

the less skilful compilation of these later books sheds an important light upon many difficulties in those earlier books which it might otherwise have been more difficult to elucidate.

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THE DIFFICULT WORDS OF CHRIST.

III. THINGS NEW AND OLD.¹

THE words of our Lord contain many counsels to Christian teachers; but this one is in certain respects peculiar. In other sayings He expatiates on the spirit in which work for Him ought to be done; but here he enters in an unusual way into practical detail. In others He speaks in the character of the supreme Lord, who sends forth the labourers into His vineyard; but here He appears rather as Himself a worker for the kingdom, who has had to find out the path and gives His fellow-labourers the benefit of His experience.

The name which he employs for Christian teachers is noteworthy: He calls them scribes—"every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven."

This is a singular name for Him to use. The "scribes," in the New Testament and especially in Christ's own history, occupy a sinister position, and theirs is an evil name. The Christian generations look back to them with disfavour, and Christian writers never weary of satirising their pedantic learning and orthodox absurdities. Jesus Himself delivered against them the most scorching philippics, branding them with everlasting contempt. It might naturally, then, have been expected that scribes

¹ "Therefore every scribe that is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."—*Matt.* xiii. 52.

would have no place in the new order of things which He came to found—that, though they were instructed for the use of the synagogue, there would be none of them instructed for the Church. Christ's own name, however, for Christianity is "the kingdom of heaven," and here He speaks of "every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven"—that is instructed so as to be of use in forwarding Christianity.¹ Nor is this the only occasion on which He applies this name to the propagators of His faith.²

There can be little doubt that what was in His mind was the occupation of the scribes with the Word of God. They searched the Scriptures: this was the duty to which they were set apart: and it was from this that their name was derived. They performed their duty very badly; and their practices will always be a warning to those to whom the same duty is committed. Yet the Word of God abideth forever; and our Lord foresaw that this was to be the weapon with which His followers were to subdue the world.

He made use of it Himself. Utter as was His contempt for the way in which the scribes of His day handled the holy oracles, yet He searched in the book on which the labour of these pedants was expended more diligently than any of them. In His own private life He sought and found in it the description of the path to pursue, and in temptation He repelled with it the attacks of the Wicked One. When He became a preacher, not only did He make use of it to confirm His doctrine, but His ordinary language was steeped in its spirit and studded with its phraseology, and in controversy He fell back continually on its authority.

Undoubtedly this was an example which the Founder of

¹ Meyer supposes "kingdom of heaven" to be personified, and the scribe to be apprenticed to it or sent into its school. This is the force of the construction *μαθητευθεὶς τῷ*.

² Cf. Matt. xxiii. 34.

our religion intended its propagators to follow, especially when they came into possession of the ampler Bible which He was going to give to His Church. The new Bible may, indeed, be misused, as the old one was : it may be converted into a stronghold of error, or an armoury of bigotry, or a tomb of charity. But, used as Jesus Himself employed so much of it as was then in existence, it will always be indispensable ; and he who would be of much use to the kingdom of God must be mighty in the Scriptures.

The equipment of the Christian teacher is peculiarly designated : it is called a treasure—he “ bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”

The metaphor is taken either from the chest in which the jewels of a wealthy family are kept,¹ or from the store-room in which a householder keeps the provisions necessary for the sustenance of his children and servants. Perhaps the latter is the more likely ; a Christian teacher is one who supplies spiritual sustenance for his fellow creatures ; and, in order to be able to do so, he must have it in store, he must have a treasure.

Where is this treasure ? As the word “ scribe ” designates the servant of Christ as one who seeks what he requires in the Word of God, it might be thought that the Bible is the treasure. And this would give an intelligible enough sense—that the Bible is a treasure-house, over which the Christian teacher presides, bringing out of it what is needed on every occasion. The connexion, however, as we shall see further on, does not permit the idea to be restricted to this.

The treasure of a Christian teacher is not anything outside of himself, such as the Bible : it is within him. It is a storehouse or magazine in the mind, which he has

¹ The receptacles out of which the Wise Men (Matt. ii. 11) brought forth their gifts are so called.

filled with spiritual accumulations. Though the mind is not a substance extended in space or divisible into parts, yet it is natural to give to our conceptions of it a visual form; and our Lord here thinks of it as containing a store-house or magazine, which He may have conceived as a single room or perhaps as a series of apartments, opening out of one another and supplied with shelves and compartments for distributing the contents in their proper places.¹

Such is the Christian teacher's treasure. But what is it filled with? It is filled with what is necessary for the work he has to do as a witness for God and a messenger to men.

