

small attainments of some who seem to us far behind in the race, and to judge more leniently, more tenderly, their shortcomings and defects.

But the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost descends upon us all. We are all baptized with the same Spirit. The grand question for us is, How we are surrendering to its influence, and resigning ourselves to be borne on by it, and lifted up; what we have made and are making of those occasional Divine inflows and inspirations with which we are visited. For "who will not acknowledge," as one has asked, "that he has been carried at times whither he would not, and had nobler thoughts, and felt higher aspirations, than the course of his ordinary life seems to allow? These came to him, he could scarcely tell how; sometimes with outward and apparent cause, and sometimes with none, 'the wind blowing where it listed;' but they were the most important moments of his history for good or for evil, the critical points that have made him what he is, either as he used or neglected them." Let us each take heed, then, that we "receive not the grace of God in vain."

S. A. TIPPLE.

THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH HEARERS.

ST. MATTHEW vii. 24-27; ST. LUKE vi. 47-49.

THE subject suggested by these solemn sentences, which form the conclusion of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, is one in connection with which the value of a synoptical method of studying the Gospels is very apparent. There is reason to fear that it is also one in connection with which that method is too often neglected. We are all accustomed to turn to the First

Gospel for anything pertaining to the great discourse on the kingdom of God and its righteousness, scarcely taking the trouble to turn to the Third to see how the matter is put there. The practice is excusable on the ground that the version of the Sermon in Matthew is so much fuller than in Luke. But it is seldom safe to omit comparison where more than one account is given of the same incident or saying, and the consequence of such neglect in the case of the passage above cited may be serious. We may miss the point of our Lord's words, and fail to find the key to their true interpretation. For while it may be admitted that here also Matthew's version is the fuller, and probably also on the whole the more accurate, there is one very important point which comes out more clearly in the version given by the Third Evangelist. When we read of one man building his house on the rock, and of another building his house on the sand, we are apt to suppose that the point of the contrast lies in the selection made by the two men, respectively, of a foundation whereon to build. The wise man selects rock for his foundation, the foolish man selects sand; and he is foolish because he makes a bad selection—his folly consists in an error of judgment after due deliberation. Hence the theme suggested by the passage is often put, for pulpit purposes, in this form: "The Two Foundations." But the truth is that the contrast intended is not that between two men deliberately selecting different foundations on which to build, but that between two men, one of whom makes the foundation a matter of deliberate consideration, while the other, on the contrary, never takes a moment's thought about a foundation, but proceeds to build at hap-hazard, on the surface,

anywhere, just where he happens to be—on the loose sand on the banks, or even in the bed, of a river dried up by the severe drought and scorching heat of summer, as rivers are so apt to be in the East. Insight into the whole connection of thought in the Sermon might lead us to this conclusion, even were we to confine our attention to Matthew's narrative; but it is *forced* on our attention by the way in which Luke reports Christ's words. He that heareth and doeth is said to be like a man who "built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundations on the rock:" and he that heareth and doeth not is said to be like a man "that, *without a foundation*,¹ built a house upon the earth." That is, the one takes great pains with the foundation of his house, digs below the surface, and goes deep in digging;² continues digging, in short, till he comes down to the rock, which cannot be washed away by the flood, should the waters of the neighbouring stream ever happen to rise to the level of his dwelling: the other takes no pains with the foundation, provides none indeed, but begins at once to build on the surface of the ground.³ Evidently this foolish man is not one who makes a mistake in judgment as to the best foundation for a house, judging sand to be the best, which in certain circumstances it really is; but, rather, one who loses sight of the fact that the found-

¹ χωρίς θεμέλιου.

² ὡς ἔσκαψεν καὶ ἐβάθυνεν. On these words Kitto remarks: "At this very day the mode of building in Christ's own town of Nazareth suggests the source of this image. Dr. Robinson was entertained in the house of a Greek Arab. The house had just been built, and was not yet finished. In order to lay the foundations, he had dug down to the solid rock, as is usual throughout the country here, to the depth of thirty feet, and then built up arches."—"The Pictorial Bible."

