

From one of these two forms, probably the second, the name of the rich man may have been evolved. The advantage of such a solution is that it lies in the nature of things ; if the Gospel simply calls him "the rich man," then an illustration of the Gospel is likely to give the same description, rather than to invent a name or to borrow one out of the Old Testament. The most serious objection to such a solution would, perhaps, be that we do not know anything of the existence of such pictorial illustrations of the parables of the New Testament, at the early time required by the patristic and textual evidence.¹

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THE FIRST MIRACLE AND THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST'S HUMAN NATURE.

"And the third day there was a marriage."—*St. John* ii. 1.

THOSE who have written in defence of Christianity have been for the most part wont to lay great stress on what they have described as the simple and inartificial character of the Gospels. Of recent years, however, the minute analysis to which they have been subjected by sceptic and Christian commentator alike, has revealed to us that the Gospels should rather be regarded as works of consummate art. Nor does it seem easy to understand why any Chris-

tion with accompanying legends. The famous Diptych of Rambona, which is one of the oldest of extant crucifixions, has *mulier en* over the head of the Virgin, and *dissipule ecce* over the head of St. John, accompanied by *Ego sum* *Ihs nasaraeus* over the head of the Lord ; but here the legends seem to be borrowed from the Gospel of John ("Behold thy mother," etc.), and are not designed especially for the assistance of the person studying the carving, where the figures did not, in fact, need any elucidation.

¹ In the *Collectanea* of Ps.-Bede, we have the name of the rich man given as Tantalus, but this is an obvious loan from the Pagan mythology, due to the fact that the rich man desired a drop of water to drink, and could not obtain it.

tian should demur to such a description of them. It is confessed that the Old Testament is the flower of the ancient Hebrew literature. Why should we suppose that the later oracles of God would be differently ordered? Why should an artistic and forcible presentation of the gracious words and majestic works of the Christ be deemed incompatible with accuracy and truthfulness? In any case it is impossible to deny that St. John deliberately arranged his Gospel on an artistic plan. As the Holy Spirit "brought all things to his remembrance," the Evangelist selected seven out of all the signs he had witnessed, and not many more of the discourses he had heard, and arranged them in such wise that as we read the conviction deepens upon us that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The great drama is complete, prologue, epilogue and all. Moreover the narrative was intended by St. John to be significant in all its details. Not only does he present the miracles of Christ as signs, parables in action, but there is a spiritual meaning, more or less plainly to be seen, in the sequence and collocation of the events recorded. Acted sign and spoken word explain and supplement each other. Nor is this unnatural, and other than what we might expect. Had we but the leisure to study it, the life of every man, as of every nation, is full of spiritual and moral lessons. How much more true is this of "the sinless years that breathed beneath the Syrian blue"! And when we bear in mind the relation in which St. John conceived himself to stand to Jesus, it will be only reasonable to expect to find a spiritual significance in the details of his Gospel, which is not a biography, or even a memoir, but a study of the life of Christ.

I have thought it well to meet at the outset the charge of fancifulness which is often, in modern times, brought against minute Biblical exegesis, especially as applied to the New Testament. It is thought far-fetched and trifling

to see symbolism in numbers and suchlike details. A little consideration will show that this objection involves an anachronism. The question is not, What are legitimate literary methods *now*? but, What was considered, in the first century, by St. John and his contemporaries, to be a commendable and useful method of conveying instruction? All through the ages God speaks to men, through men, "in divers manners." The one truth of God presents itself in different ways to men of different mental training. And it is with the expression of secular knowledge as with that of spiritual knowledge. Walk through any old established library, and note the thousands of volumes that are now only moved from their shelves to be dusted, that now are never read, not always because the statements they contain are untrue or antiquated, but because they are presented in a manner uncongenial or unattractive to the present day reader. "We thank God that we are much better than our fathers." So we boast. Our children, however, will certainly say the same.

The events of the last week of Christ's life on earth occupy, as every one knows, a very large proportion of the Gospel narrative; about one-fourth in the Synoptists, and rather more than a third in the Gospel according to St. John. But St. John alone gives details of another week, a week at the beginning of our Lord's official ministry. On the first day we read of the witness of John the Baptist to the Jews, his repudiation for himself of any higher dignity than that of "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," and his vague indication of the presence of some great one in the midst of his hearers. On the second day the testimony of John assumes a more definite form. He points to Jesus as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," yea, "the Son of God." On the third day John directs the attention of two of his own disciples to Jesus as "the Lamb of God"; they accept the invitation

of the new Rabbi; they come and see, and in turn bear their testimony, "We have found the Messiah." On the fourth day the witness of disciples rises still higher. Philip describes Jesus to Nathanael as "Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write," and from the incredulous, it may be the disillusioned, Nathanael is drawn a confession, which, alike in its cause and in its fervour, resembles that of Thomas, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art King of Israel."

