

THE PLACE AND FUNCTION OF THE LAMP.

ST. MARK iv. 21-25; ST. MATTHEW x. 26, 27; ST. LUKE  
viii. 16-18; xii. 1-3.

II. THE PARADOX.

THE picturesque little Parable of the Lamp is based on a generalization as broad and significant as any that ever fell even from the lips of Christ. The truth conveyed by the Parable itself is, as we have seen, that just as no lamp is lit only that it may burn, and, still less, only that it may burn in secret, so no man is illuminated for his own sake alone, but in order that he may let his light shine before men, in order that he may impart to them the truth which he himself has received from Heaven. And this truth, so wide in its scope, so generous in its tone, He forthwith proceeds to base on a truth still wider and more generous. "*For,*" He argues, "*nothing is hid except that it may be made manifest, neither was anything kept secret except that it should come abroad*": that is to say, There is now absolutely no light or truth veiled from men which it is not the intention and purpose of God to uncover and reveal to them as soon as they are able to receive it; nor was there ever, at any time, anything hidden from them which it was not for their good to hide from them for the time, and which was not disclosed to them so soon as it was for their good that the disclosure should be made.

It is impossible to glance at such words as these without being impressed by their breadth and fulness of meaning; but we shall best learn perhaps how much they cover and convey if we trace this great saying through the four several connections in which it was used by our Lord Himself, view it in the various lights in which it was placed by Him, and so arrive at the principle He intended it to enforce.

We take it, first, as it is reported by St. Mark (Chapter iv. Verse 22). And here, as we have seen, it stands between a proverb which calls special attention to it, and the parable which affirms that men are taught as lamps are lit, viz. that they may shine, that they may teach what and as they have been taught. Taken in this connection, it is evident that by this paradox He commands and invites us to a frank and liberal utterance of any and every truth we know by the example of God Himself, who, whether in the natural or in the spiritual world, hides nothing from us that we are able to receive, withholds nothing that we are able to use; nay, never has concealed or withheld anything from us save with the express intention of revealing and conferring it upon us so soon as it would be for our good to know or to have it. In short, we are to be frank and generous, because our Father in heaven is frank and generous, just as we are to be perfect because He is perfect.

So far the immediate context carries us. But even St. Mark places this great axiom in other connections, and asks us to look at it from other points of view. If, for instance, we turn back to the earlier verses of the Chapter, we learn that our Lord had just uttered the parable of the Sower who went forth to sow; and that no sooner was He alone with his disciples than they asked Him why He was adopting this parabolic method with the multitude; why, instead of speaking to the people plainly as He spake to *them*, He spoke in parables which concealed the truths He taught. His answer to that question seems so utterly alien to "the mind of Christ" that it perplexes and distresses us to this day: "Unto *you* it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to *them* I speak in parables that, seeing, they may see and not perceive, and, hearing, they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven

them." Possibly we shall never grasp all that these strange words involve; but take them in connection with our Parable and Paradox, as we are bound to do, and all that distresses us in them, if not all that perplexes us, immediately disappears. For when Christ says, "Doth the lamp come to be put under the bushel or under the couch, and not to be set on the lampstand?" it is the light in *his parables* which He has in view; and what He asks of the disciples is virtually: "Do you suppose that *this* lamp has been kindled only that it may be hid? Nay, but rather it has been kindled that it may give light to all who are in the house, and even that it may shine ruddily through door and window, and invite all who are without to enter in." And when He declares that, in the intention and purpose of God, "nothing is hidden except that it may be manifested," his words are so full of teaching and comfort and promise that I cannot hope to convey the half of what even I can see in them. But they cannot mean less, they must mean more, very much more, than this: (1) that the disciples have been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom in order that they may teach them to the multitude; (2) that the truths of that kingdom are only hidden from any man by his own inability to see them, and until he is able to see them; and (3) that sooner or later, these truths in all their illuminating and saving power must be made known to every soul of man. If absolutely *nothing*, no truth of God, is hidden "except that it may be manifested," why then it *must* be manifested some day; and if nothing, no grace of God, is withheld for a time "except that it may come abroad," why then it *must* come abroad before all is done. All that we *can* see, therefore, we *may* see; all that we can find out, we may find out; and what as yet we can neither see nor find out is only hidden from us for a while, hidden by the infirmities and limitations of our own nature, and is destined by the will of God Him-

self to manifest itself to us as the eyes of the soul grow larger, keener, stronger.