³ Bengel seems to have noticed the true point of contrast. His note on Luke vi. 49 is: "θεμέλιον, *fundamentum*, artificiale, *petra*, naturale. Illi opponitur carentia fundamenti; huic terra mera."

ation of a house is a matter of prime importance, and thoughtlessly begins to build, like children who amuse themselves by erecting miniature houses on the sea-shore within high-water mark, destined to be washed away a few hours after by the in-rolling tide.

Having by a careful inspection of the texts ascertained this important fact, let us now see what light it throws on the interpretation of the whole passage.

1. In the light of the true distinction between the two builders, as above stated, we can see the special appropriateness of the emblems employed by our Lord to represent two different types of men in reference to religion. On the general appropriateness of these emblems it is unnecessary to dilate, as that must be obvious to all. The building of a house is manifestly an apt emblem of the profession and practice of religion. In their religion men provide for their souls something analogous to that which a house is for their bodies. The analogy might be drawn out into several particulars. Thus, a house is for rest—it is our place of abode, our home. In like manner, religion is the rest of the soul, as is implied in such texts as the following: “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee;” “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations;” “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” The idea underlying these familiar Bible sayings is that, through the culture of the religious affections, a man provides for himself a home for the soul. Again, a house is for shelter from the elements, from cold, rain, snow, stormy winds. In like manner, religion is the soul’s shelter from sin, temptation, fear, and care; as we are taught by the beautiful words of Psalm xci.: “He

that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." Yet again, a house is for comfort: it is not only the place of our abode, to which we always return from our wanderings, and after the duties of the day are over; it is not merely a place of shelter from the elements; but, furthermore and above all, it is the scene of domestic happiness and peace. Even so is religion the bliss of the soul. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;" "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach to thee, that he may dwell in thy courts."

Thus far the figures of this passage are evidently apposite to the purpose to which they are applied. But a difficulty may be felt in reference to the house built on the *sand*, especially when we think of it as built in the hap-hazard manner suggested by Luke's version of our Lord's words. If it were a case of a man committing an error in judgment in the selection of a foundation, one might feel less perplexity; for to err is human. But can we conceive of any man being so utterly foolish as to build a house on the loose sand, liable to be blown down by a hurricane, and even to be washed away by the mountain torrent when it comes down in full flood? Men do build houses at the foot of a volcanic mountain, but a volcanic eruption is an event of comparatively rare occurrence, and men feel that it is a risk they may without absolute folly run. But a flood in a river is a thing of annual, or even more frequent, occurrence; and it seems to violate all natural probability to represent men as acting in entire disregard of so great a risk. But in this very

violation of probability lies the very point and peculiar appositeness of the metaphor. For Christ would suggest that men do in religion things the like of which they would not dream of doing in the ordinary affairs of life; and the implied assertion is unhappily too true. Without doubt it would be difficult to find men anywhere who do not, in the building of their houses, take all possible precaution against the destruction of them by the elements. But the fact is that just such folly is not uncommon in religion; so that, to describe the case truly, the Preacher was under the necessity of violating natural probability in his choice of a figure to describe the character of the man who hears and does not. If He had described the latter as taking into consideration where he might best build his house, and at last resolving to build on sand, He would have given him credit for more thoughtfulness and thoroughness than he possesses; for inconsiderateness is characteristic of the type of men to which he belongs. They are not in earnest in religion; they only play at being religious; at most they are but half in earnest. Thus what on first view appears to be an infelicity in the metaphor employed to describe the man who heareth and doeth not, is seen, after due reflection, to be its very point of merit. And when this is understood, we are at the same time impressed with the peculiar appositeness of the other comparison, of the man who heareth and doeth, to one who, being minded to build a house, begins by digging, and going deep in digging, for a foundation. It points him out in contrast to the other as one who considers well what he is about, bears in mind all the uses of a house, and all that it may have to endure. In a word, his characteristics are con-

siderateness and thoroughness, as those of the other are inconsiderateness and superficiality.