Some of the accumulations are obtained from Scripture. Although the Bible, as we have seen, is not itself the treasure, yet there is much from Scripture in the treasure; and the more the better. In a sense all Scripture belongs to every man; but, in a deeper sense, only as much of it belongs to anyone as he has appropriated. There are parts of Scripture which we have made our own by living through them. We have fastened our attention on them and dug at them till we have found their secret. Better still, some of them have, so to speak, come out of the Bible of their own accord, and ministered to our necessities. They have cheered us in tribulation and strengthened us in temptation, they have inspired us with courage and caused our hearts to burn with delight. Such of the contents of Scripture as have thus become our own by experience are our possessions in a way in which the bulk of the Bible is not; and these form a valuable part of our treasure.

Among the most precious contents of the treasure may be reckoned all other personal religious experiences. The first canon of religious work is that he who would com-

¹ Elsewhere He employs the same metaphor. Matt. xii. 35.

municate religion to others must have it himself; and, the more of it he has, the fitter is he for the position. He who knows by experience what repentance and faith are, and who carries in his memory the record of his own dealings with God in temptation and trouble, about his aspirations and his failures, his plans and his hopes, has a treasure filled with the best of materials.

Another important addition to the treasure is acquaintance with the experiences of others. To have seen God's work in the souls of men is a precious possession. Some have the gift of enticing forth the confidences of others about their secret life; and to him who thus knows the history of human souls on an extensive scale the world is open; he can tap the fountains of interest with skill and meet the exact need of every condition. Knowledge of human nature in general and of human life, in its different grades and varieties, is also very valuable; because the aim of Christianity is to transform all life, and, if it is to bless men, it must be closely acquainted with their needs. Many other kinds of knowledge, however, may go into this wonderful magazine and treasure-house. As we shall see, Jesus Himself was conspicuously catholic in His conceptions of what it might advantageously contain.

How enormously the treasures of different Christian teachers differ from one another! They differ in size: one is small and empty, another large and ever widening. They differ in the quality of their contents: in one the materials are common or out of date, in another they have been sought with unceasing diligence and selected with cultured discrimination. They differ in accessibility and usefulness: one store-room is like a lumber-room, where many valuable things are cast, but in such disorder that nothing can be laid hands on when it is wanted, while, in another, everything is so well arranged that it offers itself for use just at the moment when it is required.

These and other differences distinguish one man's treasure from another, and on the size and quality of his treasure will depend a Christian teacher's usefulness.

We have seen how the treasure is filled. But it is filled that it may be emptied again for the good of the world; and our Lord indicates how this is to be done in the words —“bringeth out of his treasure things new and old.”

This is generally understood to recommend a pleasing variety in Christian teaching. Old and well-known truths are to be often repeated, because people are apt to forget them: line has to be given upon line and precept upon precept; yet, on the other hand, it does not do to harp always on the same string; and, therefore, as much novelty must be introduced from time to time as may be needed to keep the attention awake. This is good advice; at least it is tolerably good; but it is utterly common-place, and entirely beneath the height and dignity of the teaching of Jesus.

What He intended is seen from observing in what connexion this saying occurs. Jesus had been teaching many things in parables; and to His disciples apart He entered into an explanation of His reasons for adopting this mode of teaching. He extolled it as the best for His purpose, and He finished with commending its use to His disciples also. This he does in this verse, which is, therefore, in the first place, a characterization of His own parabolic mode of teaching.

In what sense is a parable the bringing forth of things new and old? If by the old we understand the well-known and familiar, and by the new the unknown or unfamiliar, it is not difficult to see; for a parable may be defined to be a familiar incident setting forth an unfamiliar truth. In His parables Jesus painted pictures of the common life of Galilee and Judea which enchanted His hearers; for

“ We're made so that we love
First when we see them painted things we've passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see.”

This was the old ; but, almost before the hearers were aware, the new—namely, the doctrine of the kingdom—was conveyed into their minds by means of this vehicle.