And is not that a truth which liberates our Lord's answer to his disciples from all that really distresses us in it? What it comes to, as interpreted by the passage before us, is simply this: If nothing is hid except that it may be manifested, if God kindles no lamp except that it may shine, if what the disciples have heard in secret that they are to proclaim from the housetops, then *they* have been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom in order that they may teach that mystery to all men; the Parable has been explained to them that they may explain it to the people; the truth has been hidden for a while from those who were not able to receive it, only to whet their curiosity and stimulate them to research, only that, as soon as they can receive it, it may be revealed unto them also.

This I take to be the general principle of the passage, as St. Mark lays it down; and we must now mark how he applies it, or rather how he represents our Lord as applying it in the Verses which follow it. In the very next Verse we find a proverb: "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear," which reminds us that capacity involves responsibility, that what we *can* do we *ought* to do: hear, if we can hear; see, if we can see; speak, if we can speak; and so on, through the whole range of our powers.

Why our Lord selects *hearing*, rather than seeing or speaking for instance, as the illustrative capacity becomes obvious as we pass on to Verse 24. For here we learn that what our Lord wished specially to impress on his disciples at the moment was the duty of wise hearing, of *Christian* hearing; *i.e.*, the duty of listening to what He said *for the sake of others* as well as for their own sake. They were to *hear* well that they might *teach* well, that they might proclaim from the housetop the secrets of truth and grace which were whispered into their ears when they

were alone with Him. They were listening for the world, as well as for themselves. And this duty of hearing well in order that they might teach well is enforced upon them by two general principles which would well repay careful study, but on which we can only throw a glance in passing.

The first general principle our Lord lays down is this: "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." The principle is true in a thousand different ways, in all the complex relations of human life; but it is cited here mainly as a basis, a reason, for wise and right hearing of the truth; mainly to teach that the measure of attention we give to truth will be the very measure in which truth will be meted out to us; that in proportion as we listen and attend, we shall learn, learning more the more attentively we listen. In Verse 25 a second general principle is brought to bear on this selfsame duty: "To him that hath (hath an open and attentive ear, for example) more shall be given; while from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away." That is to say, we lose the very faculty of attention if we fail to use it, and gain that faculty, gain force and quickness for it, in proportion as we use it. Of course both these axioms or general principles have a multitude of applications; they are true all round, through the whole circle of our experience. But they are brought in here mainly to illustrate *the law of hearing*, to teach the disciples of Christ with what attention they are to listen to the Master's words, since they are listening not for their own instruction alone, but also and chiefly that they may teach to others the truths which they have learned from Him. The more they are able to learn, the more He will be able to teach them; the more they can take, the more He can give. And it should be their ambition, as it should be ours, to learn and to take as much as they can, because they them-

selves may need hereafter truths of which they do not feel their need now, and because the world will very certainly need all that they can teach it.

In St. Matthew x. 26 we have another version of this great saying; and here the law of Christian *teaching* is illustrated and enforced, instead of, as in St. Mark, the law of Christian hearing. The Lord warns his disciples that they are not to suffer any fear of man to hinder or impede them in the free and frank proclamation of the truths they have learned from Him. And He nerves them to meet the oppositions of men in the words: "Fear not them, therefore: *for there is nothing covered that shall not be uncovered, and nothing hid that shall not be known.*" Here is our general principle again. Here once more Christ fires us with courage and with hope by affirming, in the most absolute and unlimited terms, that there is positively *nothing*—nothing anywhere, nothing either in the natural or in the spiritual universe—covered from us that shall not be uncovered to us, nothing hidden from us which we shall not one day know; no secret of science, no mystery of providence, no gift of grace. Not a single condition is made, not a single limitation imposed. Because God is our Father, all that He has is ours; and as He has all things, *all* things are ours—ours in right even now already, ours in fact so soon as we are able to administer and enjoy the vast inheritance.