2. But the difference between the two classes of men spoken of by the Preacher is too important to be disposed of in a sentence, and we must therefore now consider more fully what light is thrown on that topic by the contrast drawn between the two builders. Our Lord Himself distinguishes the two classes by representing a man of the one class as one who heareth his sayings and doeth them, and a man of the other class as one who heareth his sayings and doeth them not. The distinction is sufficiently definite for practical purposes. We all have an approximately correct idea of the two types of character thus discriminated. We know pretty well what sort of a man he who hears and does is. He is one who is in thorough earnest in religion, who has it for his constant aim to be, in heart and life, in conformity with the will of Christ as made known in his recorded teaching, and maintains a persistent resolute effort to accomplish his aim; one who devoutly desires and constantly strives to be in thought, feeling, and conduct, in harmony with the Beatitudes; and with the exposition of the law given by Christ as a searching spiritual law, meant to regulate, not merely outward actions, but inward dispositions; and with the portraiture of the true religion as aiming at glorifying God, not at gaining reputation for ourselves; and with the charming description of the life of faith as a childlike trust in God our Father which raises us, above fear and care, into a serene atmosphere of cheerfulness and hope, in which we can rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. He is not one, we understand, who has at-

tained unto perfection in charity and humility and purity of heart, and meekness and singleness of mind, and abhorrence of ostentation in praying and almsgiving and fasting, and unworldliness and childlike trust in a never-sleeping Providence. But he is one who is not contented with merely hearing and admiring the fine sayings of Jesus about these things, admitting them to be very beautiful, and at the same time voting them utterly impracticable, but is minded to live under the power of those Divine words; and seeing clearly, as every man of tender conscience must see, how far short he comes of the lofty ideal embodied therein, he is deeply humbled, and mourns over his worldliness, vanity, and unbelief, the impurity of his heart and the unholiness of his life, and thus is as far as possible from the self-complacency of the Pharisee, and rather inclined to take his place beside the publican, and pray, "God be merciful to me." Understanding the "doing" ascribed to the right-minded hearer in this way, we have no difficulty in removing from our Lord's description of him any appearance of an unevangelic legalism, or in perceiving its perfect compatibility with the great New Testament doctrine that salvation is of grace received by faith. No man who is thoroughly in sympathy with the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is in danger of making any serious mistake as to the footing on which he stands before God. Thoroughgoing moral earnestness is the sure road to faith in Divine grace as the source of salvation, as the history of Paul and of Luther shews. A little earnestness may make a man a *Pharisee*, but a great consuming earnestness will make him a *Christian*, after the Pauline type.

We know, then, what sort of man he is who heareth and doeth. And we have no great difficulty in forming a tolerably correct notion of the other sort of man, who heareth and doeth not. When Christ gives him credit for "hearing," we assume that He means by hearing, everything short of doing. He does not mean to put the distinction between the two classes thus: Whoso heareth my sayings with rapt attention, and with enjoyment of the sentiments uttered, is the right sort of disciple; and whoso heareth listlessly, with his thoughts wandering on other things, is the wrong sort of disciple. He assumes even the worst part of his audience to be attentive delighted hearers. I question if He would have deemed such listless hearers as we are too familiar with in these days worthy of the name of hearers. Nay, I question if, among the crowd assembled on the grassy slopes of the hill of Galilee, to hear the Prophet of Nazareth, there were any such listless non-hearing hearers, who, while the Speaker discoursed on the high things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were thinking of their crops, or their merchandise, or their household cares, or their amusements. The people who composed that crowd had come for the express purpose of hearing the remarkable Person who spoke to them, and not in mechanical compliance with religious custom; and it may be regarded as certain that they all listened with fixed attention and unfeigned pleasure while He discoursed of the beatitudes of the kingdom, and of its pure inward morality, and of its heavenly charity, and of the aversion to ostentation characteristic of its citizens, and of their unworldliness and childlike trust in Providence; all, at least, save the very few artificial, morally per-

verse, religionists, incapable of appreciating anything natural and true and unsophisticated, who might happen to be present, listening with attention enough, but without sympathy.

All heard with pleasure, but the class we now speak of heard and did not. Before experience, one would say the dissociation of doing from such hearing was very unlikely, if not impossible. But experience teaches us that it is neither impossible nor very rare. There are people at all times like those in Israel of whom Ezekiel complains, who talked about him as men talk now about any pulpit celebrity; who sat in groups by the town wall and at the doorsteps, and conversed about the prophet, saying to each other, "Come, I pray you, and hear the word of the Lord." They were all very ready to come and hear. They came in a body; they sat before the prophet, with intent to listen devoutly, as became God's people. They came, they sat down, they heard; but they did not do. With their mouth they shewed much love, but their heart went after their covetousness; and the poor prophet was unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument. They heard his words with delight, but they did them not; they liked his song, but as for translating the poetry into prose, and embodying the sentiment in conduct, that they never for a moment dreamed of.