The old and the new are not, therefore, to be brought out of the treasure apart—sometimes the one and sometimes the other—but they are to be brought forth together, in such a way that what is already well known and familiar may become the stepping-stone by which to ascend to what is novel and recondite. Nature is old ; human nature is old ; human life is old ; but Christianity is new : that which is natural is first, and afterwards comes that which is spiritual : but let him who brings the spiritual search in the natural for points of connexion, to which he may hook it on : this is the wisdom of the great Teacher.

Another illustration of how He obeyed His own maxim is to be found in His use of the Old Testament. To His hearers the figures, the institutions and the teachings of the Law and the Prophets were old—that is, well known and familiar—whereas the facts and truths which were to be embodied in the New Testament were novel and unfamiliar. But He brought them forth together in such a way that the ancient teaching, whose authority His hearers acknowledged led them on to comprehend and accept the new. St. Paul's method of teaching in the synagogues was the very same : he always began with a review of Jewish history, and, when he had gone so far with his hearers upon familiar ground, he tried, by the impulse thus communicated, to carry them over the gulf which separated them from Christianity. The Epistle to the Hebrews is, from beginning to end, a brilliant illustration of the same method.

In one sense we cannot here follow the Lord and the Apostles, because, the Old Testament is not now the old, in

the sense of the familiar, and the New the unfamiliar. Rather the case is reversed: the New Testament is the stepping-stone by which we must ascend to the Old. Yet in a deeper sense the case stands as it used to do. For what, speaking in the broadest sense, is the Old Testament, and what is the New? The Old is the revelation of law, the New of love. The Old was given to rouse the conscience and produce the sense of sin, the New to meet the sense of misery thus produced and satisfy the conscience by the glad tidings of reconciliation. In this sense the Old and the New are still to be brought forth together in Christ's own order; because to preach law alone is to awaken hunger without giving bread, and to preach love alone is to offer bread to those who are not hungry.

It might be, further, shown that Jesus acted Himself on the direction He gave to others when, in His teaching, He began with the simpler elements of the kingdom, as in the Sermon on the Mount, and then, when these were learnt and in this sense old, advanced by means of them to the deeper mysteries, as in His farewell discourse. But the principle is clear and need not be illustrated further.

We may fail to follow it for either of two reasons. Some do not know the old things well enough: they do not know human nature or human life; they are unsympathetic; they do not know how to find people where they are, or to estimate the stage of knowledge and attainment which they have reached. They are far advanced themselves and expatiate on the mysteries of experience; but what they say has a far-away and unearthly sound, and their hearers are not won. Others know the old well, but they know too little of the new. They sympathize with the natural man and can describe common life with pathos, but they are cold when they begin to speak of that which is spiritual—of grace and regeneration and sanctification. Or they may be able to teach with real feeling the first elements of Christian experience, but their

hearers are soon left in the lurch. It is no unusual complaint that the circle of a preacher's ideas is so narrow that those who have heard him for a year or two have nothing more to learn from him, because, whatever text he may choose, he puts into it the same message. At bottom this means that his own experience has ceased to grow. We need to develop in two directions—first, man-wards, in sympathy and comprehension, so that we shall be able to find even the simplest where they stand and lead them by the help of what they know already to what is not yet known to them; and, at the same time, God-wards, in the experience of grace, so that those who follow our guidance may continually find themselves entering into fresh fields and pastures new.

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*SOME EARLY EVIDENCE FOR THE TWELVE
VERSES ST. MARK XVI. 9-20.*

It has been said that in the whole Greek ante-Nicene literature there are *at most but two traces* of St. Mark xvi. 9-20. My purpose in these notes is to show by a few instances that the early evidence for the disputed twelve verses has perhaps been understated.

1. IRENÆUS.

“Irenæus (188) clearly cites xvi. 19 as St. Mark's own (*In fine autem evangelii ait Marcus, corresponding to Marcus interpres et sectator Petri initium evangelicæ conscriptionis fecit sic*); and the fidelity of the Latin text is supported by a Greek scholium” (W. H., *App.* 39). See lib. iii. 11. 6 in Harvey's Irenæus (vol. ii., p. 39).

Irenæus writes that St. Mark's “beginning of the Gospel” (i. 1) was fulfilment of prophecy; and that in accordance with this beginning he writes at the end, *So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken unto them, was*