But in the next Verse (ver. 27) our Lord makes a particular application of this general principle, derives from it a law which is to rule all our teaching: "Whatsoever I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and whatsoever ye hear (spoken) into the ear, that proclaim ye upon the housetops." Now we know what the method of Christ's teaching was to which He alludes in these words. Parables and dark sayings, whispered hints and suggestions, axioms of an immeasurable depth and breadth, maxims and manysided

proverbs capable of an infinite variety of applications, were among the forms by which He led his disciples to a knowledge of the truth. And now He tells them that what they thus learned, as it were in darkness and in secret, they were to teach openly, freely, boldly, to all. If they did, those who persecuted Him would no doubt persecute them. *That*, however, was to make no difference, to impose no check on them as teachers and ambassadors of the truth. At most their enemies and the enemies of the truth could but kill the body. After that there was no more that they could do. And what did *that* matter? what harm could that do them? All things and all men were pressing on to a day of universal manifestation. The time was coming when everything would be seen in its true light, stripped of all disguises, and every man be known for what he was. "Your enemies will be unmasked, and so will you. Their true character will be exposed to view, and so will yours. Live and speak, then, as in the light of that day. Be open, frank, fearless. Teach all you know, even that which is most inward and secret. Hold nothing in reserve, even of that which is most unwelcome to those to whom you speak. And have no fear as to the result. Leave that to time, and to Him who shapes it to a perfect end. All that is covered must and will be uncovered; all that is secret must and will be disclosed. And hence all that lies in your choice is, not what and how much truth shall come abroad, but whether or not *you* will be of those who teach the truth and publish its secrets to the general ear."

Such seems to be the meaning and application of this great principle as it stands in St. Matthew's Gospel. While St. Mark gives a law for the Christian hearer, St. Matthew gives a law for the Christian teacher; both laws being derived from the same large and fundamental axiom.

But this law of Christian teaching comes out still more strongly in the Gospel of St. Luke. Indeed he inculcates

both the lessons we have just learned, that of St. Matthew and that of St. Mark. In St. Luke viii. 16-18 we have a close parallel to the words we have already studied in St. Mark. In Verse 16 the parable of the Lamp is repeated. It is followed in Verse 17 by the Paradox with which we are now concerned. And in Verse 18 we have the very warning or admonition given in St. Mark, "Take heed how ye hear," backed up by an appeal to the same general principle: "To him that hath shall be given; from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." Here then is the very warning we have already heard, the warning to *hear* wisely and attentively, to grasp and possess ourselves of what truth we have within our reach, on the express ground that we cultivate a faculty by using it, and lose it in proportion as we suffer it to "rust in us unused."

And if we turn over a few pages, and glance at Chapter xii. Verse 2, of the same Gospel, we find that very law of Christian *teaching* which we have heard from St. Matthew, but laid down here in terms still more forcible and imperative. The disciples are to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Verse 1), one element of whose hypocrisy it was to withhold from the common people the light of their own better knowledge; neither going into the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffering those who would have entered to go in. The disciples, unlike the Pharisees, are not to withhold any light which they possess; for God intends nothing to be concealed from any man. Whatever *is* covered is to be uncovered. Whatever is hidden from us is hidden, not by God, but by the limitations of our own faculty, and will be disclosed as we train our faculty of perception and outgrow its limitations. So far as we *can* see we *may* see; and what we see not yet we shall see soon. Yes, and, as we are expressly taught in Verse 3, so far as we can see we may *speak*, and even *must* speak. For as it is the will of God that nothing should be covered