But it is not necessary to suppose that the neglect of doing, on the part of those whom our Lord had in view, is to be taken so absolutely as it is exhibited in the graphic representation of Ezekiel. In actual experience, we do not always find that men whose religious character is sentimental and hollow wholly

neglect the practice of duties. On the contrary, we often see them busying themselves in "good works" of the technical or conventional sort. We cannot, therefore, draw a hard and fast line between the two classes, and say, The one are doers; the other, non-doers. We require some test to distinguish between doers and doers—between the doing which deserves the name, and the doing which does not. And here the contrast between the builders, as above explained, comes to our aid, supplying us with a ready means of ascertaining in what respects precisely the two classes of hearers differ from each other. It will be observed that in the figurative representation both men appear as building a house. The difference between the wise man and the foolish is not that the wise man builds for himself a house, and that the foolish is content to do without one, not seeing any necessity for it in the dry warm weather of summer. Both build, and the difference lies in the quality of their work. One looks well to his foundation, the other never thinks of a foundation, but commences to build on the surface at hap-hazard. So stands the contrast in the figure. What is the moral import of it?

Two points of difference in character are clearly hinted at. *First*, the wise builder has a prudent regard to the future. He anticipates the coming of storms, and he aims at being well provided against these. The foolish builder, on the contrary, thinks only of the present. If all is well to-day, he recks not of to-morrow, and the storms it may bring. *Second*, the wise builder does not look merely to appearance. The question with him is not, What will look well? but, What will stand, being founded on the rock? The

foolish builder, on the other hand, cares for appearance only. His house looks as well as another's, so far as what is above ground is concerned ; and as for what is below ground, that, in his esteem, goes for nothing.

Carrying these two distinctions with us into the spiritual sphere, we are supplied with the means of distinguishing very exactly between the genuine and the spurious professors of religion. Taking the latter of the two distinctions first, the two classes of men differ thus : the spurious look only to what is seen, the outward act ; the genuine look to what is not seen, the hidden foundation of inward disposition, the heart-motive, out of which flow the issues of life. The outward acts of both may be the same, but the motive of the one is love of goodness, that of the other is vanity. Both pray ; but one prays by preference in secret, his care being, not to be known as a praying man, but to obtain the boon he asks of Heaven ; the other prays by preference at the corner of the street, his aim being, not to obtain the favour of God, or the thing he seems to desire, but to get credit for a devotional spirit. Both give alms ; but one from love and pity, with shame-faced modesty ; the other from ostentation, not sympathizing with the poor, but seeking a reputation for philanthropy.

Thus far the doer of Christ's sayings is the man who in all conduct attaches supreme importance to motive and disposition ; and the non-doer, the man who is not concerned to be right in heart, but regards only the visible part of morality, the external deed.

But another equally marked distinction between the genuine and the counterfeit disciple is to be found in their respective attitudes towards the future. The one

has forethought, the other has none ; the one thinks of to-morrow, and the trials it may bring ; the other thinks only of to-day, and its bright sunshine. The one counts the cost when he thinks of becoming a Christian ; the other receives the Word with joy, leaving out of view the responsibilities and difficulties, the "tribulations" he is likely to encounter in the career on which he is entering. Not much is said of this distinction between the true citizen of the kingdom and the false in the course of the Sermon on the Mount, the great matter insisted on throughout being sincerity. But though forethought, counting the cost, is little emphasized in the body of the discourse, it gets due attention in the close. Why does the Preacher refer to the storms that will come, if not to suggest the necessity of keeping them duly in view ? He says in effect, See that your religion be such as will stand the test, for a testing time will come. Regard to the testing time, therefore, must be an attribute of genuine piety. It may be said, Sincerity will always stand the test ; therefore it is enough to be sincere. But the question is, Does not forethought enter as an element into sincere character ? Or, to put it the other way, Is not the want of forethought an essential characteristic of spurious religious character ? It certainly is ; for the man who has regard only to appearances, would never profess religion at all if he considered the future. He acts from impulse, imitation, and fashion ; and the use of religion as a stay in temptation and trouble is not in all his thoughts. Hence we understand why Christ so often presented the difficulties of the spiritual life to the view of those offering themselves as disciples. It was his way of ridding Himself of counterfeit discipleship, ori-