It was a journey of sixty miles from the scene of these successive testimonies to Cana of Galilee. Nothing is told us of the journey. Jesus reached Cana on the third day after His meeting with Nathanael, and there in His first miracle he drew still closer the bonds of discipleship. "He manifested His glory and His disciples believed on Him."

The Gospel according to St. John has lain under the loving and reverent scrutiny of the Church for eighteen hundred years; and it may well seem presumptuous in any one to pretend to offer an original exposition on any part of it. Yet I venture here to suggest that the commentators have not yet perceived all that St. John designed to teach, not only in the sign itself, related in the second chapter, the changing of water into wine, but in the occasion on which it took place—a marriage festivity—and in the note of time so markedly recorded, after an interval of silence, "the third day."

The miracle itself is rightly interpreted by Bishop Westcott as "a true symbol of Christ's whole work"; "the change of the simpler to the richer element" illustrating the effect of the power of God introduced into human society by the Incarnation, whereby the sons of men receive "the right to become children of God."

With this and other lessons drawn from the miracle itself we are familiar. They, all of them, bear on the dealings of the Divine grace with sinful man. They were,

no doubt, the primary lessons which the Worker of the sign Himself intended to suggest to mankind. But there was another lesson which "he that saw and bare record" wished to convey to the Church, a doctrinal lesson concerning the human nature of his Master, and it is to this that I now desire to direct attention.

The question has been asked, Was it the fall of man only that brought about the Incarnation? Would God have become man, if man had not sinned, if an atonement for sin had not been needed? In answer to this it has been maintained that the great and primary purpose of the Incarnation was to effect the union of man with God, a union to which mere human nature, however perfect, could not attain, and that consequently the Incarnation must have taken place whether man had sinned or not. In this point of view the Atonement would be almost an after-thought in the Divine plan. It seems, however, at least, certain that the act by which atonement was made, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, was also necessary, if one may use the expression, to the consummation of the Incarnation; requisite, that is, to render the Incarnation the mighty force that it is in the regeneration of men of every race in all ages.

As Jesus Himself said, it was by being lifted up that He draws all men unto Him. Of course we must believe that from the moment of His conception there were joined together in the one Person of Christ the two whole and perfect natures of God and man. But until the resurrection the perfection of the humanity of Christ was relative, not absolute. On that third day, after the silent journey, there was a changing of water into wine, and the mystical union or marriage between Christ and His Church was initiated.

The mystery of Christ's holy Incarnation is one that demands reverent and cautious treatment. We are in the

least danger of going wrong if we patiently classify and study the statements of Holy Scripture. It seems plain, then, from the New Testament that the human nature of Christ entered upon a fresh and final stage of development and exaltation on the morning of the resurrection. This final stage or condition St. John describes as the glorification of Jesus. It is no doubt true that during His ministry on earth, moving as a man among men, "Jesus manifested His glory." But a peculiar increase and accession of glory is implied in the twice-repeated phrase, "Jesus was glorified," as descriptive of the issue of the Cross and Passion, the glorious Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord. It is to this that Jesus aspires in those words in the great consecration prayer, "And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Nor is the Gospel according to St. John alone in teaching thus. Many passages of St. Paul's Epistles will readily occur to the mind in which the humiliation of Jesus, the humiliation of a human life, culminating in the humiliation of death, is spoken of as the necessary precondition to the glorification of His sacred humanity.

The effect of this transformation may be thus expressed: Before the resurrection of Christ His humanity had only local relationships to man; after the resurrection, and ever since, those relationships are universal.

This consideration gives a new force to the apostle's words, "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more." This consideration, too, may supply a reasonable ground for the distrust and dislike which many Christians instinctively feel towards some modern investigations in, and discussions on, the words of Christ. In the current number (January, 1900) of the *Contemporary Review*, Dr. James Stalker informs us that

“Study is moving on from the story of Jesus to His mind. What is called on the Continent the self-consciousness of Jesus has, especially of late, been the object of literary activity. The difficulty,” Dr. Stalker proceeds to say, “is principally due to the mingling of two elements in Christ’s conceptions about Himself and His plan—the one temporary and local, the other universal and eternal.”

Dr. Stalker, of course, has nothing but condemnation for “a very active school of young theologians on the Continent who emphasize the Messianic, that is, the temporary and local, element of the consciousness of Jesus.” But none the less he himself anticipates approvingly “an exhibition of the mind of Christ deduced scientifically from His words, from all His words.” Now surely the critical analysis of the mind of Jesus which is here indicated is a very different matter from that devout study of His words and teaching in which Christians of every age have found strength and consolation. This new proposed mental attitude towards the Being whom we regard as a present Providence, an attitude partly antiquarian, partly literary and philosophical, must be instinctively felt by the devout Christian to be strangely irreverent, by the reflecting Christian to be impossible.