except that it may be uncovered, so also it is the will of Christ that whatever He or his disciples have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light, whatever they have spoken in the chamber shall be proclaimed from the housetop. The same rule is to govern *their* words which governed *his* words. What He had taught them privately, that they were to teach openly (St. Matthew x. 27) ; and now He adds that whatever *they* taught privately, that their successors were to teach openly. They were to have no mysteries, no "œconomy," no truths reserved for the initiated. To attempt to hide any truth they had mastered, or to confine it to the knowledge of the few, was to fight against God, whose aim it was that all things should become open and naked to men even as all are naked and open to Him.

O, it is a great word, a principle of the broadest and most generous scope ! For it declares that, in the intention of God, no truth, no hope, has ever been concealed from men for any other purpose than that they might have the honour and joy of discovering it ; it declares it to be his will and intention that all the darkneses by which we are oppressed should be dispelled, every secret told, every problem solved, every mystery at once explained and justified ; and it bids us withhold from our fellows no light which we have received from Him, on the express ground that He wishes to pour light into every darkness and to make plain whatever is concealed. So far as we shrink from seeing any new truth therefore, or from recognizing old truths in new and larger forms, we are making void the gracious purpose of God, violating the Christian law of learning, and are running the risk of losing even what knowledge of truth we have. And, on the other hand, if we do not teach what and all we know ; if we hold certain truths to be " dangerous " to our fellows, though not to ourselves ; if we seek to suppress any honest and sincere utterance, we are setting ourselves against

the authority of Christ, and flagrantly violating the law of Him who has bidden all who have learned of Him to proclaim publicly and freely even the most secret and private lessons He has taught them. We, too, are running a dreadful risk; for He Himself has warned us that with the very measure we mete out his truth to others, that truth shall be meted out to us; so that, by refusing to teach any truth we know, we shut truth out from our minds. All truth is for all men; for nothing is hidden except that it may be manifested, nothing covered except that it may be uncovered, nothing kept secret except that it may be published abroad.

We should wrong so great and absolute a saying, however, were we to limit its application to the study and ministry of the inspired Word. It is absolutely without limits as it fell from the lips of Christ, and the three or four applications of it at which we have already glanced are not intended to exclude other applications, or any application of it that can be fairly made. They are but specimens of the mode in which we are to use and apply the general principle which proved so potent on the lips of Christ. What it means in the last resort, and when taken at the full, is, that in the will and intention of God *all things are for all men*, and all men for one another. Nothing is to be hidden or withheld from any one of us when once God has trained us to receive, use, and enjoy the knowledge or the gift we crave; no secret of nature, no problem of providence, no possibility of virtue even the finest and most heroic, no attainment of grace even the last and highest. *All* that is covered is to be uncovered, all that perplexes us made clear, all that we value and strive for attained.

It is obviously impossible to touch even on all the points suggested by so large an interpretation of so large a saying. But there are one or two points on which it bears with

markable and opportune force; and on these a few words may be advanced. Clearly, then, we have in this axiom and paradox (1) the very charter of science; (2) a warrant for all honest inquiry; and (3) a solid ground for hope.

(1) In the long controversy between science and religion it is hard to say which of the combatants, who never should have been aught but friends, has been the more to blame. On the one hand, we all know how piercing an outcry has been raised by sincerely good men against the discoveries, or assumed discoveries, of science, especially when those discoveries have militated against their traditional interpretations of Scripture. Not content with making a stand for these interpretations in the very teeth of reason, they have condemned scientific investigation into the secrets of nature as wicked in itself, and denounced those who pursued it as enemies of the Christian faith. But on the other hand, men of science, whose boast it is to search into facts and examine them for themselves, have too often and too hastily assumed that the Christian faith is responsible both for the traditional interpretations thrust upon it and for the follies and blunders of some of its adherents; than which it would be no whit more unreasonable to infer the real motion of the sun from its apparent motion, or to assume that the alchemists of the Middle Ages were the true representatives of science.