ginating in by-ends or thoughtless sentiment, and of securing that his circle of followers should include only men whose religion was an affair, not of sentiment alone, but of reason and conscience—of reason looking well before and after, and of conscience realizing seriously moral responsibility.

3. We have thus ascertained the distinctive characteristics of the two classes of hearers. But it is one thing to discriminate between these two classes on paper, another thing to discern and judge between them as existing in real life. Judging who is the genuine man, and who is the counterfeit, is a difficult and delicate task. We can only judge from appearance; and, judging from appearance, we run a risk of thinking the pretender the better man. For *he* looks to appearances; he makes appearance his study. Therefore I should not be surprised were his house to appear the finer of the two, so that men should say, looking at it, What an elegant structure, compared with that other building which looks so plain and unadorned! False disciples often gain golden opinions, when true disciples, with their faults all on the surface, are of little account.

Who then is to decide as to the merits of the two builders? The Divine Preacher, with true insight into the state of the case, replies, The elements. The rain, the winds, and the floods, are the infallible judges of the builders and their work. The house built on the rock is described as successfully enduring the trial: "it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." The house built on the sand is represented as tumbling down in utter ruin under the trial: "it fell, and great was the fall of it." The rock-founded house, whatever its

faults apparent above ground, is thus manifested to be genuine ; and the house built on the sand, with all its attractions, is manifested to be spurious. The elements in the metaphor represent generally times of severe trial, the judgment-days which overtake men even in this world occasionally, and in which many fair edifices of religious profession go down. The forms in which the trial may come are very diverse. There are trials by outward calamities, trials by religious doubt, trials by sinful desires, trials in business, by commercial crises and the like ; trials by tribulations, such as overtake professors of religion in evil times. The thing to be laid to heart is that trial, in one form or another, is to be expected. It will come. And another thing should be remembered : the crisis that is to try us may come suddenly, leaving no time for preparation, no time for saving one's household furniture, barely time to save one's own life. Speaking of such a crisis in another discourse, Jesus said, " Then let them which be in Judæa flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house. Neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes." ¹ The suddenness with which the visitation of judgment may come is graphically depicted in these words of our Lord which we have been studying—the very abruptness of the style suggesting the idea of a thunder-storm suddenly arising among the hills, whence rivers take their rise, after a long period of summer heat and drought. " Descended the rain, and came the floods, and blew the winds." ² Black clouds gather ; lightnings flash ; thunder rolls ;

¹ Matt. xxiv. 16-18.

² Καριβη ή βροχή και ήλθον οι ποταμοι και επνευσαν οι άνεμοι.—Matt. vii. 27.

rain falls in torrents ; down rush the floods, filling the dry bed of the water-course from bank to bank ; the winds blow with tropical violence : and away goes the house which was built on the loose sand in the dry river-channel that looked so well in the bright summer sun. How many illustrations of this picture one might draw, if he wished, from current events !

A. B. BRUCE.

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF ST. PAUL,

IN THE SUPERScription OF HIS EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

THE superscriptions of St. Paul's Epistles are a special study. In them the Apostle appears, not so much standing, equipped in full for the task lying before him, as starting, like a racer eager for the race. He cannot, with cool conventional exactitude, hold himself in, within the lines of customary commonplace, until the formalities of designation and salutation are hurried over. He is quivering with restrained emotion in every fibre of his moral being. His mind is not only full to the brim : it is gushing up and running over. The overflow laves the astonished reader. But his astonishment rises into admiration when he notes that the ideas thus lavishly poured forth are among the richest that ever welled up in the mind of the Apostle. The superscription of the Epistle to the Romans is peerless for its wealth of theological idea.

Verse 1.—*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.*—KING JAMES'S VERSION.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, a called apostle,