Our Gospels contain but fragmentary and meagre records of the words of Christ. And even supposing that we could be sure that they were fully representative of His teaching, that a fifth evangelist could have told us no more, there still remain these questions to be answered, Did Jesus on every occasion manifest His Divine glory in His words any more than He did in His actions? Again, How far did He consciously and deliberately accommodate His language to the then existing state of knowledge? I do not pretend to say that these questions are altogether incapable of solution; but I do say that, so far as they can be answered, “they are spiritually discerned.” They do not belong to the order of things with which mere human science, unaided by Divine grace, is competent to deal.

Moreover, supposing we were to assume that the recorded words of Christ represented even His human thought before the Ascension, could we be sure that they would be an adequate presentation of His human consciousness now? Our God is a living God. Is it not true to say that Christ would not be less to us than He is, even if no words of His had ever been recorded, if we only knew the facts about Him that are stated in the Nicene Creed? For though it be true that He "has words of eternal life," yet it is not by His words that He saves us, but by the silent communication of His supernatural grace. To quote Dr. Stalker once more:

"The reason why the generations of the saints have loved and worshipped Jesus has not been because He has left them a tender and glorious memory, but because He has done to one and all of them, each in his own day, an infinite personal service. No conception of Christ is adequate which does not recognise, in addition to what He was and did in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago, what He is and what He is doing at the present hour."

The exaltation of Christ's humanity, effected by His resurrection on the third day, consisted, as has been said, in the development of its relation to the entire human race. And St. John, as I venture to think, intended that this should be suggested symbolically by the marriage and the changing of water into wine, both on the third day.

Every reader of the Bible knows that in the Old Testament the relation between Jehovah and Israel is most commonly spoken of in terms borrowed from the relation of husband and wife. This is too well known to need illustration. In the New Testament the same figure is transferred, or rather, I should say, continued to express the relation between Christ and His Church. John the Baptist, Jesus Himself in His parables, St. Paul, St. John in the Revelation, all use the same metaphor. It is all the more striking when we connect the strong emphasis laid by

St. Paul on the unity involved in the marriage relation, with his equally forcible language as to the unity of nature between Christ and those who have been by baptism made members of His body.

Again, the exaltation of the human nature of Christ necessarily involves the exaltation of those who are brought into union with Him. And accordingly His resurrection is constantly spoken of as the instrumental cause of the regeneration of each individual, as that which gives to Christian baptism its efficacy, as, for example, in the words of St. Paul to the Colossians, "Having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead." Alas, as we look around us, and still more when we look within our own hearts, sad misgivings arise as to the reality of all this. We must remember, however, in the first place, that it is possible that these misgivings may be, in some cases, prompted by the enemy of God. In fact they too often drive men from God. "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." And finally, let us keep before us the fact that in God's dealings with the soul of man "He calleth the things that are not as though they were." Men are lost by thinking meanly of themselves, and hence God always sets before us the ideal at which we are to aim as having been already potentially accomplished. Thus only can men "rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things." We need not despair, and disbelieve that the water of our faulty lives has been transmuted into the wine of the kingdom of God, when we consider that the same misgivings might, so far as present human appearances are concerned, arise in the heart of the Lord Himself, with regard to the accomplishment of His kingdom.

"All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the

world." "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ." Is it really so? We may at least reply, There is no hope for the man who does not act in the faith that it is.

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LINES OF DEFENCE OF THE BIBLICAL
REVELATION.

II. THE WISDOM OF BEN-SIRA AND THE WISDOM OF
SOLOMON (*continued*).

THE last parallel to be noticed is between Isaiah lvi. 4, 5 and Wisdom iii. 14. In Isaiah the eunuchs are mentioned together with the strangers; neither are to despair, since the former, if they keep the Sabbath, etc., shall be given a monument in God's house that is better than sons or daughters, while the strangers will form an integral part of God's people. In Wisdom the eunuchs are mentioned after the *virgins*, which is assuredly the more natural context for them. On the whole the mention of the eunuchs in Isaiah is most naturally explained as follows: In verse 2, "Keeping his hand from doing any evil," which comes in the context of the prophecy, reminds the prophet of Wisdom iii. 14, where this phrase is used of the eunuch. Hence the prophet, in verses 3-5, repeats and enlarges the promise made to them in Wisdom. Even here there seems to be the same relation between the two books that has several times been noticed: there is a steady flame in Wisdom, flashes in Isaiah. "The eunuch who does no wrong and thinks no wrong shall be well rewarded for his faith, and given a fair allotment in God's temple; for good deeds bear famous fruit, and the root of Wisdom is imperishable." Isaiah seems to take the temple literally; but how in that material temple can the eunuch have a monument that is better than sons or daughters? Wisdom clearly thinks of