Now had the men of theology on the one hand, and the men of science on the other, gone to Christ Himself for their conceptions of his teaching, these grievous mistakes would have been simply impossible. This great saying would of itself have rendered them impossible. For here is the very charter of science: "There is nothing hid *except that it may be manifested*; nor was anything (ever) kept secret *except that it might come abroad*." To those who will take a law from Christ's lips nothing more than this can be necessary

to justify every kind of investigation into the secrets and mysteries of the universe. For in so many words it throws open the whole universe to research, and even stimulates research by predicting its ultimate success.

The simple fact is that God has hidden nothing, and desires to hide nothing, from us. The secrets of nature are, or have been, secrets only because of the inevitable limitations under which the human intellect has worked and continues to work. The old strange story of Moses and his veil, and St. Paul's striking use of it in his letter to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> may be taken as a case in point. When Moses came down from the mount of fellowship, with the law in his hand, a divine lustre sat on his brow, which lustre he had to veil. Why? Because either Jehovah or he himself wanted to hide it from the men of Israel? Not at all, replies the Apostle; but because *they* could not endure to look upon it. And even to this day, he continues, when the Jews read the law that came by Moses, a veil hangs between the law and them. But the veil is not on the law; nor is it woven by God. It is on their own hearts, and has been woven by their own hands. Even yet they cannot bear the full brightness of the Divine will, or are not willing to recognize its true and full meaning, lest it should condemn the narrow formularies and traditional interpretations to which they cleave.

Now a like veil is on *our* hearts as we contemplate the natural universe. We are so made and so limited that we must see the phenomena, and mistake them for realities before we can penetrate to the laws and forces which lie behind them. We are so made and so limited that even when we apprehend the laws and forces at work behind this great Show of things, we can only apprehend them in part, only advance and enlarge our conceptions of them by long years of toilsome thought, and must always confess that

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 7-18.

behind all we know there lies an infinite unknown. Till *we* are what we ought to be, we shall never know things as they are in themselves. Till we touch our ideal and reach our full stature as men in the Perfect Man, we must look out on the world as through a glass darkly, and speak of what we see with a childish simplicity and imperfection. We are but children of a larger growth; and so long as man is a child he must speak as a child, understand as a child, and think as a child. Not till we are perfect men in Christ Jesus shall we put off childish things, and know even as also we are known,—know as He knows, speak as He speaks.

When, therefore, we complain of the limitations of our knowledge, and of the insoluble mysteries by which we are encompassed, we are like children who want to be men; and what we really complain of is that God has made the universe so vast, so rich, and has called us to so noble an inheritance, that we cannot survey and comprehend it at a glance. And when we set ourselves against any real discovery of science, or reject any true conclusion it has reached, we are unfaithful to the law of Christ, who has taught us to expect the discovery and manifestation of that which once was hidden from us, and untrue to God who is thus calling us to go up and possess ourselves of part of our great inheritance: we are like children who love childish things too well to put them away, and to assume the tasks, honours, and responsibilities of men. And when, because others, who should know better, tell us that we ought to be content with such imperfect knowledge as we have, and not seek to discover aught that lies beyond our present range, we assume *that* to be the will of God or the law of Christ, we are like children who gather their impressions from their schoolfellows and playmates, instead of going to the Master and Teacher of us all and learning the truth from Him.:

(2) But it is not only into the facts and truths of

nature that we are concerned to inquire, but also into the facts and truths of life and religion. And here, once more, the broad principle laid down by Christ holds good. Most of us, indeed, are well content to leave the discoveries of science to be dealt with by minds more capable and more highly trained than our own; but there are truths which we cannot leave to others: our experience of life, and the questions which that experience breeds, will not suffer us to neglect or evade them. Even if we pass through life without a doubt on questions of such fundamental moment as "Is there a God? and what is He like?" or, "Is there a future life, and how may we prepare for it?" there are other questions which will come home to us and wring from us some sort of reply. Questions on the authority or the interpretation of Scripture, for example, or on the scope of the Atonement, or on the power of Prayer, or on the daily Providence which shapes our ends for us, or on the function and duration of Evil, no thoughtful man can honestly evade for long. And when such questions as these are raised, they are not always wisely met, nor are those who moot them always fairly handled, even in the Church itself. "Pride of reason must be humbled;" "God resists those who seek to be wise above that which is written;" "Temptations of the devil;" "Damned if you doubt;" "Danger of inquiry;" are among the phrases and warcries with which ignorant men who did not want to think have too often attempted to put down thought and stifle free inquiry.

How little they knew of the mind of Christ, how fatally they misinterpreted it, we may infer from the great axiom on which He so often leant. The words, in which we have already found the charter of science, are also a warrant for all honest inquiry. If we take Him for our teacher, we learn that, so far from being jealous of our growing too wise or knowing too much, God has thrown the

whole spiritual, no less than the whole physical, realm open to us; that here also, in the most inward and secret region of his activity, He invites us to learn all that we can learn, to appropriate all that we can make our own. Here, too, the veil is not on Him, nor on his truth, but on our own hearts. If we follow on to know, we shall know both Him and his way with us. The hidden things, whether of his providence or of his grace, are hidden from us only by the limitations of our own nature or the imperfection of our culture, only by our incapacity to grasp the vast inheritance He has conferred upon us. All that we can apprehend we may apprehend; all that we can take we may take. He does not want to conceal Himself from us, nor anything that is his; He delights to impart Himself to us. And if, as yet, much *is* covered from us, it is concealed only until we are prepared to see it and enjoy it; it is covered only that it may be uncovered the very moment we can apprehend and appropriate it.

(3) And so, finally, we reach the solid ground of hope which this Paradox places beneath our feet. For if nothing is hidden except that it may be manifested, and nothing kept secret except that it may come abroad, we may be very sure that a time in which all the secrets that now perplex and distress us will be revealed is coming, and coming as fast as we are becoming able to endure the splendours of its revelations. We may be sure that in proportion as we grow in spiritual life and power, that happy time will dawn on us. For the veil is on our eyes, not on the spiritual world which Christ has opened up to us. As soon as we *can* see more we *shall* see more; as soon as we can see *all* we shall see all. The veil will fall as soon as we can endure to look with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord. When that which is perfect has come in us, we shall forthwith find ourselves in a perfect world,

with all things sweetly attuned to our mind, and all open to our inquiring gaze.

What a hope, what a promise is this for the man of science! All the secrets of force, causation, life, growth, consciousness, thought, thrown open to him; and, for the man of religion, all the mysteries of prayer and providence, of Divine purpose and grace, uncovered and published abroad!

If we have at all entered into the meaning of this great saying, if we have found in it the charter of science, a warrant for all honest inquiry, and a solid ground for the hope that all problems are to be solved one day, and all mysteries, even the darkest, to grow luminous to us, we shall not grudge the time we have spent in tracing out its history, in marking how it gathers force and volume from every repetition of it, and deepens its hold upon us as the great Teacher and Saviour of men touches it again and again.

S. Cox.

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ON ROMANS V. 1.

No Verse in the New Testament has given rise to more divergent and strongly held opinions among the best scholars than has the Verse I have placed at the head of this paper. The three latest critical editors, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott, adopt the reading *Let us have peace*. This reading is accepted by Fritzsche, Hofmann, and Alford; by this last, however, with extreme and undisguised reluctance. But it is summarily rejected, for exegetical reasons, by the great commentators Meyer and Godet, who retain the more familiar reading, *We have peace*. In this they are supported by the first-rate textual critic, Dr. Scrivener.

Of the difficulty which has given rise to these conflicting: