THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

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ST. MARK.

Exposition

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Homiletics

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Homilies by Various Authors.

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THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1.—Till they see the kingdom of God come with power. In St. Matthew (xvi. 28) the words run thus: "Till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." In St. Luke (ix. 27), "Till they see the kingdom of God." All these evangelists connect their record of the Transfiguration with these predictive words—a circumstance which must not be lost sight of in their interpretation. The question, therefore, is whether or how far the Transfiguration is to be regarded as a fulfilment of these words. One thing seems plain, that the Transfiguration, if a fulfilment at all, was not an exhaustive fulfilment of the words. The solemnity of their introduction forbids us to limit them to an event which would happen within eight days of their utterance. But there was an event impending, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, involving the overthrow of the Jewish polity, which, coming as it did within forty or fifty years of the time when our Lord uttered these words, might reasonably have been expected to take place within the lifetime of some of those then standing there. And that great catastrophe was frequently alluded to by our Lord as a type and earnest of the great judgment at the end of the world. What relation, then, did the Transfiguration hold to these two events and to the prediction contained in this verse? It was surely a prelude and pledge of what should be hereafter, specially designed to brace and strengthen the apostles for the sight of the sufferings of their Master, and to animate them to endure the toil and the trials of the Christian life. So that the Transfiguration was an event, so to speak, parenthetic to this prediction—a preliminary manifestation, for the special advantage of those who witnessed it; though given also "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Such were the views of St. Hilary, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, and others. "When our Lord was transfigured," says St. Jerome, "he did not lose his form and aspect, but he appeared to his apostles as he will appear at the day of judgment." And elsewhere he says, "Go forth a little out of your prison, and place before your eyes the reward of your present labour, which 'the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man.'"

Vers. 2, 3.—**After six days.** St. Luke (ix. 28) says, "About eight days after these sayings." There is no real discrepancy here. There were six whole days that intervened between our Lord's words and the Transfiguration itself. **Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John.** He chose these three, as the leaders amongst the disciples, and he showed to them his glory, because he intended also to show them afterwards his bitter agony in the garden. This magnificent splendour—this "excellent glory," as St. Peter (2 Epist. i. 17) describes it—this, together with the voice of the Father, "This is my beloved Son," would assure them that Christ was truly God, but that his essential Deity was hidden by the veil of the flesh; and that, although he was about to be crucified and slain, yet his Godhead could not suffer or die. It was an evidence beforehand, a prospective evidence, that he underwent death, even the death of the cross, not constrained by infirmity or necessity, but of his own will, for the redemption of man. It was plain that, since he could thus invest his body with this Divine glory, he could have saved himself from death if he had so willed. *He taketh with him Peter, and James,*

and John. St. Peter's reference to the transfiguration (just alluded to) shows what a deep and abiding impression it made on his mind. St. James, too, was there, as one who was to be amongst the first to die for his sake. St. John also was with them, who, having seen the glory of the Son of God, which is subject to no limits of time, might be bold to send forth his grand testimony, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves. "It is necessary for all," says Remigius, "who desire to contemplate God, that they should not grovel amidst low thoughts and desires, but ever be lifted up to heavenly things. And thus our Lord was teaching his disciples that they must not look for the brightness of the Divine glory in the depths of this world, but in the kingdom of heavenly blessedness. And he leads them *apart*, because holy men are in intention and desire separated from evil, as they will be altogether separated from it in the world to come. For they who look for the glories of the resurrection ought now in heart and mind to dwell on high, and to seek these glories by continual prayer." *Into a high mountain.* A tradition of the time of Jerome identifies this mountain with Tabor, in Galilee. But there are two weighty objections to this view: (1) that our Lord was at this time in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, a considerable distance from Tabor, and (2) that there is strong reason for believing that Tabor had at this time a fortress on its summit. It must be remembered that Cæsarea Philippi was at the foot of Libanus; and the spurs of Libanus would present several eminences answering to the description, "a high mountain (*ὄρος ὑψηλὸν*)." The Mount of Transfiguration was in all probability Hermon, a position of extreme grandeur and beauty, its snowy peaks overlooking the whole extent of Palestine. "High up," says Dean Stanley, "on its southern slopes there must be many a point where the disciples could be taken 'apart by themselves.' Even the transient comparison of the celestial splendour with the snow, where alone it could be seen in Palestine, should not, perhaps, be wholly overlooked. At any rate, the remote heights above the sources of the Jordan witnessed the moment when, his work in his own peculiar sphere being ended, he set his face for the last time to go up to Jerusalem." Although compelled to dismiss from our minds the old tradition of Tabor as the scene of the Transfiguration, we still think of that mountain as near to Nazareth, where our Lord was brought up; and of Hermon, where he was transfigured, as we rejoice in the fulfilment of the old prophecy, "Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy Name." And he was transfigured (*μετεμορφώθη*) before them. The fashion of his appearance was changed. It was no illusion, no imaginary appearance, but a real transformation. It was the Divine glory within him manifesting itself through his humanity; and yet not that glory of Deity which no man hath seen or can see; but such a manifestation that the disciples might in some degree behold the glory and majesty of Deity through the veil of his flesh. Nor, we may believe, did our Lord in his transfiguration change the essence or form of his countenance. But he assumed a mighty splendour, so that, as St. Matthew (xvii. 2) tells us, "his face did shine as the sun." This splendour was not in the air, nor in the eyes of the disciples, but in the person of the Son of God—a splendour which communicated itself to his raiment, so that his garments became glistering (*στίλβοντα*), exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. This figure is taken from natural things. The first idea of "fuller" from the Latin *fullo*, is that of one who cleanses by "stamping with the feet." His business is to restore the soiled cloth to its natural whiteness. The evangelist uses an earthly thing to represent the heavenly. The heavenly Fuller gives a purity and a brightness infinitely exceeding the power of any "fuller on earth." It would almost seem as if the figure was one specially supplied by St. Peter.

Ver. 4.—And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses. Moses and Elijah were there because Moses was the lawgiver of the old covenant, and Elijah was conspicuous among the prophets; so that they were the representatives, the one of the Law, and the other of the "goodly fellowship of the prophets." They appear together to bear witness to Christ as the true Messiah, the Saviour of the world, prefigured in the Law, and foretold by the prophets. They appear to bear witness to him, and then to resign their offices to the great Lawgiver and Prophet whom they foreshadowed. Then, further, Moses died, but Elijah was translated. Moses, therefore, represents the dead saints who shall rise from their graves and come forth at his coming, while Elijah represents those who shall be found alive at his advent. Our Lord brought with him, at his transfiguration, Moses who had died, and Elijah who had been translated, that he might show his power over both "the quick and the dead." St. Luke (ix. 31) says that Moses and Elijah "appeared in glory, and spake of his decease (*τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ*) which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." They appeared in glory; the Divine splendour irradiated them. They "spake of his decease," literally, *his departure*—his de-

parture not only out of Jerusalem, but out of this life, by his death upon the cross. The death of Christ was thus shown to be the ultimate end to which the Law and the prophets pointed. Even in that hour of his glory, on the Mount of Transfiguration, this was their theme; and thus the disciples were nerved to look with hope and faith to that which they had contemplated with dismay.

Ver. 5.—**Peter answereth, and saith to Jesus.** We learn from St. Luke (ix. 33) that this happened just as Moses and Elijah were departing. Peter was excited, and there was fear mingled with his excitement. He was bewildered. His first idea was to seek that they might remain, for he saw that they were just preparing to depart. Theophylact says upon this, "Do not say with Peter, 'It is good for us to be here;' for it behoves us ever, whilst in the flesh, to be advancing, and not to remain in one stage of virtue and contemplation, but to pass on to other degrees." It is, perhaps, too curious a question to ask how the three disciples knew them to be Moses and Elijah. The same Divine power which presented them with a vision of the other world gave them an intuitive knowledge on the subject. And we may, perhaps, infer from hence that in that world to come there will be not only recognition, but knowledge, at once imparted, of those whose faces we have not seen "in the flesh." St. Luke (ix. 32) says that Peter and his companions "were heavy with sleep (*βεβαρημένοι ὕπνῳ*)." It is probable that the Transfiguration took place at night. The whole manifestation would be rendered more conspicuous and striking amidst the darkness and stillness of night. But St. Luke is careful to add, "when they were fully awake (*διαγρηγορήσαντες*)." This word might be rendered, "having remained awake." But whichever translation be adopted, the intention of the evangelist is evidently to show that it was not in a dream or a vision of the night that they saw this. It was a great reality, on which they looked with open eyes.

Ver. 6.—**They became sore afraid.** There is a slight change of reading here. Instead of *ἦσαν γὰρ ἔκφοβοι*, the best authorities give *ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο*. A sense of great awe and terror overpowered the bliss and brightness of the scene. All the revelations of the other world strike terror, even though abated as this manifestation was by the presence of their dear Lord and Saviour.

Ver. 7.—**There came a cloud overshadowing them.** The cloud enfolded them all, so that they could not be seen, it was so ample and dense, and yet so bright and shining. St. Matthew (xvii. 5) says it was "a bright cloud." The cloud was a symbol of the grandeur and unapproachable glory of God. The disciples were admitted within this cloud that they might have a foretaste of future glory, and that they might be witnesses of what took place under the cloud, and especially that they might be able to give evidence throughout all ages of the voice which they heard come out of the cloud from "the excellent glory" (the expression is equivalent to the Hebrew "Shechinah," and St. Peter says (2 Epist. i. 18), it came from heaven), **This is MY beloved Son: hear ye him.** But at the same time that this cloud was the symbol, it was also the veil of Deity, of the glory of Deity. "He maketh the clouds his chariot," says the psalmist (Ps. civ. 3). Moreover, the cloud abated and subdued the splendour of Christ's appearance, which otherwise the mortal eyes of the disciples could not have borne. It will be observed that St. Mark omits the words, found in St. Matthew (xvii. 5), "in whom I am well pleased." So does St. Luke. But it is remarkable that they are found in St. Peter (2 Epist. i. 17); from whence we might have expected to find them here. In St. Luke (ix. 35) the most approved readings give, "This is my Son, my chosen (*ἐκλελεγμένος*)." The words, "my beloved Son," are impressed upon us in order that epithets so sweet and endearing might kindle our love and devotion. "Hear ye him"—not Moses, who has now departed, but Christ himself, the new Author of a new Law. "Hear ye him" was not said when our Lord was baptized, because he was then only just proclaimed to the world. But now these words signify the abolition of the old dispensation, and the establishment of the new covenant in Christ.

Ver. 8.—**And suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves.** St. Matthew here says (xvii. 6), "When the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid." St. Mark omits this; but in his characteristic manner states that which implies what St. Matthew has recorded. It was the "touch" of Jesus that caused them to look round about; and then in a moment they perceived that they were alone with Jesus, as they were before this manifestation began. The order of incidents in the Transfiguration appears to have been this: Our Lord is praying. The disciples, fatigued with the ascent of the mountain, are heavy with sleep; and Christ is transfigured. Then appear Moses and Elijah; and they are talking with Jesus about his exodus—his decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem. The disciples roused from their sleep by the supernatural brightness, and by the conver-

sation, and now, fully awake, behold the glory of Jesus, and Moses and Elijah talking with him. As Moses and Elijah are preparing for their departure, Peter, excited, enchanted, bewildered, and yet grieved to see that they were going, seeks to detain them by the proposal to make some temporary resting-place for them. Then comes the bright overshadowing cloud, and a voice out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." At the sound of this voice the disciples fall terrified to the earth. But they are soon comforted by Christ, and, looking up, they see him alone with themselves.

Ver. 9.—**He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of man should have risen again from the dead.** They were not even to tell their fellow-disciples, lest it might cause vexation or envy that they had not been thus favoured. The time of our Lord's resurrection would be a fitting opportunity for revealing this mystery; and then the disciples would understand and believe it, when, after his passion and death, which were an offence to them, they should see him rising in glory, of which event the Transfiguration was a type. For, by the Resurrection they would certainly know that Christ underwent the death of the cross, not by constraint, but of his own accord, and out of his great love for us.

Vers. 10, 11.—**Questioning among themselves what the rising again from the dead should mean**; that is, his own rising from the dead, of which our Lord had just been speaking. No doubt the general resurrection at the end of the world was an article of faith with which the disciples were familiar. But they could not understand, when he spake of his own immediate rising from the dead. So their perplexities led them at last to ask him the question; or rather to make the remark to him, **The scribes say that Elijah must first come**; with a view to obtaining some clearer understanding. They had just seen Elijah in the Transfiguration, and they had seen him disappear. They wondered why he should have departed. They thought, it may be, that he ought to have remained, that he might be the forerunner of Christ and of his kingdom and glory, according to the prophecy of Malachi (iv. 6). This the scribes taught; but they erred in the confusion of times, for they did not distinguish the first coming of Christ in the flesh from his second advent to judgment. The thought upon the mind of the disciples appears to have been this: They heard Christ speak of his own resurrection as close at hand, and they had seen the type of it in his transfiguration; and they thought that immediately after that, Christ's kingdom would come, and he would reign gloriously. Why, then, had not Elijah remained, that he might be his precursor? St. Matthew (xvii. 13) tells us that our Lord's words which follow showed the disciples that when he said that Elijah was to come first and restore all things, he meant them to understand "that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." Upon the question of a future coming of Elijah, it seems safest to confess our ignorance. The prophecy of Malachi was no doubt in part fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist; but it would be rash to affirm that it may not receive another and more literal fulfilment before the second advent. A host of ancient Christian expositors have held that Elijah will appear in person before the second advent of Christ. St. Augustine, in his 'City of God' (xx. 29), says, "Not without reason do we hope that before the coming of our Judge and Saviour Elias will come, because we have good reason to believe that he is now alive; for, as Holy Scripture distinctly informs us, he was taken up from this life in a chariot of fire. When, therefore, he is come he shall give a spiritual explanation of the Law which the Jews at present understand carnally, and will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers; that is, the Jews who are the children will understand the Law in the same sense as their fathers the prophets understood it." Indeed, this is one of the principal reasons assigned by the Fathers for this appearance of Elijah, that he may convert the Jews.

Ver. 14.—**And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great crowd around them.** High authorities support the reading adopted by the Revisers, *when they came to the disciples, they saw a great multitude about them.* "They" would thus mean our Lord and the three chosen disciples who had been with him on the Mount of Transfiguration. "They" came to the other disciples who had been left below. St. Luke (ix. 37) adds "On the next day, when they were come down from the mountain." This would seem to confirm the supposition that the transfiguration took place in the night. All the synoptists agree in placing the following miracle immediately after the transfiguration. Scribes were questioning with the disciples who had been left behind. As usual, they had assembled in the neighbourhood where Jesus was, for the purpose of watching him. Their object in questioning with the disciples was doubtless to throw discredit upon Jesus, because they, his disciples, had failed to work the miracle.

Ver. 15.—The multitude were favourably disposed towards Jesus, and were glad that he had returned at an opportune moment to defend his disciples against the scribes.

But why were they greatly amazed? The word in the Greek is ἐξεθαμβήθη. It seems most probable that they saw in his countenance, always heavenly and majestic, something even yet more Divine, retaining some traces of the glory of his transfiguration, even as the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mount (Exod. xxxiv. 29). It hardly seems likely that the amazement of the people was simply caused by our Lord having arrived at an opportune time to relieve his disciples of their difficulty. The Greek word expresses something more than would be satisfied by the fact of our Lord having come upon the scene just when he was wanted. Even if there were no remains of the transfiguration glory upon his countenance, the vivid recollection of the scene, of the conversation with Moses and Elijah, and the subject of it, and the voice of the Father, must have invested his countenance with a peculiar majesty and dignity. The same word, though without its compound (ἐθαμβοῦντο), is used further on in ch. x. 32 to express the amazement of the disciples, as he pressed eagerly onwards before them on his way to Jerusalem and to his cross. There was no doubt something then in his countenance which astonished them. The multitude **running to him, saluted him.** The scribes had not been able to shake their faith. In their view he was still "that Prophet that should come into the world."

Ver. 16.—**And he asked them**; that is, the multitude. The context shows this. The reading here is αὐτούς, not τοὺς γραμματεῖς.

Ver. 17.—**One of the multitude answered him, Master I brought**—the Greek is ἤνεγκα—**unto thee my son.** He brought his son, expecting to find Jesus; but failing in this, he applied to our Lord's disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they could not. St. Matthew (xvii. 14) says that the man came kneeling to Christ, "and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic." The word in the Greek there is σεληνιάζεται. Etymologically, no doubt, "lunatic" conveys the meaning of the word most nearly. But the graphic description here of St. Mark corresponds exactly to epilepsy, and to epilepsy acted upon by an unclean spirit, who in this instance deprived the sufferer of his speech. Lunatics were so called from the prevailing impression, not without foundation, that the light and the changes of the moon have an influence upon the body, and so act through the body upon the mind. This influence seems to be recognized in Ps. cxxi. 6, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night."

Ver. 18.—**Wheresoever it taketh him** (καταλάβῃ); literally, *it seizeth hold of him.* This is the Greek word from which comes our "catalepsy," the active form of "epilepsy." **It teareth him** (ῥήσσει). This is doubtless the literal meaning. But there is much evidence to show that it means here "it striketh or throweth him down." This is the rendering of the Peshito Syriac, and of the Vulgate. The same interpretation is also given by Hesychius as one of the meanings of the word. St. Luke (ix. 39) describes the symptoms thus: "A spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out, and it teareth him (σπαράσσει αὐτὸν) that he foameth (μετὰ ἀφροῦ), and it hardly departeth from him, bruising him sorely." This it will be remembered is the record of one who was himself a physician. **He grindeth his teeth, and pineth away** (ξηραίνεται), as though the springs of his life were dried up. The father of the boy is here minutely describing the symptoms when the fit was upon him. He seems here to express the stiffness and rigidity of the body in the approaches of the malady. **And I spake to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able.** They had tried and failed. This failure is attributed by our Lord (see Matt. xvii. 20) to their want of faith; or rather to their "little faith (διὰ τὴν ὀλιγοπιστίαν ὑμῶν)."

Ver. 19.—**O faithless generation.** These words were no doubt intended primarily as a rebuke to the Jews and their scribes; though not without a glance at the weakness of faith of his own disciples. The words are the complaint of one weary of the unbelief of the masses and of the weakness of faith in even his own. **Bring him unto me** (φέρετε); literally, *Bring ye him to me.*

Ver. 20.—**And they brought him unto him.** The father, it would seem, was not able of himself to bring him, so fierce and violent were the paroxysms of the disorder. **And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him** (συνεσπάραξεν)—it might be rendered, *convulsed him*—grievously. Observe the Greek construction (καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν τὸ πνεῦμα), masculine participle with neuter noun. The sight of Christ stirred the evil spirit dwelling in the child. He was irritated by the presence of Christ; for he knew his power, and feared lest he should be cast out. Then came the last and most violent convulsion. He **wallowed foaming.** The word "to wallow" is probably from the Latin *volvo.* He rolled about in his agony. St. Gregory, quoted by Trench ('Miracles,' p. 397), shows how true all this is to nature; and that "the expulsion of a deadly evil from our spiritual being is not accomplished without a terrible struggle, followed in some cases by extreme prostration."

Vers. 21, 22.—Our Lord asks the father, not the sufferer, which in this case would

have been useless—he was but a lad, and he was dumb. Our Lord's question, **How long time is it since this hath come unto him?** was intended, not of course for his own information, but to inspire the father with hope and confidence. The father briefly answers, **From a child**; and then returns to a description of the perils to which his child was continually exposed through these paroxysms. And then, half doubting, half in despair, he says, **If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.** It is as though he said, "Thy disciples have failed, perhaps thy power may be greater."

Vers. 23, 24.—The most approved reading here is, not Εἰ δύνασαι, πιστεῦσαι, but simply Εἰ δύνασαι. So that the English rendering is, **If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth.** Our Lord takes up the father's words. It is as though he said, "Thou sayest to me, 'If thou canst do anything!' Ah, that 'If thou canst!' All things are possible to him that believeth." In other words, our Lord said to him, "Believe in me, and your child shall be healed." It was right that Christ should demand faith in himself; for it was not fitting that he should confer his special benefits on those who disbelieved or doubted about him—that he should thrust his blessings on those who were unworthy of them. The answer of the father is touching and beautiful. Greatly agitated, he cried out and said (we might well suppose (*μετὰ δακρύων*), "with tears," although the weight of evidence is against this addition being retained in the text), **I believe; help thou mine unbelief.** It is as though he said, "I do believe; but my faith is weak. Do thou, therefore, increase and strengthen it; so that whatever there is in me of doubt or remaining unbelief may be taken away, and I may be counted worthy to obtain from thee this blessing for my son." Nor can we doubt that Christ heard a prayer so humble and so fervent, and took away from him the last remains of doubt and unbelief.

Vers. 25—29.—The multitude had been much excited by the dispute between the scribes and our Lord's disciples. And now, when they noticed that he had taken the father apart, as no doubt he had done, to question him, they **came running together** (the word is *ἐπισυντρέχει*, an unusual word, meaning "they ran together to the place") where he was, crowding upon him. Then he came forward, and with a voice of sublime authority he said, **Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.** The rest of the narrative shows how malignant and powerful this evil spirit was, who dared so to resist and defy Christ that, in his departure out of the afflicted boy, he almost robbed him of life. "Most unwillingly," says Archbishop Trench, "does the evil spirit depart, seeking to destroy that which he can no longer retain." And he quotes Fuller, who says that he is "like an outgoing tenant, that cares not what mischief he does to the house that he is quitting." Some have supposed that this was an evil spirit possessed of more than ordinary power as well as malignity, and that this was the reason why our Lord's disciples could not cast him out; so that this expulsion needed the mighty arm of One stronger than the strong. The words in the Greek are powerful, severe, and authoritative: "He rebuked (*ἐπετίμησε*) the unclean spirit, ... Thou dumb and deaf spirit (*τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν*), I command thee (*ἐγώ σοι ἐπιτάσσω*), come out of him, and enter no more into him." This explains our Lord's words when the disciples remarked afterwards, **We could not cast it out. ... This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer**; that is, this particular kind of malicious spirit. For there are different degrees of malice and energy in evil spirits as in evil men. The words "and fasting" are added in many ancient authorities.

Ver. 30.—This verse informs us that our Lord and his disciples now left the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. Their route would be across the Jordan above the Sea of Galilee, and so by the usual track through Galilee down to Capernaum. Our Lord now wished for privacy, that he might further instruct his disciples with regard to his sufferings and death.

Ver. 31.—**For he taught his disciples** (*ἐδίδασκε γὰρ τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ*); literally, *for he was teaching* (imperfect) *his disciples.* **The Son of man is delivered** (*παραδίδοται*). The whole is present to his mind, as though it were now taking place. **And they shall kill him** (*ἀποκτενοῦσιν*). This is a stronger form of *κτείνω*. **And when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again** (*ἀναστήσεται*); literally, *he shall rise up.* Our Lord repeats this prediction, in order that, when these events actually took place, his disciples might not be alarmed or offended, or abandon their faith in him, as though he could not be the Messiah because he underwent so terrible a death. It will be remembered that, notwithstanding these repeated warnings from their Lord, when these events actually took place, "they all forsook him and fled." It was therefore necessary that this coming event of his crucifixion should be repeatedly impressed upon them, that they might thus be assured that he was willing to undergo this bitter death; that he was not going to his cross by constraint, but as a willing Sacrifice, that he might do the will of his Father, and so redeem man-

kind. Therefore he repeated all this in Galilee, when he returned from his transfiguration, and after he had cast out the evil spirit from the epileptic child, and so had gained to himself great renown. He would thus restrain the excited feelings of his disciples, and impress upon them the reasons for his journey to Jerusalem, and prepare them for the dread realities which were awaiting him there.

Ver. 32.—**But they understood not the saying, and were afraid** (*ἐφοβοῦντο*) **to ask him.** St. Matthew (xvii. 23) says, "They were exceeding sorry." They saw that something very dreadful was about to happen. Their Master's words and looks showed them this. But it was a mystery to them. All his words staggered them, but especially those which spoke of his rising again. They did not understand whether it was an entrance into a higher state or a restoration to a common life. They did not understand why he was to die, and how these words of his about his death could agree with those in which he had told them that his kingdom was at hand. Perhaps, on the whole, they inclined to the view most pleasing to them, that Christ would not die; for this was what they wished and most desired. And so they tried to persuade themselves that his words respecting his sufferings and death had some other hidden meaning; and were to be understood in a figurative sense and not a literal. But anyhow, they dreaded to ask him.

Vers. 33, 34.—They have now reached Capernaum. **And when he was in the house**—the house, that is, which he frequented when staying in Capernaum—**he asked them, What were ye reasoning in the way?** The words "among yourselves," of the Authorized Version, are not found in the best authorities. St. Matthew (xviii. 1) does not record this question of our Lord, which brings to light the fact that they had been disputing by the way which of them should be the greatest. The Greek is (*τίς μείζων*) **who was greater, that is, than the rest.** It has been well noticed that this passage, given in substance in all the synoptic Gospels, is a striking evidence of the truthfulness and impartiality of the disciples. This dispute of theirs might easily have been suppressed as scarcely creditable to them. But in writing the Gospels the evangelists thought more of what exalted the Saviour than what abased themselves. This dispute of the disciples shows how thoroughly they realized the nearness of his kingdom, and at the same time how much they had yet to learn as to the qualifications necessary for admission to it. It is not unlikely that the preference given by our Lord to Peter, James, and John may have given occasion for this contention.

Ver. 35.—**And he sat down, and called the twelve.** He sat down, with the authority of the great Teacher, to inculcate solemnly a fundamental principle of the Christian life. **If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all.** These words are capable of two interpretations. They might be regarded as analogous to our Lord's words elsewhere, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased;" as though they indicated the penalty which attaches to unworthy ambition. But it is surely far more natural to regard them as pointing out the way to real greatness, namely, by humble service for Christ's sake.

Ver. 36.—**And he took a little child** (*παιδίον*), **and set him in the midst of them.** St. Mark adds, what is not recorded by the other synoptists, that he took him in his arms. **And taking him in his arms** (*ἐναγκαλισάμενος*); literally, *folding him in his arms; embracing him.* It is probable that the house where he was was the house of Simon Peter; and it is possible that this little child might have been Simon's. A tradition not earlier than the ninth century says that this child was Ignatius.

Ver. 37.—**Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me. Whosoever shall** "receive;" that is, show him offices of kindness and charity. *One of such little children;* that is, such in simplicity, in innocence and humility, such as this little child is in age and stature. *In my Name,* that is, with special regard to my Name. He thus seems to link all that is good and beautiful with his Name; as all that is really good and excellent in man is a reflection of his goodness. St. Luke (ix. 48) says, 'Whosoever shall receive *this little child* in my Name receiveth me." Our Lord, therefore, speaks first, literally of a little child, and secondly, in a mystical sense, of those who are like little children; making that little child in his arms the figure and type of all those who are like little children. The sense, therefore, of his words is this: "Humility, which is the foundation and the measure of spiritual perfection, so pleases me that I delight in little children. And all who would be my disciples must become as little children, and so will they deserve to be received by all; for men will think that they receive me in them, because they receive them for my sake."

Ver. 38.—This verse, according to the best authorities, should begin simply, **John said unto him**—although in St. Luke (ix. 49) they stand, "And John answered and said"—**Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name: and we forbade him, because he followed not us.** The casting out of evil spirits was one of the foremost

signs of apostleship; and what surprised St. John was that one who followed not Christ should have been able to work this miracle—a miracle in which, it will be remembered, the disciples had recently failed. It thus appears that our Lord's teaching had been so influential, that some, not reckoned amongst his disciples, had shown this proof of a strong and overpowering faith. We know that there were those in our Saviour's time, of Jewish race, who cast out devils (Matt. xii. 27). And Justin Martyr, in his 'Dialogue with Trypho the Jew,' states that while exorcism, as practised by the Jews, often failed when it was attempted to be exercised "by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," was eminently successful when administered "by the name of the Son of God, who was born of a virgin and crucified under Pontius Pilate" (c. 85). That spirit has power over spirit in many mysterious ways is one of those truths which science has not yet been able to explain (see Dr. Morison on St. Mark, *in loc.*). To return, however, to the instance here alluded to by St. John, it should be observed that they who acted thus had faith in Christ; and that by thus acting with him and for him, though not amongst his recognized followers, they contributed towards his honour who, by means of these imperfect instruments, carried out the great purpose of his manifestation, namely, "to destroy the works of the devil." Then further, the disciples forbade them not out of envy or hatred, but out of zeal for Christ, as though they were thus serving his cause and upholding his honour. But this was "a zeal, not according to knowledge." They had forbidden them, without having first taken counsel of their Master.

Ver. 39.—**But Jesus said, Forbid him not.** It is as though our Lord said, "Do not forbid him; do not hinder him from a good work—a work which does honour to me and to my cause; because, although he does not actually follow me as you do, he is nevertheless engaged in the same cause; he is celebrating my Name by the casting out of evil spirits. Therefore he is not opposing my Name; on the contrary, he is publishing and recommending it." Here is a warning against that exclusive spirit, which is eager for its own ends rather than for Christ's glory, and would limit the exercise of his gifts and graces to its own system or school, instead of inquiring whether those whom it condemns are not working in Christ's name and for the promotion of his glory, although it may be allowable to think that in some instances they might find a more excellent way.

Ver. 40.—**For he that is not against us is for us.** In St. Matthew (xii. 30) we find our Lord using a somewhat similar expression, only in an inverted order. He there says, "He that is not with me is against me." The lesson which both these apothegms teach is the same, that there is no such thing as neutrality in reference to Christ and his cause. We must be either with him or against him. Dr. Morison on St. Mark in this place says, "When in applied morals we sit in judgment on ourselves, we should in ordinary circumstances apply the law obversely and stringently, 'he who is not with Christ is against him.' But when we are sitting in judgment on others, into whose hearts we cannot look directly, we should in ordinary circumstances apply the law reversely and generously, 'He that is not against Christ is with him.'"

Ver. 41.—**In my name, because ye belong to Christ.** The reading adopted in the Revised Version is, *ἐν ὀνόματι ὅτι χριστοῦ ἐστέ*: literally, *in name, that ye are Christ's*; or, *because ye are Christ's*. The force of this observation seems to be this: "If he who gives you a cup of water to drink in my Name, and out of regard for me, does well, and shall be rewarded of God, much more shall he be rewarded who casts out devils in my Name." The disciples are thus taught that it is contrary to the whole spirit of Christianity to disparage works of beneficence, or to suggest unworthy motives for them (see 'Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*).

Ver. 42.—This verse stands out as the severe antithesis to what has gone before. As he who receives and encourages Christ's little ones and those who are like little children and believe in him, receives him, and so shall receive from him the glorious rewards of Heaven; so, on the contrary, whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Christ is guilty of deadly sin; and it were better for him if a great millstone (*μύλος ὀνικός*)—literally, *a millstone so large as to require to be turned by an ass*—were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

Ver. 43.—The hand, or the foot, or the eye represents any instrument by which sin may be committed; and it applies to those who may be the means of drawing us into sin. If your relative or your friend, who is useful or dear to you as your hand, your foot, or your eye, is drawing you into sin, cut him off from you, lest he should draw you into hell, into the unquenchable Gehenna. Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, lay to the south of Jerusalem. Originally a pleasant suburb of the city, it became in later times the scene of the worship of Molech, "the abomination of the children of Ammon." On this account the valley was polluted by King Josiah. It thus became the receptacle of everything that was vile and filthy.

These noisome accumulations were from time to time consumed by fire; and the things which were not consumed by fire were the prey of worms. Hence "Gehenna" became the image of the place of eternal punishment, where "the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." These terrible images are conclusive as to the eternity of future punishment, so far as our nature is concerned and our knowledge reaches. They are the symbols of certain dreadful realities; too dreadful for human language to describe or human thought to conceive.

Ver. 44.—Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. These words are a quotation from Isa. lxvi. 24, and they are repeated three times in the Authorized Version. But the best ancient authorities omit them in the two first places, retaining them at ver. 48. The metaphor is very striking as well as awful. Ordinarily the worm feeds upon the disorganized body, and then dies. The fire consumes the fuel, and then itself expires. But here the worm never dies; the fire never goes out. The words of Cornelius à Lapide on the original passage in Isaiah are well worth recording here: "I beseech you, O reader, by the mercies of our God, by your own salvation, by that one little life entrusted to you and committed to your care, that you will ever keep before your eyes the living memory, as of eternity and of eternal torments, so also of the eternal joys on the other side offered to you by God, and concerning which you here cast the die, and that irrevocable. Let these two things never depart from your mind. In this world, 'Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.' Oh, what a void there is in earthly things! Oh, how vain is all our life without Christ! In the world to come, truth of truths, and all is truth; stability of stabilities, and all is stability; eternity of eternities, and all is eternity. An eternity in heaven most happy, in hell most miserable, 'Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.'" St. Bernard says "the worm that never dies is the memory of the past, which never ceases to gnaw the conscience of the impenitent."

Ver. 49.—For every one shall be salted with fire; and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. According to the most approved authorities, the second clause of this verse should be omitted, although it is evident that our Lord had in his mind the words in Lev. ii. 13, "Every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt." *Every one shall be salted with fire.* "Every one." The statement is general in its application. There is no limitation. The good and the evil alike shall be "salted with fire." There is an apparent incongruity here. But it must be remembered that both the salt and the fire are here used in a metaphorical sense; and there is a fire which is *penal*, and there is a fire which *purifies*. In the case of the wicked the fire is penal; and the salting with fire in their case can only mean the anguish of a tormented conscience, which must be commensurate with its existence in the same moral condition. But there is a fire which purifies. St. Peter, addressing the Christians of the Dispersion (1 Epist. iv. 12), bids them not to think it strange concerning the "fiery trial" which was among them. This was their "salting with fire." Those persecutions which they suffered were their discipline of affliction, through which God was purifying and preserving them. This discipline is necessary for all Christians. They must arm themselves with the same mind, even though they may not live in a time of outward persecution. He who parts with the hand, or the foot, or the eye; that is, he who surrenders what is dear to him—he who parts with what, if he was only to confer with flesh and blood, he would rather keep, for the sake of Christ, is going through the discipline of self-sacrifice, which is often painful and severe, but nevertheless purifying. He is salted with fire; but he is preserved by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Ver. 50.—Salt is good; that is, it is useful and beneficial. This is true of the literal salt. Its wholesome antiseptic properties are universally recognized. But our Lord has before his mind in this whole passage the spiritual meaning. He is thinking of the salt of Divine grace, of the salt of a spirit informed and influenced by the Holy Spirit. He had already told his disciples that they were "the salt of the earth." Not, indeed, that they could deliver the earth from corruption—that was beyond their power. But when Christ had delivered it by his mighty sacrifice and the gift of his Spirit, it was their business, as it is the duty of all Christians, to keep it in a healthy state; so that by their wisdom and purity, their holy lives and holy teaching, they might season the whole world. But if the salt have lost its saltness (ἐὰν τὸ ἅλας ἄναλον γένηται), wherewith will ye season it? This insipid, tasteless condition of salt is familiar to travellers in the East. Examples are to be found of large masses of salt which "has lost its savour." Our Lord here applies this in a spiritual sense to his disciples. "If ye, my disciples, who are the salt of the earth,—if ye lose the true properties of salt; if your Christianity loses its heart, its quickening, stimulating influence; so that on account of the love of the world, or the fear of man, or through lust or ambition, you fall away from the heavenly doctrine and life;—who shall re-

store you to your former spiritual health and vigour? With what can salt itself be seasoned when its own chemical energies are lost?" Our Lord plays upon this figure of salt, and cautions his disciples, lest by any means they should lose the qualities of this mystic salt. Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another. This sentence fitly winds up the whole. Have the salt of wisdom and purity, and of a Christian life, namely, humility, charity, contempt of the world, and especially peace. Do not be idly contending about place or position, as not long ago you were disputing (ver. 33). Our Lord foresaw that this kind of contention, these rivalries, and these ambitious aims, would prove a great scandal and a great hindrance to the progress of his Church in the future ages of the world. But he also knew that if his disciples in every age would endeavour to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," their influence would be irresistible, and they would draw all men to them and to himself, the great Centre of attraction, and "the confidence of all the ends of the earth" (Ps. lxv. 5).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—13.—*Transfiguration.* Observe the crisis of our Lord's ministry at which this marvellous and memorable incident took place. The period of novelty, of popularity, of prosperity, was past and gone; the period of hostility, of persecution, of endurance, was commencing. Already Jesus had forewarned his disciples of the speedy approach of his death at the hands of his enemies. And it seems as though this unique and impressive display of his proper majesty, and of the affection and confidence of his Father, came exactly at the needed conjuncture. It was for his own sake, that a vivid consciousness of Divine favour might go with him to the scenes of ignominy and of suffering which awaited him. It was for the sake of the nearest and dearest among his friends, that they might carry with them, especially in those trials of their faith and attachment which were coming upon them, a conviction concerning their master's nature and mission which might support them and preserve them, if not from weak defection, still from shameful apostasy. The close connection between the glories of the Transfiguration and the shame and woe of Calvary, is evident both from the narrative itself and from the central and critical position it occupies. Regarding the Mount of Transfiguration as a mount of witness, we observe—

I. THE WITNESS CHRIST HERE BEARS TO HIMSELF. The sun in heaven is his own witness, shines by his own light, tells of his own nature and power. So with the Lord Christ. When, amidst the darkness of the night, upon the slopes of Hermon, his garments glistened, and his face shone with a dazzling radiance, his proper glory shone through the disguise of his human weakness and humiliation. For once he appeared to be what he really was—the Son of the Father, and the Lord of the world. It was testimony very powerful and very effective, and produced its impression upon those who were privileged to behold that "great sight."

II. THE WITNESS HERE BORNE TO CHRIST BY THE LAWGIVER AND THE PROPHET. After Abraham, no personages in their history were more honoured and venerated by the Jews than Moses and Elijah: Moses the giver of their Law, and Elijah the head and leader of their prophets. These two had not only in life fulfilled the will of God, they had at the close of their life-service been taken to himself by their Lord in very remarkable and singular circumstances. From the seats of the blessed, and in their vesture of immortality, these illustrious and glorified saints came to converse with the Son of God regarding the decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. They had foretold him, they had prefigured him, they now gave place to him; and what more appropriate than that they should thus tender to him their homage and their admiration? 1. They manifested interest in his mission, for this gave the meaning to their own—explained in the old economy much which would otherwise have been inexplicable. 2. They acknowledged his authority, for they had already testified to a Greater than themselves who should come, and their appearance on this occasion was an evidence of the reverential honour in which they held the Divine Lawgiver, the Divine Prophet. 3. They anticipated his decease; the event which he had so recently foretold, and for which he was now so deliberately, so sacredly preparing—an event of stupendous magnitude in the history of our sinful humanity.

III. THE WITNESS BORNE TO CHRIST BY HIS FRIENDS AND APOSTLES. 1. It may be asked—Why was it appointed that the Transfiguration should be witnessed by so small and select a group, and in so secluded a spot? Why were not multitudes permitted to behold a spectacle so amazing in itself, and so fitted to bring conviction to the minds of all beholders? Surely, it might be urged, no unbeliever, no cavillor, could have withstood the evidence of our Lord's authority which such a scene afforded! It is recorded that the leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees, asked from Jesus a sign from heaven. This he refused them. But he allowed three favoured friends to behold his glory, when the customary veil was in some measure withdrawn. What is the explanation of this? It may be replied that it was not in harmony with the plans of our Lord Jesus to overpower the senses of the people with some irresistible display of supernatural power and glory. This would not have been to secure a moral result by moral means. Jesus would not have valued the admiration which was withheld from his moral character and his benevolent life, but which was accorded to the effulgence of celestial glory, striking all eyes with amazement. But there was another reason for the limitation of the witnesses of our Lord's transfiguration. The highest revelations of God's wisdom and holiness and love are for those only who are prepared to receive them. You may walk round the outside of a vast domain, a splendid palace; you may make the circuit of the walls, you may see the tree-tops shaken by the wind, you may catch glimpses of the lofty roofs and towers of the lordly edifice. But how little do you know of the imposing palace and its enchanting environments! If, however, you are permitted to enter the gates, to tread the stately gardens, to explore the mansion, to look through the library, to admire the sculptures and paintings, and, above all, to spend hours and days in converse with the choice spirits who make the abode their home,—then you can form a judgment, and cherish an appreciation which, so long as you were on the outside, you would never have been able to do. So with the knowledge of every high and pure and noble soul. Such a one is only to be known by those who have sympathy with him, and opportunities of fellowship with him. It cannot be otherwise than that the ignorant, the vulgar, the selfish, should misunderstand him. In like manner, but in the highest degree, it needed some sympathy with the Lord Christ in order to judge aright of him. It seems likely that when Jesus took with him only his three most intimate and congenial friends to behold his glory upon the holy mount, he did so because none others were sufficiently advanced in spiritual knowledge and appreciation to be capable of partaking and profiting by the privilege. Even the bulk of his own twelve disciples would have been, at that time, out of place upon the Mount of Transfiguration. As for the scribes and Pharisees, and all the vulgar formalists who desired a sign, they had no spiritual eyes with which to see the vision which was then and there vouchsafed to three lowly fishermen, whose hearts the Lord had touched, and whose sight the Lord had cleansed and quickened. 2. The emotions with which the favoured three were affected, when they beheld Christ's glory, deserve attention. There was *awe*: and this was honourable to them, that they experienced the feeling of trembling reverence in a presence so august, and before evidence so majestic and convincing. There was *delight*: hence the exclamation and the proposal of Peter. They felt it "good" to be in such a scene and in such society, and they would fain have prolonged the precious opportunity, and dwelt for a season upon the mount. 3. The convictions which they formed may be known from the language of Peter in his Second Epistle, from which it is apparent that the Transfiguration produced upon the minds of the witnesses a profound and ineffaceable impression concerning their Master's dignity and authority.

IV. THE WITNESS BORNE TO CHRIST BY THE FATHER HIMSELF. In the voice which came from the Father we observe: 1. A *declaration* to be believed: "This is my beloved Son." Jesus was beloved: (1) For the relation he sustained to the Father; for he was "the only begotten," and was by nature what no other human being can be affirmed to have been. (2) For his congenial character; for he pleased the Father alway; his character embodied every moral excellence. (3) For his willing obedience; for, as he had undertaken his mission in the spirit of the prophetic language, "Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O my God," so he acted throughout his ministry in a manner conformable to the just and holy will of God the Father. (4) For his perfect submission; for he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," and shrank

not from any sufferings appointed, and refused not the cup which the Father gave. As God's beloved Son, he was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." 2. An *appeal* to be obeyed: "Hear ye him!" As in the former clause the address is to the intelligent nature, so in this clause it is to the practical nature, of men. It is a Divine imperative. The appeal is to the sense of human obligation. Hear his teachings as your Master! Hear his promises as your Friend and Saviour! Hear his commands as your Leader and Lord! Hear to rejoice, to respond, to obey!

APPLICATION. 1. Receive this witness concerning Christ. It is the witness of the most trustworthy of men, the most competent of observers; it is the witness of the Eternal Father, of him who cannot lie. 2. Repeat this witness concerning Christ. It is the vocation of the disciple to give testimony to the master. The Church is Christ's witness to the world. It is ours to tell who Jesus is and what he has done; it is ours to invite the faith, to require the allegiance of all mankind to him who is the Son of God.

Vers. 14—29.—*The lunatic boy.* In Raphael's picture of the Transfiguration, which has often been called the greatest of all paintings, the foreground is occupied by a vivid representation of this marvellous miracle wrought by our Lord upon his descent from the mountain. The conjunction of the two incidents, which are in such striking contrast with each other, seems suggestive. The native glory of the Redeemer shone forth in the presence of the three favoured disciples upon the holy mount. But the redemptive work of the Son of God is brought out most prominently by his mighty work of healing, in which he shows himself able to deliver a human sufferer from the agonies of a terrible disease, and from the clutches of a cruel foe. The one incident serves to bring out the other into a bolder relief; and the two must be taken together, in order that we may obtain a fair and complete view of the nature, and especially of the ministry, of Jesus.

I. OBSERVE THE DISTRESSING CASE OF HUMAN MISERY HERE PORTRAYED. St. Mark has depicted this whole incident with a graphic minuteness that cannot fail to impress itself upon the reader's mind. 1. The case itself is unique in the wretchedness of its symptoms. An epileptic boy, speechless, often convulsed and sometimes flung into the fire and the water, a sufferer in this way from childhood, and now wasting away from long-continued disease,—can a more affecting picture of human misery be painted than this? Add to all the particulars related the possession by an evil spirit; and the hopelessness of the case, the powerlessness of all human endeavours, becomes apparent. 2. The anguish of the father's heart is beyond description; his attitude, his language, declare his distress and his dejection. 3. The interest of the multitude is evident; a spectacle such as this could not fail to excite the commiseration and compassion of every feeling heart. Observe in this case a striking figure of the condition of the sinner as a captive of Satan, and of the state of this ungodly and sin-accursed humanity!

II. REMARK THE INABILITY OF ALL HUMAN MEANS AND AGENCIES TO RELIEVE THIS CASE OF WRETCHEDNESS. All that a father's watchfulness and care could effect had long been tried. Doubtless the best known and most skilful physicians had exhausted the resources of their art. But all had been in vain. And now the disciples of our Lord had been appealed to with earnest entreaties. In the absence of their Master upon the mountain they had put forth their endeavours, had exercised their authority. But all was in vain. It was the assertion of the father; it was the confession of the disciples themselves: "They could not cast out" the demon. And there is no power on earth that can deal effectually with the sinner's case—that can expel from this humanity the spirit of evil that has so long ruled, afflicted, and defiled it.

III. CONSIDER THE APPLICATION WHICH WAS MADE TO JESUS AS TO THE DIVINE HEALER. How spiritually significant and instructive is the approach of the suppliant father to the Christ! The importance attached to *faith* comes out in this narrative perhaps more prominently than in any other part of the Gospel. We recognize. 1. *The demand for faith.* The father states his case, describes the sufferings of his son, implores compassion, and entreats help. His qualification, "If thou canst do anything," calls forth Christ's marvellous and memorable utterance: "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth." This is, indeed, a repetition of the

teaching of Scripture in every page. Faith is the posture of the heart which God approves, and which renders those who assume it capable of being blessed. Faith is the cry of the heart which God will never disregard or reject. And this condition comes out in a very impressive manner in this dialogue. 2. *The assertion of faith.* The poor father was driven to faith by need and suffering, by sympathy and despondency, by his repeated failures to obtain relief. He was drawn to Christ by his gracious and majestic presence as he came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. The leper had doubted the will of Christ to save; this father seems to have had confidence in the disposition and readiness of the Divine Teacher and Healer, and upon the suggestion and requirement of the Redeemer he exclaims, with fervour and with earnestness, "Lord, I believe." 3. *The confession of unbelief.* He doubts, or until now has doubted, Christ's power to save, as appears from his "If thou canst," and as he himself acknowledges in his cry, "Help thou mine unbelief." If he had not believed at all, he would not have come to Jesus; if he had believed firmly, he would have come with other words and in another spirit. This combination is very true to nature. There are degrees of faith even in the faithful. Where is perfect faith in Jesus? Who has not had reason to cry, "Help thou mine unbelief;" "Increase my faith"? 4. *The cry for help.* The earnest applicant did not wait until his faith was stronger—until more assurances and encouragements were given. He pleads as for his life, for he pleads for his child. Hating his unbelief, he struggles against it. His appeal is the utterance of his heart, which has no hope and no resource save in Immanuel, the Son of God. An example this to all hearers of the gospel, and especially to the penitent, the doubting, the timid, and the tempted.

IV. REMARK THE HEALING GRACE AND POWER OF JESUS. 1. His compassion was excited. He might pause to call forth the father's faith; but he would not withhold his sympathy from the suffering. 2. His authority was exercised over the evil spirit; for he rebuked and bade the demon to come out, and this with a commanding voice, which even so potent an agent of evil could not resist. 3. His healing, gracious aid was extended to the boy. When the sufferer seemed as if dead, by reason of the exhausting convulsions in which the departing demon displayed his malicious power, the Lord of life took him by the hand and raised him up, and he arose. How beautiful and encouraging an illustration of our Lord's personal interest in, and spiritual contact with, those whom he commiserates, relieves, and saves!

APPLICATION. 1. There is no case of need, sin, and wretchedness beyond the power of Christ to aid. 2. There is no faith, however feeble, which will not justify an approach to Christ, and elicit his compassion and his willingness to help. 3. By spiritual discipline Christ's people may train themselves for grappling with every form, however extreme, of human misery and helplessness.

Vers. 30—32.—*Death foretold.* The evangelists have recorded that on several distinct occasions our Lord foretold, in the hearing of his disciples, what would be the close of his earthly career. It is evident, accordingly, that these predictions, though only partially comprehended at the time, nevertheless made a deep impression on the minds of those who listened to them. After all that Jesus had foretold had been fulfilled, his apostles naturally enough recalled his sayings, and pondered them in the light of actual events, and published among their fellow-disciples the communications which have been recorded in the Gospels.

I. THE OCCASION OF THESE REVELATIONS. This *second* declaration by the Son of man of his approaching death and resurrection was made not long after the first. 1. It was in the course of the journey from Cæsarea Philippi through Galilee to the most ordinary scenes of his ministry that Jesus thus spoke to his disciples. They were apart from the multitude and the busy towns, where the great Healer was continually beset by applicants for relief and healing. There was quiet leisure, of which opportunity was taken by the Master to unfold anew to his disciples facts of tremendous import. 2. It was soon after the Transfiguration upon the mount—a display of his glory which must have enlightened the minds of his friends with regard to his nature, and must have disposed them to receive with deeper reflectiveness declarations concerning himself. That a Being so glorious and so remarkably in correspondence with celestial intelligences, and so intimately in the fellowship and the favour of the Eternal, should look forward

to a fate so dread—this was indeed likely to provoke them to profound inquiry and meditation.

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THESE REVELATIONS. The matter of these very remarkable and repeated communications was threefold. 1. He foretold his apprehension by his enemies. That there were among the ruling classes at Jerusalem many who were violently opposed to his teaching and to his claims, must have been known to his disciples as well as to himself. But hitherto Jesus had eluded the efforts of his foes, and had always proved himself able both to refute them in argument and to defy their efforts to seize and kill him. But the Lord's express words assured them that the time was at hand when the foes, whose enmity and malice had hitherto been defeated, should prevail against the Holy One and the Just. 2. He foretold the violent death which his enemies should inflict upon him. He had saved many from death, and had raised some from the dead; strange it must have seemed to them that he himself should submit to be put to death by the violence of men! Why should he submit to power which he was evidently capable of defying? Why should he endure treatment from which he could certainly save himself? Why should he endure a fate which he might easily avert? 3. He foretold his resurrection after three days' submission to death. This must have perplexed them still more. To what purpose need he die if he intended so soon to revive? Why not rather avoid death than, first submitting to it, then prove himself superior to its power? Yet such a prediction was fitted to enhance their conceptions of his majesty and authority.

III. THE EFFECT OF THESE REVELATIONS UPON THE MINDS OF THE DISCIPLES. Very simply are we informed that: 1. They understood not the saying. The words which the Lord had used were simple and unmistakable; the events he had foretold were such as were familiar to their observation, or such as they were acquainted with from the Old Testament narrative. What was it that they failed to understand? Probably the consistency between such a prospect and the view they were forming of Jesus' Messianic character and glory, and the expectations they were cherishing of his speedily approaching kingdom. Their minds were utterly confused by declarations which accorded neither with their primitive nor their more mature apprehensions of their Master's nature and ministry. 2. They were afraid to ask him. There seem to have been times when the disciples stood in awe of their Master. It could not well be otherwise. Sometimes his grace and friendliness drew them to him, and the intimacy was as that subsisting among brothers; at other times the superiority of Jesus seemed to cleave a chasm of separation which they had not confidence or courage to bridge over by their approaches. They could not *then* even question him concerning the import of his own language.

IV. THE REASON OF THESE REVELATIONS. 1. Jesus intended thus to open the eyes of his companions to his own character. Such sayings as these must have awakened their renewed inquiry, "What manner of man is this?" Thus Jesus would impress upon them the fact that his nature and character, his kingdom and mission, were altogether unique. 2. Jesus intended, in some measure, to prepare them for the events which were about to happen. This was effected but partially; yet it would be a mistake to suppose that such teaching was lost upon the twelve. The events of the Passion did indeed amaze and dismay Christ's disciples, yet not to that extent which would have been the case had no such communications been vouchsafed. 3. Jesus designed to open their minds to the spiritual nature of his kingdom. What he foretold could not happen without dispelling, or at least weakening, many preconceived notions and expectations; and even before these things came to pass, some light regarding the unworldly and spiritual kingdom must have streamed into their dim minds. 4. Jesus purposed that, after he should have arisen from the dead, they should call to memory the sayings they had heard from him, and that their faith should thus be confirmed in his superior knowledge, and in the divinity of his purposes, so clearly conceived and so gloriously accomplished. Thus was provision made for their thinking aright of him who laid down his life for the sheep, and in due time and of his own accord took to him that life again.

Vers. 33—37.—*True greatness.* Our Lord's ministry was not only to the people generally, but to his own disciples and friends: and even to these he had occasion

sometimes to address language, not only of instruction, but of rebuke and expostulation. On the occasion here referred to, a serious fault was displayed among the chosen circle, which called for the Lord's interference and reprimand. At the same time the great Teacher pointed out to the erring a more excellent way. Ambition was the fault, and its appearance among the twelve occasioned our Lord's lesson in true greatness.

I. AMBITION AMONG THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST. 1. Notice its occasion. It seems as if recent events gave rise to the desire for pre-eminence among the friends and disciples of Jesus. The special commendation of Peter which the Master had recently pronounced, and the selection of the same apostle, with James and John, to witness the Transfiguration, probably prompted the aspiration and the discussion here recorded. 2. The exact form this disposition assumed. The twelve looked forward to the Messianic kingdom, of which they had come to regard Jesus as the divinely appointed Head, and in which they all expected to occupy posts of dignity and power. But who should be greatest? Who should be the chief minister under the Messianic King? Such was the matter in dispute, and that it should be so shows us how much the apostles had yet to learn. 3. The evil fruits of this ambition. It is quite in accordance with human nature that such a disposition should lead to disagreement and to contention. The twelve not only reasoned, they disputed; rivalry took the place of brotherhood. It is ever so; when the desire for pre-eminence and supremacy takes possession of men's hearts, farewell to contentment, harmony, and peace!

II. CHRIST'S REBUKE AND REMEDY FOR AMBITION. The observant eye of Jesus had remarked the wrangling which had gone on among his disciples, and his heart was pained. When he inquired into what had happened, they were ashamed and silenced; and he proceeded to unfold a principle which should operate, not in this company only, but throughout all periods of his Church. 1. Christ reveals the new and Christian law of greatness. Only those who are willing to be last of all, and ministers of all, shall be foremost in his kingdom. This was *paradoxical*, altogether in contradiction to the prevalent plan and principle among men in all grades of society, and in all communities, civil and ecclesiastical. It was *exemplified most illustriously in the Lord Jesus himself*. "Though he was rich, he became poor;" "He took on him the form of a servant;" "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." In his own person—in his incarnation, his humiliation, his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross—our Lord furnished the one incomparable example of humility and self-denial, and laid the axe to the root of the tree of self-seeking and pride. It was *a law containing within it its own sanction and power*. The humiliation and self-sacrifice of the Lord Jesus were more than an example; they introduced a new motive of spiritual persuasiveness and constraint into human society. The cross of Christ has been the great moral power which has changed human society, and is now the one hope of human regeneration. 2. Christ enforces his new law of greatness by a striking symbol. Our Lord often taught by act, thus enforcing the lessons embodied in his words. On this occasion he took a little child, and preached an ever-memorable sermon from this beautiful and touching text. The infant was in himself a living and evident illustration of submissiveness, teachableness, and humility. And not only so; the infant furnished the great Teacher with the lesson he needed: "Whosoever shall receive one of such," etc. Instead of seeking to be preferred above their brethren, Christians are here taught to seek out, and to minister to, the lowliest and the feeblest; and the inspiriting assurance is added, that those who in the Master's spirit receive and aid the least of his disciples—the lambs of his flock, the babes of his household—shall be regarded as having rendered a service to the Christ himself; nay, as having "received" the Creator and Lord of all, even him who sent and gave his Son for the salvation of mankind!

APPLICATION. 1. Dispositions which we are ashamed to bring into the presence and under the notice of Christ, are by that very fact condemned, and must be at once repressed and checked. 2. Towards one another it behoves the disciples of Jesus to cherish sentiments of esteem and honour. 3. Towards the feeble and the obscure they should display the tenderest consideration, remembering that those who serve Christ's lowliest people serve Christ himself.

Vers. 38—41.—*The judgment of charity.* It is clear, from this passage, that the

influence of our Lord Jesus was wider than was known by his own immediate friends, and that his work was, even during his lifetime, advancing in directions of which they were not aware. Accidentally, as it were, we gain an insight into the progress of the kingdom of Christ outside the immediate circle of his acknowledged and professed disciples; and the incident which affords us this insight, at the same time presents to us truths and lessons of vast practical importance.

I. BIGOTRY IS HUMAN, AND CHARITY IS DIVINE. If any one of the twelve might have been deemed free from all suspicion of bigotry, surely it would have been John, often called "The Apostle of Love." Yet from this incident, and from his wishing upon another occasion to call down fire from heaven upon unbelievers, it is plain that, at all events during the Lord's ministry, he was wont to give way to an ardent, impetuous, violent spirit. In the view of a bigot, one who does not work in his own way is censured and condemned as unfit to work for God at all. The Lord Jesus proved his superiority to human infirmity by permitting and encouraging service which his followers would have forbidden.

II. OUTWARD UNITY AND CONFORMITY ARE NO SUFFICIENT TEST OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP. Men are naturally prone to lay great stress upon this. The complaint, "He followeth not with us," has not been confined to the first followers of Jesus. The "following," in such cases, means outward association and agreement in language, usages, forms of policy and of worship. But two considerations should check that narrowness which would limit discipleship to those who conform to established custom: 1. Some conform, who prove themselves to be lacking in the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ. 2. Some refuse, or neglect to conform, who display such spirit, and whose actions show them to be Christ's.

III. ONE TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP IS THE SPIRIT IN WHICH MEN WORK FOR CHRIST. The stranger, to whom reference is made, is said to have done what he did *in Christ's Name*, and the Lord declares that the presumption is markedly in the favour of one whose practice may be so denoted. What are we to understand by the expression, "in Christ's Name"? It is an idiom which involves more than lies upon the surface. The Name of Christ implies his nature, his character, his claims, his mission. What is done truly in his Name, is done from reverence towards him, from faith in him, from love to him, in reliance upon his grace, and with a view to his honour and his approval. Now, our Lord teaches us that they whose life is animated and governed, controlled and guided, by a constant reference to himself, are to be honoured and encouraged. Such may have an imperfect acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, an insufficient apprehension of his nature or his work, an indisposition to consort with his professed followers. In all this it is possible they may be inferior to ourselves, though it is not certain. But this must not rouse us to bigotry, to conceit, and opinionated self-complacency. Let us recognize and admire the spirit which such "outsiders" may display, and wish them God-speed, and rejoice in their witness and in their work!

IV. ANOTHER TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP IS THE WORK WHICH MEN DO FOR CHRIST. This passage reminds us that: 1. It may be a mighty work or a power. This is not necessarily miraculous; it may be moral. The mark of God's finger may be upon the work. In our own state of society this "note" of true Christianity may sometimes be recognized among those who are unassociated with our Churches, and even among the "unorthodox." 2. It may be the casting out of demons. In the Gospel narrative this was literally the case. And in modern life there are many demons of ignorance, impurity, sloth, and selfishness, which need expulsion. And those who devote their time and energies to combating these ills, are doing the work of our Master, and will not be able quickly to speak evil of him. Let us rejoice, not only in their work, but in themselves. 3. It may be the giving of a cup of cold water to Christ's people in Christ's Name. Not the magnitude, but the moral tendency, the inner motive of the act, is of importance in the sight of our Lord. If the act itself be kind and beneficent, that is sufficient to recommend it to us, and to make it acceptable to the Lord. There is an obvious harmony between a good work and the good spirit in which the work is performed.

V. A CANON OF JUDGMENT. It may be determined that the rule of ver. 40, "He that is not against us is for us," refers to our judgment of others and of their actions. It is a wise as well as a charitable principle. It is a preservative against bigotry, and

it is fitted to ensure equitable and considerate treatment of our neighbours. The rule elsewhere recorded, "He that is not for us is against us," applies to ourselves, and warns us against lukewarmness in our piety and negligence in our service. Let us be stricter with ourselves, and more charitable with others, and we shall the better please our righteous and gracious Lord.

Vers. 42—50.—*Warnings.* With these solemn words our Lord closed his arduous and faithful ministry in Galilee. Christ's language was usually language of grace and encouragement; but there were occasions, like the present, when he spoke words of faithful warning in tones almost of severity. Yet it should be noted that these admonitions were addressed to his own disciples, and were intended to quicken their spiritual sensibility, and to induce them to use with diligence the privileges with which they were favoured, especially through their association with himself.

I. POWERS AND MEANS OF USEFULNESS MAY BECOME OCCASIONS OF SPIRITUAL OFFENCE. This is a very serious consideration. Increased privilege brings increased responsibility, and none can possess powers of body or of mind without being exposed by such possession to liability to unfaithfulness and to consequent deprivation. 1. *Social intercourse and influence* come under this general principle. Our Lord speaks of his disciples, and especially of the inexperienced and immature, as "his little ones who believe on him." We cannot be associated with such without affecting them for good or for evil. To cause them to stumble, to betray them into errors or into sin, is an offence against our Lord, and it would be better for a man to be flung with a millstone about his neck into the deep water, than so to offend against the Lord of the little ones. 2. Our *active powers* may become occasions of offence. The hand and the foot may be taken as emblematical of these powers, the proper and intended purpose of which is undoubtedly their employment in works of justice and of charity and helpfulness. Yet these good faculties may cause their possessors to offend. The hands may work deeds of violence, the feet may lead into the way of sinners; and in such a case the purpose of the Creator is frustrated, and condemnation is incurred. 3. *Sense and intelligence may be productive of harm as well as of good.* The eye may fairly be taken as representing sense generally, and the apprehensive faculty. When the eyes wander where they should not, are closed when they should be open, or are open when they should be closed, they are an offence. When the intellect is directed to the wrong topics, or to the right topics in the wrong temper, its glory is dimmed, for its intention is thwarted, and it becomes a curse instead of a blessing.

II. THE ABUSE OF POWERS AND MEANS OF USEFULNESS WILL INVOLVE PUNITIVE SUFFERING AND RUIN. Under the rule of a righteous God, it cannot be that faithfulness and unfaithfulness, watchfulness and remissness, obedience and rebellion, will be treated alike. From the lips of the Lamb of God, the "meek and lowly in heart," language such as that which our Lord here employs is doubly impressive. Nevertheless, it is in mercy that the fruits of sin are shown to be apples of Sodom, that the wages of sin are expressly declared to be death. The figurative representations of the doom of the sinful are indeed terrific. This doom is worse than the vengeful overwhelming in the Lake of Galilee; it is compared to the casting out of corpses into Gehenna, below the walls of Jerusalem, where the fire consumed or the worms gnawed the unburied bodies of the dead. Such teaching leaves us in no doubt as to the view which the omniscient and most gracious Saviour takes of the future and eternal prospects of those who desecrate their powers and misuse their opportunities in the service of sin.

III. On the other hand, WATCHFULNESS AND SEVERITY WITH SELF WILL ENSURE THE BLESSING OF THE ETERNAL LIFE, AND THE HONOURS OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM. Even supposing that self is denied and crucified, that pleasures are foregone, that privations are incurred,—is all this worth thinking of with regret when the recompense of the faithful is borne in mind? What is this recompense? The Giver of life himself promises "entrance into life;" the Sovereign of the spiritual kingdom promises "entrance into the kingdom of God." If in some sense the saved are, in the process, exposed to a thousand ills and sorrows, still, though they enter lame and maimed and half-sightless into the kingdom of life, of God, they *do* enter, and entering are for ever glorious and for ever blessed. It is promised that through much tribulation Christ's followers shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2—8.—*The Transfiguration.* I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. At an interval of six or eight (Luke) days from Peter's confession and the teaching of the cross. "Into a high mountain," *i.e.* into some glen or secluded spot in the mountain. As there is no mention of any movement southward, and distinct assurance that they did not at this time go into Galilee (ch. ix. 30), the notion of Tabor being the mountain is unfounded. The slightness of its elevation, and the circumstance that its summit has been a fortified spot from the earliest times, render it almost certain that it was not the scene of the Transfiguration. All the evidence is in favour of Hermon, the snow-clad, sentinel-like peak in which the Anti-Libanus range culminates. Its name means "the mountain," and it is spoken of in the Old Testament as "holy." Its cool slopes and upland solitudes would afford congenial retirement to the weary Christ. It was mental trouble he had to overcome, and this he sought to do in prayer and Divine communion. For this reason, and the signs afforded by the rest of the chapter of the day having well begun as they descended, it has been supposed it was a night scene. He was wont to pray during the night, and the disciples were "heavy with sleep." It gives a peculiar character to the occurrence to suppose this to have been the case. But that they were fully awake when the vision appeared, Luke again assures us. The duration of the vision is not suggested; probably, as in dreams, time was an inappreciable element.

II. THE INCIDENTS. 1. *Transformation.* "He was transfigured before them," etc. The change described by the Greek word is literally one of *form*, but this must not be pressed. "It was a change in the externality of the person," says Morison; "a kind of temporary glorification, effected no doubt from within outward, rather than from without inward. It would reveal the essential glory of the spirit that 'tabernacled' within, its glory at once in that lower sphere that was human, and in that higher sphere that was Divine" ('Practical Commentary,' *in loc.*). The general brightness of his appearance is noted by the three evangelists, Matthew comparing his face to the sun, and his garments to the light. Mark speaks of the fuller's white in his description of it. The face is referred to by Matthew and Luke, and all three refer to the garments. Luke tells us it occurred "as he was praying." 2. *Association with Moses and Elias.* They *were seen* by the apostles, but did not purposely present themselves. They were talking with him, and Luke tells us the subject of their converse: "his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." They were representatives of the righteous spirits in Hades, the world of the unseen, of disembodied spirits; representatives, too, of the Law and the prophets. They had laid the foundations of the kingdom of righteousness which he perfected. They spoke of his death as the grand means of the fulfilment of the hopes of immortality, they themselves having in the manner of their own "exodus" afforded the shadow and prophetic type of which his was the substance. He is in essential, spiritual oneness with them. 3. *Peter's suggestion.* Outcome of zeal, but not according to knowledge. It is seemingly enough for him to see his Master on terms of *equality* with those great spirits of the past. There is an undiscriminating comprehension in his proposal; a desire also to extend the duration of the ecstasy in which he and his companions were. It breaks the grand harmony of the evolution of the scene, and yet is full of instruction. 4. *Divine attestation.* The three accounts agree in the words, "This is my Son: hear ye him." Matthew and Mark have also "beloved," for which Luke substitutes "my chosen;" and Matthew alone adds, "in whom I am well pleased." The words are but human renderings of the unspeakable "voice." They prove that the great Centre of attention and attraction for the Church is Jesus, not Moses or Elias. 5. *Restoration of Christ to his usual appearance.* The distinguished associates of his glory vanish. The vision was no "baseless fabric," but it was over, and now the spectators must return to common life and mundane duties. Jesus "was found alone;" "Jesus only."

III. THE LESSONS. These are innumerable, and we must content ourselves with a few of the more prominent. There was revelation for both Christ and his disciples. A new light was thrown upon past and future, and the fear of death was broken. But the whole scene is best understood as a *revelation and glorification of Christ.* 1. *The Divine Father has glorified his Son, and thereby attested him to himself and to the*

confidence of believers. This was the "sign from heaven" vainly asked by the unbelieving Pharisees, and now granted to the three leaders of the apostles. And a corresponding revelation will take place in the experience of every true child of God, whereby his faith shall be confirmed, and he shall be "sealed unto the day of redemption." The yearning, praying, aspiring spirit of the Son at last, in foretaste, attains; and he and his followers are strengthened. The personal glory, the sublime association with the precursors of the kingdom in the past, and the transcendant commendation, leave no room for doubt in the heart of the true believer. The evidence is intuitive, but it is spiritually complete. 2. *The loftiest tendencies and aspirations of the Law and the prophets are fulfilled in the "obedience unto death" of the Divine Son.* "They spake with him of his decease;" it was evidently central to their thoughts. The religious hopes of the past were to be satisfied in that way alone; by that alone was the righteousness of God to be satisfied. Self-sacrifice is the spirit of both Law and prophecy. To them the profound mystery of the hereafter was solved in the spirit of his death and in his resurrection; "life and immortality were brought to light" in him. It is as associated with them and representative of them that he looked forward to his dying. The manifestation of the Divine Son is therefore of universal significance, and relates itself to all that was highest and most spiritual in ancient religious movements. 3. *What God did for his Son on this occasion he will do for all who vitally belong to his "Body."* Even as the bodily frame of Christ was transfigured, and partook of the inward glory of his spirit, so shall all in whose nature his grace is found appear with him in the glory of the resurrection. The spiritual law is manifest and certain, and it is evidently the same in the believer as in his Lord. Glory of spirit must sooner or later appear in glory of external appearance, and the body shall partake in the blessedness of the spirit.—M.

Ver. 8.—"*Jesus only.*" The transition from the glory and the spiritual vision to the sober light of common day—from the Christ uplifted in the radiance of heaven, and waited upon by the greatest spirits of ancient Hebrew religion, to the humiliated form of the man Jesus—was a perilous one for ordinary mortals to pass through. But it was necessary. It is for faith to penetrate the spiritual significance of ordinary forms and appearances, and grasp the Divine. It is to faith, and faith alone, that God is manifest in the flesh.

I. JESUS OUTLIVES HIS RECOMMENDATIONS. He is ever more, far more, than he appears to be. Some things and persons have nothing remaining when you strip the pretence and tinsel away. The radiance subsides into damp mist, and the glorious brightness proves but bottle-glass. It is this overmastering intrinsic worth and power of Jesus which explains his enduring influence. Eloquent advocacy has been engaged in his cause, great ideas have been associated with him, his claims have been attested by miraculous powers and signs, and ever and again the background of the Divine mystery from which he emerged has revealed itself, and a multitude of external proofs etc., are forthcoming when required; but he himself is greater than them all, and contains their latent possibilities within himself. When excitement, etc., are over, there still remains the power to elicit faith and constrain personal attachment. He himself is the ultimate verification of the faith of his disciples.

II. NOT THE SIGN OR MARVEL, BUT CHRIST IT IS THAT SAVES. The former only provisional, the latter permanent. The familiar, continuing, sympathizing Christ. The crucified One; the risen again; and in spiritual presence the Dweller in the heart of faith. It is this Christ whose power is felt within, a vital energy and a moral impulse; an Interpreter of the mysteries of life and death.

III. HE ALONE IS SUFFICIENT FOR OUR NEED. There is an unhealthy longing for dainties in things spiritual as in bodily satisfactions. His teaching, his example, his sympathy, his perfect sacrifice, are ours if we but believe. God has testified his approval and acceptance, and commends him to us. Our own experience will seal and confirm the prophecies and attestations of others: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for *we have heard him ourselves*, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John iv. 42).—M.

Vers. 9—13.—*The saying that was kept.* The disciples did not understand their

Master—a common experience. Why was this saying so difficult? It seems plain enough to us. But then we look at it after its accomplishment; they before that. And their rabbinic training taught them to look for something very different from what Christ seemed to be referring to. He spoke as if he alone was to rise again. They had been taught to think of the resurrection as universal, and altogether; not an experience of one here and another there. Moreover, their teachers had told them that Elias must first come. In fact, their habits of thought were all going in one direction, and this saying of Christ's in another. Yet, like fair and candid men, they did not dismiss the words as impossible of accomplishment or interpretation; but they "kept the saying."

I. HOW ARE WE TO EXPLAIN THE HOLD WHICH THE HARD SAYINGS OF CHRIST HAVE UPON THE DEVOUT MIND? Their "keeping" the saying was doubtless for the most part a voluntary thing, yet there was also a sense in which it was involuntary. The subject it concerned awed and interested them, and they could not, if they had wished to do it, throw off its fascination. And so it is with the other hard sayings; that which is to be said of this may be said of them. 1. *Because of relation with similar experiences.* Many a time had the actions of Christ, or their own spiritual history, presented enigmas that refused to be summarily explained. They were continually stumbling upon some new, strange thing. They had just come out of a scene of which the wisest and soberest of them might well wonder whether it was fairyland or fact. And they were conscious of deep yearnings and aspirations to which the Saviour's words seemed to answer as the key to the lock. These had evidently something in common. The doctrines of Christianity may be difficult for the carnal mind to construe, but they appeal to a deep, universal, albeit depraved, human consciousness, which forbids their being at once dismissed from the thought. 2. *And the sense of mystery is itself an element of fascination.* The mind goes forth freely after the infinite and eternal in speculation and fancy, if not in serious moral interest. If there be but a substratum of apparent fact upon which thought can build, the sense of a mystery lying beyond is congenial to man; and he *will* continually return to it in efforts to penetrate it. This is why—at least, one reason why—the world around us never palls upon our senses. Its commonest things are steeped in wonder of the unknowable, if we but take one or two steps onward in the study of them. 3. *In addition to this, the disciples knew that no mystery was uttered by their Master without some gracious meaning in it, which would sooner or later be made known.* The hardest doctrine was, they felt, closely connected with their welfare, and would be seen to be so by-and-by. And Christians have experienced the same ever since. Our daily life is, if we be thoughtful, the best expositor of the deep things of grace, and keeps hovering within our horizon many an angel of revelation ready to deliver his message in due time.

II. HOW SHOULD THESE BE DEALT WITH? The disciples "kept," *i.e.* held fast, the saying; thus affording an example to all true Christians. 1. *We should continually endeavour to understand or learn their meaning.* Sometimes simple communion with one's own heart will be enough; or, again, it may be necessary to discuss them with others of a kindred spirit. Many of the happiest hours of life are so spent. Not that we shall always succeed; very often there will remain an element of the infinite or the unknown that will trouble us. 2. *But when human wisdom fails, Divine wisdom may be invoked.* "They asked him," and he cleared away the difficulty to the extent to which they made it known. To the praying soul the light will come in ever-increasing fulness. More light will break forth from the book of earthly experience, and from the written Word of comfort and revelation. And when the mystery still remains insoluble, the Spirit of Jesus will give us faith and patience until "the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts," and we know even as we are known.—M.

Vers. 14—29.—*The cure of the demoniac child.* This stands out in striking contrast with the halcyon hour on the mountain with which the three had been favoured. Their brethren were experiencing a greater difficulty than they had ever yet known. But the discussion of the saying they had kept, formed for the three an intermediate step down into actual life, and daily events and troubles. Christ, on the other hand, appears to have received a greater fulness of Messianic consciousness and power

through his transfiguration, as was his wont after similar retirements into spiritual seclusion. This incident affords a view of *Christ's manner of dealing with exceptional difficulties in spiritual service.*

I. ACCREDITED SERVANTS OF CHRIST WERE BEING DESPISED AND DISCOURAGED. (Vers. 14—18.) 1. *Their spirit was being daunted.* The people ceased to respect them, and the scribes began to turn the failure to account as an argument against their Lord. What could they say or do? Their Master was absent, and they were at their wits' end. A situation with its parallels in every age of the Church. Moral phases of individual, social, and national life which seem to defy remedy or even amelioration. Difficulties and failures in mission work, etc. 2. *Their usefulness was at a standstill.* The enemies of their cause had now the upper hand, and they were pressing them with objections and sneers. Perhaps they were even asking why their Master had gone away so mysteriously, and left them to cope with difficulties for which they were unequal. It was high time Jesus should come to their rescue. And lo! as the thought arose within them almost despairingly, he appeared! "The multitude, when they saw him, were greatly amazed." He had come just at the right moment, as if he divined the need for his presence.

II. THEIR MASTER MADE THE DIFFICULTY AN OCCASION FOR SPIRITUAL REBUKE AND INSTRUCTION. 1. *To the people,* or generally. He laments their want of faith, and slowness to receive the things of God. They had the highest reasons for faith—his works and himself—in their midst, and yet would not believe. He gives vent to the feeling of weariness and moral disgust which overcame him, and in the face of which he still laboured and forbore. The want of faith, only immediately manifested towards the disciples, was in reality towards himself. That was the root and spring of their readiness to cavil, and their questionings and arguments. 2. *To the father.* His conversation with Christ is made by the latter a perfect spiritual discipline. Already the dealings of God had been experienced in his home and heart, and that which has been begun is carried to a successful issue. It is amongst the compensations of great sorrows that, if they do not themselves induce a high spirituality of mind, they, at all events, help us to feel our need of the Saviour. There was a preparatory work already done, and Christ wastes no advantage thus gained. Having signified his willingness to undertake the cure, he begins to question the father, partly as an expression of sympathy, partly to show the true character of the case. In this he succeeds in eliciting an expression of the sceptical spirit of the man: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Here there is room for a commencement, and the Saviour repeats in grieved astonishment, "*If thou canst!*" It was a qualification that had no business in such a request, and it showed how poor was the spiritual life or power of the man. He then declares the grand condition of all his cures, "All things are possible to him that believeth;" which in this connection meant that all the blessings Christ conferred were given only in response to faith, but where that was there was no limit with regard to their bestowal. He did not mean that any request, of whatever kind it might be, would be granted if it were only *accompanied* by faith, but that all requests that were the outcome of a Divine faith, and consequently subject to its conditions—as, for instance, their being agreeable to God's will—would be granted, however hard they might appear to man. This remark awoke the slumbering spiritual nature of the father, whose love for his son was also at work to quicken his susceptibilities, and he cried out, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." There is great difference of opinion as to the true meaning of these words, and no certainty would seem to be attainable. Yet that they reveal a low, self-contradictory spiritual state is evident. Still, progress is perceptible. He at least knows his shortcoming, and has asked for its removal. That was probably effected by the cure of his son, which took place, not because of satisfaction with the father's confession—a very faulty one at best—but through desire to prevent tumult, etc.; for when "*he saw that a multitude came running together,*" he quickly completed the miracle. But even in his expedition there is no hurry. The whole scene is solemn and expressive, and must have had a strong influence on all who looked on. 3. *To the disciples.* A call to a more intense and elevated communion with God. Prayer (and fasting) was a means to that. Faith is thus seen to be a condition both of getting good and doing good. It is because Christians live habitually on such a worldly plane that they lack power.

Oneness in heart and life with God would remove "mountains." This power should be sought by all.

III. HE MADE IT ALSO AN OCCASION FOR MORE SIGNAL DISPLAY OF HIS GLORY. The delay, failure of disciples, gradual extraction of all the circumstances of the case from the father, etc., all tended to increase the moral effect of the final exercise of power. His *authority* as the moral Governor of the universe, and Destroyer of the works of the devil, is also vindicated in addressing the demon. Not less, but far more, awful are the effects of sin upon the soul. Its expulsion is a work of Divine power and grace, and exhaustive of the nature in which it has dwelt. It is for Christ to raise up and revivify the poor wreck, the spiritual impotency that survives. So are the failures of weak disciples retrieved, and where disgrace is, humanly speaking, inevitable, the glory of God is revealed. The servants of Christ may despair of themselves, but never of him.—M.

Ver. 23.—*The omnipotence of faith.* This is a case in which the revisers have introduced a dramatic play of expression into what has seemed a merely conditional statement; and apparently with the authority of the best manuscripts. The words of Christ are seen to be those of surprise and expostulation. He sends back the qualification which the man had uttered, and asserts the virtual omnipotence of faith, and, at the same time, the dauntlessness of its spirit.

I. THE SPIRIT WHICH CHARACTERIZES THE BELIEVER. 1. *Confidence and fearlessness.* The true believer will never say, "If thou canst." The greatest difficulties will not seem insuperable, and the testimony of sight and ordinary experience will be distrusted. Inward weakness and uncertainty will be conquered. The one thing of consequence will be, "Is this promised?" "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job xiii. 15; cf. Hab. iii. 17). 2. *It is to be distinguished from self-confidence.* There is no immediate reference to self in such a conviction; it bases itself upon the unseen and eternal, the laws and promises of God. Hence we may speak of the *humility* of faith. 3. *It is exceptional and divinely produced.* Most men are guided by their ordinary experience. When that experience is deliberately set aside or ignored, it must be because of some fact or truth not visible to the natural mind. But such a discovery would be equivalent to a Divine communication. The faith which proceeds upon this must, therefore, be supernaturally inspired. It cannot exist save in one conscious of God, and of a peculiar relation to him.

II. THE POSSIBILITIES OF FAITH If not wholly dependent upon the actual experience of the power of faith, the confidence of the believer is nevertheless greatly sustained and strengthened by it. Resting in the first instance upon the consciousness of One mighty to save, whose help is promised and assured, and concerning whom it may be said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" the man of faith will also prize every indication that God has been with man. For he is assured from within and from without that the possibilities of faith are: 1. *Unlimited—because it identifies itself with the power of God.* Faith is the union of the spirit of the believer with him in whom he trusts. It ensures nothing less than his interest and help. The weakest child of God can secure his aid. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" 2. *Unlimited—save that it subjects itself to the will of God.* Just as God is omnipotent and yet incapable of unrighteousness, so the faith of the believer will only avail for things pleasing to his heavenly Father. But, then, it never desires any other. The promises of God, however, declare the direction in which Divine help may be certainly expected; and there are countless instances in which the believer can plainly discern the lawfulness and propriety of the objects for which he pleads. (1) The work of faith is ever blessed. (2) The prayer of faith is never denied; for if the answer do not assume the form expected, it will nevertheless prove to be substantially, and under the best form, the blessing that is required. And fervent, earnest, repeated prayer is unmistakably encouraged by the teaching of Christ. It is for Christians not to pray less, but more and more importunately, only leaving the particular mode in which the answer is to come to the wisdom and love of God. 3. *Unlimited—as illustrated in Scripture and the biographies of godly men.* The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a magnificent confirmation of the promises of the Lord; and there can be no better exercise than the study of the answers to prayer recorded in the Word of God and the lives of saints.—M.

Ver. 29.—"*And he said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer.*" The work of the Christian Church essentially the same from age to age, although the external phase of it may change and pass away. "Casting out devils" sounds strangely on modern ears; its associations, whilst they are weird and picturesque, are too far away to seriously engage our attention. We are in the habit of dismissing it in an offhand fashion, as a form of religious activity necessarily confined to a transitional period of the development of Christianity, and having no relation to our own or any other age. But that is only a superficial view of the work of the gospel which will lead to such a judgment. "Casting out devils" is a task which belongs as much to the servant of Christ to-day as in the apostolic age. The particular form assumed by the "possession" may not be the same, but the fact of "possession" still continues; and the mission of the Son of God to "destroy the works of the devil" must be fulfilled, until human souls are freed from the thraldom to which Satan subjects them. In every sinful wish or thought Satan gains a foothold; in every sinful habit formed he may be said to "possess" the nature in which it exists. Until we regard sinful habits as not mere habits, but as involving the presence and power of the evil one, we need not expect to grasp or deal with the problem of evil in our world. In the work of converting human souls, we are contending not merely with those who are the immediate objects of our solicitude, but with a supernatural antagonist, holding them in subjection, and deeply skilled in the arts requisite for the maintenance of his influence. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Eph. vi. 12). It is due to this permanent characteristic of evil in human nature that such difficulties are met with as the text explains.

I. EXCEPTIONAL DIFFICULTIES IN SPIRITUAL WORK. 1. *Occasioned by* (1) a peculiar intensity of indwelling evil. We cannot explain it, but it is full of stubbornness, subtlety, and power of resistance. There is a mysterious sympathy, it may be, between the sinner and the special sin that besets him, or prevents his yielding himself to Divine grace. And this may go the length of (2) total enslavement of the nature. Like the epileptic of the story, not only the body but the spirit may be enthralled. The will is so weak that it is practically powerless. The external ministries of the Church are insufficient to deliver, unaccompanied as they are by any strong desire for salvation on the part of the sinner. It sometimes happens, too, in more general work, that a spirit of opposition displays itself, or circumstances are persistently unfavourable. The Christian toils on, but his efforts are like the dashing of himself against a rock, or the ploughing of the sand. There are none of God's people who are strangers to such experiences, which are: 2. *From their very nature unexpected.* The spiritual worker goes on with comparative or even brilliant success for a time, and then encounters sudden breakdown. The reason of this in most instances is, that a great proportion of Christian work is all but mechanical. It consists in a routine of duties; its results represent a sum total of indirect and sometimes unconscious agencies; religious institutions are originated perhaps in an impulse once imparted but not repeated, and are carried on thus far by "their own momentum." There occurs all at once a check, and a sense of helplessness and humiliation ensues, involving the baffled worker in spiritual perplexity. Such difficulties are: 3. *Not an unmitigated calamity.* They have their uses in the Divine economy. When searching of heart is induced, and hidden sins are revealed, or absence of direct communion with God is made manifest, or pride and self-sufficiency are brought low, they have accomplished a good and necessary work.

II. HOW ARE THEY TO BE OVERCOME? 1. *The means.* "Prayer," or, in the Authorized Version, "prayer and fasting." There is a singularity about such a specific. A particular case of failure occurs, in apparently exceptional circumstances, and the remedy is not new or peculiar, but general. Could devils, then, come out by anything else than prayer, when man was the exorciser? It would almost seem as if the disciples had done their work hitherto by virtue of an external commission, using the name of Christ as a sort of talisman. This was sufficient for ordinary cases, but whenever one out of the usual occurred they were at a loss. 2. *The reason for its necessity.* The immediate occasion for the Master's admonition probably was the increasing laxity of the disciples in personal prayer, their outwardness, and their failure to grasp the essential principles of his kingdom. But there was a more profound reason for the advice. The servant of

God should be in complete sympathy and oneness with his Master, and that can only be cultivated by frequent acts of devotion and the exercise of a constant faith. It is not in his own strength that difficulties are to be met, but in Christ's. But that can only be imparted through fellowship with his spirit, which depends for its efficiency and depth upon repeated acts of the spiritual nature. The disciple by this rule is called into conscious personal fellowship with God, whose power will only then be granted. Oneness with God is the secret of spiritual power. 3. *The same principle applies to the whole life of the Christian.* True success depends upon vital spiritual effort, upon conscious co-operation with God, and consequent fasting from self. If we would not be taken at unawares we must be watchful, in constant actual exercise of faith, and uninterrupted personal communion with God. We are in danger of making too much of the external and accidental element in religion; we can never make too much of him who "worketh in" and through "us to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13).—M.

Vers. 30—32.—*The gospel a source of sorrow and perplexity.* Something very grand and pathetic in those rehearsals of the drama of redemption. The great heart of Christ yearning for sympathy, and yet shrinking from the kind that was evoked; wondering, meanwhile, at the "hardness of heart" of his disciples, who "understood not the saying." How inexplicable this failure to affect their moral nature! So far as *words* are concerned, it was the same gospel as that which woke the nations at Pentecost; yet it was as if still-born; an abstraction; a mystery past finding out. It is a sad monologue; a recitative upon a minor key. Reasons for this failure and ineffectiveness—

I. IT WAS NOT UNDERSTOOD. From human standpoint all but incomprehensible; as it certainly could not have been originally conceived by man. A mood and sentiment too elevated for ordinary moral natures. An important consideration in determining the question as to who founded Christianity—Christ or his disciples. The "prophet" must not discourse in an unknown tongue.

II. IT COULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD UNTIL IT WAS ACCOMPLISHED. Intelligence, moral perception, and spiritual illumination waited upon the finished work. It was, so to speak, a moral creation, which beforehand only the Author could comprehend, and afterwards still he alone perfectly. Each step in the evolution of it, up to a certain point, only deepened the mystery. When Christ *realized* his work of salvation in act, his people began to realize it in thought and experience.

III. AND THEN ONLY COULD IT BE UNDERSTOOD THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IT CALLED FORTH. Christ had to evoke the very faculty by which the plan and spirit of his work were to be discerned. It is "unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). The world by wisdom knew it not, "but we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. . . . Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. ii. 12—14). It is not until we learn the true character of God, and, in the light of that, the nature of sin, that we can from the heart approve of the career of Jesus as "the way of salvation."—M.

Vers. 33—37.—*Who shall be greatest?* The selection of Peter, James, and John for exceptional association with Christ; the primacy of Peter suggested by the words of their Master on a certain occasion; and the spirit of the sons of Zebedee, shown in the request made by their mother, a little later, on their behalf (ch. x. 35—41), were circumstances that soon attracted the attention of the others, and gave rise to discussion as to relative superiority. In dealing with this unseemly dispute, our Saviour showed—

I. THAT IT WAS A QUESTION THAT OUGHT NOT TO BE ASKED AMONGST CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS. (Vers. 33, 34.) 1. His question elicited no reply. They were ashamed that he should have detected them. It was evidently contrary to his spirit, as they felt, although they might be unable to explain. 2. That it is foreign to the genius of Christianity is further shown by the evils it has created within the Church. A vast percentage of the failures and scandals of Christians has arisen from this contention, whether carried on in silence or expressed. Nevertheless that it is deeply seated in

human nature is shown by its persistency from age to age. A motive of action we are ashamed to confess when a sense of Christ's presence is upon us cannot be a right one. And in proportion as the presence of the Master's spirit is felt, it is suppressed or destroyed.

II. THE PRINCIPLE BY WHICH IT SHOULD BE SETTLED WHEN IT ARISES. (Ver. 35.) "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all." This is, and probably was meant to be, slightly enigmatical. Without altering the future of the sentence ("he shall be") into the imperative ("let him be"), as some, without sufficient warrant, have done, it is still possible to read in it several distinct meanings. It might mean that that was to be the penalty of such presumption; that God would so regard presumptuous men; that this was a discipline to which they should subject themselves; that the avenue to official pre-eminence was the greatest serviceableness and humility; or, lastly, that *the highest excellence in the kingdom of God is his who abases and forgets himself altogether in the benefit and advancement of others.* It is in the last sense that Christ should be understood, if we are to take the general spirit of his teaching for our guide. In the Christian the virtue and usefulness are ends in themselves, and not stepping-stones to external, official pre-eminence. At the same time, there is a colourable suggestion, supported by experience, in the first three interpretations. The second last is the spirit of the Roman curia, which in literal expression looks so like the precept it contradicts. The sitting down of Christ, and his summons to all, prove the importance of the lesson.

III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE. (Vers. 36, 37.) "A little child," perhaps one of Peter's family. He gives an example in his own behaviour, simply and ingenuously, by embracing the child. 1. *The lowliest in the kingdom of God should receive the purest sympathy and consideration.* This is the most disinterested and unselfish service. The noblest deeds in God's world are of this kind: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. i. 27). We can "receive" to the heart when we cannot to the home; to kindness and love when we cannot to great earthly advantage. 2. *The motive which distinguishes this conduct from ordinary human tenderness and affection.* It is to be "in my Name," *i.e.* "on account of me," impelled by my example and spirit, and for the sake of my cause. It is only a "grace" or quality of the regenerate nature as he inspires it. 3. *So regarded, the object of our love and compassion is really the representative of Jesus and of God.* Christ has thus commended the children and the poor to the care of his people. And their sympathies thus awakened and directed are to be looked upon not as supplementing the deficient provisions of the Divine love, but only, in our own degree and measure, expressing and executing the infinite, loving will of "our Father in heaven." Herein, therefore, the lowliest service and the highest coincide. "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 10).—M.

Vers. 38—42.—*The comprehensiveness of Christ's service.* The connection with what preceded is to be sought in John's keen sense of having transgressed the spirit of the beautiful words just uttered. Christ would acknowledge all who professed his name; John had to confess that he had forbidden such a one from working. This leads to Christ's indicating—

I. MARKS OF HIS TRUE SERVANTS. The general link between the several classes is his "Name," *i.e.* conscious oneness and sympathy with him as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Accepting that as the test, he lays down: 1. *A general principle of comprehension.* (Ver. 40.) It is negative. If a man does not oppose him, he is to be considered as an ally and a friend. There is no neutrality in man's relations to Christ. This was especially the case in that age: the devil was too active in human nature to suffer any opposition to be undeveloped. The powers of darkness and of light were in deadly antagonism, and all who were aware of the conflict were certain to have their sympathies engaged for the one side or the other. This seems a dangerous principle, and apt to lead to entanglement or disaster. "Divinely dangerous." Yet is it the teaching of the Spirit of God, and beautifully harmonious with it. 2. *That those are his servants who do mighty works in his Name.* This mere statement suggests how

profoundly the work of Christ was leavening the community. There were many besides his professed followers who were influenced by his spirit. (1) That they should be able to do these works (which were of a miraculous nature) showed that they must already be in communion with his spirit. To cast forth devils could not be to further the cause of their prince, or to be aided by him. And so of the complementary work of awaking spiritual life in conversion, etc. Such work is manifestly of God, and these results prove his presence and approval. (2) The honour and cause of Christ will be dear to such, even as to those more openly and professedly connected with him. Christ's servants do not work magically, by the mechanical force of dark formulas, but by sympathy and moral oneness with him. 3. *That sympathy and help towards a disciple, as such, is itself a proof of discipleship.* (1) The slightest sign of this spirit is to be welcomed in faith and hope, as a firstfruits of greater things to come. (2) But in itself it is already truly a great service, and as such will be certainly rewarded. It seems almost more precious, in its connection, than the "mighty works;" for these may sometimes incommode, and be mingled with much error and evil, but the merciful kindness is ever serviceable, and flows from no other fountain than the heart of God.

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THESE ARE TO BE REGARDED. The child of grace is to be trustfully disposed, and ready to put a charitable construction upon the merely negative behaviour of men. And, moreover, it is to be recollected that the principle is not one of judgment, but of policy. "Jesus would impress it upon his disciples that they must honour and protect the isolated beginnings or germs of faith to be found in the world" (Lange). Towards all who do not oppose Christ there is to be an attitude of hopeful and trustful encouragement (cf. Matt. xi. 42). 1. *Christian acknowledgment.* "Forbid them not." Involving (1) brotherly recognition—not mere toleration; (2) fostering and protecting care; (3) devout thankfulness and humility. 2. *Remembering their relation to the same Master.* (1) He acknowledges them; (2) he will afterwards reward them; (3) we shall be sternly and awfully judged if we "cause them to stumble." "The word for millstone indicates the larger stone-mill, in working which an ass was generally employed, as distinguished from the smaller hand-mill of Luke xvii. 35. The punishment was not recognized in the Jewish Law, but it was in occasional use among the Greeks (Diod. Sic., xvi. 35), and had been inflicted by Augustus (Sueton., 'Aug.,' lxvii.) in cases of special infamy. Jerome states (in a note on this passage) that it was practised in Galilee, and it is not improbable that the Romans had inflicted it upon some of the ringleaders of the insurrection headed by Judas of Galilee. The infamy of offending one of the 'little ones' was as great as that of those whose crimes brought upon them this exceptional punishment. It was obviously a form of death less cruel in itself than many others, and its chief horror, both for Jews and heathen, was probably that it deprived the dead of all rites of burial" (Plumptre, in 'New Test. Com.'). This punishment, such as it was, was but a shadow of the more terrible penalties of the spiritual state.—M.

Vers. 43—49.—*The value of deliverance from spiritual snares.* I. ILLUSTRATED BY: 1. *Relative importance of that which is sacrificed and that which is saved.* They are as parts to the whole: as external limbs or members compared with the entire nature, or central *ego.* "Our Saviour of course specifies hand and foot only for rhetorical purposes. It is a fine, bold, graphic way of bringing home to the imagination and the bosom the idea of *what is near and dear to our natural feelings.* He speaks in hieroglyphics" (Morison). They represent also our natural lust, tendencies, and carnalized faculties. 2. *Terrible consequences to the wicked in the world to come.* "Gehenna;" "the Gehenna of fire." "Originally it was the Greek form of Ge-hinnom (the Valley of Hinnom, sometimes of the "son" or the "children" of Hinnom), and was applied to a narrow gorge on the south of Jerusalem (Josh. xv. 8)" (Plumptre). It became the common cesspool and place for consuming filth. Dead bodies of great criminals were probably cast forth without burial into it; and fires were continually burning for the destruction of the offal. It is, of course, only a type of the punishment of the lost. "There is a commingled reference to two modes of destruction—vermicular putrefaction and fire. When men's bodies are destroyed, it is generally either by the one agency or by the other. Both are here combined for cumulative rhetorical effect. And the dread climax of the whole representation is found in the ceaselessness of the twofold operation"

(Morison). There are two elements in this destruction, viz.: (1) internal corruptions—"their worm;" and (2) external consuming forces—"fire." Both of these are to be understood of their spiritual analogues.

II. MORALLY STIMULATIVE BECAUSE OF APPEAL TO FREE-WILL AND SPIRITUAL AGENCY OF MAN. These considerations would have no weight but for this. Just as one *can* cut off a hand or a foot, and pluck out an eye, so one can restrain erring desires and affections, and curb unruly appetites. This is the *sin* of the ruined one, viz. he is *self*-ruined. And all corrupting influence one exerts, returns upon himself to his own destruction. *Self-sacrifice is, therefore, the only way of salvation.* The power to do this is given by Christ. "It is better to make any sacrifice than to retain any sin" (Godwin). "The meaning is not that any man is in such a case that he hath no better way to avoid sin and hell [than being maimed]; but if he had no better, he should choose this. Nor doth it mean that maimed persons are maimed in heaven; but if it were so, it were a less evil" (Richard Baxter).—M.

Vers. 49, 50.—*Christian purity—its origin and influence.* These verses have been the subject of much controversy. They are obscure and difficult; but the context is of great assistance, and a uniform interpretation of the term "salted" in the first and second clauses of ver. 50 will do much to remove the hindrances in the way of construing them together. Manuscript authority is not strong enough to compel the rejection of either clause, although our revisers have omitted the latter. Everything turns upon the sense given to "salted." It is evidently "purified," "preserved from corruption," in the second clause. So ought it to be understood in the first. "Consumed" is a sense implied in the sense "purified," and secondary to it. The whole emphasis of the passage is thus in favour of Christian purification. Again, the second clause of ver. 50 does not appear to have been quoted merely in confirmatory or illustrative allusion, but as a statement of the consequence which will flow from the first; the conjunction having a slightly illative force.

I. HOW SPIRITUAL PURITY IS PRODUCED AND SUSTAINED. 1. "*With fire:*" a figurative term, relating itself to the fire that is not quenched of the preceding passage, and the description of the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Matt. iii. 11, 12). "Even when manifested in its most awful forms, it is still true that they who 'walk righteously and speak uprightly' may dwell with 'everlasting burnings'" (Plumptre). "Thy God is a consuming fire" (Deut. iv. 24); and that to the evil *in* his people, as well as that out of which they are taken. This may refer (1) to the general spiritual experience of the child of God as subject to the influences of the Holy Spirit; (2) to Divine chastisement; (3) to "the spirit to which our Saviour refers in vers. 43—48, *the spirit that parts, for righteousness' sake, with a hand, a foot, an eye*" (Morison). It is "an alternative fire," "which indeed scorches the sensibility to agony, but which in the end consumes only what is bad, and leaves the soul freed from those moral combustibles on which the penal fire of Gehenna could feed." "He is *preserved from corruption, and consequent everlasting destruction, by the fire of unsparing self-sacrifice*" (ibid.). 2. *This is the universal experience of true Christians.* Because it is essential to the Divine life in the soul, if indeed it be not rather identical with it. Have we endured this "scourging," without which no son is received by our Father? Is this our spirit? Herein we can examine ourselves.

II. ITS INFLUENCE. It affects: 1. *Christians* (1) individually; (2) collectively. "Have salt in yourselves, and *be at peace* one with another." Purity of aim and spirit will obviate misunderstandings, and allay bitternesses between true believers. 2. *Their sacrifices.* It is in a sense the spirit of Christ's sacrifice communicated to theirs. As it was a law of the Levitical code that "every sacrifice should be salted with salt," so it is a law of the spiritual life, fulfilled through the spirit of self-sacrifice communicated to the particular act and object of sacrifice. This applies to the whole outcome and expression of the spiritual life of the children of God, their thought, word, action, as well as to their gifts to the cause of Christ. 3. *The general life of the world.* "Ye are the salt of the earth." An indirect and incomplete, but still a positive blessing to the world of the unconverted. For this constant renewals of grace are required, from a source independent of ourselves. Watchfulness, prayer ceaseless self-sacrifice in the spirit of Christ.—M.

Ver. 36.—*Christ and the child: a sermon to children.* The disciples of Jesus had been disputing amongst themselves which of them should be the greatest in his kingdom. Though they were ashamed to confess this, Jesus knew all about it; for he overhears even whispered and secret conversations. He rebuked their ambition by calling a little child to him, who was glad enough to come to One so loving; and taking him up in his arms, he bade his disciples become childlike, not caring for money and high positions, but being glad in the love of the Lord. Probably the child never saw Jesus again; but he would never forget him. Legend reports that his name was Ignatius, and that he grew up to be an earnest and devout man, who at last bravely died for the faith. But the treatment of this child by Jesus is only an example of his treatment of children now. He loves them, and they should love him.

I. WHY DID JESUS CALL THE CHILD TO HIM? 1. *Because there was something in the child which Jesus liked.* We do not call to us and take into our arms those we hate and avoid. It was not sinlessness that Jesus saw in the child, but *simplicity.* He was something like what Jesus himself had been in the home at Nazareth, when he was subject to his parents, and so sweet, humble, and gentle that every one loved him. Children are not perfectly innocent; they do many things that are wrong, and need to be forgiven. Jesus did not say to the child, "You can do without me," but, "Come to me." So, when he saw the young man who said he had kept the commandments, Jesus "loved him;" yet he did not leave him as he was, but bade him go and sell all that he had. 2. *Because there was in the child something he wanted.* He wanted the child's *love.* "My son, give me thine heart." The way to be loved is to love; and Jesus loves us, not as crowds, but as individuals. Each can say with Paul, "He loved *me*, and gave himself for me." The child knew this from the look and tone of the Lord. 3. *Because there was something he hoped to do for the child.* He meant to *save* him. To be saved from sin involves something more than being forgiven. If bad temper asserts itself, you may be forgiven for an outburst; but it rises again and again. Jesus would conquer that temper so that it should never trouble you any more.

II. WHY DID THE CHILD GO TO JESUS? He might have hesitated and said, "He does not mean it;" or, "The disciples are rough, and will push me back, or laugh at me;" or, "Perhaps I had better wait a little, till I am older." Instead of this, he went at once, and went as he was. There are reasons why you, as children, should go to him. 1. *Because conscience says you need him.* Conscience is more sensitive, and speaks more clearly in childhood than in age; and this is an evidence that childhood is the appointed and the best time to hear God's voice. 2. *Because affection says you need him.* Some children feel much secret grief because they have an impression that no one cares much for them. Their brothers and sisters are more popular than they are, so they are always supposing that they are being slighted. Or perhaps they are at school, and are thoroughly homesick among strangers. How pleasant it is to feel that One who is always near loves you personally, intensely, fervently! and how naturally should your love flow forth responsively to him! 3. *Because energy says you need him.* A child is naturally active. The fingers itch to touch what is forbidden, to try what is unknown; and mischief often results from no evil intention. All that pent-up energy is from God; stored up for the doing of life's work, and the bearing of its burdens. And the Lord wants in his kingdom these vigorous frames and powerful minds, that he may sanctify and bless them—that the children may lead off the hosannas in which the world will join in the New Jerusalem. 4. *Because hope says you want him.* Every child has some hope of becoming better and greater. It is a sign that Paradise is lost, but that heaven is possible, else we might be satisfied. Many boys and girls have quiet times, little spoken of to others, when they say, "I wish I could be better; that I could get over this evil habit; that I was steadfast, pure, and true; that I loved God, and was glad he loved me." That is the time when Jesus is near, when he stretches out his arms and says, "Come unto me;" and in answer to the secret prayer he will take the little one in his arms, put his hands on him, and bless him.—A. R.

Ver. 41.—*Christian beneficence.* Loving consideration for others and generous kindness to them are among the fruits of the Spirit and the signs of true discipleship. Their effects it would not be easy to exaggerate. The law of kindness for Jesus' sake is of all things the most likely to remove prejudices against Christianity, and to bring

together those whose interests are separate, so as to ensure the salvation of society. Even on lower grounds, therefore, this law demands our obedience, for there is much in our social condition to cause anxiety to the Church. Questions once carefully ignored are being boldly discussed; classes of men whose ignorance and poverty made them political nonentities are now powers in the State. Capitalists and producers are discussing anew their respective rights; owners of land are being openly asked whether the proportion they have received of its value is not greater than their due. And in all these movements agitators are exaggerating claims, some of which have in them germs of right. Meanwhile it is to be feared that religion, as a factor in the settlement of such disputes, is being disregarded, and debate is rife whether indeed the Christian faith is longer credible. Anything which would suddenly change the relations of various classes, any outburst of the communistic or nihilistic spirit, would bring about far more evil than good. Evils must be abolished now as they were in the early days of the Christian faith. When slaves were held in cruel bondage, and profligacy assumed hideous forms, and accumulated wealth appeared side by side with abject want, Christ and the teachers who followed him aroused no servile war, but by word and life showed a more excellent way. They taught that the highest bliss was not in abundance of possessions, but in abundance of spiritual life; that the loftiest dignity was to be found not in the indulgence, but in the denial, of self; that all a man possessed he held as a responsible steward; and that those removed from others in social position were brothers and sisters to be cared for. All this was exhibited in the life of One who went about doing good, and was seen in its ultimate victory on the cross where Christ died for us, that we henceforth might live no more to ourselves. One phase of this law of kindness is brought before us in our text, where its manifestation is recognized as a germ of discipleship.

I. THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE is asserted throughout Scripture. Under the old dispensation, the blessedness of him who considers the poor was exemplified in the experience of Job, and of the widow of Sarepta, and of multitudes besides. The duty was made still more clear in the New Testament; and this is noteworthy, because the disciples of our Lord were themselves poor, so that no one of them could give out of his superabundance; and even of our Lord himself this was true, though he so often showed that it was more blessed to give than to receive. On this principle the Church acted. Spontaneously Barnabas sold his estates to aid those who were in special difficulties because they were cast out of trade and home, and his example was contagious. There was no law passed that Christians should do this; but though as a compulsory law it would have been an unsound dictum for all times, it was right and good when Christians, moved by pity for their poor persecuted brethren, distributed as every man had need. Spontaneity gives worth to such acts. He who thus gives, though it be but a cup of cold water, shall not lose his reward.

II. THE OBJECTS OF CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE. All less favoured than ourselves have a claim, not necessarily on our money, but on our help and sympathy, in some form, when an opportunity comes for service in Christ's Name. 1. *Human relationship* has its claims on us, and he who does not "provide for his own," even though he benefits some religious organization, fails in his duty to his Lord. 2. *Neighbourhood* has claims on us. No follower of Christ can be like the rich man, who would give alms to be seen of man, but would let poor Lazarus die at his gate, fighting for crumbs with the dogs. 3. *Fellowship in the same Church* has claims on us, though those needing our aid may be least in knowledge, least in capacity, least in attractiveness, or least in desert. 4. *But we are to do good unto all men*, though especially to such as are of the household of faith. Christ died for all, and in his Name, for his sake, in his spirit, we must seek to aid them, even though it only be by a cup of cold water.

III. THE REASONS FOR CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE are numerous, but we may mention one or two. 1. *All we have is from God.* His providence has made us to differ. Our birth, our inheritance, our education, our natural capacities,—these are in no sense the results of our own creation or choice. He who gave us these, demands that we should use them in part to promote the peace and the comfort of those for whom his Son died. "Freely ye have received, freely give." 2. *Our superabundance is for others.* When our cup runs over, the droppings are not for ourselves but for others. When our harvest is gathered, room must be made for gleaners as well as for reapers. Waste

is against God's law. The breath we throw off from our lungs is wanted by nature. The rain poured down so lavishly is not lost. The refuse flung on the soil is to reappear in new forms. All nature rebukes the waste and extravagance of which we are often guilty; and Ambrose has well said, "It is no greater sin to take from him that rightly possesseth than being able not to give to him that wanteth."—A. R.

Vers. 43, 45, 47.—*Causes of stumbling.* "If thy hand . . . if thy foot . . . if thine eye offend thee." The passage from which these few words are chosen is stern and severe; yet it was uttered by the gentle Teacher who would not break the bruised reed. Christ Jesus was not like the Pharisees, punctilious over little things, so he would not have uttered these words needlessly. He was not ignorant of human temptations and weaknesses, but had the most perfect knowledge of our nature. He was not one of those scribes who would bind heavy burdens on others, and yet not touch them with one of their fingers, but was tempted as we are, and by a life and death of sacrifice endeavoured to put away the sin of the world. Words stern as these, coming from One who had generous views of sinners and unerring views of sin in its nature and effect, deserve our serious consideration. Our Lord thought them so important that he now repeated them, although none who had heard them previously in his sermon on the mount would be likely to forget them. The general lesson taught is this—that it is better to die than to sin, and so to wrong ourselves and others; but we confine ourselves now to the causes or incitements to sin here suggested by the "hand," the "foot," and the "eye."

I. OF WHAT IS THE HAND AN EMBLEM? 1. *Companionship.* We shake hands with those to whom we are introduced or with whom we are friendly, not with those who are unknown or hostile. If we have quarrelled, and reconciliation has been effected, the outstretched hand is a sign that we are reconciled. It is often said that a man is known by his friends, and it is perhaps equally true that he is made by his friends, especially in the time of youth, when character is plastic and habits are readily formed. Some communication with others is a necessity of school and business life; but friends may be chosen; and it is of the last importance that they be chosen well. Yet Christians will sometimes form a lifelong companionship with those whose worldliness will inevitably lead them astray from the ways of God. "If thy hand" in such a companionship "cause thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee." 2. *Work.* The hand is the medium through which we put forth our skill and strength. Daily work may have "holiness to the Lord" written on it, or may be the means of spiritual injury. There are shops in which dishonesty is a necessity; there are positions young girls are called upon to fill which cannot but injure their modesty and purity; there are undertakings which can only succeed by a sacrifice of truth. Whatever their external and material advantages, these are amongst the causes of offence which our Lord calls on us to sacrifice.

II. OF WHAT IS THE FOOT AN EMBLEM? By it we make progress. It may be taken, therefore, as a figure for getting on in the world. Parents are sometimes too eager for this on their children's behalf. They are like Lot, who sought the place of prosperity and was regardless of its temptations. It were far better to be less swift to attain wealth and position than to have the terrible awakening that will come to many at last. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

III. OF WHAT IS THE EYE AN EMBLEM? Through it most offences to the soul's purity come. Fatal has been the issue with many of "seeing life." David saw, lusted, and fell into adultery and murder. Eve saw, longed, and put forth her hand and took the forbidden fruit, and so came death into the world, and all our woe. Achan saw the garment and the gold, and covetousness led him to disobedience. Better to have been blind than to have seen that. How many now fall into evil ways who assure any one remonstrating with them that they are only going to that place of temptation because they wish for once "to see what it is like"! There are books, too, which, from the doubts they insinuate or from the morality they implicitly commend, should be abjured. It may be sometimes an intellectual loss, but it results in larger gain; and the law of the gospel is that which is here, and which St. Paul repeats in the words, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth."—A. R.

Vers. 43, 44.—*Better die than sin.* Christ is speaking here of injuries which we may do ourselves or others. Most men guard themselves carefully against physical injury. They insure against accidents, avoid miasma, and attend to the first appearance of the germs of disease. Yet sometimes they are like a commander who is on the alert against external assault, but is unsuspicious of treachery within. In a moral sense, it may often be said, "A man's foes are they of his own household." The allusion to the hand, the foot, and the eye indicate that the causes of sin are found in our own nature; that evil is natural to us as the use of these members. Sins spring from within: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." When acts are repeated, habits are formed which become part of ourselves. Then these habits are allowed for and excused by others, so that we no longer get our attention directed to them as otherwise we might do. A notoriously selfish man is not asked to help others; a passionate or suspicious temper becomes regarded as a personal peculiarity. Yet, though it seems a part of ourselves, God says, "Cut it off, and cast it from thee."

I. GOD'S TREATMENT OF SIN IS RADICAL. We naturally shrink from the severe method indicated here. Who has not suffered an agony of pain rather than apply to the surgeon or dentist, although it must come to that at last? Nothing short of amputation of evil habit will save the life of the soul. Some are satisfied that they have confessed, received absolution, and done penance at the bidding of a human priest. Others are told to exercise discretion even when the taste and smell of intoxicants are sources of peril, and their only hope is to cut them off. Many excuse the young in their follies, and say, "They must sow their wild oats." Ay, but they will never plough them up, and no subsequent sowing will alter the effects of the first. "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Now, if we see deformity in a child which will mar its beauty for life, the pain he would immediately suffer would not prevent our cutting it off; and if there be a moral weakness or an evil habit that deforms spiritual beauty, the treatment must be as radical. When the moth is in a garment, the careful housewife does not leave a few and run the risk. When a man is bitten by a mad dog, the hot iron will sear the flesh, though it causes agony. When a child dies of diphtheria, the clothes are burnt and the little toys, which the mother would gladly keep, lest the other children should take the infection. The house is purged so as by fire. The treatment is severe, no doubt; but Christ did not come to lead us in the path of ease, but of self-denial. He knew that it was not painless to cut off the hand or the foot and to pluck out the eye, but he declared it was better to suffer what was represented by this than that the man with all his powers should be cast into hell. If this word comes as the sword of the Spirit to cut your heart in twain—

> "Oh, throw away the worser part of it,
> And live the purer with the other half."

Christ "died to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and in his Name we are called upon to "crucify the world with its affections and lusts."

II. GOD'S CALL TO OBEDIENCE IS URGENT. 1. *We are urged to this for the sake of others.* What anxiety would be relieved and what joy would be imparted to Christian friends if, by the transforming power of God's Spirit, you were delivered from evil! Besides this, by delaying repentance you may be causing others to stumble. There is a word in this passage about children—little ones, young people who may be influenced by you for evil. If you laugh at serious impressions, jeer at another as a saint, discourage earnestness, and lead to folly or guilt,—take heed, for it were better that a millstone were hanged about your neck than that such a crime should curse you. Parents especially can hold back their children from evil, and encourage them to good, if they prayerfully seek to do so. By allowing sceptical or immoral literature, by encouraging worldly companionships, they may foster a life of sin, and check the life of God in the soul. Still more power have they by example and personal influence. 2. *We are urged to this for our own sakes.* Christ was the King of Truth. He never deceived, misrepresented, or exaggerated. Ponder, therefore, his solemn words, "It is better for thee to enter life maimed," etc. This is not a literal description of hell. It is an allusion to Isa. lxvi. 24, where the prophet describes apostates from Jehovah lying outside the holy city in the valley of Hinnom, where refuse was cast, and the worm of corruption died not, and the fires of destruction were not extinguished. This

was used as an emblem of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." Figurative as the language is, it is ominous, and warns us against the untold terrors which await the impenitent—the retribution which follows unrepented sin. A man may escape the consequences of sin here, but the punishment must ultimately come. True, "God is merciful." But when a man on the sea-shore disregards warning, and the tide comes in, his cries and prayers are of no avail, and soon his dead body is flung up as a useless waif. He has defied the merciless law of a merciful God. Put yourself in harmony with that law and it brings benediction, but oppose it and it brings destruction. The amazing sacrifice of Christ is only explicable on the theory that sin has effects beyond those which are visible here. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—A. R.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Transfiguration.* A brief interval of six days occurs, "days of the Son of man," of which no record remains. How much of even this brief ministry to men seems to be lost! Yet is the account of each day to be given when, to every man favoured with his presence and teaching, it is said, "Render the account of thy stewardship." The silence of the record is an appropriate prelude to the sublime event which follows. "He went up into a mountain to pray." "Peter, James, and John" —"the flower and crown of the apostolic band"—were the privileged three who alone witnessed the scene, though the few graphic words of the historian, "kept and told to no man until after the Son of man had risen from the dead," have presented to the eye of the Church in all ages a clearly defined picture of it. And yet in viewing it we are dazzled by excess of light. Few and simple must be our words. "He was transfigured," a word which is afterwards explained to apply to "the fashion of his countenance." It was "altered;" so St. Luke. St. Matthew adds, "his face did shine as the sun;" while "his garment became glistering, exceeding white," "white as the light," "so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." Beautiful addition—so naïve, so simple! That Divine nature, which in the incarnate body was always transfigured before the eyes of men, now burst forth to view, radiating from within; the hidden divinity shining through the veil of the flesh until its veil of raiment became radiant with light.

I. In the history and development of the incarnate Son this event must have had its high import. What is personal to himself, however, is almost entirely hidden. Of the "talking" we hear only one word. The two men, "which were Moses and Elijah," "the founder and the great defender of the old dispensation," "spake of his *decease.*" Very soon after "the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up," and "he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." Henceforth his steps tend to the cross.

II. But, whatever purpose was answered in respect of Jesus himself, the revelation most assuredly was, in the highest degree, important to the disciples, and through them to the Church at large. 1. Here is beheld the harmony, the unity, of the Law and the prophets and the Christ. 2. Here, within the "bright cloud" which "overshadowed them," though "they feared as they entered into it," they were made "eye-witnesses of his majesty;" they witnessed the "honour and glory" which "he received from God the Father." 3. They heard the "voice," and heard it "come out of heaven," which bore testimony for all to receive: "This is my beloved Son." In this lay the "honour and glory" which "he received." So thought that one of the three who declared, "It is good to be here," and who would fain have built tabernacles on this "holy mount." This testimony had already been borne when, at the baptism, "a voice out of the" same "heaven" declared *to* him, "*Thou art* my beloved Son." Here the witness is *of* him to others: "*This is* my beloved Son;" and with the additional word of command, "Hear ye him." Once again afterwards, when the Father glorified his Name, there came "a voice out of heaven" directly speaking to him; though, as he declared, "this voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes." How truly might he say of all that he received, "not for my sake, but for your sakes"! Now, not to Peter only, but also to James and John, is it revealed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now they with him share this blessedness which "flesh and blood" could not impart; now we, and with us all the Church, rejoice in the knowledge of this primary truth. Now our hearts long to see his glory and hear the

heavenly voice, and dwell on "the holy mount" of vision! And yet, how "good" soever it might be, it is better for the cultivation of our hearts in righteousness, and far better for the suffering, sinful world, that we go down into the valley to struggle with the evil spirit, and by faith and love and obedience glorify our living Head, and seek a meetness for those "tabernacles" which are not made by human hands.—G.

Vers. 14—28.—*The healing of the lunatic youth.* Descending from "the holy mount," where he had "received honour and glory from God the Father," a scene presented itself in direct contrast to "the majesty" of which the favoured three had then been "eye-witnesses." Around the disciples "they saw a great multitude, and scribes questioning with them." They had suffered a painful defeat. One of the multitude had brought to them his son, having "a dumb spirit;" and he spake to the "disciples that they should cast him out; and they were not able"! A more pitiable object could scarcely be imagined. "From a child" he was "epileptic," and suffered "grievously;" "the spirit ofttimes" casting "him both into the fire and into the waters" as if "to destroy him;" and so dire was its influence over him that, as the father said, "wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away;" "it teareth him that he foameth, and it hardly departeth from him, bruising him sorely;" and when it "taketh him" he, in inarticulate tones, "suddenly crieth out." To add to the sadness of the case, the spirit was "unclean," compelling its victim to acts of filthiness. The poor boy, too, suffered the grievous aggravation of being "dumb," so that he could not tell out his sorrows; and he was "deaf," so that no word of strengthening consolation could be spoken to him. It was almost a misfortune to him not to be blind, for he could contrast his sad state with that of other youths around him. The father, wearied and disappointed with long and daily watching—for it seized him "suddenly"—and unable to find relief, brought him to the disciples, and met the sad rebuke of their inability. "They could not" cast him out. As a last resource, with timid, wearied heart, and with a hesitancy that surely found its justification in the failure of all efforts to obtain relief, he brought him to Jesus, uttering the word so descriptive of timid doubt, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." It is now that he who bears alike our sins and sorrows, who "bears with" our weakness and our ignorance, who, even in his greatest works, strives so to work as to teach, corrects the imperfect view of the father, and makes his demand even upon his faulty faith, gently rebuking his pardonable insinuation. "It is not, 'If I can,' but, 'If thou canst!'" And he adds for all ages the all-inclusive teaching, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Christ's words, even of correction, rouse faith. The assurance that "all things" were "possible" to faith drew forth from the tremulous lips the profession of faith, "I believe;" while the tearful eyes (margin) bore witness to the genuineness of the confession hidden in the lowly prayer, "Help," and therein forgive, "thou mine unbelief." It is enough. With his word, in presence of a "multitude" that "came running together," he cast out the dumb and deaf spirit, and commanded him to "enter no more into him." The scene is full of teaching:

I. ON THE SAD CAPACITY OF THE HUMAN LIFE FOR SUFFERING AND DEGRADATION.

II. ON THE GLORIOUS POWER OF CHRIST TO HEAL AND RESTORE THE UTMOST DISORGANIZATION AND DEGENERATION OF THE HUMAN LIFE. It is an instance of his "power over all the power of the enemy." With such a picture before their eyes, who need hesitate to come to Jesus, in any need whatsoever? But the greatest teaching lies in the words spoken to the disciples in reply to their demand as to the reason why they "could not cast it out,"—"because of your little faith."

III. For us and for all, a third teaching, ON THE POWER OF PRAYER AND FAITH, lies openly on the face of the Lord's words to the distressed father. It is impossible to read the Gospels without learning that in Christ's view the exercise of Divine power over the suffering human life is often suspended on the attainment of certain conditions on the part of the sufferers. There is a fitness of things. Suffering and need seem to come of departures from the Divine order. The voluntary return to that order is most aptly, perhaps most easily, expressed by "faith." It indicates the lowly submissiveness of the spirit. It is the plasticity of the clay which truly prepares it for the hand of the potter. It is the least, and yet the best, self-fitting work that can be done by any who

would experience "the power of the Lord to heal." It is at once the acknowledgment of the human impotence, need, and receptivity; it is the symbol of departure from all other and competing helpers; it is an acceptance of the Lord himself, and in and with him the germ of all healing, whether of body or soul.—G.

Vers. 28, 29.—*The conditions of success in spiritual work.* As might have been expected, "when he was come into the house, the disciples asked him privately," "How is it that we could not cast it out?" The reply is simple: "This kind can come out by nothing, save prayer." St. Matthew helps us to gain a clearer insight into the cause: "Because of your little faith." "Many ancient authorities add *and fasting*" (margin). The "little faith" must have approached closely to "unbelief," or to no faith, for the Lord adds, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed . . . nothing shall be impossible to you." A little thought will compel us to learn much concerning the influence of faith and of prayer, if not also of fasting, in the work assigned to the disciples and in the general and ceaseless conflict with evil. That there was some hindering cause palsying the strength of the disciples is obvious. But recently Jesus had "given them power and authority over all devils," "and to cure diseases," and they are suddenly powerless in the use of that authority. That they may have been cherishing feelings which were inconsistent with so sacred a trust, the subsequent record plainly declares. But our attention is riveted on the words of our Lord in his demand for prayer and faith; and we learn at once, that the bestowment of great authority, even with high endowments, does not set aside the necessity for cherishing suitable conditions of mind in order to the effective discharge of the duties which that authority imposes. The calling to be apostles, the investiture with power to cast out devils and to cure diseases, does not release from the necessity to be clothed with humility—to live in that spirit of withdrawment from the world, and communion with the Father, which "prayer," even if not joined with "fasting," implies. The mere symbols of office are useless in the spiritual realm. Rank in these hierarchies conveys no might. Yea, though the very "power" be given, and given by Christ himself, no presumption of personal freedom from the need of the lowliest spirit may be entertained. As Christ's own power was arrested by the "unbelief" of those amongst whom he would do "many mighty works," so the "power" entrusted to apostles is defied by "the unclean spirit" if the minds of those apostles are not freed from unbelief, and not raised to an alliance with heavenly powers by prayer. Entangled in nets that beset even their feet, exposed to temptations that rudely assail even them, they, though armed by the great power and authority of the kingdom, become weak, and are as other men. Hence we learn that in the spiritual kingdom—

I. THE MERE AUTHORITY OF OFFICE IS INSUFFICIENT FOR DOING GREAT WORKS IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. Apostles, prophets, preachers, teachers, rulers, are all taught that there is a condition of heart needed as well as an investiture of office.

II. NO ENDOWMENT OF POWER OR GIFTS SETS ASIDE THE NECESSITY FOR LOWLY SPIRITUAL EXERCISES. For while these acknowledge and minister to lowliness of heart, they bring their possessor into a true and living sympathy with the heavenly kingdom, and make him a meet channel for the conveyance of its healing grace. No mere talent suffices.

III. FAITH AND PRAYERFULNESS DESCRIBE THE TRUE CONDITION OF THE SOUL OF HIM OF WHOM IT IS TO BE SAID, "THOU HAST POWER WITH GOD AND WITH MAN, AND HAST PREVAILED." The spiritual, who wield spiritual weapons, must maintain a spiritual sensibility. This cannot be maintained without that true fasting which is a withdrawment from the spirit of the world, or without that prayerfulness which is a true communion with the Father, or without that faith which is the real might of the soul. These are steps in the spiritual progress; the final attainment being, not the feeble word on the lip, "Come out of him," but that perfect oneness with the Divine which, while it acknowledges the human impotence, makes the feeble man a true and fit instrument of the Divine power. For by that power alone, after all, is the devil cast out.—G.

Vers. 33—37.—*Honour.* By slow steps Jesus had brought the chosen band of the disciples onward in that course of instruction which prepared them to ascend "the holy

mount" and behold "his glory," "glory as of the only begotten from the Father." He had also begun to show unto them that "he must suffer many things," and "be killed," making them "exceeding sorry." And he had spoken to them of the time "when the Son of man should have risen again from the dead;" but "what the rising again from the dead should mean" they understood not. Now by silent and hidden byways, secretly, for "he would not that any man should know it," they passed through Galilee and came to Capernaum. Jesus, taking advantage of this quiet, "taught his disciples" concerning the dark future that loomed upon him. But their minds seem to have been preoccupied, and "they understood not the saying." Scarcely had they entered the house when he demanded of them, "What were ye reasoning in the way?" Shame covered their face, the searching question revealing the power of him before whom all hearts be open. They were dumb before him, for "they had disputed one with another in the way who was the greatest." The distinction conferred upon the three, or the signal honour paid to Peter, may have been the occasion for this dispute, fanned perhaps by the anticipation of the decease at Jerusalem. Possibly there may have been an assumption of superiority on the part of one in that little republic. But such a spirit must be instantly crushed; and on the dark human background must the principles of the true heavenly kingdom be thrown forward. In calmness "he sat down," and solemnly "called the twelve" to him, and laid down as a principle to be then and for ever remembered, that in his house, or kingdom, or brotherhood, things are different from what they are in ordinary communities of men. And strange as the paradox may seem, the lowest is the highest, the most laborious servant is the true lord, the least is the greatest. "If any would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all." Further to impress this truth upon the hearts of the men who were contending for the highest room, the chief seat, the father's place in the house, "he took a little child"—the least in the house, and the furthest removed from the head; lower even than the servants, for they command the little children—"and set him in the midst." The Lord's sermon from this visible text is elsewhere recorded at length. The lesson for us to ponder, and often to ponder, for we are in great danger of forgetting it, is—He is the chief, the greatest, the first, in the kingdom of heaven who does most service in it. The honour is not to him who sits at the head of the table—any feeble one can do that; but to him who, girt with a towel, waits on the rest—to him who sees the true greatness of the kingdom; who so discerns its lofty, spiritual, and heavenly character, as to learn his own littleness in presence of it; who perceives that its highest end and aim is reached in rendering the utmost service to men. He who has seen the "Lord and Master" of all girded with a towel, stooping to wash and wipe the feet of his servants; he who has most of this his Master's spirit, who follows most closely in his Master's steps of toilsome, self-sacrificing service; he who, like his Master, does the most and the hardest work in the house;—yea, he is really and indeed the chief, the greatest, the first, in the house. And so, in truth, is it in all houses and in all kingdoms; the truly great are the labourers, the men who always see the kingdom to be greater than they, and, seeing the aim of the kingdom to be greater than the kingdom itself, are lowly enough and great enough to serve that aim, and have their greatness and most honourable place, not in medals, and decorations, and plaudits, and rewards, but in the deep if hidden fact, that the kingdom's welfare has been most advanced by them, that they have saved it from ruin or advanced it in honour, prosperity, and blessing. Then let every one seek eagerly the first, the highest place; but let every toilsome servant know that, in Christ's view, that is most prized which is furthest from self-adulation, from empty vanity, from indolent glorying in place; that he who most obeys, who hardest works, who lowliest walks—he, even he, is chief. This is the highest tribute paid (1) to all lowliness of mind, (2) to all diligent industry, (3) to all willing, self-sacrificing service to the common good.—G.

Vers. 38—50.—*Stumbling-blocks.* The same spirit which had led to the disputing as to "who was the greatest," had prompted the forbidding of one who, in Jesus' Name, was "casting out devils." The only reason assigned for the authoritative prohibition was, "He followed not us." If to pride envy succeeds, and if hatred lurks near to envy, malice is not afar off. The simple correction, "Forbid him not," is supported by the assurance that such a one cannot quickly become an enemy—"speak evil of me;" and

"he that is not against us is for us." This admonition is urged by a teaching which branches out in three directions, relating to—

I. THE FAITHFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND REWARD OF THE LEAST SERVICE RENDERED TO THE DISCIPLES IN THE NAME OF CHRIST—even "a cup of water to drink." Very wide apart are the two works, the "casting out devils" and the giving "a cup of water to drink." The one act may be performed by a mere child in age or in grace; but the other is the work of the man in grace and years. That the disciples were in the wrong in forbidding him who did the greater work, is shown by the assurance that he who does the less is acknowledged and rewarded by the Lord of all. Did not the disciples know that the casting out of devils was service done to them? Were they as ignorant as so many to-day are, not knowing that in the conquest of evil every one's best interests are advanced? Intimately is the well-being of one bound up in the well-being of all. The human body is not more closely knit and compacted together than is human society. To do good to any part is to do good to the whole. And each part suffers in the suffering, or loss, or injury of any other. Then by whomsoever or howsoever devils are cast out, let every true lover of his race and every wise lover of himself rejoice. Such a worker is not "against us," but "for us."

II. THE EQUALLY FAITHFUL PUNISHMENT OF ANY WHO SHALL CAUSE ONE OF THE LOWLIEST—one "of the least of these little ones that believe on me"—TO STUMBLE. But a rude interference with any worker of good is an offence against that good Lord, from whom alone men have power to do good. Here not only were devils cast out, but they were cast out in the Name of Christ. Plainly this was a servant of Christ, and a disciple, acknowledged as "one of these little ones that believe on me," to whom the Lord had given "power and authority." And that power was being used obediently. How serious a stumbling-block was thrown in the way of his obedience by the authoritative prohibition of the (possibly jealous) disciples! But how great the penalty—worse than to have "a great millstone hanged about his neck," and to be "drowned in the depth of the sea"! So jealously does the Lord of all guard the interests even of "little ones." It were better for a man to lose his own life in time than to lead another astray, so that he should lose the life eternal; better for them both. But what was the greater evil to which the layer of stumbling-blocks was exposed? Was it not the certainty that the Lord would do with his own body what he taught the disciples to do with theirs?—"cut off" the "hand" or "foot," "cast out" the "eye" that caused the body to stumble, whomsoever that foot or eye or hand might be? Was the foot cut off when Judas was severed from the body, and cut off to save the body, so that through all ages, of the twelve chosen, one must be wanting? Sad was the possibility, severe the warning; but how merciful and gracious! Men act on the principle, and sever a limb to save a life. So in spirituals should it be.

III. THE WISDOM OF EVERY DISCIPLE UTTERLY RENOUNCING WHATEVER MIGHT CAUSE HIM TO STUMBLE, OR BE A STUMBLING-BLOCK TO OTHERS. For every disciple the principle holds good. It is wise to forego anything that threatens the true life rather than lose that life. To retain all and be "cast into hell"—not into the mere hiding, or hidden place, but into "the unquenchable fire," the fire into which the spirit will be cast; worse than that, into which the body may be thrown, the real Gehenna, not the symbolical one—is to lose all. "To enter into the kingdom of God," having suffered the loss of that which was dear as an eye, a hand, or a foot, "is good" indeed in comparison with being "cast into" that "hell." There is a final fire, a fire that "is not quenched," which is punishment. And there is a present temporary fire, a salting fire, which is corrective and disciplinary. To this the cutting off the hand corresponds. It is a pain-giving, fiery ordeal, with which every one in God's good way is "salted." And there is a salt of self-denial, which leads men to be "at peace one with another." It is held in the thought, which the "many ancient authorities" teach, that if any one would be a true sacrifice to God he must faithfully apply the fiery salt to the green, cankerous wound and burn out the evil, lest the evil burn out and burn up the life.—G.

Vers. 2—18.—*Glimpses of the glory of Jesus.* I. SPECIAL FAVOURS FOR SPECIAL SERVICES. The three disciples had given up all to follow Christ, had submitted them-

selves entirely to the Divine will. Only to such consecration is the deeper vision of truth granted, and ascent to the loftiest heights of spiritual enjoyment.

II. DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S APPEARANCE. 1. He wore one appearance for the multitude, another for the circle of disciples. In the multitude he was the Prophet and the Wonder-worker; to the disciples the Friend and familiar Teacher. The multitude felt that he must be a great Man; the disciples knew him to be the Anointed One and Divine. 2. Among the disciples themselves: there was the familiar and ordinary, the extraordinary and unusual aspect of Christ. Here he passes out of the earthly medium of vision into one of celestial and supernatural glory.

"How nigh is grandeur to our dust!
How near is God to man!"

3. The manifestation of Christ is one in which extremes meet. The Man of sorrows, the beloved Son, delighted in of God. The lowly Teacher and Missionary of the kingdom of God; the enthroned Messiah. The Man, the God, and "both together mixed." 4. We cannot always enjoy the higher views in their clearness and brilliancy. After the vision and the voice, they look round and see "Jesus only!" Well for those who can ever see and find in Jesus of Nazareth the highest revelation they need of the Divine majesty and the Divine love.—J.

Vers. 9—13.—*Dark sayings.* I. RESERVE AND DELAY IN THE UTTERANCES OF TRUTH. There is an economy and an order in the kingdom of God. It is constantly observed by Christ. Certain truths there are always and everywhere to be made known; others must wait their time. As we are not to pry into the secrets of God, so neither are we hastily to blab them. Peculiar personal revelations should be treated with delicacy, not made an affair of the news-room or the market-place. The hour will come when our holiest memories, our deepest convictions, will be extracted from us by the need of the time.

II. ILLUSIONS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT. The prophecy concerning Elijah (Mal. iv. 5) was misunderstood, being taken literally. It was fulfilled in the person of the Baptist (John i. 21; Luke i. 17). John came to restore the Jewish people from the wrong teaching and preachers of later times, to the earlier and better lessons of the Law and the prophets. Another illusion was that the Messiah was to be a glorious earthly sovereign, and exempt from suffering. The scribes overlooked the predictions concerning the sufferings of Christ. So has every age its illusions; and God in every age fulfils himself unexpectedly. Even out of the humble and the lowly, the base things of the world, he causes his purpose to unfold, his power to be made manifest. The spirit of prophecy teaches that suffering belongs to the present service of God.—J.

Vers. 14—29.—*The demoniac.* I. WANT OF SPIRITUAL POWER IS CAUSED BY WANT OF FAITH. Faith is a mighty word in the gospel. It really includes all the energies of knowing, feeling, and willing; it is the entire affirmation of the man in favour of truth, goodness, and love. It is life in the power of God. In a sense it is unnatural to be without faith, for it is the pulse of the world. If we have not this we are weak, we cannot move a step beyond the bounds of actual knowledge—can take nothing for granted.

II. FAITH, WHEN WEAK, BECOMES DIMINISHED BY ASSOCIATION WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NONE. We become cowards or braver in company: pessimists or optimists. We trust in the good order of the world as God's, or give up everything for lost to the devil. "God desires from all eternity cheerful and brave sons," says Luther. Let us keep company with cheerful and trustful souls.

III. ON THE OTHER HAND, STRONG FAITH IS COMMUNICATIVE AND INSPIRING (J. H. Godwin). Tell an invalid he is looking ill, and you make him feel worse. Tell him he is improving, and his faith in his physical future will revive at the brighter picture. We are governed by imagination, and faith is a kind of imagination. It is exposed to the most contagious influences for health or disease. Whenever a strong deed is done, or mighty word spoken—

"Our hearts, in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise."

IV. FAITH IS THE CONDITION BOTH OF DOING AND RECEIVING THE HIGHEST GOOD. Faith gives a mental picture, distinguished from other mental pictures in that it is as *good as a reality* to him who views it. Now, we must have the distinct idea of a good to be received before we can place ourselves in the attitude to receive it; or of the good to be done and the possibility of doing it, before we can set about attempting it. The question then arises—Can faith be commanded by the will? The answer is—Not directly. "Paint a fire, it will not therefore burn." But the rebuke of Jesus implies that the disciples ought to have had faith. And the lesson is that faith may indirectly be obtained, be promoted, fostered, and preserved by communion with God.—J.

Vers. 30—32.—*Renewed prediction of death.* I. UNWELCOME OUTLOOKS SHOULD BE FIRMLY FACED. 'Tis not well to hide the head in the sand, like the ostrich, and try to fancy danger absent because not seen. For, if faced, the worst prospect loses at once half, and presently all, its terrors.

II. THE WILL OF GOD IS TO BE RECOGNIZED, EVEN IN THE WICKEDNESS OF MEN. It is by conflict that his will is wrought out. Outbursts of crime represent only one side of great living forces, and onward moving facts.

III. UNWELCOME TRUTHS NEED TO BE REPEATED, BUT NOT FOR ALL. There is an esoteric and an exoteric in Christianity. We do not tell children all we know of life. But there is an age, and there are persons, to whom all should be told that we know. Let truth be economized and wisely administered.—J.

Vers. 33—37.—*The symbolic child.* I. THE EXAMPLE OF CHILDREN. They are humble and trustful in the presence of superior wisdom. Man not always so, but ought always to be so.

II. THE SECRET OF POWER LIES IN SERVICE. Command others by being useful to them. Rise in a community by working your way through all the grades of service, from the lowest to the highest.

III. TO STOOP IN LOVE IS TO RISE IN HONOUR. Jesus puts his arms around the little ones and around the weak, and is enthroned in the dependent heart of mankind.

IV. THE SCALE OF SERVICE, AND THE INCLUSION OF THE LOWER IN THE HIGHER. The order of duty is not to begin with the high and the remote, but with the lowly and the mean. "God is served by obedience to Christ, and Christ by kindness to the least and lowest who belong to him" (Godwin).—J.

Vers. 38—50.—*Marked sins.* There are some sins which are singled out for peculiar denunciation by the Spirit and Word of Christ. They are *extremely* opposed to the ends and purport of the kingdom.

I. INTOLERANCE. That is, the hindering of good, because the good is not done in our way. Christianity says the good deed justifies itself. Coming from a good source, it is not likely to be associated with evil opinions or teaching. Any one who does good nowadays may be said *virtually* to do it in the Name of Christ. To do good one need not, cannot, pass out of the Christian atmosphere. And experience of history confirms the statement of Christ. Good men really love him, whatever difference there may be in their mode of conception of him and statements about him. All that is done for love's sake is virtually and really done in his Name.

II. CAUSING SIN IN OTHERS. Involuntarily people may take offence, "stumble" at what we do or say. We cannot help false inferences being drawn, nor turn bad reasoners or conduct into good, nor weak brethren into strong. But we can avoid doing what we know will hurt others. If we are reckless in this respect, the will and the intelligence are involved in guilt.

III. DELIBERATE PREFERENCE OF PLEASURE TO RIGHT. The old story of the man who defended his dishonesty by the plea, "One must live," has its meaning for us. The judge replied to the culprit, "I do not see the necessity." So with the Christian: luxury is not a necessity; pleasure is not a necessity; even life in the lower sense is not a necessity; but only life in the higher sense—a good conscience, a soul in purity and integrity. It is ever a good bargain to part with a sin, and a losing business to compromise with a lust.

IV. SIN CAN ONLY BE CURED BY SUFFERING. Sin is in the intelligence want of

principle; in the will want of energy for true self-realization. Our mistakes and troubles throw us upon the true principles of conduct, on the moral law of God. The fallacy of expecting blessedness by false methods leads us back to the true. Stern but kind is the discipline by which God uproots our follies and trains us for himself.—J.

Vers. 1—13. Parallel passages: Matt. xvii. 1—13; Luke ix. 28—36.—*A glimpse of glory.* I. THE TRANSFIGURATION. 1. *Allusions to the Transfiguration.* The scene described in the above parallel passages is as singular as solemn. There are, however, two allusions to it in other books of the New Testament. One is in St. John's Gospel (i. 14), "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and *we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,*) full of grace and truth." The other occurs in 2 Pet. i. 16—18, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were *eye-witnesses of his majesty.* For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when *we were with him in the holy mount.*" There is, moreover, an intimation of the same in the three preceding verses, where the apostle, speaking of his "decease," uses the same word (ἔξοδος) which is found in this passage and nowhere else in the same sense in the New Testament, and where he speaks once and again of his σκήνωμα, "tabernacle," saying, "As long as I am in this tabernacle," and "Shortly I must put off this tabernacle." As undesigned coincidences are acknowledged to be strongly corroborative of the truth of a narrative, so such allusive references as those just quoted are in the highest degree confirmatory of the reality of the awful event referred to. 2. *Persons present.* The persons permitted to witness this event were truly privileged individuals—of the chosen the more select, and of the loved the more beloved. This inner circle of the disciples consisted of Peter and James and John. They alone were present with the Saviour in the death-chamber of the daughter of Jairus, they alone were eye-witnesses of the Transfiguration, and they alone accompanied him in his agony. 3. *Place of the occurrence.* The place where the Transfiguration occurred was long believed to be Tabor, that solitary hill rising abruptly from the great plain of Esdraelon, the ancient Jezreel. This tradition, prevalent since the sixth century, has been set aside in more recent times. The locality last named as visited by our Lord was Cæsarea Philippi, too far distant from Tabor and necessitating too great a change of place. It is certain that the summit of Tabor was occupied at the time in question by a Roman fortress, and did not afford the solitude which the event referred to presupposes. Besides, that town of Cæsarea Philippi lay under the range of Hermon, so that one of the heights of that snow-capped mountain was the most likely place. Hermon is the most conspicuous mountain in Palestine; hence its present name of *Jebel esh Sheikh*, the chief mountain. There is, moreover, an expression of comparison in one of the narratives, which points in this same direction, for the graphic touch of St. Mark, "white as snow," might well be suggested by the snowy cone of Hermon. It must, however, be admitted that the words of comparison (ὡς χιὼν) are omitted in ℵ, B, C, L, Δ, 1, in several versions, and by most of the critical editors, though found in A, D, E, F, G, and eight other uncials; in the Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, and most of the Latin versions. 4. *The time of the event.* The time is specified by each of the three evangelists. Two of them, reckoning exclusively, specify a period of six days, and one of them, adopting the inclusive method, speaks of it as "about an eight days." This note of time, thus given in all the three narratives, has in it something surely special and significant. Nor is it to be passed over slightly, for the element of time in this instance is helpful, not only in tracing the sequence of events in the life of our Lord, but also in indicating in some measure the significance of the particular event here recorded. Peter had made his famous confession of the Christ, and had been commended for the words of truth he spoke. Our Lord had followed this up by foretelling his own death and passion. But now, instead of words of praise, he had to use the language of sharp rebuke, when Peter deprecated our Lord's sufferings, and, tempter-like, sought to divert his thoughts to an earthly kingdom, like those very kingdoms of the world and their glory which Satan had proffered in one of his great assaults. After these and other conversations about Messiah's work and the nature of his kingdom, a week or thereabouts had elapsed when the Transfiguration

scene took place—a scene having an important bearing on the disciples at that crisis, on the Master in the near prospect of his passion, and on the Church at all periods and in all places.

II. CONCOMITANTS OF THE TRANSFIGURATION. 1. *Mountain scenery.* In the scenery of Scripture, as in the natural landscape, mountains form a conspicuous object. They are the spots so often selected for Divine manifestations, and so frequently signalized by solemn service or severe sacrifice. Why they have been chosen for such purposes we may be unable to explain. Whether it is that their sublime grandeur tends to elevate the thoughts from earth to heaven; or that their separation from the plains and valleys around promotes meditative seclusion, helping to shut out the world and leave the soul alone with God; or whether the fresh free air that surrounds their summits has a bracing effect upon the human spirit;—whatever be the cause, the fact of their selection remains the same. When Abraham, the father of the faithful, was summoned to surrender his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved, the sacrifice was to take place on Mount Moriah. When God was pleased to appear to Moses in the bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed, it was on Mount Horeb. When he came down in awful majesty at the giving of the Law, it was on the top of Sinai he descended. It was on bleak and barren Ebal the curses were pronounced; it was on fair and fertile Gerizim that the blessings were uttered; while at each curse and blessing the living voice of the mighty multitude rolled up the hillsides, pronouncing the long "Amen." On Carmel Elijah denounced the prophets of Baal, and destroyed the worship of that idol. It was on Mount Zion that the ark and tabernacle found a resting-place in David's day, and there in consequence was the centre of Jewish religious service; though it was on Mount Moriah that the temple was subsequently built. From Pisgah Moses looked across the flood and gazed on the land of promise. On Nebo God took his servant home to heaven. So also our blessed Lord himself chose mountains as the scenes of his discourses, doings, and devotions. On the Mountain of the Beatitudes he delivered those blessed utterances contained in that wondrous sermon on the mount. On a mountain in Galilee he manifested himself after his passion; and from Olivet he ascended. And now he leads his disciples to that mountain apart; and so retirement, it would seem, was one ground of the selection of a mountain on this occasion. 2. *The preparation.* But more important than the place of transfiguration was the Saviour's preparation for it. That preparation, we learn, was *prayer.* In every crisis of his history, and at every great event of his life, we find the Saviour engaged in prayer. One main feature of his life on earth was prayer. When he was inaugurated by baptism, and when he formally entered on his own ministry, he prayed; for it is written, "It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven opened." Before he set apart his twelve apostles to found his Church and propagate his doctrine, he spent a whole night in prayer. When he wrought his greatest miracle, "he lifted up his eyes in prayer and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always." During his agony in the garden of Gethsemane he prayed once and again, and a third time, with still-increasing earnestness. When he hung upon the cross he prayed, and prayed even for his murderers. As he ascended to heaven his hands were uplifted in holy prayer and heavenly benediction. And now that he is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high he prays on behalf of his people; for he is our Advocate with the Father, and ever lives to intercede. In like manner, the purpose for which he ascended the Mount of Transfiguration was prayer: "He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray." 3. *Peculiarity of the Saviour's prayer.* We must mark the peculiarity and purport of his prayer. It had this *peculiarity,* that one element of prayer was wanting—indeed, it must have been wanting. There were thanksgiving and petition, we know, but there could be no confession. He had no sin to confess, no contrition to feel for personal sin, no sorrow on that head to express, and so repentance in his case was impossible. Yet in his humanity, sinless though it was, he needed prayer. The *purport* of such prayer we are at no loss to discover. It included petition for himself and intercession for his people; while this spirit of prayer served as a pattern for all his followers. Not only was he an Expiation, but an Example: for he left us an example, that we should follow in his steps. The character of his intercession may be learned from his prayer for Peter, and his great intercession (John xvii.)

for all his followers in all times and in all lands. His petition for the cup to pass away from him had its answer in the power that sustained him in his agony, in the submission of his human will to the Divine, and in the angel strengthening him.

III. CHARACTERS CONCERNED. 1. *Representative characters.* In addition to the three favourite apostles, who were merely spectators but not actors, properly speaking, in this scene, we have Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, all of them in a representative character. Here were the Law-giver, the Law-restorer, and the Law-fulfiller. The Law was given by Moses; it was restored, after a time of sad defection, by Elijah; it was fulfilled in all its requirements by Jesus, who came expressly not to destroy the Law or abrogate the prophets, but to fulfil them both. They represented still more. Moses represented the Law and Elijah the prophets; both doing homage to Jesus, who represented the gospel, or rather Law and prophets merged in the gospel dispensation. Here, again, is one that never tasted death, but was transferred in a fiery chariot from earth to heaven. No doubt that very translation effected some change analogous to death. At all events, he may fitly represent those that are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord, who shall not sleep as others sleep, but who shall be changed; "for," saith the apostle, "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Here, too, is one that died as mortals die, but how or where his body was laid to rest no one knoweth till this day; the only record is that "God buried him." Here, also, is One that died a violent death and by wicked hands; he died and was buried, his grave being made with the rich in his death. Thus we get a hint that it matters little how we die—whether by the decay of nature, or fell disease, or dread catastrophe, or the hand of violence; neither does it matter where or how we are buried—whether in the country churchyard, or city cemetery, or the desert sands, or the depths of ocean; whether in the grave of the poor or mausoleum of the rich, whether in obscure privacy or with funereal pomp; in any case, if servants of God, we shall be compeers of Moses and Elijah, and shall appear with Christ in glory. 2. *A foreshadow of heavenly fellowship.* Once more, though the apostles were mainly present as witnesses, still they were representative men. They were publishers and preachers of the new economy, and thus representatives of the Christian dispensation. Here, last of all and greatest of all, was Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant and the Representative of all times. So in that heavenly state, of which the Transfiguration was merely a foreshadow, saints of all times and of all dispensations shall be found. Believers during the legal age, believers in the times of the prophets, believers in the days of the apostles, believers from then till now, and onward till the consummation of all things, shall be there; "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Even a philosophic heathen could exult in the prospect of meeting the shades of departed worthies in a future state. "What bounds," he exclaims, "can you set to the value of conversing with Orpheus and Musæus and Homer and Hesiod? What delight must it be to meet with Palamedes and Ajax, and others like to them! Then we should experience the wisdom of that great king who led his troops to Troy, and the prudence of Ulysses and Sisyphus." Oh, how infinitely greater and holier is the joy with which the Christian can anticipate that grand gathering of all the faithful in Christ Jesus—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, all who purely lived and nobly died; not only the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed ones of all the tribes of the children of Israel, but "a great multitude, that no man can number," in that day when we shall "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven!" 3. *Recognition.* Here it must be observed, in passing, that the apostles at once recognize Moses and Elijah, in what manner or by what means we cannot tell; whether from their discourse, or by information from Christ, or by some spiritual intuition, we do not know. At all events, we may fairly infer from this fact that in heaven there shall be distinct recognition; otherwise the crowded ranks of the celestial inhabitants would only present one vast collection of unknown and so less interesting faces. Other Scriptures confirm this. Thus Abraham seems acquainted with all the circumstances of Lazarus' life, and Dives knows the state of his brothers on earth. Paul gives us to understand that our mental faculties shall be enlarged and expanded. Can we imagine, then, that memory

alone shall be impaired and diminished? Oh, what zest such recognition will give to the joys of heaven! Who is not alive to the pleasures of social intercourse on earth? With what satisfaction does a happy family surround the domestic hearth, or meet round the festive board! With what delight of family and friends is the wanderer, after long years of absence, welcomed to his native land! And oh, how great shall be the joy in heaven when the faithful minister meets those to whom he had preached the gospel, telling of heaven and leading the way! Or when the man of prayer meets those for whom he had offered supplication in seasons of danger, or difficulty, or distress, or disease, or at the hour of death! Or when the spiritual teacher, whether in sabbath school, or Bible class, or cottage meeting, meets those who had been once his pupils, but are now his companions in glory!

IV. CHANGE DESCRIBED. 1. *The glory of his person.* Here we are to notice, in the first place, the glory of his person. From eternity he had been in the form (*μορφῇ*) of God. This had been his original form, but in the fulness of time he took upon him the form of a servant. Now for a while he resumes the form which he had laid aside. The form of a servant is changed back (*μετεμορφώθη*) into that of Deity. He "was transfigured before them" is the statement of St. Matthew and St. Mark. The veil of mortal flesh became transparent. The glory of the Godhead broke through the concealment. Like a sudden sunburst from behind the murky clouds on a dark and wintry day, there was a glorious outburst of Divine effulgence. It irradiated his body, it diffused itself over his whole person, it surrounded him with an atmosphere of brightness and beauty. Beams of heavenly light flashed from head to foot. The whole man presented an unearthly splendour. His appearance was a reflection of that glory which he had had with the Father before all worlds, and in which he appears among the inhabitants of heaven. 2. *The change of his countenance.* "The fashion of his countenance was altered" is the statement of St. Luke, who, writing for Gentiles, avoids the word transformed, or *metamorphosed*, on account of its association with heathenism; while St. Matthew explains the nature of that alteration by saying, "His face did shine as the sun." After Moses' interview with God on Mount Sinai, the skin of his face shone so that he was obliged to cover it with a veil as soon as his public official duty had been discharged. Similarly, when Stephen, the proto-martyr, was brought before the council, "all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." But in the case of Stephen and of Moses it was a borrowed brightness, whereas the Saviour's face shone with native irradiation. It was no reflected lustre, like that of the moon in the heavens, deriving all her light from the sun. The light and loveliness were all his own. The face soon to be marred more than any man, and his countenance more than the sons of men, possessed a brilliancy that was dazzling and that outrivalled the radiance of the sun at noon. That face, soon to be smitten and spit upon, and from which men hid in scorn and sorrow, now displayed a glory indescribable. The veil of humanity became too thin to hide the outshining of the divinity within. Like a magnificent temple grandly lighted up on every side and throughout its entire extent, from nave to porch and from dome to pavement, the Saviour's face and entire person—the whole temple of his body—was brightened up and beautified with celestial glory. 3. *The glistening of his garments.* Even his garments shared this heavenly transformation. They brightened, they glistened, they dazzled. The sacred penmen seem at a loss for similitudes to give us a correct notion of a change so marvellous and glorious. "White as the light," says St. Matthew; "shining, exceeding white as snow," says St. Mark; "white and glistering"—white and flashing forth as lightning (*ἐξαστράπτων*)—says St. Luke. They lay both nature and art under contribution for the purpose of describing it. They became "white as snow," says one—white as the snowy peak of the neighbouring hill with the sunbeams resting on it; "exceeding white," he says again, "so as no fuller on earth can white them." When St. John saw him in apocalyptic vision, his head and hair were white as wool. Ages before, when Daniel saw him in prophetic vision as the Ancient of days, his garments were white as snow. On the Mount of Transfiguration his human nature was closely assimilated to his Divine nature, in which he clothes himself with light as with a garment. Such was Christ on Hermon; what must he be in heaven? Such was he in his transfigured humanity; what must be his divinity revealed? What shall he be when, with face unveiled, we shall see him as he is? But, better and more

blessed still, in that day we shall be like him. If, under a former portion of this subject, we caught a glimpse of our companionship in heaven, here we get a glance at our condition in the heavenly state.

V. CONSEQUENCES. 1. *One consequence common.* Some of the consequences of the Transfiguration scene are general, and some special. There is one common to the saints of all times and of all climes. That transfigured body of Christ is the model and pattern of all the glorified. He is the Head, they are the members. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Here and now our bodies, though fearfully and wonderfully made, are bodies of humiliation. They are subject to many infirmities, liable to painful and even loathsome diseases, doomed to dissolution in a few years at most, while, worst of all, they contain the seed of sin, and their members too often are instruments of unrighteousness; "for I know," says the apostle, "that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." But these bodies of humiliation shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; these bodies, now "of the earth, earthy," shall be elevated to the condition of the heavenly; these bodies, now so frail, shall be endued with immortal health and vigour. Here and now the beauty of the fairest face soon fades; then the plainest face shall become beautiful, and that beauty shall be truly amaranthine. The features now saddened by sorrow, or marred by disease, or disfigured by age, shall become "bright as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength," bright as the Saviour's on the Mount of Transfiguration, bright as the face of our Lord was seen by Peter and James and John at that time, bright as it always appears to the saints in glory. Every blemish shall be blotted out, every wrinkle shall be smoothed, every disease expelled, and all decrepitude for ever removed. Then, too, on the sightless eyeballs of the blind shall flash the light of an eternal day, the ear of the deaf shall be unstopped, the tongue of the dumb sing, and the lame man for ever lay aside his lameness. Moreover, the richest raiment of earth will be but rags when compared with those robes of brightness which the ransomed in heaven wear. In view of all this may we not exclaim?—

"Oh for the robes of whiteness!
Oh for the tearless eyes!
Oh for the glorious brightness
Of the unclouded skies!
Oh for the no more weeping
Within the land of love,
The endless joy of keeping
The bridal feast above!"

2. *An immediate consequence.* Another and immediate consequence was to reconcile the disciples to the sufferings of their Master, and sustain them amid their own. Then, as now, the Jews overlooked the first appearance of Messiah in weakness, through haste for his glorious second advent. Then, as now, their pride rebelled against the idea of a suffering Saviour, in their anticipation of his glory. Then, as afterwards, they looked for a great temporal potentate, to whom all thrones would be subject and whom all sovereigns would obey. They antedated the glory of his reign. But this experience of heaven upon earth, of glory so surpassing was surely enough to make amends for those disappointed hopes. It was meant also to prepare them for the approaching crisis, to comfort them when it came, and to confirm their faith in his Divine majesty, even when, as a malefactor, he was nailed to the cross. 3. *An additional consequence.* Again, it not only helped to reconcile the disciples to the death of their Master, but doubtless went far to comfort Immanuel himself in the near prospect of his agony and bloody sweat, and of his cross and passion. Elsewhere we are informed that, "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." This short space of heavenly enjoyment, coming in as a parenthesis amid the wearisome struggles and strivings of earthly life, would cheer him onward towards the end. The foretaste thus afforded of the coming glory that would crown everlastingly the brief sorrows of the present would sustain him in the approaching sufferings. The cloud of witnesses that surrounds the Christian in his pilgrimage serves as a motive to urge him on, so that, laying aside every weight, he runs with patience the race set before him; so these witnesses, representative of ten thousand times ten thousand, intensely interested in the

Redeemer's work and intently looking on, would encourage the human spirit of the Saviour, so that, braced with new alacrity, he would hold on the course appointed and pass through the baptism of blood. As his baptism was the commencement of his ministry, his transfiguration was his consecration to suffering.

VI. THE CONVERSATION HELD. 1. *The persons engaged in converse.* Here were two *prophetic* men, of whom one died and was buried by mystic hands, no one knew how or where.

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man knows that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er;
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

. . . . .

"And had he not high honour?—
The hillside for a pall;
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave;
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave!"

The other never died, was never buried; but went straight from earth to heaven—

"All undrest
From his mortal vest,
He stept on the car of heavenly fire;
To prove how bright
Are the realms of light,
Bursting at once upon the sight."

And now these two visitants from the heavenly world have taken their place together on that lone mountain apart. Here also were three *apostolic* men—the foremost of the apostolic band: John, with his heart of love; James, with his high standard of law—both of them sons of thunder with outspoken courage; and Peter, honoured with the keys that opened the door of faith to Jew and Gentile. "And why these?" asks the devout Bishop Hall, in his 'Contemplations on the Holy Scriptures.' "We may be too curious: Peter because the eldest; John because the dearest; James because, next Peter, the zealousest: Peter because he loved Christ most; John because Christ most loved him; James because, next to both, he loved and was loved most. I had rather," he adds, "to have no reason, but because it so pleased him. Why may we not as well ask why he chose these twelve from others, as why he chose three out of the twelve?" But with prophets and apostles, the foundation of the future Church, was Jesus Christ the *God-man* and the Church's chief Corner-stone. The converse, however, was confined to Moses and Elias and Jesus; the apostles were only listeners. One is naturally curious to know the subject that engaged the attention of that small but wonderfully select company. The subject must have been worthy of such an august assembly. 2. *The subject of conversation.* What, then, was the subject that occupied them? Was it political, embracing the fate of kingdoms, or the fall of dynasties, or fast-coming times of calamity and change? Was it the extent and power and future breaking up of the great Roman empire? Was it the subjection of Palestine to Roman rule, or the relation of the Tetrarch of Galilee to the Procurator of Judæa? Nothing of all this. But if the subject was not political, was it one of Jewish casuistry, such as divided the schools of Hillel and Shammai, about binding or loosing? Was it in reference to the primary or derivative prohibitions of sabbath work—the *avoth* or the *toldoth*? Was it about the *Halakoth* or *Hagadoth*—the rules of jurisprudence or the legends illustrative of them, and both afterwards embodied in the Gemara? None of these, or such as those, was of sufficient importance to command their attention. We might, however, reason-

ably enough expect that it would be the beauties of heaven, with its gates of pearl, and streets of gold, and jasper wall, and foundations of precious stones; or the grandeur of its minstrelsy and melody of its songs; or the blessedness of the heavenly state and the ecstasies of its joys, or all the untold glories of the beatific vision; or the unspeakable magnificence of the heavenly hierarchy, with its thrones and dominions and principalities and powers. And yet it was none of these. It might have been the atmosphere of heaven brought down by Christ to earth, the perfection of his life when here below, the power of his miracles, the purity of his precepts, the preciousness of his promises, his words and works of benevolence. And yet it was none of these. It was perhaps a less inviting, but certainly not less important, theme. Over and above what is common to all the evangelists, each contributes a part peculiar to himself. As St. Mark omits mention of the change that passed over the countenance of the Saviour, and fixes attention on the garments so white and glistening; so St. Luke alone records the *subject* about which they discoursed. Our curiosity is thus gratified at least in part. True it is that, while we are made acquainted with the topic of conversation, the evangelist gives no hint of the conversation itself. And yet perhaps we have an echo of that conversation in the writings of those favourite apostles who were privileged to form the audience on that remarkable occasion. 3. *A peculiar term.* That most interesting subject was the *decease* he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The expression is so remarkable, it is no way strange that attention has often been directed to it. Elsewhere in Scripture death is literally spoken of, or it is represented from its physical effect as "giving up the ghost," or it is euphemistically expressed as "sleep." This latter expression, however, is never applied to the death of Christ, for that death was no babe-like slumber—no gentle falling asleep. It was death in all its hideousness, in all its bitterness, with cruelly aggravated horrors and fearfully augmented terrors. In consequence of these sufferings the believer's death is now changed into sleep, and so we read that "them who sleep *by* (διὰ) Jesus will God bring with him." The death of the Saviour is here set forth as an ἔξοδος, exodus or departure, so that the term would cover all that was peculiar in the exit of Moses, or Elijah, or Christ himself; while it is the result of his own voluntary act, and an event, too, in which he was more active than passive; and so the ordinary verb ἔθανεν is not used in his case. Likewise in the narrative of his death the evangelists use a similar expression, namely, ἐξέπνευσε, "he breathed forth," St. Luke and St. Mark; "he delivered up the ghost" (παρέδωκε), St. John; or "dismissed," sent away his spirit (ἀφῆκε), St. Matthew. The decease he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem was thus lifted up out of the rank of ordinary deaths, and raised by a whole heaven above them. It was a *voluntary* surrender: "No man taketh my life;" "I have power to lay it down," he said, "and power to take it again." It was *vicarious* as well as voluntary; for he suffered, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." It was *valid* for every expectant soul; because "to them that look for him he will appear a second time without sin unto salvation." It realized the types of the old economy, for it was the great antitype that finished all. It crowned the sacrifices under the Law; for "by one sacrifice he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It fulfilled the promises of the past and guaranteed the bestowal of them all; for "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" It put new meaning into many otherwise dark and obscure statements of Old Testament Scripture. It was the death of deaths. It was the gateway to eternal life; it "opened the door of heaven to all believers." It was an offering; for he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour. It was a propitiation; for "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins." It was a ransom; for "he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many." Confessors took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, but that spoiling was the test of their own sincerity. Martyrs shed their blood unmurmuringly and even triumphantly, but the martyr's death was the preparation for the martyr's crown. Yet martyrs and confessors stood each in his own lot, suffering for themselves and by themselves. Not so Jesus; for others, not for himself, he drained the bitter cup; for others, not himself, he underwent the bloody baptism; for sins, but not his own, he endured the cross, despising all the pain and shame. 4. *Character of their conversation.* The subject, then, as we have just seen, was that death—a death

which patriarchs, and priests, and prophets, and pious persons under the old dispensation looked and longed for; a death which not only fulfilled the predictions, but realised the typical institutions of the old economy; that death which was the complement of the legal economy and the consummation of the Jewish Church, and which, at the same time, formed the commencement of a new epoch and of a higher order of events. What a glorious subject! More glorious far than the fate of kingdoms or the fall of kings; more glorious than all the discoveries of science, or applications of art, or improvements of society. In their *conversation* on this high theme they spake, no doubt, of the nature of the decease to be accomplished: of its necessity, to realise types and fulfil prophecies; to "magnify the Law and make it honourable;" to save miserable man and glorify Almighty God, restoring peace between heaven and earth, and "by one sacrifice perfecting for ever the sanctified;" to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, and diffuse light and life and love through all the world; to extract the sting of death, "destroying him that had the power of it, that is, the devil," and throwing the radiance of heavenly glory over the darkness of the tomb. They conversed, no doubt, of the travail of the Redeemer's soul, and of his mediatorial reward in the eternal approbation of the Father, the salvation of the lost, and the praises of the redeemed for ever. Of all subjects this was the most important to men, the most interesting to Christ, and the most glorifying to God. This subject is still the great theme of the Church militant on earth, and the glorious song of the Church triumphant in heaven. 5. *Apparently out of place.* But glorious as the subject of conversation was, and edifying as the manner of that conversation was, it might in one sense seem inopportune. Hence says an old divine already cited (Hall, in his 'Contemplations'), "A strange opportunity! in his highest exaltation to speak of his sufferings; to talk of Calvary on Tabor; when his head shone with glory, to tell him how it must bleed with thorns; when his face shone like the sun, to tell him it must be blubbered and spit upon; when his garments glistered with that celestial brightness, to tell him they must be stripped off and divided; when he was adored by the saints of heaven, to tell him how he must be scorned by the basest of men; when he was seen between two saints, to tell him how he must be seen between two malefactors: in a word, in the midst of his Divine majesty, to tell him of his shame; and, while he was transfigured on the mount, to tell him how he must be disfigured upon the cross." So thought good Bishop Hall. But this subject is never out of place, it is never out of time. It is the theme of our praises both here and hereafter, and should be the subject of our prayerful meditations till we feel its transforming power, and are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord."

VII. CONCLUSION. 1. *St. Peter's proposal.* "Let us make three tabernacles," said Peter, "one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Chrysostom thinks that Peter's object was to remain away from the holy city, and thus, by remaining on the mount and remote from Jerusalem, prevent the Saviour's sufferings. God had tabernacled in *Shechinah* glory, why should not the Saviour embody the same? But the expression of Peter was rather the expression of an ecstasy of delight—a plenitude of joy which words could not express. So great was his rapture that he wist not what he said. A little of the joy of heaven would be too much for flesh and blood—it would overwhelm us. Besides, Peter was overlooking the fact that the wilderness work and warfare must needs be resumed. The journey of life was not ended. Some droppings of heavenly blessedness had transported him into rapture, but the full wealth of its downpour was not yet at hand. He antedated the bliss of heaven, forgetting for the moment that he was still on earth. More sacrifice, more suffering, more sorrow, more self-denial, more days of toil and nights of trouble, must intervene before he crossed the Jordan and entered the promised land. 2. *The effect of emotion.* Peter's exclamation partook more of the emotional than of the rational. It was rather the offspring of ardent desire than of deliberate judgment. It proceeded more from the heart than from the head. But head as well as heart must be influenced by religion. If it were confined to the head, it would tend to formality; if to the heart, it might issue in fanaticism. On one hand, Peter's exclamation was quite excusable. "It is good for us to be here," a fine thing, a pleasant thing; not good in a moral sense, which is differently expressed (ἀγαθὸν), but good physically (καλὸν), which is the expression here. If there were a place on earth of which this might be said, it was that Mount

of Transfiguration. It was, perhaps, the spot on earth nearest and likest heaven. There was a *hill*, an emblem of heaven, which is the hill of God's holiness. There were two *saints*, an epitome of heaven, representing as they did the quick and the dead—those alive on earth, and the dead raised up at the day of judgment. There was the *Saviour* himself, in uncreated light and unveiled glory, at once the Source and Centre of heavenly blessedness. There was *conversation* such as may be presumed to be held among the redeemed in heaven, for the burden of their song is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." There, moreover, was temporary seclusion from the toil and turmoil of earth, from the business and bustle of the world, from the sorrows and sufferings of this mortal life and strife. There, too, was enjoyment of the unclouded sunshine and untroubled rest of heaven. There was a ravishing foretaste of the joys of heaven. No wonder, then, that Peter proposed to perpetuate the happiness, continue the enjoyment, and carry on the fellowship, erecting tabernacles and dwelling on the mount. But, on the other hand, there was something selfish, if not exclusive, in the proposal, for he was leaving behind his friends and fellow-worshippers on the plain below; he was speaking in forgetfulness of the bodies of the saints that slept; he was acting unreasonably in requiring Moses to forsake the Divine presence, after the uninterrupted enjoyment thereof during fifteen centuries, for a tent-like dwelling, and Elijah to forget the car of fire in which he had gone up, and now abide below; he was strangely overlooking the recent subject of discourse with which Moses and Elijah had been so occupied—the decease that was to be accomplished, the death to be endured, the redemption to be effected, the sacrifice to be offered, and the salvation to be procured. In entire obliviousness of, or indifference to, all this, his proposal was to forestall the future and have a present heaven upon earth. In momentary rapture he forgot he was still in a scene of pilgrimage and in a state of sojourn; he forgot he was a stranger in a strange land, which was neither his rest nor his home, and where no abiding city is to be found. He forgot that the Christian's life is a journey; and what traveller can reach his destination without the toil of travelling? He forgot life is a race; and where is the racer who is rewarded without a struggle, and who, without running, yet obtains the prize? He forgot that life is a warfare, in which a fight, a hard fight, is to be fought before the combat is ended and the conqueror crowned. It is only when we shall have fought the good fight, and finished our course, and kept the faith, that we may say with Paul, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory, which God, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." But Peter wist not what (λαλήσῃ) he should speak; he wist not even what he (λέγει) actually does say; so enraptured was he with delight, so carried out of himself by the extraordinary occurrence, and so bewildered with terror at the same time. 3. *Due in part to sleep.* Further, and finally, they had been "heavy with sleep," but either kept awake throughout it, or awoke after an interval, or rather started all at once into perfect wakefulness, now wide awake and fully alive to all that was seen or said. They had been asleep, wrapped perhaps in their *abbas*, according to Oriental fashion, on the ground, when the celestial light, bursting upon them, roused them thoroughly so as to witness all that transpired. 4. *Miscellaneous remarks.* (1) The disciples thought this was the predicted coming of Elijah, but our Lord corrects their mistake, and tells them he had already come in the person of John the Baptist; and as the prediction relating to John has been fulfilled, *a fortiori* will the prediction of Messiah's sufferings be fulfilled. Thus the seemingly awkward clause, "and how it is written of the Son of man," is best explained (*a*) as a parenthetic exposition of the preceding clause, and an *a fortiori* confirmation of the succeeding one. There is, however, (*b*) another explanation which takes "how" as directly interrogatory; thus, "But how is it written of the Son of man? that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought;" so that, after the coming of Elijah had been stated, the object of Messiah's coming is specified by way of question and answer: "For what purpose is it written that Messiah cometh?" In order that he may come to suffer as a malefactor, not to conquer as a warrior. (2) The apostles were sorely puzzled about "the rising from the dead." This does not refer to the general doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which must have been known to them and believed by them; but they regarded that resurrection as far off, and understood, and rightly understood, our Lord to speak of a resurrection near at hand, affecting himself in some mysterious way which they did not then comprehend, and which they were

only convinced of by that wondrous event itself when it actually occurred. (3) The conversation before and the miracle after the Transfiguration are equally recorded by all three synoptists. In the narrative the *prostration through fear* is peculiar to St. Matthew; the *subject of conversation* to St. Luke, as we have seen; while the *sudden departure* of the heavenly visitants, and the perplexed *questioning* about the rising from the dead, are only related by St. Mark. (4) His teaching henceforth turned towards the cross; while his miracles between this and his passion were confined to five.—J. J. G.

Vers. 14—29. Parallel passages: Matt. xvii. 14—21; Luke ix. 37—43.—*Healing of a demoniac youth, after the disciples' failure.* I. STRIKING CONTRAST. We can scarcely imagine a greater contrast than that which is here presented between the scene on the mountain and that in the plain below—the tranquillity of the one, the tumult of the other; the calm repose of the one, the unrest of the other; the blessedness of the one, the distress of the other; the gladness of the one, the sadness of the other; the glory of the one, the gloominess of the other; the heavenly quietude of the one, the unseemly wrangling of the other; the happiness of the one, the misery of the other; the ecstatic rapture of the one, the excruciating pain of the other; the confidence and comfort of the one, the disputatious unbelief of the other. The contrast was just that which we can conceive to exist between the holiness of heaven and the sinfulness of earth. The contrast is transferred to the canvas and made visible and palpable in the great picture of "The Transfiguration," by Raphael.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLNESS. This illness may be distributed into three elements—the supernatural, the natural so called, and the periodical. By the supernatural we understand the demoniac possession. This poor boy was under the influence of a foul and fiendish spirit that made him deaf and dumb. The natural element, if natural may be applied in any sense to a state that is abnormal and unnatural because the result of sin, consists in the fearful manifestations, consisting of epileptic fits, madness, convulsions, grinding the teeth, foaming at the mouth, and pining away. The periodical element is the fitful paroxysms, the crises of which were synchronous with the changes of the moon, so that "demoniac" and "lunatic" were both applied, and properly applied, to this peculiar case.

III. A DOUBLE PERSONALITY. The change of subject with respect to the verbs used in this description brings into view a startling fact and exhibits a strange complication. Two personalities, or two personal agencies, are here combined, and the union between them is so close and complete that the transition from the one to the other is as singular as sudden. Thus the first two verbs descriptive of the sad condition of this wretched sufferer have for their subject, though not directly expressed, yet distinctly implied, the *demon*. He it is of whom the poor father of the unhappy boy says, "Wheresoever it taketh him"—or, more literally, *wheresoever it seizeth* (καταλάβῃ) *him*—"it teareth, or dasheth down, or *breaketh* (ῥήσσει) him." This is very graphic, and as terrible as graphic. The demon so convulsed the lad as if he would dislocate the entire frame or dismember his whole body, breaking limb from limb. But the remaining verbs in the description, as it passes rapidly from the agent to the sufferer, require a different subject; for it is only the boy of whom it can be said, "He foameth," "grindeth his teeth," "becomes parched" (ξηραίνεται), or "pines away." The same curious commingling of terms—some applicable to the demon, and others to the possessed, occurs in describing the paroxysm which came on when the lad was brought into our Lord's presence. In the expression, "when he saw him," the participle is used, and is in the masculine gender, so that it appears to refer to the boy, and if so, it must be used absolutely; but if it apply to the unclean spirit, the word πνεῦμα, spirit, is neuter, and thus it must be constructed *ad sensum*, and indicate the personality of that spirit; in either case, there is an irregularity of construction arising from this unusual blending of personal agencies. Further, when the demoniac or the demon saw Jesus, the demon or unclean spirit *grievously tore* (ἐσπάραξεν, from σπάω, whence *spasm*, and signifying "to pull to pieces," not the same verb as that used in ver. 18) or convulsed the poor demoniac; while he fell on the earth and wallowed (akin to the Latin *volvo*), that is, rolled himself (κυλίω, equivalent to κυλίνδω, used of rolling in the dust, in token of grief), foaming.

IV. THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS ON THE SCENE. Soon as the crowd saw him, they were quite amazed—perfectly astounded, the prepositional element in the compound verb implying the greatness of their astonishment. But what caused their excessive amazement? It might be (1) the suddenness of the appearance of one whom they had been looking for in vain; but now that they had ceased to expect him, all at once, to their surprise, he is seen approaching; or (2) it is concluded by some, on rather slender grounds, that the term used does not denote mere surprise, much less joyful surprise, at the sudden and unexpected appearance of the Saviour, but rather a degree of alarm or perplexity on account of expressions to which utterance had been given in the dispute between the disciples and the scribes in our Lord's absence, and in reference to his power of casting out devils. There is much more probability (3) in the opinion that the astonishment was occasioned by some remnant of the heavenly radiance still beaming on and brightening his countenance. This view is strongly supported by the analogous case of Moses, of whom we read that, on his descent from Mount Sinai, "the skin of his face shone," so that Aaron and the children of Israel "were afraid to come nigh him." If this explanation be accepted, there is in the two cases a similarity and a dissimilarity: the brightness of Moses' face made the onlookers afraid, and deterred them from approaching him; the heavenly splendour that still lingered on the countenance of the Saviour affected the spectators in the very opposite way, attracting them to him. Accordingly, while some waited for his approach, as appears from St. Matthew's account, which speaks of his *coming to the multitude*, others, detaching themselves from the crowd, sallied forth to meet him, *running to him*, as we learn here from St. Mark; while St. Luke informs us that on his coming down from the hill much people *met him*. The accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke are thus harmonized by St. Mark's statement, from which we rightly conclude that part of the crowd went to meet him, and part waited where they were for his approach. Their salutation, including, as we think, welcome and friendly greeting, if not from the scribes, at least from the rest of the crowd, is opposed to the notion of perplexity or alarm referred to in (2). Our Lord's popularity with the multitude had not yet suffered any diminution, nor begun to wane. He finds on his arrival that a somewhat keen discussion had been going on between two parties very unequally matched—the scribes, with their general learning and special Biblical lore, on the one hand, and his disciples, illiterate and imperfectly enlightened, on the other. The surrounding crowd, divided, most likely, in sentiment, and acting as partisans—some favouring the disciples and some the scribes—expressed approbation and disapprobation accordingly. The subject of disputation may be readily inferred from the sequel. Meantime our Lord asks the scribes with authority, "*What* question ye with [rather *at*, or *against* (πρὸς)] *them*?" or, better perhaps, "*Why* question ye with them?" What proper ground is there for such acrimonious questioning? What sufficient reason can be shown for it? But another reading, having the reflexive pronoun, is represented by the margin—"among yourselves," or "with one another;" in which case both scribes and disciples are addressed in common.

V. APPLICATION OF THE DEMONIAC'S FATHER. To our Lord's interrogatory, one of the multitude, or rather one *out of* (ἐκ) the multitude, stepping forward, volunteers an answer. He felt that his child's misfortune had given occasion to the altercation, in which the disputants had waxed warm, if not angry, and that it devolved of right on him to make the requisite explanation. Another and a more urgent reason calling for his interference was his paternal solicitude. "I *brought* [ἤνεγκα, aorist] some short time ago my son to thee;" such had been his intention, as he had not been aware of the Saviour's absence. "I *spake* to thy disciples, in thy absence [ἵνα, denoting here the purport of what he said, as also the purpose for which it was said], *that* they should drive the demon from my son; but they *could not*;" while it must be observed that this verb is not an auxiliary, nor even a part of δύναμαι, but a stronger term (ἰσχυσαν), which, preceded by the negative, means that they had not *strength* enough for such a difficult operation. After stating, in reply to a question of our Lord about the length of time the suffering had lasted, that his son had been afflicted in this shocking manner from childhood, he went on to enumerate other aggravating circumstances of the affliction, to the effect that the demon often cast him into the fire and into the waters to destroy him. He then concluded with the remarkably earnest appeal, "If thou canst

do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." The expression *βοήθησον* (from *βοή*, cry, and *θέω*, to run) is very significant, being equivalent to "hasten to our cry for help;" it is more than *succour* (from *sub* and *curro*, to run), which means to run to one's aid; it is "run to our aid at our earnest, urgent cry for help." The compassion is taken for granted, being expressed by a participle; and it also is a very expressive word, denoting the yearning of the bowels or heart in tenderness and pity.

VI. THE SAVIOUR'S ANSWER. Our Lord utters a reproof on the ground of their want of faith. In that reproof he includes his own disciples, the scribes who had been in conflict with them, and the father of the afflicted boy—one and all comprehended in the "faithless generation" of that time. The failure of the apostles to drive out the demon had been a matter of humiliation to themselves, and of exultation to those hostile scribes, who had, no doubt, made the most of this case of unsuccess; and that failure had been owing in part to weakness, if not want, of faith. The scribes all along had acted the part of obstinately incredulous sceptics. The distressed father, earnest as he was, and eloquent as he was in his appeal, betrayed much weakness of faith, saying, "If at all thou canst—if in any way thou canst," or "if thou canst do anything." This refers the matter of cure to the *power* of Christ; the leper resolved the cure in his case into the *will* of Christ, "If thou wilt, thou canst." How prone we are to circumscribe the Saviour by our own narrow conditions! and yet he shows us demonstratively that he is above and independent of all such limitations. He proved to the leper his possession of the will, and to the demoniac's father his possession of the power; and to us, through both, his ability as well as willingness to do to us and in us and for us "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." The limitations are all on one side—all on our side, and are owing to the weakness of our frail and naturally faithless humanity. The possession in the present instance had been from childhood. The distress was thus of comparatively long standing; it had become chronic; it was an apparently hopeless case. It had defied the power of the disciples, and baffled their utmost skill and strength. While this failure had lowered them in the estimation of the crowd, and left them at the mercy of the biting taunts of the sarcastic scribes, it at the same time lessened still more the faith of the unhappy parent. The cure, therefore, which our Lord effected in this seemingly hopeless, certainly desperate case, holds forth encouragement to the weakest and the worst—those morally so—to apply to him.

VII. HIS APPLIANCE. The *first* direction is, "Bring him unto *me*:" you have tried the power of my disciples; I now invite you to try mine. You have been disappointed by their failure; but I will remedy that failure by my favour to thee and thine. You have been disheartened—too much disheartened; I now bid you take heart of hope. His *next* step was to secure the confidence and strengthen the faith of the father; and for this purpose he employs his own words and (1) according to the common reading he said to him *the* (*τῷ*) *saying*, "*If thou canst believe*, all things are possible to [or possible to be done for] him that believeth." But (2) the word *πιστεῦσαι* is omitted in three or more of the oldest uncials, in several versions, by the critical editors Tregelles and Tischendorf, and by Meyer and some commentators; and with this omission the sentence reads, "*Jesus said unto him, As for thy If thou canst*, all things are possible to him that believeth." And (3) some, putting the acute on the antepenult *πίστευσαι*, take it to be imperative aorist middle, and translate, "*Believe what you expressed by your If thou canst*, all things are possible to him that believeth." Again, (4) others take it interrogatively, "*The If thou canst?* or *What? If thou canst?*" so that the sense is as if he asked, "Is this what you say?" or, "Do you really mean this?" The man's own words were thus thrown back on him, and by this judicious retort he is brought to understand that faith in the Saviour's power and propitiousness is a prerequisite for the bestowal of the boon he sought; he is also brought to feel that the hand of faith must likewise be outstretched for the reception of spiritual benefits and blessings; at the same time he is made conscious of the great deficiency—the entire inadequacy of his faith for the attainment of the favour he is so anxious to obtain. Suspending his petition on behalf of his son, but resuming his request with the same term and now in his own interest, he called aloud, with eyes brimful of tears—if this reading (*μετὰ δακρύων*) is accepted, at all events—affectingly and touchingly, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." He affirms the possession of belief, but that belief is so weak as to be scarcely worthy of the name; that he has some faith, but that faith is small, exceeding small, like a grain of

mustard seed. Persuaded that his faith is too insignificant to satisfy the condition, he prays (1) for its increase; in other words, he seeks to be helped against his unbelief. Another interpretation, though advocated by some good and great men, to the effect, (2) "Help me, notwithstanding the weakness of my faith," has but little, we think, to commend it to favour and acceptance. Now at length all is ready for the beneficent operation; the people are running together to the place, or running together yet more (ἐπι, denoting intensity or addition), when our Lord addressed the unclean spirit in terms of stern rebuke, and words of unmistakable authority, saying, "I" [ἐγώ expressed, and so emphatic and distinctive]—I, thy Master; I, whose authority you cannot evade; I, whose word of command you dare not disobey; I, not my disciples, who were nonplussed by the strange and sudden outburst of thy fiendish malignity; I order thee to come out of him at once, and never again to enter into him.

VIII. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE CURE. The command to "enter no more into him" may be attributed to the weakness of the father's faith—to assure him there would be no relapse, to convince him there would be no return of the paroxysm; it may also be owing in part to the malignant obstinacy of the foul fiend, who now, after crying aloud, and after convulsing the poor boy's whole frame with a horrible spasm, came out of him, leaving him all but dead, so that the many said he was dead. The great primary act of expelling the demon had been accomplished, but the effect of his long dominion over the lad, and the shock to his system at departure, left him so thoroughly exhausted and prostrate that a second miracle was required to supplement the first. In consequence, our Lord seized him by the hand, or seized his hand, and lifted him up, so that he stood upon his feet well and sound and strong, as though the whole had been but the memory of a troubled dream. An explanation was subsequently given to the disciples touching their inability in the present case, and their want of success in the exercise of a gift which had been bestowed, and which had been most probably effectual in other instances. The explanation appears to have respect to the character of the demon, and the conduct of the apostles themselves. First, there is mention of "this kind," by which some understand (1) the race of demons in general—"the race of all demons," according to Euthymius; others limit the expression to (2) a special kind of spirits, peculiarly obstinate and stiffnecked, and consequently more difficult to be driven out; while a recent authority on the subject suggests that the reference is to (3) a class of demons which manifested their presence by unexpectedly sudden and frightfully severe outbreaks, and for the expulsion of which the exorcist or physician operating required uncommon presence of mind and strength of nerve, as well as vigorous exercise of faith. But, waiving a discussion of this doubtful kind, and merely expressing our preference for the second of the opinions stated, we may notice briefly a strange term employed here, namely, *go out* (ἐξελθεῖν). If the statement in which this word is used is to be interpreted literally, the meaning appears to be that demons of this kind could not go out, even if they would, of the persons possessed by any other means or in any other way than in the use or by the exercise of prayer and fasting. If this be the real, as it is the literal meaning, it is a circumstance of a strange, inscrutable kind; and, among matters more or less mysterious, it is not the least so. We may, however, give to the words a freer interpretation and take them in the more ordinary sense, that this kind can be expelled by nothing but by prayer and fasting. The conduct of the apostles themselves had most to do with their powerlessness to cast out the demon in this instance. They had received the requisite power, as we read in ch. vi. 7 that, in sending them forth by two and two, he "gave them power over unclean spirits;" but they had neglected the discipline indispensable to the efficient and successful employment of that power. Two circumstances in close connection with this neglect are assigned as the cause of failure—weakness of faith is mentioned by St. Matthew, and neglect of prayer is hinted by St. Mark. We may regard them as standing together in the relation of two joint causes, or rather as cause and effect in relation to this matter—neglect of prayer being the former, and debility of faith the latter.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. We learn the important duty of parental solicitude for the spiritual as well as, or rather more than, for the bodily, well-being of their offspring. In the case of the Syro-phœnician woman we saw how she identified herself with her afflicted daughter, saying, "Lord, help me!" Here likewise the father of the demoniac makes common cause with his child, in the words, "Have compassion on us, and help

us!" Especially should we travail, as in birth, till Christ is formed in their heart, and till by grace they are enabled to renounce the devil and all his works. 2. Great importance attaches to the element of time. The demon got possession early of this sorely distressed boy, and the demoniac power seems to have grown with the child's growth, and to have strengthened with his strength, so that dispossession had become next to an impossibility. The apostles were not competent to the task, and when our Lord, in the exercise of his almighty power, expelled him, it was only after he had made horrid havoc of the lad's system, frightfully convulsing him and leaving him half-dead. So, if Satan unhappily gain the ascendant in a young heart, he will do his best to blight the whole life; he will hold his dominion with tenacity, and, if possible, to the end; he will seat himself firmly on the throne of the affections, and exercise a despot's sway; his dethronement will be attended with the greatest difficulty; and if, by Divine mercy, his power is at last overthrown, it will cost pain of body, distress of mind, and grief of heart. Oh, how careful young persons should be to guard against the solicitations of the evil one, and to resist his power! How determined not to yield to his temptations, and to vanquish youthful lusts that war against the soul! How resolved, by the aid of Divine strength, to keep him out, remembering how difficult it is to get him out once he has gained an entrance, and especially if he has gained it early! 3. Every gift that God bestows should be diligently cultivated, and husbanded with care. The power bestowed on the apostles was, as we have seen, lost through their own remissness. Faith required to be kept in healthy exercise and active vigour; devotion and self-denial were required for its maintenance. The neglect or undue performance of thes left them weak before the power of the evil one, and caused them to be humiliated in the presence of their enemies. Thus it was with the apostles and miraculous gifts. How much more is such likely to be the case with ordinary persons in the exercise of ordinary gifts! We greatly need to use all the means that tend to strengthen faith; above all, we must pray earnestly, in the beautiful words suggested by this passage "Lord, increase our faith;" avoiding at the same time any and every indulgence that might weaken faith or slacken prayer.

"Restraining prayer we cease to fight;
Prayer keeps the Christian's armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

4. This passage cannot legitimately apply to any attempt at working miracles in the present day. The age of miracles is past. The power thus possessed by the apostles was not to continue, and needed not to continue, after the great purpose for which miracles had been bestowed had been attained. Faith and prayer and fasting cannot of themselves confer the power; they were needed to sustain it only where it had been bestowed; they were required for its successful exercise where it did exist. 5. The greatness of the believer's privilege is immense, yet not without certain well-defined limits. "All things are possible to him that believeth:" this appears to comprise at once omnipotence in action and universality in possession. To the former we have the parallel statement of St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;" or rather, "in (ἐν) Christ that giveth me inward strength (ἐνδυναμοῦντι);" and thus the strength as to its source is obtainable by virtue of living and lively union with Christ, while as to its nature it is spiritual. But the reference is rather to what it is possible for us to get than to do; and so all things are ours, for "we are Christ's, and Christ is God's." There are here two limitations which, though not expressed, must be implied: (1) The first limitation restricts the "all things" to things truly beneficial —beneficial spiritually as well as temporally, beneficial for eternity rather than for the brief relations of time; they are such things as are thus of real benefit, when regard is had to the believer's condition and present position. (2) The second limitation has respect to the circumstances of others, that is to say, of those with whom we come into close contact, or with whom we have to do and deal in the affairs of life. All things are thus possible to be attained by the believer, as far as they are consistent with his real benefit, and compatible at the same time with his relations in the widest sense— relations to his Father in heaven and to his fellow-man on earth. Such is the potentiality of faith—it extends to all things; such, too, is its practicability, excepting only such things as, at the present or in the long run, do not comport with his own personal

good, as also with his relation to God, whose glory is paramount, and to his fellow-man, whose good, as well as our own, we are in duty bound to seek.—J. J. G.

Vers. 30—32. Parallel passages: Matt. xvii. 22, 23; Luke ix. 43—45.—*Prediction of his passion.* I. SECRECY. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." Every man has a work to do, and a time allowed him to do it in. Every man, moreover, is immortal till that work is done, and God's will with him accomplished. In like manner there was a time allotted for our Lord's mission on earth. There was a time fixed for his ministry of mercy to man. When the fulness of the time was come, he made his descent into our world; when the work he came to do was done, and when the proper period again arrived, he took his departure from our world. The appointed interval of his sojourn on earth no enemy could shorten by one day, no power could abridge it by a single hour; nothing could interfere with it, so long as "his hour was not yet come." Yet, notwithstanding this, our Lord never neglected the use of such means as were proper for the prolongation of his stay on earth till his great work should be performed, and the destined period completed. Accordingly, we find him at one time returning to Galilee, and "walking no more in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him." Afterward, when Herod's attention had been directed to him, and his abode even in Galilee had thus become somewhat insecure, we find him withdrawing to the more remote and less populous districts of that province. We are, moreover, informed that subsequently he had gone yet further from contact with his enemies, passing beyond Galilee into the Phœnician territory. This he did in order, it would seem, to escape observation, for while there he "entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid." This course our Lord pursued for various reasons. While each particular occasion on which he courted privacy had its own specific reason, we can state in general the motives that seem to have influenced him in this direction. As already intimated, he avoided such publicity as would bring him into hostile conflict with his enemies, so as to precipitate the crisis, and hasten his death, before the proper and purposed period. Again he sought seclusion, now for required rest, oftener for more time and better opportunity of instructing his apostles for their future work and important mission. But while our Lord thus sought seclusion to prevent any interference either with the space of his ministry or with the plan of instructing his apostles, there was another eventuality which he carefully avoided, namely, any attempt on the part of the people to make him a king; as, after the miracle of feeding the five thousand, we read that, "when Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." This was no very improbable contingency. In a moment of excitement, under the influence of enthusiasm, yielding to the impulse of popular feeling, they might attempt to place him at the head of a rebellion, if not a revolution, against existing authorities, and try to restore to Israel the temporal kingdom which Israel so ardently, though mistakenly, sought. This would have been a result greatly to be deprecated. It would have left a stigma on the Saviour's name, and caused a suspicion about his design, both of which would have been most detrimental to the interests of that spiritual kingdom—the kingdom "not of this world," which he came to set up. Accordingly, we find that when he had restored the deaf mute, he charged them that "they should tell no man." Again, when he cured the blind man at Bethsaida, he sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town"—any townsmen he might chance to meet on his way home. Also, after the Transfiguration, "he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead." And now that they passed along (*παρεπορεύοντο*) through Galilee, "he would not that any man should know it." Even an apparent exception is easily accounted for: nor is there any real discrepancy between the injunction he laid on them after the restoration of the deaf mute (ch. vii.), to "tell no man," and the direction he gave the demoniac (ch. v.), to "go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." No doubt it was the same district of Decapolis where both commands were given: but on the latter occasion our Lord was about to leave the district in question, so that there was no risk of his ministry being obstructed by the matter being blazoned abroad; on the former occasion he was going to tarry for a

time in the same region, and hence he resorts to the precaution necessary under circumstances which were thus quite different.

II. HE FORETELLS HIS DEATH. There were three great epochs in our Lord's ministry. The first was that of miracles, by which he attested the divinity of his mission; the second was that of parables, by which he developed the nature of his kingdom; and the third was that of suffering, by which he made satisfaction for the sins of his people. The miracles began with that at Cana; the parables, properly so called, began somewhere about the commencement of the last year of the Saviour's work and ministry. Though his parabolic teaching began at this period to assume a more formal shape, he had all along employed on certain occasions parabolic utterances of a briefer sort. Thus, for example, in the sermon on the mount the agreement with one's adversary there recommended is of the nature of parable; the similitude of the wise and foolish builders, with which that sermon closes, is still more distinctly parabolic; while subsequently, and before the beginning of his regular method of strictly parabolic instruction, we find such proverbial or brief parabolic representations as that of the new patch and the old garment, and that of the new wine and the old bottles, besides that of the creditor and the two debtors. Still, from the period indicated, his teaching by parables became more frequent and methodical. The reasons of our Lord's adopting this method are such as the following:—1. The harmony existing between the kingdom of nature and that of grace, and the similarity in their laws of development. 2. The adaptation to our nature of the historical element, real or ideal, contained in them. 3. The amount of truth communicable in this way to the dull apprehension of the disciples. 4. Their helpfulness to memory by linking the spiritual truth to some familiar natural object, the frequent occurrence of the latter always suggesting the former; and: 5. A judicial veiling of the truth because of past dulness and indifference. The constant theme of his teaching henceforth consists of his sufferings and death, as is implied in the imperfect tense (ἐδίδασκε, "he kept teaching") here used.

III. PREVIOUS INTIMITATIONS ON THE SUBJECT. The previous intimations had been obscure. There had been the intimation of the Baptist when he pointed the Saviour out as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29), and in the repetition of part of the same at ver. 36. He had himself given several figurative intimations of it, as when he spake of his death by violence, and his resurrection in three days under the similitude of the demolition and rebuilding of a temple. "Destroy," he said, "this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This had occurred at the celebration of the first Passover after the commencement of his public ministry. Again, in his discourse with Nicodemus, he represented his crucifixion as an uplifting, and its beneficial effects by a comparison with Moses' lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, when the bitten Israelite looked and lived. Another intimation of his death, and the first allusion to that event recorded in this Gospel (St. Mark's), is the removal of the bridegroom, of which he said, "The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them" (ch. ii. 20; Matt. ix. 15). Also, after the feeding of the five thousand, in the synagogue of Capernaum he made a reference to it in the words, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." But the first clear and *distinct* declaration is that of the preceding chapter (ch. viii.), when "he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

IV. SIMILAR DECLARATIONS IN THE PRESENT AND SUBSEQUENT CHAPTERS. The first public, or at least the first direct and unreserved announcement of his sufferings, death, and resurrection, was made, as recorded in the preceding chapter, after the disciples had been convinced of, and Peter had confessed, his Messiahship, saying, "Thou art the Christ." On that occasion we learn from the fuller report of St. Matthew that our Lord warmly commended Peter's confession, but soon after, as both St. Matthew and St. Mark inform us, found cause to condemn his indiscreet and unwelcome rebuke. The commendation is contained in the words, "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." The latter clause of the promise just cited has, as is well known, excited no little controversy, and called forth a variety of interpretations. 1. Augustine will have it that the rock on which the Church is built, according to the Saviour's promise, is *Christ himself.*

2. Chrysostom maintains that the *confession of faith in Christ*, that Peter had just given utterance to, is the rock on which the Church is based. We admit the show of reason and the plausibility with which both opinions have been expressed and enforced; still we cannot concur in either. Chrysostom's explanation is chargeable with overlooking the context. So to some extent, though less so, is that of Augustine; but the latter rests, besides, on a very doubtful distinction between two words which are frequently used in classical writers as interchangeable. According to this interpreter its import would be, "Thou art Peter (*πέτρος*), a small stone; but I am Christ, a strong Rock (*πέτρα*), and on this Rock, that is, myself, I will build my Church." In the Aramaic there is one word (*Kipho*) for *Peter* and for *rock*, just as in French there is one word for both—*Pierre*, Peter, a man's name, and *pierre*, a stone or rock. But in Greek there are the two words already mentioned, viz. *πέτρος* and *πέτρα*, so that in this play upon the word there is a slight variation in the Greek, without, however, real difference of meaning. Even admitting the distinction between the two words, which has been questioned, if not entirely disproved, the explanation is evidently forced. We require to look more closely at the context as furnished by the eighteenth verse itself, and by the sixteenth. As recorded in the latter, Peter's answer was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord, after expressing approval of Peter's reply, and assuring him that the truth contained in it was the outcome, not of human discovery, but of Divine revelation, takes occasion to state another and no less important truth, and that in a form accommodated to the statement of Peter, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [*πέτρος*, a rock], and upon this rock (*πέτρα*) I will build my Church;" that is to say,—You have made a good and true confession in acknowledging my Messiahship and divinity; I also, in my turn, will confess what I have in store for you in connection with my Church. 3. Your name is significant—it means a rock; and *according to your name will be the nature of your work*. With the foundation of the Church you will have much to do. On your preaching of the faith which you have just professed its foundation shall be laid. Similarly, elsewhere we read that the Church is "built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone;" whereas apostles and prophets are only the foundation in so far as they themselves, *knit together with and cemented to Christ, lay the foundation by their exhibition of Christ and declaration of the truth concerning Christ*. It is as though our Lord had said to Peter, Among Jews and Gentiles your work is appointed you. Among the Jews on the day of Pentecost your proclamation of the selfsame faith, which you have just confessed, will lay the foundation of the Christian Church; while to Cornelius the same gospel preached by you will inaugurate a similar blessed result among the Gentiles, introducing the first-fruits of the Gentile world into the Church. Still more, to the united Church of the believing Jew and converted Gentile I shall promise and provide security from all the devices of the most wily, and all the assaults of the most Satanic, foes.

V. WHY IS THIS COMMENDATION OMITTED BY ST. MARK? It has often been remarked that many things redounding solely to the honour of St. Peter are omitted by St. Mark; while at the same time his infirmities are fully and faithfully recorded by the same evangelist, extenuating circumstances being less noticed by this evangelist than by the other synoptists. An example of this is furnished in the case before us. The blessing pronounced on him because of this noble and brave confession of the Christ, the Divine origin of his knowledge and faith, the promise just considered, and the further promise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, are all omitted by St. Mark. But the rebuke to which he soon after subjected himself is carefully recorded. Many instances of both kinds occur. This is one of those incidental circumstances that go far to confirm the voice of history in regard to the relation in which St. Peter stood to St. Mark and his Gospel, namely, that the latter penned his Gospel, as disciple and by the dictation, to some extent, of the former. If so, and we think it extremely probable, we have proof herein of the veracity of the one and the humility of the other.

VI. REPETITION OF THE PREDICTION. Reverting to the subject of the Saviour's sufferings, so plainly announced in the eighth chapter, we have a repetition of a similar announcement in this ninth chapter, and another, again, in nearly the same terms in the tenth chapter. These repeated as well as direct and unreserved declarations on

this subject—a subject so distasteful and saddening to his disciples—show their unwillingness to associate the idea of death with the Messiah, their tenacity in clinging to a temporal king and worldly kingdom, their slowness and lothness to apprehend or accept the notion of a spiritual, unworldly kingdom. The idea of a suffering Messiah has, therefore, to be dinned into their ears and impressed on their hearts by frequent and earnest reiterations. Nor has this subject lost aught of its importance or interest even for ourselves and at the present day; while the faithful inculcation of it is as much a duty and a necessity now as when our Lord in person urged it so solemnly and so often on the mind and heart of his sorrowing disciples. Though the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, it is still the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to the salvation of every believer. The way to the crown is still by, and only by, the cross; humiliation precedes glorification. The preacher of the gospel cannot dwell too frequently or too earnestly on a theme that bulked so largely in the sight of the Saviour himself. The doctrine of Christ's suffering for us to put away our sins—suffering, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God"—cannot be too much insisted on; neither can we be too often instructed in the duty of giving ourselves fully, freely, and for ever to him "who loved us and gave himself for us." If, moreover, Christ was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," in all its shame and with all its pain, it surely behoves us, in daily, holy obedience, to take up our cross, deny ourselves, and follow him.—J. J. G.

Ver. 33. Parallel passage: Matt. xvii. 24—27.—*The tribute money.* I. ANOTHER OMISSION. In the first line of the thirty-third verse we approach the subject of the tribute money; but in St. Mark's narrative we only approach it, and that in the statement, "he came to Capernaum;" but in the parallel section of St. Matthew we read of the demand for the tribute money, of Peter being commissioned to procure it from "the fish that first cometh up," of the exemption Jesus might have claimed but waived, and the reason of his doing so. Here, again, St. Mark omits the part of the narrative which relates to the honour conferred on Peter by our Lord, when he commissioned him to work the miracle by which the tribute money was procured from the fish's mouth. But, though St. Mark omits this portion of the recital, the preceding and succeeding portions are coincident with those of St. Matthew. The peculiar relation of the apostle to the evangelist, already considered, can alone account for the omission.

II. GROUND OF LEGITIMATE EXEMPTION. In Matt. xvii. 24, 25, we read, "When they were come to Capernaum, they that received *tribute money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?" Then at the last clause of the twenty-fifth verse, our Lord asked Peter, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take *custom* or *tribute*? of their own children, or of strangers?" A slight amount of archæological knowledge makes this plain. The word "tribute" in the twenty-fourth verse is τὰ δίδραχμα; the word "tribute" in the twenty-fifth is κῆνσον; while "custom," a word of kindred meaning, is τέλη. Also in the twenty-seventh verse, the word στατῆρ, or "shekel," rendered "piece of money" in the English version, occurs. The stater, or shekel, equivalent to two shillings and sixpence of our currency, was the exact amount of tax payable by two. Now, there is a very wide and important distinction between these terms, and a distinction necessary to be kept in view for the right understanding of the passage. For (1) the δίδραχμα were equal in value to the Jewish half-shekel, or some fifteenpence of our money, and may be called a sacred tribute or annual contribution paid by every male among the Jews, from twenty years of age and upwards, for the support of the temple at Jerusalem—to defray the general expenses, to provide the sacrifices and other things required for the service. The persons who collected it were not the civil tax-gatherers, called *publicani*, or rather *portitores*; nor, indeed, was the tax a civil one at all, but a sacred one. From overlooking this fact, the point of the argument is liable to be missed, as it actually has been by several of the Fathers. It is briefly, though correctly, developed by Alford, in the following sentence:—"If the sons are free, then on me, being the Son of God, has this tax no claim." It requires, however, to be somewhat more fully and plainly exhibited. In order to set the matter in a clear light, we premise (2) that the κῆνσος, for which St. Luke employs the classical Greek term φόρος, was a poll or capitation tax, like the Roman *tributum*; while by τέλη are to be understood the *toll* or *customs*'

duties, which are identical with the *vectigal* of the Romans. Further, let it be borne in mind that Peter's confession of faith that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," had been made, being recorded in the sixteenth chapter, and so had preceded the present conversation. Our Lord now argues from analogy that he was entitled to, and might fairly claim, exemption. In doing so, he asks Peter this question, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own sons, or of strangers?" It is here admitted by implication that civil rulers have a right to impose taxes for the support of civil government, but that, in exercising this right, they impose taxes on the other members of the state, not on the members of their own household. When kings levy taxes, or have them levied in the ordinary constitutional way, they impose them on their subjects, not on their sons. Peter had confessed Jesus to be the Son of God; the tax demanded was for the support of God's house; according to the principle of action among earthly kings, God, the great King of heaven and of earth, while requiring contributions for the maintenance of his service from his subjects, would exempt his own Son, for, from his position of Sonship, which the apostle had recently acknowledged, and from the principle of taxation in which he had just acquiesced, it was necessarily inferred, "then are the sons free." Not as a mere member of the Hebrew race, or as an ordinary Jew, but from his dignity as the Son of God, in the highest and most exalted sense, our Lord might have claimed exemption from the tax in question. This was the gist of his reasoning: but he waived his right; and proceeds to explain to Peter the ground on which he foregoes his privilege, saying, "Lest we should offend them," or more plainly in the Revised Version, "Lest we cause them to stumble;" in other words, lest he and his disciples should be regarded as indifferent to, or be charged with, neglect of the house of God and the maintenance of its service.—J. J. G.

Vers. 33—37. Parallel passages: Matt. xviii. 1—5; Luke ix. 46—48.—*The lesson of humility.* The exquisite lesson of humility taught in the remainder of this section (the first clause of the thirty-third verse, as it stands in St. Mark, having been already considered) may be appropriately taken up in connection with the section of next chapter, where the lovely comparison of childhood is again employed.—J. J. G.

Vers. 38—41. Parallel passage: Luke ix. 49, 50.—*Rebuke of sectarian narrowness.* I. THE KEY-NOTE OF THE PASSAGE. The sentence which appears to furnish the key to the understanding of this instructive and interesting passage is contained in the following short sentence:—"He that is not against us is on our part," or, as it stands yet more concisely in St. Luke, "He that is not against us is for us."

II. A SEEMING CONTRADICTION. The statement just quoted from the Gospel of St. Luke (ix. 50) appears to be at variance with another statement further on in the same Gospel, where, at the eleventh chapter and twenty-third verse, it is written, "He that is not with me is against me." The discrepancy, however, is only apparent. In order to perceive this, we must consider the occasions on which the words recorded were respectively spoken; for, as our Lord and his apostles usually adapted their language to the occasion, we shall thus best learn the design with which each of those sentiments was uttered. Accordingly, we learn that some one not consorting with Christ or his apostles was, nevertheless, casting out devils in the Saviour's name, and that John forbade him. Our Lord sets John right in the matter by saying, "Forbid him not;" that is, do not interfere with any who may be attempting anything good in my name. And then he assigns the reason; for "he that is not against us is for us;" he who is not directly opposed to us is rather to be regarded as on our side; he who is not preventing our progress may be looked upon, at least negatively, as promoting it. Just as is intimated by the Apostle Paul on a certain occasion, even though envy and strife should be the impelling motive, if Christ is preached his cause is advanced, and "I therein do rejoice." So here we may fairly understand the words of the Master to mean—Whosoever this man may be, or whatever may be his object, he is weakening Satan's kingdom by casting out devils, and therefore, so far from being against me, he must be looked upon as an auxiliary in the great war against the great enemy of man. Besides, by such forbearance as I thus counsel, he may be drawn into closer and more effective co-operation against the common adversary. Such is the plain meaning of the passage

before us. On the other hand, in the second passage, our Lord had been charged by the hostile, cavilling Pharisees with casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils. This charge had called forth the rejoinder of our Lord, that "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation." Such would be the case if Satan cast out Satan. The only reasonable alternative was that the Saviour was casting out devils by the Spirit of God, and so the kingdom of God had come unto them. He follows up this reply by a warning against lukewarmness and an exhortation to decision, that the crisis had come when men must choose sides, that they must elect to take part with God or with Satan. Neutrality was impossible. In view of two kingdoms so opposed, there was no possibility of belonging to both; nay, there was no middle ground between loyalty and rebellion. If not on the side of the Saviour, he must be on the side of Satan; if not a subject of the former, he must be a slave of the latter, and so an enemy to the cause of Christ: "He that is not with me is against me."

III. THE SAME SUBJECT VIEWED FROM A PRACTICAL STANDPOINT. The one text implies that men may take different roads to the same place, or reach the same point by different routes. This is true morally as well as geographically. It condemns the narrowness that refuses to tolerate want of uniformity, and commends forbearance towards all who in reality serve the same Master and seek the same object, viz. the glory of God, though their forms may be diverse, their modes of worship different, and even their creeds divergent in expression. The other text affirms that, in the natural and increasing conflict between good and evil, our hesitation to unite with the good is tantamount with adhesion to the evil. The one text does not insist on uniformity, the other inculcates unity. Again, conformity to the same standards is not an indispensable condition of Christianity, as we infer from the one text; but cordiality in embracing Christ and espousing his cause is of its very essence. We are taught by the one that there may be many folds, though there is but one flock; but by the other that, as there is but one Shepherd, union to him is indispensable to membership in his flock. Further, the one makes charity to others imperative, provided they have the same great end in view, however divergent the means adopted for its attainment; the other requires of us decision for ourselves in seeking that end.—J. J. G.

Vers. 42—50. Parallel passage: Matt. xviii. 6—9.—*Christ's love to his little ones, and offences.* I. LOVE TO THE LITTLE ONES. Christ's little ones are either young believers or weak believers. A kindness shown them is accepted by Christ as done to himself. Even a cup of cold water will be rewarded. However much they may be despised by men or neglected in the world, they are dear to God and near to the Saviour's heart; while angels of highest rank are commissioned to guard them—even angels who are privileged to stand in the immediate presence of the great King; for "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Angels of all grades have a twofold function—they worship and they minister; they worship in the heavenly sanctuary the Father everlasting (λειτουργικὰ), they wait for ministry (εἰς διακονίαν) to man on earth. But those of most exalted dignity are the guardians of Christ's little ones.

II. CONSEQUENCES OF OFFENCES. The sin of offending one of these little ones is great in proportion to Christ's love to them. How careful men should be, and how cautious, not to put a stumbling-block in the way of these little ones! The sin of turning weak believers or young Christians aside from the truth, or from the faith, or from the path of purity, or a career of virtue, by evil advice or bad example, or by casting doubt on the Word of God, or by insinuating sceptical notions, or by mockery of Divine things, is a sin so great that a preferable alternative would be for the person guilty of it to have a millstone of large size, turned by an ass (ὀνικὸς), lying around his neck, and himself cast into the sea. Such is the fearfully emphatic declaration of the guilt and danger of scandalizing or offending the youngest child that believes, or the weakest Christian.

III. OTHER OFFENCES. Our Lord passes by a common law of suggestion to speak of offences by ourselves and against ourselves. The hand may offend by doing wrong the foot may offend by going on what is wrong. But if the most serviceable member, as the hand, do amiss, or the most useful member, as the foot, walk astray, or the most

precious member, as the eye, look with delight on objects sinful and forbidden, then there must be no hesitation in divesting ourselves of such rather than risk the fearful fate of those who are tormented in the Gehenna of fire, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

IV. SALTED WITH FIRE. This difficult expression is taken by some as a promise and by others as a punishment. In the former sense, fire is taken in the signification of purifying and preserving, and this twofold property it shares with salt. Salt preserves from putrefaction, fire purifies from corruption. The sacrifice of old required to be offered with salt. According to the Law in Lev. ii. 13, the meat offering was to be seasoned with salt, and salt was to be offered with all offerings. So, when we present ourselves living sacrifices to God, we may be purified by fiery trials; we may be called to pass through the fire of affliction, perhaps of persecution, certainly of self-denial. But thus purified by fire, like the sacrifice on the altar, salted with salt, we shall be saved. This gives a good sense, but does not suit the context. In the second sense, fire is taken to mean punishing and preserving. Six times does the evangelist represent unceasing torments by unquenchable fire; and as the salt applied to the sacrifice was the symbol of preservation, so fire here is symbolical of preservation, not, alas! from punishment, but for punishment, so that the undying worm and the unquenchable fire, instead of annihilating, preserve while they punish. Here is a fearful figure, and a terrible warning!

V. PEACE. They are exhorted to keep the salt of moral purity and covenant concord rather than have the salt of fiery punishment, and, as the effect and evidence thereof, to be at peace among themselves, and so avoid the strife for pre-eminence and the discord of ambition.—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1.—Instead of the words, **into the coasts of Judæa by the farther side of Jordan**, the passage, by a change of reading from διὰ τοῦ to καὶ, will run thus: *into the coasts (borders) of Judæa and beyond Jordan.* Our Lord was now on his last progress towards Jerusalem. It would appear from St. Luke (ix. 51) that in the earlier part of his journey he touched the frontier of Samaria. Putting the accounts together, we conclude that, being refused by the Samaritans, he passed eastwards along their frontier, having Galilee on his left, and Samaria on his right; and then crossed the Jordan, perhaps at Scythopolis, where was a bridge, and so entered Peræa. As Judæa and Galilee both lay west of the Jordan, this route above described would be literally coming "to the borders of Judæa and beyond Jordan." Again multitudes flocked together to him, and again he taught them. St. Matthew (xix. 1) says that "he healed them." His miracles of healing and his teaching went hand in hand.

Ver. 2.—**And there came unto him Pharisees**—the article should be omitted—**and asked him**—they came forward before the people, and publicly questioned him—**Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?** St. Matthew (xix. 3) adds to the question the words, "for every cause." There were causes for which it was lawful. They put this question to our Lord, **tempting him**; of course with an evil intent. This question about divorce was one which was much agitated in the time of our Lord. In the century before Christ, a learned rabbi, named Hillel, a native of Babylon, who afterwards came to Jerusalem, studied the Law with great success, and became the head of the chief school in that city. One of his disciples, named Shammai, separated from his master, and set up another school; so that in the time of our Lord the scribes and doctors of the Law were ranged in two parties, namely, the followers of Hillel, the most influential; and the followers of Shammai. These two schools differed widely on the subject of divorce. The followers of Shammai only permitted divorce in the case of moral defilement, while the followers of Hillel placed the matter entirely in the power of the husband. The object, therefore, of this artful question was to entrap our Lord, and to bring him into collision with one or other of these two opposing parties. For if he had said that it was not lawful for a man to put away his wife, he would have exposed himself to the hostility of many of the wealthy classes, who put away their wives for any cause. But if he had allowed the lawfulness of divorce at all, they would have found fault with his doctrine as imperfect and carnal, although he professed to be a spiritual Teacher of a perfect system, sent down from heaven.

Vers. 3, 4.—**And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?** They professed much reverence for Moses;

ne therefore appeals to their great lawgiver. And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. If we now turn to St. Matthew (xix. 4, 5), we shall find that our Lord then appeals to the original institution of marriage. "Have ye not read, that he which made them from the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." He thus reminds them that marriage is a Divine institution; that as Adam and Eve were united by him in a union which was indissoluble, therefore he intended that the marriage bond should remain ever, so that the wife ought never to be separated from her husband, since she becomes by marriage a very part of her husband. To this purpose St. Augustine says ('City of God,' bk. xiv. 22), "It was not of the spirit which commands and the body which obeys, nor of the rational soul which rules and the irrational desire which is ruled, nor of the contemplative virtue which is supreme, and the active which is subject, nor of the understanding of the mind and the sense of the body; but plainly of the matrimonial union, by which the sexes are mutually bound together, that our Lord, when asked whether it were lawful for any cause to put away one's wife, answered as in St. Matthew (xix. 4, 5). It is certain, then, that from the first men were created as we see and know them to be now, of two sexes—male and female—and that they are called one, either on account of the matrimonial union, or on account of the origin of the woman, who was created from out of the side of the man."

Ver. 5.—St. Matthew appears to give the more full account, of which St. Mark's is an abbreviation. If we suppose the scribes here to interpose their question, "Why then did Moses permit a bill of divorcement?" the two narratives fit exactly. Our Lord here answers their question, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. He permitted (not commanded) them to put away their wives, lest dislike might turn to hatred. From the beginning God joined them in one indissoluble bond; but man's nature having become corrupt through sin, that sin changed and corrupted the institution, and so was the occasion of bills of divorcement, and polygamy. The Law of Moses put some restraint upon the freedom with which men had till then put away their wives; for thenceforth, a divorce could not take place until some legal steps had been taken, and a regular instrument had been drawn up; and this delay might often be the means of preventing a divorce which might otherwise have been effected in a moment of passion. Thus this legislation was adapted to the imperfect moral condition of the people, who were as yet quite unprepared for a higher moral code.

Ver. 10.—The discussion with the Pharisees, related in the previous verses, had taken place in public. But now in the house, and in private, the disciples asked him again of this matter; so that what follows seems here to have been said to them privately. But it would appear from St. Matthew (xix. 8) that our Lord had already said this in public; so that here he proclaims a new law, or rather affirms the sanctions of the primitive institution, abrogating the "bill of divorcement" excepting in the one case of fornication, and restoring the rite of marriage to its primæval and indissoluble character.

Ver. 11.—Committeth adultery against her (*μοιχᾶται ἐπ' αὐτήν*). This must surely mean the wife that has been put away. The adultery is against her, against her rights and interests.

Ver. 12.—This verse should be read thus: And if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery (*καὶ ἐὰν αὐτὴ ἀπολύσασα τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς, γαμήσῃ ἄλλον, μοιχᾶται*). This reading is well supported. These words indicate that, according to our blessed Lord's teaching, wives and husbands have equal rights in reference to divorce; and so the Greek, according to the best authorities, is (*γαμήσῃ*) "shall marry," not (*γαμηθῇ*) "shall be married." Josephus, however, makes it evident that in his time husband and wife had by no means equal rights in these matters ('Antiq.,' xv. 7, 10).

Ver. 13.—It is worthy of notice that this touching incident follows here, as well as in the parallel passage in St. Matthew (xix. 13), immediately after the discourse about the marriage bond. And they brought unto him (*προσέφερον*)—literally, *were bringing*—little children (*παιδία*)—St. Luke (xviii. 15) calls them "babes" (*βρέφη*)—that he should touch them (*ἵνα ἅψηται αὐτῶν*). St. Luke has the same word (*ἵνα ἅπτηται*); but St. Matthew (xix. 13) says "that he should lay his hands on them and pray." The imposition of hands implies a formal benediction the invoking of Divine grace upon them, that they might grow up into wise and holy men and women. Why did the disciples rebuke them? Perhaps because they thought it unworthy of so great a Prophet, whose business was rather that of instructing those of full age, to be spending his time upon little children.

Ver. 14.—But when Jesus saw it (*ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς*). The Greek shows that there was no interval between the acts of the parents

and the disciples, and our Lord's seeing it. The parents were bringing the children, the disciples were rebuking them, Jesus was perceiving. **He was much displeased** (ἠγανάκτησε); literally, *he was moved with indignation.* His words imply eagerness and earnestness: **Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not.** The copulative καὶ is not to be found in the best authorities. The omission adds force and vividness to the words. The simplicity, candour, and innocence of little children are very attractive. This narrative shows with what care children should be educated. **For of such is the kingdom of God;** that is, of such little children as these. The kingdom of heaven belongs in a peculiar manner to little children. We know for certain that little children who have been brought to Christ in Holy Baptism, if they die before they are old enough for moral accountableness, are undoubtedly saved. They pass at once into a nearer position to the throne. "They are without fault before the throne of God."

Ver. 15.—**Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.** Observe the "verily" with which our Lord introduces these words. He here adds something which extends what he has just said to those who are, not literally, but figuratively, little children. We must first receive the kingdom into our affections before we can really enter into it. It is as though Christ said, "It is not unworthy of my dignity to take little children into my arms and bless them, because by my benediction they become fit for the kingdom of heaven. And if you full-grown men would become fit for my kingdom, you must give up your ambitious aims and earthly contests, and imitate the simple unworldly ways of little children. The simplicity of the little child is the model and the rule for every one who desires, by the grace of Christ, to obtain the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord's whole action here is a great encouragement to the receiving of little children by Holy Baptism into covenant with him.

Ver. 16.—**And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.** This is considered the true order of the words, according to the best authorities. The word rendered "taking in the arms" (ἐναγκαλισάμενος) has already occurred in this Gospel at ch. ix. 36 (where see the note). The description here is very graphic. Our Saviour would first embrace the little child, folding it in his arms; then he would lay his right hand upon the child's head, and bless it.

Ver. 17.—This verse should be rendered, **And as he was going forth** (ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ)—that is, just as he was leaving the house—**there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him.** St. Matthew (xix. 20) says that he was "a young man." St. Luke (xviii. 18) that he was "a ruler." He had apparently been waiting for our Lord, waylaying him, though with a good intention. He showed zeal—as soon as he saw Jesus he ran to him; and he showed reverence, for he kneeled down to him. He wanted advice from one whom he must have heard of as a celebrated Teacher; and he wanted this counsel as a matter of great interest to himself. **Good Master.** This would be the ordinary and courteous mode of accosting a person professing to be a teacher, so as to conciliate his attention and interest. **What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** It is as though he said, "Rabbi, I know thee to be good, both as a man and as a teacher, and a prophet, well able to teach me perfectly those things which are really good, and which lead to blessedness hereafter. Tell me, therefore, What shall I do?" St. Matthew (xix. 17) says, "What good thing (τί ἀγαθὸν ποιήσω) shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Ver. 18.—**Why callest thou me good?** According to the best authorities, the words in St. Matthew (xix. 17) run thus: "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good." The word "good" is the pivot on which our Lord's answer turns, both in St. Matthew and here. The question is doubtless put to test the young ruler's faith. If, as may be supposed, the young man used the term, "good Master," as a mere conventional expression, it was not the proper epithet to apply to our Lord, who at once transfers the praise and the goodness to God, that he might teach us to do the same. This ruler, by his mode of accosting our Lord, showed that he had not as yet a right faith in him—that he did not believe in his Godhead. Our Lord, therefore, desired to rouse him and lift him up to a higher faith. He seems to say to him, "If you call me good, believe that I am God; for no one is good, intrinsically good, but God. God alone is essentially good, and wise, and powerful, and holy. It is from him that angels and men derive a few drops, or rather some faint adumbration, of his goodness. There is none essentially, entirely, absolutely good but one, that is, God. Therefore seek after him, love him, imitate him. He alone can satisfy your longing desires, as in this life with his grace, so in the life to come with his glory; yea, with himself. For in heaven he manifests himself as the supreme good, to be tasted and enjoyed by the blessed for ever."

Ver. 19.—In St. Matthew (xix. 17, etc.) the record of our Lord's conversation with

the young ruler is more full; and it should be read side by side with the more condensed narrative of St. Mark. It will be observed that it is upon the commandments of the second table that our Lord here lays stress. For the love of God produces the love of our neighbour; and he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Ver. 20.—**Master, all those things have I observed from my youth** (ἐφυλαξάμην); literally, *I kept, I guarded.* St. Matthew adds here (xix. 20), "What lack I yet?"—"What is still wanting in me, that I may inherit the life to come in its fulness of glory and bliss? You seem, good Master, as a heavenly Teacher, to set forth a higher and more excellent way than that pointed out by our scribes and Pharisees. Tell me what that way is. Tell me what I still lack; for I earnestly desire to go forward in the right way that leadeth to everlasting life."

Ver. 21.—**And Jesus looking upon him loved him** (ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ, ἠγάπησεν αὐτόν). This is another of St. Mark's graphic touches—an exquisite piece of word-painting, probably supplied to him by St. Peter. The words express most vividly an earnest, tender, searching look. They seem, if it may be said reverently, to combine the Divine penetration with human sympathy and compassion. The counsel of our Lord which follows was not a general command, but a particular precept, which the young ruler specially needed. **One thing thou lackest.** In St. Matthew (xix. 21) the words are, "If thou wouldest be perfect." But our Lord's words here, "One thing thou lackest," fit in excellently with the young ruler's question given just before in St. Matthew, "What lack I yet?" showing a substantial unity in the narrative, with just that variety which we should expect in the account of the same incident given by two independent but equally trustworthy witnesses. The "one thing thou lackest" of St. Mark, and "if thou wilt be perfect" of St. Matthew, both point to the same conclusion—that our Lord's object was to reveal this young man to himself. His stumbling-block was his wealth; and so our Saviour at once pierces his besetting sin of covetousness. The precept was a special counsel to him; it directed him to do something which, as our Lord saw, was in his case necessary to his salvation. He could not follow Christ without parting with this sin, and with that which ministered to it. This was his particular spiritual difficulty.

Ver. 22.—**But his countenance fell at the saying** (ὁ δὲ, στυγνάσας ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ). The same word is used in St. Matthew (xvi. 3) for a "lowering," "frowning sky" (οὐρανὸς στυγνάζων). **And he went away sorrowful** (ἀπῆλθε λυπούμενος); **for he had** (ἦν γὰρ ἔχων)—literally, *for he was one that had*—**great possessions.**

Ver. 23.—**And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples** (καὶ περιβλεψάμενος ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει). St. Mark frequently uses this word περιβλέπω. Our Lord turned from the young man, who was now going away, and looked round about, no doubt with a sad and disappointed look, and said to his disciples, **How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!** Why is this? Partly because the love of riches tempts men to heap them up, whether lawfully or unlawfully. Partly because the love of riches binds the soul to earth, so that it is less likely to think of heaven. Partly because riches are an incentive to pride and luxury and other sins. The heathen poet Ovid could speak of riches as "irritamenta malorum." Poverty and contempt of riches often open that heaven which wealth and covetousness close.

Ver. 24.—**And the disciples were astonished** (ἐθαμβοῦντο)—literally, *were amazed*—**at his words.** The Greek word here implies bewilderment. It is used again below at ver. 32. We find it also at ch. i. 27. This doctrine of our Lord was so new and strange to them. They had been accustomed to think little of the dangers, and much of the advantages of wealth. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, **Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!** He uses the endearing expression of "children" (τέκνα), and takes off somewhat of the edge of the severity of the expression, by changing the form of it into the words, "how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" There is some authority for omitting the words, "for them that trust in riches;" so to reduce the sentence to the simple form, "How hard is it to enter into the kingdom of God!" Such is the reading in the two great uncial manuscripts, the Sinaitic and the Vatican. But on the whole the balance of evidence is in favour of that which was adopted in the Authorized Version, and has been retained by the Revisers of 1881; and it is reasonable to believe that our Lord qualified the former expression, in order to relieve the minds of his amazed disciples.

Ver. 25.—**It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye,** etc. This is a strong hyperbolic proverbial expression to represent anything that is very difficult to do. Dr. John Lightfoot, in his Hebrew exercitations upon St. Matthew's Gospel (vol. ii. p. 219), quotes instances from the rabbinical writings of a very similar phrase intended to represent something that is im-

possible. For example, he quotes one rabbi disputing with another, who says, "Perhaps thou art one of those who can make an elephant pass through the eye of a needle;" that is, "who speak things that are impossible." St. Jerome says, "It is not the absolute impossibility of the thing which is set forth, but the infrequency of it."

Ver. 26.—**And they were astonished exceedingly** (*περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο*), **saying among themselves**—according to the best reading the words are, *saying unto him* (*πρὸς αὐτόν*)—**Then who can be saved?**

Ver. 27.—**Jesus looking upon them** (*ἐμβλέψας δὲ αὐτοῖς*). The Greek verb implies an earnest, intense looking upon them; evidently narrated by one who, like Peter, had watched his countenance. St. Chrysostom says that he looked on them in this way that he might mitigate and soothe the timid and anxious minds of his disciples. It is as though our Lord said, "It is impossible for a rich man, embarrassed and entangled with his wealth, by his own natural strength to obtain salvation; because this is a supernatural blessing, which we cannot obtain without the like supernatural aids of grace. But with God all things are possible, because God is the Author and Source, as of nature, so of grace and glory. And he enables us, by his grace, to triumph over all the difficulties and hindrances of nature; so that rich men shall not be hindered by their riches; but, by being faithful in the unrighteous mammon, shall make it the means of their being received unto 'the eternal tabernacle.'"

Ver. 28.—**Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.** Peter *began* to say unto him. He had been thinking of himself and his companions, the other disciples, in reference to these last words of our Lord. It is probable that the sacrifice which Peter and the rest of the disciples had made when they became his followers, was small, compared with the sacrifice which our Lord demanded of the rich young ruler. Nevertheless they forsook their all, whatever it was. They had forsaken their boats and their nets. They had forsaken their means of subsistence. They had forsaken things which, though they were not much in themselves, were nevertheless such things as they would have desired to keep. Cornelius à Lapide says, "Such things are forsaken by those who follow Christ, as are capable of being desired by those who do not follow him." St. Augustine says, "St. Peter not only forsook what he had, but also what he desired to have. But who does not desire daily to increase what he has? That desire is cut off. Peter forsook the whole world, and he receives in return the whole world. They were as those who had nothing, and yet were possessing all things."

Ver. 29.—St. Matthew (xix. 28) here introduces the great promise, to be fulfilled in the regeneration, that is, at the second coming of Christ—at the second birth of the world to a new and glorious state. It may be that St. Matthew was guided to record it, inasmuch as his Gospel was written for Jews. Its omission by St. Mark and St. Luke may be explained by the fact that they were writing, the one to Romans, and the other to Gentiles generally. Omitting further notice here of this great promise recorded only by St. Matthew, St. Mark's words seem general, common to all faithful Christians. This leaving of house, or brethren, or sisters, etc., might be rendered necessary from various causes. But they are all covered by that one expression, **for my sake, and for the gospel's.**

Ver. 30.—**But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time** (*ἑκατονταπλασίονα*). St. Luke (xviii. 30) says (*πολλαπλασίονα*), "manifold more"—an indefinite increase, to show the greatness and multitude of the recompense. He who forsakes his own for the sake of Christ will find others, many in number, who will give him the love of brethren and sisters, with even greater affection; so that he will seem not to have lost or forsaken his own, but to have received them again with interest. For spiritual affections are far deeper than natural; and his love is stronger who burns with heavenly love which God has kindled, than he who is influenced by earthly love only, which only nature has planted. But in the fullest sense, he who forsakes these earthly things for the sake of Christ, receives instead, God himself. For to those who forsake all for him, he is himself father, brother, sister, and all things. So that he will have possessions far richer than what earth can supply; only **with persecutions** (*μετὰ διωγμῶν*). This is a very striking addition. Our Lord here includes "persecutions" in the number of the Christian's blessings. And no doubt there is a noble sense in which persecutions are really amongst the blessings of the believer. "If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Pet. iv. 14). St. Peter, who must have had in his mind the "with persecutions" of our Lord when he wrote these words, here shows that the blessedness of the Christian when suffering persecution is this, that he has a special sense of the abiding presence of the Spirit of God, bringing with it the assurance of future glory. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." The

words are also, of course, a warning to the disciples as to the persecutions that awaited them. And in the world to come eternal life. This is that splendid inheritance in which the blessed shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; and so shall possess not only the heaven and the earth, and all things that are in them, but even God himself, and all honour, all glory, all joy, not merely as occupiers, but as heirs for ever; as long as God himself shall be, who is himself "the eternal God."

Ver. 31.—But many that are first shall be last; and the last first. Most fitly does our Lord add this weighty sentence to what has just gone before. For thus he places himself, his grace, and his gospel in direct opposition to the corrupt teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. Perhaps the disciples thought within themselves, "How can it come to pass that we, the poor, the unlearned, the despised, are to sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, amongst whom are men far our superiors in station, in learning, and in authority, such as are the scribes and Pharisees, and that rich young ruler just mentioned." Our Lord here teaches them that the future will reveal great changes—that some who are first here will be last there, and some who seem last here will be first there. The disciples, and others like them, who, having forsaken all and followed Christ, seemed to be last in this world, will be first in the world to come—most dear to Christ, the King of Heaven, in their lives; most like to him in their zeal for his cause.

Ver. 32.—They were now going up from Jericho to Jerusalem, going up with Christ to his cross and his death. He went before them, eagerly leading the way for his timid disciples, who were now beginning to realize what was about to happen, and that he would be condemned and crucified. Therefore the evangelist adds, they were amazed (Greek, *ἐθαμβοῦντο*); the same word which is used at ver. 24. The words in the original, according to the best reading, make a distinction between the utter amazement of the disciples and the fear of the others who followed (*οἱ δὲ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἐφοβοῦντο*). St. Mark draws a distinction between the disciples, who would be following him, though at a little distance, and the mixed company, who were also following him, though at a greater distance. The whole scene is before us. Our blessed Lord, with an awful majesty on his countenance, and eager resolution in his manner, is pressing forwards to his cross. "How am I straitened until it be accomplished!" His disciples follow him, amazed and bewildered; and even the miscellaneous crowd, who no doubt gazed upon him with keen interest as the great "Prophet that should come into the world," felt that something was going to happen, though they knew not what—something very dreadful; and they too were afraid. In the case of the disciples, Bede says that the chief cause of their amazement was their own imminent fear of death. They were amazed that their Master should hasten forward with such alacrity to his cross, and they feared lest they too should have to suffer with him. He took again the twelve; and once more impressed upon them the dread realities which were awaiting him. They were still slow of apprehension; they required to be told again and again.

Ver. 35.—And there come near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee. St. Matthew (xx. 20) informs us that this request was made by Salome, "the mother of Zebedee's children." The two accounts are readily reconciled if we consider that the request was made by Salome and her sons, and by her in their behalf. This request was made by them not long after they had heard our Lord's great promise that his apostles "in the regeneration" should "sit upon thrones," judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 28), and very soon after they had heard his repeated announcement of his sufferings and death. But the thought of the glory which was to follow swallowed up the thought of the suffering that was to precede it; and so these two disciples were emboldened at once to ask for prominent positions amongst the thrones. St. Chrysostom finds an excuse for the imperfection of their faith. He says, "The mystery of the cross was not yet accomplished; nor yet was the grace of the Holy Spirit poured into their hearts. Wherefore, if you desire to know the strength of their faith, consider what they became after they had been endued with power from on high."

Ver. 38.—It will be observed that in St. Matthew (xx. 20), while Salome is represented as the person who makes the request, the answer is given, not to her, but to her sons. Ye know not what ye ask. Our Lord knew that the sons had spoken in the mother and by the mother. They knew not what they asked (1) because his kingdom was spiritual and heavenly, not carnal and earthly, as they supposed; (2) because they sought the glory before they had gained the victory; (3) because perhaps they thought that this kingdom was given in right of natural relationship (they were his cousins); whereas it is not given save to those who deserve it and take it by force. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism

that I am baptized with? It is as though he said, "It is by my cross and passion that I am to attain to the kingdom; therefore the same way must be trodden by you who seek the same end." Our Lord here describes his passion as his cup. The "cup" everywhere in Holy Scripture, as well as in profane writers, signifies a man's portion, which is determined for him by God, and sent to him. The figure is derived from the ancient custom at feasts, by which the ruler of the feast tempered the wine according to his own will, and appointed to each guest his own portion, which it was his duty to drink. Our Lord then proceeds to describe his passion, which he had already spoken of as his cup, as his baptism. He uses this image because he would be totally buried, immersed, so to speak, in his passion. But it seems probable that the idea of *purification* entered into this image. It was a baptism of fire into which he was plunged, and out of which he came forth victorious. The fire of his bitter passion and death tried him. It was his "salting with fire." It pleased God thus to "make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings." Our Lord asks these ambitious disciples whether they could drink his cup of suffering, and be baptized with his fiery baptism.

Ver. 39.—James and John seem to have understood the meaning of the cup; and perhaps also of the baptism. They both of them drank the cup, though in different ways. St. James, preaching Christ more boldly and fervently, became an early martyr, having been slain by the sword of Herod (Acts xii. 2). St. John also drank of this cup, and was baptized with this baptism, when, if we may trust the authority of Tertullian ('De Præscript.' c. xxxvi.), he was cast by order of Domitian into a caldron of boiling oil, before the Porta Latina at Rome, although the oil had no power to hurt him. Another legend states that he drank a cup of poison, and took no harm. On this account he is frequently represented with a cup in his hand.

Ver. 40.—**But to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared.** The Arians gathered from this that our Lord was not of one substance with the Father. But this arose from a misunderstanding of the words. For the antithesis is not here between Christ and the Father; but between James and John on the one side ambitiously seeking the pre-eminence, and those on the other side to whom it ought of right to be given. St. Jerome wisely says, "Our Lord does not say, 'Ye shall not sit,' lest he should put to shame these two. Neither does he say, 'Ye shall sit,' lest the others should be envious. But by holding out the prize to all, he animates all to contend for it." Our Lord is also careful to point out that he who humbles himself shall be exalted. But Christ is the Giver, not indeed by way of favour to any one who asks, but according to the eternal and unalterable principles laid down by the Father. That Christ is the Giver is plain from St. Luke (xxii. 29), "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me."

Ver. 41.—**And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John.** How did they hear it? It is most likely that Salome and her two sons sought this favour secretly from Christ, lest they should excite the envy of the others. But they, the ten, must have noticed the approach of James and John with their mother to our Lord. They came in a formal manner, worshipping him first, and then making their request (see Matt. xx. 20). The ten would naturally be desirous to know the nature of this interview; and when it was explained to them, they began to show indignation. Our Lord perceived that they were disputing; and he then called them and addressed the whole body. For he saw that they were all labouring under this disease of ambition; and he wished to apply the remedy at once to all, as we see in the words which follow.

Ver. 42.—In these words our Lord does not find fault with that power or authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical, which is exercised by princes or bishops; for this is necessary in every state, and so is sanctioned by Divine and human law. What he condemns is the arbitrary and tyrannical exercise of such power, which the princes of the Gentiles were accustomed to.

Vers. 43, 44.—In these words our Lord enjoins him who is raised above others to conduct himself modestly and humbly; so as not to lord it over those beneath him, but to consider for them and to consult their security and happiness, and so to conduct himself that he may appear to be rather their minister and servant than their lord; ever remembering the golden rule, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do to them." At the same time, our Lord here teaches all alike, whether superiors or inferiors, by what way we should strive to reach heaven, so as to sit at the right or left hand of Christ in his kingdom, namely, by the way of humility. For those who are the lowliest and most humble here will be the greatest and most exalted there.

Ver. 45.—**A ransom for many** (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν; from λύω, to loose, or set free). **Not**

that Christ died only for the elect. For Christ died for all; and has obtained for all the means necessary and sufficient for their salvation. Yet the fruit of his death and his full salvation comes only to those who persevere to the end. When our Lord says that he came "to give his life a ransom for many," he regards the vast multitude of those who are included within his purposes of mercy. He "is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

Ver 46.—**And they come to Jericho.** Jericho, situated in the midst of a fertile, well-watered country, celebrated for its palm trees, was situated about seventeen English miles east-north-east of Jerusalem, and about six miles from the nearest bend of the river Jordan. In the time of our Lord it was one of the most important cities next to Jerusalem. It is now known by the name of Richa or Ericha, and is almost deserted. The journey from the Jordan to Jericho is through a flat country; but that from Jericho to Jerusalem is very hilly. It is supposed that it was upon the rocky heights overhanging this city that our Lord's temptation took place. Jericho derives its name, either from "the moon," or from the fragrant odours of the "balsam" plant, which was extensively cultivated in the neighbourhood. Its palm groves and balsam gardens were bestowed by Anthony upon Cleopatra, from whom Herod the Great purchased them. It was here that Herod the Great died. It is now one of the most filthy and neglected places in Palestine. To this place our Lord came; and St. Luke (xviii. and xix.) gives a full account of his reception there. St. Matthew speaks of two blind men; but he agrees with St. Mark in saying that the cure took place as he went out from Jericho. St. Luke mentions only one; but he places the cure at the time of our Lord's entrance into Jericho. How do we reconcile St. Mark's account of one only, specially named, Bartimæus, the son of Timæus? St. Augustine says that there were two blind men; but that the one, better known, overshadowed the other. He also says that Bartimæus was a well-known character, and that he was accustomed to sit by the wayside, not only blind, but as a beggar. It is of course possible that St. Luke may refer to another case altogether. But on the other hand, with the exception that he mentions only one, and that he places the cure at the time of the entrance into Jericho, and not at the time of the departure, all the other circumstances are identical. May not this latter discrepancy be reconciled thus?—the blind man may have sought a cure from Christ at his first entrance into the city; but he may not have been able to be heard on account of the crowd. Or our Lord may have passed him by at first, in order to stimulate his faith and hope. So the day after, he may have placed himself at the gate of the city, close by where Christ would pass through; and there again he may have urged his request, and so obtained healing. Dr. John Lightfoot (p. 348) says that the careful description of Bartimæus would seem to imply that his father may have been a person of some note. Dr. Lightfoot adds that it is possible that Timæus, or "Thimai," may be the same with *Simais*, blind, from the use of the letter *thau* from *samech*, common amongst the Chaldæans; so that Bartimæus might mean nothing more than "blind son of a blind father."

Ver. 48.—**Many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace.** They rebuked him, perhaps, out of reverence and regard for Christ, who might perhaps at that moment have been preaching to the people, and so might be disturbed by the blind man's loud and noisy appeal. But the rebuke of the crowd gave additional energy to his entreaties; and **he cried out the more a great deal**, that his voice might be heard above them all. He was in good earnest, and would not be restrained. A useful lesson is here suggested to all. He who desires to serve God must overcome all earthly shame and fear; for, indeed, this unworthy feeling keeps back many from Christ.

Ver. 49.—**And Jesus stood still** (*στὰς ὁ Ἰησοῦς*)—literally, *Jesus stood*—**and said, Call ye him.** St. Jerome says that our Lord stood still on account of the man's infirmity. There were many walls in Jericho; there were rough places; there were rocks and precipices over which he might stumble. Therefore the Lord stood, where there was a plain path by which the blind man might approach him. The crowd show their sympathy. There is something very genuine as well as touching in their words, **Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee.**

Ver. 50.—**And he, casting away his garment, rose**—the word in the Greek is *ἀναπηδήσας*, literally, *sprang to his feet*—**and came to Jesus.** He cast away his "garment," that is, the loose outer robe which covered his tunic. He was in haste, and desired to disengage himself from every impediment, in his eagerness to approach Jesus. We seem here to have the description of a keen eye-witness, such as St. Peter would be.

Vers. 51, 52.—Our Lord well knew what he wanted; but it was necessary that he and those around him should hear from the lips of the blind man the confession of his need, and of his faith in the power that was present to heal him. **And the blind man said**

unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. "Rabboni," or "Rabbuni," means literally, *my Master*. It was a more respectful mode of address than the more simple form "Rabbi." This expression shows that Bartimæus had yet much to learn as to the Divine character of our Lord. But his faith is accepted; and he showed that it was genuine as far as it went, by forthwith following Jesus in the way. There were six occasions on which our Lord is recorded to have healed the blind: St. Matthew (ix. 27; xii. 22; xxi. 14); St. Mark (viii. 24; x. 46); St. John (ix. 1). St. Chrysostom says of Bartimæus, that as before this gift of healing he showed perseverance, so after it he showed gratitude.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Marriage and divorce.* Our Lord Jesus is the great moral Legislator of humanity. His authoritative teaching applies to all classes and to all relationships of mankind. And it is to be noticed that he bases his commands and counsels both upon grounds of natural right and reason, and also upon the revealed Mosaic Law. With regard to the latter, it is observable that he professes not to destroy it, but to fulfil it—to inspire it with a new motive, and to give it a wider range; whilst he allows no authority to mere traditions and usages, but treats them simply upon their own merits.

I. UPON WHAT OUR LORD BASES THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE. It is to be observed that Jesus goes back behind the old Mosaic Law, which was universally accepted among the Jews as the authoritative standard of conduct. 1. There is reference to what we should call *natural adaptation*. If there is design in any arrangement or provision of nature, there is certainly design in the division of mankind (as, indeed, of other races of living beings) into two corresponding and complementary sexes. Man was made for woman, and woman for man; and the equality in numbers of male and female is evidently a natural reason both for marriage and for monogamy. 2. There is reference to the *creative, historical basis* of marriage. The record of Genesis is adduced, and Jesus reminds the Pharisees that marriage dated, as a matter of fact, from the beginning of the creation—that our first parents lived together in this relationship from their first introduction to each other until the close of life. 3. Jesus asserts marriage to be *a Divine ordinance*. "God hath joined together" husband and wife. The Law of Moses came in with its additional provisions and sanctions; but it presumed the existence of the marriage state. God, who orders all things well, had seen that it would not be good for the man to be alone; accordingly he instituted wedded life, and hallowed it.

II. WHAT OUR LORD DEDUCES FROM THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE. 1. A condemnation of the custom of facile divorce. It was a common practice for the Jews, when dissatisfied with their wives, to put them away for very trivial reasons—even because they were not pleased with them, without any offence having been committed. They were wont to appeal to a permissive provision in their law as a warrant for acting thus. In our own times, in many countries even professedly Christian, it is too common for regulations of great laxity to be made regarding divorce. In some countries even incompatibility of temper is a sufficient ground for permanent separation. Such practices are condemned by Jesus as contrary to the Divine intention regarding marriage, and as subversive of all sound morality. As the family is the unit and the basis of all communities, and of all moral unity and welfare, it is of the highest importance that the sacredness of this Divine institution should be upheld, and that all practices and sentiments which undermine it should be discountenanced and opposed. Lax views upon divorce are to be repressed, as inimical to all social welfare as well as to domestic concord. 2. A declaration that such divorce is conducive to adultery. Our Lord does not say that the remarriage of divorced persons is in all cases adulterous; but, speaking of those who are separated for trivial offences, and for any offence short of the most serious, he declares that for such persons to marry again is nothing less than adultery. They are not really and in God's sight released from one another, and a second union is therefore unlawful. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

APPLICATION. 1. Learn our Lord's independence as an ethical and spiritual Teacher, and his superiority to traditional and even Mosaic authority. 2. Learn his interest in

all our human relationships; he consecrates them by the regard of his grace and by the imposition of his Law. 3. Let Christians discountenance lax opinions and practices upon a question so vital to social and national well-being as the ordinance of marriage.

Vers. 13—16.—*Christ and the children.* That three of the evangelists should have recorded this incident is proof of the impression it made upon the early Christians, and of the importance they attached to it. The Son of man interested himself in all classes and conditions of humanity; and it is not strange that he should have come into direct and tender relations with the very young.

I. THE CHILDREN who were brought to Jesus. They were very young, for they are called "little children," and they were so small as to be taken up in the arms. Jesus had himself been a child, and had passed through the stages of infancy and boyhood, so that from his own experience he could sympathize with this age and condition of human life. These children may have been children of the house where Jesus had been staying, and of the neighbours. It should be remembered that, not long before, Jesus had taken a little child and used him as an example of simplicity and humility. We may certainly learn from this incident that no child, however young or feeble, is disregarded by our Lord Jesus. In every one he sees an immortal, God-given nature, capable of fellowship with the Creator's mind, and of obedience to his commands.

II. THE PARENTS OF THE CHILDREN. 1. They revered and honoured Jesus themselves, or they would not have acted thus. They would not have treated another rabbi thus. There must have been something in our Lord which attracted them and induced them to believe that he would not repel them should they ask a favour on behalf of their little ones. 2. They brought their children to Jesus. The babes had neither knowledge nor strength to come of themselves; but their parents acted for them. Parents should regard it as their duty and privilege to bring their offspring to the Saviour. This they may do by instructing them as to who and what Jesus is, by leading them into the society of Christ's people. 3. They had a definite purpose in bringing the children to Jesus, viz. that he should touch them and should pray for them. To tell our children of Christ is, or should be, with a view to their personal spiritual contact with him, and with a view to their enjoying both the regard of his friendship and the benefit of his intercession.

III. THE TWELVE, AND THEIR TREATMENT OF THE CHILDREN. It is instructive to observe that the very persons whose office it was to make Jesus known to men, and to introduce all the needy to his notice, and to commend them to his aid, should have on this occasion interfered with the approach of those whom Jesus would have welcomed. The twelve rebuked the parents, and forbade the children to be brought to Jesus, probably from a mistaken idea that the Lord would not care to be troubled with those so young and so helpless. How important that Christians should not interpose to prevent children from seeking Christ and the fellowship of his people!

IV. JESUS, AND HIS TREATMENT OF THE CHILDREN. The narrative gives us a delightful view of the Saviour's character, as the children's Friend. 1. What he *felt*. A very strong expression is used to denote our Lord's disapproval of his disciples' conduct. He was "moved with indignation" by their demeanour. They were both misrepresenting him and inflicting a wrong upon the applicants for blessing. 2. What he *said*. His language includes a special reference to the occasion, and a general statement of a Divine principle. "Suffer the children to come!" "Forbid them not!" How gracious a revelation of the Saviour's mind and disposition, and how instructive a lesson for his people! The general principle he enunciates is even more valuable: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The reference is doubtless to the dependence and teachableness of little children. God's kingdom is composed of childlike natures. The proud, self-sufficient, and self-confident are out of harmony with a spiritual society which recognizes a Divine Head and is governed by Divine laws. 3. What he *did*. Doubtless, in these actions, Jesus was obeying the impulse of his affectionate nature. Yet he intended to teach the world how gracious is his heart, how compassionate are his purposes, how vast and widely extended are the arms of his love. He took them in his arms, verifying the prediction concerning him as the Good Shepherd. He laid his hands upon them, signifying his tender interest. He blessed them, praying for them, and pronouncing over them words of Divine benediction.

APPLICATION. 1. An encouragement to Christian parents to bring their children to the Saviour. 2. An inducement to the young to look to Jesus as the Giver of true blessing. 3. An example to the Church of Christ as to the spirit in which the Lord's people should deal with the young—with inexperienced and immature natures. No impatience or contempt, but rather gentleness and consideration, should distinguish the attitude of Christ's people towards the lambs of the flock.

Vers. 17—22.—*Loved, yet lacking.* An interesting character this, coming in the Gospel history like a meteor out of the darkness for a brief moment, and then vanishing again, to be no more seen. An interesting conversation this, casting valuable light upon the character and the demands of Christ, and upon the aspirations and virtues, the tests and the deficiencies, of human nature. Strange that Jesus should love one who came before him in this one short interview; stranger still that, in this loved one, he should find a lack so serious and even fatal, that such promise should issue in such disappointment! In this young ruler we have a type of a class of applicants to Christ.

I. HE POSSESSED MANY THINGS. How much was in this young man's favour! 1. His *worldly position.* Though young, he was a ruler, and the possessor of great riches. It was to his credit that, when his worldly condition and circumstances were such, he yet acted as he did, evincing a mind set upon higher blessings than this world can give. 2. His *character.* There is no reason to disbelieve his assertion that he had in his outward life kept the Law of the Decalogue. Christ did not charge him with hypocrisy in this profession; he rather admitted its truth in requiring more than compliance with the rules of morality. 3. His *reverence for Jesus.* This is apparent in his action and attitude: "he came kneeling down on the road before Jesus;" and in his address, "Good Master," as well as in the fact that he reverently asked the judgment of the prophet of Nazareth upon a most important question. 4. His *aspiration after eternal life.* This was a proof of a noble dissatisfaction and a noble desire; this question which the young ruler addressed to the one Being who was able to answer and resolve it.

II. HE WAS LOVED AND TESTED BY CHRIST. 1. Jesus *loved* him, doubtless seeing in him an ingenuous disposition, a thirst for truth, a reverence for goodness; doubtless looking back upon a pure and honourable life in the past, and forward to the bright possibilities of the future. What an insight we thus gain into the truly human nature of the Saviour! And are there not *now* those whom he looks upon and loves, beholding in them so much that is congenial to his heart? 2. Jesus *tested* him. He did this in love, yet in faithfulness. And in three ways. (1) His faith in Himself. Why call him "good"? The epithet was too honourable if he were man. Was his disciple prepared to apply it to him with the clear understanding that it involved his Deity? (2) His character. This test the young ruler stood; he had "a conscience void of offence." (3) His love and devotion. Was the young ruler prepared to give up all at the Master's bidding? This leads to the observation that—

III. HE LACKED ONE THING. Consider: 1. *Christ's demand.* (1) It was that he should part with his wealth, and bestow all upon the poor. Not that this is universally obligatory or desirable. It was the form of *complete surrender* which in this case was most appropriate. A hard test, a stern requirement; yet most necessary "to prove the sincerity of his love." (2) The promise. There was an inducement held out, of "treasure in heaven," which should more than compensate his loss. Our Lord shows his compassion upon our human nature in thus alluring to his side. (3) The call. It was to discipleship: "Follow me." What an opportunity was, in these words, opened up before this ardent, aspiring mind! Who can say what position he might have held in the circle of the apostles, in the memory of Christendom, had he responded to this heavenly summons? 2. *The young ruler's failure under trial.* The saying was too hard; the test was too severe; the world was too strong! His heart sank within him, and his countenance fell. And then he went away sorrowful, grieving to leave Christ, yet feeling that the grief would be greater of leaving the riches in which he delighted and trusted. Had he given, not his admiration, his respect, only, to Christ, but his very heart, then it would have been possible to him to have "left all, and followed him." But one thing he lacked—the surrender of self, of the spiritual nature, which would have involved the surrender of all.

APPLICATION. Christ will be satisfied with nothing less than our heart, our all. We may have many things, and yet lack the spirit of perfect surrender and consecration. The test is certain to be applied; how shall we endure it?

Vers. 23—31.—*Christ must be all.* Sometimes our Lord gave utterance to paradox Certainly it was so on this occasion. Any ordinary observer would have pronounced the rich young ruler blessed, and would have pitied the poor fishermen who neglected their petty craft and followed the homeless and penniless Rabbi of Nazareth. But God's ways are not our ways. Jesus looked below the surface. To him the case of the favoured of fortune and the admired of society was a sad case, and the choice of the twelve was the choice of the good part, which none can take away.

I. THE SPIRITUAL DISADVANTAGES AND PERILS OF WEALTH. This is not a popular or acceptable lesson; and most people would be willing to accept, without a murmur, the position of danger and temptation occupied by the affluent. However, the warnings of the Master are fully borne out by the experience of those who have watched the working of human nature under the influence of riches. 1. To have wealth is to be in danger of trusting in wealth. 2. To trust in wealth is not conducive to humility, penitence, and faith—the dispositions peculiarly suitable to those who would be saved. 3. To lack these dispositions is to be disqualified for the kingdom of God. 4. Yet the grace of God, with whom all things are possible, is able to overcome difficulties and temptations great as these.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING UP ALL FOR CHRIST. 1. Really and truly *the Christian surrenders all he has to his Lord.* That Lord may give him back, as it were, of what was his own, but even when used for himself, it is consecrated, and is still the Lord's. (1) Christians may be called upon to give up earthly possessions. This the rich young ruler should have done, but did not; this Peter and the rest of the twelve actually did. It has often been remarked that the apostles did not give up much in order to become disciples of Jesus. But the answer is fair—What they had they gave up; it was their all. When plainly called upon to part with property, as, *e.g.*, in times of persecution, or for the sake of charity, Christ's people willingly make the sacrifice required. Property so lost is truly gained. (2) Christians may have to renounce earthly aims and prospects. How often does this happen still! The convert feels constrained to break away from old associations, which might well be the stepping-stone to honour, station, emolument; and in sacrificing what the world would give, he reaps a rich reward in the approval of his conscience, the progress he makes in the Divine life, the increased opportunities of usefulness he enjoys. Such are foremost in inviting their fellow-men to the better path—

> "Come, learn, your follies quitting,
> That this world's gain is loss;
> To his mild rule submitting
> Who bare for you the cross."

(3) They renounce the pleasures and the applause of the world. The pleasures of sin it is their aim to relinquish; the praise of men they regard with indifference; for they "have left all." (4) All this renunciation is spiritually valuable just so far as it expresses the renunciation of self-will, and the acceptance of the will of Christ. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord." 2. In so doing *the Christian reaps a rich reward.* This is twofold. (1) There is recompense in this life. To follow Jesus is in itself an honour and happiness. Who that loves him would not willingly share his lot? Surrender all you have to Christ, and Christ will bestow all he has on you. He not only confers upon his people the favour of his heart, he gives them to enjoy the approbation of a good conscience. And Jesus points out the provision made by God's goodness for many of his faithful followers. It happened, as he foretold, that many of the persecuted disciples experienced marvellous interpositions and unexpected relief; that their confession of Christ was the occasion of the attachment and affection, the ministrations and gifts, of those who witnessed and admired their fidelity. (2) There is a yet richer recompense hereafter. Simply and grandly does Jesus assure his people that they shall have "in the world to come eternal life." It was an assurance which was repeated by Christ's inspired

apostles, which was addressed from the throne of his glory by the triumphant Redeemer to his struggling soldiers upon earth. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Many a faithful witness and warrior has been animated by the glorious prospect, and has learned joyfully to toil and patiently to endure, with the blessed hope of the future before his eyes. The light afflictions are light, because they introduce the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

"When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past?"

Vers. 32—34.—*The reiterated prediction.* This was the *third* occasion upon which Jesus expressly and formally intimated to his followers the approaching close of his ministry and life. The occasion was the last great journey up to Jerusalem. He wished the disciples to understand what their discipleship involved, into what scenes they were now about to follow him; that, forewarned, they might be forearmed. Observe—

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THIS COMMUNICATION. Mark, in a few words, graphically and vividly portrays the scene. An unusual state of excitement pervades the company. The attitude of the Master, and the expression of the disciples' countenances, display the prevalence of common emotion. Jesus goes before, absorbed in contemplation of his approaching sufferings; the group of disciples are amazed at the prospect opened up to them in the words of warning they have just heard; and the people around are silent with dread and awe!

II. JESUS PREDICTS THE PLACE OF HIS SUFFERINGS. They are going up to Jerusalem. The city, in which he has often preached and wrought his mighty works, is about to reject him. The metropolis is in this act to fulfil the counsels of the nation. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

III. IT IS FORETOLD WHO SHALL BE THE INSTIGATORS OF THE MARTYRDOM. The chief priests and the scribes have opposed him at every point; have disputed with him, calumniated him, stirred up the people against him. And now it is into their hands that he is to be delivered, and they are to take the initiative in his destruction. The leaders of his own nation are to compass the violent end of him who is that nation's Glory and Redeemer.

IV. IT IS FORETOLD WHO SHALL BE THE AGENTS IN HIS MARTYRDOM. It is a proof of our Lord's prophetic foresight, that he predicts that the instrumentality by which the leaders of the Jews shall effect their purpose is not a native but a foreign agency. He came "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of God's people Israel;" and it was permitted that he should be "despised and rejected of men," and that both sections of the human race should conspire and concur in his martyrdom.

V. JESUS FORETELLS THE INSULTS AND INDIGNITIES WHICH SHALL PRECEDE HIS DEATH. The circumstantial manner in which the great Sufferer describes beforehand the cruel and inhuman treatment with which he shall meet, is pathetic and instructive. He reads the very hearts of his foes, and marks their malignity and baseness, their hostility to himself and to all that is good. Death is formidable, but the prospect of such a death as this awakens horror.

VI. THE RESURRECTION IS FORETOLD AS THE COMPLETION OF THE MARTYRDOM. Christ's death was not merely a martyrdom; it was a sacrifice. Its purpose would not have been answered had it not been shown that it was impossible that he should be holden of death. Thus was there given to the world an assurance from Heaven that this was indeed the Christ, declared to be the Son of God with power. And for the sake of the disciples themselves, the Lord Jesus foretells his approaching victory over the grave, that their hearts may be cheered and their hopes inspired, that they may learn the more truly to reverence him and the more ardently to trust him.

Vers. 35—45.—*True ministry is true dignity.* Some of the most sacred and precious lessons which the Lord Jesus has taught mankind were suggested by incidents which occurred in his own ministry. This is true, both of lessons regarding his own grace and of lessons regarding our duty and life. His hand turns all that he touches into

gold. Who would have thought that the selfish and thoughtless request of a mother and her sons could have led to one of the profoundest statements concerning the Saviour's mission, and to the publication of one of the most novel and powerful laws that were to govern the subjects of the Saviour's kingdom? Yet so it is.

I. THE REQUEST OF AMBITION. There is scope in every position of human life for the display of this principle of human nature. The desire to be wiser and better and more influential for good than we are is to be commended; but the desire to have more power and honour than our fellow-men is bad, unless it be cherished with a view to their advantage. There is such a thing as religious ambition, as the history of the Church in all ages abundantly shows. And the passage in the Gospel history now before us exhibits the working of this principle in the breasts of some of our Lord's first followers and apostles. Observe: 1. *By whom* this request was preferred. Salome was the wife of Zebedee, the owner of fishing-boats upon the Galilean lake. As the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, she may naturally have thought she and hers had some claim upon the Founder of the new kingdom. Her sons, James and John, joined with her in this petition for pre-eminence, so that it was in all likelihood discussed and arranged beforehand. It is remarkable that these ambitious followers of Jesus, who herein showed so little of the Master's spirit, were, with Peter, his most intimate and trusted friends, who might have been supposed the most to resemble him in disposition and character. A warning which none should neglect, as to the possibility of even eminent Christians falling into this snare. 2. On *what occasion* was this petition presented? It is observable that, shortly before, Jesus had promised his disciples honour and dignities; in fact, thrones of dominion and judgment in the kingdom that was to be. Yet more recently, however, he had amazed his disciples by informing them of events which he plainly foresaw—his own approaching persecution, sufferings, and death. The end was indeed near, and Jesus seems to have foretold its accompaniments the more clearly the nearer the time approached. It is singular that the ambition of the brothers, instead of being subdued by the mournful prospect, was inflamed by the glorious promise. They thought of their thrones more than of his cross. 3. There was *some good* in this request. It recognized Christ's authority, for the petition was urged upon him as upon a King who was able to grant it. It evinced faith in his character and in his future; for unless the kingdom had been a real thing to them they would not have sought participation in its glories. Not only did they refer the appointment to him; they evidently desired above all things to rule, not only under him, but with him. 4. Yet there was still more manifestly what was *bad* in the request. Their great error was that they overlooked the sublime truth, that fellowship is spiritual and not circumstantial. To be Christ's, whether upon a throne, or in a hovel, or a dungeon—that is the aspiration of the true Christian's heart; the aspiration to share in his outward glory (as if that were the best) is mean and contemptible. What a carnal conception was theirs of the kingdom! They laid hold of the emblem, but the underlying truth and reality escaped them altogether. And yet, again, we discern in the request a selfish desire for personal aggrandizement. They were thinking of themselves when they should have been thinking of their Lord. They ought to have asked, "How, Lord, can we serve thee, or suffer with thee, and so please and glorify thee?" Instead of which they were scheming what they might get from Christ, and how a connection with him might be turned best to their own advantage.

II. THE REBUKE OF AMBITION. Our Lord had on several occasions to rebuke the pride, vain-glory, and strife for pre-eminence which broke forth now and again even in the chosen band of the twelve. This he did by symbolical acts, as when he set the little child in the midst and exhorted them to a childlike spirit; and again when he washed their feet, bidding them follow his example of condescension and humility. On the occasion before us our Lord censured the conduct of the brothers with a peculiar and memorable solemnity. 1. Remark *what he refused.* The places asked for he would not grant them. He gave them to understand that the bestowment of honours in Christ's kingdom is not a matter, so to speak, of favouritism, of private and personal feeling. It is governed by great moral laws. It is the result of their operation in the heart and in society. There is nothing arbitrary or capricious in it. It is the expression of the Father's wisdom. The future shall reveal what for the present lies hid from all. 2. Remark *what Jesus promised.* He first puts it to them in the form of a question;

but he very graciously passes from interrogation to assurance and promise. These two men who asked for thrones were promised—what? The cup of sorrow and the baptism of suffering. But it was to be *his* cup, *his* baptism. What Jesus meant we are at no loss to decide. The cup he drank in the garden of Gethsemane; the baptism all but overwhelmed him upon the cross of Calvary. Of all this they should know something by bitter, yet blessed, experience. They had some foretaste of their portion when they saw their Master in his humiliation and in his death. After years enlarged their experience. James fell a victim to the sword of the persecutor; John lived a long life of witness, both by work for Christ and by steadfastness in suffering for Christ. Both were faithful unto death. Both lost all taint of earthly ambition, and knew the fellowship of their Lord's cross and passion. 3. Consider how *contrary to their expectations* was this revelation of the mode in which Christ's disciples should share with him. The manner in which the Lord dealt with them showed alike his knowledge of human nature and his habitual power of spiritual sympathy. How fitted was his treatment of them to draw out and encourage their better feelings! How much higher and nobler a view of human nature and its possibilities and destinies was this which Jesus presented! And he did it in such a way as not to discourage those whom yet he felt it needful to rebuke; in such a way as to prepare his friends to give, in due time, the convincing proof that their friendship was genuine, sympathetic, and unselfish.

III. THE REMEDY FOR AMBITION. Here, as everywhere, Christianity is Christ. Jesus never merely tells us what he would have us be; he first shows us this in his own Person, and then he supplies us with the Divine and all-sufficient motive in his own ministry and sacrifice. "For verily the Son of man came not to be," etc. 1. Not that Jesus absolutely and always refused to be ministered unto. In his infancy his mother nurtured him; during his ministry his friends supplied his wants, and welcomed him to their homes. Gracefully and graciously he accepted their kind and affectionate service. 2. But that his chief purpose in his earthly life was to minister to men. He observed and pitied those whom he came to save and bless, for their wants were many and their woes were great. He supplied their bodily necessities, he relieved their bodily privations, he healed their bodily maladies; he sympathized with them in their griefs, and brought both health and consolation to their hearts. Their spiritual wants aroused his deepest commiseration. He taught the ignorant, aroused in the sinful the conscience of sin, brought pardon to the penitent, hope to the downcast, and salvation to all prepared to receive it. His career on earth was one long ministry of wisdom, faithfulness, love, and power. 3. And his death was voluntary sacrifice and service, in the highest form. The purpose of our Lord's coming was a purpose of "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross." There was nothing accidental or unforeseen in the close of our Lord's earthly career. He consciously and voluntarily *gave* his life. What others prized, he surrendered; what others strove to save, he was content to lose. A sublime spectacle of self-abnegation! But there was a purpose in this act of Jesus. It was that he might pay a ransom that he deigned to die. He is the Redeemer, and redemption was his great work. From the bondage and power, from the penalty and curse of sin, he died to set us free. And observe the expansive benevolence that characterized his redemptive work. It was to ransom *many* that he died. Not to exalt himself merely, as was the carnal aim of his half-trained followers, but to save multitudes, to redeem mankind.

IV. THE CURE OF AMBITION. We must not lose sight of the close connection between our Saviour's statement regarding himself, his ministry, and death, and his language to the twelve, especially to the ambitious brothers. Observe: 1. *How the remedy works.* Difficult as it is to explain the bearing of our Saviour's redemption upon the Divine character and government, there is little difficulty in explaining its bearing upon human character and life. The soul that by faith lays hold upon the Redeemer, and accepts the redemption as the provision of God's free grace, comes under a new impulse and motive. Gratitude and love towards him who gave himself for us lead, both naturally and of purpose, to devotion, obedience, and assimilation of character. Such motives the Holy Spirit applies to the nature, and thus overcomes the native tendency to selfishness and sinful pride. The Christian feels that Jesus lived and died to redeem from all evil, and certainly from this prevailing fault and folly. Our Saviour is both the *Model* and the *Motive* of our new service. Himself the highest example of

humility and benevolence, he furnishes in his cross the power which inspires us to conflict with sin, and encourages us to hope for victory. It is Divine wisdom which has devised the plan, and Divine grace which has executed it, and the results are worthy of him to whom we owe them. 2. *By what signs* the efficacy of the remedy is made apparent. Our Lord clearly saw how contrary is the law of his kingdom to that which prevails in earthly society. He observed how men aim at pre-eminence and dominion; and, instead of qualifying this practice, he condemns it; instead of lopping the boughs, he strikes at the root of the tree. "It is not so among you." On the contrary, he unfolds the new law: "Foremost in service, foremost in kingdom, in honour." Accordingly, if you would know whether an individual, a community, is truly Christ's, apply this test. Do not ask—Is the creed orthodox? Are the devotions splendid or fervent? Is profession loud and ample? But ask—Is the Spirit of Jesus manifest? Is the law of Jesus observed? For "if a man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." They are truly Christians who, instead of asking—How can we enjoy ourselves? how can we raise ourselves? ask, on the contrary—How can we live as ministers of one another, and as servants of all? In the family, in the Church, in the world, we have ever-widening circles within which our influence may extend. To promote the bodily, the social, the educational, the moral, and spiritual welfare of our fellow-creatures—this is an aim worthy of all adoption, and an aim which will supply a sufficient and conclusive answer to the somewhat foolish question of the day, "Is life worth living?" To work for others and to work for Christ,—this is what the Lord expects from his people. And this is the manner of moral life which leads to his approval; this is the pathway to the stars.

APPLICATION. 1. Adore the compassion and humility of the Redeemer. 2. Accept the deliverance which he has wrought in the payment of your ransom. 3. Check the rising spirit of self-seeking and ambition. 4. Live as ministers of blessing to those around you. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

Vers. 46—52.—*Blind Bartimæus.* It is not without a purpose that the evangelists have put upon record so many of our Lord's miracles wrought on behalf of the blind. In all such miracles the "sign" is prominent, the moral lesson is instructive, impressive, and encouraging.

I. We recognize, in the privation of Bartimæus, AN EMBLEM OF THE SINNER'S STATE. For: 1. The sinner is without spiritual knowledge. The blind are necessarily, by their deprivation of the highest of the senses, cut off from much knowledge of the outer world, and of the properties of matter, and consequently of the appeals of the Creator to the mind and heart of man. 2. The sinner is a stranger to many pure and elevating pleasures. The enjoyments of the sightless are grievously curtailed. The votary of sin has indeed his pleasures, but they are impure, debasing, and unsatisfying. 3. The sinner lacks true guidance. Just as the blind man depends upon others to lead him, and unless so assisted goes astray, so the unenlightened are doomed to wander in the mazes of error and of sin. 4. The sinner has no assurance, for he has no means of safety. As the blind fall into dangers for want of sight, so those whose minds are dark know nothing of true spiritual security, and have no well-founded hope.

II. Here we have AN EXAMPLE OF THE CRY OF DAWNING FAITH. 1. There is presumed a sense of privation, of misery, of need. This expresses itself when opportunity invites the expression. 2. We observe a recognition of Christ's power and willingness to help and save. When Bartimæus heard that it was Jesus who drew near, he cried aloud for help, having no doubt heard from some credible quarter of the customary compassion and the miraculous powers of the Prophet of Nazareth. 3. This shapes itself into a definite appeal for mercy. 4. And this appeal is distinguished by perseverance and persistency. Hindrances and dissuasions are of no avail; they only incite the applicant to more earnest supplications. The soul that truly feels its need, and has caught a true glimpse of Jesus, is not to be deterred from entreaties for grace and help. Obstacles may hinder the indifferent; they quicken the zeal of those who are earnest.

III. AN INSTANCE OF CHRIST'S COMPASSIONATE INTEREST. When the blind beggar cries aloud, Jesus hears; he pauses to allow an interview; he bids that the suppliant be brought to him. It is ever so. Nothing is so welcome to the Saviour as the

entreaty and appeal of the penitent and believing sinner. No voice is unheard, no wretchedness unfelt, no applicant rejected, by him. The sinner's need is his concern; the sinner's cry prompts his interposition.

IV. AN INDICATION OF THE CHURCH'S PROPER MISSION. The people, attentive to Christ and friendly to the sufferer, call the blind man, raise his hopes, encourage his approach. This conduct is exactly that of our Lord's faithful ministers and of all his true disciples. The Church cannot save, but its privilege and its duty is to point to him who can save. The vocation of the Church is to tell of Jesus, to point to Jesus, to lead to Jesus. This is the true ministry, at once humbling and ennobling; for whilst it presumes the spiritual powerlessness of man, it affords to human benevolence an abundant scope, and assimilates it to the pity of the Saviour's gracious heart.

V. AN ILLUSTRATION OF EARNESTNESS RESPONDING TO THE INVITATION OF CHRIST. How picturesquely does Mark tell us that this blind man, casting away his garment, "sprang up, and came to Christ"! A suggestion that he who hears the gospel should fling from him all his doubts, should abandon his evil companions and sin that doth so easily beset him, should forsake his evil ways and thoughts, — so should draw near to Christ.

VI. THE CHARACTERISTIC MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST IMPARTED THE BLESSING SOUGHT. The dialogue between Jesus and Bartimæus was brief, and it was "to the point." Question, answer, and final assurance were all satisfactory. The point upon which stress is chiefly laid is the *faith* which makes whole. It is the one condition. When this is complied with, all things are possible; the blind see, the prayer is granted, the soul is saved.

VII. THE GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF THE BOON CONFERRED IS A LESSON TO ALL WHO ARE BLESSED BY CHRIST. As Bartimæus followed Jesus in the way, doubtless to testify to the pity and the power of the Redeemer, to glorify his Deliverer, and to invite others to extol and praise him; so does it become all those whose eyes Christ has opened to witness to the Divine Healer, and to say fearlessly in the presence of all men, "He hath opened mine eyes;" "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Christ's statement of the Divine law of marriage.* It is well to note his locality at this time. He was approaching the centre of the Judæan party, outlying members of which encountered him as he was entering Judæa from beyond Jordan. Nevertheless he no longer observes "counsels of prudence." He freely addresses the crowds that throng to his ministry, and confronts the attempts of his enemies to catch him in his words. This Divine abandonment is very noble and beautiful, and argues that he now clearly foresaw all that was to take place. There are two intentions in the reply of Jesus which it is necessary to distinguish, viz. that of defence, and that of teaching. His words are to be studied, therefore, as—

I. A MEASURE OF DEFENCE. That his questioners meant him mischief there can be no doubt. The word "tempting" is used for "trying," "proving," and that in an evil sense. 1. *What, then, was the danger that lay in such a question?* According to his reply they hoped: (1) To discredit him with the respectable classes, and to found a charge against him of overturning the social and religious institutions of the land. It is the reproach and shame of nearly all "heresies" in religion that they sooner or later attempt to abolish the safeguards of society, and the time-honoured customs of the social order. Marriage is a touchstone that betrays the inherent unrighteousness and impracticability of a large proportion of them. His enemies hoped on this point to array him against Moses. (2) To discredit him with the common people. It was a vexed question at the time in the rival schools of Hillel and Shammai, the latter being stricter, the former laxer, in their view of the lawfulness of divorce. Probably convinced of their own view of the case, they relied upon easily confuting his arguments, and thereby "showing him up" as a pretender and impostor. 2. *But in this twofold scheme they were defeated,* Jesus making his interrogators themselves the declarers of the Law which he accepted and simply interpreted. He appeared, therefore, as a

defender and not an assailant of the Law. And then he showed how deep the basis of obligation really was, and how much less strict the "precept" of Moses was than it might have been, and the cause of this.

II. A PERMANENT DOCTRINE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The historical circumstances of the time when the precept was formulated were probably considered at greater length than could be represented in Mark's account, and the position justified that it was a compromise or provisional measure necessitated by "the hardness of heart" of the Jews, the drawing up of a formal document being a check upon hasty and passionate ruptures of the marriage tie. He thus proved that *moral obligation is deeper and more permanent than convention or external law.* He next considered marriage as a law of nature anterior to the social sanction, which does not therefore create the institution, but ought only to recognize and enforce it. To this end *he traces it to the original purpose of God in creation,* quoting Gen. i. 27; and strengthening the inference from this by the positive command of Gen. ii. 24, long anterior to the time of Moses. It is not for man to interfere with or modify an arrangement so manifestly Divine. *The only ground upon which marriage can be set aside is therefore that of one or other party to the marriage bond having already broken it by sinful action, and thus destroyed it as an actual thing.* The Law then simply steps in to defend the rights of the party who has been injured, setting that party free from further possibility of like injury. This transgression of the marriage bond which amounts to its annulment is not stated, but is clearly implied, viz. adultery. The Saviour thereby proves his teaching in harmony with the teaching of nature and previous revelation. But the gospel which is proclaimed in his Name does more than this. It seeks to fit man for the highest social and religious duties, by purifying and strengthening his moral being.—M.

Vers. 13—16.—*Jesus blessing the little children: a children's sermon.* One of the scenes in the life of the Saviour which illustrate most strongly and beautifully the genius of the gospel. The imagination loves to dwell upon it, and the heart is its best interpreter. There is, so to speak, a climax in the action.

I. LITTLE CHILDREN ARE ATTRACTED TO JESUS. There must have been something in the aspect, etc., of the Saviour which drew the little ones and their mothers to his side. Christianity differs from the systems of idolatry in presenting us with One whom we instinctively can love. A little girl, when asked why she thought Jesus must have smiled, said, "He must have smiled when he said, 'Suffer little children,' etc., else they would never have come!" A chief object of preaching and living the gospel is to exhibit this charm.

II. LITTLE CHILDREN ARE INVITED TO JESUS. How many people won't come to a place unless they think they are welcome, and therefore they expect an invitation. Now, when the disciples thought that their Master was too engrossed with high thoughts and important affairs to attend to the children, they took it upon themselves to send them away. This was not done through unkindness, but simply through a mistake. Christ corrected the mistake, and deliberately invited the little children. That proves—does it not?—in the strongest way that he intends them to come to him. But Jesus does more than invite.

III. LITTLE CHILDREN ARE CLAIMED BY JESUS. "For of such is the kingdom of heaven." That means that little children are very near to him already. They are really *in* his kingdom, and he is their King. He has a greater right, therefore, to their obedience and service and society, than father or mother, or brother or sister. When little children are good and loving they *are with* Jesus, and it is only when they do or think what is WRONG that they go away from him. And all who come into his kingdom have to come in as little children, *i.e.* they are to be childlike—simple, loving, trustful, and obedient.

IV. LITTLE CHILDREN ARE BLESSED BY JESUS. He took them in his arms and embraced them. But he also put his hands on them, and gave them his Father's blessing. How great a thing did the Jews think a blessing was! Let us try and live so that we shall at last get the blessing Christ has in store for us. Do you love to be with Jesus? Do you do whatever he commands you? Then you are a subject of his kingdom, and a child of grace; and hereafter you will share his glory.—M.

Vers. 17—22.—*The great inquiry.* This seems a better title for the subject than "The Great Decision," as we have no reason to believe that the decision come to was a final one. But the reference to "eternal life" proves how momentous the occasion was to him who inquired. Such a time comes but seldom, yet it comes to every man, when he feels that everything else dwindles into insignificance in comparison with "life." As to this inquiry, notice—

I. How it was made. 1. *Earnestly.* The manner of the man is vividly portrayed by St. Mark: "running, and kneeled to him." This spirit is a primary requisite. "*Seek first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." He seized the passing opportunity and despised the judgment of onlookers. 2. *Intelligently.* What he was seeking was definitely before his mind. His previous training had prepared him to think of the object he sought more or less correctly. He used the word "inherit," which implied something different from "have," or "possess" (Matthew). 3. *With real but defectively justified acknowledgment of Christ's character.* This vague instinct which he expressed in the title "Good," had to be grounded in some true apprehension of the nature and character of Jesus ere it could be accepted as satisfactory. How radical this misconception was appears as he answers the question regarding the commandments.

II. How it was answered. 1. *With the needful correction to the question.* It is of the utmost importance that we clearly perceive what real "goodness" is, and to whom alone it can belong, ere we seek it. 2. *With a provisional test.* The commandments; perhaps those emphasized which bore most directly upon his position and circumstances. *Self-restraint* is a first requisite, and that is witnessed to by the Law. But he still stands outside the true conception of "goodness," for he answers from the conventional and not from the absolute and spiritual standpoint. "The Law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," by showing us our imperfection and need of a Saviour. 3. *With a final test.* "One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast," etc. Self-restraint being insufficient, *self-denial*, and that specially corresponding with his circumstances, is invited. This was the *crucial* test. It has to be varied according to the difference in individual tastes, ideals, circumstances, etc., of different people. 4. *By a look of love.* It was spontaneous, full of attraction, and, up to a certain degree, of approval; then of yearning sorrow and concern. Such questions and such a disposition can never be received by Christ with indifference.

III. In what it resulted. "His countenance fell," etc. There was grief, disappointment, perhaps even a little resentment, and also inward shame. Not decision; rather indecision. Tested by highest test and found wanting. Drawn by tenderest love of the Son of God, yet unwilling to yield. The grieved heart may yet return: its sad disconsolateness is its most hopeful attribute.—M.

Vers. 23—27.—*Riches a spiritual drawback.* Valuable to the moral as to the scientific or artistic teacher to have a real instance—a study from the life. Yet it is not given to many to seize the salient points and analyze the character as Christ did. He did it, too, in a manner the most natural.

I. The saying of Christ. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" It is no proverb culled from the pages of the past, but evidently his own instinctive, penetrating "moral" from what they had just seen. It was self-evident to him "how hardly," *i.e.* with what difficulty, such a thing could take place. He knew by personal experience the price that was to be paid for the realization of that kingdom, and what its nature would be when realized; but he alone. As fruit of his own inward experience it was a distinct discovery in morals. The disciples, not so conversant with the inner nature of the kingdom, were amazed. It was the exact opposite of their own idea. They thought that it would be absolutely necessary to gain such disciples if the kingdom was ever to be realized. It was impossible for them to conceive of spiritual power apart from material means and influence. They could not get rid, moreover, of the dream that a political shape would sooner or later be assumed by this coming power. Their mistake was deeply rooted in the whole habit of thought of the ancient world. The well-to-do had not only the material advantage of their riches, but a certain reflected honour as enjoying the theocratic blessing upon the keeping of the commandments. And in the case of the ruler this

moral excellence was not only an ancestral trait but a personal characteristic. The Greek who styled the rich and powerful of his nation *οἱ ἀγαθοί*, or *καλοί*, and the poor *οἱ κακοί*, was representative of his age; cf. the Latin *optimates*, the Saxon *good men* (opposed to *lewd people, base hinds*), the French *prudhommes*. And the modern mind has not yet got rid of the twist. There is a superficial gentleness of manners, refinement, and honour, identified, by long association, with the "better classes," that is easily mistaken for a deeper moral principle. Nor can we ignore the "minor moralities," the conventional proprieties and respectabilities which wealth generally brings in its train. It is only when the *emphasis* is laid on character that these are estimated at their proper worth. Therefore the necessity for—

II. THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE SAYING. It is done in a spirit of tender, condescending sympathy—"children." 1. *The general difficulty attending entrance into the kingdom is declared* (the clause, "for them that trust in riches," being probably not genuine). The reason for this difficulty is not, however, stated. It ought to have been remembered. "Taking up his cross" was the condition imposed upon every would-be "disciple." 2. *A figure of speech is employed in relation to the rich.* The tradition identifying the "needle's eye" with a certain gate of Jerusalem is hardly well enough supported to be reliable. It was probably but an impromptu hyperbole that flashed from the mind of Christ. But it would recall the teaching of the "strait gate." *Κάμιλος*, a rope, may, however, be the true reading. Everything that exaggerates and pampers "self" hinders from the better life. The disciples had learnt that lesson in part (ver. 28), but its absolute import and spiritual realization they were not to arrive at until their Master had gone away. Their astonishment is not, therefore, lessened, but rather increased, by the repeated statement; and they said, "*Then who can be saved?*" A question which seemed to imply, "If the rich cannot be saved without difficulty, the poor will have still less chance." The temptations of poverty were probably prominent in their minds. From the human point of view this would seem to be a just observation; therefore he qualified his statement, and under certain conditions declared—

III. THE SAYING SUPERSEDED. "*With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God.*" There is here a double hint, viz. as to the objective work which he himself was to do *for* men, and the spiritual aid which would be experienced *in* men by the advent of the Holy Ghost. The difficulty is wholly on the human side. Salvation is thus vindicated as a supernatural achievement—a Divine grace, and not a human virtue.—M.

VERS. 28—31.—*The hundredfold.* I. IS CHRISTIAN SELF-SACRIFICE WORTH WHILE? 1. *A question repeatedly asked,* by worldlings and by Christians themselves: by the former because they do not comprehend or perceive the things of God, and by the latter from an imperfect experience and an imperfectly matured spiritual consciousness. 2. *Reasonably enough.* The privation to which Christianity exposes men is sometimes extreme. They are called upon virtually or actually to renounce all things. Peter not to be accused of sordidness—of a desire to "make the best of both worlds." Life and the things of life are precious gifts with which we should not lightly or aimlessly part; and the neophyte in Christian life cannot be expected to have all his aims perfectly spiritual. Christianity is a means of raising men from the carnal to the spiritual, and it does so by gradually spiritualizing the desires and interests of the soul. It is an instinct of our being not to part with a real, tangible good unless in exchange for another of equal or higher value, although not necessarily estimated from a selfish or self-regarding point of view. 3. *It is only from the highest point of view and the most advanced experience that this question can be properly and adequately answered.* There is, therefore, a Divine fitness in Jesus, our Example, being the Answerer and Judge. Yet out of the most imperfect experience of the Divine life, if that experience be properly interpreted, the answer would still be satisfying and justifying.

II. THE CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS QUESTION IS DECIDED. 1. *The measure of recompense.* "A hundredfold:" an estimate not to be literally construed. It is intended to express "overwhelmingly more." "In the preceding verse the connective between the items is *or*; here it is *and*. There is great propriety in the exchange, for here the Saviour is giving, as it were, an *inventory of the Divine fulness of blessing*, so far as it is available for the most ample compensation of those who have suffered loss.

And there is, besides, in the spiritual sphere of things a kind of mutual involution of blessed relationships; the sum total of them all belongs to every true disciple" (Morison). 2. *The manner of it.* It is to be *correspondent to the things renounced*, although not necessarily similar in kind. "*With persecutions:*" an addition that seems strange, but is justified in the experience of the Christian; as that which is *lost* is *gain* (cf. Matt. v. 10; Phil. i. 29; 1 Pet. iii. 14), so that which is *endured* for Christ's sake is a new occasion and factor of blessedness. *Suited to the differing conditions of this life and that which is to come.* Here there is variety, objectiveness, material embodiment; there there is one grand reward, subjective, spiritual, viz. eternal life. *And the relative position of Christians will be very much altered from that which they occupy here.* The honour and blessedness conferred will depend, not upon accident of birth or fortune, but upon intrinsic worth and direct Divine appointment.—M.

Ver. 31.—*The kingdom of God a revolution of the world-order.* I. BECAUSE REWARD WILL BE ACCORDING TO CHARACTER AND WORK.

II. IT WILL NOT BE OF DESERT, BUT OF GRACE.

III. EVERY SAINT WILL RECEIVE WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO HIS HAPPINESS, USEFULNESS, AND SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT.

IV. BUT THERE WILL BE DEGREES IN THE GLORY AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE REDEEMED. 1. *Reflecting the manifold glory of God.* 2. *Correcting and compensating the inequalities of time.* 3. *Stimulating to nobler attainment.*—M.

Vers. 32—34.—(Cf. ch. ix. 30—32.)—M.

Vers. 35—45.—(Cf. ch. ix. 33—37.)—M.

Ver. 45.—*The greatness of the Son of man.* I. HOW IT DISPLAYED ITSELF. In a quasi-concealment: reversal of order and method of worldly greatness. The great of this world exercise authority for the most part and generally to their own advantage, and the loss and degradation of others. This precedent is only mentioned that it may be condemned. The greatness of the Son of man showed itself in: 1. *Service.* Typically set forth in the washing of the disciples' feet (John xiii. 4). Realized: (1) In his position. Incarnate: born into the pain and shame of sinful humanity. In humble social circumstances; accustomed to labour and obedience to authority. (2) In his work. His whole life, in its example, teaching, and miracles, was a ministry. What men needed was help, and he rendered it. And that his doing so might not be regarded as accidental, he declares it as the purpose of his coming into the world. And in relation to God, in the demands of his Law, he was obedient, "fulfilling all righteousness." 2. *Sacrifice.* The culmination and seal of service. "To give his life" "indicates the *climax* of the service in which he was engaged (comp. Phil. ii. 6: obedient—obedient unto death on the cross). The term *ministering* expresses the spirit of the life of Christ. His sufferings and death illustrated and displayed the submission of his whole course; they shed the fullest light on the object of his life" (Lange).

II. WHAT IT WAS TO ACHIEVE. It was to be no barren spectacle, or merely personal glory, but was to exert a practical influence upon the condition of those amongst whom he came. The kind of work it had to do corresponded to the needs of man. It was for men the Son of man lived. And as they were in a state of wretchedness and danger, he undertook to save them. In respect of this purpose the death of Christ availed for: 1. *Redemption.* His life was given as the *ransom.* "It is the first distinct utterance, we may note, of the plan and method of his work. He had spoken before of 'saving' the lost (Matt. xviii. 11); now he declares that the work of 'salvation' was to be also one of 'redemption.' It could only be accomplished by the payment of a price, and that price was his own life" (Plumptre). The natural state of men is one of bondage to sin. A "ransom" is an equivalent for a man's life or service (cf. Exod. xxi. 30; Lev. xxv. 50; Prov. xiii. 8). This price our Saviour gave "instead of" ("for") men, as their Representative before God—in a certain sense as their Substitute (cf. Matt. xvii. 27; Heb. xii. 16; Rom. iii. 24; 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 19). 2. *The redemption of many.* "The expression 'many' is not intended to indicate an exclusive minority, or a smaller number as compared with *all*, for the latter expres-

sion occurs in Rom. v. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 4. The term is intended rather by way of antithesis to the *one* whose life was the ransom of the *many*" (Lange). Its efficacy was to be felt far beyond the personality in which it first took place. We are invited to take wide, comprehensive views of the work of Christ. And there is nothing in the language of Scripture to lead to the supposition that only some may be saved. That which avails for one will avail for all who choose to comply with the condition of salvation, viz. faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice for sin. The sinlessness and perfect obedience of Christ are his qualification for this work.

III. IN WHAT WAY IT SHOULD BE ACKNOWLEDGED. The verse commences with "for"—a word connecting it with the previous verses, to which it is appended as a *reason* for what is there enjoined. Our duty, therefore, with respect to the service and sacrifice he has rendered is: 1. *To accept them for ourselves.* By believing in the redemptive work of Christ we honour him, and the Father by whom he was sent. 2. *To imitate his spirit.* His kingdom is based upon service, and its dignities and authorities are the result of the spontaneous affection thereby secured. Service and self-humiliation are not only means toward the attainment of future greatness; they are that greatness already. Offices in the Church are not thereby abolished; they are only interpreted as functions of love: all dignity and authority otherwise derived are discountenanced, and convicted as usurpations. 3. *To declare his work amongst men.* In so doing we shall truly glorify him, and extend his kingdom to the ends of the earth.—M.

VERS. 46—52.—*Blind Bartimæus.* I. THE BEHAVIOUR OF THOSE WHO ARE IN EARNEST ABOUT BEING SAVED. They will: 1. *Seize every opportunity that presents itself.* 2. *Make the most of it,* by (1) putting all their knowledge to the proof, and (2) exerting all their powers to attract attention and help. 3. *Not be easily discouraged.* 4. *Hasten to do what Jesus commands.*

II. THE SPIRIT THAT OUGHT TO BE SHOWN BY CHRIST'S SERVANTS TOWARDS THOSE SEEKING SALVATION. Two standards of conduct observed by them, viz. the dignity and glory of their Master, and the good of men. The mistake has been in over-emphasizing the one or the other of these, or in divorcing them. They are really but the two sides of one thing. The glory of Christ is that of a Saviour, *i.e.* in saving from misery and sin. 1. *Christ corrects what is faulty in their attitude.* 2. *Employs them to further his purpose of mercy.* 3. *Infuses his own spirit of gentleness and love.* "Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee," is the expression of the spirit of the gospel as it ought to be proclaimed to the world.

III. CHRIST PROVING HIMSELF THE SAVIOUR OF MEN. 1. *By his sympathy for distress.* He heard the cry of the beggar notwithstanding the tumult, and the thoughts which agitated his mind. It was natural for him to postpone everything to attend to such a cry. 2. *By inspiring others with his own spirit, and employing them to further his purpose.* 3. *By calling forth and exercising the principle of faith in the subjects of his mercy.* 4. *By freely and completely delivering from distress, pain, and sin.*—M.

Ver. 52.—"*Saving faith.*" I. NOT ONE OF SEVERAL KINDS OF FAITH, BUT SIMPLY FAITH PROPERLY DIRECTED, AND PRACTICALLY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF CHRIST'S POWER. Much confusion on this subject. Theologians have spoken of different sorts of faith, as speculative, practical, historical, realizing, and saving. There is but one faith, a faculty of the soul. What is needed is not the faculty, which already exists, but the proper direction or destination of it. That is a *true faith* by which I see and appropriate the truth; that a *saving faith* by which salvation is seen and received.

II. FAITH DOES NOT SAVE THROUGH ITS OWN VIRTUE OR POWER, BUT BY BRINGING THE SOUL INTO CONTACT WITH THE VIRTUE AND POWER—THE SALVATION OF CHRIST. It is not the *cause* of salvation, but the *condition.* The only Saviour is Christ, but he saves us through our having faith towards him. By our having faith towards Christ what is his becomes ours; we enter into union and fellowship with him. His life, righteousness, spirit, become ours; and we are identified with him in his sacrifice for sin.

III. SO ALSO OUR FAITH IS THE MEASURE OF THE SAVING GRACE WE RECEIVE. St. Matthew puts it thus: "According to your faith be it unto you." Bartimæus's faith was strong and practical, and it saved him, by uniting him to the power and

holiness of Christ. A weak faith will ever entail spiritual weakness. To be "made whole" we must believe with our whole heart.—M.

Vers. 17—21.—*The excellences of the young ruler.* Too often religious teachers have attempted to classify all who are mentioned in the Bible as being either definitely good or utterly bad. If the latter exhibit any excellency it is depreciated, or explained away; and if the former have faults, they are carefully concealed. But the Bible gives no such definite decision respecting them. It mentions the faults of the saints, and exhibits the excellences of those whose character and destiny are left doubtful. Here, for example, one is mentioned who was not what he ought to have been, of whom it is boldly said, "Jesus beholding him loved him." The feeling with which our Lord regarded him was *not the result of regard for his social position,* which led to a discreet hiding of his faults. Amongst us too often one of dubious character, because he has wealth or brilliant prospects, is admitted to circles from which he ought to be excluded; and a rich man is not told of his sins as a poorer man would be, so that it is the more hard for him to enter into the kingdom. But with our Lord esteem was won not by what a man had, but by what he was. Nor was our Lord influenced by *the young man's religious knowledge,* for he made small account of theological lore, such as was possessed by lawyers and Pharisees. And as knowledge would not win his love, neither did ignorance and error prevent it. There was evidently much in this young ruler that was commendable and lovable, all of which found its source in God; for even those who are not decided followers of Christ have in them gleams of heavenly light, and must beware of quenching the Spirit.

I. THE YOUNG RULER WAS GENUINE AND SIMPLE. Christ rebuked nothing so severely as unreality. He exposed the Pharisees mercilessly, because they pretended to be what they were not. He declared that if a man's eye was "single" his whole body would be full of light; that he who was of the truth (who was a true man) would hear his voice. Such was this man. He expressed his real want. He felt that he had obeyed the commandments, and frankly said so; and when told to go and sell all that he had, he made no fallacious promise to do so. We should cultivate the grace of truthfulness in all the relations of life. If we are engaged in a common occupation, we should be true enough not to be ashamed of it; if in Church relationships, we should never ignore them; if we have done a wrong, we should candidly confess it either to God or man. In proportion as we are true we are nearer to the kingdom of truth.

II. HE WAS SINGULARLY COURTEOUS. He kneeled before the peasant Teacher of Galilee, and addressed him reverently. Courtesy is a small thing if it be identical with outward mannerism, which observes a suitable deportment, and carefully discriminates between those in different social ranks. But true courtesy is consideration for others, thoughtfulness for their feelings, respect for their age and experience and character; and this was exhibited by the young ruler whom Jesus loved. There was no rudeness like that of the Sadducees and Herodians, nor any outburst of hot temper at the sacrifice demanded of him.

III. HE WAS OF IRREPROACHABLE LIFE. So far, at least, as human judgment could determine. A young man whose passions had not misled him; rich enough to indulge evil propensity, yet outwardly pure and without reproach. The morality of the noblest does not win heaven, but it is good in itself and in its source. The idea that a profligate is the happier after his conversion because of his sinful experience, is utterly false. His experience is more remarkable, but he is not so blessed, nor so strong for Christian service; for if evil thoughts stain the mind, and sinful habits are indulged, these have their effects.

IV. HE WAS NOT SELF-SATISFIED. Self-satisfaction is one of the greatest preventives of good: *e.g.* the lad who can do without his father's counsel; the girl who scorns her mother's advice; the children who drift away from Sunday schools, to live without God and without hope in the world. This is most perilous in spiritual things. No condemnation is more severe than that of the Church which says, "I have need of nothing;" no welcome is more loving than that given by our Lord to the children, who could give him nothing but love, or to the young ruler who wistfully asked, "What lack I yet?" "He fills the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away." If your heart is hungry for the love of God, our heavenly Father is

pleased, just as an earthly father is when he knows his child wants him. If your son had run away and been hidden for years, and at last was found abroad, what would you wish to hear? Not that he was doing well, and had lost all care for you; but that, although he had everything to make him happy, he was sad because he wished to see his father, and obtain the assurance of his forgiveness.

V. HE CAME TO CHRIST WITH AN EARNEST QUESTION. What shall I do, not to gain wealth or fame, but eternal life? In the New Testament life is not spoken of as equivalent to existence, but it means life coupled with conditions which make it blessed, and therefore desirable. Life and holiness are correlatives, as are death and sin. So a man may be dead in part, and alive in part. A person struck with paralysis may lie for months in a living death, unable to reason, to speak, or to move a limb. Sin does that to our moral being. It paralyzes sensitiveness to God's presence, the power of speaking to him with naturalness and the capacity for hearing his voice. It is an endless existence, with the full enjoyment of these attributes (the exercise of which constitute the joys of heaven), which is involved in the phrase "eternal life."

VI. HE BROUGHT HIS EARNEST QUESTION TO THE LORD JESUS. It was a great thing for a man in his position to do. He faced the scorn of his friends when he ran eagerly to Christ and humbly knelt before him, beseeching him to teach and guide him. "And Jesus beholding him loved him," as he loves all who in this spirit fall at his feet.—A. R.

Ver. 21.—"*One thing thou lackest.*" This incident occurred on a journey to Jerusalem, which our Lord undertook between the Feast of Dedication, at which the Jews sought to stone him, and the Passover, during which he was crucified. Hostility, therefore, was both before him and behind him, but his serenity was not ruffled, nor his willingness to bless impaired. There was never in him a sign of *the indiscriminate judgment* which leads us to condemn a whole nation or sect as being outside the bounds of Christian charity. He was, and still is, gracious to one seeker, even though he dwells among the heathen; and hears any prayer, though it rises from a godless home. We notice here also our Lord's freedom from the *pandering to popular passion*, which has often been the snare of statecraft, and sometimes of the Christian Church. We naturally bend before an adverse current of opinion, and count it good policy to withhold the advocacy of our opinions for a season. But here was a crisis in Christ's ministry which would lead to his reception or rejection, when the decision of each one would make a weight in the scale of popular judgment. Judicious hedging just then might avert hatred or win a convert. Here was a ruler of the synagogue—a man of wealth, position, and good repute—who was willing to become a disciple; but he was met with words of discouragement, and the great Teacher put his claims before him in the strongest form. The fact is, that he thought more of the suppliant than of himself. He would rather bring him to deep repentance than have his showy following. With all his estimable qualities, the young ruler had spiritual deficiencies, which were seen by the Searcher of hearts, and revealed to himself by the test applied to him. What were these?

I. HE WAS MISTAKEN AS TO THE NATURE OF "GOODNESS." "Good Master, what good thing shall I do?" asked he. Christ at once put him in the way of discovering his mistake by answering, "Why callest thou me good?" etc. He did not decline the appellation, but repelled it when used in this superficial sense. He wanted him to weigh his words, to know what they implied, to say exactly what he meant; and this he requires of us. He reminded him that God was the Source of all goodness, because he would not have him regard any good act or good person as isolated or independent, but in connection with the God of goodness. He was himself "good;" but why? Because he was one with God. The young man might do a "good thing;" but how? Not as an isolated act, but by loving God supremely, and living in him. He enumerated the commandments as declarations of the will and character of the good One, which could only be obeyed in fulness when supreme love to God was the master passion of the soul; the duties to his fellows being mentioned because these constituted the easiest test of obedience.

II. HIS GREAT DEFICIENCY WAS AN ABSENCE OF COMPLETE SELF-SURRENDER. When told to sell all that he had, this was not the special "good thing" which would gain

eternal life; but the command was given because the attempt to obey it would reveal the fact that he did not love the Lord with all his heart and soul and strength. This is the one important thing so often lacking, short of which so many halt, but which is essential to the righting of life. If we set down a series of noughts we may say they only want one figure to make them millions; but that one figure is all-important. So is it with "the one thing" lacking to many a moral life, namely, the consecration to God, of which prayer is the natural expression.

III. HE BROKE DOWN UNDER THE TEST APPLIED. The command, "Sell whatsoever thou hast," was to be obeyed literally by him, but not by all. Christ came in contact with other rich men, and did not call upon them to do this. But it was the best thing to teach this man the special lesson he needed. The test our Lord applies to those who come to him varies greatly, but in some form it comes to all such. It may appear to be so *trifling* a thing as the giving up of an amusement or pursuit, or so *peculiar* a thing that no one has previously been asked to do it. But it is the test of character to that one, and the trifle is fraught with future destiny. That which is not a source of peril to some may be disastrous to others. A blessing in some circumstances may prove a curse in others. The lighted candle, which is useful in the home, may be a destroyer in a mine. Anything which seems a source of danger must be abjured for Christ's sake. The young ruler did not make the required sacrifice when it was called for. He went away sad; and if he went away for ever, it was to far deeper sadness, for he left the Saviour of the world—the King of heaven. Dante says that in his journey through hell he saw him "who with ignoble spirit made the great refusal." But was the refusal final? We hesitate to believe it. We hope that this inquirer, who was so sincere, earnest, and humble, only went away to consider the question, not in the excitement of the moment, but alone, on his knees, and that then and there he gave himself up, to be Christ's consecrated servant for evermore.—A. R.

Vers. 35—45.—*The request of the sons of Zebedee.* As we read the history of our Lord's dealings with his disciples, we are amazed at his unfaltering patience. They had preconceived theories about his kingdom which, in spite of his teaching, they held fast till after his death and resurrection. They constantly expected him to assume temporal power. Why he delayed they did not know; the reason for his present obscurity they could not conceive; but to all his allusions to suffering they gave, and were resolved to give, a figurative interpretation. With all this persistent misconception our Lord was patient. In this he has left us an example of the patience we should cherish towards those who, as we think, misunderstand the truth. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were two of the favoured triumvirate, and their mother, Salome, was a near relation of the Virgin Mary. It was she who expressed the request of her sons, first asking for an unconditional promise—such as a Herod might give, but our Lord never. The Old Testament counterpart of this scene is the coming of Rebekah, with her son Jacob, to win the blessing of the firstborn.

I. THE REQUEST OF THE DISCIPLES. 1. *It was the offspring of ignorance.* They little knew what it would be to stand on the right hand and on the left of their Lord in the day when the word would be fulfilled, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Well might he say, "Ye know not what ye ask." We often set our desires on some object which is vain or wrong. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought;" and sometimes we learn by a bitter experience that it is best to put ourselves trustfully in God's hands. Lot found it so. Of the Israelites, too, it is said, "God gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." 2. *It was the dictate of ambition.* Ambition is a wholesome stimulus, if only it is free from selfishness. A teacher can do little with a child who is always satisfied with the lowest position in the class. If your ambition be a lawful one it will not allow you to shirk difficulties, or to get over an obstacle by a doubtful expedient, but it will lead you to a patient and faithful doing of what your hand finds to do. You will go higher, as you faithfully fulfil the duties of the lower sphere. Ask yourself whether the object you are aiming at is worthy of a Christian man; whether the time spent in its pursuit could be better employed; whether God or self is supreme in the motives which are prompting effort, etc. Ambition can be and ought to be tested. Some people are like precious stones, glittering, but non-productive; others are like the plainer millstones, which, by steadfast

work, minister food to the hungry and wealth to the nation. 3. *It was the outcome of selfishness.* One of the best tests we have of the lawfulness of ambition is this question—How does it affect my feelings towards others? There is reason to fear that the idea of these disciples was that the chief places in the kingdom should be allotted to them, regardless of the claims of their brethren. No wonder, then, that they were rebuked by their Lord, and that when the ten heard it they had great indignation. Self-seeking ever tends to separate friends, and to arouse discord in the Christian Church. Selfishness is the root of the indolence that dishonours the disciples of Christ; it is the cause of civil dissensions; it is the spring of the bloody wars that desolate the world; and when it asserts itself in sectarianism it checks the advance of Christ's kingdom, and brings upon the Church paralysis and death. Against it Christ Jesus declared ruthless war. He declared that men must deny themselves if they would follow him; he taught us to love our enemies, and still more our neighbours, and said that if a man would be really great, he must minister to others for his sake.

II. THE REPLY OF OUR LORD. He pointed out the distinction between real greatness and seeming greatness, and declared that dignity in his kingdom was bestowed according to a certain law—the law of moral fitness. A similar law asserts itself everywhere in God's economy. Each plant and animal have their own habitat, and for their well-being we are compelled to study those conditions which the Creator designed for them. The disciples supposed that honour was at the arbitrary disposal of the Lord on the ground of personal favour. It was so with the positions held under the Roman government. The favour of an emperor might appoint a Pontius Pilate Procurator of Judæa, in complete disregard of character and suitability. It was not to be so in Christ's Church, whether on earth or in heaven. There would be distinctions of rank and honour, but they would be given by God to those worthy of dignity, and fit for it. In the kingdom of righteousness nothing would be arbitrary, or dependent upon caprice. To some extent this is so in the attainment of knowledge. Knowledge cannot be given by a teacher because a pupil is a favourite, or because a pupil wishes to be first among competitors; but it is the reward of individual work and consequent fitness. And greatness in heaven will not consist in so many pleasures or dignities, but in the enjoyment of so much life, in the developments of power and in the possibilities of service. These, then, are some of the principles laid down in our Lord's reply: 1. *Prepared places are for prepared people.* (Ver. 40.) 2. *Humble ministry is the source of highest exaltation.* (Vers. 43, 44.) 3. *Christ's mission is the pattern of Christian service.* (Ver. 45.)—A. R.

Vers. 46—52.—*Blind Bartimæus: the publicity of Christ's miracles.* Our Lord stood face to face with men. He said with truth, "I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing." His life was spent in the glare of publicity. His miracles were not performed among chosen witnesses, who might be interested in the propagation of what was false; nor in the secrecy of some convent or retreat. They were wrought on the mountain-side, in full view of five thousand men, besides women and children; in a synagogue full of worshippers hostile to his claims; or on a public road, crowded with pilgrims going to the Passover. This not only strengthened the evidence of the supernatural, but it was a sign that the blessings signified by such wonders were not intended for a class but for a race. Therefore we must beware lest we, by act or word, should be saying to any earnest seeker, what the crowd said to Bartimæus, "Hold thy peace!" By our coldness we may tacitly rebuke enthusiasm, and by our inconsistencies we may destroy the desires of the contrite. Christ can save us from this. He can by a word transform us, as he transformed that crowd, so that those who had just been saying, "Hold thy peace," became ready to say, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." Subject—*In this miracle we have reminders of some characteristics of our Lord.*

I. THE POWER OF JESUS. Its exemplification outside Jericho was appropriate both to the beauty of the city and to its memories. Jericho was an oasis in the desert. There palms flourished and roses grew. Whether approaching it from the robber-haunted road from Jerusalem, or from the Dead Sea valley, it was significant of the Paradise Christ came to restore, which would be beautiful with the flowers of his grace and fragrant with the sweetness of his love. And here Joshua, the Jesus of the Old Testament, had proved the power that was his because the Lord was with him. The angel of the covenant which appeared to him was a precursor of the mighty Conqueror who came

now. As the giant walls of the city had fallen by the simplest means, so now the darkness was conquered by light through a single word. 1. *This power is manifest if you consider the condition of the sufferer.* Blindness then was common, unalleviated, incurable. No wonder that it was used as an emblem of insensibility to spiritual facts and things. There is a sphere of thought, hope, and desire which many never know. Intelligent and active, they ask, "Are we blind also?" and the Lord says, "Because being blind you say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." Because there is no sense of want there is no cry for a blessing, and because there is no such cry the light is not given. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Tests may be applied to the spiritual condition as to the physical malady which represents it. An oculist is not satisfied with a casual question; he patiently and variously tests the organ, by presenting objects and asking respecting one after another, "Can you see this?" So we may test ourselves by seeing what sin is, and what God is to us. 2. *This power appears greater as you contrast it with the weakness of men.* Like those in the crowd, we can see the Lord and hear his voice, and as far as sympathy and prayer go may lead others to him. But after all the main issue rests between each man and Christ. If there is no spiritual contact he is left in darkness. Sometimes the most unlikely are chosen. A publican like Zacchæus is visited in a city of priests, and a blind beggar on the road is invited to join the festal procession. 3. *This power appears in the exercise of its Divine freedom.* Bartimæus was not dealt with as were those of whom he had heard. The man born blind had been told to wash in the pool of Siloam, and he of Bethsaida was led out of the town uncured. Yet no one would question the reality of the change in the other. Each could say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." Let us not expect the same experiences, but only the same effects of Divine contact with Christ. He is willing to lead us into light, but each one of us in his own way.

II. THE PITY OF JESUS. Describe the pitiable condition of Bartimæus. It is sad enough for a rich man to be blind, but it is a terrible aggravation of the privation when he who endures it has to beg his daily bread. Nor did Bartimæus know, as we do, God's love in Christ. He had not the assurance that "all things work together for good." He had not seen the cross which sanctifies sadness to each believer. In his darkness he cried to the Light of the world, and not in vain. The pity of the Lord always surpassed infinitely that of those around him. The disciples rebuked the children, but Jesus said, "Suffer them to come." Simon the Pharisee condemned the sinful woman, but Jesus let her bathe his feet with her tears. Judas blamed the waste of the ointment, but the Lord said, "She hath wrought a good work on me." The crowd said, "Hold thy peace," but the Lord said, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

III. THE PRESENCE OF JESUS. A crisis had come in the life of Bartimæus, when a single resolve would make all the difference to his future. Jesus was "passing," and therefore was within reach; but he was "passing by," and therefore would soon be beyond reach. Such crises appear unexpected to us; but he who knows the heart sees that they are not really so. Bartimæus had heard of the words and works of Jesus before this, and, shut up to his own thoughts, he had pondered them in the dark; so he was ready now to salute Jesus as "the Son of David." Similar preparation has been going on in your heart. A trouble has solemnized your thoughts; a tender touch at home has aroused new sensibility; a word has startled you to consideration; and now you are nearer Christ than before. "Jesus is passing by." Unseen, as by Bartimæus, yet able to hear the believing prayer for mercy. See to it that the world's "Hold thy peace!" does not stifle the cry for help.—A. R.

Vers. 1—12.—*Divorce.* Again with low motives, "tempting him," the Pharisees propound a question as to whether it was "lawful for a man to put away his wife." Opinions were divided, and the Teacher was in danger of offending one or other party by his reply. This was the trap "to involve him with the adulterous tetrarch, in whose territory he was." But he wisely referred them to Moses, and their thought, which was for evil, he turned to good; for he took occasion by it to show the grounds of Moses' "commandment" to have been to their condemnation, their "hardness of heart;" and he further took occasion to lay down for all Christian times, for the blessedness of the Christian home and for the preservation of Christian morals, the true, the wise, the beneficial law of marriage, founded upon the conditions of the original creation; and he

defined with authority and precision what constituted "adultery." These words remained to condemn the disobedient, and will remain to "judge him in the last day." The indissoluble bond of the marriage relation Jesus here affirms, and in the old words, spoken at "the beginning," "the twain shall become one flesh." To the propriety, the goodness, the blessedness of this law many Christian centuries bear their unequivocal testimony. The purest institution and the best, so hallowed, so beneficent, promoting in the highest degree individual happiness, the peace and sanctity of family life, the purity of public morals; preserving national health, stability, and greatness; guarding against wild lust, and a long train of envy, jealousy, revenge, and other passionate crimes; preserving the honour and dignity of women, the love and careful training of children; imposing responsibilities, but cherishing virtue and peace and joy. The family life is the symbol of the heavenly community; the marriage bond the type of the Redeemer's relation to his people, who are "the bride, the wife of the Lamb." It is God's ordination, and is very sacred; nor may it be set aside, but "for the kingdom of heaven's sake;" nor may its bond be broken, but for the one cause of fornication, from which it is the most efficient guard. Its rites were honoured by Jesus, and its "holy estate adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle." The wisest legislation tends to the conservation of the family, whose multiplied relations, whose sweet fellowship, whose united interest, and whose common possessions give rise to the lofty idea of the *home*. Conjugal, parental, filial, fraternal affection are cherished. Obedience on the one hand, care and providence on the other; discipline and wise authority; the sense of dependence arising from want; responsibility arising from the power to meet that want; common interests and common aims, go to make each home a miniature kingdom. Teaching to those in authority the beneficence of rule, and to those under authority the lessons of submission, the home lays the foundation for stable national life; while mutual interests and obligations teach all to respect the rights and just claims of the entire community; whilst each learns his responsibility to the whole, and his deep interest in the general welfare. The nation that honours the home and the sanctities of family life is honoured of God. The Christian teaching, reverting to the condition of things as it was "from the beginning of the creation," shows how truly it is in harmony with natural law, which is the expression of the Divine will.—G.

Vers. 13—16.—*Little children.* Parental anxiety led thoughtful women to bring "unto him little children, that he should touch them," according to a custom which has its approval in the hearts of all races and all times, of presenting young children to persons of sanctity and age that they may invoke a blessing upon their young life. Such are brought to Jesus, "that he should lay his hands on them and pray." Touched, perchance, by a remembrance of the humiliating lessons which the presence of a child must now have suggested, "the disciples rebuked them." Why obtrude children on the attention of One who is so competent to deal with adult wisdom? But he who came to correct error and false views, who had redeemed and established the essential marriage laws, now raises child-life to its rightful place. "Moved with indignation" at the indiscretion of the disciples, he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God"—words which (1) are inscribed as on a banner of defence, that has floated from that hour over the heads of "little children;" words which (2) have been an admonitory corrective of personal vanity and assumption; (3) have expounded the spirit of the heavenly kingdom; (4) have expressed the qualification needed by all who would enter within its gates; (5) have been seized upon as affording a justification for the admission of children into the visible community of the Church by the sacrament of baptism; and (6) have, especially in these later days, become the stimulus to diligent endeavour to bring the young under religious training and to give them the benefits of religious instruction. By so much did the Master's words of truth rebut the disciples' error, and found upon it a teaching of unlimited benefit. Thus did Christ pay his tribute to the preciousness of life, even in its infancy and imperfectness, and throw the shield of his protection around it. Thus did he compel the attention and effort of his Church in all ages to be paid to young life, knowing its susceptibility and the important bearing of its right treatment on the general condition of human society. "Forbid them not" transforms itself into a command to the heart of the Church, ever attentive to catch the

Lord's will, to remove every hindrance from the way of a child's participation in spiritual benefits. And "suffer them to come unto me" becomes an equally authoritative command to bring them unto him; to place them in close alliance with him, and, if with him, then with his kingdom. For if he, the Head of the house, receive them, they of the household may not reject them; and if he take them up in his arms, surely they may come within the embrace of his Church. If they lie in his bosom at the head of the table, they may not be denied a place in the house, or be denied a portion of its bread or a measure of its care; while their purity, helplessness, trustful dependence, and tractableness form the typical example of that spirit which he desires shall characterize all the subjects of his kingdom, all the members of his household, in every age.—G.

Vers. 17—22.—*The rich young ruler.* Never did a more becoming question escape from human lips than when "there ran one"—"a certain ruler"—"to him," and, kneeling at his feet, "asked him, Good Master, what [what good thing] shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" With characteristic calmness Jesus drew him away from the thought of his ability to do any "good thing," and from his question concerning that which is good. Only the good can do good things, and "none is good save One, even God." Therefore thou art not good; therefore thou canst not do *any*—that is, every—good thing. But there is a way unto life, even that of the commandments. "If," therefore, "thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." They lead unto eternal life. Along that path, he replied, I have ever walked. "All these things have I observed from my youth." And this was no vain boast, for "Jesus looking upon him loved him." But the thought of doing good things, and of establishing a claim to eternal life as to an inheritance, still fills the young ruler's thoughts, and the bold demand is pressed to the utmost—"What lack I yet?" Alas! "one thing thou"—even thou—"lackest." Then, hesitatingly, knowing so well "what was in man," Jesus offers to this loved one the highest attainment: "If thou wouldest be perfect," if thou wouldest lack nothing—*If!*—ah, *if!* Jesus was neither unkind nor severe in his demand. The young man pressed him for a reply, and the prize was within his reach. Whether he could pay the price, whether he really was prepared to do *any* good thing, as the "*what* good thing" implied, whether he valued the eternal life so highly as his words seemed to indicate, must be proved. "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Alas! "his countenance fell, . . . and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions." He was not the only sorrowful one. A lowering cloud must have passed over the brow of the Rabbi himself. It is not out of place to inquire—What did Jesus offer him for his riches; and what did he lose by retaining them? The offer embraced—

I. PERFECTNESS OF CHARACTER—that which can be gained only by great sacrifice and effort, by withdrawment from the world, by such apprehension of the spiritual as to lead to the surrender of the material; that faith in God which lifts the trusting heart from its confidence in the "possessions" which the eye can see and the hands handle, and which promise "much goods" for "many years," to that "treasure in heaven" which fadeth not. For imperfect man there is a perfectness, to which he shall be led if he forsake all and follow Jesus. From that path the young ruler at this time turns away, perhaps to reflect, to repent, to turn again to the Master who was patient, and finally, after earnest struggles, to join the company of those who made the sacrifice of all things for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Again be it said that he who forsakes all for Christ's "sake and the gospel's" sake enters upon a path that leads to perfection.

II. A second part of the offer made to the young man was "TREASURE IN HEAVEN"—"in the world to come eternal life." It was this the young man desired; but he knew not that the heart could find its "treasure in heaven" only by consenting to have it there alone. He who would really have "eternal life" must be content to be freed from anything and everything that withdraws the heart from that life. The living unto this present world does so withdraw the heart. Therefore the earthly possessions must be sacrificed. That many rich men enter, though "hardly," into the kingdom of heaven, and retain their place therein, is a sign of the prevalence of Christ's grace. Yet these cease to "trust in riches," or the "deceitfulness of riches" would choke in them the

seeds of eternal life. For the present, at least, the rich, eager, honoured young ruler cannot say his whole treasure is in heaven.

III. But Jesus further offered him A PLACE AMONGST THE MOST HONOURED BAND OF MEN THE WORLD HAS KNOWN, AND A SHARE IN THE MOST HONOURABLE WORK. "Come, follow me." Who can tell what might have been the effect of his sacrifice? His example might have saved Judas. He might have enriched the world with a fifth Gospel. He might have drawn many of the rulers to believe. But for the time he lost his chance, and the world is the worse for his decision, as it is the worse for every error of men. What did he gain? His "great possessions." But only for a time—it may have been a very brief time. And, when enjoying the fruits of his wealth, would the thought ever spring unbidden to his mind, "I purchased this with the price of eternal life; for this I gave up the hope of being perfect; this I chose rather than follow the 'good Master'"? He who forsakes all for Christ finds all in Christ; but he who has any possession which he would not forego, even for eternal life, loses both the life and the possession. Well may the hope be cherished that this one on whom the loving look, if not the loving kiss, of Christ rested, turned again, and laid all at his feet, yea, "and his own life also," or joined those who "were possessors of lands or houses," and who "sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet." Gently did Jesus thus teach the rich ruler that with all his wealth he lacked at least "one thing." He that would have eternal life as an inheritance must establish his claim, and that claim must be faultless. One flaw is sufficient to invalidate that claim. Further, the Lord taught that eternal life is ours, not by this title of inheritance, but is a gift of God.—G.

Vers. 23—31.—*The entry of the rich into the kingdom of heaven.* So impressive a scene as that which had just been witnessed needed some explanation, and was well suited to be the basis of important teaching. With much meaning, therefore, "Jesus looked round about," and, arresting the attention of his disciples, taught them further concerning the entry of the rich into the kingdom of God.

I. IT IS DIFFICULT. It is difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom! But that difficulty lies, not as the disciples thought, simply in the possession of riches, but in the proneness of men to love riches. And how short is the step from having riches to loving them! Only by exertion, only by the painfulness of self-denial, by giving up trust in riches and fondness for them, can the rich enter the kingdom of heaven. How hard is this to them who have abundance! How easy it seems to them who possess little! So difficult did this appear to him who knew all men, that the parabolic illustration has no extravagance, though to the disciples it shut out all hope, and rightly so from their point of view, as was confirmed by the Master's word, made the more impressive by his tender look—"With men it is impossible." Happily, however, there are springs of hope for men other than those which rise from among themselves. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." So it comes to pass that, concerning the entry of rich men into the kingdom of heaven, it may be proclaimed—

II. IT IS POSSIBLE. Yes, it is "possible with God," without whom, indeed, nothing is possible. The human inability to effect salvation stands in direct contrast to the efficiency of Divine grace. Many things hinder the salvation of men; but few have more power than "the deceitfulness of riches," which lure to self-security and self-indulgence, which lead men to think they are better than other men, and are not in the same danger or need. The voice of riches is a syren voice; the hold of riches on the heart is firm as a death-grip. Riches prevent the lowliness, the childlike feeling of utter nothingness, of trustful timidity, of tractable weakness. They inspire a false sense of strength, and security, and abundance, and superiority. Often are they the devil's counters with which he buys men's souls. But "with God" the mighty may be made to feel themselves feeble, the wealthy to be truly poor. Great is the trust reposed; great the difficulty of fidelity. But "with God" even this may be done. And in our days, as has been happily in all the days of Christ's Church, men have learned to forsake all—even when that all was much—to follow Christ in lowly humility, in the poverty of self-abasement. Let the poor know that if they lack the hindrance which riches throw in the way, they also need the help of God; if they will rise and accept it, that help shall be freely given. And let the rich know that help awaits

them; if they will stoop lowly and ask, it shall not be withheld from them. Then shall "the brother of low degree glory in his high estate: and the rich in that he is made low." All of us are poor before God; all by him, and by him alone, may be made rich. In proportion as the rich become poor shall they be truly enriched; and it shall be proved that they who press through difficulties hard as the passing of a camel through a needle's eye, are not left unrequited. Of the entry of the rich into the kingdom of heaven it may further be said—

III. IT IS REWARDED. How gently did the Lord of all warn his disciples of days of poverty and loss which were coming upon them apace, when both voluntarily, in the fulness of their love, they would sell "their possessions and goods, and part them to all according as any had need," and when with ruthless hands all would be torn from them; when "houses" and "lands" would be confiscated; when from the fellowship of brethren and sisters, of mother and father, and even from their own children, they would be separated "for the gospel's sake"! But how graciously did he assure them of the "hundredfold" which should be repaid them "now in this time," though "with persecutions;" and the great reward which should be theirs in the hereafter—"in the world to come eternal life." Who of the many disciples of those early times of suffering and persecutions was not rich in "house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands"? And who that "left" these for his "sake and for the gospel's sake" did not—does not and will not ever—find, in the undying love and fellowship of the great spiritual community, and in the eternal riches of the heavenly inheritance, more than the "hundredfold"? Yet shall there be no pre-eminence, but a true equality; for the "first shall be last, and the last first."—G.

Vers. 35—45.—*The post of honour.* How soon are the Master's words misapprehended! James and John, concerning whom it is recorded that on the call of Jesus "they straightway left the boat and their father, and followed him," come now apparently to secure the promised reward. With cautious words, and by the aid of their mother, the demand is urged upon that good Master on whose lips are ever the gracious words, "What would ye that I should do for you?" We would fain "sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory." Ah! the old leaven is not yet wholly purged out. The self-seeking, the love of supremacy, place, and honour still lurk within. The chaff mingles with the pure grain. He who holds the winnowing fan is at hand; and with decisive though gentle words, heavily weighted with their sad import, corrects their error. He had but recently "in the way" told them "the things that were to happen unto him." Direful were the words, "The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again." But these words could have had little influence, for "they understood none of these things." Perchance then they understood not "the cup that I drink," or "the baptism that I am baptized with," or there had not been so ready a response, "We are able." With prophetic eyes the Master sees the future of these brethren, and declares, "The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized. Doubtless "this saying" also "was hid from them" until the very hour when that cup touched their lips, or the waters of that baptism fell upon them. But even this could not entitle them to the high place they desired; certainly not on the grounds they desired it—that of arbitrary selection. It is given to them "for whom it hath been prepared." Out of all this the lesson arises—

I. THAT THE POSTS OF REAL HONOUR ARE NOT ATTAINED BY MERE FAVOUR OR BY ARBITRARY ALLOTMENT. All such endowment, either in the kingdom of heaven or among men, would instantly rob the distinction of all worthiness and make it a sham. The incident presents an example of that kind of false estimate of honour which supposes that it can be conferred without regard to the fitness of him who seeks it. It is true medals may be placed on the breast of him who has never fought, and the ribbon may adorn him who never did one deed of distinction; but such a decoration is a deceit or an empty title—a mere ribbon which a child might wear. No mere will of the ruler can make a life honourable and worthy. Signs of a sovereign beneficence may be heaped upon favourites, but they add no lustre to the character of him who is

adorned or enriched. And the posts of honour in the highest of all kingdoms are not assigned arbitrarily to favoured ones. As the kingdom is open to all, so are its seats of honour. Each receives according to his deserts—"according as his work shall be."

II. So is learnt a second lesson like unto the first: ALL TRUE HONOUR LIES IN SERVICE AND MERIT, NOT IN ITS RECOGNITION. How often are men attracted by the reward! They esteem the honour which attaches to attainments, to position, to wealth, to learning, or brave deeds. The eye is on the medal. Such seldom do much that is worthy, or make themselves really great. The man who works for praise and prizes is selfish and little, and the world in its deep heart hates both. He has his reward. Others steadily do their duty, undiverted by anxiety respecting honour; these finally achieve true distinction. So is it in all kingdoms.

III. IN THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM HONOUR COMES TO HIM WHO IS MEET FOR IT. Christ has no favourites to lift to emolument and dignity. He who would reach the highest place must climb up to it. But how many truly and wisely desire to stand well in the heavenly kingdom? They desire a happy freedom from evil, a lot among the sanctified! It is well. Yet the words of the great Lord come back to such, "Ye know not what ye ask." Would you be spiritually great? Would you make high attainments in spiritual knowledge? Would you do good works in the spiritual kingdom? How much of self-denial, of patient labour, of disciplinary correction—"the chastening of the Lord," which we should "regard not lightly"—how much of sacrificial endurance is needed! How many hours of quiet communion must be passed with the Redeemer if we would catch his spirit! How much of fasting and prayer, and diligent self-culture, and patient self-denial! How many strong acts of faith! What baptism of fire, what bitterness of the cup, is needed to make the disciple like his Master! But after all another spirit is to prevail. Christ's disciples are exhorted not to aim at superiority of position, at rank and order. Let the Gentiles "lord it over" one another. "It is not so among you." The greatest is the least truly. The minister, the servant of all, is chief and first. The true lesson being, "In my kingdom there is neither first nor last, highest nor lowest, near and afar off. Dismiss the thought of primacy. Look not for high places. Such there are not in my kingdom. Look for posts of service. Fix your eye on your ministering, and remember that the Lord of all came to give all—even 'his life a ransom for many.'"—G.

Vers. 46—52.—*Bartimæus.* On the roadside near Jericho sat a blind beggar, making his appeals to the pilgrims that passed up to Jerusalem to attend the feast. "A great multitude" accompanied Jesus on his leaving Jericho on his way to the holy city. The tramp of many feet and the hum of many voices caught the quick ear of the sufferer, and "he inquired what this meant." Learning it was "Jesus of Nazareth," he, having evidently some knowledge of the great Healer, cried aloud, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Thus did the blind sufferer of that day formulate a cry—a prayer for all sufferers and sinners in all subsequent ages; a cry which will ascend to heaven as long as suffering saddens the history of our race. The hindering, self-occupied crowd strove to silence the cry. But the very impediment to his earnestness only gave greater intensity to it, and "he cried out the more a great deal" the same pitiful words. As every earnest, fervent prayer, this entered the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, without whom not one sparrow falleth, and who again and again had laid an emphasis of attention on individual sufferers and sinners. Standing still, for a cry of need arrests him, he silenced their rude, unfriendly words by, "Call ye him." Then the same selfish spirit veers round to the favourite, and they cheer him and bid him rise. Casting aside his loosely flowing garment, he sprang to his feet and came to Jesus." Brief and beautiful is the colloquy, in its sweet and simple haste. "What wilt thou?" "My sight." "Go . . . thy faith" hath brought it thee. Straightway he receives his sight, and follows in the way. Brief as this narrative is, it holds much teaching.

I. ON THE TRUE METHOD OF PRAYER.

II. ON THE SPIRIT OF HIM TO WHOM PRAYER IS ADDRESSED.

Prayer springs from a sense of need, and it must express the sincere desire of him who prays. Words thrown into the form of a petition do not of themselves constitute prayer; without the heart of him who utters them they are dead, being alone. He

who asks with his lips only cannot expect him to hear who looketh on the heart. Prayer must needs be offered to One who it is believed is able to answer. Jesus laid down the clear and definite rule in his demand, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" "The prayer of faith" is the true prayer, though the patient Lord will "forgive" even the "unbelief" of timidity. Nevertheless, the Lord declares the immediate cause of the answering cure in this case: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Prayer must be prepared to push its way through surrounding discouragements and opposition; nor will it exceed propriety if it the more fervently plead by how much it is hindered and impeded. Prayer must, moreover, have respect to proper objects. Here one imperfectness in the life called forth the one petition when the "What wilt thou that I should do?" opened wide the permission to ask many things. Surely to him who came to redeem life, it was a perfectly right subject of petition: "That I may receive my sight." Thus we learn that for the freeing of the life from its incumbent evils, and for whatever will lead that life on to perfectness, we may ask, and ask in the full assurance of faith, in the readiness and ability of the Lord of life to hear and to answer. Happy the man who has learned thus to pray.—G.

Vers. 1—12.—*The law of marriage.* I. THE DIRECTIONS OF SCRIPTURE FOLLOW THE OLDER LAW OF NATURE.

II. THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE IS FOUNDED ON NATURE.

III. IN ITS IDEAL, MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE, AND INDISSOLUBLE.

IV. YET THE ACTUAL CONDITION OF HUMAN NATURE COMPELS SOME RELAXATION.

V. BUT WHAT IS PERMITTED IS NOT, THEREFORE, TO BE APPROVED OR FOLLOWED PRACTICALLY. Christianity is throughout ideal. It makes appeal to our higher nature. At the same time, it admits the difficulty of carrying our ideals unexceptionably into practice.—J.

Vers. 13—16.—*The blessing of the children.* I. THE CONTRAST: WHAT MEN THINK IMPORTANT, AND WHAT GOD RECOGNIZES AS OF WORTH. Children are "only children." They are often "in the way." They are "out of place." They are to be "sent out of the way." But Divine intelligence and love shed a bright light upon the little ones. They are living parables of the Christian spirit. Ever are they to be associated with Christ. Learning, wealth, rank,—all draw away from our true attitude, nay, tend to falsify our spirit. 'Tis the sight of the children that must win us back.

II. CHRISTIANITY THE RELIGION OF REVERENCE FOR THOSE BELOW US. In them God is found. "The religion of reverence for what is above us is ethnic religion. This delivers from degrading fear. The religion of reverence for what is around us is the philosophical. The philosopher stations himself in the middle, and must draw up to him all that is lower, and down to him all that is higher. This is the religion of wisdom. Reverence for what is under us,—this is Christian, and is the last step mankind was fitted and destined to attain" (Goethe). The lowly, the hated, the despised, the contradictory, are glorified by the insight and the sympathy of Christ.—J.

Vers. 17—23.—*The rich man's temptation.* I. THE RICH MAN FEELS THE NEED OF SALVATION. "Money answereth all things," but only in a limited sphere after all. Riches bind as well as set free; close certain doors to the spirit, as well as open them to others. The poor man knows "straitness" of one kind, the wealthy man another. Could he but unite the advantages of wealth with freedom and joy of spirit!

II. SALVATION IS POSSIBLE TO THE RICH MAN. But the practical conditions may be different from those in other cases. It is some idea, some phantasy, a pride, or a dread, or a lust, that every man needs to expel from his mind in order to salvation. In some way the idea of his riches stood in the way of this man's bliss. But the way to salvation was pointed out to him. It would be wrong to generalize the direction of the Saviour. All that can be said is that there doubtless are cases where entire renunciation may be indispensable to salvation. The principle is: the false opinion of ourselves must be given up, and our being must be grounded on the truth, if we would "enter into life."

III. IT IS ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS IN THE WORLD TO RENOUNCE RICHES. How very rare are the cases where this is done! For money represents our root in earth.

Let us, without affectation or hypocrisy, confess that it is so. Power, service, and estimation of others, a flattering self-representation,—this is what riches mean. To have grown into this circle of ideas, and to be asked suddenly to break them up, 'tis a wrench, like parting with life itself. But let us not exaggerate in any particular. Renunciation of any object with which the imagination in its dearest play is interwoven, is hard. It may be as hard for some to give up the retirement of a humble home for Christ's sake, as for others to renounce station and splendour.—J.

Vers. 24—27.—*Moral impossibilities.* I. "MORAL IMPOSSIBILITIES" IS A PHRASE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. Like all such phrases, saws, and proverbs, it represents the side of truth that is obvious and turned to general view. Men being what they are, certain changes in the character and conduct are not likely, are scarcely probable or possible. So we argue, and justly. So Jesus speaks, using a very strong figure of speech.

II. "MORAL IMPOSSIBILITIES" MAY NEVERTHELESS BE OVERCOME. As Napoleon, in the physical sphere, blotted the word "impossible" from his dictionary, so is the Christian taught to do in the moral sphere. In one light, it looks unlikely that anybody can be saved, considering the power of sin, the "weight," and the "besetment," and the apparent lack of moral energy. But nothing that is conceivable is impossible. Nothing that is morally desirable may not be expected to come to pass. 1. We are prone to a scepticism about our own nature, which we ought to overcome. It is not justifiable, in the light of the facts of history, of personal experience, of the might and love of God. 2. A deep faith in the possibilities of human nature is inspired by the love of God. Love is the spring of the human mechanism, the leaven that works in its lump, the struggling force contending against immense disadvantages, but destined to final victory. "All things are possible with God!"—J.

Vers. 28—31.—*Compensation.* I. TO EXPECT COMPENSATION FOR WORTHY LOSS IS NATURAL AND RIGHT. The gospel encourages this. Compensation is founded on the law of things. God hath set the one over against the other. The conservation of energy is a law that applies to the life of the soul. "It will be made good to us." We cannot help feeling that the integrity of our being has a worth which must be preserved.

II. CHRIST ENCOURAGES THIS EXPECTATION TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE. Self-abandonment to the good cause will bring its reward. God pays a high rate of interest.

> "Fear not, then, thou child infirm;
> There's no God that will wrong a worm.
> Laurel crowns cleave to deserts,
> And power to him who power exerts.
> Hast not thy share? On wingèd feet,
> Lo! it rushes thee to meet;
> And all that Nature made thy own,
> Floating in air, or pent in stone,
> Will rive the hills and swim the sea,
> And, like thy shadow, follow thee."

"Every stroke shall be repaid. The longer the payment is withholden, the better for you; for compound interest on compound interest is the rate and usage of this exchequer." "The martyr cannot be dishonoured. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame; every prison a more illustrious abode; every burned book enlightens the world; every suppressed or expunged word reverberates through the earth from side to side."

III. THIS PRINCIPLE HAS UNEXPECTED APPLICATIONS. Success is not always what it seems; nor apparent failure. There will be great "reversals of human judgment" (see Mozley's fine sermon on this). "Those who begin early and do much are not always preferred." Some show in the front early in life's race, but fail of the goal. Others lag at first, and come out first in the end. Gain in power may be loss in time; or self-extension involve loss of intensity. The great lesson is to live for the soul, for the inner and spiritual world. Everything gained then is gained for ever; and seeming loss and failure are converted into means of progress.—J.

Vers. 32—34.—*The coincidence of opposites.* Once more the forecast of shame and death.

I. MEN FLY IN THE FACE OF THEIR INTEREST, AND TREAT THEIR BENEFACTORS AS ENEMIES. Christ foresaw that the ruling party would be angry with him "because he told them the truth." And we partake of this guilt. We are blind to love in its disguise. We hate that which reproaches us. It is an error of the understanding and of the heart.

II. PROVIDENCE BRINGS GOOD OUT OF OUR EVIL, AND FURTHERS OUR SALVATION IN SPITE OF OURSELVES. So limited is the power of passion, it gains but a momentary end. The patriot or the traitor falls by the hand of the assassin or the judicial murderer; and his principle takes the deeper root, watered by his blood. Christ's resurrection is the eternal type of all moral victories.—J.

Vers. 35—45.—*Ambition.* It is ambition for place and power that is here illustrated.

I. IT IS NATURAL IN THE SENSE IN WHICH ALL HUMAN INSTINCTS ARE NATURAL. 1. To be without ambition of some kind is a defect of organization; a negative, not a positive; a weakness, not a virtue. Man is man because he aspires. He ceases from his worth when he becomes content to remain what he is. Milton speaks of the last "infirmity of noble minds." It is an infirmity of which a man will be ashamed to be ashamed, though he will try to conceal it under that name from others. Shakespeare makes one of his characters exclaim, "If it be a sin to covet honour, I am the most offending soul alive." 2. This passion reveals our social nature. We delight in the picture of others' respect, love, obedience, esteem. Such pictures goad us to our noblest actions. 3. Vice lies not in the passion itself, but in the wrong direction of the will, the mistake of our proper objects. We are ambitious to govern when we are only fit to serve; to teach when we should still be learning; to act when we have need to be acted upon; to be artists when we are only fit for clay, to be moulded by the Divine Artist; to be assessors of Christ when our initiation into the ways of the kingdom has only just begun.

II. CHRIST'S CORRECTION OF AMBITION. 1. By showing its ignorance of its proper objects. There is a condition attached to every distinction. The price must be paid. Have we counted the cost? One illusion is that we separate the pleasure from the means to it in our thought. Another is that we represent to ourselves incompatible things, *e.g.* a high place with a satisfaction only to be obtained by working up from a low place. Crabb Robinson said that having read, as a young man, Mrs. Barbauld's essay on the vanity of inconsistent expectations, it had cured him for life of idle wishes. 2. By showing its impossibility. Places are reserved in Providence for those fit to fill them. In the kingdom of God there is no putting of wrong men into wrong places. The principle of spiritual selection unerringly prevails in the kingdom, and "the fittest survive." The path of self-denial and suffering is open to all. It coincides at many points with that of duty for all; and it may be throughout coincident for some. It leads to blessing, but that blessing is internal. If we confound the inward blessing with the outward place, we deceive ourselves. If God gives us the higher, let us not envy those to whom he is pleased to allot the lower.

III. CHRIST'S EXPOSURE OF THE UNSOCIAL CHARACTER OF AMBITION. 1. The other disciples were indignant when the failings of the brethren were brought to light. Our secret vices never look so hideous as when we see them mirrored in another. For then the illusion of self-love has vanished, and we stand before the naked and ugly fact. 2. To desire to be above others is not Christian. To dominate and exact is the reverse of the Christian temper. It makes self the centre the world revolves around. To serve, to be useful, is the Christian temper; this makes human good the centre of every sphere of life—the family, the Church, the nation. 3. The example of Christ is the eternal light for conduct. His glory arises out of service, as in an immortal passage St. Paul teaches (Phil. ii.). Without method there is nothing sound. We need a method of thought and life—to put the first before the second. The whole is before the part, humanity more than the individual; there must be giving in order to receiving; and for the highest possible objects of our aspiration nothing less than the whole life must be paid.—J.

Vers. 46—52.—*Blind Bartimæus.* Viewed from the side of Christ, the incident may teach—

I. THE OPENING OF THE EYES OF THE BLIND IS THE MISSION OF CHRISTIANITY. If the physical boon be great, let it express for us the far greater spiritual boon. Ignorance is painfully felt by large numbers. Few who have not received a good education but bitterly feel the lack at some period or other of their life. In spreading knowledge freely we follow the example of Christ.

II. THE MISSION OF CHRISTIANITY IS PECULIARLY TO THE LOWLY AND THE MEAN. It is easier to be kind to our inferiors than to avoid jealousy among our equals. The gifts that bless both giver and receiver the most are worth much, though they cost little. From the side of Bartimæus we may reflect—

III. LONG SITTING IN DARKNESS MAY PREPARE FOR THE WELCOMING OF THE LIGHT. Yet in the darkness the lamp of hope may be kept burning, as did Bartimæus. "In our griefs we find reliefs." As every night gives place to morning, so the very constitution of nature prophesies the deliverance of mankind and of the individual. The memories of the dark hours of life mingle with attained joys. Life would not have its full significance without these mingled threads in the texture.

IV. PERSEVERANCE IS EVER REWARDED. Faith proves itself by constancy, and is in fact the perseverance of the whole man towards his hope, the realization of his life in God. In the change of events, things will change for the better to him who endures. "All things come round to him who waits." "Yet a little while, and he who is on the way shall come." The tarrying of God is in our imagination. To gain one sight, to see God and the world in God,—this compensates for an age of waiting and watching, suffering and toil of the spirit.—J.

Vers. 2—12. Parallel passage: Matt. xix. 3—12.—*Doctrine of divorce.* I. EVENTS IN THE INTERVAL. There is a gap in the narrative of St. Mark between the events of the preceding and present chapter. We need not do more than intimate them, and that for the continuity of the history. They are the following:—1. His *journey* to Jerusalem on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles. 2. Occurrences by the way: (1) Inhospitality of certain Samaritan villages; (2) rebuke of the "Sons of Thunder" by the Saviour; (3) journey continued through Samaria rather than Peræa; (4) cleansing of the ten lepers as he passed through Samaria. 3. The sending out of the seventy, and its similarity to the previous mission of the twelve. 4. *Presence and preaching* at the Feast of Tabernacles. 5. Various discourses during that feast, as recorded in the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and escape from a murderous assault. 6. Ministrations in Judæa, recorded in part by St. Luke (x.—xiii.) and partly by St. John (ix.—xi.), including the following:—(1) Instruction of a lawyer, explanation of "neighbourhood," and parable of the good Samaritan; (2) hospitality of the family of Bethany, disciples taught to pray, and return of the seventy; (3) cure of a man born blind, our Lord's comparison of himself to the Good Shepherd, celebration of the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem, retirement to Bethabara beyond Jordan, and subsequent raising of Lazarus at Bethany; also his retirement to Ephraim. 7. His *tour through Peræa*, referred to in Matt. xix. 1, 2, and Mark x. 1; his teaching during that tour, recorded by St. Luke (xiii. 22—xviii. 10), including, among other things, (1) the multitudes from all quarters in the kingdom of God, the great feast and generous invitation, also true discipleship; (2) parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and prodigal son; (3) parables of the unjust steward, Dives and Lazarus, importunate widow, the Pharisee and publican.

II. A NEW DEPARTURE. The Pharisees now change their tactics, and adopt a new mode of opposition. They, in fact, make a new departure. The old hostility remains bitter as ever, or perhaps is increasing in intensity, but the manner of its manifestation is new. Up till this period their method of attack consisted in fault-finding—objecting to the conduct of our Lord and his apostles, or taxing them with violations of the Law; henceforth it consists in questioning—captious questioning—for the purpose of eliciting his opinion on doubtful or debatable matters in order to entangle him. The subjects on which his views were sought were those keenly discussed by the Jews of that day, and an answer could scarcely fail to give offence to some party or expose him to peril on some side. The present question was eminently one of this class. It was likely

to entrap him into the charge of lax morality on the one hand, or of want of respect for the authority of Moses on the other; perhaps to embroil him with the tetrarch Herod Antipas, in whose dominions he now was.

III. THE ORIGINAL MARRIAGE LAW. In the days of our Lord one of the burning questions was the law of divorce. The school of Shammai limited the law of divorce, and allowed it only in the case of adultery; that of Hillel affirmed its legitimacy in case of dislike, or disobedience, or incompatibility in general, thus granting an arbitrary or discretionary power in the matter. The ground of the controversy is found in a difficult or obscure expression in Deut. xxiv. 1, 2, where we read, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found *some uncleanness* in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." The difficulty or obscurity of this passage arises from the original words *ervath davar*, rendered "some uncleanness" in the text of our version, and in the margin, "matter of nakedness," or more exactly still, "nakedness of word or matter." The important point to be determined, and that which produced such diversity of opinion in its determination, was whether the expression referred to meant lewdness or merely something disagreeable.

IV. NATURE OF THE BILL OF DIVORCEMENT. The bill of divorcement was called "a writing of cutting off" (*sepher kerithuth*). This bill or writing of divorcement implied, not only a mere separation from bed and board, as some restrict it, but a complete severance of the marriage tie. It was a certificate of repudiation, and either stated or omitted the cause of such repudiation. If the cause was adultery or a suspicion of adultery, the husband might prove himself (δίκαιος) *just* (*vide* Matt. i. 19), that is, a strict observer of the Law in dismissing the guilty wife with a bill of divorcement; and yet, not wishing to expose her, he might send her away privately. If, however, the guilty person or the suspected person were brought openly to justice, and the crime proved, certain death was the penalty, as is distinctly stated in Lev. xx. 10, "The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Most commonly, therefore, when a bill of divorcement was resorted to in accordance with the Mosaic permission, it was for some less cause or minor offence than conjugal infidelity; and in such cases it served the wife as a certificate of character.

V. REASON OF THIS WRITING. Our Lord, in his reply, proceeds to the original marriage law; first, however, accounting for the Mosaic regulation referred to. That regulation is regarded by many as a *relaxation* of the Law; but it can scarcely be viewed in that light, because it would thus appear to be a lowering of the standard in favour of wrong-doing. It was rather a *remedy* for harsh treatment of wives, resulting from violations of the Law; it was rather a relief bill for wives who suffered from the unkindness of cruel husbands acting in defiance of the Law. It was a remedial measure to check the bad effects of their hardness of heart; it was to (πρὸς) this the lawgiver had respect. It was, in fact, to minimize the evil results that proceeded from their transgression of the Law rather than any relaxation of the Law itself. Of two evils it was the less, and even the less owed its existence to their hardness of heart. Besides, it was not an express command, as the Pharisees appear to make it from the word ἐνετείλατο in Matthew, but a permissory injunction (ἐπέτρεψε), as subsequently acknowledged by the Pharisees themselves.

VI. ORIGINAL MARRIAGE LAW. The Saviour argues the indissoluble nature of the marriage law from the original unity of male and female, from the extreme closeness of the marriage bond taking precedence of every other union even parental and filial; above all, from its Divine origin. Marriage was thus an ordinance of God; it was instituted in Paradise in those bright and sunny bowers before sin had marred the freshness and the loveliness of the new-created world. Even then God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and accordingly he gave him a help meet for him—one that was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto [literally, *be glued* unto] his wife: and they shall be one flesh." It was an ordinance of God himself, an ordinance nearly coeval with the creation, an ordinance made for man even in his unfallen state of innocence, an ordinance which our blessed Redeemer himself, when in sinless humanity he trod our

earth and tabernacled among our race, honoured with his presence, and at the celebration of which he was graciously pleased to work his first miracle. In Cana of Galilee, at the marriage at which Jesus and his disciples and his mother were present, Jesus made the beginning of his miracles by turning water into wine, manifesting forth his glory, "and his disciples believed on him."

"Living, he own'd no nuptial vow,
No bower to Fancy dear:
Love's very self—for him no need
To nurse, on earth, the heavenly seed:
Yet comfort in his eye we read
For bridal joy and fear."

The conclusion at which he arrives is in keeping with all this—that an institution created by God at first, coeval with our race, and confirmed by so many sanctions, can neither be nullified nor modified by any human enactment, nor set aside by any authority other than his who created it. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

VII. ONE EXCEPTION TAKEN FOR GRANTED. Conjugal infidelity, as it is a violation of the marriage vow, is a virtual dissolution of the marriage relation. This is implied or taken for granted in the passage before us, though it is expressly stated, in the parallel passage of St. Matthew, where it is written, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." With respect to marriage with the divorced wife, there is a great and important diversity of sentiment. This diversity is in a certain way and to some extent connected with the right rendering of the word ἀπολελυμένην in Matt. xix. 9. 1. Some translate it as if it were preceded by τὴν, and so equivalent to "her which is put away," or "*the* divorced woman." Thus it stands in the common English Version, and reference to the woman lawfully divorced, that is, for fornication, is presumed. 2. Others, more accurately, render it "her when she is put away," as it is translated in the Revised Version, the reference being thus to her who is unlawfully divorced, that is, divorced not on the ground of adultery. This view is maintained by Stier and Meyer, the latter confirming it by the fact that "under the Law the punishment of death was attached to adultery, . . . and consequently, under the Law, the marrying of a woman divorced for adultery could never happen." 3. There is, however, another rendering, namely, "a divorced woman," that is, any divorced woman. This is the rendering advocated by Wordsworth, who says, "In no case does our Lord permit a person to marry a woman who has been divorced." This is the view of the matter taken by the Latin Church, which declares marriage with a divorced woman under any circumstances unlawful. The Oriental and most Reformed Churches, on the contrary, hold that, in the excepted case, both husband and wife may contract a fresh marriage. These are the two extreme views; but what of the case of unlawful divorce, that is to say, where the wife has been divorced for some other and less offence than that of adultery, or πορνεία, which is of widest extent, comprehending ante-nuptial as well as post-nuptial unchastity (μοιχεία)? This is the case to which the guilt of subsequent marriage attaches, for it is that in which the marriage bond has not been really ruptured. The delay connected with getting a divorce or after its being granted might give time for better counsels to prevail; second thoughts might be found preferable; angry passion might in the mean time cool down, and reconciliation and reunion be effected.—J. J. G.

Vers. 13—16. Parallel passages: Matt. xix. 13—15; Luke xviii. 15—17.—I. CHILDREN BROUGHT AND BLESSED. 1. *Our Lord's love of children.* Our Lord, when on earth, had no greater favourites than children. He set them in the midst; he laid his hands on them; he blessed them; he invited them to his presence; he welcomed them to his person; he folded them lovingly in his arms. He calls them the lambs of his flock; he provides them suitable spiritual food, and with it he bids us feed them. He represents by them his faithful followers; he reproves his disciples when they would have prevented their access to him. He reminds us all that they are precious in our heavenly Father's sight, preserved by his providence and protected by his power. He assures us, as we have seen, that "their angels do always behold the face of my Father

which is in heaven." 2. *Individual features of the three narratives.* The request of those who brought the little children, as reported by St. Matthew, is not only that the Saviour should touch them, as in St. Mark and St. Luke; but "put his hands on them, and *pray*." In St. Mark, we are told that Jesus not only touched the little children, as requested, but "took them up in his arms." They thus got more than they asked. This is usually the way with Christ; he does more for us than we ask or think. An additional feature of the narrative, as supplied by St. Luke, is that some of these children were of very tender age—mere infants (*βρέφη*).

II. THE CHANGE BY WHICH WE BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN. 1. *A parallel passage.* In St. Matthew's Gospel (xviii. 3) we have a statement exactly corresponding to the fifteenth verse of this tenth chapter of St. Mark, with this difference, however, that the former passage goes further back, bringing us up to the turning-point at which we become as little children. The verse referred to reads thus, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God;" the Revised Version has, "Except ye *turn*, and become as little children, *ye shall in no wise enter into* the kingdom of heaven." This rendering of *οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε* in the last clause brings out the meaning with due emphasis, and is thus more accurate than that of the common version; the substitution of *turn* for *be converted* in the first clause is intended to divest the term of the technical theological sense which some attach to it. The word *στραφῆτε* (second aorist passive) may be translated as a passive, or as a middle, since the aorists passive have often a middle meaning, equivalent to *turn yourselves*, or simply *turn* intransitively, as we have it in the Revised Version. In its application, as shown by the context, it urged those addressed to turn away from their ambitious notions, self-seeking eagerness, and fondness for precedence. The term is general, we readily acknowledge, and denotes a change such as that referred to; but before men are capable of turning from the courses indicated, and of exhibiting the characteristics of little children, they must have become the subjects of a special and greater change, of which that immediately referred to is a manifestation. We may read the statement of St. Mark, that "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein," or, as it is more accurately rendered in the Revised Version, "he shall in *no wise enter* therein," in the light which St. Matthew's statement sheds on it. 2. *Divine agency.* We have seen that the word in the closely corresponding text is limited by some, and may indeed be limited, to its literal sense, and understood of a turning away from such high-mindedness as the disciples had displayed on that occasion—a turning away from such haughtiness of spirit as led to the question asked by them, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Others may be disposed to take it in the sense of recovery from backsliding, of a return to the Lord after some wrong step, as a compound form of the same verb is employed (*ἐπιστρέψας*) in the words addressed to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren;" or, as we read it in the Revised Version, "And do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." Others may prefer the wider and more technical sense of conversion. But whatever sense be attached to the one particular term, a change effected by Divine agency must be presupposed; otherwise the changes implied in the lower sense cannot be rightly accomplished, nor the characteristics of childhood fully attained. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein," is the statement of St. Mark, and suggests the inquiry—What is it to receive the kingdom of God? Now, to take the simplest and plainest view of this matter, to receive the kingdom of God is to receive the gospel of the kingdom; and to receive the gospel of the kingdom is to receive him who is the Subject of that gospel, and the Sovereign of that kingdom—the Christian's King and Head; and to receive him, again, is the turning-point in a man's spiritual history, the greatest and most important event of his whole life. This reception of the Saviour implies faith of the operation of God—faith, which is God's gift and the Spirit's work in the heart. Wherever faith exists, even as a grain of mustard seed, Christ is formed in the heart. It matters little what name is given to this change, whether we call it "the new birth," or "regeneration," or "conversion;" to be subjects of it is the great thing, for it is the principle of all right action, and the prolific source of all Christian graces and of all truly virtuous conduct. 3. *Statement of a difference.* We may notice a difference which will help to a clearer apprehension of

the change in question. Conversion is akin to regeneration; it is most nearly similar, and cannot be separated from it, and yet it is not quite the same thing. Regeneration implants a new principle in the soul; conversion is the practical putting forth of that principle. Regeneration imparts new life to the soul; conversion is the exercise of that life. Regeneration bestows new power; conversion is the manifestation of that power. For sake of illustration, let us suppose a man dead and buried. Regeneration may be compared to life entering into the sepulchre, opening the eyes that death had sealed, giving back the healthy colour to the cheeks and causing the vital fluid once more to circulate through all the frame; conversion may be represented by the same man, after being thus reanimated, exerting the power of life which he has just received, rising up from among the dead, coming forth from the tomb, and entering on the various duties and activities of life. Conversion and regeneration are thus so closely linked together as cause and effect that they often stand for one another. 4. *Human instrumentality.* Here, too, the power of God and the work of man unite; Divine agency and human instrumentality combine. The hand of man may roll away the stone and remove the grave-clothes, as in the case of Lazarus; but nothing short of the power of God can resuscitate the buried corpse, or speak the dead to life. So, also, it is when the dead in trespasses and sins are quickened. By the instrumentality of man, the stone that stops the mouth of the sepulchre may be taken away and the grave-clothes unbound; but nothing less than "the working of God's mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead," can make any one of us alive through Christ Jesus. We may preach and pray, and it is our duty to combine both, and our privilege to engage in either; but the power that raises the dead to life is the power, and not only the power, but the mighty power of God. The prophet of old acknowledged this, for after he had prophesied to the dry bones in the valley of vision, he followed up his prophesying by prayer, saying, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." The psalmist felt the same when he said, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." The apostle was of the same mind when he wrote, "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved)." 5. *The means employed, and the manner in which the change is effected.* God treats us as reasonable beings; he makes his appeal to the faculties with which he has endowed us. He addresses us as his intelligent creatures, and challenges us to inquiry, saying, "Judge ye what I say." He speaks to us in his Word and by his ambassadors, and even entreats us to be reconciled to God. He bestows his Spirit, for without the agency of that Spirit all the rest would be but as the rolling away of the stone and the unbinding of the grave-clothes already spoken of. 6. *The nature of the change.* After the creation of the heavens and the earth, the first work of God was light. God said, "Let there be light." In the change in question, which, for convenience' sake, we may call conversion, the first work is also *light;* he enlightens our understanding in the knowledge of Christ. God's Word, indeed, is light, "a light to our feet;" but while we are unconverted there are scales on our eyes, and if we see at all, it is only "men like trees, walking." The Spirit takes away the scales; and we see the suitability and sufficiency of the Saviour, the completeness of his work, the fulness of his offices, the freeness of his mercy, the riches of his grace, the length and breadth and depth and height of his love; we see also our sins in the light of his sufferings, and his sufferings endured for and expiating our sins. This is not all; it is not enough to have light in the head. There is often natural light, intellectual light, the light of science, even the light of theological speculation or doctrine or controversy; but such light by itself never brought any soul to the Saviour. Of such light we may say, it is the light of the moon shining on an iceberg away in a frozen sea; it is the nocturnal light of twinkling stars, as they sparkle in the firmament, and shed their flickering radiance on some far-off mountain capped with snow. In this gracious change there is an additional element. With light in the head it combines love in the heart. Like light and heat from the same fire, they go hand in hand. The heart follows the head, and they act and react upon each other. The will obeys the understanding, and the affections go along with both. The subject of this blessed change can say with one of old, "Whereas I was blind, now I see;" but he goes further, and can say with the apostle, "The love of God has been shed

abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us." The regenerate soul can say, "I know whom I have believed;" but it stops not there; it adds, "Whom having not seen, I love." Conversion, if we may use the term in its popular sense, is the love of Christ constraining us; it is the Word of Christ instructing us; it is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" it is the work of Christ renewing us; it is the Spirit of Christ enlightening us; it is the life of Christ imparted to us—"because I live, ye shall live also;" it is the love of him "who first loved us, and gave himself for us." This love expels the enmity of the carnal mind, gives a new bent to the will and a new bias to the feelings; it lays hold of the affections, and influences all the energies of our being, operating at once on the faculties of the mind and the members of the body. It is God making us willing, as well as welcome, to be his people in the day of his power.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDHOOD. 1. *Infant salvation.* When it is said that "of such [that is, children] is the kingdom of God," it may mean children *literally;* and so many understand it, and refer kingdom to the state of future blessedness, maintaining that, as the majority of mankind die in infancy, and as they are redeemed, children will constitute the majority of the saved. But there is another interpretation, which understands children *spiritually*, that is, those who resemble children in character; thus St. Paul says, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." While we are fully persuaded that all children dying in infancy are saved because of the superabundant grace of God in Christ Jesus, we are far from supposing that regeneration is not necessary in case of children as well as of others. Indeed, the Word of God proves it indispensable; for thus says the psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;" and again, "We go astray as soon as we be born, speaking lies;" and further, the Prophet Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray." It thus becomes our duty to seek, by all available means, to bring children to Christ the Good Shepherd, who carries the lambs in his bosom, that he may bless them and make them members of his flock. There are, however, several characteristics of children which serve well to illustrate the character and conduct of God's spiritual children. 2. *The first characteristic is humility.* When converted to God, we become like little children in humility. Pride is the ruin of our race; we trace it back to Paradise. Satan introduced it there. It was the great inducement with our first parents that they should be "as gods, knowing good and evil." We mark its dark waters along the stream of time from then till now. It was a fruitful source of disaster to King David. In the pride of his heart he numbered the people, and the dreadfully calamitous choice was allowed him to elect between seven years' famine, three months' war, or three days' pestilence. Another instance occurs in the case of Naaman, commander-in-chief of the host of Syria. Leprous as he was, and consequently miserable as he must have been, he felt his pride wounded when the prophet directed him to wash seven times in Jordan; he turned away in a rage, saying, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Come we to New Testament times, we have another still more awful instance of pride and its punishment. Herod sat upon his kingly throne; he made an oration—a king's speech, and more eloquent, no doubt, than royal speeches generally are; at all events, the people were in raptures with him and it, so that they shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." He was arrayed in royal robes; he was proud of his pomp, of his power, and of his popularity. But the angel of the Lord smote him; "he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." The same evil propensity of fallen humanity finds thousands and tens of thousands of living exemplifications in those whom the Scripture calls "proud boasters," "heady, high-minded," and classes with the vilest and the worst. On the contrary, the first evidence of conversion to God is humility. The child of a prince will, if permitted, amuse itself with the child of a peasant. As they sport together there is no distinction of riches or of rank; they meet together on the same common level; they stand on the same footing of equality. We are not universal levellers; we would not do away with the distinctions of rank that exist, and perhaps must exist. We find in the membership of the human body some members discharging honourable functions, others functions less so. We find in the heavenly hierarchy various grades—thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers. But we would willingly do away with, and

Christianity tends to do away with, that proud spirit that sets up castes and opposes class to class, preventing that cordial sympathy that should ever bind together all the many members in the great family of man. Why should we be proud? What are we proud of? Is it of our bodies? They are "fearfully and wonderfully made," yet dust they are, and unto dust they must return. Is it of our souls? God "breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Is it of what we are? We are only creatures of a day, and our foundation is in the dust. Is it of what we have? We have nothing, be it worldly wealth, or intellectual endowment, or physical superiority, or spiritual grace,—nothing that we have not received. We are pensioners on the Divine bounty, daily recipients of the Divine favour, almoners on the liberality of God. Most of us have read the Rev. Legh Richmond's little book entitled 'The Dairyman's Daughter,' and the text which by the blessing of God became the means of converting that once poor, proud girl. That text was, "Be ye clothed with humility" (ἐγκομβώσασθε: literally, "wrap tight round you your humility," in allusion to Christ girding himself with a towel to wash his disciples' feet), and by its application to her heart she was led to feel her own emptiness and Christ's fulness. Next to the robe of Christ's righteousness, and inseparably connected with it, is this garment of humility which distinguishes every converted soul, which every child of God puts on, and which every Christian wears. Of all the many promises of Scripture, not one is made to the proud. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble;" "The humble and the contrite heart the Lord will not despise." 3. *A second characteristic is teachableness.* Christ was "meek and lowly in heart." He invites us to learn of him. Most children are docile; at all events, childhood and youth are the seasons for learning. Though there is no age however advanced at which we should not be learners, and no stage of progress at which we shall not have still much to learn—for here "we only see through a glass, darkly"—yet there is truth in the trite old proverb, "Learn young, learn well." The Christian, by his very profession and by his practice, when truly converted to God, is a disciple; and what is that but a learner, a scholar in the school of Christ? There are three teachers in this school—the Word of God, the providence of God, and the Spirit of God. The entrance in of that *Word* giveth light; it makes "wise unto salvation." Every time we hear it preached, or peruse it prayerfully and thoughtfully, the light is brightened and increased. It is our privilege, and should be our pleasure, to study that Word daily and diligently, dutifully and devoutly. If it were only a single text meditated on each day, it would result in spiritual blessing. We are to search this Word. There is a treasure in it, and we are to dig for that treasure—a pearl of great price, and we are to seek for that pearl, and, if needs be, part with everything else rather than miss it. That treasure is Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." That pearl is Christ—a pearl of exceeding price. There are shallows in this Word where a child may wade, and depths which no human line can fathom. "Search the Scriptures," said our Lord; "for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." The *providence* of God teaches us in many ways and furnishes many lessons. We need grace to mark those lessons and follow the leadings of that providence, and in this way the most afflictive dispensations are productive of good, so that there is occasion to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." The *Spirit* of God is the great Teacher, he leads us into all truth, he takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, he convinces us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Let us pray for childlike docility of spirit; let us come to the three teachers we have named, and hear what God the Lord will say to our souls. 4. *A third characteristic is trustfulness.* Children are proverbially confiding. When we pass from the years of childhood we become wary—too wary; cautious—often far too cautious, though never too circumspect. Let a parent make a promise to his child; that child never questions his father's word, he never doubts his father's ability to perform his promise, he never suspects his father's willingness to make good what he has said. Would that we all acted thus towards our heavenly Father! Would that we all took him in this childlike manner and with this childlike trustfulness at his word! Would that we all sought the Spirit of adoption, by which we could look up and say, "Our Father in heaven," and inward and say, "Abba, Father," and outward and around saying, "All things work together for good to them that love God,"—the beautiful things of earth and sea and sky are mine, for my Father made them all. In the 'Life of Sir

Henry Havelock,' one is amused with a remarkable example of childlike confidence on the part of his son which is recorded therein. Sir Henry had had occasion to call at a public office on business. He left his son at the door to wait for him outside. The father, after despatching the business in hand, passed out of the office by another way, in total forgetfulness of his son and of the appointment made with him. The boy, however, had such perfect confidence in his father's promise and usual punctuality, that he waited, and waited, and continued waiting all the day long, till the shades of evening were gathering. By that time something had occurred to remind Sir Henry of his son, when, going immediately to the place, he found him on the spot where he had left him in the morning. God has given us his sure Word of prophecy and promise; he bids us wait, and that prophecy will be fulfilled and that promise performed. An earthly parent may fail or forget; God never forgets his promise, nor fails to perform it to his people. He is never slack concerning his promise; at the time appointed it shall come, and not tarry. It is ours to wait and watch and work, "for the day of redemption draweth nigh." It is ours to exercise filial trust and childlike confidence in our heavenly Father, who "is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." 5. *A fourth characteristic.* Another characteristic is simplicity. We do not mean that a child of God must be a simpleton; quite the opposite. We are to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Now, by Christian simplicity we understand guilelessness and harmlessness. We take it to denote singleness of heart, of tongue, and of eye; it becomes the Christian, it glorifies God and impresses man. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God hath ordained strength." The children in the temple proclaimed, "Hosanna in the highest!" Once in a stage-coach, as we have read, a little interesting girl five years old was sitting beside her mother. A gentleman was paying attention to the child. After a time, turning her full blue eyes upon him, with childlike lovingness and in her own simple accents, she said, "You love God?" The gentleman passed the child's question off as best he could. The coach reached the place of destination, the journey ended. But still the words of that child haunted him. The question she asked was new to him; he had never thought of it before. He never rested till, by the grace of God, he was able to answer it by felt experience. Time rolled on. A few years after, as he passed through the streets of a town, he saw the mother of that little child at a window, in weeds of mourning. He called to inquire for his favourite, but she was gone; God had taken her home to glory, and to be for ever with himself.

IV. CONSEQUENCES. 1. *Contrast.* Over the entrance to Plato's famous academy at Athens was written the sentence, "Let no one enter here who does not possess a knowledge of geometry." Over the gate of heaven is written, not the proud maxim of the philosopher, but this plain statement, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." 2. *What is implied in exclusion.* Not to enter heaven, in other words, exclusion from heaven, implies the absence of holiness, of hope, and of happiness. It is never to see the King in his beauty, never to see the land that is afar off, never to enjoy peace, never to enter into rest, never to meet God in mercy, never to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and never to join the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn which are written in heaven. Still more, exclusion shuts out from wearing the crown and occupying the throne, from tenanting the mansion, and tuning the harp, and swelling the anthem of "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Not to enter heaven is to be excluded from the holy presence, from the blessed fellowship of patriarchs and prophets and apostles and martyrs and confessors; to be shut out from the life and light and love of the upper sanctuary; to be shut up with the devil and the damned, with lost spirits, with devouring fire and everlasting burnings; to be doomed to "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth," and to dwell for ever in that prison-house of hell, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."—J. J. G.

Vers. 17—31. Parallel passages: Matt. xix. 16—30; Luke xviii. 18—30.—1. *The rich young ruler's great refusal.* I. HIS APPLICATION. 1. *The position of this man.* We have in this section a most interesting narrative. The subject of it was a *young* man, in the bright and beautiful prime of life, as St. Matthew tells

us; a *ruler* of the synagogue, as St. Luke informs us; an exceedingly *rich* man, as all three synoptists relate; for St. Luke tells us he was *very rich*, and St. Matthew and St. Mark that he had *great* possessions. Besides this, he was an exceedingly interesting person—frank, sincere, amiable; he thus possessed many winning and endearing qualities. Nor was this all; he was outwardly moral, outwardly observant of God's Law, and so not far from the kingdom of heaven. 2. *His mode of approaching the Saviour.* His approach was all that could be desired. It was marked by thorough earnestness and sincerity. Our Lord was *going forth* into the way, or on his way—starting, it would seem, on his last journey from Peræa beyond Jordan to Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha and Lazarus. This young ruler, in breathless haste, lest he should miss his opportunity before the Saviour departed, came running up and fell on his knees before him. The manner, too, in which he put his question was highly respectful, and even reverential, as appears from the words with which he addressed him. By the title "Good Master" he acknowledged his authority as a teacher, and his kindness of heart, having just witnessed the graciousness and benevolence with which he had received the little children and folded them in his arms. Our Lord appears to reprove him in a gentle way on the ground of this title, and especially to reject the term "good," thus applied to him; he apparently refuses to accept it as a mere conventional expression, flippantly and thoughtlessly applied. But, on examining the subject more closely, it will be evident that our Lord wished to elevate the young ruler's notion about himself as the Messiah, and raise his thoughts to God. He wished to give this young man a hint that he was more than an ordinary teacher in Israel, that he was more than a mere teacher possessing great excellence of character and goodness of heart; that he was a Teacher sent from God, and therefore invested with highest authority, and holding a Divine commission—yea, and himself Divine. To this end he requires the ruler to reflect on what ground he applied the term "good," reminding him that there was no one absolutely good save God, and implying the inconsistency of his position, and the unwarrantableness of his calling him "good" when he did not regard him as Divine. Our Lord intimates, obscurely indeed, that, while rejecting the term in the sense in which the ruler meant it, as a mere complimentary one paid to a rabbi of eminence, and regarding it as inapplicable from that standpoint, he can only accept it in conjunction with the One alone who is good, that is, God. But, as the ruler did not apply it in that sense, our Lord takes occasion to lift up his thoughts to the only One absolutely good; as though he said, "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good;" and, "Why callest thou me good?" and, Why inquirest about the good from any mere human teacher whose goodness of head and heart, however great, is necessarily defective? Why not go at once to the One who is alone truly and absolutely good, and the Fountain-head of all goodness, and whose will is the rule and standard of what is good; while the revelation of his mind on the subject is made known in the commandments? 3. *His motive in coming.* With all this young man's advantages he felt his need of something better; he had cravings for something higher. His wealth, with all the facilities it afforded, and all the profits it implied, and all the pleasures it procured, did not satisfy his desires or supply his spiritual needs. His longings for something better than earth or sense could furnish remained unappeased; there was still a void within which the world could not fill; he felt irrepressible yearnings for immortality. He had heard the promise of a kingdom made to the little children who believed, or rather to all who possessed their childlike spirit. He had himself come recently into the inheritance of much wealth and great possessions, and thus he is prompted to ask the question very natural under the circumstances, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He was alive to the worth of his soul; he felt the paramount importance of eternal life. His question, therefore, was not prompted by mere curiosity, neither was it a cold or careless inquiry; it was a downright earnest one; it was a matter of life or death with him.

II. HIS SELF-SUFFICIENT INQUIRY. 1. *Nature of the inquiry.* The inquiry is that recorded by St. Matthew, "What lack I yet?" to which the answer of our Lord is that recorded by St. Mark in the words, "One thing thou lackest." We must first consider the question itself. This was a second question; the first was, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" and contained the very essence of Pharisaism, which

made religion consist in *doing*—scrupulously adhering to outward rules of conduct. This young man's error was that of the better part of his nation; for "Israel, which followed after the Law of righteousness, did not attain to the Law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the Law." 2. *His Pharisaism.* This young man's first inquiry shows that he expected to entitle himself to eternal life by doing many great things, or some special good thing, as the question in St. Matthew's Gospel is, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" To this our Lord replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." By this reply he meant to convince him (1) that "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his (God's) sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin;" and (2) to bring him to the conclusion that "the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." 3. *His surprise.* The young ruler was somewhat surprised at the commonplace nature of the answer, and, lest he had misheard or misapprehended it, he proceeds to inquire further, "Which" or, more accurately, "What kind of commandments?" He evidently expected that some new commandment would be announced by the great Teacher, or that some recondite rule of the oral Law would be set forth, or that certain minute ceremonial regulations would be made known to him. But no; the plainest, simplest, broadest commandments of the Decalogue were repeated in his hearing. The thing appears at first sight so plain, the direction so very trite, and the answers so commonplace, that the ruler, half puzzled by this very plainness, and surprised at the simplicity of the instruction of One whom he regarded as a distinguished public teacher, if not something more, exclaims in amazement,—Of what kind? Which commandments do you mean? Is it those ten uttered in an audible voice on Sinai, amid thunderings and lightnings, and other circumstances of splendour and solemnity? Is it those ten that were delivered to our nation amid scenes of such unparalleled publicity as well as grandeur? Is it those ten *words*, as they are beautifully called in the original, which are now hoary with the antiquity of long years gone by, which claim the respect of the whole Hebrew commonwealth, and to which every respectable member of the community renders an outward obedience? Is it those ten commandments to which your direction refers—commandments with which compliance is enforced even by an earthly judge, and transgression of which is visited with penalties by the common law? 4. *Our Lord's repetition of the commandments.* In reply to this further inquiry of the young ruler, our Lord specifies the commandments of the second table in the following order, according to St. Mark:—the seventh, sixth, eighth, ninth, tenth, and fifth. The expression "Defraud not" is taken by some (1) as a repetition of the eighth; (2) by others as a summary of the four commandments that preceded, or of the fifth that succeeded and that by way of anticipation; or (3) it is a peculiar form of the tenth, which we regard as the most natural and correct opinion. These commandments he quoted from the second table as the most obvious; appending a general principle which embraced all these commandments, and summarily comprehended the whole of the second table of the Law. That principle was love—love to brother man, and a love required to be equal in intensity and extent to the love of self, as it is added, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." 5. *Our Lord's object in this.* He saw that this in many respects estimable young man depended on his works for eternal life, and he reminded him that he must in that case keep the commandments, and keep them perfectly. The Saviour meant to show him that such had not been the case. He meant to show him that he was a sinner, and as such needed a Saviour; he meant to show him that, as far as the Law is concerned, every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Even if a man from a certain point—an early period in life—kept all the requirements of God's Law at all times and in all ways, what would atone for previous sins or remove original guilt? 6. *The Law a schoolmaster.* He meant to show him that he had "sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" that, as a matter of fact, he had been very far from attaining to universal, perfect, and constant obedience; that, in the absence of such obedience, all were concluded under sin, and that there was no exception. In this manner usually the way is prepared: the filthy rags of self-righteousness are torn off; men are led to abandon their own righteousness as a ground of pardon and acceptance before God, and to rest upon

a better righteousness, even that "everlasting righteousness," which Daniel and others of the prophets long years before had predicted as to be wrought out and brought in by Messiah. Such was probably the import of that instructive symbolic transaction, of which we read in the third chapter of Zechariah, when the filthy garments were taken away from Joshua the high priest; and when a fair mitre was set upon his head, and he was clothed with change of garments, as it is there written: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Such is the significance of the contrast between the righteousness of the Law and the righteousness of faith in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. . . . If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." 7. *True obedience inward and spiritual.* When the young man had heard our Lord's answer he looked upon the whole matter as a very simple thing, and possibly stood higher in his own estimation than he had done before, if that were possible. He seemed to say, If these be the commandments which you include in your direction, and if these be all, then have I obeyed them—every one of them—from my youth up, nay, from childhood till the present hour; they have been the rule of my life. Is there anything still wanting? Have you any new commandment to add? Is there anything needed to supplement those which I long since learnt from the Law, and to which I have duly conformed from the earliest dawn of reason? And though you have overlooked the traditions of the elders, I have neither forgotten them nor neglected them, but observed them most punctiliously. What then remains? What lack I yet? Ah, how little this young man knew of his own heart! how little of the spirituality of God's Law! how little of the exceeding broadness of the commandment! In the Law of God, as in the love of God, there are a length and breadth and depth and height to which this ruler was entirely a stranger. He had not, we are sure, been one of the audience when our Lord preached his sermon on the mount; or, if he had, he must have failed entirely to comprehend the explanation of the Law as contained in that sermon. At all events, he remained apparently ignorant that the Law in its requirements extends to the heart as well as to the life; to the principles as well as to the practice; to the feelings as well as to the facts; to the internal passions as well as to the external acts; to the inmost thoughts as well as the outward deeds. This young man had, we doubt not, maintained an unblemished character before the eyes of men; he had been guiltless of such sins as are public and common in the world, and free from all notorious vices; he had kept the Law in the letter and as prohibiting outward acts of sin; for the Saviour does not call his assertion in question. Besides, had he not been a young man of blameless conduct as well as of promising talents, he could not have attained, and at an early age, his honourable position as one of the rulers of a local synagogue, or perhaps a member of the Sanhedrin, or great council of the nation. 8. *The young man's deficiency in his own department of morals.* "What lack I yet?" may be taken as a boast rather than a question for information or an inquiry about future duty. He lacked much, we are sure, even on the low ground of morality; for taking the Law in its spiritual sense, and as Christ expounded it, he had no doubt offended at many times and in many ways; "for in many things we offend all." Instead of the self-righteous, self-sufficient assertion, "all these have I kept from my youth up," had he looked inward he might, nay, he would, have found reason to say, "All these have I broken;" for we have it on the authority of God's own Word, that "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually." The first commandment which our Lord specified, according to the common order as given by St. Matthew, is, "Thou shalt do no murder." The young ruler judged himself guiltless of any breach of this commandment, because his hands had been free from blood. He forgot that blood-guiltiness attaches to the heart as well as to the hand, to the tongue as well as to the arm that wields the deadly weapon. The teeth, as we learn from the fifty-seventh psalm, may be murderous as "spears and arrows;" and the tongue may wound as mortally as "a sharp sword;" while "out of the heart," as our Lord himself has declared, "proceed murders." "All these have I kept from my youth up." And hast thou never, O young man, been

angry with thy brother without a cause—when no real offence was offered and no insult intended? Hast thou never indulged the angry feeling till it formed itself in the contemptuous expression? Hast thou never said to thy brother, "Raca?" Hast thou never permitted thine anger to proceed still further, till it vented itself in terms of deepest guilt? Hast thou never said to thy brother, "Thou fool"? If so—if thy heart be thus pure, thy tongue innocent, and thy hand without stain of thy brother's blood—then in regard to this commandment thou mayest say, "What lack I yet?" But we may take one other example. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." This is another requirement of God's Law, and another branch of duty towards man. Here the young ruler again declares his innocence: "This also have I kept." Here again we must take him to task and catechize him. Is it, O young man, the external act merely of which you plead not guilty, or do you include what God's Law includes, the impure thought and the wanton imagination? Do you include the secret desire of the heart, the lascivious look of the eye, and the indelicate utterance of the lips? Or have you never read of "eyes full of adultery," of evil concupiscence, and of filthy communication proceeding out of the mouth? Have you never listened to or taken part in the lewd song, or the foul anecdote, or the equivocal innuendo, or the expression of double meaning? Have you ever regarded the vengeance of Heaven as due to every wanton affection, and every unchaste desire, and every roving glance, and every lustful look, and every lascivious gesture, and every impure word? Has your observance of this requirement always been thus severe, strict, and spiritual? If so, then mayest thou say with regard to this commandment also, "What lack I yet?" 9. *The Scripture standard of morality.* Oh, how exceeding broad and deep, pure and spiritual, are the commandments of an infinitely pure and holy God! In his sight the bright and beautiful sky above us is not pure, and in his presence the angels themselves—those pure spirits whose nature is like fiery flame, and who minister the high behests of the Eternal—are not unimpeachable with folly. Morality of outward action is highly commendable, and may pass current in sight of men like ourselves; but who can boast of his obedience, inward as well as outward, to all God's commandments, in the sight of that God whom the prophet in vision saw sitting on a throne high and lifted up, before whom holy seraphic intelligences veiled their faces in deepest homage and holiest reverence, while the burden of those seraphim's song was a just acknowledgment of his infinite holiness, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory"? Who, in the sight of that God who "searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts," can, like this young ruler, ask proudly, or even boastfully, "What lack I yet?"

III. His IMPERFECTION PROVED. 1. *The great defect.* "One thing thou lackest" was our Lord's declaration. But that one thing was the most important, the most needful, and the most indispensable of all. He was outwardly moral, but a stranger to spiritual religion; he had a form of godliness, but wanted the power. The one thing he lacked was love, and love which manifests itself in entire self-surrender to God and in self-denial for man. After our Lord had reminded him of the commandments and of the duties required by God's Law, he stated a general principle that included them all, saying, as St. Matthew records it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In fact, the whole Law, including the commandments of both tables, is fulfilled in that one word "love"—love to God and love to man; for "love is the fulfilling of the Law." And now he brings the principle just stated to a practical test, and puts the young ruler to the proof. "One thing thou lackest"—one thing, without which no obedience can be really beautiful before men or truly acceptable to God; one thing, without which obedience is neither real nor reliable, neither permanent nor performed consistently and efficiently; one thing, without which obedience is merely mechanical, and nothing more than a whitening of the outside of the sepulchre, while the inside is dead men's bones and all uncleanness. That one thing was the principle of love, which is the moving spring of all gospel obedience. This principle of love is the great impulse to all genuine morality; it is the essential element in all holiness. By this principle our Lord tested the young ruler, and in this practical way,—You profess entire obedience to God's Law; now, the sum and substance of that law is love—love to God and love to man, and this love must be supreme. You must love the Lord your God with all your mind, and soul, and strength, and heart; and your fellow-man as yourself. Go,

then, and act out that great principle by selling all that you have, and distributing it to relieve the necessities of your poorer brethren of mankind, and to maintain and promote the service of God. The test was found too severe for the young man's morality; his love was more of outward observance than of spiritual obedience, more of profession than of practice, more of the lip than of the life. He was not prepared to subordinate all, to surrender all, to sacrifice all, and to suffer all, if necessary, in fulfilment of that Law, the whole of which is contained in that one word "love." This one thing he lacked; weighed in the balance, he was found wanting. He needed another to fulfil the Law in his stead; he required a better righteousness than his own.

IV. APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT. 1. *In relation to the irreligious.* Men may have fame and fortune; they may have intellectual endowments and worldly wealth; they may have every earthly comfort and convenience; they may have kind friends, happy homes, and pleasant family relations; they may have all that heart can wish. But, if they want religion, then they lack the one thing that can make men truly prosperous—blessed in time and happy through eternity. 2. *With respect to the amiable, and persons possessing certain good qualities.* Persons may be amiable; they may be frank and affable and obliging; they may be generous and liberal, hospitable and kind-hearted; they may be upright in their dealings, and honourable in all the business of life; they may have strong natural affection in their various relationships, as sons or husbands or parents;—they may be all this, and have all these good natural qualities, without either possessing or professing religion. We may admire and even love them for their amiability and other natural excellences, for men differ widely by nature as well as by grace; but, wanting religion, one thing they lack, and that one thing is the one thing needful. 3. *In regard to professors of religion.* Men may profess themselves to be on the Lord's side; they may be hearers and readers and students of God's Word; they may by study make themselves acquainted with its precious truths—its doctrines and duties, its precepts and promises, its entreaties and exhortations, its warnings and reproofs; they may have respect for the Scriptures, for the sabbath, for the sanctuary, and its services; they may unite with God's people in prayer, in praise, in the sacraments, and in other exercises of religion;—and after all this, and notwithstanding all this, their heart may not be right toward God; one thing they lack, and, continuing to lack it, they must perish in the end. Oh, how dreadful to think of such having their lot at last with the openly irreligious, the profligate, and the profane! And how such will gloat over those professors of religion when they descend to the abode of the lost, and exultingly say, "Are you also become as we? Are you become like unto us?" You, who professed religion, who offered prayers, and sang praises, and piqued yourselves on your superiority to profligates like us; you, who did so much and went so far,—are you become our comrades in misery, our companions in distress? Oh, we may imagine the fiendish glee with which false or fallen professors shall be jeered, when they sink down into partnership with the utterly abandoned in the place of destruction and the region of despair! 4. *With reference to ourselves, and to avoid self-deception.* The young ruler was practising self-deception, without knowing it. He did not know his deficiency till the Saviour brought him to the severe practical proof before us. Here is a salutary lesson and a solemn warning to beware of deception in our estimate of ourselves. We too, even we, may be resting on a morality that is hollow and defective; we may fancy ourselves religious, while our heart is not right toward God, and has no real love to man. We may mistake enthusiasm, or the excitement of the occasion, or the power of sympathy, especially in times of revival, for love to Christ and his cause. We may enrol our names among the followers of the Lamb, and profess our readiness to follow him whithersoever he leadeth, through evil report and good report; we may worship with a degree of devoutness in the sanctuary, partake of the sacraments, wear the so-called "livery of religion," and practise strict outward morality. All this is right and proper, all this we should do; and yet, notwithstanding all this, we may not possess supreme love of the Saviour; and so this one thing we lack, and thus are destitute of the chief thing, the main thing, the one thing most essentially needful, and absolutely indispensable to our present and everlasting well-being. 5. *How we are undeceived.* We may be ignorant of our deficiency till the Saviour calls us to self-renunciation in some form or other; till he summons us to surrender some besetting sin or mortify some beloved lust—to cut off a right hand or a right foot

or pluck out a right eye; to take up our cross in some way and follow him. He may require us to contribute more liberally to the claims of his religion, to give more largely to his cause, to work more vigorously as well as pray more earnestly for the extension of his kingdom; or, it may be, he demands a more unreserved consecration of our time, or talents, or influence, or example, or eloquence, or wealth, or whatever else we have to give and can give. Our refusal or reluctance to comply in any of the cases supposed, proves that one thing we lack, and the lack of it proves the entire absence or imperfection of that love which is the basis of duty and the principle of religion. 6. *Evidence of our possessing that love which works by faith.* If we have true love to the Lord Jesus, our surrender to his service will be complete; we shall give on all proper occasions and in due proportion to his cause; we shall, in a word, do and dare, and even die, if needs be, for his sake. We shall put in practice that principle of self-sacrificing love which our Lord requires, and which is ready to give all and do all and suffer all for him who loved us and gave himself for us. Wherever there is real affection, whether it be to friend or fellow-man or fatherland, that affection may be modified by national character or natural temperament, but it will be sure to manifest itself in some shape and develop itself in some way; it will unfetter the feet, it will untie the hands and set them to work, it will give utterance to the tongue, and impart activity to the life. We find an illustration of this in that remarkable military enterprise, "The Retreat of the Ten Thousand Greeks" out of the heart of the Persian empire. They had crossed deep rivers and climbed high mountains; they had overcome difficulties almost incredible, and encountered dangers of every kind; they made good their retreat in the face and in spite of all the artifice and arms of Persia. At length they reached the summit of a hill called Thēchēs (now Tekeh), between Erzeroum and Trebisond; and when, from the top of that high hill, those gallant Greeks, many of whom were islanders and all of them accustomed to the sea, descried in the distance the dark waters of the Euxine, they raised a loud and long-continued cheer. "The sea! the sea!" was the shout of every tongue. The sea reminded them of their native waters, and of their island homes; and the tide of affection rose in their bosoms, high as the laughing tides that "lave those Edens of the Eastern wave." So, wherever true affection exists, it needs but the occasion to call it forth—something to move the memory, and it vents itself spontaneously with overflowing fulness.—J. J. G.

Vers. 22—31. Parallel passages: Matt. xix. 22—30; Luke xviii. 23—30.—2. *Riches and their relation to the kingdom.* REFLECTIONS TO WHICH THE INCIDENT GAVE RISE. 1. *Effect on the young ruler.* He went away grieved. He is now brought to see that he cannot obey two masters; he cannot serve God and mammon. "He was sad at that saying." The word στυγνάσας here used is peculiar. In one other place it is applied to the appearance of the sky, and translated *lowering;* and so a cloud came over the young man's brow. Our Lord esteemed him (ἠγάπησεν), for he undoubtedly manifested several endearing traits of character—he was sincere, ardent, and evidently aspiring to something heroical in religion. For the present, however, he went away. 2. *Question about his return.* Whether this young man was Lazarus, as some have conjectured from a certain similarity of incidents, such as "One thing is needful," compared with "One thing thou lackest," is of course uncertain, as is also the probability of his afterwards returning to the Saviour. "He *was having* (ἦν ἔχων) great possessions," is a somewhat striking phrase, and denotes habitual as well as actual possession. His preference was given to worldly things for the present, and was called by Dante "the great refusal." One thing is certain, that those possessions soon reverted to others; and whether it was force, or fraud, or casuality, or death that at last deprived him of them, they were taken away; and if he continued to cling to them, and to prefer them to the heavenly inheritance, then he could reckon on no reversion in the skies—no portion of which it could be said, "it shall not be taken away from" him. 3. *The rich man's difficulty.* "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The difficulty of his entrance into the kingdom of heaven is stated (1) *proverbially.* This proverb is quite in keeping with the Oriental style of exaggeration, or hyperbolical expression. Some have read (2) κάμιλον, a *rope*, instead of κάμηλον, a camel, but without adequate authority. Some, again, understand it to mean (3) the narrow *side-gate* for foot-passengers beside the

large gates of Eastern cities. This, however, is rather a modern conception to explain an ancient idea. The difficulty is connected with *trusting* in riches, and arises from the temptations to which riches expose their possessors. The love of riches is the root of the evil. A rich man may sit loose to the riches he possesses, while a poor man may set his heart upon the wealth to which he aspires. The astonishment of the apostles was occasioned partly by the extreme difficulties placed in the way of the rich by the temptations inseparably connected with riches; and partly by temptations of other kinds which they felt as placing difficulties in the way of salvation, specially, perhaps, among these the need of that inward subjective righteousness which is to be wrought out, and which, though it is not the title to, is the meetness for, the heavenly inheritance. The universal desire for wealth, and their own secret expectations of the rich rewards of an earthly kingdom, all of which were reprobated by the words of our Lord, increased the anticipated difficulty and intensified their amazement. 4. *The claim preferred by Peter on behalf of himself and fellow-disciples.* The refusal of the ruler to take up his cross and follow Christ suggests a comparison. Peter is the mouthpiece, as usual, and gives utterance to his own and the unspoken thoughts of his fellow-apostles. "Lo," he says, "we have left all, and have followed thee;" he draws special attention to the fact by a "Lo," or "Behold." Others soon after did the same, and literally acted out the requirement which our Lord proposed to the ruler as the practical test of that principle of self-denying, self-sacrificing love which is the spring of true obedience; for in Acts iv. 34, 35, we read, "As many as were possessed of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." Peter, however, supplements his statement of fact by the inquiry, "What shall we have therefore?" as St. Matthew informs us. Peter reckons on a reward—he calculates on a *quid pro quo;* and so far forth he shows that he has failed in the spirit of the requirement, though he has fulfilled it in the letter. An earthly kingdom with its attractive rewards was still looming before the eyes of these partially enlightened men. 5. *The promised compensation.* In the compensatory reward the equivalents for "father" and "wife" are omitted. The reason is not far to seek; we have not many fathers in Christ. As the apostle writes to the Corinthians, "Though ye have ten thousand instructers in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers;" but contrariwise we may have many spiritual mothers, as well as brothers and sisters. Thus Paul reckons among his spiritual mothers the mother of Rufus, when he says (Rom. xvi. 13), "his mother and mine." The jeer of Julian, with respect to a multiplicity of wives, is referred to by Theophylact in the following terms:—"Shall he then also have a hundred wives? Yes. Though the cursed Julian mocked this." Theophylact then proceeds to explain it of the ministry of holy women supplying food and raiment, and relieving the disciples of care about all such things. The compensation of a hundredfold for all we abandon or lose for Christ's sake must be understood figuratively and spiritually—figuratively as to the quantitative proportion, spiritually with regard to quality or kind. The apostles enjoyed the fulfilment of this promise to the utmost in the presence and companionship of their Lord and Master, his instructions, his guidance, and his grace. There is no one who will make a similar sacrifice for his *name's* sake, according to St. Matthew—that is, as read in the light of the other evangelists, for sake of Christ and his cause, or Christ and his kingdom, not by reason of a calculation of reward—that will not gain what is a hundred times more valuable than all they sacrifice: Divine favour, pardon of sin, purity of heart, peace of conscience, spiritual consolations, friends in Jesus; and all these not only in the present dispensation, but at the present season (*καιρῷ*); while in the coming dispensation we shall have eternal life; that is to say, every blessing we need in this world, and eternal blessedness in the world to come. One of the items here enumerated is generally understood as a limitation; but *μετὰ διωγμῶν* does not denote (1) *after* persecutions, which would require the accusative, nor (2) *amidst* persecutions, but (3) *with* persecutions, implying that persecutions have a place among the enumerated blessings, just as in the sermon on the mount we read, "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We should also compare with this promise of the Saviour the inventory of the Christian's possessions, as reckoned up by the apostle in 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Further, strictly temporal blessings are not excluded, but either

directly or indirectly included. Godliness enables us in a certain sense to make the best of both worlds, being profitable for all things, and "having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." The blessing of the Lord maketh rich; for with his blessing and the enjoyment of his favour men cultivate those virtues and habits that tend to temporal as well as spiritual well-being, such as industry, thrift, temperance, health, purity, prudent management, proper economy, and consequent credit, all of which bear directly on worldly wealth and present happiness.—J. J. G.

Vers. 32—34. Parallel passages: Matt. xx. 17—19; Luke xviii. 31—34.—*A third prediction by our Lord of his passion and resurrection.* I. REPEATED PREDICTIONS ON THESE SUBJECTS. The disciples required line upon line on this subject; they were so slow to grasp it and so loth to entertain it. It appeared to them inconceivable and incredible. When it was first directly and definitely announced, Peter deprecated it in the strongest terms, and so far forgot himself that he presumed to rebuke his Master, which drew down on him in turn that severe and sharp reproof, "Get thee behind me, Satan," as though Satan had employed Peter as his emissary, and to do his work on that occasion by tempting our Lord to shrink from the sufferings he foretold. Instead of affording our Lord that support and sympathy, that strength and encouragement which, in view of the approaching ordeal, his human nature craved, his servants whom he loved and who loved him so well, though not always wisely, fell in with Satan's own suggestion at the temptation to the Saviour, to seek the crown without the cross. Why not prove his Messiahship and assume his Kingship over the nations with out such suffering and sorrow, without the sharpness of death and shade of the sepulchre?

II. PREVIOUS PREPARATION. The previous training which the disciples had received from the Lord would, one might think, be sufficient to have disabused their minds of the prejudices of their race and nation to which they were so prone. Even after they had been convinced of his Messiahship, and after Peter's notable and noble confession of it, they needed to be repeatedly reminded of the necessity of his suffering and death to the completion of his work, and to be instructed once and again about the needfulness of his resurrection to demonstrate the divinity of his mission, and that he had power to lay down his life and power to take it again, as also that, delivered for our offences, he was to be raised for our justification. The notion of a temporal kingdom was so firmly fixed in their minds, and intertwined with all their Messianic hopes and expectations, that it was next to impossible to eradicate it. And yet, at an early period of his ministry, and almost immediately after his proclaiming the near approach of the kingdom of heaven, he expounded the principles, laws, and spiritual nature of that kingdom. Thus, in the sermon on the mount, he explained the object and elucidated the *rules* of that kingdom in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew; he then interpreted, according to the rules of the kingdom, those *religious exercises* in which the subjects of the kingdom engage, in the sixth chapter of the same Gospel; while in the seventh he lays down the *mutual duties* of the members, with other duties of a more general but practical kind. In his seaside parables, again, as recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the same Gospel, he traces the gradual progress, steady development in spite of all obstacles, and ultimate success of that kingdom. When thus prepared for it, he proclaimed to them once and again, and now the third time, in distinct, definite, and decided terms, his passion, death, and resurrection.

III. AN ADDITIONAL FEATURE IN THIS PREDICTION. In this third direct prediction a new element is introduced, the Gentiles are mentioned for the first time in connection with our Lord's death. "The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the *Gentiles.*" And yet, strange, yea, passing strange, "they understood," as St. Luke tells us, "none of these things." It is probable that they understood his language as figurative, and expressive of the great difficulties to be overcome, and the formidable obstacles he would have to encounter in making his way to his Messianic throne. Hence it was that they were amazed at his alacrity, as he went before them and led the way as they were going up to the capital. This much, at the least, they must have known, that he was soon to face his bitterest foes; they must have had some gloomy foreboding of the risk he was about to run, and the perils to which he was going to

expose himself. Consequently they were amazed at the more than wonted energy with which he pressed forward to the place of danger and the scene of suffering; and though, like a dauntless leader, and fearless but faithful general, he marched at their head, preceding them and leading them forward, they fell timorously behind, afraid to follow him in the perilous path he was pursuing. We may here recall to mind that the first direct prediction of his death was in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, soon after Peter's confession; the second shortly after, as they were returning to Capernaum; and now, on their way up to Jerusalem, he states the particulars more fully and clearly than ever before. The "spitting" is here mentioned by both St. Mark and St. Luke, the condemnation of the Jewish Sanhedrim is referred to by St. Matthew and St. Mark; the execution by the Gentiles is recorded by all three synoptists; while the mode of death by crucifixion is mentioned by St. Matthew alone.—J. J. G.

Vers. 35—45. Parallel passage: Matt. xx. 20—28.—*The ambition of the apostles: the sons of Zebedee.* I. PROBABLE ORIGIN. Peter and James and John certainly enjoyed a sort of precedence over the other apostles; they were *primi inter pares* at least, and constituted an inner circle among the members of the apostolic office. They were not only the first called to follow Christ, and to undertake special service in his cause; they had been privileged with his closest confidence; and they were admitted as his sole attendants, as we have already seen, on three most remarkable occasions. It was soon after one of these occasions, that of the Transfiguration, that the dispute about precedence occurred, on their journey to Capernaum. The natural inference seems to be that the prominence assigned to these three favourite apostles excited the jealousy of the rest, and occasioned the dispute referred to. And now again two of these aspiring men, having their heart still fixed on an earthly and secular kingdom, had their ambition fired by our Lord's mention of twelve thrones, as recorded by St. Matthew, and the apostles seated on them, in the regeneration, that second birthday of our world, in which the present sufferings and sorrows of earth's travail-throes shall at length issue. Accordingly, ashamed perhaps to present the petition themselves, they induce their mother Salome, according to St. Matthew's record, to present it for them, "desiring a certain thing of him;" and according to the principle, *Quod facit per alterum facit per se.* They thus try by a sort of trick, if we may so say, to make sure of our Lord's consent before specifying the nature of this unreasonable petition.

II. THE CUP AND THE BAPTISM. By "cup" is meant one's lot or destiny, be it good or bad, especially the latter. Thus, "Thou makest my cup run over," where the lot is plenty; and the words, divested of the figure, are nearly equivalent to, Thou givest me a plentiful supply as my lot. Again, it stands for vengeance allotted to the wicked, as is said of Jerusalem, "Thou hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out;" and in Ps. lxxv. 8, it is the cup of wrath, or the portion of Divine and deserved indignation apportioned to the wicked, for it is there written, "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." Baptism, again, has three different meanings, or rather applications, in Scripture. There is baptism with water, a Christian sacrament; there is baptism by the Holy Spirit, or regeneration, which is that change by which we become truly Christians; and there is baptism in the sense of suffering, which is its meaning here.

III. A MISRENDERING. "But to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father." This verse, as it stands in our version, seems to limit the power of the Saviour, and to be at variance with his own statement in Luke xxii. 29, where he says, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It also appears flatly to contradict that promise of our Lord recorded in Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." Various methods of rectification have been resorted to. The Latin Vulgate cuts the knot by inserting *vobis*, to you, and so rendering the clause in question, "It is not mine to give *to you*, but to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." But as this addition is not supported by any manuscript authority, it must be rejected as arbitrary.

Still more unwarrantable is the explanation of some, who understand the answer of our Lord as having reference only to the time previous to his sufferings, as though it meant, "It is not mine to give till after I shall have suffered; then all power will be vested in my hands." Now, the difficulty is in a great measure created by the words supplied in our version, and therefore marked in italics as above. The ellipsis thus indicated is either too little or too large. It must either be extended or eliminated altogether. We might enlarge the ellipsis, and take the clause to signify, "It is not mine to give (as a matter of favouritism), but it is mine to give (on the ground of fitness) to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." It is much better, however, to omit entirely the words supplied. This at once does away with the difficulty, and removes the seeming contradiction, while the sense of the original thus becomes plain and clear. Accordingly, we would read the last part of the verse thus, "Is not mine to give, but [save] to them for whom it is prepared." The preparedness of the recipients, not the power of the Saviour, is the only limitation of the bestowment in question. This power, again, is exercised in accordance with the Divine purpose, while in Rom. viii. 29, 30 we have a full declaration of such purpose: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. . . . Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The view which we thus adopt corresponds with the rendering of the old Syriac, which translates the portion of the verse before us without supplying any words. It is confirmed by Luther's German translation. It has the sanction of several other important versions, both ancient and modern. The only objection to this, namely, that ἀλλὰ has thereby the sense of εἰ μή, is set aside by comparing Matt. xvii. 8 with Mark ix. 8, where, in recording the same fact, in nearly the same words, St. Matthew uses εἰ μή, while St. Mark expresses the same sense by ἀλλά. Even in the chapter immediately foregoing (Matt. xix.), ἀλλὰ is employed in nearly the same signification at the eleventh verse: "All men cannot receive this saying, save (ἀλλὰ) they to whom it is given." Though not identical, they closely approximate, for "res eodem recidit sive oppositione sive exceptione." If an ellipsis be at all admissible in the verse we are considering, then the words suggested by Alford, "[is not mine to give, but *it shall be given by me*," or those supplied by De Wette, "Sondern denen wird es verliehen," or even those supplied in the Revised Version, "Is not mine to give: but *it is for them* for whom it hath been prepared," are undoubtedly preferable to those supplied in our common version, and express the sense much better. Still, even the words thus introduced to eke out the meaning of the original seem awkward and unnecessary.—J. J. G.

Vers. 46—52. Parallel passages: Matt. xx. 29—34; Luke xviii. 35—43.—*The cure of two blind men at Jericho.* I. BLIND BARTIMÆUS. 1. *His condition.* He was *blind;* he was deprived of that most valuable sense of sight. He was a stranger to the beauties of nature. "The light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to see the sun;" but that sun, that light, those beauties, those bright colours of sky or earth or sea; those lovely forms that appear in the heaven above, the earth beneath, and the waters round the earth—all, all were to him a blank. We know nothing of this blind man's family or friends, but from the patronymic, "Son of Timæus," we may infer that his father or family had been of some note; but the former had gone the way of all the earth and the latter had fallen into decay. That morning, however, whether by relative or friend or neighbourly hand, he was led forth to his accustomed seat by the wayside. He could hear the sound of the voices round him, but he could not see the persons who spoke; he could feel them if they came in contact with him, but could not behold them. Of all that passed by that way he could only judge by the voice or sound. The expression of their countenance, their form or figure, their smiles or tears, their bright eyes or sad looks, their faces sweet or sullen, were to him unknown and by him unseen. Our Lord, having continued his journey through Peræa, crossed the Jordan opposite Jericho, and arrived at that once famous city, upwards of five or six miles to the west of the river, and fifteen miles in a direct line eastward of Jerusalem. This ancient place, round which so many associations gather—such as its conquest by Joshua, its rebuilding by Hiel the Bethelite in the reign of Ahab, notwithstanding the curse; its mention in the history of the

prophets Elijah and Elisha, its close connection at an early period with our Lord's own ancestry—was celebrated for its palms and balsams. Its fertilizing spring contributed to its wealth and importance. It was beautified by Herod the Great; subsequently destroyed, but rebuilt by Archelaus; celebrated by the historian Josephus as a populous and prosperous place in his day. But its glory long ago passed away. It is now a miserable hamlet called *Riha*. At the time of our Lord's visit, however, it was a flourishing town, and entitled to its ancient designation of the "city of palm trees," or "city of fragrance," as the name derived from the verb *ruach* imports. Fragrant flowers and aromatic shrubs perfumed the air; the scenery around was fresh and lovely; while every prospect was pleasing, and "man alone was vile." On the morning of the day that our Lord arrived at Jericho the gardens round the town bloomed in beauty, as usual, and charmed the eye of the beholder; the feathery palm lifted high its head in air or waved in the morning breeze; the Jordan valley stretched away into the distance. It was springtime, moreover, for multitudes were on their way to the great spring festival of the Passover at Jerusalem, and spring had clothed the landscape with vernal beauties. Over all the loveliness of earth was spread the clear blue of a Judæan sky, while down on all the glorious sun was shedding his bright beams, lighting up the whole with brilliancy and beauty. But what were all these beautiful sights and bright scenes to the blind Bartimæus? As far as he was concerned, they might as well have been dark and dismal, blank and black, like a moonless, starless night, with its darkness thick as in the land of Egypt, even "darkness that might be felt." 2. *His circumstances.* He was poor. Incapable of any worldly calling, he was a dependant on the charity of others; he was reduced to solicit alms of the passing traveller. Thus he was not only blind, but a beggar. Troubles love a train: one trouble seldom comes alone. The blindness of Bartimæus was aggravated by his poverty, and his poverty had no relief nor remedy but begging. His blindness had been the visitation of God; his poverty and beggary were misfortunes consequent thereon. For both he was to be pitied, for neither to be blamed. There was no special sin in his blindness, and therefore none in his begging. What a complication of misery had fallen to this poor man's lot in life! One almost fancies he sees Bartimæus as he sat that day by the wayside, with face pale, his head bare, perhaps bald from age; while those placid features—as the features of the blind always are—and those sightless eyes might well move the hardest heart to pity. The blind man hears the footsteps of travellers going on their way; he hears the earnest conversation of passers-by, eagerly bent on business or pleasure. Many a time the proud priest has gone that way, but ever passed by on the other side; or the haughty Levite has only cast a glance of curiosity at the blind man; sanctimonious Pharisees, with broad phylacteries, have looked with scorn on the poor mendicant. Many a time the cheerful voices of men and women have sounded in his ears, and many a time he has listened to the sound of childhood's fun and frolic. Day by day, as such sounds were repeated in his hearing and close at hand, all must have seemed to him lively, all cheerful, and all happy save himself, the poor blind beggar, doomed to melancholy darkness. This day, however, he hears the rush of many feet, the tread as of a numerous crowd, the shouts as of a mighty multitude. He wonders what the sound of those many footsteps means, what the swell of those voices can be. He listens till the crowd comes nearer, and he hears them speak in praise, a few, perhaps, in blame, of the Prophet of Nazareth. 3. *The corresponding state of the unconverted.* Many in the state of their soul resemble that poor blind beggar. The Scriptures speak of *blind* people that have eyes—"they have eyes, but see not;" their understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart. Satan, the prince of darkness, blinds the minds of them that believe not. His followers are of the night and of darkness, and at last, if they follow him to the end, they shall be cast into outer darkness. By nature men are spiritually blind. They are face to face with great realities—God and heaven and eternity—but they do not see them. They are on the brink of a great precipice, they are close to great peril, but they do not see it. Like a blind man on the edge of a frightful abyss, and yet seemingly secure just because he is blind to the danger. They are side by side with great truths, but, not seeing them, they deny their existence, as if a blind man denied the existence of mountains and rivers, the great sea and the bright

sun, because he does not see them. There are great beauties just beside them—beauties of holiness, of grace, of glory, of Christ, and God; but they are as blind to spiritual beauties as a blind man to all the multiform beauties of this lovely world—a world so lovely notwithstanding the blight of sin. The spiritually blind see no comeliness in Christ that they should desire him, no glory in the gospel that they should embrace it, no preciousness in salvation that they should seek it, no beauty in holiness that they should practise it. Neither do they see any terror in the threatenings of God, nor much, if any, sinfulness in sin; nothing to attract in the promises of the gospel, and nothing to terrify in the curses of a broken Law. Sinner, you are blind, though you know it not! The sinner is *poor* as well as blind. He has no peace in this world, no prospect for the next; he has no real satisfaction on earth, and no sure hope of heaven. He has no shelter from the storm of Divine wrath, and no refuge in the day of danger. He has neither part nor lot with the people of God, no interest in the covenant of promise, no title to the heavenly inheritance, and no meetness for it. He is without the only blood that can cleanse from sin, the only righteousness that can justify a sinner, the only Spirit that can sanctify the soul. In a word, he is without Christ, and without God, and without hope. This surely is poverty—spiritual poverty, the deepest and the worst. This is the sad state of all unregenerate persons. They are, in the words of Scripture, "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They are blind in soul as Bartimæus in body, poor in spiritual things as he was in temporal. And yet to such the advice is addressed, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

II. THE APPLICATION OF BARTIMÆUS TO JESUS. 1. *His inquiry.* The first step here was inquiry. Hearing the noise of the on-coming crowd and the voices of the multitude passing by, he asked what it meant, and the answer returned to his inquiry was "that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." This was good news for the poor blind beggar. Bartimæus had no doubt heard of Jesus, of his works of wonder and miracles of mercy. Some report may, nay, must, have reached him about the lepers cleansed, the demoniacs cured, the sick restored to health, the deaf whose ears were opened, the dumb whose tongues were loosed, even the dead raised to life, and, what came more closely home to himself, the blind whose eyes were opened. Bartimæus might, most probably did, hear all this; but how was he to reach the Prophet? Where could he find him? How could he, a poor, blind beggar, make such a long and weary way? Unless Jesus came into the neighbourhood of Jericho, he could not expect to be blessed and benefited. Now, however, what he never expected has come to pass. Jesus is at his side—he is passing by; and now Bartimæus feels that it is his opportunity, a most precious opportunity, far too precious to be lost. When his condition had rendered it impossible for him to go to the Saviour, the Saviour has come to him. Instantly and energetically he avails himself of this blessed opportunity. Now or never, he thinks with himself. He does not lose a moment; he cannot afford it, for he knows not but that the chance may be lost for ever. Bartimæus bethinks himself of all this, reasoning thus:—He is come to me; I could not go to him; and it is do or die now. If I lose this opportunity I may never have another. The tide will soon ebb; I must take it at the flow. The steamer will soon start; I must enter it or it will go without me. The bell is ringing and the train will soon be off; if I do not take my place at once I am left behind, and perhaps for ever. Somehow thus reasoned the poor, blind beggar—if we may be permitted to translate his words, or rather express his thoughts, in modern parlance. 2. *His earnest appeal.* And so "he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Previous occurrences had prepared for this: Christ was passing by that way; Bartimæus was informed of his approach; he felt his need, and the Friend of sinners was near. Thus the various stages were inquiry, information, felt necessity, and the Saviour's presence. His appeal was earnest as well as instant. He cried out, and it was a strong and loud cry. Many things might have prevented his appeal, but they did not; many impediments lay in the way, but he did not allow them to keep him back. The crowd did not deter him, for he was in earnest, and cared not what the crowd either said or thought. The fact of so many strangers being round him did not stop him, for their presence was nothing to him, and he was too anxious

for relief to feel false shame. The circumstance of his poverty did not prevent him; on the contrary, it prompted him all the more. True, he had no introduction to the Prophet from Galilee—no one to make known his situation or explain his unhappy circumstances, and bespeak the Saviour's favour on his behalf. Still he hoped his earnest appeal would find an echo in the bosom of the illustrious Stranger. He had no merit, he knew, to recommend him, and no particular claim on that Stranger's clemency; yet he was resolved to try whether his misfortune might not awaken his sympathy. 3. *A lesson for ourselves.* Jesus passeth by; he is near to us, and his presence is close at hand. In this sense he passeth by every time a sabbath dawns upon us, and every time we see the light of the sabbath sun. He passeth by, that is, is present, every time we enter the sanctuary and assemble ourselves with the people of God. He passeth by, and we are apprised of his presence, every time we are privileged to listen to a gospel sermon. He passeth by us every time we read his Word, or sing his praise, or call on God's name in prayer. He passeth by us every time we partake of the sacrament of the Supper, and he maketh himself known to us in the breaking of bread. Oh, how often on such occasions has "our heart burned within us as he talked to us by the way, and opened to us the Scriptures"! He passeth by us every time his Holy Spirit strives with us or exercises his gracious influences upon us. He passeth by and makes us feel his presence times and ways past specifying or reckoning. He assures us of this; for has he not said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"? Jesus has come near and close to each of us. He assumed our nature and became our Kinsman. He saw us in our blood, cast out into the open field on the day in which we were born; he pitied us and passed us by, and his time was a time of love. He has come to us, or we should never have gone to him; he has sought us, or we should never have sought him. He has passed us by and made his mercy known to us. He has made good his word, "I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry." Nor is it a mere hasty and passing visit he pays us. He has stood at the door of our heart until his head has become wet with dew and his locks with the drops of the night. But he will not stand always. He passeth by; and while we understand this statement of his presence, and of that presence manifested to our souls, of his gracious presence in his ordinances, and of his Holy Spirit stirring in our hearts, yet we must not make the fatal mistake of supposing that this will last always. In the very nature of things it cannot continue. Life itself is uncertain, and time is short. Besides, the day of grace will not always tarry; like the Saviour himself, it passeth by. Jesus never visited Jericho again, nor did he ever pass by that way again. So with ourselves. He has visited us often; who can say when or which shall be his last visit? Oh, then, for such earnestness and eagerness as Bartimæus showed, on the part of all that hear the gospel! Jesus has passed near us many a time, and yet some of us, up to the present moment, care for none of these things. We have never cried for help as we ought, or sued for mercy as we should; we have never eagerly sought his grace, or earnestly supplicated forgiveness. We have been lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot. If so, let us beware lest, like the Laodiceans, we are spued out of his mouth. We may have been at ease in Zion, and like wine settled on the lees, forgetful of the woes pronounced on such. How little of the earnestness of this blind beggar do we show in the things of God! And yet, if like him we felt our need, we could not but be earnest and energetic. The hungry man will beg for bread; the thirsty man will repair to the clear cool spring; the starving babe, by the very instinct of its nature, will cry for nurture; even the dumb animals have ways of making known their wants and of seeking a supply: and shall we be so indifferent to spiritual necessities and eternal interests? 4. *Characteristics of discipleship.* Bartimæus exhibited several characteristics of true discipleship—characteristics which all should seek to possess. He was *prompt.* There is need for promptness, for God's long-suffering has its limits. He may wait long, but will not wait always. He passeth by, vouchsafing his presence for a time, but withdrawing it when he sees fit so to do. He was *humble*, for his plea was for mercy: "Have mercy on me." He was conscious of the entire absence of all merit. He came at once, and came as he was—in his blindness, in his poverty, and in his beggary. So should it be with ourselves. We must come according to the spirit of the simple lines—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind—
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

His *faith* was remarkable; he was fully abreast of his times in theological knowledge; he was fairly ahead of the crowd in his knowledge of the Saviour. They informed him that it was *Jesus of Nazareth* that was passing by. They represented him correctly, as far as they went; but their representation was sadly imperfect and shamefully incomplete. They regarded him as a prophet, but a prophet of a despised place and of a despised province. His native town and native province were both of little, or rather of ill, repute. "Can any good thing," asked Nathanael, "come out of Nazareth?" The Pharisees said scornfully to Nicodemus, "Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Bartimæus knew better. Blind as he was, and so shut out from books as the source of knowledge; poor as he was, and so deprived of the means of acquiring information, he had made himself in some way or by some means acquainted with the descent and dignity of Messiah. Hence he accosted him, not as Jesus of Nazareth, but addressed him, "Jesus, thou Son of David." In any case the Spirit of God had been his instructor. Thus, too, we must come to Jesus with a proper apprehension of his character and claims, of his mercy and his might, as well as of our own worthlessness and helplessness. Feeling ourselves sinners, our individual inquiry must be, "What must I do to be saved?" Accepting the answer furnished by God's Word, we must "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved." Feeling ourselves lost, we are encouraged by the Saviour's own gracious assurance, that He "came to seek and save that which was lost." Feeling ourselves deep down in the pit of sin, in this low and lost condition, we are cheered by the declaration that his errand into our world was to save sinners, even the chief. However blind the eyes, Christ can open them; however hard the heart, he can soften it; however dark the stain of our sin, his blood can wash it out; however desperate our case, his grace can meet it; however sorrowful and forlorn our spirits, he can soothe and comfort them. His *perseverance* was also remarkable. His ardour was not to be repressed, his earnestness was not to be checked. Having found the long-expected Deliverer, he was determined not to be parted from him; having attained a conviction—a rapidly growing and speedily maturing conviction—that he was now within reach of One who could convert the soul as well as cure the body, he continued to cry to him, and ceased not till his cry was heard and answered. The crowd wished to impose silence on him, yet he persevered; the multitude rebuked him, that he should hold his peace, yet he "cried the more," says St. Matthew; "the more a great deal," says St. Mark; "so much the more," says St. Luke. They protested against his appeal, and many—not one, or two, or three, but many of them—charged him to hold his peace. His outcry appeared to them, no doubt, so loud, so boisterous, so rude, that they did their best to suppress it; but he refused to desist. Some thought him too contemptible to deserve notice, or to delay the procession; others, perhaps, felt or feigned concern for the Master, as having too many objects of solicitude on his spirit, and too many and too heavy burdens on his shoulders already; but in spite of all these obstacles, and in face of all this opposition, Bartimæus persisted, and in the end succeeded. Such was this poor beggar—this brave, blind man! When sinners set about seeking God, they may expect similar obstruction, and rebukes equally heartless and cruel. Satan will be sure to rouse opposition from some quarter. The world will flatter them or force them to desist; friends will speak words of pity or persuade them to abandon their self-imposed task; formalists may shake the head and speak of fanaticism, enthusiasm, or unwisdom. But earnest souls, like Bartimæus, will not, must not, give up or give over. Once they have put their hand to the plough, they may not turn back; once they have set their face Zionward, they must not turn away or turn aside. The language of the twenty-seventh Psalm will be on their lips, and acted out in their life, as the psalmist says, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall

not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after. . . . Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me." Thus waiting on the Lord, they shall be enabled to hold on their way; waiting on the Lord, they shall be strengthened; waiting on the Lord, they shall experience that merciful support, of which mention is interjected six and twenty times in the psalm which records Israel's trials and triumphs —"for his mercy endureth for ever."

III. THE SUCCESS WHICH CROWNED THE APPLICATION. 1. "*Jesus stood still.*" So says St. Matthew, so says St. Mark, so says St. Luke; all three evangelists agree in recording this fact. He was on his last journey to Jerusalem; he was hurrying on to drink and drain the cup of bitterness, and be baptized with the baptism of blood; he was hastening forward with eager steps to bear his people's sins in his own body on the tree, to satisfy Divine justice by the sacrifice of himself, to vindicate God's truth, express God's love, and magnify God's Law, to maintain the glory of the Divine attributes, and secure the salvation of countless human souls. Never was there a journey so important, never was errand so deeply interesting, and never was there another embassy involving such weighty consequences and vast concernments. Heaven and earth and hell were all affected by that journey; the glory of God was connected with it; and the redemption of man depended on it. And yet, notwithstanding all the urgencies of that journey, and all the ardour, even bordering on impatience, with which our Lord was speeding forward on that journey, the cry of distress arrested him; the prayer of a blind beggar stopped him! And so it is still, for the prayer of the penitent has a potency that Divine mercy never resists, and will not repel. The waves of the sea stood still, and the waters of the river stood still, in the interests of God's people, and in order that they might pass over; the sun and moon stood still at the cry of Joshua, and that the hosts of Israel might prolong their victory; the shadow stood still, or rather went back, on the dial-plate of time at the prayers of good King Hezekiah, and to assure him of an addition of fifteen years to his limit of life. But what are the waters of the sea, or the luminaries of the sky, or the element of time to him who furrowed the channel for the one and fixed the place of the other, and who himself fills all space with his presence and all time with his fulness? And yet he stood still when that crisis, the greatest in all this world's history, was fast approaching—for Messiah to be cut off, sin to be made an end of, and everlasting righteousness brought in; and all this in answer to Bartimæus's earnest entreaties, and to restore sight to his blind eyes and impart life to his dead soul. 2. *What he did on standing still.* We have three accounts of this also, but, while identical in the main, they exhibit the same thing under different aspects. "He called" is the statement of St. Matthew; "he commanded him to be called" is the version of St. Mark; "he commanded him to be brought" is the addition of St. Luke. In the first we have the sovereignty of God, who calls us by his grace—calls us out of darkness into marvellous light. In the second we have the ministry of man. "The Lord gave the Word," we read: "great was the company of those that published it." In the third we have the agency of the Holy Spirit. God, of his sovereign grace and mere good pleasure, calls us—calls us, as St. Peter assures us, "unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus;" and so, as stated in other Scriptures, it is a "high calling," a "holy calling," and a "heavenly calling." To men, as his ambassadors, is committed the ministry of reconciliation; they are employed to explain the Divine call, to enforce it and repeat it. The Holy Spirit's agency must accompany the minister's message, to bring it home in power and demonstration and assurance, convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Thus we are made willing in the day of his power; and thus at his own command we are brought unto him. The lessons of his Word, the dispensations of his providence, the ordinances of religion, the movements of his Holy Spirit on our hearts, are all employed in drawing us to Christ for the salvation of our souls. 3. *A strange question.* We almost see the blind man rise in haste at the word of command, which is now repeated to him by the crowd, with the encouraging "Be of good comfort," and, in obedience to the Saviour's call, rush forward, "casting aside his garment," in his eager, earnest haste. We almost hear the Saviour answer the unspoken thought of the blind man's heart, as he said unto him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" There was little need for such an inquiry, one would think, on the part of our Lord. There was not one in all that crowd that could not guess, and guess correctly, the answer; the Saviour knew the thought that was uppermost in the blind

man's heart, for he knew what was in man. Why, then, does he ask the question? Just in order to give him an opportunity of presenting his petition and making known his wants in his own words. (1) So in our own case we come to Jesus by his command and gracious invitation; that command is expressed in many forms, such as "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden;" "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." His invitations are multiplied. (2) In coming we must lay aside every weight, and the sin that would most easily beset us, just as Bartimæus cast aside his outer garment, to be free from every entanglement that might retard or altogether prevent our reaching him. The young ruler, as we have seen, came to Jesus; he longed for Jesus, and Jesus esteemed him; he panted for life eternal, but could not bring himself to part with the things of this present life; he did not cast aside his garment. (3) We are to come with prayer. Once the gracious desire is formed in our heart by the Spirit of grace, it will soon shape itself in prayer, for the spirit of grace is also the spirit of supplication. Though he knows our wants better than we ourselves, and before we ask him, and even our ignorance in asking; yet he will have us express them in prayer, so that "Behold, he prayeth!" indicates the first outgoing of spiritual life. God grants to our feeblest petitions what he will not give without them. Prayer fits us for receiving the blessing; it puts us into the proper position—that of humble dependence; it exalts the Giver without in any way degrading the receiver; it brings us into conformity with God's own plan. Fixed, as the alternation of day and night, or as the succession of the seasons, or as the order of the universe itself, is God's purpose that we must ask in order to receive, seek in order to find, and knock in order that it may be opened. When our necessity is greatest, let us go to him by prayer, and he will supply it; when the trial is sorest, let us go to him in prayer, and he will alleviate it or entirely remove it; when the burden is heaviest, let us go to him in prayer, and he will lift it entirely off our shoulders or at least enable us to bear it. (4) Another reason for the question was to suggest the large liberality and great generosity of the Saviour; there is a glorious fulness in the inquiry, "What wilt thou?" There is a gracious freeness in it at the same time. There is a royal ring in the question; there is a kingly munificence. It reminds us of, though it surpasses, both in reality and richness, the question of King Ahasuerus to his queen, "What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed." So to Bartimæus the Saviour said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" and it shall be done; you have only to make your choice; you have only to mention what you want. I do not limit you; if straitened, it is in and through yourself. So to the suppliant still Christ says, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"—The wealth of worlds is mine; the power of omnipotence is mine; the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are mine; ask, and you shall receive what you want, as much as you want, yea, all you want, provided it be really expedient for you, conducive to the Divine glory, and consistent with the welfare of your fellow-man. 4. *The blind man's direct reply.* Bartimæus, we are sure from all the known circumstances of the case, wanted many things—better clothing, more wholesome food, a more comfortable place of abode, more of the necessaries of life in general; some even of its simple comforts would not be likely to spoil this poor mendicant, who had suffered so long from privation, pining in poverty and pinched with want. Bartimæus refers to none of these things, or such things as these; he comes directly to the point; he names at once the thing which he needs most; he mentions the one thing needful for the relief of his direst necessity. "Lord," he said, "that I might receive my sight." In like manner, whether we engage in public supplication, or family worship, or private devotions, we should have before our mind our most urgent necessities, rightly discriminate them, really feel them, and with pointed earnestness and plain directness of speech express them; we should have some felt want, some real necessity, an actual petition to present or hearty thanksgiving to render. 5. *The cure.* It was immediate: "immediately he received his sight." It was a wonderful change for this poor, blind man; it was a new and blessed experience; it was like a transference into a new and beautiful world; in fact, we cannot realize, and words fail to express it. Equally new, and gracious, and wonderful, and blessed is the translation out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God, which takes place in regeneration, when the eyes of the understanding are opened, and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God flashes in upon

the soul. 6. *The means employed.* The gentle touch of Jesus' hand was the *outward* instrumentality. Lovingly, tenderly, he passed his hand over the sightless eyeballs. What a thrilling touch that was! What condescension withal! How it helped the sufferer to hope for the best, and to have faith in the Saviour's power! The inward means was *faith:* "Thy faith hath saved thee." Nor is it said, "Thy promptness hath saved thee," though his promptness was laudable; nor "Thy humility," though that was most becoming; nor "Thy perseverance," though that was commendable; nor "Thy Scriptural knowledge in relation to the Messianic hopes of the nation," though that was of a superior kind; but "Thy faith." Faith and salvation go hand in hand together; God has joined them, let not man separate them; God has wed them, and let not man divorce them. 7. *How faith saves.* It saves, not by any merit in itself, not by any virtue of its own; it saves by bringing us into contact with Christ. It is the instrument that extracts virtue from the grace of Christ; it is the link of gold that unites with and binds us to Christ; it is the arm that puts on the robe of Christ's righteousness, and that is the robe of salvation; it is the hand stretched out to receive the gifts that grace bestows. "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

IV. How BARTIMÆUS PROVED HIS GRATITUDE. 1. *He followed Christ.* His faith, as usual, wrought by love; and love keeps near, and delights in, the presence of the beloved object. So with all who love the Lord; they follow him. Soon as the eyes are enlightened to see his beauty and his excellence, we follow him; soon as the heart begins to burn within us by his teaching, we follow him; if true disciples, we follow him; if sheep of the Good Shepherd, we follow him. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." In Old Testament as well as in New Testament times, it was so with all who loved the Lord. Thus it is recorded to the honour, and redounded to the salvation, of Caleb and Joshua that they "wholly followed the Lord." The psalmist speaks his personal experience in the words, "My soul followeth hard after thee." The children of God in both Testaments followed the Lord as monuments of his mercy, as trophies of his grace, as living witnesses of the power of his love, and as witness-bearers to his truth. Bartimæus followed him "in the way." We read of the Israelites, in their journeyings, being on one occasion sorely "discouraged because of the way." It may be so with ourselves, yet we must follow the Saviour whithersoever he leads; whether it be up the hill of difficulty, or down the hill into the valley of humiliation; whether it be a way of toil and trial, of danger and distress, or in green pastures and by still waters; taking up our cross, we shall, by his gracious help, follow him; through evil report and good report we shall follow him. Even when his way, as often, is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known, we will follow him. But how do we make sure that it is the way—the right way? He has himself marked out the way in his Word, and said to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" his providence has erected signposts along the way, so that a "wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein" or wander therefrom; his Spirit guides us in the way and comforts us by the way. Thus instructed in his Word, led by his providence, and guided by his Spirit, we shall follow him in the way which, rough though it be at times, and painful, and even distressing, leads in the end to glory, honour, and immortality. 2. *He glorified God.* "Glorifying God," says St. Luke. So, too, shall we. We have always admired that opening statement in one of the Westminster standards, which says, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever;" it contains at once the whole duty of man, and the chief blessedness of man. We glorify God by deep and heartfelt gratitude; we glorify him when we praise his name and defend his cause; we glorify him by the devotedness of our life and our consecration to his service. Thus by the homage of the heart, by the fruit of the lips, and by the sinlessness and faithfulness of the life, we glorify him. We have good cause to glorify God for his unspeakable gift—the Son of his love and our beloved Saviour. We glorify God for raising up "a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;" for the perfection of his person, the purity of his life, the suitability of his offices, the efficacy of his death, the prevalence of his intercession; for "his agony and bloody sweat, for his cross and passion, for his precious death and burial, for his glorious resurrection and ascension, and for the coming of the Holy Ghost;" for all he has done for us, for all he is doing, and for all he has promised to do. 3. *The happy influence exerted on others.* "All the people," says St. Luke, "when they saw it, gave praise unto

God." There is a holy contagiousness in this work. When one gets good for his own soul, he cannot keep it to himself, he cannot hide it; the gratitude is so deep, the joy is so great, that he must declare it aloud and to all around, just as the psalmist, saying—

"All that fear God, come, hear; I'll tell
What he did for my soul."

Or again—

"God will I bless all times; his praise
My mouth shall still express.
. . . . .
Extol the Lord with me, let us
Exalt his name together."

4. *Conclusion.* We would sum up our study of the case of this poor, blind beggar in the now somewhat trite, but still touching and tender verses of a poet lately departed—

"Blind Bartimæus at the gates
Of Jericho in darkness waits;
He hears the crowd;—he hears a breath
Say, 'It is Christ of Nazareth!'
And calls, in tones of agony,
Ἰησοῦ, ἐλέησόν με!

"The thronging multitudes increase;
'Blind Bartimæus, hold thy peace!'
But still, above the noisy crowd,
The beggar's cry is shrill and loud;
Until they say, 'He calleth thee!'
Θάρσει, ἔγειραι, φωνεῖ σε!

"Then saith the Christ, as silent stands
The crowd, 'What wilt thou at my hands?'
And he replies, 'Oh, give me light!
Rabbi, restore the blind man's sight!'
And Jesus answers, "Υπαγε·
Ἡ πίστις σοῦ σέσωκέ σε!

"Ye that have eyes, yet cannot see,
In darkness and in misery,
Recall those mighty voices three,
Ἰησοῦ, ἐλέησόν με!
Θάρσει, ἔγειραι, ὕπαγε!
Ἡ πίστις σοῦ σέσωκέ σε!"

We may here add, in a very few words, the common solution of two seeming discrepancies of the evangelists' narrative: viz. our Lord cured *two* blind men together on this occasion; but Bartimæus was better known, either previously, as already hinted, in reference to the patronymic, or subsequently as a "monument of the Lord's miracle;" while in reference to the *place* or *time* of cure, one of the two had made his application to our Lord as he approached or entered Jericho, yet was not cured at that time, but in company with the second, as our Lord left the city.—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1.—**And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives.** St. Matthew (xxi. 1) says, "When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and came unto Bethphage." St. Mark mentions the three places together, because Bethphage and Bethany, being near together, were also both of them close to Jerusalem. The distance from Jericho to Jerusalem (about seventeen miles) would involve a journey of about seven hours. The country between Jerusalem and Jericho is hilly, rugged, and desolate. It is from the height overhanging Bethany that the finest view of Jerusalem is gained. It appears from St. John (xii. 1) that our Lord on the preceding sabbath had supped, and probably passed the night, at Bethany; and that on

the following day (answering to our Palm Sunday) he had come still nearer to Jerusalem, namely, to Bethphage; and from thence he sent two of his disciples for the ass and the colt. So his way to Jerusalem was from Bethany by Bethphage, the Mount of Olives, and the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The Valley of Jehoshaphat, through which flows the brook Kedron, lies close to Jerusalem. Bethphage literally means "the house of green figs," as Bethany, lying a short distance west of it, means "the house of dates." The date palm growing in the neighbourhood would furnish the branches with which the multitude strewed the way on the occasion of our Lord's triumphal entry. **He sendeth two of his disciples.** Who were they? Bede thinks that they were Peter and Philip. Jansenius, with greater probability, thinks that they were Peter and John, because a little after this Christ sent these two to prepare for the Passover. But we know nothing certain on this point.

Ver. 2.—**Go your way into the village that is over against you.** The village over against them would most likely be Bethphage, towards which they were then approaching. **Straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat.** St. Mark mentions only the colt; St. Matthew mentions the ass and the colt. But St. Mark singles out the colt as that which our Lord specially needed; the mother of the animal accompanying it as a sumpter. Animals which had never before been used were alone admissible for sacred purposes. We read in Numbers (xix. 2) of "the heifer on which never came yoke." Our Lord here beholds things absent and out of sight, as though they were present. So that he revealed this to his disciples by the gift of prophecy which his divinity added to his humanity. Here, therefore, is a manifest proof of his divinity. It was by the same Divine power that he revealed to Nathanael what had taken place under the fig tree.

Ver. 3.—**And if any one say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, The Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him back hither.** The Greek, according to the best authorities here, is εὐθέως αὐτὸν ἀποστέλλει πάλιν ὧδε: literally, *straightway he sendeth it back hither again.* The verb here in the present may represent the verb in the future, "he will send it back." But the word "again" (πάλιν) is not quite so easily explained. There is strong authority for the insertion of this word, which necessarily changes the meaning of the sentence. Without the πάλιν, the sentence would actually mean that our Lord, by his Divine prescience, here tells his disciples that when the colt was demanded by them the owner would at once permit them to take it. But if the word πάλιν be inserted, it can only mean that this was a part of the message which our Lord directed his disciples to deliver as from himself, "The Lord hath need of him; and he, the Lord, will forthwith send him back again." The passage is so interpreted by Origen, who twice introduces the adverb in his commentary on St. Matthew. The evidence of the oldest uncials is strongly in favour of this insertion. Our Lord was unwilling that the disciples should take away the colt if the owner objected. He might have taken the animals away in his own supreme right, but he chose to accomplish his will by his providence, powerfully and yet gently; and, if the reading here be allowed, he further influenced them by the promise that their property should be returned to them. It was the will and purpose of Christ, who for these three years had gone about on foot, and travelled over the whole of Palestine in this way, to show himself at length the King of Judah, that is, the Messiah and Heir of David; and so he resolves to enter Jerusalem, the metropolis, the city of the great King, with royal dignity. But he will not be surrounded with the "pomp and circumstance" of an earthly monarch. He rides on an ass's colt, that he might show his kingdom to be of another kind, that is, spiritual and heavenly. And so he assumes a humble equipage, riding upon a colt, his only housings being the clothes of his disciples. And yet there was dignity as well as humility in his equipage. The ass of the East was, and is, a superior animal to that known amongst us. The judges and princes of Israel rode on "white asses," and their sons on asses' colts. So our Lord rode upon an ass's colt; and there were no gleaming swords in his procession, or other signs of strife and bloodshed. But there were palm branches and garments spread all along his path—the evidences of devotion to him. So he came in gentleness, not that he might be feared on account of his power, but that he might be loved on account of his goodness.

Ver. 4.—**By the door without, in a place where two ways met** (ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀμφόδου); literally, *in the open street.*

Ver. 8.—Others cut down branches off the trees, etc. According to the best authorities, the words should be rendered, *and others branches* (or, *leaves for strewing*), *which they had cut from the fields* (ἄλλοι δὲ στοιβάδας κόψαντες ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν). The branches were cut in the fields; and the smaller, leafy portions of them, suitable for their purpose, were carried out.

Ver. 9.—The word **Hosanna** literally means "Oh, save!" It may have been

originally the cry of captives or rebels for mercy; and thus have passed into a general acclamation, expressive of joy and deliverance.

Ver. 10.—This verse should be read thus: Blessed be the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David—that is, the kingdom of Messiah, now coming, and about to be established—Hosanna in the highest;—that is, Hosanna in the highest realms of glory and blessedness, where salvation is perfected.

Ver. 11.—This visit to the temple is not mentioned by St. Matthew. It is an important addition to his narrative. The moment of our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem was not the moment for the display of his indignation against the profaners of the temple. He was then surrounded by an enthusiastic and admiring multitude; so he contented himself on this occasion with looking round about upon all things (*περιβλεψάμενος πάντα*). His keen and searching eye saw at a glance all that was going on, and penetrated everything. But without any comment or action at that time, he went out unto Bethany (it was now eventide) with the twelve. No doubt the disciples, and especially Peter, saw what was involved in this visit of inspection, which prepared them for what took place on the morrow.

Ver. 12.—And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered. This was, therefore, the day after Palm Sunday (as we call it)—on the Monday, the 11th day of the month Nisan, which, according to our computation, would be March 21. *He hungered.* This showed his humanity, which he was ever wont to do when he was about to display his Divine power. The fact that he hungered would lead us to the conclusion that he had not been spending the night in the house of Martha and Mary. It is far more likely that he had been in the open air during the previous night, fasting and praying.

Ver. 13.—And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon. St. Matthew (xxi. 19) says he saw "*one* fig tree" (*μίαν συκῆν*), and therefore more conspicuous. Fig trees were no doubt plentiful in the neighbourhood of Bethphage, "the house of figs." Dean Stanley ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 418) says that "Mount Olivet is still sprinkled with fig trees." This fig tree had leaves, but no fruit; for it was not the season of figs (*ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς οὐκ ἦν σύκων*). Other trees would all be bare at this early season, but the fig trees would be putting forth their broad green leaves. It is possible that this tree, standing by itself as it would seem, was more forward than the other fig trees around. It was seen "from afar," and therefore it must have had the full benefit of the sun. Our Lord says (St. Luke xxi. 29), "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth, ye see it, and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh." He puts the fig tree first, as being of its own nature the most forward to put forth its buds. But then it is peculiar to the fig tree that its fruit begins to appear before its leaves. It was, therefore, a natural supposition that on this tree, with its leaves fully developed, there might be found at least some ripened fruit. Our Lord, therefore, approaches the tree in his hunger, with the expectation of finding fruit. But as he draws near to it, and realizes the fact that the tree, though full of leaf, is absolutely fruitless, he forgets his natural hunger in the thought of the spiritual figure which this tree began to present to his mind. The accident of his hunger as a man, brought him into contact with a great parable of spiritual things, presented to him as God; and as he approached this fig tree full of leaf, but destitute of fruit, there stood before him the striking but awful image of the Jewish nation, having indeed the leaves of a great profession, but yielding no fruit. The leaves of this fig tree deceived the passer-by, who, from seeing them, would naturally expect the fruit. And so the fig tree was cursed, not for being barren, but for being false. When our Lord, being hungry, sought figs on the fig tree, he signified that he hungered after something which he did not find. The Jews were this unprofitable fig tree, full of the leaves of profession, but fruitless. Our Lord never did anything without reason; and, therefore, when he seemed to do anything without reason, he was setting forth in a figure some great reality. Nothing but his Divine yearning after the Jewish people, his spiritual hunger for their salvation, can explain this typical action with regard to the fig tree, and indeed the whole mystery of his life and death.

Ver. 14.—No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever (*εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*). These words, in their application to the Jewish nation, have a merciful limitation—a limitation which lies in the original words rendered "for ever," which literally mean *for the age.* "No man eat fruit of thee henceforward, for the age;" until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. A day will doubtless come when Israel, which now says, "I am a dry tree," shall accept the words of its true Lord, "From me is thy fruit found," and shall be clothed with the richest fruits of all trees. (See Trench on the Miracles). St. Matthew (xxi. 19) tells us that "immediately the fig tree withered

away." "Straightway a shivering fear and trembling passed through its leaves, as though it was at once struck to the heart by the malediction of its Creator." Our Lord's disciples heard his words; but they appear not to have noticed the immediate effect of them upon the tree. It was not until the next day that they observed what had happened. This miracle would show his disciples how soon he could have withered his enemies, who were about to crucify him; but he waited with long-suffering for their salvation, by repentance and faith in him.

Ver. 15.—**And they come to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple.** Not the holy place, nor the holy of holies (into which the high priest might alone enter), but into the temple court; for into that the people went to pray, and to witness the sacrifices which were being offered before the holy place; for this court was, so to speak, the temple of the people. Our Lord was not a Levitical priest, because he was not sprung of Levi and Aaron. Therefore he could not enter the holy place, but only the outer court of the temple. **And began to cast out** (ἐκβάλλειν)—it was a forcible expulsion—**them that sold and them that bought in the temple.** There were two occasions on which our Lord thus purged the temple—one at the beginning of his public ministry, and the other at the end of it, four days before his death. There was a regular market in the outer court, the court of the Gentiles, belonging to the family of the high priest. The booths of this market are mentioned in the rabbinical writings as the booths of the son of Hanan, or Annas. But this market is never mentioned in the Old Testament. It seems to have sprung up after the Captivity. Our Lord adopted these strong measures (1) because the temple courts were not the proper places for merchandise, and (2) because these transactions were often dishonest, on account of the avarice and covetousness of the priests. The priests, either themselves or by their families, sold oxen and sheep and doves to those who had need to offer them in the temple. These animals were, of course, needed for sacrifices; and there was good reason why they should be ready at hand for those who came up to worship. But the sin of the priests lay in permitting this buying and selling to go on *within* the sacred precincts, and in trading dishonestly. There were other things needed for the sacrifices, such as wine, and salt, and oil. Then there were also the **money-changers** (κολλυβιστής, from κόλλυβος, a small coin)—those who exchanged large coins for smaller, or foreign money for the half-shekel. Every Israelite, whether rich or poor, was required to give the half-shekel, neither less nor more. So when money had to be exchanged, an allowance or premium was required by the money-changer. Doves or pigeons were required on various occasions for offerings, chiefly by the poor, who could not afford more costly offerings. From these also the priests had their gain. **The seats of them that sold the doves.** These birds were often sold by women, who were provided with seats.

Ver. 16.—**And he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple.** It was a great temptation to make the temple, at least the great court of the Gentiles, a thoroughfare. It was so extensive that a long and tedious circuit would be avoided, in going from one part of the city to another, by passing through it. To those, for example, who were passing from the sheep market, Bethesda, into the upper part of the city, the shortest cut was through this court and by Solomon's Porch. The distance would be greatly increased if they went round it. So the priests permitted servants and labourers, laden with anything, to take this shorter way through the great court of the temple. But our Lord hindered them, forbidding them with the voice of one that had authority, and restraining them with his hand, and compelling them to go back. He would have the whole of his Father's House regarded as sacred.

Ver. 17.—**My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations** (πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). St. Mark, writing for Gentiles, assures them that the God of the Jews is the God of all the nations; and that the court of the Gentiles, which was then so profaned, was a constituent part of his house of prayer. St. Jerome notes Christ's action in driving out the profaners of the temple as a great proof of his Divine power, that he alone should have been able to cast out so great a multitude. He says, "A fiery splendour flashed from his eyes, and the majesty of Deity shone in his countenance." The words, "My house shall be called the house of prayer," are a quotation from Isa. lvi. 7; and it is a remarkable coincidence that in ver. 11 of that chapter the rulers of the people are described as looking "every one for his gain from his quarter." **A den of thieves** (σπήλαιον λῃστῶν); this should be rendered, *a den of robbers.* The Greek word for "thief" is κλέπτης, not λῃστής. The two terms are carefully distinguished in St. John (x. 1), "the same is a thief (κλέπτης) and a robber (λῃστής)." These priests, wholly intent upon gain, by various fraudulent acts plundered strangers and the poor, who came to purchase offerings for the worship of God. Observe that the temple is called the house of God, not because he dwells in it in any corporeal

sense, for "he dwelleth not in temples made with hands," but because the temple is the place set apart for the worship of God, in which he specially gives ear to the prayers of his people, and in which he specially promises his spiritual presence. Hence we learn what reverence is due to the houses of God; so that, as the master of a house resents any insult offered to his house as an insult to himself, so Christ reckons any wilful dishonour done to his house as a wrong and insult to him.

Ver. 18.—**And the chief priests and the scribes**—this is the right order of the words—**heard it** (*ἤκουσαν*), **and sought** (*ἐζήτουν*)—*began to seek*, or *were seeking* (imperfect)—**how they might destroy him** (*ἀπολέσουσιν*). They were seeking how they might, not only put him to death, but "utterly destroy him," stamp out his name and influence as a great spiritual energy in the world. This action of his raised them to the highest pitch of fury and indignation. Their authority and their interests were attacked. But the people still acknowledged his power; and the scribes and Pharisees feared the people.

Ver. 19.—**And when even was come**; literally, *and whenever* (*ὅταν*) *evening came*; that is, *every evening*. During these last days before his crucifixion, he remained in Jerusalem during the day, and went back to Bethany at night. St. Matthew says (xxi. 17), speaking of one of these days, "And he left them, and went forth out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there." So true it was that "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." No one in that city, which he loved so well, offered to receive him. The end was drawing near. But the intercourse with Martha and Mary must have been soothing to him; and Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem.

Vers. 20, 21.—**And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots.** They had returned the evening before, probably after sunset, to Bethany; and so, in the twilight, had not noticed the withered tree. St. Matthew gathers the whole account of the fig tree into one notice. St. Mark disposes of the facts in their chronological order. It was on the Monday morning, the day after the triumphant entry, and when they were on their way to Jerusalem, that our Lord cursed the fig tree. Thence he passed on at once into Jerusalem, and drove out the profaners of the temple, and taught the people. In the evening he returned to Bethany; and then on the next morning, as they were on their way into the city, they saw what had happened to the fig tree. **And then Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away** (*ἐξήρανται*), the same Greek word as in the preceding verse. Some have thought that the fig tree was the tree forbidden to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. (See Cornelius à Lapide on Gen. ii. 9).

Vers. 22, 23.—**Have faith in God**; literally, *have the faith of God*—full, perfect, effectual faith in him; faith like a grain of mustard seed. You may be staggered and perplexed at what you will see shortly; but "have faith in God." The Jews may seem for a time to flourish like that green fig tree; but they will "soon be cut down as the grass, and be withered as the green herb." What seems difficult to you is easy with God. Trust in the Divine omnipotence. The things which are impossible with men are possible with him. Our Lord then uses a metaphor frequently employed to indicate the accomplishment of things so difficult as to be apparently impossible. He employs a bold and vivid hyperbole; and, pointing probably to the Mount of Olives overhanging them, and on the shoulders of which they were then standing, he says, "With this faith you might say to this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, and it shall come to pass."

Ver. 24.—**All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them; and ye shall have them.** But you must "ask in faith, nothing wavering."

Ver. 25.—**And whersoever ye stand praying** (*στήκητε προσευχόμενοι*). The ordinary attitude of Eastern nations in prayer is here indicated, namely, "standing," with the head, doubtless, bowed in reverence. The promise of this text is that requests offered in prayer by a faithful heart will be granted—granted as God knows best. The connection of these verses with the former is close. One great hindrance to the faith without which there can be no spiritual power, is the presence of angry and uncharitable feelings. These must all be put away if we would hope for a favourable answer from God.

Ver. 26.—There appears to be sufficient evidence to justify the Revisers in their omission of this verse; although its omission or retention does not affect the general exegesis of the passage.

Vers. 27, 28.—**By what authority doest thou these things?** We learn from ver. 18 that the chief priests and scribes had already been seeking how they might destroy him, and they wanted to establish some definite charge, whether of blasphemy or of sedition, against him. They now approach him as he walked in the temple, and demand by what authority he was doing these things, such as casting out the pro-

fanes of the temple, teaching and instructing the people, accepting their Hosannas, etc. **And who gave thee this authority to do these things?** According to the best reading, this sentence should run, *or* (ἢ instead of καὶ) *who gave thee*, etc., instead of "and who gave thee," etc. So that the questions are directed to two things—was his authority inherent? or, was it derived?

Ver. 29.—**I will ask of you one question** (ἐπερωτήσω ὑμᾶς ἕνα λόγον). The verb justifies the translation, *one question*, for "one word." The question which our Lord put to them was one on which hung the solution of that proposed by the scribes. It is as though he said, "You do not believe me when I say that I have received power from God. Believe then John the Baptist, who bare witness of me that I was sent from God to do these things."

Ver. 30.—**The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men?** By the "baptism of John" our Lord means his testimony concerning himself, his doctrine, and all his preaching. It is a synecdoche—the part put for the whole. The argument is incontrovertible. It is this: "You ask from whence I derive my authority—from God or from men? I in my turn ask you from whom did John the Baptist derive his authority to baptize and to teach? from heaven or from men? If he had it from God, as all will confess, then I too have the same from God; for John testified of me, saying that he was but a servant, the friend of the Bridegroom; but that I was the Messiah, the Son of God: and this too when you sent messengers to him for his special purpose, that you might know from him whether he was the Messias." (See John i. 20; x. 41.) **Answer me.** This is characteristic of St. Mark's style, and of our Lord's dignified earnestness.

Vers. 31, 32.—**They reasoned with themselves**, like men anxious and perplexed. **If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?** For he told you I was the promised Messias, and bade you prepare yourselves by repentance to receive my grace and salvation. **But should we say, From men—they feared the people:** for **all verily held John to be a prophet.** This is a broken sentence, but very expressive. The evangelist leaves his reader to supply what they meant. They deemed it prudent not to finish the sentence; and probably cut it short with some significant gesture. They did not like to confess that they feared the people; although this was the true reason why they hesitated to say that John's baptism was of men. They knew that all the people held John to be a prophet. They were thus thrown on one or other horn of a dilemma.

Ver. 33.—**We know not.** They had seen the life of John. They had heard his holy and Divine teaching. They were witnesses to his death for the truth; and yet they lie. They might have said, "We think it imprudent or inexpedient to say;" but for this they had not sufficient moral courage. **Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.** You will not answer my question; neither will I therefore answer yours; because your answer to mine is the answer to your own. "He thus shows," says St. Jerome, "that they knew, but would not answer; and that he knew, but did not speak, because they were silent as to what they knew." Our Lord did thus but mete out to them the measure which they meted to him.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The triumphal entry.* Christ was a King, but his royalty was misunderstood during his ministry upon earth. The devil had offered him the kingdoms of this world, and he had refused them. The people would have taken him by force and have made him a king, but he had hidden himself from them. Yet it was right and meet that he should in some way assume a kingly state and accept royal honours. The triumphal entry interests us, because it was the acknowledgment and reception of Jesus with the joyful homage due to him as King of Israel and King of men.

I. THE OCCASION OF THIS HOMAGE. Our Lord Jesus knew well what was to be the issue of this his last visit to the metropolis. He foresaw, and he had foretold in the hearing of his disciples, that he was about to be put to a violent death. Notwithstanding his clear perception of this his approaching sacrifice, he had come cheerfully to the city where he was to share the fate of the prophets. It is absurd to draw from this narrative the inference that Jesus was now looking for popular and national acceptance; he was not so misled. But it is remarkable that he should choose to receive the homage of the multitude almost upon the eve of his betrayal and condemnation. In his apprehension, the Priesthood and the Kingship of the Messiah were most closely connected. And to our minds there is no discordance between the sorrows

Jesus was about to endure and the honours he now consented to accept. The occasion was well chosen, and brings before us our Lord's independence of all human standards and preconceptions. Ours was a King whose royalty suffered no tarnishing of its splendour when he rode in majesty, although he rode to death.

II. THE SCENE OF THIS HOMAGE. 1. It was the scene of his ministry. In and near Jerusalem many of Christ's mighty works had been wrought, many of his discourses had been delivered, many of his disciples had been made. It was becoming that for once, in this scene of his labours, his claims should be publicly recognized and his honour publicly displayed. 2. It was to be the scene of his martyrdom and sacrifice. It has often been noted, as a witness to human fickleness, that the same roads and public places should within a few days resound with the incongruous shouts, "Hosanna!" and "Crucify him!" How true was the language of Pilate—they crucified their King! On the one hand, it could not be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem; on the other hand, it was fitting that the city of David should openly welcome and acknowledge David's Son and David's Lord, and the establishment of the predicted kingdom.

III. THE OFFERERS OF THIS HOMAGE. There were, amongst those who welcomed Jesus, his own attendants and disciples, the villagers from Bethany, the citizens of Jerusalem, and the Galilean pilgrims who had come up to the feast. The multitude was a very varied and representative crowd, including Israelites of many classes, and doubtless differing from one another in the measure of their knowledge of Jesus and their appreciation of his character and his claims. As is often the case when Christ is extolled and praised, some were drawn into the general enthusiasm and rejoicing by the force of example and under the inspiration of feeling. The general welcome was an anticipation of the honour which shall be rendered to Jesus, when "every tongue shall acknowledge him to be Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

IV. BY WHAT ACTIONS THIS HOMAGE WAS EXPRESSED. The simple circumstances of this entry, so natural and almost childlike, are all significant of our Saviour's dignity and majesty. In the bringing of the ass's colt for him to ride, there was a fulfilment of an ancient prediction; and the act itself, according to the usage of the East, was becoming to royalty. In the spreading of their garments upon the foal's back, the strewing the road with their clothes and with the branches of trees, there was a picturesque, if very simple, expression of their admiring reverence and loyalty.

V. THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH THIS HOMAGE WAS UTTERED. The unpremeditated shouts and exclamations with which Jesus was greeted were an expression of fervid, popular sentiment. Yet they were also to some extent a confession of Jesus' Messiahship and an acknowledgment of his royalty. 1. Notice the character in which they hailed him: he came "in the Name of the Lord;" he brought in "the kingdom of David." Drawn from Hebrew prophecy, these appellations could not be used without a very special significance. 2. Notice the joyous language in which they hailed him. They called him "Blessed!" they greeted him with the cry, "Hosanna in the highest!" It was enthusiastic and lofty language; but meaner terms would have been inappropriate, unworthy, and unjust.

Vers. 12—14, 19—25.—*The fruit of the fruitless fig tree.* This action of our Lord Jesus is one of the very few he is recorded to have performed to which exception has been taken. It has been objected that the "cursing" of the fig tree was a vindictive act, and unlike and unworthy of the gracious and beneficent Redeemer. In answer to this objection, a distinction must be drawn between a vindictive and a judicial proceeding; the latter having no element of personal irritation or ill feeling. It must not be forgotten that the Lord Jesus was and is the Judge, and this symbolical action was a picture of his judicial function in exercise. It has also been objected that the doom pronounced and carried into effect was unjust, inasmuch as the season for figs had not yet come, and Jesus looked for what, in the nature of things, it was not reasonable to expect. In answer to this, it must be remembered that trees have no consciousness, and no capacity for sentient suffering; and that, in the analogous case of the barren professor of religion, no sentence of condemnation is pronounced except as the consequence of moral culpability. This passage has two distinct movements, each containing its own spiritual lesson impressively conveyed.

I. HERE IS A SYMBOL OF "JUDGMENT IN THE HOUSE OF GOD." 1. The fruitless fig tree is an emblem of the immoral or useless professor of Christianity. Leaves are beautiful in themselves, are indicative of life and vital vigour, and seem to promise fruit; yet, in the case of such trees as that here spoken of, it is the fruit which is the end for which the tree is allowed to occupy ground, to absorb nourishment, to engage the toil of the husbandman or gardener. So in the moral domain. The foliage corresponds to outward position, to visible standing, and audible confession. These are excellent and admirable where they are not deceptive. But where there is "nothing but leaves" to meet the eye of the husbandman, where there is the "name to live" without the life, where there is the language of belief and of devotion with no corresponding principles and conduct,—all this is disappointing to the Divine Husbandman and Vine-dresser. 2. The withering of the fig tree is symbolical of the moral doom and destruction of the unfruitful professor of religion. The tree may live, although it bear no fruit. But the fruitless Christian carries his own condemnation within him. The Lord who came to earth to save, lives in heaven to reign, and finally will return to judge. It would not be just to found an argument upon what is but an illustration. Nevertheless, there is very much express teaching from our Lord's lips as to the doom of the hypocrite. The fruitless scribes and Pharisees incurred his anger and his condemnation; and there is no reason to suppose that those more privileged, and equally false and spiritually worthless, can escape their doom. To be fruitless is to "wither away." For the barren there is no place in the vineyard of God.

II. HERE IS INSTRUCTION AS TO THE POWER OF FAITH AND PRAYER. It is a lesson we should scarcely have expected to find attached to this miracle. The amazement of Peter and the other disciples was excited by this exercise of power on the part of the Master. In reply to their expressions of wonder, Jesus, who was ever ready to give to the conversation a practical and profitable turn, discoursed upon the power of faith and prayer. 1. Faith gives efficacy to *effort*. It removes mountains. But such is not the work of the doubter or of the vacillating. All moral miracles and spiritual triumphs are due to the faith which is placed, not in human skill or power, but in God himself. 2. Faith gives efficacy to *prayer*. There are those who are mighty in prayer. This is because they believe in God, to whom "all things are possible." Hesitating, half-hearted prayer is dishonouring to God. We are directed to believe that we have received, at the very moment when we offer our entreaties; which is certainly only possible to strong faith. Yet what encouragement is there so to pray! 3. The works which may in this manner be accomplished, the blessings which may thus be obtained, are described in remarkable language. Trees may be withered, mountains may be removed, *all things* may be had, by those who have faith. No wonder that the poet says of faith, it—

> "Laughs at impossibilities,
> And cries, 'It shall be done!'"

4. Yet there is a condition of a moral kind laid down by Christ. A sincere and forgiving disposition is indispensable. If we appeal to a gracious and benignant Father, if we ask of him needed forgiveness, we must approach him with a mind unstained by wrath, by malice, by any lack of charity.

Vers. 15—18.—*The holy house.* It is significant that our Lord should have performed the authoritative and symbolical act of cleansing the temple *twice*—at the commencement, and again at the close, of his ministry. We learn that no real reformation had taken place in the religious habits of the chief priests and the people who frequented the holy place; they continued to practise the abuses which had been already so justly and so sternly rebuked. And we learn also that Jesus, although hated and despised by the rulers, had abated none of his claims to authority and jurisdiction.

I. THE OCCASION OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITATIVE INTERFERENCE. 1. This was the *abuse* of the temple. The holy house had been erected for the manifestation of the Divine glory, the celebration of Divine worship, the realization of Divine communion. No other material structure has ever possessed the sanctity which attached to this. There were grades of sanctity, culminating in the holy of holies; yet all the precincts and courts were consecrated to the God of Israel. To turn such a building to any

secular purpose was an unjustifiable abuse. 2. The *profanation* of the temple. Three stages of profanation were referred to: vessels used for common purposes were carried through the courts; money was exchanged—foreign money, with the images, the superscription, the symbols, which denoted heathenism, for the shekels of the sanctuary; and doves and other victims, used for sacrifice and offerings, were openly bought and sold. Turning the sacred precincts to purposes of gain was a heinous offence against the majesty of the Lord of the temple. 3. But even this was not the worst, for there is implied the *violation* of the temple. The traffic which took place was distinguished by injustice and fraud: "Ye have made it a den of robbers." The family of the high priest are known to have made this merchandise a source of unlawful gain. In the exchange of money there was unfairness, in the sale of animals there was extortion. It was bad enough that in the Lord's house there should be trading, it was far worse that there should be rapacity and fraud.

II. THE MANNER OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITATIVE INTERFERENCE. 1. This was *independent*. Jesus took counsel of no one, but acted of his own accord, as One who had no superior to whom to refer. He acted in his own Name and in that of his Father. 2. It was *peremptory*. We feel that it was but seldom that the meek and lowly Jesus acted as on this occasion. There was an unsparing severity in his action and in his language, when rescuing the holy house from the profane intruders. He did well to be angry. 3. It was *impressive*. The priests, who profited by the robbery, were enraged; the scribes, who resented the exercise of authority by the Nazarene, were incensed; and the people, who witnessed this remarkable act, were astonished.

III. THE JUSTIFICATION BY CHRIST OF HIS AUTHORITATIVE INTERFERENCE. Our Lord not only acted; he taught and explained the meaning of his action. We cannot suppose that he was animated by any superstitious feelings in so acting, and the record shows us what were his motives. 1. He regarded the temple as the *house of his Father, God*. 2. It was in his view the *house of prayer*, and was to be reserved for communion between human spirits and him who is the Father of spirits. 3. And it was intended for the service of all nations, which gave it a peculiar dignity and sacredness in his eyes. These considerations show why a Teacher, whose whole teaching was peculiarly spiritual, should display a zeal for the sanctity of a local and material representation of a Divine presence.

IV. THE RESULTS OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITATIVE INTERFERENCE. 1. Its immediate effect was to provoke the dread, the malice, and the plots of the scribes and priests. The incident occurred but a few days before our Lord's crucifixion, and it appears to have led to that awful event. In their own interests, the religious leaders of the Jews felt themselves constrained to crush the power of One whose conduct and teaching were so inconsistent with their own. Thus one of the highest exercises of our Lord's righteous authority was the occasion of his most cruel humiliation and shameful death. 2. Its more remote effect has been to enhance the conception entertained of Christ's character and official dignity and power. Humanity is God's true temple, too long defiled by the occupation of the spiritual foe, and desecrated to the service of sin. Christ is the Divine Purifier, who dispossesses the enemy, and restores the sanctuary to its destined ends, the indwelling, the worship, and the glory of the Eternal!

Vers. 27—33.—*Authority vindicated.* The conflict between the Divine Prophet and the leaders of the Jewish people was now at its height. Jesus knew that his hour was at hand, and no longer either concealed himself, or restrained his tongue from words of merited indignation, rebuke, and almost defiance. Thus the enmity of his foes was provoked, and his condemnation was assured.

I. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WAS PUBLICLY ASSERTED AND EXERCISED. In three respects this was now made most plain. 1. The teaching of Jesus at this time was characterized by the assumption of a superiority of knowledge and insight which must have been galling to the pride of his questioners, and which they may have deemed altogether arrogant. 2. His public entry into Jerusalem in a kind of kingly state must have aroused their hostility; for, without courting their favour or support, he took to himself the homage due to the King of Israel. 3. His cleansing of the temple was an authoritative act, which was felt all the more acutely by his enemies as an attack upon themselves, because their own practices were rebuked and their own

credit was threatened, not to say that the base gains of some of them were imperilled. In these respects Christ claimed and exercised a special and vast authority.

II. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WAS PUBLICLY QUESTIONED AND IMPUGNED. It is evident that it was a formal deputation which surrounded him in the temple, and sought to overawe and silence him by the question which they put: "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave it thee?" There was on their part the assumption of their own judicial right to inquire, to silence, to condemn. They had acted in a very similar manner with respect to John the Baptist. To us this deputation, and its inquisitorial proceedings, are interesting, because they conclusively establish the fact that the Lord Jesus *did* claim to act as none other acted, and thus aroused the hostility of his unsympathizing and unspiritual foes.

III. CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WAS PUBLICLY VINDICATED BY HIMSELF. The way in which he did this is remarkable. 1. Why did not Jesus directly account for his actions to the priests, scribes, and elders? *Because* he had done no wrong; in the acts he had publicly performed there was nothing for which they dared expressly to impugn him. *Because* they themselves had corruptly suffered and justified one of the evils which he had redressed. To this their conscience testified. *Because*, being unable to defend their own position, they could not be allowed to attack his. *Because*, above all, being what he was, he was not accountable, either to them or to others, for his actions. 2. Why did Jesus vindicate himself by retorting upon his assailants? by reducing them to helpless silence? *Because* he thus made evident the agreement between John's ministry and his own. It was well known that John had confessed Jesus to be the One who should come, the Messiah. Jesus appealed to John's witness, at the same time claiming to have greater witness than that of John. *Because* he thus exhibited the utter incompetency of his enemies to judge his claims. They were not prepared publicly either to avow or to disavow sympathy with, confidence in, the ministry of the great forerunner. How, then, could any stress be laid upon their judgment with respect to him to whom John had witnessed? 3. What was the effect of this method of dealing with his assailants? It is evident that the leaders of the Jews were discredited and put to shame. It is equally evident that the minds of the people were influenced in Christ's favour. But, above all, the true, proper, underived, and incomparable authority of Christ shines forth in unrivalled brightness and beauty. The surf beats upon the rock, but it falls off, powerless and defeated; whilst the rock stands out in its rugged and impressive grandeur, its stability appearing all the more manifestly immovable because of the feebleness and vanity of the repeated and furious assaults of the tempestuous sea.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The triumphal entry into Jerusalem.* "To Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany," the order of mention being determined by reckoning *from the place whither* the movement was being made. They began, therefore, with Bethany. It was familiar ground, fragrant with tender associations with both the human and the Divine.

I. PREPARATIONS. The triumph was foreseen by Christ, and he made arrangements for its being celebrated with becoming order and dignity. 1. *The unforeseen and unexpected was foreseen and prepared for by Christ.* If Divine advents are delayed, or Divine celebrations fail of their loftiest end, it is not because of failure or unreadiness in him. He was willing to have made this triumph a real, permanent, and universal one. He is ever in advance of the event, whether it be a triumph or a crucifixion. Above all, he was ready in himself. 2. *It was to his own disciples he looked for the supply of what was required for his triumph.* He appealed to their recognition of his authority—"the Lord." The claim was allowed by the stranger who owned the colt. It was freely given when asked. Christians are to make ready for their Lord's triumph. They have all that he needs, if it be but freely rendered. He will throne himself amidst their gifts if they have him enthroned in their hearts. Nothing but what is freely rendered is acceptable to him or desired by him. It should be enough for a disciple to know what the Lord will have him do and of what the Lord has need.

II. THE TRIUMPH. It was a simple procession, gradually increasing in volume and excitement as it approached the city. 1. *The movement was natural and spontaneous.* No signs of getting it up. The enthusiasm it expressed already existed. Direction and order were imparted, but the motive was self-developed. 2. *It was of a predominantly spiritual character.* The attraction did not lie in the accessories, but in the central Figure. Never had the native glory of the Messiah been so manifest. The Jews, had they only known, were on the verge of an apocalypse, which only depended upon their spiritual preparedness. "Meekness is nobler and mightier than force, goodness than grandeur" (Godwin). 3. *It was a manifest fulfilment of prophecy.* The people were conscious of it as they shouted. Their words are a quotation from Ps. cxviii. "(1) 'Hosanna!' The word was a Hebrew imperative, 'Save us, we beseech thee,' and had come into liturgical use from Ps. cxviii. That psalm belonged specially to the Feast of Tabernacles, and as such was naturally associated with the palm branches; the verses from it now chanted by the people are said to have been those with which the inhabitants of Jerusalem were wont to welcome the pilgrims who came up to keep the feast. The addition of 'Hosanna to the Son of David' made it a direct recognition of the claims of Jesus to be the Christ; that of 'Hosanna in the highest' (comp. Luke ii. 14) claimed heaven as in accord with earth in this recognition. (2) 'Blessed be ['the King,' in St. Luke] he that cometh in the Name of the Lord.' These words, too, received a special, personal application. The welcome was now given, not to the crowd of pilgrims, but to the King. (3) As in St. Luke, one of the cries was an echo of the angels' hymn at the Nativity, 'Peace on earth, and glory in the highest' (Luke ii. 14). (4) As in St. Mark, 'Blessed be the kingdom of our father David.' We have to think of these shouts as filling the air as he rides slowly on in silence. He will not check them at the bidding of the Pharisees (Luke xix. 39), but his own spirit is filled with quite other thoughts than theirs" (Plumptre). Yet, because of the unpreparedness of the people, the fulfilment was only provisional, not ultimate; typical, not actual. In its spiritual idea, its universal influence ("all the city was moved"), its spontaneous acclaim, it spoke of that which is to come; in its outwardness, its question, "Who is this?" and answer, "This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee," its readiness to pass from praise to execration, it showed how distant the people were from the true realization.

III. CULMINATING SOVEREIGNTY. 1. *Seen in the destination to which he came.* "*He entered the temple.*" He is Priest as well as King. "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii. 6). It is from the holy place that his rule extends; and there it begins, and is most intensely and specially exercised. He is Key to all the mysteries there; Centre of all the symbols and rites. This suggests that his reign is primarily and essentially a spiritual one. As King of saints he reigns in the earth. 2. *Expressed and exercised in a "look."* "*He looked round about upon all things.*" "Not simply as one might gaze who had never been there before: an arbitrary and wanton idea; but as one who had a right to inspect the condition of the place, and who was determined to assert and exercise that right" (Morison). So is he Lord of that temple not made with hands—the *body* in which he dwelt, and the *spirit* in which he offered the eternal sacrifice; and so will he take account of the secrets of human nature in the great day, for is he not "the Son of man"?—M.

Ver. 3.—"*The Lord hath need of him.*" How singular the conjunction! Need of a *colt!* In what sense was such a creature necessary for the Lord of all? In what sense is anything created necessary to the Creator? As showing forth his glory, and fulfilling his purposes.

I. THE LOWLIEST THINGS HAVE SOME HIGH PURPOSE, OR CAPACITY OF GLORIFYING GOD.

II. IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES THE LOWLIEST THINGS MAY EXCLUSIVELY OR MORE FITTINGLY EXPRESS A CERTAIN PHASE OF THE DIVINE GLORY. What else could so set forth the meekness, the lowliness, of the Son of man? or the privilege and freedom of the young Church, of which he was the only burden and law? In that colt the brute world had its most honoured representative. So in human poverty, simplicity, weakness, and ignorance, the glory of God may be shown forth the more conspicuously.

III. LET US LOOK FOR AND GIVE EFFECT TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST, *i.e.* OF GOD, IN ALL THINGS.

IV. A FORTIORI LET US OFFER OUR OWN SELVES, SO GLORIOUSLY ENDOWED, IN PERSONAL CONSECRATION AND EFFORT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. If he had need for a colt, we cannot say he has no need for us.—M.

Ver. 11.—*Jesus surveying the temple.* I. A SIGN OF AUTHORITY. Supreme, absolute, spiritual.

II. AN EXERCISE OF JUDGMENT. Inward, unerring, and from the highest standpoint.

III. AN EXPRESSION OF GRIEF AND DISAPPOINTMENT. There is nothing upon which the look can rest with approval and satisfaction. It goes round, but returns not. It goes through and beyond. The temple in its condition was symbolical of the people.

IV. A TOKEN OF FORBEARING MERCY. Only a look, for the present. He has it not in his heart to inflict the final stroke at once. He will wait. A day of grace is still left. Is this our case—as a Church? as individuals?—M.

Vers. 12—14, 20—25.—*The destruction of the fig tree.* I. THE SUFFICIENT REASON FOR THE ACT. 1. *Not an outcome of petulance or disappointment.* The idea of Christ being "in a temper" is preposterous! The difficulty as to the phrases, "if haply he might find anything thereon," and "he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs," is for the most part factitious and artificial. Our Lord was not mistaken—first expectant and then disappointed. "He came to the tree, not for the sake of eating, but for the sake of performing an adumbrative action (sed aliquid præfigurandi causa)" (Zuingli). "His hunger, too, was the occasion that gave shape to his adumbrative action, when he went to the leafy tree to see if there was fruit on it" (Morison). 2. But neither was it *an action symbolizing the penalty of spiritual barrenness.* Its proximity in spirit and time to the cleansing of the temple inclines the mind to a parabolic meaning in that direction; so also Peter's strong word "cursedst," which seems at first to convey an impression of moral displeasure. As a merely natural incident, it is hard to reduce the disproportion it exhibits between the apparently judicial sentence and its occasion. On the other hand, it is harder still to explain Christ's total silence as to the reference to spiritual barrenness and its penalty, if such a reference had ever been intended. The circumstance that a day intervened between the sentence of Christ and Peter's noting the result, would seem to demand that the Master should have "pointed the moral" in some more manifest way. Again, what he did teach concerning the occurrence, so far as it has been preserved, suggests that the action was "adumbrative" in a simpler and more direct sense, of that, namely, of which he spoke—*the power of God commanded through faith.* "The significance of this event is different from that of the parable given by St. Luke (xiii. 6), to show the doom of impenitence. In that, the fig tree was planted in a vineyard; everything was done for its culture that could be done; and not till after years of barrenness was it cut down. Here the fig tree was growing by the road; it belonged to no one, and nothing had been done for its improvement; and it was destroyed when its uselessness was made manifest. It was fruitless, because the fruit season had not come, and no old fruit remained on the branches. It was, therefore, not a fit emblem of the impenitent Jews. But the destruction of a senseless and worthless thing made known the power of Christ, as sufficient to destroy, though used only to restore" (Godwin, 'Matthew'). As illustrative of Divine power it was splendidly significant. To wither was within the power of any one, but to *wither by a word* was a supernatural act only possible to one in closest fellowship with God.

II. CHRIST'S OWN APPLICATION OF THE INCIDENT. "Have faith in God." 1. *Greater results than it are attained by his servants if they will but believe.* (1) In doing. The words "shall say unto this mountain," etc., are figurative. A magnificent promise! Not only such an act as the withering of the fig tree, but one comparable to the uprooting of the Mount of Olives on which it grew (against which, by the way, there could surely be no "judicial resentment" even in the most metaphorical sense). It is spoken of moral and spiritual difficulties met with in fulfilling the great commission, or in individual spiritual growth. (2) In receiving. Here the whole doctrine of prayer came up again for review. The answer was not to be merely looked forward to as coming, or even imminent, but was to be realized as already fulfilling itself in present

experience. A secret of intense and successful devotion. 2. *The ground of all such power is moral and spiritual oneness with God.* The general conditions of prayer being answered, viz. agreeableness to the Divine will, advantage of the kingdom of God, etc., are all supposed. But, in addition, the boon of forgiveness is chiefly referred to as of greatest moment; and, in connection with it, the necessity of a forgiving disposition in the petitioner, as a condition of his being answered. This is one of the highest phases of spiritual or moral power, and is only possible through partaking of the Divine Spirit, in other words, through oneness with God.—M.

Vers. 15—19.—*Jesus cleansing the temple.* A second occasion; the first occurring at the beginning of his ministry (John ii. 13—17). A fulfilment of Mal. iii. 1, 2.

I. THERE IS A TENDENCY IN THE MOST SACRED INSTITUTIONS TO DECAY AND ABUSE. Most of the abominations swept away by Christ had their origin in immemorial custom, and the demands of the worshippers themselves. Traffic came to assume a religious character, and gain was excused on account of ceremonial exigencies and conveniences. This tendency recurs and culminates. How suggestive the contrast—"a house of prayer," "a den of thieves"!

II. THIS IS DUE TO LOSING SIGHT OF THE ORIGINAL SPIRIT AND PURPOSE. The essence of the old worship was simple, personal devotion, of which rites and sacrifices were only of use as the expression. Through the intrusion of the business spirit, the latter came to be regarded as important for their own sake.

III. JESUS CHRIST IS THE CHIEF AUTHOR AND RESTORER OF PURE WORSHIP. This act of Christ is in perfect accord with his whole character and life. It but expresses his spirit and influence. Every reform or advance of the Church is due to his agency.

IV. HE EFFECTS THIS THROUGH HIS SPIRIT, AND THE REVELATION HE MAKES OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SACRED THINGS. The original purpose of the temple is restated, and he emphasizes the spiritual side of worship. It is to pray, to commune with our Father, we go up into the temple. Everything which interferes with or corrupts that simple motive, is an abuse and an evil. The gospel, in recalling men to a sense of righteousness and the love of God, creates the prayer-spirit. And the Holy Ghost sustains the communion thus established. From time to time the Spirit takes of the things of God and reveals them afresh, making fresh advents to the heart, and kindling the flame of zeal and love.

V. REFORMING ZEAL, IN PROPORTION TO ITS SPIRITUALITY AND ENLIGHTENMENT, WILL PROVOKE HATRED AND OPPOSITION IN THOSE WHOSE INTERESTS ARE THREATENED; BUT THERE WILL EVER BE OTHERS BY WHOM IT WILL BE WELCOMED. Those who are interested in the *status quo* will resent interference with it. Priestly importance and the spirit of selfishness are potent antagonists to true worship. But the "multitude" has within it ever some who yearn after better things. The human longing after the Divine is enshrined in the common heart of man.—M.

Ver. 17.—*The Church—ideal and actual.* I. THE CHURCH IN ITS IDEAL. As viewed under this aspect it has: 1. *A twofold character.* (Isa. lvi. 7.) (1) A house of prayer. This recognition of a spiritual end to be secured by the institution of the temple is most remarkable, as having taken place in an era of ceremonialism. It is not a priestly but a prophetic point of view, in which details are lost sight of in the inward and eternal. The temple was to be "called a house of *prayer*" as indicative not of a special but rather of an exclusive purpose; any other being a transgression and an offence. It was to be set apart for the most sacred occupations of the soul—intercourse and communion with God. An emphasis was thereby given to the Divine side of life. Men were to seek the presence of God that they might receive his grace and truth. A space was marked off from the business and secularities of life, so that, undisturbed from without, and aided by all the circumstances of devotion, the higher nature might be called forth and educated. Instead of worldly cares and competitions distracting the worshippers, they were to be engrossed for a while with their Father's business. How important is this witness of the Church to the claims of the unseen and eternal! It is the sphere within which the highest exercise of human faculties may take place, and the noblest life may be laid hold of. There may be no immediate demand for what it

provides, yet does it minister to the deepest and most lasting human needs. (2) The spiritual home of mankind. The defect of Judaism was that it was too national and exclusive: all that was to cease. From the earliest times the universality of the Divine grace was declared by the prophets. Even from within a principle of expansion began to discover itself. The presence of the "stranger" within the camp led to the recognition of the "proselytes of the gate," and by-and-by to the institution of the "court of the Gentiles" in the temple itself. The fundamental doctrine of Jehovah itself implied such an intention as ultimate if not immediate, for before him there was no respect of persons, and he was the Father of all. The promises, too, were all couched in terms that precluded a merely local or temporary enjoyment of their blessings. Even as taught in the Old Testament the doctrine of election is declared to be a temporary provision for the benefit of others besides the elect. The chief end of the temple, or the Church which it represented, could not be secured save by the conversion of the world to the knowledge of Jehovah, and the spiritual coming of mankind to Zion. It is therefore the great mission of Christianity, as the spiritual successor of Judaism, to give effect to this. The Church is a witness to the oneness of the race in its origin and destiny, and the great foster-mother of mankind. Through her charity, and not by mechanical necessities or material interests, is the unity of the world to be realized. 2. *This twofold intention of the Church is certain to be fulfilled.* As we have seen, it is (1) the Divine purpose: everything God wills will be; and (2) the genius of Christianity. If Judaism declared a universal brotherhood, Christianity *is* that brotherhood. It teaches us to say, "Our Father," and realizes itself in the communion of saints. The Church is not an end in itself, but is *for* the world. Christianity is nothing if it is not evangelistic and aggressive.

II. THE CHURCH IN ITS CORRUPTION. In the mean time what God intended has been frustrated by the worldliness of men. The consequence has been: 1. *A complete contradiction to its original purpose.* Even in Jeremiah's day the epithet, "a den of thieves," could be applied to it (Jer. vii. 11); so soon does spiritual decay run to its term! That which was meant to be a universal good became a universal curse. The abuse of sacred things is ever the most mischievous of all abuses. Instead of Divine charity, human selfishness: the wrangling and violence of robbers where the peace of God was to be looked for. The contrast is utter, but the transition is easy and natural. The very extension of Judaism, outstripping as it did the expansion of affection in its members, sufficed to ensure its corruption. Worshippers came from distant places to offer sacrifice, and being unable to bring animals with them for the purpose, they sought for them on the spot. Gradually, therefore, the courts of the temple were invaded by cattle-dealers and their herds. Another inconvenience was felt in the difficulty of exchanging foreign money for the sacred coin which could alone be accepted in the treasury. Here the money-changer stepped in. The whole process was gradual and easily explained; but the result was none the less an evil, which required to be sternly corrected. Nor can Christians plead innocence of this sin. "The history of Christian Churches," says Plumptre, "has not been altogether without parallels that may help us to understand how such a desecration came to be permitted. Those who remember the state of the great cathedral of London, as painted in the literature of Elizabeth and James, when mules and horses, laden with market produce, were led through St. Paul's as a matter of every-day occurrence, and bargains were struck there, and burglaries planned, and servants hired, and profligate assignations made and kept, will feel that even Christian and Protestant England has hardly the right to cast a stone at the priests and people of Jerusalem." It is a great deal, however, when it is recognized that this is not the purpose for which the sanctuary has been hallowed, and the lesson of the past is surely that of a constant watchfulness against insidious abuses, and above all of the need of a deeper and more continuous consecration of the worshippers themselves. 2. *Divine anger and rejection.* The wrath of the Lord of the temple was typical for all time. As the temple, so the Church or the soul which defiles itself will be visited by penal consequences. Sacred names and ceremonies will not consecrate vile ends. There is nothing more abhorrent to God than the travesty of religion, the seeking of gain under the mask of godliness.—M.

Vers. 27—33.—*Christ's authority challenged and defended.* This was a necessary

consequence of his action in the cleansing of the temple. By so doing he claimed to be the Judge of things religious and sacred, and to direct the conscience of man.

I. THE ULTIMATE QUESTION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS OF MEN IS ONE OF AUTHORITY. Only direct Divine sanction, or a higher truth vindicating itself at the bar of reason and conscience, or in the field of experience, can justify the attitude of Christ and his religion towards the religions and superstitions of men. Arbitrary assumption will soon betray itself, and the spiritual nature of man must be satisfied. This question of authority is sure to be raised sooner or later by the upholders of the systems and beliefs Christianity impugns. And Christians are counselled to "give a reason of the hope that is in" them.

II. TO ALL GENUINE INQUIRERS CHRISTIANITY PRESENTS A SUFFICIENCY OF EVIDENCE. 1. *The life and works of Christ are his justification.* They prove him "sent from God." The evidence upon which our belief in these is based is as strong, at least, as for any other historic matter. 2. *The experience of the operation of Christian doctrine and practice in the ages subsequent to the Cross.* 3. *The immediate witness of the conscience and the heart.* With the first and the third of these the temple authorities were already conversant.

III. HYPOCRITICAL AND ILLEGITIMATE INQUIRIES INTO THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST OR HIS SERVANTS MAY BE RESISTED AND EXPOSED. 1. *Christ knew the motives of his inquisitors.* 2. *He placed them in a false position in order to expose these to themselves and others.* 3. *All Divine revelations have similar evidence, and stand or fall together.* Had they believed John, they would have believed Jesus. As they believed neither, it must have been because they hated the truth. It was for the interests of true religion that this fact should be made evident. He proceeded to prove the traditional unrighteousness of the Jewish people and their leaders in a series of "parables" or similitudes, which were at the same time so many appeals to conscience. (It would be well for the preacher to remark upon the unbroken consecution of ch. xi. and xii. in the spoken discourse of Christ.)—M.

Vers. 1—3.—*Jesus the King.* On the occasion described in these verses Jesus assumed kingly authority. Loved as a Friend, revered as a Teacher, and followed as a Worker of miracles, he now declared his kingliness, and demanded obedience and homage. Therein he taught us, his subjects, some lessons.

I. AS A KING, JESUS REQUIRES ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE. To the two disciples this command must have appeared strange. After finding the animal denoted, they were not to ask for it, but to take it; and if their action was questioned they were merely to say, "The Lord hath need of him." If it belonged to a foe, some might arrest or assail them for robbery. It was not the first occasion, however, on which they simply obeyed. Christ had a right to their absolute obedience, and their faith was tested by this demand upon it. Unquestioning obedience to truth and to duty is far too rare. We want to see the reasons for a command, the probable issues of it, and when we see neither too often we withhold obedience. Peril from this is now more frequent, because authority as such is weakened on all sides. Children in the home, which is the true sphere for the cultivation of obedience, are too often allowed to question when they ought to be told to obey. If we are sure of duty as followers of Jesus Christ, we must be regardless of consequences. He anticipates our difficulties, as he foresaw the question of the owner of the colt. He asks us to take one step, and to take it boldly, although we do not see what the next will be, nor whither it may lead us. If we go on to the Red Sea, it will afford us a path of safety and cut off our foes from following us. If an angel rouses us from sleep, and we arise and follow him, the great iron gate we cannot stir will open to us of its own accord.

II. AS A KING, JESUS CLAIMS THE USE OF ALL THAT HE REQUIRES. We forget that we are not the absolute owners of anything. All we have is held in trust; but our seeming possession tests our disposition, and helps to develop character. If we wish to prove the honesty of a servant, and let his skill in management grow, we do not give him a small sum each day, and check and watch him till the evening, and then expect a strict account. No; we put a large sum at his disposal, and "after a long time" reckon with him, with the result, that if he has been faithful he has increased his capital and his fitness. So God puts at our disposal wealth, talents, etc., in the hope

that for our own sake we will use all loyally for him. Christ Jesus, during his ministry, was as one "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." No colt was his, but one was there, and when its owner heard "The Lord hath need of him," it was ready for the Lord's use. The message sent to that man, when it comes home to our hearts, should silence all objections to the making of effort or sacrifice. If we have to give up some luxury so as to help the poor, if we have to sacrifice leisure that is hardly earned to teach the ignorant, if we have to part with one who is dear to us, our anger and defiance will be quieted when we say to ourselves, "The *Lord* hath need of them." The owner was perhaps a secret disciple. The Lord knew him, although the apostles did not. Now, after loving Jesus quietly, the opportunity for showing his love was suddenly proffered, and he gladly gave what he could. Christ asks of us, as he asked of him, what is possible and reasonable; and instead of waiting to do something great, let us do what we can, and that which is mean in itself will be hallowed and glorified when used by our Lord.

III. AS A KING, JESUS EXERCISES A SPIRITUAL RULE. Until now his kingliness had been concealed except from the nearest and dearest disciples. On this occasion it was declared. Yet the spiritual nature of that kingliness was so evident in his dress, in the animal he bestrode, and in his attendants, that when a few days afterwards he was charged with calling himself a King, no reference was made to this incident before Herod or Pilate. Such is the nature of his kingdom still. His sovereignty is not advanced by material force or by worldly cunning. To him, as a spiritual Ruler, gifts do not take the place of earnest prayer; nor is attendance on the means of grace a substitute for fellowship of soul with God. His kingdom was inaugurated by death; it was founded on a grave; it was built up by the Spirit, "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Hence he approached Jerusalem, not on the war-horse of the conqueror, but on an ass, on which rode messengers of peace; as if he were determined that he would not come in judgment till to the last love had been tried. Thus he comes to us, in quiet suggestions, in holy desires, in tears, and prayers; but hereafter he will come in power and great glory, fulfilling the vision St. John saw of One upon the white horse, going forth conquering, and to conquer.—A. R.

Vers. 8—10.—*Palm Sunday.* We sometimes wonder that the greatest Teacher, the divinest Master the world ever saw, was so little recognized during his ministry. Our surprise would be lessened if we fairly put ourselves in the position of his contemporaries. Suppose news came to our metropolis that in a distant hamlet, among working people, a child had been born, and that rumours of portents accompanying his birth found favour in that country-side. Suppose that, as years rolled on, it was reported that this child, now a man, had done some marvellous works; and that, after several visits to the city, he came into it accompanied by his followers, chiefly peasants, neither learned nor wealthy. The probabilities are that although some might know him to be a great teacher, a man of unquestioned holiness and of astonishing pretensions, the hum of business would not be hushed for a moment, and few would turn aside to see his festal procession.

I. THE WELCOME GIVEN TO JESUS. 1. *His welcome would have been more speedy and general had he come differently.* All through his ministry we find evidence of that. There was eagerness for a Messiah of a certain type. A promise to restore the theocracy, and overthrow the Roman tyranny, would have been hailed with a unanimous shout of delight. But our Lord would not be content, and never is, with a worldly homage, such as a Christian nation, for example, offers when it calls itself by his Name, and violates his principles. Unless he rules human hearts, he has no joy and the ruled no bliss. Even an earthly king desires real loyalty; but he cannot read men's thoughts nor see how in heart his flatterers despise him. If he could, how thankfully would he turn from the adulation of courtiers to the unsophisticated love of his children! So our Lord turned from priests and Pharisees to the humble peasants of Galilee and the loving children in Jerusalem. In order to avoid false homage, Christ came, and still comes, quietly. He comes not with peals of thunder and visions of angels, nor even as a national leader appealing to popular passion and armed force; but, in quiet thoughts and in happy Christian homes, he reveals himself to those seeking the truth, or burdened with sin. 2. *Even such a welcome as this given on Palm Sunday was unusual.*

His motto seemed to be, "He shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." Popular applause was suppressed, and even natural enthusiasm was cooled. If people would take him by force to make him a king, he departed and did hide himself from them. If the disciples saw a glimpse of his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, he said, "See that ye tell no man." His miracles were quietly wrought, generally with but few witnesses, and those blessed were often told not to publish it. But on this first day of the last week he wished to have an unwonted procession. In the crowds who had come together for the Passover all the elements of it were ready, if he only gave a sign of his willingness to receive it. And this he did. He arranged for it. He sent to the village for the young colt, and when it was brought he sat upon it, and allowed a simple procession to be formed, which increased in numbers and enthusiasm as they drew nearer to Jerusalem. 3. *This exceptional scene was wisely ordered.* (1) The memory of it would help the disciples in the dark days which ended that eventful week; for they would reflect that it was not want of power, but want of will, which did not allow him to rouse the people in his defence. "The Good Shepherd *giveth* his life for the sheep." (2) Besides, it would give an opportunity to the people to see him as the King he claimed to be, and it was possible that some who had resisted other influences might yield to this, and pay him homage now. He had come as a babe to Jerusalem, and few had loved him; he had come as a child, only to be wondered at when he sat among the doctors; he had come to the feasts, and scarcely any had recognized him. He had come "unto his own, and his own received him not." Once more, in a new way, he would draw near. He would try one more avenue to the closed heart before uttering the pathetic lament, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children . . . and ye would not!" (3) Further, there was something prophetic and typical in this procession. The triumphal entry was a symbol of the resurrection on that day week, and of his later ascension to heaven amidst the hosannas of the angels. It was a prophecy also of his kingly progress through history, and of his second coming in glory, when all in heaven and all on earth will cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!"

II. THE CROWD SURROUNDING JESUS. In some of those there we may see, perhaps, representatives of ourselves. 1. *Enthusiasts were there.* They had seen his miracles, and with loud hosannas spread their garments in his way. He foresaw with sadness the change that would come over them. They appplauded on Olivet, but they were absent from Calvary. Beware of spasmodic enthusiasm, and ask for grace to stand by Christ's cause in times of trouble as well as in times of triumph. 2. *Foes were there.* They kept quiet while the crowd of his followers surrounded them; but soon they would raise the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" It is possible to "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." 3. *Disciples were there.* The blind who had been restored, demoniacs who had been delivered, learners who had sat reverently at his feet. In the procession which still is following the Lord, may we find our place!—A. R.

Ver. 15.—"*And Jesus went into the temple.*" "Jesus went into the temple." The act was characteristic and suggestive.

I. IT EXEMPLIFIED THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HIS WORK AND THAT OF JOHN. From the beginning to the end of his ministry the Baptist, so far as we know, was a stranger to the temple courts. John was in the wilderness, and the people from Jerusalem and Judæa "went out" to hear him. Christ was never apart from his people. He was not a "voice crying in the wilderness," but the Good Shepherd, who, instead of expecting his strayed sheep to seek him, came after them, to seek and to save that which was lost. In accordance with this, Jesus entered into the temple, or taught in the synagogues, or went into the homes of the people, to teach the ignorant and to bless the needy. Here is a distinguishing mark of the great Redeemer as contrasted with the great reformer; and it is also distinctive of their work. A reformer points the way of righteousness to those willing to walk in it. A Redeemer, by the power of his love and life, touches and turns the hearts of the children of men. John said in effect, "Do what you can in the way of moral reform." Christ in effect said, "I have come to do for you what you cannot do for yourselves." These ministries are still maintained. Morality is uplifted to her lofty pedestal; but, conscious of her beauty and of his failures, the

sinner can only say, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." Christ Jesus comes down amongst us from the lofty heavens, as One meek and lowly, and says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will open the door, I will come in to him."

II. IT ILLUSTRATED OUR LORD'S RELATION TO THE OLD DISPENSATION. He was often accused of setting himself against the Law. This act was one of many proofs he gave of the truth of his words, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." He knew, as others did not, that the work of the temple was almost done, and that it would shortly perish in the flames; he knew that, though it had such marvellous material stability, it was one of "the things that could be shaken," and would be removed, so that "the things which could not be shaken might remain." But so long as the temple remained as the house of God he honoured it, and encouraged his disciples to do so. He kept its feasts; he taught and healed its worshippers; he led his followers to join in its praises and prayers and he showed the people, by this act of cleansing, that they were guilty if they desecrated God's appointed house of prayer.

III. IT INCULCATED FOR ALL AGES LESSONS OF FORBEARANCE AND PATIENCE. As followers of Christ we should learn to put up with, and to use to the utmost, what we know is imperfect and transient. If we see an organization which aims at what we approve, but which in our judgment is imperfect, and resolve to withhold our sympathy and support till it perfectly accords with our views, we are not following our Lord in this. If we recognize the faults of our fellow-Christians, and are so vexed at their folly that we determine to have no more fellowship or co-operation with them, we are not following our Lord in this. If we have attempted to reform society or to rescue a sinner, and have apparently failed, so that we give up all further effort in despair, we are not following our Lord. For once before, at the beginning of his ministry, he had cleansed this temple and driven forth the buyers and sellers, but the evil had reasserted itself, so that it was defiled as much as formerly. Still patiently and hopefully he cleansed it again, and made the place ring with his words of truth, and beautified it by his works of mercy.

IV. IT UTTERED A SIGNIFICANT REBUKE TO ALL THAT WAS FALSE AND EVIL. He went to the temple to worship, although in the crowds he saw there so few that were spiritually in sympathy with him. But he would not allow any mistake to be made about his association with evil. He was not like those who are so silent about wrong-doing or false teaching that all around suppose that they sympathize with it. Such silence is guilty. If Christ saw evil he looked upon it with pain and shame, and therefore once more before he left the temple, which was the scene of it, he made a bold protest and uttered a final rebuke. He associated with the good, but he cast out the evil.—A. R.

Vers. 15—17.—*Christ cleansing the temple.* The acts of our Lord were not merely intended to accomplish an immediate result. Had they been, they were sadly ineffectual. If, for example, he had simply set before himself the design of clearing the temple of intruders, he could have secured that end more permanently than he did. But he recognized that the noblest thing is not to cut off a public abuse, but to dry up the spring whence it flows, which often lies deep in the human heart. Remedial measures are better than repressive legislation. When our Lord for a second time cleansed the temple, his main object was not to put down the abuse immediately by force, but to rebuke the sin, and so to lead the people to think about it, confess, and forsake it. He wished to establish the principle that the temple of God should be free from worldliness, a principle which is capable of world-wide application. As the material temple rises before our vision through the mists of past years, we hail it as an image of the invisible temple in which the Eternal God is praised and served by his people. Two truths appear prominently in this incident.

I. THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS OFTEN DESECRATED. In considering the sins of other people and of other times, we are: 1. *Apt to forget how naturally and imperceptibly they obtained place and power.* The Jews easily lapsed into this desecration. The Mosaic code ordained sacrifices of oxen, goats, and sheep in great numbers. In process of time the habits of the nation changed, so that it was no longer possible, as it had been in the pastoral period, to take a victim from a flock or herd close at hand. Jerusalem was now a large and crowded city. Space was costly, and a large area seemed to be necessary where worshippers could obtain victims. In the vast temple area a large space was

available. It was close by the sacrificial altar, and not set apart for the actual worship of the chosen people. If it were used for stalls and pens, a good rental would be secured which would pay for the repair and decoration of the building, and so the glory of the sanctuary would be maintained and devout worshippers accommodated. So the abuse grew up, amid the protests of the few and the silence of the many, and all were tolerating an evil which they could not openly defend. Evils have generally sprung up in the Church insidiously. If they had come in their hideous maturity they would have been repelled with horror, but they were welcomed when they came like the tiny child a legendary saint took on his shoulders, to find him grow so heavy as to crush him with his weight. Examples of this may be found in ecclesiastical history: *e.g.* papal pretensions, simony, erastianism; all of which in their germ seemed to have about them something reasonable and right. 2. *The root of the special evil here denounced was covetousness.* Probably that was the besetting sin of the nation in our Lord's day. Publicans sold themselves to the tyrants of their country, because wealth was more to them than patriotism. Priests and Sadducees let out sites to the temple traders, because they would make gain of godliness, and cared more for the temple income than for spiritual worship. This spirit pervaded the entire nation. There was no sign of the splendid generosity of David, and no need, as in Moses' days, to restrain the people from giving. The sin appeared among the apostles. We see it in all its hideousness in Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and then flung the money at the feet of the priests as they sat in the temple of God. The love of money is declared to be "the root of all evil," and the statement is in harmony with the words of our Lord about the difficulty a rich man would find in entering his kingdom. Show how generally such teaching is forgotten among different classes of our population. See the effects of this in the floating of unsound speculations in which the fortunes of the unwary are wrecked; in the unfairness of men to each other in the common relations of life; in the unjust wars of aggression which the nation has sometimes waged. The Christian Church is called upon to set an example of the opposite of all this, in her princely generosity and in her Christ-like self-sacrifice. 3. *There are other ways besides covetousness by which desecration may enter God's temple.* There is unbelief, which silences the voice of prayer in professed believers; worldliness, which puts material organization in the place of spiritual power; pride, which prevents hearty fellowship amongst God's people; expediency, which usurps the throne of truth; and self-indulgence, which expels self-devotion. So the temple is defiled; for "know ye not that *ye* are the temple of God?" Jesus Christ felt burning indignation when he saw the sanctuary of his Father transformed into a place of worldly traffic, and he feels it still as he beholds a Christian community desecrated by the power of sin.

II. THE DESECRATED TEMPLE NEEDS CHRIST AS ITS PURIFIER. We too soon get accustomed to evils, and tolerate them, until One mightier than ourselves alone can expel them. What priests and Levites failed to do, Jesus did, and none resisted him. 1. *His coming was an act of sublime condescension.* It would have been far pleasanter to him to go into the fields, where the sower cast his seed; or to sail over the lake, in which fishermen plied their nets; or to walk over the hillsides, on which the flowers whispered of his Father's love. He knew what the temple was, yet he did not forsake it; but came again and again, in spite of the unreality and sin that prevailed in it. As willingly he will enter the heart or the Church, which is unworthy of his presence. 2. *His coming was not such as might have been expected.* The Jews had often read the words, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple," etc., but as they were looking heavenward the prophecy was fulfilled by the coming of this young Galilean Peasant. As they waited in vain for a startling advent, so some now wait for a special manifestation of his presence, and ignore the fact that he is already with them in the holy thoughts which they refuse to welcome. "Behold, there standeth one among you, whom ye know not." It is the realized presence of the living Christ which will purge the heart or the Church of evil thought and habit, and transform it into the temple of the Most High. May he, who is the source of spiritual power and heavenly purity, come amongst us and abide with us for ever!—A. R.

Vers. 1—10.—*The royal entry into the royal city.* Simple indeed are the preparations for the entry of Zion's King into his own city. "Go your way into the village that

is over against you: and straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him." The long-waiting prophecy is now to be fulfilled—

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee:
He is just, and having salvation;
Lowly, and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt the foal of an ass."

And the daughter of Zion did rejoice greatly. What a scene of gladness! What a shout of triumph! They bring the colt covered with their garments, while the way is prepared by the soft branches of palms scattered and loose robes cast upon the ground. And the lowly, mighty King enters, and the cries rend the still air.

"Hosanna;
Blessed is he that cometh
In the Name of the Lord:
Blessed is the kingdom that cometh,
The kingdom of our father David:
Hosanna in the highest."

There are times when truth bursts through all that hides it, and declares itself as the sun through a rent cloud. So is it here. Without restraint the children of Israel proclaim their King as did Pilate when he wrote, "The King of the Jews." True, Pilate did not believe, nor did the shouting crowd at the gates of the city for long together. The same walls soon heard the cry, "Crucify him! crucify him!" But for the time the truth prevails. It is uppermost. As in the Transfiguration, the hidden glory is revealed. Perhaps unconsciously, these voices bear witness to the truth. It is a scene to carry in the eye, to be engraven on the heart. Let us learn—

I. THAT TRUE ROYALTY NEEDS NOT THE SYMBOLS OF AUTHORITY. It is not constituted or upheld by them; it is not destroyed by their absence. Christianity is independent of external support.

II. THAT IMMUTABLE TRUTH WILL SOONER OR LATER ASSERT ITSELF. Yea, though it may be rejected, it will leave its testimony for following ages of faith and unbelief to ponder according to their respective needs.

III. THAT THE REAL AND PERMANENT RULER IS HE WHO COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. Other kings and other kingdoms will rise in a temporary prevalence of power, and fall into dark oblivion and disgrace. But the true will quietly assume its rightful place, whether men accept or reject. Jesus is a King. "To this end have I been born." Jesus is "King of the Jews," though their priests cry aloud, "We have no king but Cæsar." Jesus is the King of kings. But the kingdom is "not of this world," nor will it pass away as the kingdoms of this world. It abideth for ever. And happy is the man who is a true and faithful subject under this heavenly reign.—G.

Vers. 11—25.—*The barren fig tree.* How changed is the scene! The great King entered into the royal city, and the great High Priest into the holy temple. Then—O significant words!—"he looked round about upon all things." Alas, what scenes caught those calm eyes! In the eventide he left Jerusalem, accompanied only by the twelve. On the morrow, returning again to Jerusalem from Bethany, where he had spent the night, "he hungered." A mere touch of the pen discloses a link of connection between him and every one who in hunger seeks and has not his daily bread. But a "fig tree having leaves" from "afar" attracts his keen sight, and "he came, if haply he might find anything thereon," as the leaves which usually appear after the fruit promised. Alas, his hope is mocked! "He found nothing but leaves." Then he, who giveth nature its greenness, who maketh the fig tree to blossom, and hangeth the fruit on the vine and the olive, uttered his "curse" in prohibiting it to minister any more to the wants of man. The morrow finds it "withered away." There were watching disciples for whose use this and the other trees grew in the great garden, and this must be used for their highest good. By it he will impress upon their hearts a solemn truth. It is c

parable enacted. But the parable goes unexpounded, while a great lesson on faith in God is given. By common consent, this withered tree conveys a deep teaching on immature professions. Following so immediately after the jubilant cry of yesterday, it seems to speak in condemnation of that all too hasty and untrustworthy demonstration, those shouts of welcome to the King of Jerusalem which would be so soon exchanged for the cry of repudiation, "We have no king but Cæsar." The strength of the tree is exhausted in the immature foliage. This seems to point to the immature haste of profession made by them who cried "Hosanna!" and who would show how vain the hopes would be that relied upon that cry, for in a few days it would be exchanged for "Crucify him!" It was the one visible curse of him who in reality curses everything that is false and pretentious. Significantly it is related, "and his disciples heard it." The morrow declares that the Lord's word is a word of power, as the drooping leaves and dried-up branches and trunk, even "from the roots," declare. Peter's exclamation draws forth from the Master a profound reply, which seems designed to lead the thoughts of the disciples away from all that is false, unreal, and untrue, on which they may not place their hope, to him who is worthy of their faith, and who never disappoints them that trust in him. Henceforth this fig tree stands before us as—

I. A SYMBOL OF INSINCERITY, or of that uncultured strength which is presumption.

II. A SIGN OF THE DELUSION AND DISAPPOINTMENT WHICH MUST FOLLOW FROM TRUST IN EMPTY, UNNATURAL BOASTS AND PROMISES. Many are dependent upon, or at least influenced by, the professions of others. There are weak souls that lean upon stronger ones for support, who are comforted and strengthened by their fidelity, or led astray by their dejection.

III. Therefore this must be A SOLEMN WARNING AND ADMONITION TO ALL TO TRUST IN THE TRUSTWORTHY. And in this case, perhaps, not to commit themselves to the frail, unworthy cry of an excited multitude, but to have calm faith in God, who can sweep away the false and delusive, the weak and fruitless fig tree, and with equal ease the firmly rooted mountain from its place. The "mountain" may have found its antitype in the firmly fixed power that waged its opposition to the world's Redeemer, and would soon hang him on a tree. That which could not satisfy the hunger, and that which could crush and overwhelm the King, were equally amenable, as is every mountain and every deceitful thing to the mighty power of God, invoked by a faith held in a true spirit.—G.

Vers. 15—18.—*The cleansing of the temple.* Jesus came to "bear witness unto the truth." One truth was the sanctity of that "house of prayer" which was opened for "all the nations." But have the rightful guardians of that house preserved for it this sacredness, that the feet of the wearied and the heart of the sorrowful of all nations might be allured within its hallowed walls, where in humble penitence and prayer, and with strong cries to the God of heaven and earth, they might find rest and peace and shelter? Nay, verily. Cruel covetousness has let out the sacred enclosure for gainful purposes. The love of money, the root of this evil, has led men to sell God's house to purposes of merchandise; and, if worse could be, to trickery and thieving. Ah, they robbed God of his rightful honour; and they robbed the poor, and the sorrowful, and the homeless, and the heart-sick, and the sin-sick, of the one place of refuge where they might find peace and healing and rest! They turned the "house of prayer" into "a den of robbers." In the place where men might seek heavenly blessing, they filched earthly pelf. Sin is great in proportion to its nearness to the restraints of righteousness. How great, then, was this! Their cry was, "This is the place for money-changers and barterers, for pilferers and thieves." So great a lie must be contradicted by "the Truth;" even if he lose his life in doing it. The true fire burns in his breast: he cannot be silent. The zeal of the Lord consumes him. He takes advantage of the popular enthusiasm which now for a time runs in his favour. The astonished multitude "hung upon him, listening." And though he needs not their help, yet he disappoints not their hope. He put forth his own regal authority, and with his word and holy hands "cast out" the traders, "overthrew" the tables of "the money-changers," and refused to allow men to desecrate the holy pavement by carrying burdens over it. Nor would he "suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple." It might be asked—How could he do this single-handed?

Apart from that Divine power which now and again he restrained not, "the chief priests and the scribes feared him," and the multitude stood "astonished at his teaching." Cowardice and guilt are always staggered at religious enthusiasm. In this incident we may learn—

I. CHRIST'S DEFENCE OF THE SACREDNESS OF PLACES DEDICATED TO PURPOSES OF WORSHIP. It is his high testimony to the efficacy of prayer, that the very place where it is offered is holy ground. If all places are holy in his view, all are not to be used indiscriminately. There is an appropriate place for each work. And sacred places are devoted to sacred acts. This is here declared to be according to Christ's will.

II. CHRIST'S DECLARATION THAT THE INTRUSION OF EARTHLY AFFAIRS INTO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD IS A WICKED AND UNWARRANTABLE DESECRATION. How strongly this speaks against intruding worldly thoughts into acts of Divine worship, and worldly motives into holy service! He who "set a bound for the waters that they may not pass over," has forbidden the trespass upon the threshold of his house of anything that is "of the earth, earthy."

III. With a view to the encouragement of prayer among all the nations, THE HOUSE OF THE LORD IS CONSECRATED FOR THEM TO THIS PURPOSE. It cannot, however, be that only one house should be opened. It is, therefore, the house in every nation that is so opened is consecrated and sacred whither the tribes of men may go up to offer worship and service, to present the sacrifice of song, to seek help and rest and mercy.

IV. But through all the teaching there runs a deeper truth: THE CLEANSED AND CONSECRATED TEMPLE OF THE HEART WHERE THE LORD IS TRULY WORSHIPPED MUST BE PRESERVED FREE FROM CORRUPT DESECRATION. The hidden place, the quiet solitudes of the soul where prayer is to be truly made, may not be polluted by trickery and deceit. And the very consecration of it as a temple where God may be approached declares that it need not be a place of burdens; for he will speak the word of faith and peace, will ease and comfort the troubled, will give rest to the weary, and solace and salvation to the tempted and tried. Happy the man whose heart is a pure temple of God!—G.

Vers. 1—11.—*The symbolic triumph.* I. THE ASSUMPTION OF AUTHORITY BY CHRIST. He issues his mandate, as having a pre-emption or right to be served before all others. The act was the more impressive because standing out in rare contrast to the ordinary tenor of Christ's conduct.

II. THE MILD POMP OF HIS ENTRY. He is acknowledged with loyal shouts as King and Lord. Hosanna is "Save now!" The words of acclamation are cited from a "Hallelujah" psalm (cxviii. 25, 26), which both celebrates and foretells deliverance. His kingdom prevails by truth, meekness, and love. May "his unsuffering kingdom" come!

III. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE POSITION ASSIGNED HIM IN PROPHECY. He is the predicted King and Saviour, the Representative of God upon earth. Thus in this cheerful, humble scene of instructive, popular gladness, and rejoicing, we have an emblem of the progress of Christianity through the world.—J.

Vers. 12—19.—*God's house vindicated.* THE TEMPLE WAS DESIGNED AS A RELIGIOUS CENTRE FOR THE NATIONS. It contains the idea of the Divine house, and therefore of the home for all men.

II. THE ASSOCIATIONS SHOULD BE SUCH AS BECOME THE PLACE. "Peace and purity should be maintained in the service of God." The Church should be like the home. The associates of traffic and the passions it excites should be shut out.

> "Let vain and busy thoughts have there no part;
> Bring not thy plough, thy plots, thy pleasures thither.
> Christ purged his temple; so must thou thy heart.
> All worldly thoughts are but thieves met together
> To cozen thee. Look to thy actions well;
> For churches either are our heaven or hell." (George Herbert.)

III. IN THE RELIGIOUS CALLING MEN ENJOY GREAT ADVANTAGES, AND ARE EXPOSED

TO GREAT TEMPTATIONS. Religion intensifies all it touches. "We become better or worse in dealing with sacred things" (Godwin).—J.

Vers. 20—26.—*The withered tree.* I. DESTRUCTION MAY SERVE THE PURPOSES OF LIFE. Here the fig tree is destroyed for the sake of a lesson to the spirit. Much lower life is destroyed from day to day that the higher may be preserved.

II. THE INCIDENT ILLUSTRATES THE RESERVE OF CHRIST'S MIRACULOUS POWER. He could destroy; that was evident. But he came not to destroy, but to save. And while he lavished his power upon the sick and suffering, to heal, cheer, and deliver, he economized the dread power of destruction. Compare what is said on this subject in 'Ecce Homo!'

III. FAITH THE ONE SECRET OF POWER. Our Lord here employs, as often, a bold figure of speech. To the undivided thought and will nothing is ideally impossible. Actually our power is limited, as is our thought. But we are born for the ideal, and to overcome our limitations. Prayer is essentially part of faith; it is the exercise of the will, the entire going-forth of the man in that direction in which he is called endlessly to exert himself.

IV. LOVE IS AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF TRUE FAITH. Faith works by love. How mistaken is it to limit faith to intellectual assent! Devils believe, but love not, and are weak. Faith and love are other words for the might of God in the soul. "Oh, my brothers, God exists! Believing love will relieve us of a load of care!"—will lift mountains' weight from the spirit, and make our ideals a present reality. But the unloving, unforgiving soul remains fettered in itself, unreleased, unfree, and weak.—J.

Vers. 27—33.—*Critics criticized.* I. THE SPIRIT OF FAULT-FINDING NEVER LACKS FOOD. The action is wrong; or, if it is right, it is done from a wrong motive, or done by the wrong person. "Ill will never said well."

II. IT ASKS FOR REASONS, BUT REFUSES TO GIVE THEM. It will call others to account, and refuse to give account of itself. The arbitrary temper is directly opposed to the "sweet reasonableness of Christ."

III. THE UNTRUE MAN THINKS ONLY OF POLICY IN HIS ANSWERS. The true man thinks of the fact, and tries to get at it and state it. The other, of how much he can afford to tell; how much 'twere well to keep back. "Truth should be the first question with men, not consequences."

IV. THERE IS A USE IN SILENT CONTEMPT. Christ, so ready to discuss with candid inquirers and give instruction, here holds his peace. Sometimes the rule is, "Answer a fool according to his folly;" sometimes, "Answer him not according to his folly." Truth and the good of souls must be our guide. "Incompetency may be exposed and assumption resisted for the sake of truth."—J.

Vers. 1—11. Parallel passages: Matt. xxi. 1—11; 14—17; Luke xix. 29—44; John xii. 12—19.—*Our Lord's public entry into Jerusalem.* I. JOURNEY FROM JERICHO. Jerusalem is at an elevation of three thousand six hundred feet above Jericho in the Jordan valley. The distance between the two cities is upwards of fifteen miles. Travel-stained and weary with this uphill journey, gradually ascending all the way, our Lord stayed over sabbath with the family of Bethany, where he got rested and refreshed. Bethany, which St. John calls "the town of Mary and her sister Martha," is fifteen furlongs, or nearly two miles, from Jerusalem, and gets its name from the fruit of the palm trees that once flourished there, signifying "house of dates." It is now called *El-Azariyeh*, from the name of Lazarus, and in memory of the miracle wrought in raising him from the dead. Next day, being the 10th of Nisan, or 1st of April—the day on which the Paschal lamb was set apart—was the day chosen by him, who is our true Paschal Lamb, for his public entry into Jerusalem, there to be sacrificed for us. Of the caravan of pilgrims that accompanied our Lord and his disciples in the journey from Jericho, some had proceeded onward direct to the holy city; others had pitched their tents in the wooded vale of Bethany; and others, again, on the western slopes of Olivet, opposite to and in full view of the city. Those who had advanced to Jerusalem had, it is probable, brought word thither of the approach of the Prophet of Nazareth.

II. PUBLIC PROCESSION. The life and ministry of our Lord were fast drawing to a

close. The time of his departure was at hand. There is no longer need of enjoining secrecy with regard to his miracles, or of concealment in respect of his office, lest public excitement might ensue, or lest his work might be interfered with or interrupted by the opposition of enemies, before the seed of truth, which he had sown by his discourses and parables, should get time to take root in the public mind. Publicity rather than secrecy is now needed. The great Passover Lamb is to be sacrificed, and so the Priest is on his way to the place of sacrifice; the Prophet is going up to the house of God to renew the work of reformation, to rectify abuses, to restore, or at least exhibit, the purity befitting the service of the sanctuary, and to teach daily, as he did, in the temple. Above all, the King is going up to his capital; the daughter of Zion is to receive her King with rejoicing. Hitherto he had indeed gone about continually, doing good, yet with little or no outward show; save by the crowds that followed for healing or hearing, and on some rare occasions and with some signal exceptions, he had been little recognised, being rather "despised and rejected of men." Now the time has come for him to announce his kingdom and claim the honour of a King. The public avowal of his dignity, the official declaration of his Messiahship, and the formal proclamation of his kingdom, now behoved to be made. He was now going to assert his right to reign. Now, for the first and only time, he assumes somewhat of royal state in entering his metropolis. Nor yet was there anything very great or very garish in this exhibition of royalty; the whole was carried out in lowly guise. Christ was indeed a King, but King of the realm of truth; and his entrance into Jerusalem was a royal procession—a right royal one, though in a spiritual sense. He was King, but not such a King as the multitude, and even his disciples, expected. He was not a King coming with chariots and horses, with battle-bow or weapons of war, as earthly rulers and worldly conquerors; but "just, and bringing salvation." He was the spiritual King of an unworldly, but universal and unending kingdom.

III. OMNISCIENCE APPARENT IN HIS ORDERS. In the directions which our Lord gives his disciples, probably Peter and John, to go to the village over against them—perhaps Bethphage, which means "house of figs"—there are several particulars so precise, minute, and striking, that they imply superhuman knowledge. How else could he tell them beforehand (1) that immediately on entering the village they would find an ass and her colt; (2) that they were not loose, but tied, and so ready to be employed by their owner; (3) that that colt had never been tamed, or broken in, and that no man had ever sat on its back; (4) the exact position in which the colt would be found—not in the courtyard, but outside; at the door, yet not in the public street, but on a road that ran round (ἀμφόδου) the rear of the house or village; (5) that in case of any demur on the part of persons standing by, they should inform them for whose use it was required; and (6) that the ready consent of the owner would be obtained—"and straightway he will send them"? Another reading of this latter clause has the future, and adds πάλιν, so that the sense is, "He [Christ] will send it back again."

IV. THE HUMBLE YET HEARTY PAGEANT. All was done as had been directed. The colt was brought and led quietly along, its mother by its side, accompanying it. Then the disciples cast their *abbas*, or outer garments, on them, and set Jesus upon them [ἐπάνω αὐτῶν being either on the garments, or on one of the animals. The former view is that of Theophylact, who refers the pronoun to the garments, saying, "Not the two beasts of burden, but the garments;" so also Euthymius, Beza, and many others. Many explain the pronoun of the beasts of burden, but understand it variously—some supposing our Lord to have mounted them alternately; others supplying τινός, as Krebs and Kuinoel; and others, again, having recourse to an enallage of number; while some copyists have ventured to substitute αὐτοῦ or αὐτῆς. The intention of the disciples was to do their Master royal honour in the true Eastern style of improvising, and just as in Old Testament times, a throne had been extemporised for Jehu, as we read in 2 Kings ix. 13, "Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him [Jehu] on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king." Scarcely had the disciples prepared the housing and got their Master mounted on the colt thus caparisoned, when the very great multitude, or rather the most part of the multitude, not to be outdone in devotion and loyalty, strewed some their garments, while others cut down branches off the trees or out of the fields (ἀγρῶν, read by Tischendorf and Tregelles), and spread them in the way. Thus the streaming multitude from

Galilee, from Bethany—some before, some behind the central figure of the Saviour—tapestried the line of march with their garments, or strewed it with fronds (*στοιβάδας*, a rare word, as if *στειβάδας*, from *στείβω*, to tread; and thus, that which is trodden on, a litter of leaves or bed of small leafy branches, then the material of such, viz. young branches). It may perhaps be worthy of note, that in the former case the aorist (*ἔστρωσαν*) is used to denote the throwing down of their garments as a thing done readily and at once; while the cutting of the branches and the spreading of them in the way, as requiring more time, are expressed in the imperfect; that is, they kept cutting them and continued strewing them as they proceeded. Many similar tokens of honour and respect are on record, and practised even to the present day. Thus, when Mordecai issued from the palace of Ahasuerus, the streets (Targum on Esther) were strewn with myrtle; like honour was shown to Xerxes by his army before crossing the Hellespont; so also, as we are informed by Robinson, in his 'Biblical Researches,' the Bethlehemites threw their garments under the feet of the English consul's horses at Damascus, when they had come to implore his aid. In the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus, too, we read that the doomed monarch, when entering the palace on his return to Mycenæ, was, in imitation of the barbaric pomp of Eastern kings, tempted to walk on costly carpets.

V. A PEACEFUL THOUGH TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION. The lowliness of the animal was in keeping with the character of the procession. It was humble, yet right royal. The ass in the East is stately, sprightly, sleek, and shiny; it is highly esteemed, and employed alike for work and riding. Persons of *rank* used it commonly for the latter purpose. Thus we read of Balaam, of Caleb's daughter, and of Abigail riding on asses. Moses' wife rode on an ass, as she went down with her husband from Midian into Egypt. At a still earlier period it was the same animal that Abraham rode on that eventful day, when, rising early in the morning, he saddled his ass and went to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice. It was, moreover, the animal on which the judges of Israel rode, as we learn from such passages as the following:—"Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment;" so also Jair the Gileadite, who judged Israel two and twenty years, "had," as we read, "thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities." We have evidence of the same in Jacob's blessing of his sons, when he says of Issachar that he is "a strong ass, couching down between two burdens." Animals unyoked or unused were employed for *sacred* purposes; thus, in Num. xix. 2, it is written, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke;" again, in 1 Sam. vi. 7, "Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke." Thus it was every way suited to the procession, sacred and solemn, peaceful and royal, that advanced on this occasion towards Jerusalem. The horse, on the other hand, would have been unbecoming in such a procession, since the horse was the emblem of war from an early to a late period in Hebrew history; thus, in Exod. xv. we read, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea;" and also in Jer. viii. 6, "Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle."

VI. THE PROCESSION FROM THE CITY. Another crowd of persons, passing out of the city gates, crossed the Kedron, and advanced in one long continuous line up the opposite side of Olivet till it met the procession that accompanied our Lord. The persons that composed this crowd had been attracted by the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, and they bore their willing testimony to that stupendous fact, as St. John informs us (xii. 17), where we read *ὅτι*, *that*, instead of *ὅτε*, *when*, "The people therefore that was with him bare record *that* he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead." The people from the city bore in their hands palm branches, the emblems of victory. In the ancient games the crowns were various—olive, laurel, pine, or parsley; but in every game the victor bore in his hand the palm branch of victory. Accordingly, with these palm branches in their hands, they welcomed him as victorious over death and the Conqueror of the king of terrors. Soon the crowd from Jerusalem and the multitude from Bethany met and mingled; and now all united formed one grand triumphal procession, the like of which had never climbed or crossed that hill before.

VII. THE ENTHUSIASM. The enthusiasm had reached its height. Hitherto the acknowledgment of the Saviour's kingly power was confined to actions—those of himself and his disciples; now the multitudinous voices of the united crowd made the welkin

ring with shouts of triumph. The proclamation, no longer limited to action, now found utterance in words—words in which the men of Bethany and the people from Jerusalem all took part, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" as we have it in the Gospel by St. Matthew. This term "Hosanna!" was originally a supplication, signifying "Save now!" and thus some understand it here, "Grant salvation to the Son of David!" as the Hebrew verb from which it comes is sometimes followed by a dative. It would in this way be nearly equivalent to "God save the king!" It may, however, be better understood as a joyful acclamation of welcome to the Saviour-King long promised, but now present, like the *Io triumphe* of the Romans or the pæan of the Greeks. "Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!" Here we have one of the designations of Messiah, who was spoken of as *the Coming One;* ages had passed, but still his arrival was a matter of expectation; centuries had rolled away, but his advent was still future. And now that he has come, it is in the name, invested with the authority and bearing the commission, of the great Jehovah. He came as the Vicegerent of God on earth, and as the Mediator for man with heaven. On the occasion here referred to, the crowd accorded him a most cordial welcome and received him with truly regal honours. So enthusiastic were they in the reception of their Messiah, that they did not confine themselves, in expressing their gratulation, to the well-known words of the familiar psalm; carried away with the outburst of general joy, they expressed in their own spontaneous utterances their fond anticipation of his Messianic reign, saying, "Blessed is the *kingdom* that cometh, the kingdom of our father David!" for David was the great theocratic king, and eminently typical of Messiah's kingly power. "Hosanna in the *highest!*" that is, the highest places or the highest strains. So difficult did they find it to express their exuberant joy, and to vent their feelings of jubilation, that they appealed to Heaven itself to give its sanction, and called as it were on the heavenly hosts to join them and take part in their exultation, heaven and earth being presumed of one accord and in perfect unison on the subject. Another explanation makes the words mean "in the highest degree," in order to convey still greater intensity of feeling; while a third regards it as an address to the Most High, equivalent to "O thou that dwellest in the heavens, save, we pray; for all salvation owns thee as its Source!"

VIII. FULFILMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE. The fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy is here noticed by St. Matthew. "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass," is the prediction in Zech. ix. 9; or the exact rendering of the last clause may rather be, "and sitting upon an ass (*chamar*), *even* a colt (*air*), son of she-asses (*athonoth*)," the *ve* being exegetical. The evangelist, in quoting the prophet's words, informs us that the purpose of what now transpired was their fulfilment. The meaning of ἵνα here, as in other similar passages, is either *telic*, or final, "in order that;" or *ecbatic*, that is, eventual or consecutive, "so that." If the word be taken in the former sense, it marks the Divine purpose, and with God purpose and result are coincident; if in the latter sense, it is a consequence, or the evangelist's reflection on the circumstance of what had been foretold being duly fulfilled. That ἵνα had acquired in later Greek a weakened or modified meaning, so as to stand midway between purpose and result, or even to denote the latter, is pretty generally admitted.

IX. PRACTICAL REMARKS. 1. *A cause of circumspection.* This is one practical effect of Christ's omniscience. He had perfect knowledge of the state of matters in and round the village whither he sent his two disciples on the errand we here read of. He told them beforehand where the animal he wanted would be found and how it would be found—the how and where; the inquiry that would be made of them and the answer they were to return, and the readiness with which the desired permission would be granted them. It is a natural and indeed necessary inference that he is equally acquainted with ourselves—our persons, situations, and circumstances. He knows perfectly the great things and the little things of our histories; our condition and conduct in matters the most minute, as well as in those we deem of most importance. From all this we learn the necessity of circumspection. The old Roman wished his house so constructed that all that transpired inside might be seen outside—that to the eye of every passer-by the interior of his dwelling and all that was done in it might be visible. The Saviour's eye penetrates not our houses merely, but our hearts. All we think, as well as all we say and all we do, is every moment uncovered to his inspection

and open to his cognizance. How circumspect, then, we should be! Who would not shrink from having exposed to the view of neighbour or friend or kinsman every thought that lies deep down in the recesses of his heart? Who would care to have every word he utters in the secret chamber made known to his fellow-man? And who would feel quite at ease if he knew that the eyes of some great man or nobleman or prince rested on all his actions throughout an entire day? How careful we are to have things presented in the best possible light, when we expect the presence of some person of consequence or superior rank for the space of a few hours! Oh, then, how we should feel chastened and subdued by the thought that One greater than even the greatest of the kings of the earth knows all we do, hears all we say, and is cognizant of all we think; and that, not for a few hours of a single day, but every hour of every day! Surely this reflection, if duly realized, would be a powerful help to make us circumspect in thought and word and work, guarding our hearts, "for out of them are the issues of life," "keeping the door of our lips that we offend not with our tongue," and using circumspection in all our works and ways. 2. *A source of consolation.* The presence of a friend is often most encouraging. The consciousness that a friendly eye is upon us in time of difficulty, or emergency, or at some critical juncture, is a source of strength, inspiring with courage and stimulating to energy. In sorrow or suffering, also, a sympathetic eye goes a long way to give relief, or, where that is out of the question, to sustain us in our sufferings. But to know that from behind the silent blue of the arching heaven a friendly eye is ever on us, a friendly heart ever beats in sympathy with us, a friendly hand is ever stretched forth to wipe away the tear of sorrow, is a source of comfort unfailing as unspeakable. The little things that vex us, the heavy griefs that crush us, our afflictions, whether physical, or mental and more inward, are known alike to that Friend who never changes, and who never fails nor forsakes us. 3. *A ground of confidence.* The fulfilment of God's Word in the past and at the present is one of the surest grounds of confidence in time to come. St. Matthew, writing in the first instance for Hebrew Christians who had the prophecies in their hand, and were thus in a position to compare prediction with performance, and having, besides, a special propensity in that direction, is careful to note the fulfilment of prophecy, and to draw the attention of his countrymen to the fact. The prediction referred to in this passage had preceded its fulfilment by five centuries and a half; but it did not fail. God's words are "pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times;" not one of them shall ever fail or be falsified.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!"

4. *Human inconstancy.* A heathen moralizes on the fickleness of popular favour; it is changeable as the breeze. The psalmist no doubt had experience of it, when he hastily concluded and hurriedly said that all men are liars; but though his generalization was, as subsequent experience taught him, too sweeping, yet he had had sufficient ground for his statement just then. Hence we have the salutary caution in another psalm, "Trust not in princes, nor man's son." Paul upbraids the Galatians with their changeableness, when he says, "I bear you record, that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" A great and good man, now with God, having had a bitter experience on one occasion of the variableness of human favour, wrote down in his diary the cool but cutting words, "Is it strange that men and the moon should change?" Yet never were the fickleness and consequent worthlessness of human popularity so strikingly exemplified as in the case of the crowd that shouted long and lustily, "Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!" but just four days after, and before the week was out, cried long and loudly, "Crucify him! crucify him!" What a lesson is thus taught the follower of Jesus! What a warning to set little store by human favour and popular applause!

X. THE TEARS JESUS SHED OVER JERUSALEM. 1. *The sight of the city.* Of the three roads that led over the Mount of Olives—one between the two northern crests, a second right over the summit,—the third, or southern, then as now the main road, and the one most frequented from Bethany, was that by which the procession was approaching the city. At a spot where it winds round the southern ridge of the hill, the city,

by a turn of the road, is at once brought full in view. At the descent from this shoulder of Olivet, "when he was come near, he beheld the city," looking across the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Its temple, its buildings, its dwellings, rising full before him, were all seen in the clear air of a Judæan sky; at the same time, its guilty inhabitants and their future fate were equally open to his eyes. 2. *Jesus weeps.* He paused and pondered. The sight of that splendid capital, the knowledge of its crimes, the remembrance of God's mercies, the thought that it might have been spared if, like Nineveh, it had known the day of its visitation and the things that belonged to its peace,—all these considerations awoke the sorrow and called forth the sympathy of the Saviour. "Jesus wept over it," as St. Luke informs us. He dropped a tear in silence (ἐδάκρυσεν) at the grave of Lazarus, a departed friend; but in view of the doomed city of Jerusalem he shed a flood of tears, weeping aloud (ἔκλαυσεν). But while his tears testified his love and showed his tenderness, his lips pronounced the city's fearful doom. 3. *His affecting apostrophe.* "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" Jerusalem had its day, and in vain was that day protracted. "If thou hadst known, even thou," O ill-fated city; even thou, with all thy guilt; even thou, who hast so long abused the forbearance of a long-suffering God; even thou, who hast been so often reproved, and yet ever hardened thyself against reproof; even thou, who hast had so many warnings from the prophets of God and apostolic men; even thou, whose children I would have gathered as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; if thou, even thou, after so many days of mercy and of privilege have been misspent, after so many days of grace have been lost and for ever; if thou, even thou, hadst known, at least in this thy day, in this thy last day of privilege and of promise, in this thy last day of heavenly ministration, in this day of merciful visitation still thine, though the eleventh hour of thy existence and the eve of thy destruction! Never was apostrophe to place or person so tender, and never was aposiopesis so terrible; for the sentence is suddenly broken off and left unfinished; the clause which should state the consequence is omitted. After this omission the Saviour pauses, and then adds, "But now they are hid from thine eyes." The sentence might be taken as the expression of a wish: "Oh that thou hadst known the things that belong to thy peace!" and the sense would have remained the same and the sentiment equally solemn. 4. *Application to ourselves.* Our Lord's address on this occasion is as practical as it is pathetic. Personally applied, what an appeal it makes to each one of us! Jerusalem had its day, patriarchs and prophets had their day, evangelists and apostles had their day, ancient Jews and early Christians had their day, the apostolic and other Church Fathers had their day, the schoolmen and the reformers had their day, our forefathers and the men of preceding generations had their day; but "our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Now, the present is our day. God says to each of us—This, the present, is thy day! Let conscience re-echo the solemn truth, for the past is gone, and gone for ever; the future is to come, and may never come to us; the present is all we can call our own. This, then, is our day; for "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." 5. *The purpose for which it is vouchsafed.* Day is not merely a measure of time, or portion of duration, or period of light, or a unit of a month or of a year, or a fragment of existence, made up of so many hours; it is that season for getting good and doing good which God has given us, and which he has assigned us for accomplishing the work for which he sent us into the world. It is thy day, reader; for God has given it to thee for a great purpose, and that purpose is the securing of thine own eternal well-being and the welfare of thy fellow-creature, and in both the glory of the great Creator. It is thy day; for it is thy property as long as Heaven is pleased to continue the boon. It is thy day; but not thine to waste or misspend; it is not thine to while away, or trifle away, or sin away, at thy option. It is thine; for it is a talent lent, a treasure given you by God, and for which thou shalt have to render an account. It is thy day for imitating the Saviour in working the work of him that sent thee: and "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent;" "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ;" this is thy day for attending to the conditions of peace, the things that tend to and make for peace, such as the righteousness of Christ received by faith, repentance of sin, and reformation of life. It is thy day for cultivating personal and practical religion in thine own soul; thy day, more-

over, for the discharge of the duties of relative religion, because, in a certain sense, every man should be his brother's keeper, and no man is to live wholly to himself, or to seek entirely and selfishly, and therefore sinfully, his own things only, but to look also upon the things of others. It is thy day to do something for God, something for the Church, something for the world, endeavouring to leave it better than you found it —something useful in thy day and generation.—J. J. G.

Vers. 12—26. Parallel passages: Matt. xxi. 12—22; Luke xix. 45—48.—*The blighting of the barren fig tree.* I. SYMBOLISM. 1. *Miracles of mercy.* Mercy has been called God's darling attribute; judgment is his strange work. The only-begotten Son, who has declared the Father unto us, has manifested the selfsame character. His miracles are miracles of mercy—all save two. Of these two, one was permissive and punitive, when our Lord allowed the devils to enter into the swine of the Gadarenes; the other, which is recorded in this passage, is a sort of symbol such as the old prophets used when they inculcated any solemn utterance, or wished specially to impress any predicted event. This custom was common in New as well as in Old Testament times. Thus Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Thus also Agabus, when he foretold Paul's imprisonment at Jerusalem, symbolized the fact by taking the apostle's girdle and therewith binding his own hands and feet, saying, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle." In like manner our Lord, by this miracle of the blasted fig tree, most symbolically and significantly sets forth the blight of barrenness which so justly fell upon the Jewish people, and which is sure to fall upon any people or any person who has only the leaves of an outside profession, but who wants the fruits of a genuine faith or a heartfelt piety. To pronounce a curse on a senseless tree might appear meaningless—it might even seem vindictive. Not so, however, when the Saviour, in order to express the hopes which the appearance of the tree excited, and the disappointment which its want of fruit occasioned, devoted that tree by a striking figure to future and for ever fruitlessness. He thereby converts that tree into a symbol of the hypocrite or false professor, be he Gentile or be he Jew; and makes it a danger-signal, at once to warn us of the danger and ward off the doom. 2. *Judgment succeeds the abuse of mercy.* Another lesson which our Lord teaches us by this tree is the consequence of abused mercy. When mercy has been abused, judgment must succeed. The day of grace does not always last; and when that day has passed, and its privileges have been misused, the axe is then laid to the root of the tree, that it may be hewn down and cast into the fire. Such was the case with the body of the Jewish nation at the very time this miracle was wrought. Their day of grace was expiring. Their heart had remained untouched by that most pathetic appeal, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" Now, however, they were hid from their eyes. A woe similar to that pronounced on Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum had gone forth against all that people, notwithstanding the fact that they had once been the people of God, and notwithstanding the many and great privileges which they had enjoyed, as well as the loud and leafy professions they had made. 3. *The relation of the miracle of the fig tree to the parable of the fig tree.* The fact of this relationship should be kept in view. The miracle narrated in this passage and the parable recorded by St. Luke are in a great measure the converse of each other. The parable of the fig tree long spared through the intercession of the vine-dresser, and this miracle of the fig tree suddenly withered to the very roots, are to a large extent the right opposite of each other. The one represents mercy pleading, the other judgment suddenly and surely overtaking the guilty; the one the long-suffering kindness of God, the other the swift vengeance of Heaven; the one mercy prevailing over judgment, the other judgment without mercy; the one a tree spared in hope of fruitfulness, the other a tree suddenly scathed to the very earth because of its barrenness. There is, however, one point, and only one point, in common; and that is, the end of continued unfruitfulness is cursing, the end of barrenness is burning, and the end of all leaf and no fruit is the speedy execution of the sentence, "Bind them in bundles, and burn them." 4. *A comparison and a contrast.* In the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find a beautiful comparison and an awful contrast; by the former the lesson of the parable is enforced, and by the latter the warn-

ing of this miracle receives a solemn sanction. "The earth," we there read, "which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them *for* whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

II. OUR LORD'S DISAPPOINTMENT. 1. *He hungered.* The Saviour was on his way from Bethany to Jerusalem. It was in the morning, and he was hungry. This may appear strange. What had been the matter with the friendly family of Bethany, under whose roof our Lord had been so often and so hospitably entertained? Had they forfeited the high character for hospitality which they had so well earned? Had they forgotten its rights and become inconsiderate towards their Guest—a Guest whom they so highly honoured, and who had such claims upon them? Had they forgotten his wants, or neglected to supply them? Had Martha ceased her thrift, and given up her housewifery? Be this as it may, it could be no intentional neglect, much less a studied slight; it must have been some strange oversight. Or, as our Lord's time on earth was soon to terminate, and as much was to be done that day, perhaps he left Bethany at an earlier hour than usual; and, doing so, he could not wait till the customary hour for breakfast, and would not allow the household arrangements to be broken through for his convenience. Or perhaps he wished to reach the temple in time for the morning sacrifice at nine o'clock, before which time a devout Jew seldom broke his fast. Or perhaps he was so intent on his Father's business, and so intensely absorbed in his own great work, and so rapt in contemplation of its grand results, that he neglected the food provided for him. Or, in the absence of any direct statement, and where we are left to conjecture, we may suppose that it is just possible that he had shunned the shelter of any roof, and spent the previous night in prayer on some lone hillside or other sequestered spot. At all events, the broad fact stands out that he, by whom all things were made, became hungry; that he, who had fed thousands in a wilderness with a few loaves and fishes, would fain have satisfied the cravings of appetite with a few unripe figs. 2. *Leafage without fruitage, or all leaf and no fruit.* The district through which our Lord passed on his way, as he went from Bethany to Jerusalem, was a fig region. A village by the way had its name from this very circumstance; that village was Bethphage, which, as we have already seen, means "house of figs." Journeying through this district, he would, as might be expected, see many fig trees. His eye, however, rested on one at some distance. From St. Matthew's special mention of this *one* fig tree we conclude that there must have been something peculiar in its appearance. Our Lord singled it out from all or any in the district. It was rich in leaves, and so, full of promise. We must have in recollection the well-known fact in reference to the fig tree, that it puts forth its fruit before its leaves. The leaves of the fig tree, when they appeared, warranted the expectation of the figs. The leaves of this tree, visible to a distance, must have been large and numerous, and thus they held out the hope of abundant figs. The leafy honours of the tree bespoke its abundant fruitfulness. On the other hand, we are informed that "the time of figs was not yet," by which some (1) understand that the fig harvest had not yet come—the time of gathering the figs had not yet arrived. According to this understanding, in which Wakefield, Wetstein, Newcome, Campbell, Bloomfield, and others coincide, while the leaves indicated the existence of figs on the tree, the season of the year intimated with equal certainty that they had not been gathered off the tree; whatever fruit, therefore, the tree had, it retained. Figs there should have been, and if the tree had been true to its promise, figs there would have been. Figs there should have been still on the tree, for they had had time to grow, but not yet time to be gathered. There was every reason to expect figs on that fig tree, still green they might be, still immature, and not yet fully ripened. And yet this forwardness of the foliage implied the forwardness of its fruit. The advanced state of the one naturally induced the hope of a proportionately advanced state in the other. But not so. Our Lord approaches this goodly tree, but no fruit is there—not one fig among all its branches, not one fig among all its leaves. We must notice another explanation of the supposed difficulty in the words "for the time of figs was not [yet]." We put aside at once such attempted explanations as that of Heinsius, who, by accenting and changing the breathing, read *οὔ* instead of *οὐ* the negative, and rendered accordingly, "for where he was, it was the season of figs," that is, fruits ripened in Judæa considerably earlier than in the less mild climate of Galilee; also the

still more forced interpretation of those who read the clause interrogatively, viz. "for was it not the time of figs?" and the no less objectionable explanation of καιρὸς in the sense of a favourable season, for in that case the season, not the tree, would have deserved the malediction; or in the signification of favourable weather, as Olshausen. All these, however ingenious they may appear, are evasive shifts and no more. But, discounting them, we find an interpretation other than that first given and simpler, which, (2) understanding the reference to be to a *precocious* or *premature foliation*, takes the words in their plain and natural sense. It was not the time or season of figs—"denn es war nicht Feigenzeit," as Fritzsche properly renders it; but this tree antedated the season by putting forth its leaves prematurely. The appearance of the leaves was unseasonably early; still, as their appearance implied the prior existence of fruit, the passer-by was thus invited to approach the tree, and induced to expect and hope for fruit. The show of leaves, though not the season of the year, favoured this expectation; accordingly he came, if therefore (ἄρα), as it was reasonable to expect from the tree having leaves, he shall find anything in it (ἐν αὐτῇ) within the compass of this umbrageous tree, among its leaves and branches. But though he came (ἐπ' αὐτήν) close upon it, right up to it, yet, notwithstanding his nearness to it, and the narrowness with which he inspected it, he found nothing but leaves. 3. *Symbol of profession without performance.* According to either of the explanations above given, either (1) or (2), especially perhaps the latter, that large fig tree, with its fine foliage and luxuriant leaves, occupying, as it did, a prominent position near the wayside, and visible far off by reason of its grand proportions and magnificent appearance, was nothing better than a huge practical lie, an embodied falsehood, a palpable untruth. That tree made a promise, but it broke it; it held out a hope, but it disappointed it; it professed much, but performed nothing. Never was there a more striking symbol of any people than that fig tree was of the Jews. They had enjoyed covenant promises and covenant privileges and covenant hopes, and their professions corresponded therewith. These were their leaves, but they had no real fruitfulness. They occupied a high and prominent position; theirs were a very fruitful hillside—the horn of the son of oil—an exceedingly fertile soil, glorious fostering sunshine, and rich refreshing dews; "they were Israelites; to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises;" but they proved themselves unworthy, shamefully unworthy, of these favours. They had commandments and ordinances; they made loud professions and long prayers; they were strict in certain religious observances, and scrupulous in their ritual. In some things they went beyond the letter of the Law, for they tithed rue and anise and cummin; but, in matters of much greater magnitude and really enjoined by the Law, they fell short, and were in fact woefully deficient. God "looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." They called themselves children of Abraham, but they had none of that precious faith that so distinguished Abraham. They were proud of Moses, their great lawgiver, but they attended not to the Prophet to whom Moses pointed as greater than himself, and to whom he commanded them to hearken. They professed themselves expectants of Messiah, but when he came to them they received him not. They were no better than the dark world around—"a world that knew not when he came, even God's eternal Son." We need not trace further the application of this symbolic fig tree to the Jews; let us see its application to Gentiles also. 4. *Adumbrative of Gentile as well as Jew.* There may be the leaves of profession without any corresponding fruitfulness in the case of Gentiles as well as of Jews. This symbolic fig tree may have a personal application to ourselves. We may profess Christ to please men, to keep up appearances, to maintain a respectable position, or advance in some way our worldly prospects. We may rest in a mere form; we may have a form of godliness without the power; we may have a name to live, and yet be spiritually dead; we may be content with the outward visible sign, and care nothing for the inward spiritual grace. This was the complaint of God against his professing people in the days of Ezekiel: "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." Here is

the too common defect of profession without practice, naming the name of Christ and not departing from iniquity. Others, again, it is to be feared, are downrightly insincere; they put religion on like a cloak, and lay it aside when it suits them; like their Sunday clothes, they wear it on the sabbath, but lay it past throughout the week. They impose on their fellow-men, they trifle with the Almighty, and deceive their own souls. 5. *The Saviour's dissatisfaction with barren professors.* Many a time Christ comes to professors, and when he finds no fruit, no figs, no real goodness, nothing but leaves, oh, how he is disappointed! Many a time he is wounded in the house of his friends; many a time he has reason to be indignant with the false professor; many a time religion is scandalized by the leaf of profession and the life of sin. We can conceive Christ coming to such professors and saying—Was it for this you trod my courts? for this you joined yourself to my people? for this you sat at my table? for this you took the cup of salvation in your hand? for this you avouched yourself to be the Lord's in solemn sacramental action? 6. *His remonstrance.* Besides the expression of just indignation, there is tender remonstrance on his part. That remonstrance may be supposed couched in some such terms as the following:—After all my care for you, and love to you, and provision for your salvation; after all my goodness and grace to your soul; after all my sufferings, both in life and death; after all my agony of soul and anguish of body; after the many precepts I have given you, the exhortations I have addressed to you, the warnings I have sent you; after all the checks of conscience, and after all the strivings of my Spirit,—is this the return you make me? Have you so soon forgotten your covenant engagements; so soon forgotten all your vows; so soon belied the profession you made, saying by act, if not by word, "O Lord, I am thy servant: thou hast loosed my bonds"? Have you so soon and so sadly violated your pledged allegiance expressed in the words, "I am not my own; I am bought with a price; and bound therefore to serve the Lord with body and spirit, which are the Lord's"? God forbid that this should be the case with any of us! May better things be hoped, and reasonably hoped, of us all, and "things that accompany salvation"! Let our motto be, "Now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Let our conduct be in accordance with the statement, "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" Let our meditation be on "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;" and "if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," let us "think on these things."

III. DOOM PRONOUNCED ON THE FIG TREE. 1. *He stereotypes its state.* Christ does not make this fig tree barren, he only stereotypes its barrenness; he found it in that state, and, as far as its condition of barrenness was concerned, he left it pretty much as he found it. It bare no fruit before, it should bear no fruit afterwards, and so no fruit for ever. As far, however, as his own action was concerned, he did more; for he withered its leaves, he scathed its trunk, he blighted it both root and branch. It was cursed, and so devoted to barrenness; it was dried up from the roots, and so inevitably destined to decay; it was completely withered, and so doomed to entire destruction. To the present hour the Jew has an unmistakable resemblance to this symbolic fig tree. Nationally, he is barked and peeled; he is a tree of which the branches are withered; he is one of a nation on which the blight of Heaven rests; the curse has come upon them to the uttermost. He has neither Church, as in days of old, nor State, nor proper nationality. He has neither temple, nor priest, nor sacrifice. He is still doomed to the "wandering foot and weary breast"—one of a people resembling this withered fig tree to which the curse of Heaven clings. 2. *Applicability of the symbol to our own case.* What is the conclusion from all this, and what is its connection with ourselves? Just that of which the apostle, in writing to the Romans (xi. 21, 22) speaks: "For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." 3. *Responsibility pertaining to the Church of God.* It is no light matter to have the Church of God in our midst, its ordinances dispensed to us, its sacraments enjoyed by us, its doctrines proclaimed to us, its duties declared to us. What weighty responsibilities does all this impose? "Unto whomsoever much

is given, of them shall much be required." What a blessing, if we improve these privileges, and know the time of our merciful visitation! What a millstone weight of condemnation is hung about our neck, when, in the full enjoyment of ordinances, we prove ourselves at once unfaithful and ungrateful? We see here what Christ expects of us, and what he has every right to expect. He sees on us the leaves of profession; he requires the living power of religion in our souls. He beholds the leaves of confession; he demands correspondence of character, conduct, and conversation. He has heard your proclamation with the lips to the effect, "Henceforth shall the Lord be my God;" he looks, therefore, for piety of heart and purity of life. He observes with you the show of godliness; he will not be satisfied unless you diffuse the savour of it all around. Truth binds you to this; you have sworn, and must not go back; you have vowed, and must fulfil your vow; you have avouched the Lord to be your God, and the covenant entered into may not be broken, except at terrible risk. Gratitude binds to this. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his gracious benefits and gifts to us?

"Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all."

Consistency binds to this. What can be thought of any one who enters into the most solemn engagements and then practically repudiates them? Our welfare, both for time and eternity, binds to this; for "blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."

IV. APPLICATION OF THE WHOLE. 1. Think for a moment of the awful doom of this withered fig tree. It is the doom of every hypocrite and of every false professor. The first blessing pronounced on man was fruitfulness; one of the severest curses is barrenness. The leaf of the merely nominal Christian will soon wither; it will soon decay and die. There is no root, and so even the leaf of profession will not last long; no faith, and so no fruitfulness; no principle, and so no practical godliness. The sparks of his own kindling make but a flickering light at best; and that light, bad as it is, soon goes out altogether in utter darkness. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." 2. As it fared with the Jews, so will it fare with every individual who abuses God's mercies by continued unfruitfulness. God's ancient people has been unchurched, and, if we may so say, unpeopled; and if this was done in a green tree, what shall not be done in a dry? The seven Churches of Asia had been unfaithful, and the candlestick was removed out of its place. So with the African Churches—Alexandria, Hippo, and Carthage. 3. God looks for fruit, and claims it as his due. The more fruitful you are, the more is he glorified. "Herein," said the Saviour, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;" the more, also, is your own soul benefited and blessed. Often, when men become unfruitful, and prove false to their vows, neglecting God's ordinances, and abusing his mercies, he gives them over to judicial blindness of mind, hardness of heart, searedness of conscience, or to strong delusion, or to a famine not of bread but of hearing the Word of the Lord. Sickness, or age, or poverty, or removal of their habitation, deprives them of the once possessed, but little esteemed and much abused, mercies. So with Ephraim; he is "joined to his idols: let him alone." 4. During our walks in summer or early autumn we used to see a tree withered and decayed; its leaves were gone, its bark peeled off, and its branches quite bare. Near to it on every side were trees green and leafy, healthy and vigorous, beautiful and flourishing. How ghastly looked that naked skelcton tree beside them! We often said as we passed it by—What a true type of a barren professor, "twice dead, plucked up by the roots"! 5. From this miracle our Lord took occasion to speak of the wonders which faith works, and to urge the necessity of faith to the success of prayer.—J. J. G.

Vers. 27—33. Parallel passages: Matt. xxi. 23—32; Luke xx. 1—8.—*Christ's authority questioned.* I. CAUSE OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY BEING CALLED IN QUESTION. The ostensible cause was the events of the preceding day; the real cause Satan's opposition to the work of Christ. On the day before he had displayed his zeal for the sanctity of God's house and the purity of its worship. He is now called to account

because of the extraordinary efforts he had made to put a stop to the public profanation of the house of God, and because of the no less extraordinary authority which he had exercised. Such appears to be the right reference of the ταῦτα in the question, though along with the purging of the temple may be included the miracles of healing that had been performed on the blind and lame who, as St. Matthew informs us, had resorted to him in the temple. Others, with less probability, refer the word to his teaching; for "he taught daily in the temple," as we read in St. Luke. All these, together with our Lord's triumphal entry, had sorely displeased and greatly discomfited the Jewish rulers, who now proceeded to call his authority in question. But the prime mover of this cavilling opposition was Satan. He was pursuing his usual tactics. Good is often done in an informal way, or by voluntary agencies, or by very humble instrumentalities; and Satan, when the fact of the good done is undeniable, stirs up men to impugn the authority or assail the commission of those Christian workers by whom the good is done, thus endeavouring to raise a false issue and stay its progress.

II. GREED OF GAIN VERSUS GODLINESS. The Church has its counterfeits as well as the world; there is no class altogether free from false disguises. Some, perhaps many, of those unholy traffickers who were desecrating the temple so that a second cleansing of it within the short period of three years had become a necessity, fancied they were doing God service and accommodating his worshippers; while their own sordid and selfish interests—their own love of gain and usurious greed—were their real and actuating motives. Was it strange that our Lord was roused to indignation, and resorted to the most active measures to expel from the sacred precincts those dealers in sheep and oxen, with their droves of cattle, those dove-sellers and money-changers, who, under the pretext of supplying the requisites for sacrifices to such as came from a distance, and the temple half-shekels to foreign Jews for their larger coins or coins with heathenish images and inscriptions, had their heart set on driving a profitable trade in this matter of the sacrifices, and their eye fixed on the κόλλυβος, or twelfth of a shekel, as the agio of exchange; while the noisy bargainings, unseemly wranglings, and general hubbub made the house of God resemble one of those caves where robbers quarrelled over their ill-got gains?

III. OUR LORD'S ANSWER TO THE QUESTION ABOUT AUTHORITY. The twofold question about our Lord's authority and its source was put by a deputation from the Sanhedrim—a deputation representative of the three chief sections of that body: namely, chief priests or heads of the twenty-four classes; scribes, the theologians or authorized interpreters of Scripture; and the elders or heads of the principal families. The question of this formidable deputation called forth a counter-question on the part of our Lord; nor was there any evasion in this. By asking them whether John's baptism was of heavenly or human origin, he effectually answered their question, and put them into a dilemma from which there was no escaping. If they admitted John's mission to have been from God, the matter was settled at once and decisively; for John had testified most positively and repeatedly to the Divine mission and consequent Divine authority of Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and declaring that he would "baptize with the Holy Ghost." The alternative of John's mission being derived from a human source was what they dared not face, for it would bring them into collision with the crowd, and they were too cowardly for that.

IV. THE UNFAIRNESS OF THE QUESTION OF THE SANHEDRIM. Had they not had evidence of Jesus' authority in his exceptionally sinless life in the midst of all the temptations of a sinful world? Had they not evidence of his Divine authority in his teaching?—"for he taught as One having authority, and not as the scribes;" in "the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth"?—for the universal testimony was that "never man spake like this Man." Had they not proof in the miracles which he wrought—not prodigally, but properly and appropriately?

"But who so blind as those who will not see?
And who so deaf as those who will not hear?"

J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1.—**And he began to speak unto them in parables.** This particular parable which follows was specially directed against the scribes and Pharisees; but it was uttered in the presence of a multitude of the people. "He *began* to speak ... in parables." He had not used this form of instruction till now in Jerusalem. **A man planted a vineyard.** The imagery of the parable would be familiar to them from Isaiah (v. 1). But Palestine was eminently a land of "vineyards," as well as of "oil olives." The man who planted the vineyard is no other than God himself. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it." The imagery is specially appropriate. No property was considered to yield so rich a return as the vineyard, and none required such unceasing care and attention. The vine represents the kingdom of God in its idea and conception; not the Jewish Church in particular. The owner of this vineyard had himself made it. He had "planted it." This planting took place in the establishment of the Jewish polity in the land of Canaan, when the heathen were cast out. **He set a hedge about it.** This and the following descriptions are not mere ornaments of the parable. The "hedge" was an important protection to the vineyard. It might be a wall or a "quick hedge," a living fence. The vineyards in the East may now be seen often with a strong hedge planted round them. Such hedges, made of the prickly cactus, are to be seen at this day in the neighbourhood of Joppa. Figuratively, this hedge would represent the middle wall of partition which then existed between the Jew and the Gentile; and in this, their separation from the idolatrous nations around them, lay the security of the Jews that they should enjoy the continued protection of God. It is well remarked by Archbishop Trench that the geographical position of Judæa was figurative of this, the spiritual separation of the people—guarded as Judæa was eastward by the river Jordan and its chain of lakes, northward by Anti-libanus, southward by the desert and Idumæa, and westward by the Mediterranean Sea. **Digged a place for the winepress** (ληνός, *torcular*); the words are literally, *digged a pit for the winepress* (ὤρυξεν ὑπολήνιον); the digging could only apply to the pit, a place hollowed out and then fitted with masonry. Sometimes these pits were formed out of the solid rock. Examples of these are frequent in Palestine. There were usually two pits hollowed out of the rock, one sloping to the other, and with openings between them. The grapes were placed in the upper pit; and the juice, crushed out by the feet of men, flowed into the lower pit, from whence it was taken out and put into wine-skins. "I have trodden the winepress alone." **And built a tower.** The tower (πύργον) was probably the watch-tower, where a watchman was placed to guard the vineyard from plunderers. Particular directions are given in the rabbinical writings (see Lightfoot) for the dimensions both of the winepress and of the tower. The tower was to be ten cubits high and four cubits square. It is described as "a high place, where the vine-dresser stands to overlook the vineyard." Such towers are still to be seen in Palestine, especially in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, of Hebron, and in the vine-growing districts of Lebanon. **And let it out to husbandmen.** The husbandmen would be the ordinary stated teachers of the people, though not excluding the people themselves. The Jewish nation in fact, both the teachers and the taught, represented the husbandmen, each member of the Church, then as now, being required to seek the welfare of the whole body. **And went into a far country** (καὶ ἀπεδήμησε); literally, *and went into another country.* St. Luke (xx. 9) adds (χρόνους ἱκανούς), "for a long time."

Vers. 2—5.—**And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard.** St. Matthew (xxi. 34) says he sent "his servants." St. Mark mentions them in detail. These servants were the prophets, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, whom the Jews persecuted and slew in different ways, as the reprovers of their vices. But the mercy of God was long-suffering, and still triumphed over their wickedness. In his account of this parable St. Mark is very minute. The first servant that was sent received no fruit, and was beaten. The second received much worse usage. According to the Authorized Version the words are, **At him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled** (κἀκεῖνον λιθοβολήσαντες ἐκεφαλαίωσαν, καὶ ἀπέστειλαν ἠτιμωμένον). The word λιθοβολήσαντες is, however, not to be found in the best authorities; and the right reading of the next word is apparently ἐκεφαλίωσαν, a very unusual word; but the context makes it plain that it expresses some injury done to the head. The other form of the word is usual enough; but it ordinarily signifies "a summing up," "a gathering up into a head." *And handled shamefully* (ἠτιμωμένον); literally, *dishonoured.* The third mes-

senger they killed outright. The words run, **And him they killed; and many others; beating some, and killing some.** The construction here is incomplete, although the meaning is plain. The complete sentence would be, "And him they killed; and *they did violence to* many others, beating some and killing some."

Vers. 6—8.—**Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved.** There is strong evidence in favour of a different reading here, namely (ἔτι ἕνα εἶχεν, υἱὸν ἀγαπητόν), *he had yet one, a beloved son.* There is something very touching in this form of expression. Many messages had been sent; many means had been tried. But one other resource remained. "There is one, a beloved Son. I will send him; they will surely reverence him (ἐντραπήσονται τὸν υἱόν μου). They will reflect, and reflection will bring shame and submission and reverence." This was the last effort of Divine mercy—the sending of the Incarnate God, whom the Jews put to death without the city. St. Mark's words seem rather to imply that they killed him within the vineyard, and cast out the dead body. But it is possible that in his narrative he mentions the climax first—**they killed him,** and then returns to a detail of the dreadful tragedy; they cast him out of the vineyard, and there slew him. (See Matt. xxi. 39.)

Ver. 9.—**What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do?** In St. Matthew's narrative the scribes answer this question. St. Luke, as St. Mark here, assigns the answer to our Lord. It would seem probable that the scribes first answered him, and that then he himself repeated their answer, and confirmed it by his looks and gesture; so that from thence, as well as from what followed, they might sufficiently understand that he spake these things of them. Then, according to St. Luke (xx. 16), they subjoined the words, "God forbid!" an expression wrung from their consciences, which accused them and told them that the parable applied to them. Here, then, we have a distinct prediction of the rejection of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles.

Vers. 10, 11.—This quotation is from Ps. cxviii. 22, where David prophesies of Christ. The meaning is plainly this, that the chief priests and scribes, as the builders of the Jewish Church, rejected Christ from the building as a useless stone; yea, more—they condemned and crucified him. They **rejected** him (ἀπεδοκίμασαν). The verb in the Greek implies that the stone was first examined and then deliberately refused. But this stone, thus disallowed and set at nought by the builders, was made **the head of the corner.** The image here is different from that used in the Epistles, where Christ is spoken of as the chief Corner-stone in the foundation. Here he is represented as the Corner-stone in the cornice. In real truth he is both. He is the tried Foundation-stone. But he is also the Head of the corner. In the great spiritual building he is "all and in all," uniting and binding together all in one. **This was the Lord's doing** (παρὰ Κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη); literally, *this was from the Lord.* The feminine (αὕτη) refers apparently to κεφαλή. This lifting up of the despised and rejected stone to be the Corner-stone of the cornice was God's work; and was a fitting object for wonder and praise.

Ver. 12.—The scribes and Pharisees knew, partly from the words of this psalm, and partly from the looks of Christ, that they were spoken against them. So **they sought in their rage and malice to lay hold on him; but they feared the people,** with whom he was still popular. Thus, however, by his rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees, he prepared the way for that death which, within three days, they brought upon him. And the counsel of God was fulfilled for the redemption of men by the blood of Christ.

Vers. 13, 14.—St. Matthew (xxii. 15) tells us that "the Pharisees took counsel how they might ensnare him (ὅπως αὐτὸν παγιδεύσωσιν) in his talk;" namely, by proposing to him captious and insidious questions, which, in whatever way he might answer them, might expose him to danger. On this occasion they enlisted the Herodians to join them in their attack upon him. These Herodians were a sect of the Jews who supported the house of Herod, and were in favour of giving tribute to the Roman Cæsar. They were so called at first from Herod the Great, who was a great supporter of Cæsar. Tertullian, St. Jerome, and others say that these Herodians thought that Herod was the promised Messiah, because they saw that in him the sceptre had departed from Judah (Gen. xlix. 10). Herod encouraged these flatterers, and so put to death the infants at Bethlehem, that he might thus get rid of Christ, lest any other than himself might be regarded as Christ. They said that it was on this account that he rebuilt the temple with so much magnificence. The Pharisees took, of course, altogether the other side, and stood forward as the supporters of the Law of Moses and of their national freedom. So, in order that they might ensnare him, they sent to him their disciples with the Herodians, and in the most artful manner proposed to him, apparently in good faith, a question which answer it how he might, would, as they hoped, throw him upon the horns of a dilemma. If he said that tribute ought to be given to Cæsar, he would expose him-

self to the malice of the Jewish people, who prided themselves upon their freedom. If, on the other hand, he said that tribute ought not to be given to Cæsar, he would incur the wrath of Cæsar and of the Roman power.

Vers. 15, 16.—St. Matthew (xxii. 18) says, "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" You pretend that you are approaching me with a good conscience, sincerely desirous to know how you ought to act in this matter; when at the same time you are enemies alike of me and of God, and are thirsting for my blood, and are doing all in your power to torment me, and to entangle me by fraud. "The first virtue," says St. Jerome, "of the respondent is to know the mind of the questioner, and to adapt his answer accordingly." These Pharisees and Herodians flatter Christ that they may destroy him; but he rebukes them, that, if possible, he might save them. **Bring me a penny, that I may see it.** The Roman *denarius* was equal to about eightpence halfpenny. This was the coin in which the tribute money was to be paid. It had stamped upon it the image of Tiberius Cæsar, the then reigning Roman emperor. The cognomen of Cæsar was first given to Julius Cæsar, from whom it was devolved to his successors. The current coin of the country proved the subjection of the country to him whose image was upon it. Maimonides, quoted by Dr. John Lightfoot (vol. ii. p. 230), says, "Wheresoever the money of any king is current, there the inhabitants acknowledge that king for their lord."

Ver. 17.—**Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.** It is as though our Lord said, "Since you Jews are now subject to Cæsar—and there is here this evidence of it, that his coin is current amongst you; you would not use it were you not obliged, because all Gentile rites and symbols are an abhorrence to you;—but since Cæsar demands nothing of you but his tribute—the coin stamped with his own image and name—it is your duty to render to him his own *denarius* for tribute. But spiritual things, such as worship and obedience, give these to God; for these he demands from you as his right, and by so doing you will offend neither God nor yet Cæsar." Our Lord, in his infinite wisdom, avoids the question altogether whether the Jews were rightly in subjection to the Romans. This was a doubtful question. But there could be no doubt as to the fact that they were tributary. This was made plain by the evidence of the current coin. Now, this being so, it was manifestly the duty of the Jewish people to give to Cæsar the tribute money which he demanded of them for the expenses of government, and especially of supporting an army to defend them from their enemies. And it was no less their duty to give their tribute to God, which he in his own right demanded of them as his creatures and faithful subjects. The rights of Cæsar are one thing, and those of God are another; and there is nothing that need clash between them. State polity is not opposed to religion, nor religion to state. Tertullian says, "'Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's;' that is, give to Cæsar his image stamped upon his coin, and give to God his own image stamped upon you; so that while you render to Cæsar the coin which is his due, you may render your own self to God." This wonderful answer of our Lord teaches us that we ought to try to speak so wisely, and so to moderate our speech amongst those who are captious, that we may, if possible, offend neither side, but steer safely between Scylla and Charybdis. **And they marvelled at him.** The true Greek reading of the verb here is not *ἐθαύμασαν*, but *ἐξεθαύμαζον*, *they marvelled greatly at him*; *they stood marvelling greatly at him.* They marvelled at his wisdom and skill in extricating himself so readily out of this net in which they had hoped to entangle him. Indeed, the words of the psalmist (Ps. ix. 15) were verified in them: "The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." He vaulted over the trap set for him, leaving them entangled in it. He lifted up the question far above the petty controversy of the hour, and affirmed a great principle of natural and religious obligation which belongs alike to all times and persons and places.

Vers. 18—23.—**And there come unto him Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection.** Josephus states that in the time of Judas Maccabæus there were three sects of the Jews, differing amongst themselves, namely, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. The Hebrew word *Zadoc*, from which the Sadducees derive their name, means "just," or "righteous." These Sadducees accepted the Pentateuch, and probably more than the Pentateuch; but they rejected any oral tradition. They were known in the time of our Lord as denying those doctrines which connect us more immediately with another world, such as the existence of spirits and of angels, and the resurrection of the body. They altogether denied fate, affirming that all things are in our own power. They heard Christ preach the resurrection, and by means of it persuade men to repentance and a holy life. They therefore proposed to him

a question which appeared to them to be fatal to the doctrine of a future state and a resurrection. The case supposed is that of seven brethren, who, in compliance with the Law of Moses, one after another, as each died in succession, took the same woman to wife. It is probable that such a case may actually have occurred; at any rate, it was a possible case. And the question founded upon it by the Sadducees was this—Whose wife would she be of them in the resurrection? Here, then, they hoped to entangle him, and to show that the doctrine of the resurrection was absurd. For if our Lord should say that in the resurrection she would be the wife of one only, the other brethren would have been excited to envy and continual strife. Nor could he have said that she would be common to the seven brothers. Such were the absurdities which, as they intimated, would flow out of his doctrine of the resurrection, if it could be proved. But our Lord scatters to the winds all this foolish reasoning, by adding one clause omitted by them, and overlooked by men of mere earthly minds, namely, that in the world to come this widow would be the wife of none of the seven brethren.

Ver. 24.—These Sadducees erred in two ways: (1) They did not know or remember the Scriptures, such as that in Job (xix. 25), "I know that my Redeemer liveth," etc., or in Isaiah (xxvi. 19), "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise;" or in Daniel (xii. 2), "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," etc. (2) They did not know the power of God, namely, that he can raise the bodies of the dead again to life, even as at first he created them out of nothing; for a greater power is required to make that to be which was not, than to make that again to be which once was. But then the resurrection life will be a new life, spiritual, glorious, eternal, like that of the angels. So in these words our Lord struck at the double root of the error of the Sadducees: (1) ignorance of the Scriptures, which plainly teach the resurrection; and (2) ignorance of the power of God, which led them to interpret these Scriptures, which speak of the resurrection, to mean only a mystical resurrection from vice to virtue.

Ver. 25.—But are as angels in heaven—not "the angels;" the *οἱ* is omitted. The blessed, after the resurrection, will be like angels as to purity, as to a spiritual life, as to immortality, as to happiness and glory. There will be no necessity for marriages in heaven. Here, on earth, the father dies, but he lives on in his children after death. In heaven there is no death, but every one will live and be blessed for ever; and therefore it is that St. Luke adds here, "Neither can they die any more." St. Augustine says, "Marriages are on account of children; children on account of succession; succession on account of death. But in heaven, as there is no death, neither is there any marriage."

Ver. 26.—St. Mark is here careful to state that what St. Matthew describes as "the word spoken by God" was to be found in the book of Moses (Exod. iii. 5), in the place concerning the Bush (*ἐπὶ τῆς βάτου*), as it is correctly rendered in the Revised Version. Our Lord might have brought yet clearer proofs out of Job, Daniel, Ezekiel, etc.; but in his wisdom he preferred to allege this out of Moses and the Pentateuch, because, whatever the views of the Sadducees may have been as to other parts of the Old Testament, these books of Moses they readily acknowledged. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. The force of the argument is this, that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Their souls are still alive; and if these patriarchs are still alive, there will be a resurrection. If men are to live for ever, they will, sooner or later, live again in the completeness of their being, namely, of body and soul and spirit. Our Lord would, therefore, say this: "In a few days you will put me to death; but in three days I shall rise again from the dead. And after that, in due time I shall raise them from the dead at the last day, and bring them in triumph with me into heaven." The Sadducees and the Epicureans denied the resurrection, because they denied the immortality of the soul; for these two doctrines hang together. For if the soul is immortal, then, since it naturally depends upon the body, it is necessary that the body should rise. Otherwise the soul would continue to exist in a dislocated state, and would only obtain a divided life and an imperfect existence. Hence our Lord here distinctly proves the resurrection of the body from the immortality of the soul. When he speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he does not speak of their souls only, but of their whole being. Therefore, though they are for a time dead to us, yet they live to God, and sleep, as it were, because ere long God will raise them from death, as from a sleep, to a blessed and endless life. For all, though they have passed out of our sight, still live to him.

Ver. 27.—Ye therefore do greatly err. The Greek is, omitting the *οὖν*, simply *ὑμεῖς πολὺ πλανᾶσθε*, *Ye greatly err*. The omission is more consistent with St. Mark's usual style. The Sadducees entirely misunderstood the meaning of their own Scriptures.

Ver. 28.—St. Matthew (xxii. 34) says here

that the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together, and that then one of them, who was a lawyer (*νομίνος*), that is, "a scribe," asked him this question, **What commandment is the first of all?** It appears here from St. Mark that this scribe had been present at the discussion with the Sadducees, and he had probably informed the others of what had taken place, and of the wisdom and power of our Lord's answer; so he was naturally put forward to try our Lord with another crucial question. It does not necessarily appear that he had an evil intention in putting this question. He may, in his own mind (seeing the wisdom and skill of our Lord), have desired to hear what Christ had to say to a very difficult question on a matter deeply interesting to all true Hebrews. The question was one much mooted amongst the Jews in the time of our Lord. "For many," says Bede, "thought that the first commandment in the Law related to offerings and sacrifices, with regard to which so much is said in Leviticus, and that the right worship of God consisted in the due offering of these." On this account the Pharisees encouraged children to say "Corban" to their parents; and hence this candid and truth-loving scribe, when he heard our Lord's answer about the love of God and of our neighbour, said that such obedience was worth "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." With regard to the love of God, St. Bernard says, "The measure of our love to God is to love him without measure; for the immense goodness of God deserves all the love that we can possibly give to him."

Ver. 31.—**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** God is to be loved above everything—above all angels, or men, or any created thing. But after God, amongst created things, our neighbour is above all to be loved. And we are to extend to our neighbour that kind of love with which we love ourselves. Our love of ourselves is not a frigid love, but a sincere and ardent love. In like manner we should love our neighbour, and desire for him all those good things both for the body and for the soul that we desire for ourselves. This is what our Lord himself teaches us. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do unto them." **There is none other commandment greater than these.** St. Matthew (xxii. 40) says, "On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the prophets." There is no commandment greater than these, because all the precepts of the Divine Law are included in them. So that our Lord here teaches us that we ought continually to have these two precepts in our minds and before our eyes, and direct all our thoughts and words and actions by them, and regulate our whole life according to them.

Ver. 32.—The first words of this verse should be rendered thus: **Of a truth, Master, thou hast well said that he is one.** In the remainder of the scribe's answer we find a different word used in the Greek for "mind," or "understanding," from that just used by our Lord. In our Lord's answer the word is *διάνοια*. Here it is *σύνεσις*. Both words are well rendered by "understanding." It is an act of understanding. It is the thought associating itself with the object, and "standing under" it so as to support it. (See Dr. Morison on St. Mark.)

Ver. 33.—**Is more** (*περισσότερόν*)—according to the most approved reading, *much more*—**than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.** This scribe was evidently emerging out of the bondage of ceremonial things, and perceiving the supremacy of the moral law.

Ver. 34.—**And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly** (*νουνεχῶς*), **he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.** It would appear from this answer that our Lord regarded him as one who approached him with the sincere desire to know the truth, and so he encouraged him. This shows how powerful an influence our Lord's teaching had already exercised amongst all classes of the Jews. This scribe, notwithstanding the prejudices of his class, had reached the border-land of the kingdom. He had learnt that the true way to the kingdom was by the love of God and of our neighbour. He was not far from the kingdom—not far from "the Church militant here on earth," by which is the way to the Church triumphant in heaven. He was not far from the kingdom, but still he wanted that which is the true pathway to the kingdom—faith in Christ as the Saviour of the world. **And no man after that durst ask him any question.** St. Matthew (xxii. 46) places these words after the next occurrence. But there is no inconsistency in the two narratives, because in this next incident our Lord puts the question to them; and this silenced both their questioning and their answering. All felt that there was such a vast reach of wisdom and knowledge in all that he said, that it was in vain to contend with him.

Ver. 35.—Our Lord was now in the temple, and he took the opportunity for instructing the scribes and Pharisees concerning his person and his dignity. Thus, as ever, he returned good for evil. He here taught them that the Messiah was not a mere man, as they supposed, but that he was both God and man, and that therefore they ought not to wonder or to be offended

because he called himself the Son of God. St. Matthew (xxii. 42) more fully gives their answer first, namely, that "Christ is the Son of David." They should have said that, as God, he was the Son of God, according to those words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee;" but that, as man, he was the Son of David. Their answer was very different from that of Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But they wanted the Divine knowledge which the disciples had gained.

Ver. 36.—**The Lord said unto my Lord.** From this verse (Ps. cx.) our Lord shows that the Messiah, such as he was, was not a mere man, as the Pharisees thought, but that he was God, and therefore David's Lord. The meaning, therefore, is this, "The Lord God said to my Lord," that is, Christ, "Sit thou at my right hand," that is, when, after his cross, his death, and his resurrection, he will exalt him far above all principality and power, and place him next to him in heaven, that he may reign with supreme happiness and power and glory over all creatures. These words show that this is a Divine decree, fixed and irrevocable. **Till I make thine enemies thy footstool** (*ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου*); literally, *the footstool of thy feet;* that is, reign with me in glory until the day of judgment, when I will make the wicked, all opposing powers, subject to thee. The word "till" does not imply that Christ will then cease to reign. "Of his kingdom there shall be no end." But he will then formally deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, only that he may receive it again as the second Person of the Godhead.

Vers. 38, 39.—These verses are a condensation of the woes recorded at length by St. Matthew (xxiii.). **And he said unto them in his doctrine** (*ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ*)—literally, *in his teaching*—**Beware of the scribes which desire** (*τῶν θελόντων*) **to walk in long robes** (*ἐν στολαῖς*). The *στόλη* was a rich robe which reached down to the ankles, and was adorned with fringes. The scribes took pleasure in this kind of display. The salient points in their character were ostentation, avarice, and religious hypocrisy.

Ver. 40.—There is a change in the construction here, which is not marked in the Authorized Version. The sentence in this fortieth verse should stand alone, and be read thus: **They which devour** (*οἱ κατεσθίοντες*) **widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation.** The sentence thus read is far more graphic. The statement thus becomes indeed more general, but the reference is still to the scribes who through their avarice swallowed up the property of helpless widows, and through their hypocrisy, in the hope of thus more effectually imposing upon their victims, lengthened out their prayers. *Greater condemnation.* The word in the Greek is *κρίμα*, that is, "judgment." A severer sentence would fall upon them in the day of judgment and a heavier condemnation, because, under the semblance of piety, they practised iniquity, and indulged their avarice under the mask of religion.

Ver. 41.—**He sat down over against the treasury** (*γαζοφυλάκιον*, from *γάζα*, a Persian word meaning "treasure," and *φυλάττειν*, to guard). This was the receptacle into which the offerings of the people were cast, for the uses of the temple and for the benefit of the priests and of the poor. Hence that part of the temple in which these gifts were kept was called the treasury. **He beheld** (*ἐθεώρει*)—literally, *he was beholding; he was observing*—**how the multitude** (*πῶς ὁ ὄχλος*)—that is, in what manner, with what motives (for he was the heart-searcher) the crowd of givers—**cast money** (*βάλλει χαλκόν*); literally, *is casting.* St. Luke uses the term (*τὰ δῶρα*) "their gifts." Many that were rich cast in much (*πολλά*), that is, "many pieces." There were several apertures in the treasury, which from their shape were called trumpets. Some of these had special inscriptions, marking the destination of the offerings.

Ver. 42.—**A poor widow** (*μία χήρα πτωχή*); literally, *one poor widow;* one specially singled out for notice. St. Luke says, *εἶδε δὲ καί τινα χήραν πενιχρὰν*: literally, *a widow who supported herself by her own little labour.* **And she cast in two mites** (*λεπτά*), **which make a farthing.** The farthing was the fourth part of an *as*, and ten of these made a *denarius.* The Greek word (*λεπτά*) means literally "thin pieces."

Vers. 43, 44.—**This poor widow hath cast in more.** The right reading of the verb here is *ἔβαλε*, not *βέβληκε*; this aoristic rendering has very good authority—*this poor widow cast in more.* Her act is completed, and has gone up for a memorial before God. She "gave" more than all the others who are casting (*τῶν βαλλόντων*), not "have cast in (*τῶν βαλόντων*)." She gave more, when she threw in those two mites, than all the others were giving—more, that is, in the estimation of him who sees not as man sees. God does not weigh the gift so much as the mind of the giver. That gift is really the greater in his sight, not which is actually of greater value, but which is greater in respect of the giver. Therefore this poor widow, when she gave her farthing, gave more than they all, because she gave all her living—all, that is, that she had beforehand for that day, trusting that the Lord would give her her bread for that day. And so she carried

off the palm for liberality, Christ himself being the Judge. St. Ambrose says, "That which God esteems is not that which you proudly present, but what you offer with humility and devotion."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Rebel vine-dressers.* By this time there was no further prospect or possibility that the fate of Jesus might be averted. His entry into Jerusalem in state, and his cleansing of the temple, were acts that the priests, scribes, and Pharisees could not pardon, for they were a claim to authority altogether incompatible with their own. And the words of Jesus were as bold as his acts; their justice and severity enraged the rulers beyond all degree. The enemies of truth and righteousness were by this time fully resolved to strike down him whose character and ministry were the living embodiment of what they most hated. It was only a question of time and manner and instrumentalities. All this Jesus knew, and he knew that "his hour was come." There was no occasion now for reticence, and there was no longer any end to be subserved by it. His speech was always plain and faithful, but now his denunciations were unsparing, and his warnings terrible. On this Tuesday morning of his last week, our Lord summed up in this parable of "the wicked husbandmen," "the rebel vine-dressers," the rebellious history of Israel in the past, and the approaching doom of Israel in the future. It was in the temple precincts, and in the presence both of the people and of the chief priests, that the great Teacher so boldly aserted his own special mission and authority, and so emphatically foretold his own fate and the judgment which should overtake the guilty nation. The immediate application of the parable is clear enough. Israel was the vineyard planted in the election of Abraham, and hedged about and provided with all things needful, in the giving of the Law by Moses and in the settlement in Canaan under Joshua. The Eternal, who had so favoured the chosen people, had sent prophets in three periods—that of Samuel, that of Elijah and Elisha, and that of Isaiah and Jeremiah—to summon Israel to a life of spirituality and obedience corresponding with their privileges. The Jews had not fulfilled the Law of God, or rendered to Heaven the fruits meet for repentance. And now he, the Son of God, was among them, the final Embassy from the throne of the great King. It was but too plain to all eyes that the unfruitfulness and rebellion of Israel reached the most awful height just when their advantages were the greatest, and the mercy of the Eternal was most conspicuous. They, who had rejected and slain the prophets, were now plotting against the very Son of God. They were about to put him to death, because he told them the truth and urged the rightful claims and demands of his Father. They might think, and did think, that this would be the end; but such an expectation was delusive: it was incompatible with the righteous government of God. And the Lord plainly foretold them that, as surely as God reigned in heaven and on earth, so surely should the rebellion of Israel be awfully and signally chastised, their special privileges come to a perpetual end, and the blessings which they were rejecting be conferred by God's sovereign favour upon others, who should render the fruits in their seasons. Forty years afterwards Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jews were scattered, and their national life came to an end; and the kingdom of God was established among the Gentiles. The parable has lessons, not only for Israel, but for us; it embodies truth spiritual, practical, and impressive.

I. OUR EARTHLY OCCUPATION: TO TILL THE VINEYARD OF GOD. The figure sets forth our vocation and responsibility. It represents our life as one of *privilege*. It is not a wilderness, but a vineyard, which we are called to cultivate. God has done much for us, in appointing for us the circumstances and opportunities of our existence. Our life is one of *work*. The most favourable situation and the most fruitful soil avail little if the plot be neglected; only faithful and diligent labour on our part can secure that the purposes of the Divine Lord shall be fulfilled. It is for us to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure." The greater our privileges, the more need that we should be diligent, laborious, and prayerful. Opportunities must be used, and not neglected or abused.

II. GOD'S RIGHTEOUS EXPECTATION: THAT WE SHALL YIELD HIM FRUIT. *What* is the

crop, the produce, he desires to see? Holiness and obedience, love and praise, as far as he is concerned; and, as far as regards our fellow-men, justice and gentleness, benevolence and helpfulness. He looks for repentance from the sinner, for faith from the hearer of the gospel, for improvement in character and for usefulness in service from the Christian. *Why* he does this is obvious enough. He has given us the means of knowledge and the opportunities of devotion, and looks for a return. "What more," he says, "could I have done than I have done?" And this expectation is for our sake as well as for his own. Our fruitfulness is our welfare and our happiness; it brings its own reward.

III. GOD'S REQUIREMENT AND DEMAND UPON MEN, BY HIS MESSENGERS AND BY HIS SON. Our Lord appeals to us both by the Law and by the gospel. The teaching of his Word brings before us his rightful claims, and shows us how much it is for our highest advantage that we should not be unmindful of them. He summons us by the lessons of his providence, and by the counsels of our Christian friends, to a religious life. Yet there is no appeal so powerful, so persuasive, as that which God makes to us by his own "dear Son." Christ comes to us with authority; he comes to us with grace. He comes from the Father, and he comes with the deepest interest in our condition, anxious to overcome our rebelliousness, and to lead us to a holy and grateful obedience. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the one great, Divine appeal to the hearts of men. It is the method which infinite Wisdom and Mercy have devised of winning our confidence and love, and securing our ready obedience and loyal service. Those who have rejected other messengers of Heaven may justly be enjoined to receive with reverence the Son of God.

IV. THE PENALTIES OF FRUITLESSNESS AND REBELLION. These are described in this passage in the most affecting terms. Privileges are removed from the unfaithful. The negligent and rebellious are punished and cast out. The advantages which they have spurned are transferred to others.

V. THE REWARD OF FRUITFULNESS AND LOYALTY. 1. Christ is glorified, even though there may be those who reject and contemn him. Christ himself quotes a passage of Scripture, in which this great truth is set forth, though by a change of figure. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the Head of the corner." The purposes of God are accomplished, and cannot be frustrated by the guilt of man. 2. Other husbandmen are found who will deal more faithfully with the sacred trust. These shall offer the fruits of obedience, which shall be acceptable to the Lord of the vineyard. They shall be confirmed in their occupation, shall be blessed in their work, shall enjoy the Master's favour, and shall live in the light of their Master's glory.

Vers. 13—17.—*Cæsar's due.* There could not have been a more decisive proof of the duplicity and hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders than that furnished by this incident. It is certain that they were opposed to the Roman sway, that they nursed in their hearts hopes of Jewish independence, that they would have eagerly welcomed such a Messiah as they looked for—one who should deliver them from the yoke of foreign bondage. Yet, in their malignity, they were ready to denounce Jesus to the Roman governor should he express an opinion adverse to the paying of tribute, just as they were ready to deliver him up to the fury of the populace should he formally approve and sanction the rights of the empire over the Jewish people. Thus—

I. A JUST BUT INSINCERE COMPLIMENT VEILS A MALIGNANT DESIGN. It is an astounding instance of duplicity, this method of approaching the Lord Jesus. These Pharisees and Herodians make admissions which they would never have made except as the means to an evil end. They address the Master with the acknowledgment that he is "true"—in this a striking contrast to themselves; that he is impartial, caring not for any one, nor regarding the person of men; that he taught the way of God. This was not empty, complimentary language; it was just. Whether in their hearts they believed it to be so, we cannot say; but Christ's enemies were often unintentional witnesses, both to his virtues and to his Divine authority and mission. Their only aim was to conciliate him, so that, in an unguarded moment, he might, with natural frankness, commit himself to some judgment which they might use to his harm.

II. A CRAFTY ALTERNATIVE, AN INSIDIOUS SNARE, IS WISELY ELUDED. "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" A categorical answer either way would have been immediately and effectively used to his injury; he could not, after so answering, both

stand well with his countrymen and remain free from the imputation of disloyalty to the then supreme power of Rome. The alternative was fairly evaded, and the snare was escaped, by the method in which Jesus dealt with the question propounded. There was something picturesque and impressive to the popular mind in his asking for the *denarius*, and pointing to the emperor's image and superscription. There was manifest reasonableness in yielding to Cæsar what was so obviously his own; yet it was pointed out that this might be loyally done without detriment to the higher obligations of religion.

III. A PRINCIPLE OF ACTION IN THE SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS OF HUMAN LIFE IS ONCE FOR ALL ASSERTED. 1. We have here a recognition that civil government is of Divine authority. It does not follow from this that every government deserves approval, or even that under no circumstances is it lawful to resist constituted authority. But our Lord teaches, and his apostles teach, as a general principle, that civil governors are to be obeyed, that "the powers that be are ordained of God." 2. An implication that there is a province into which civil governors may not intrude, that there are obligations which take precedence even of the duties we owe to the earthly sovereign. There are claims which the Divine Lord himself prefers, and which he regards as supreme. The apostles clearly grasped this principle, and put it into practice when the rulers interfered with their discharge of what they held to be their religious duties. When a conflict occurs between the allegiance due to the civil ruler and that due to the supreme King, our Lord's words warrant the preference of the Divine to the human law. In times of persecution especially, the principle of our Lord's words has often guided the wavering and sustained the feeble. "Whether it be right to obey God rather than man, judge ye!" We may say that the modern privilege of religious liberty has grown out of this incident in our Lord's ministry, these words from our Lord's lips. And to the same source we may attribute the growing tendency on the part of secular powers to withdraw from the province of religion, and to allow free scope to the action of conscience and full liberty for the profession and for the rites of religion. There is a province into which no earthly authority may intrude, and where the Creator reigns supreme and alone.

Vers. 18—27.—*Sadducees confuted.* Of all the subjects which awaken the speculative curiosity and inquiry of men, none approaches, in dignity and importance, the future life. The nobler spirits, in every civilized and cultured community, have either held as an article of faith, or have cherished with fondest hope, the prospect of immortality. Annihilation is a prospect which none but the degraded and sinful can consent to accept without shuddering horror. It has often been observed as very remarkable, though not inexplicable, that the Pentateuch contains no express, explicit statement regarding a future life. It appears that the revelation of immortality was progressive; for expectations regarding a conscious existence of happiness after death are certainly found with growing frequency in the later books of the Old Testament. The psalmists and prophets rejoiced in the hope of a heavenly rest and an imperishable fellowship with the Father of spirits. At the time of our Lord's ministry there was a division among the religious authorities of the Jewish people upon this all-important subject; the Pharisees holding to the doctrines of immortality and resurrection, and the Sadducees denying and apparently ridiculing both. Amongst the Sadducees were many of the most intellectual of the upper classes of society. They also retained in their own leading families the office of high priest. Both our Lord Christ and his apostle Paul took a very decided stand against the Sadducaic doctrine and party. During the last week of our Lord's ministry, when the conflict with his enemies was reaching its height, many assaults were made from various quarters against Jesus and his claims and teaching. This passage records the attack of the rationalistic party upon the Divine Master, and his original and conclusive repulse of that attack.

I. THE REASONING OF THE SADDUCEES AGAINST THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD UPON IMMORTALITY AND RESURRECTION. 1. It was indirect reasoning. Instead of attacking the doctrine, they simply attacked a supposed inference from it, viz. the continuance of physical human relations in another life. 2. It was frivolous reasoning. They must have found it hard to state with serious faces a case so absurd. It would have been childish had they supposed the woman to have married twice; the supposition that she

should confront in the resurrection life the rival claims of seven husbands was ridiculous. This is not the temper in which great problems regarding human destiny should be discussed. 3. It was inconclusive; for no one of the alternative solutions of the difficulty proposed would have been incompatible with a future life.

II. THE GENERAL REPLY OF THE LORD JESUS TO THIS REASONING. 1. He refutes the argument, if it can be so called, which they had adduced. Marriage is an earthly institution, and is especially adapted to a mortal race, providing that generation shall succeed generation. Love is indeed imperishable, and shall be perfected in heaven; but marriage shall no longer be necessary when men shall be equal to the angels, and shall sin and die no more. Therefore no reasoning founded upon the continuance of this physical relationship has place with reference to the life beyond the grave. 2. He bases the doctrine of the future life upon the power of God, which they strangely overlooked. It is the reasoning which was repeated by St. Paul, "Why should it be thought a thing impossible with you that God should raise the dead?" The omnipotence which first called human nature into being is surely able to revive the spirit and perpetuate its consciousness and activity. This is an unanswerable argument still against all dogmatic denial of the future life. It does not in itself establish the doctrine, but it is conclusive against those who deny it. It removes the presumption from the opponents to the upholders of immortality. 3. He refers to the Scriptures for grounds for belief in a future life. Those who admitted their authority would find it hard to reconcile such admission with disbelief in the resurrection.

III. THE SPECIAL ARGUMENT BY WHICH THE LORD JESUS ESTABLISHES FAITH IN IMMORTALITY AND A FUTURE LIFE. 1. Jesus refers to an authority which the Sadducees professed emphatically to revere—the Pentateuch. "The Law" was their especial pride, and they may have justified their scepticism by the absence of explicit teaching upon this great doctrine from the books of Moses. 2. Jesus quotes a familiar passage, in which he reads, or from which he deduces, a new and striking and convincing argument. It is upon record that God declared himself to Moses as "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." Now, what did this imply? That God *had been* their God, but that, they having ceased to exist, he was no longer? Or, that he was the God of their mouldering or dispersed dust, which, upon the theory of annihilation, was all that remained of them? Either those who had been wont to read this passage must have passed it over without reflection, or they must have been satisfied with an interpretation crude and empty. Or else they must have drawn the inference which the great Master now drew: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Once he declares himself his people's God, he remains such for ever; and they remain his,—conscious recipients of his favour, and responsive partakers of his Divine and Fatherly love. He is a covenant God; his promises are never broken, and his declarations never fail. An immortal God involves the immortality of those whom he has created in his image, redeemed by his grace, renewed by his Spirit. If he is what he has revealed himself as being, if his people are what he has declared them to be, then death has no power over them; they are destined to "glory, honour, and immortality." For "all live in him."

Vers. 28—34.—*The great commandments.* This passage of the Gospel affords common ground, upon which those who lay the greatest stress upon Christian doctrine may meet with conciliation and harmony those who are wont to insist most upon Christian morality. Here is a statement, upon the highest authority, as to what God requires of man, as to what man owes to God and to his fellow-men. "Do this, and thou shalt live!" It is a sublime view of the great purposes of our spiritual being. Beyond this religion cannot go; for this is the end for which our nature was framed, for which revelation was vouchsafed. Yet who can read these requirements of a holy and benevolent Creator and Ruler without feeling that by himself they have not been fulfilled? The man must be besotted by self-conceit, or must have silenced conscience, who claims to have loved God with all his powers, or to have uniformly loved his neighbour as himself. The purer, the more stringent the Law, the deeper the humiliation and contrition of the transgressor. What, then, more fitted to induce sinners to receive the gospel with faith and gratitude than these words of Jesus? What can make so welcome the tidings of Divine forgiveness secured through the redemption

wrought by the Saviour on the cross? And, further, as we meditate upon this ideal of a beautiful and acceptable moral life, how profoundly are we impressed with a sense of our own weakness! And surely this must lead us to seek and to accept the aid of the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit at once of power and of love! Thus the inculcation of Christian morality naturally suggests the doctrines upon which we build our hopes for time and for eternity. On the other hand, in the presence of these inspiriting words of the Master, how is it possible for the candid and the faithful to rest in that view of the gospel which represents religion as merely securing the forgiveness of sin, and immunity from wrath and punishment? Here is a summons to a spiritual, a self-denying, and a benevolent life.

I. THE QUESTION PROPOSED TO JESUS. 1. In itself it was a worthy, a noble question. Unlike the trifling and ridiculous riddle propounded by the Pharisees, it was an inquiry becoming on the part of the scribe who urged it, and fit for the consideration and judgment of the holy Master himself. It respected commandments, and thus acknowledged the rule of a just God, and the duty of man's obedience and submission. It concerned morality—the highest of all human interests. It evinced an evident desire to do what was right, and to give precedence to what should be acknowledged best. There can be no nobler inquiry than this—What is the will of God? What is the duty of man? What shall I do? 2. In its spirit and purport, the question was commendable. The questioner observed that Jesus had answered well; that he had solved with marvellous wisdom the difficult question of the Pharisees; that he had dealt skilfully and conclusively with the cavilling of the Sadducees. The limits of civil submission are an interesting branch of study; the future life is of all speculative questions the most engrossing to the thoughtful; but of even wider interest are the foundation, the character, the means, of human goodness. The inquiry as to the first of commandments was put as a testing question, but in no captious spirit; it was the expression of a desire to learn—to learn from the highest authority, to learn the most sacred principles of moral life. And not to learn only, but doubtless to practise the lesson acquired.

II. THE ANSWER OF JESUS TO THE SCRIBE. There was no hesitation in the Master's reply to the question proposed; the challenge was at once taken up. And consummate wisdom was shown in the reference to the Mosaic Law, the very words of which were quoted. Thus the right-minded were conciliated, yet at no expense, but rather by the manifestation, of truth. And the hostile were silenced; for who of the Jewish rabbis could call in question the authority of their own sacred books? When we look into the substance of the response, several remarkable facts become apparent. 1. Love is represented as the sum of the Divine commandments. The Pentateuch contained the injunctions our Lord repeated, but they were included in a vast body of precepts and prohibitions. It could scarcely be said with justice that love was the most prominent of the Mosaic commandments. Christ's independence, discernment, and legislative authority were shown in his fixing upon the two requirements which occur in different books and in different connections, and in bringing them out into the light of day, and exhibiting them as in his view of surpassing importance, and so promulgating them as the laws of his spiritual kingdom through all time. God himself is love; Christ is the expression and proof of the Divine love; and it is therefore natural and reasonable that love should be the law of the Divine kingdom, the badge of the spiritual family. 2. The Object of supreme love is God himself. The *personality* of God is assumed, for we cannot love an abstraction, a power; only a living being, who thinks, feels, and purposes. The *unity* of God is asserted; for although, when Jesus lived on earth, the Jews were no longer subject to the temptation to idolatry, such temptation had beset them when the Law was originally given, and for a long period subsequently. The *relationship* between God and man is presumed—"thy God;" for he is ours and we are his. The *claims* of God are implied; his character, his treatment of men, his redeeming love in Christ. "We love him, because he first loved us." 3. The description and degree of love demanded are very fully stated in the text. The expression is a very strong one: "With all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength." Attempts have been made accurately to discriminate among these. But it seems sufficient to say that the love required in such language is cordial and fervent; cordial, as distinguished from mere profession, and fervent, as distinguished from lukewarmness and

indifference. The whole of our nature is expected to combine, so to speak, in this exercise. Not only so, but God is to be regarded as the supreme Object of affection and devotion. He demands the first place in our heart; and those who see his grace in Christ cannot find it hard to offer what he demands. 4. Love to man follows upon love to God. It may, indeed, in order of time, in some measure precede and prepare for it. But in the moral order, in the order of obligation, love to God comes first, and, indeed, furnishes the one sound and safe basis for human love. The *designation* of the objects of this love deserves notice; they are our "neighbours." We must interpret this term in the light of our Lord's answer to an earlier question put to him by a certain lawyer: "Who is my neighbour?" In the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus then laid a broad foundation for human charity. Not our own family, or Church, or nation, but all mankind, are to be regarded with good will, and treated, not only with justice, but with kindness. Practically, those have a claim upon our kindly feeling and good offices whom Providence brings into any contact with us in human society. Remark the *measure* of this love: "As thyself." It is, then, right to love self; but in subordination to Divine love, and in accordance with love to neighbours. The test is an effective one, and can always be applied; the Law is parallel with the golden rule, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." The *dependence* of this law upon the preceding is obvious. Christianity bases morality upon religion; we love our fellow-men as the children of God, because he loves them and for his sake. 5. Love, to be acceptable, must display itself in practical forms. The love we cherish toward God should lead to worship and to obedience—in a word, to a religious life. The love we entertain to our fellow-men will reveal itself in the demeanour, the language, and still more in the conduct. Helpfulness, self-denial, liberality, forbearance, are all fruits of love; which is destructive of discord, malice, and envy, of jealousy, hatred, and persecution. Here is the power to banish the vices, and the remedy to heal the spiritual maladies which afflict mankind!

III. THE SCRIBE'S APPROVING CONSENT TO CHRIST'S REPLY. 1. He thus proved his independence of judgment. Others, when answered and silenced by Jesus, retired discomfited, but unconvinced. This rabbi, with a mind candid and open to the truth, receives the Lord's saying as sufficient and decisive, and renders his own consent and approbation in the words, "Thou hast well said." 2. He shows his pleasure in the grand utterances of inspiration by repeating the language which Jesus had quoted—language evidently both familiar to him and congenial to his character. 3. His boldness and spirituality are apparent in his stating, what Jesus had implied, the superiority of the heart's affection to all service of the hands.

IV. THE COMMENDATION EXPRESSED BY JESUS. 1. The position of the lawyer was very different from that of others. There were many who were "far" from God's kingdom. The Pharisees for the most part by their formality, the Sadducees by their scepticism and arrogance, the publicans and sinners by their vices, the multitude by their ignorance,—these were far from the kingdom. Amongst those who may justly be so described are always some who are outwardly numbered among the religious, as well as multitudes who are without God, and manifestly have no hope. 2. There were several respects in which this scribe approached the spiritual kingdom of the Saviour. (1) He was acquainted with God's Word, and was interested in it; he explored and studied it. He appreciated the grandeur and beauty of the Divine Law, and he was bold and earnest in speaking of it. In all this he displayed sympathy with him who came to magnify and to fulfil the Law, and who bade the people search the Scriptures. (2) He thoroughly agreed with the dictum of the great Master, with regard to the first and most binding and comprehensive ordinances of the inspired Word. Whether or not he was prepared with this answer to the question he proposed, it is evident that the answer commended itself to his judgment and conscience, and that the Divine Respondent was regarded by him with reverential admiration. It is well to find the truth; but it is also well, when others have found it, to recognize and to accept it. (3) Grand indeed was this scribe's confession, that love "is much more than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." All religions—the true as well as the false—are corrupted by a tendency in human nature to substitute the sacrificial, the ceremonial, the verbal, for the real, the spiritual. Men think that to comply with directions, instructive and profitable in themselves, but having reference only to symbolical actions,

is all important, and they give diligent attention to these, and neglect the weightier matters of the Law. It is presumed that bodily service is sufficient, in forgetfulness of the fact that God is the Searcher of hearts, and that he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. This is a lesson which still needs to be inculcated, even in days of Christian light and evangelical fervour. Never be it forgotten that character and conduct are of supreme importance, and that the only sufficient, conclusive evidence that a man has received the benefits of redemption, and has felt the renewing power of the Spirit of God, is to be found in the reign of love within his soul, and the manifestation of love in his whole character and life.

V. THE RESERVATION AND QUALIFICATION IN OUR LORD'S APPROVAL. If there was so much that was admirable in the spirit and the language of this student and expositor of the Law, what was lacking? If he was near the kingdom, what separated him from it, and prevented him from entering in? This question we cannot answer with certainty; we can only surmise. There may have been an inadequate sense of sin; his admiration of Jesus may have come short of true faith in him; and he may have been unready to make a complete surrender of himself to the Lord Jesus. At all events, we have no difficulty in enumerating various hindrances which, as a matter of fact, do keep outside of the kingdom those who are very near its confines. Christ's dominion is one which cannot be entered except through the door of repentance and of faith. True subjects come in sincere and childlike humility, and receive the welcome promised; by the new birth they enter the new life of the kingdom. The laws of the kingdom are spiritual, and demand spiritual conformity. And the King is enthroned in the heart as well as in society. You must become as little children in order that you may enter the kingdom of God.

APPLICATION. 1. Let faith work by love in Christian natures; and let those who love Christ prove by their spirit and their actions the sincerity of their love. 2. Let those who are near the kingdom, instead of resting in their nearness, regard this as a reason why they should, without delay, enter the gates before which they stand.

Ver. 34.—"*Not far from the kingdom.*" That this scribe should have shown so deep an admiration for the Divine Law, so clear a perception of the superiority of the spiritual to the ceremonial, so discerning an appreciation of the Divine Master,—all this was to his credit, and awakened the approval and elicited the commendation of our Lord. In the language Jesus addressed to him, a description is given of not a few hearers of the gospel, who present in their character much that is admirable, but who come short of true consecration to Christ, who are "not far from the kingdom of God." Of this class we may ask—

I. HOW NEAR HAVE THEY COME TO THE KINGDOM? 1. They have been, in many cases, brought near by the action of others. A Christian education and Christian influence have moulded their habits and improved a naturally well-inclined disposition. 2. They are well acquainted with the truths of religion, have studied the Scriptures, and have mastered the doctrines as well as the facts they contain. 3. They assent to the revelation contained in the Bible, either unreflectingly or after inquiry and doubt. 4. They admire Christ's moral character and beneficent life, his pure teaching, and his purposes of compassion towards mankind. 5. They conform to the practices of Christian worship, and even make use of the language of praise and prayer. 6. They obey many of the laws of Christ, either from habit or from a conviction of their justice and expediency. 7. They have had many desires, and may even have formed resolutions, to go further than this—to yield all to the Saviour. Of such it may indeed be said, they are "not far from the kingdom of God."

II. HOW FAR ARE THEY STILL FROM THE KINGDOM? Men may travel a long distance in the right direction, and yet may leave untraversed the last and most important stage of the journey. So is it with many hearers of the gospel. 1. They may yet have to receive the gospel of Christ with their whole nature. The assent of the understanding must be followed by the consent of the will. 2. They may yet have to surrender themselves and their all to Jesus. Men may give much, but withhold more. The test which our Lord proposes is a readiness to offer the heart, and with it all powers and possessions, unto himself. Less is not acceptable to him who claims, and has a right to, *all*. 3. They may need to overcome much self-righteousness, self-confi-

dence, self-seeking, before their state of mind is such as to enable them to accept the terms of Heaven: "Except ye become as little children," etc.

III. How SHOULD THOSE SO SITUATED NOW ACT? 1. They should reflect how vain is past progress except it lead to future consecration. 2. They should rejoice at the thought that their approach to the kingdom makes it easier for them to enter in. All their knowledge, good feelings, and partial obedience are so many steps upon the road, leaving the fewer to be taken in order to salvation. 3. They should remind themselves how unwise and dangerous and sinful it is to pause where they are. "It is the first step which costs;" and it is the last step which pays! Why should not that last step be taken at once? True repentance, sincere faith, cordial surrender, the new birth,—such are the descriptions given of the change yet to pass over those who are not far from the kingdom, in order that they may enter it. Illustrations: The builder rears the arch of a bridge; the keystone has yet to be placed; if that be left undone a storm may rise, the river may swell, his work may be swept away, and all that has been done may count for nothing. The traveller exploring a continent may endure many hardships and perils, may come within a day's march of the vast lake of which he hopes to be the discoverer: shall he turn back? The manslayer, pursued by the avenger of blood, may be within sight of the city of refuge: to pause is to be slain; to summon up all his strength and to bound forward is to find himself safely within the protecting walls. The captain, the adventurous explorer, after a long voyage over unknown seas, sights the land of which he has dreamed: shall he give orders to put about the ship, and abandon the glorious discovery within its reach, and all the honour, wealth, and fame which now at length await him?

Vers. 34, 37.—*Various effects of Christ's ministry.* There was a vigour and directness, an unsparing boldness and fidelity, peculiar to the ministry of our Lord in Jerusalem during the last week of his life. This no doubt precipitated the crisis, enraging his enemies at the same time that it silenced their reasonings. Two remarks are made by the evangelist which show us what was the effect of Christ's discourses and conversations both upon his foes and upon the multitude.

I. HIS ENEMIES WERE SILENCED. These included most of the members of the more prominent classes, who occupied positions of influence and authority in Jerusalem. 1. Their varied efforts to entrap Christ in his speech are recorded at length. The Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the scribes, all questioned Jesus and reasoned with him, largely with the hope of either weakening his influence or taking some advantage of his replies. There was much craft in the way in which they sought thus to injure him and his work. 2. Their uniform confutation by his wisdom and moral authority. All their efforts, from whatever quarter, and however conducted, proved in vain. None were able to withstand him. He either put them to shame, or convinced them by the wisdom of his answers. The evangelist sums up the impression produced by our Lord's demeanour and language in these several interviews in the words, "And no man after that durst ask him any question." Christ's wisdom is flawless; Christ's authority is irresistible. Now, as then, it is true that none can dispute with him except to be discomfited. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

II. THE MULTITUDE WERE ATTRACTED AND DELIGHTED. Whilst the self-confident and the self-righteous were put to shame and confusion, the common people, or rather the multitude, "the people" (as we say), heard him gladly. There were several sufficient reasons for this. 1. He spoke to them as one of themselves. Not from a height of official distance and superiority, but in their own language, with illustrations drawn from their own daily life, and as one who knew them and their ways. 2. His personal interest and sympathy were very marked. He did not break the bruised reed. Often brought into contact with the suffering, he pitied and healed them. Often meeting with sinners contrite and penitent, he pardoned and cheered them. 3. His fearless exposure and denunciation of the wickedness of the religious leaders of the Jews. The selfishness and hypocrisy of Pharisees and lawyers were well known; but such was the mental bondage of the people, that they dared not speak of the iniquities of the rulers save with bated breath. Jesus, however, who regarded not the person of any man, boldly upbraided the iniquitous rulers for their misdeeds. And those who

suffered from the extortion and oppression which they endured, rejoiced in the Lord Jesus as in a Champion of the down-trodden, and an Upholder of the right. 4. His direct appeal to the conscience and heart of the people. It is thus, indeed, that masses of men are ever to be moved. Whilst in the preaching of Jesus statement of Divine truth and exhibitions of Divine love formed the substance of his addresses, he so spoke as to reach the moral nature of his hearers. No raving, no exaggeration, no vulgarity; but simplicity, vigour, earnestness, moral authority, were manifest in all his utterances. 5. He brought the fatherly grace of God home to the erring and helpless. This was what the religious leaders of the time did *not*. The hearts of men responded to the revelation of the heart of God. How could the people do otherwise than hear him gladly, when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"?

Vers. 35—40.—*The scribes.* The profession of scribes, which had existed among the Jews ever since the Captivity, was in itself an honourable and useful profession. And there were members of this learned body who came into contact with the Lord Jesus who showed a candid disposition, a love of the truth, and who evinced respect and admiration for the great Rabbi. Yet some of the most bitter and virulent of our Lord's enemies were of this class. Their superiority to the people was a snare as well as an advantage. Many of them hid beneath the cloak of learning an evil heart, selfishness, arrogance, and unspirituality. In the discourse of Jesus here recorded, we find a protest against the general teaching, and a protest against the too common character, of these adversaries of his ministry and doctrine.

I. CHRIST'S CORRECTION OF THE SCRIBES' TEACHING REGARDING THE MESSIAH. 1. What was this teaching? It was the simple statement, that the Messiah should be a descendant of David. This was Scriptural truth, and the Gospels exhibit its application to Jesus. But it was only part of the truth. 2. In what respects did Jesus add to this conception of the Messiah? He quoted from the Scriptures, and he attributed their declarations to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And thus he transmuted the bald doctrine of the scribes into a doctrine full of spiritual significance and dignity. These points especially are brought out: (1) Pre-eminence is assigned to the Messiah over even his illustrious ancestor, David. (2) The Messiah is represented as the Assessor of the Most High himself. (3) The Messiah is depicted as the Conqueror of his foes. In all these respects the truly Scriptural representation of the Christ is an immense advance upon the customary teaching of the Jewish scribes. Thus Christ teaches concerning himself.

II. CHRIST'S DENUNCIATION OF THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE SCRIBES. 1. Their loud professions of sanctity, and their ostentatious devotions, are censured. Long prayers may sometimes be the outcome of deep feeling and many needs; they may, as in the case of these scribes, be a cloak for sin. Long robes, like long prayers, may be a profession with which nothing spiritual corresponds. Hypocrisy was a crying evil of the times. There is no vice that is more hateful to God; and it may be questioned whether it often imposes upon men. 2. Their love of pre-eminence is blamed. Both in "Church and State" they loved to be supreme, and in all social relations they sought the honour which cometh from man. In the synagogues, in the market-places, and at festive gatherings the scribes would fain be first. 3. Their cruel rapacity is held up to obloquy. The bereaved and the defenceless were their victims. On some pretext or other they gained possession or management of the property of widows, and were not satisfied until they appropriated the whole. There are those in our own days, and in Christian lands, who grow rich by similar practices, and who incur by such infamous cruelty "the wrath of the Lamb." 4. Christ predicts the condemnation of such sinners, and at the same time puts the people on their guard against them. His threat of condemnation was authoritative; and his warning was one which was needed and timely. Against the wrongs and cruelties, the assumptions and the errors of such pretenders, the Good Shepherd would fain protect his feeble and defenceless sheep.

Vers. 41—44.—*The widow's mite.* The presence of this poor widow, among unspiritual and ostentatious worshippers and officers, is as a sunbeam amidst the gloom,

a rose in the wilderness. It is a touching picture, this of the lonely woman, who had lost her husband, and whose heart was sad, whose means were scanty, and whose life was obscure and cheerless. But she had found strength and consolation in waiting upon God. And the temple, the appointed place for worship, with its services, so helpful to devotion, and associated with holy gatherings, and with opportunities for Divine communion, was dear to her heart. She could not be absent when the sacred services were proceeding, nor could she withhold her little gift in passing the treasury, as she left the scene of worship and of fellowship. And thus she was noticed by the Master, and her memory was immortalized, and her action has become a model and an inspiration to Christ's people through all time. We may learn from this incident—

I. WHAT IN GIFTS AND ALMS IS, IN GOD'S SIGHT, INCONSIDERABLE. The view taken by men is different. But we are, as Christians, bound by the judgment of our Lord, who here teaches us that: 1. The actual amount is in itself of little moment. With reference to the material ends to be obtained by money, this is of course not the case. When a spacious, durable, and handsome church is to be built, when an expensive missionary expedition to some distant land is to be undertaken, there is need of large pecuniary contributions; and it is only where there is large wealth that such enterprises are possible. But as far as the spiritual value and acceptableness of alms and benefactions are concerned, the mere pecuniary amount is unimportant. The mite of the widow is as much approved by God as the gold of the wealthy. 2. The comparative amount which is contributed is in this regard unimportant. The offering which is less than that presented by a neighbour is not, therefore, necessarily bad; nor is the offering which exceeds that of a neighbour, therefore, necessarily good. It is too common among givers to ask—What is customary? What is the amount contributed by others? The relative sum is disregarded by the Observer of all donations and the Searcher of all hearts. If one gives largely from his superfluity, he may nevertheless give less than his neighbour, who out of his poverty gives what seems a trifling sum.

II. WHAT IN GIFTS AND ALMS IS VALUABLE IN GOD'S SIGHT. 1. The relation they bear to the giver's means. This is brought out very effectively in this narrative. The poor widow "of her want" gave "all that she had," even "all her living," *i.e.* perhaps what she had in hand for that day's sustenance. It has often been remarked that God has regard, not merely to what a man gives, but to what he keeps. The gifts of the opulent are acceptable, but "dearer to God are the gifts of the poor." 2. The purpose and intent for which they are given. Money, which is bestowed merely with a view to secure the good opinion of men, to attain a certain position socially or in the religious community, is not regarded by the Omniscient as given to his cause. If the motive be the relief of human suffering, the enlightenment of human ignorance, the diffusion of religious knowledge and privileges, then doubtless gifts are acceptable, even though there may be some deficiency in the worldly wisdom according to which the means are directed to the ends in view. 3. The spirit in which they are given. An unostentatious act of charity, an ungrudging devotion of property, a disposition to forego some luxury, some personal comfort or pleasure, in order to do good, a pious reference of the act of giving to him who gives alike the means and the inclination for liberality,—these are qualities which render beneficence acceptable to the Lord and Judge of all. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." He who thus bestows his charity shall indeed receive again from him who acknowledges all true service. A gift is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The parable of the vineyard.* The imagery adopted would at once address itself to the understanding of the hearers. Palestine pre-eminently a land of the grape. The prophetic writings are full of symbols and figures from the vine. This was spoken in continuation of his dispute with the Sanhedrim, and in the presence of all the people in the temple. The historical allusions to the prophets and the personal one to himself must have been only too clear. It was a detailed and crescent indictment of the most solemn and awful character.

I. GOD'S LOVING PROVISION FOR THE SPIRITUAL INTERESTS OF HIS PEOPLE INVOLVED CORRESPONDING OBLIGATION.

II. INSTEAD OF SERVING GOD, THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL SOUGHT THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE.

III. SELFISHNESS AND UNBELIEF LED TO THE REJECTION OF THE PROPHETS, AND EVEN OF THE SON OF GOD HIMSELF.

IV. SUCH CONDUCT ENTAILS A JUDGMENT, WHICH, ALTHOUGH DELAYED, IS NEVERTHELESS SURE AND TERRIBLE.

V. THE LOVING PURPOSE OF GOD, ALTHOUGH HINDERED BY SUCH MEANS, WILL BE ULTIMATELY AND GLORIOUSLY FULFILLED.—M.

Vers. 13—17.—*The politics of Christianity.* Christ, in his visits to the temple, met with the various representatives of religious, ecclesiastical, and political opinion in Palestine. He is the centre and touchstone of all. Their very attacks and dishonest questions were so many confessions of his moral and intellectual supremacy. To Christ do the different schools of thought and life amongst men still come, and the problems they raise can never be satisfactorily settled until he solves them.

I. A TRAP LAID FOR CHRIST. 1. *By whom?* Ultimately and originally by the Pharisees, the leaders of ultra-Judaism and advocates of a restored theocracy and national independence. But that this view, having its root at first in profound spirituality of aim and motive, had been subsidized by baser considerations, is only too evident. Their hatred for Christ on the present occasion led them to throw away all scruples they might have felt, and to assume a disingenuous position of inquiry. But they could do this the more effectively in concert with others, with whom, although somewhat disagreeing on the solution to be accepted of the theory of national independence, they yet agreed upon the general question itself. The Herodians were a recent party, attached to the fortunes and politics of the Herods, and accepting their rule as a satisfactory compromise of the difficulty arising from the theocratic views of the Jews and the actual supremacy of the Roman empire. They are supposed to have originated with the Pharisees, with whom they still retained general relations, and with whom they for the most part co-operated. Menahem the Essene, who was a Pharisee, being captivated, it is said, by the predicted ascendency of the house of Herod, attached himself to Herod the Great, and brought over many of his co-religionists. They believed that in the monarchy of Herod the national aspirations of the Jews were reasonably met, and at the same time the demands of Rome, whose creature he was. They were as a party, as might be expected, less scrupulous than the original Pharisees. The latter imagined, as many like them have done since, that by suborning others to do a dishonourable action they avoided the disgrace of it themselves. 2. *In what did the snare consist?* In an attempt to get Christ to commit himself to the tenets of one or other of the political parties of the day. This was not with the view of strengthening the influence of either, but simply to compromise him, according to his answer, either with the Roman government on the one hand, or with the national party of Judaism on the other. 3. *How was it baited?* With flattery: yet flattery which unwillingly witnessed to the "openness" and uprightness of Christ's character, his Divine impartiality, his fearless truthfulness.

II. THE TRAP EVADED. The simplicity of Christ, upon which they had calculated for the success of their scheme, was the very cause of its failure. "Wise as serpents, but harmless as doves," is a principle which has its root in the nature of the Divine life. The inquiry is answered: 1. *By an appeal to matter of fact.* "Show me a penny," etc. The existence of such a coin (the *denarius*, which was the standard silver coin of the Romans, value about eightpence or ninepence), with its "image and superscription," proved beyond question the subject condition of Palestine. The actual situation being, therefore, what it was, and, so far as they could do anything, irreversible, it was not right for them to ignore it. If the privileges attending it were freely made use of, the duties involved should also be discharged. 2. *By enunciating a deeper and wider principle than they recognized.* As things were, the practice of their own religion was freely permitted to the Jews, toleration being a principle of imperial policy. There was, therefore, no really spiritual difficulty involved. The political nostrums of Pharisee and Herodian alike were, therefore, party cries and nothing more. They were thus con-

victed of unreality, of hypocrisy, or acting a part. It was not religion they cared for, but their own personal or party ends. Yet at the same time, for such as then or at any future time might have their religious scruples affected by political conditions, Christ laid down a general principle of action. When human government is not opposed to Divine, submission may be conscientiously made to both. Only where they differ is there any room for doubt; but even such a doubt will be satisfactorily dealt with by beginning from the Divine side of obligation. This principle, which stands good for all times, is essentially a spiritual one. Under all circumstances, therefore, the *duty of the Christian*, or conscientious religionist, *is shown to be fundamentally a moral one.* Actually existent authority imposes obligations which have to be recognized in the spirit of submission and piety, when not conflicting with Divine prerogatives. *Christianity has only indirectly a bearing on politics; its direct and immediate concern is with morals.*—M.

Ver. 15.—"*Bring me a penny.*" I. CHRIST WILL HAVE ACCOUNT OF THE SMALLEST THINGS. The *denarius* was a small coin in common use. The spirit of Christ, sunlike, discovers even the "motes." In all things there is duty. Christ's attitude to the Law not only general but particular. "Not one jot or tittle" was to pass away unfulfilled because of the influence of Christianity. "Ye are my disciples, if ye do *whatsoever* I have commanded you." We shall have to give account of smallest things *at last*—idle words, false shame, "the cup of cold water," etc. The parable of the pounds has for its moral, "He that is faithful in that which is least," etc. There is no slurring over of little things because of a general disposition and amiable intention.

II. SMALL THINGS OFTEN REPRESENT GREAT PRINCIPLES, AND BECOME THE VEHICLES OF GREAT DUTIES. Coins are often of value, apart from their intrinsic worth, in witnessing to conquests, political influences, the progress of civilization, etc.; and numismatists have made many important contributions to history through their testimony. In this case the witness was even more pregnant and precious. It proved what actually existed, and represented the claim of earthly powers. The duty to God was shown thereby to be something quite distinct, and the general relation of the human and the Divine in human obligations was thereby permanently settled and set forth. It is equally so in regard to other things. "A straw will show which way the wind blows, or the water flows." Illustrated in such instances as the Massacre of St. Bartholomew; watchwords and flags of truce in time of war; the petty dealings of common life; the "minor moralities" of the Christian, etc.

III. WE ARE ENCOURAGED AND COMMANDED TO BRING SMALL THINGS TO CHRIST Do not say he has no interest in them. See how he looks at that widow with her two mites. Hear how he calls the little children. We need a *more thorough* Christianity, and if we follow this rule of bringing our daily concerns, our griefs, our moral difficulties, our sins, to the throne of grace, we shall become "Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile." He will interpret the minutest uncertainty or perplexity, and show us the great in the little. Erasmus Darwin wrote (April 13, 1789): "I have just heard that there are muzzles or gags made at Birmingham for the slaves in our islands. If this be true, and such an instrument could be exhibited by a speaker in the House of Commons, it might have a great effect. Could not one of their long whips or wire-tails be also procured and exhibited? But an instrument of torture of our own manufacture would have a greater effect, I dare say" ('Life,' p. 46).—M.

Vers. 18—27.—*The puzzle of the Sadducees.* I. THE CASE STATED. An extreme one; and probably a *locus classicus* in the works of the rabbins. It was supposed to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of all theories of resurrection or immortality. "In the resurrection" is used apparently in a pregnant sense, as including the judgment, when all questions would be decided, and the conditions of the future state settled. The case as stated referred only to legal and external conditions, questions of sentiment or spiritual attachment being ignored. The only case in Scripture of Christ coming into direct collision with the Sadducees. That the questioners were not maliciously disposed in presenting these difficulties may be inferred from the manner in which they are answered: not indignantly, or with an epithet expressing moral condemnation; but in

a straightforward, matter-of-fact way, although censure is also expressed—a kind of censure peculiarly distasteful to such men, who generally pretend to great originality and critical acumen. They are accused of ignorance and spiritual inexperience.

II. How Christ disposed of it. 1. *By reference to the possibilities of Divine power.* "In the resurrection state there will not be a repetition, pure and simple, of present conditions; there will be advance of inward and outward development. Love will continue; but in the case of the holy it will be sublimed. 'The power of God' is adequate, not only to the re-formative, but also to the transformative changes that may be requisite; and his wisdom will see to it that they be in harmony with the perfectibility of individual personality and the general procession of the ages. Even on earth there are loftier loves than those that are merely marital" (Morison). "They neither marry, nor are given in marriage." "His words teach absolutely the absence from the resurrection life of the definite relations on which marriage rests in this, and they suggest an answer to the yearning questions which rise up in our minds as we ponder the things behind the veil. . . . The old relations may subsist under new conditions. Things that are incompatible here may there be found to coexist. The saintly wife of two saintly husbands may love both with an angelic, and therefore a pure and unimpaired, affection. The contrast between our Lord's teaching and the sensual paradise of Mahomet, or Swedenborg's dream of the marriage state perpetuated under its earthly conditions, is so obvious as hardly to call for notice" (Plumptre). "The present life is but a partial revelation of the Divine power. All the relations of earthly families do not continue in heaven" (Godwin). 2. *By interpretation of Scripture.* Not the letter of Scripture is appealed to, but the underlying truth involved in the statement of Scripture, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. *He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*" The copula connecting the first clause of the quotation is not in the original, so that no argument can be founded upon it. Professor Plumptre's explanation—"The principle implied in the reasoning is, that the union of the Divine Name with that of a man, as in 'I am the God of Abraham,' involved a relation existing, not in the past only, but when the words were uttered. They meant something more than 'I am the God whom Abraham worshipped in the past'"—is, therefore, manifestly inadequate. That of Dr. Morison is more explicit and profound: "It amounted to this: *If there was at all a patriarchal dispensation, embracing a Messianic or redemptive scheme, and thus involving a Divinely commissioned Messiah or Redeemer, who was to be in due time incarnated, then there must be a life to come. But there was such a dispensation, if it be the case that God became 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' in any distinctive sense whatever.* And then, moreover, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob took personal advantage of the Messianic covenant into which God entered with them, they 'live.' They have 'life,' 'everlasting life,' in the intense acceptation of the term" (*in loc.*). Cf. Heb. xi. 13, 14, 16. A more direct proof might have been obtained in other portions of the Old Testament, but the skill of this argument lay in the reference to a book received by the Sadducees, and in the unexpected interpretation of familiar words. Thus their literalism and narrowness were rebuked, and the popular longing of the Jews confirmed. The line of evidence led by Christ not only meets the objection to resurrection, but includes the proof of that of which resurrection is only a portion, viz. immortality. If such depth of meaning lay in the words of an old pre-Christian revelation, what may not the gospel itself unfold, when spiritually interpretated in the light of new conditions and experiences?—M.

Ver. 24.—*Sources of heresy.* I. Principal causes of religious error. 1. *Ignorance of Holy Scripture.* (1) Unaided human nature is prone to error. Rather might it be said that of itself human nature cannot possibly know the truth. We have but to remember the *idola* of which philosophy warns us, to perceive how much there is in the circumstances and very constitution of the human mind to interfere with the attainment of intellectual truth. Difficulties of this nature, however, may be practically overcome by diligence, candour, and careful study; and the phenomena of the senses will yield up the secret of their working to the educated thinker. But there are things beyond sense concerning which the methods of intellectual research can give us no information. The agnosticism of science concerning these things is therefore, as a

whole, to be accepted as real. Were it not that there are moral as well as purely intellectual and constitutional causes for this ignorance, no fault need be found with it. But any view of mental error which omitted consideration of the fact of human depravity could not be considered adequate. The natural mind "loves darkness rather than light." (2) Scripture is intended to correct human error. "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (Ps. cxix. 130). They reveal the existence, works, character, and purpose of God. By so doing they solve the mysteries attaching to human life and duty. They are the Word of God, anticipating and transcending the findings of the world's experience. This is done, not only by communicating what is above sensible perception, but by affording a discipline to the spiritual nature. "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. iii. 16). "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" (John v. 39). 2. *Lack of spiritual experience.* "Nor the power of God." This ignorance may consist partly in ignorance of the facts of the Divine history of mankind as recorded in Scripture; but it is chiefly due to absence of personal, experimental consciousness of God in the spiritual nature. It is the "darkness of the heart" which exaggerates and intensifies the effects of general ignorance. "The power of God" works its miracles in the inward as well as the outward life; in conversion, sanctification, communion, and providential grace.

II. IN WHOM THESE MAY EXIST. The Sadducees were, according to the standards of their day, educated men. With the letter of the books of Moses they were familiar (ver. 26); and they were most careful to preserve them from addition or intermixture. 1. *Highly educated men may err in Divine things.* "Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25). Secular culture has not furnished an atom of the transcendental knowledge upon which religion is based; the Bible is not its product, nor can it be interpreted by it. Yet is not literature, art, or science to be discarded as a secondary aid to the interpretation of Scripture. If God does not require our knowledge, neither does he, as it has been finely said, require our ignorance. 2. *There are many who know the letter of God's Word without knowing its spirit.* Religious training may bestow an acquaintance with Scriptural history and doctrine and the chief outlines of moral duty, but it cannot ensure the inward knowledge of the heart. The interpretation of Scripture is only possible to those who are spiritually enlightened. Knowing the Bible externally may actually prove a hindrance to an inward knowledge of it, if it be made too much of, or imagined sufficient in itself. Superficial acquaintance with Biblical literature, doctrine, etc., "puffeth up;" and it requires the sternest and most frequent assaults ere its true character is exposed to itself.

III. HOW THEY ARE TO BE REMOVED. 1. *The teaching of Christ;* awakening a sense of inward need and repentance, and revealing the correspondence of the Word of God to the expanding and maturing spiritual consciousness. 2. *The gift of the Holy Spirit;* which takes of the things of God and reveals them to us. "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 9). Not least of the enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost is due to the purification of the heart.—M.

Vers. 28—34.—*The Law akin to the gospel, but inferior to it.* I. TRUE RELIGIOUS INQUIRY IS ENCOURAGED BY CANDOUR AND SPIRITUAL INSIGHT ON THE PART OF RELIGIOUS TEACHERS. Matthew tells us that the Pharisees "came together to the same place," when they saw the discomfiture of the Sadducees; and "then one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying." Mark introduces him as one of the scribes. In the one Gospel the motive and encouragement are represented as experienced by the Pharisaic party in general; in the other they are represented as individually felt and acted upon. There were, therefore, elements of earnestness and spirituality amongst

the Pharisees, and these were called forth by our Saviour's teaching. They were now in a more favourable attitude for receiving the truth than they had ever been before. As to the idea expressed by "tempting," it need not be understood in a sinister sense, but generally as proving, testing, etc. Our Lord did not crush the spirit of inquiry, but courted it. They felt that there was more in him than they could explain, and that his knowledge of Scripture was spiritual and profound, and therefore *they wished to discover what he could possibly have to tell them that was not already taught by Moses or his prophetic exponents.* He had all but converted his enemies and critics into his disciples. He had infected them with his own spirit of religious earnestness. Of this mood the "lawyer" was the mouthpiece. He pushes inquiry to its highest point, and desires to know the chief duties of religion.

II. THE BEST MODE OF ANSWERING SUCH INQUIRY IS THAT WHICH PRESENTS THE SPIRIT AND SUBSTANCE OF DUTY, OR TRUE RELIGION IN ITS UNITY AND UNIVERSALITY. "Deut. vi. 4. This is not given as a part of the Law of Moses, but as the principle of all service. Lev. xix. 18 contains a similar principle for all social duties" (Godwin). Passing over all matters of mere ceremonial, and questions of less or more, he lays hold of the spirit of the Law and presents it to his inquirer. It is out of the very heart of the book of ceremonies (Leviticus) that the duty to neighbours is extracted. He declares "the three unities of religion: (1) the one God; (2) the one faith; (3) the one commandment" (Lange); and compels the agreement and admiration of his questioner. "Note also the real reverence shown in the form of address, 'Master,' *i.e.* 'Teacher, Rabbi.' He recognized the speaker as one of his own order" (Plumptre). All religion is summed up by him in a "great commandment," viz. the *love of God*, and that is shown in its earthward aspect to involve *loving our neighbour as ourselves.* That true religion is not ceremonial but spiritual is thus demonstrated; and in quoting the highest utterances of the prophets, the scribe but endorses and restates the same doctrine. Teacher and inquirer are therefore theoretically one. But more is needed; and towards the attainment of this the stimulus is given, "Thou art *not far from the kingdom of God.*" This meant that—

III. SUCH INQUIRY CAN ONLY BE SATISFIED AND CROWNED BY ACTING UPON ITS HIGHEST SPIRITUAL CONVICTIONS. "The words are significant as showing the unity of our Lord's teaching. Now, as when he spoke the sermon on the mount, the righteousness which fulfils the Law is the condition of the entrance into the kingdom of God (Matt. v. 19, 20). Even the recognition of that righteousness as consisting in the fulfilment of the two commandments that were exceeding broad, brought a man as to the very threshold of the kingdom. It is instructive to compare our Lord's different method of dealing, in Luke x. 25—37, with one who had the same theoretical knowledge, but who obviously, consciously or unconsciously, minimized the force of the commandments by his narrowing definitions" (Plumptre). "The kingdom of heaven is, for the moment, pictorially represented as *localized*, like the ordinary kingdoms of the world. The scribe, walking in the way of conscientious inquiry, and thus making religious pilgrimage, had nearly reached its borderland. He was bordering on the great reality of true religion, *subjection of spirit to the sovereign will of God*" (Morison). This state can only be attained to by conversion, the identification of the sinner through faith with the righteousness of the Saviour, and the indwelling of the Spirit of God. It is thus scientific conviction becomes moral, and we are able to carry into effect what we know to be true and right.—M.

Ver. 34.—"*Not far from the kingdom of God.*" I. THE HIGHEST INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN DUTY APPROACHES THE GOSPEL, BUT FALLS SHORT OF IT.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF ENTRANCE INTO CHRIST'S KINGDOM ARE MORAL, AND NOT MERELY INTELLECTUAL. Faith; obedience; love. The heart, or central being.

III. NO MAN OUGHT TO BE SATISFIED WITH MERELY BEING "NOT FAR" FROM THE KINGDOM. 1. *To stop there is to stultify our highest spiritual instincts and tendencies.* 2. *To stop there is to fail of salvation.* 3. *To stop there is to aggravate our misery and sin.*—M.

Vers. 35—37.—*Great David's greater Son.* I. UNSPIRITUAL INTERPRETERS OF SCRIPTURE ARE INVOLVED IN INCONSISTENCY AND SELF-CONTRADICTION. 1. *In the*

present instance they proved to be so with respect to the most important truths. It is only the spiritual mind that can harmonize the apparent discrepancies of revelation (1 Cor. ii. 14; cf. Heb. v. 12, *seq.*). 2. *This results in their own loss and injury* (1 Pet. iii. 16). They failed to recognize the Messiah when he did come, because of their false conceptions of what he was.

II. THE GLORY OF THE MESSIAH IS SEEN FROM PROPHETIC SCRIPTURE TO BE MORE THAN ROYAL—TO BE, IN FACT, DIVINE. The hundred and tenth psalm is rightly called "a psalm of David." Merely to apply it to David is to destroy its Messianic character. "The psalm is not only quoted by our Lord as Messianic in the passages already referred to (viz. this and Matt. xxii. 41—46); it is more frequently cited by the New Testament writers than any other single portion of the ancient Scriptures. (Comp., besides these passages in the Gospels, Acts ii. 34, 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13; v. 6; vii. 17, 21; x. 13.) In later Jewish writings, in the Talmud and the rabbis, nearly every verse of the psalm is quoted as referring to the Messiah" (Perowne). "The majority of ancient Jewish interpreters apply the psalm to the Messiah" (Strauss, 'Leben Jesu,' ii. 6, 79). If, then, it is David's own composition, and is Messianic, the language used with respect to the Royal One who is to come is only to be explained as involving divinity: "Jehovah said to *my Lord.*"

III. IN APPLYING THE PSALM TO HIMSELF, CHRIST SUGGESTED THE TRUE SOLUTION OF THE APPARENT CONTRADICTION. The psalm is deliberately and by implication adopted by Christ. He testifies to the Divine inspiration of its author. His own person and work are the key to its meaning. As he was Son of David on the human side, so was he David's Lord by virtue of his Divine Sonship.—M.

Ver. 37.—"*The common people heard him gladly.*" I. THE PERSONS THUS AFFECTED. The reference of the words "common people" misunderstood. Literally the expression is, "the great multitude." It was in the temple, and must have comprehended all classes, especially the middle and upper; the very lowest being but sparsely represented. It was also nationally homogeneous—Jewish.

II. REASONS FOR THEIR BEING SO. Not on account of eloquence, or so-called "popularity" of address. That the highest qualities were exhibited "goes without saying." The full splendour and majesty of Messianic teaching were exhibited. The Man himself was more, and felt to be more, than his words. Two circumstances lent a passing interest to his teaching: he exposed and defeated the religious pretenders of the day, Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, whose true character the people's instinct felt had been revealed; and he appealed to the national religious spirit, in setting forth the true doctrine of the Messiah.

III. THE MORAL VALUE OF THIS RECEPTION OF CHRIST. 1. It showed that the deepest instincts of humanity are on the side of religion and Divine truth. 2. But it did not involve discipleship. Admiration, intellectual assent, even some wonder at what was truly Divine; but no moral conviction. There are many to whom the gospel is a thing gladly heard, but soon dismissed from the thoughts. It is in obedience and faith that the "glad tidings" are practically and permanently experienced by the human heart.—M.

Vers. 41—44.—*The widow's two mites.* The treasury, "in front of the sanctuary," consisted of thirteen brazen chests, called "trumpets" from their peculiar shape, "swelling out beneath, and tapering upward into a narrow mouth or opening, into which the contributions were put." The contributions given were towards the sacrifice fund, and they were voluntary. This incident has a deep, permanent interest for all Christians.

I. CHRIST'S OBSERVATION OF RELIGIOUS GIVING. He "sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury." This has been felt to be typical of his eternal attitude: he still sits "over against the treasury" of his Church. 1. *It was deliberate.* He did it as one who had purposed to do it; and he was not in any hurry. The position was chosen, and was well suited to carry out his intention. 2. *It was careful and discriminating.* The different classes of people were noted—rich and poor, ostentatious and retiring, mean and generous. He beheld *how* the people cast in. 3. *It was comprehensive.* No individual seems to have escaped

his attention. Even the poor widow is observed. 4. *It was his last act ere quitting the temple for ever.*

II. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ITS MOTIVES AND CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. *How penetrating!* The outward actions and bearing of the donors would doubtless reveal to his eye, who "knew what was in man," their real characters. Now he looks directly upon our secret thoughts and feelings, and is acquainted with all the conditions of mind and heart through which we pass. He knows the *history* of the gift, as well as its actual bestowal. 2. *How complete!* The domestic circumstances of the widow were well known to him. No tax-surveyor could have reckoned the income of the people more accurately. 3. *How minute!* The exact nature and number of the widow's coins are noted.

III. HIS JUDGMENT AS TO ITS WORTH. His attitude now, as on the day when "he looked round about upon all things," was authoritative and judicial. He sat as one who had a right to be there. It is from a supreme elevation of moral sentiment that he looks, for already clearly visible to his spirit is his own great gift—of himself. 1. *Given from a spiritual point of view.* Not the objective amount, but the motives and feelings of the givers. The spirit of sacrifice, the religious enthusiasm of each, is measured and declared. 2. *The standard indicated is not how much is given, but from how much it is given.* They all cast in "of their abundance." What they gave was, therefore, a mere superfluity. Their comforts were not decreased, their luxuries still abounded. The need—the absolute poverty—of the widow rendered her gift a sacrifice, and a heroic act of faith. It was prophetic of the Divine charities that were to be awakened in the breasts of regenerate men, when his own great sacrifice should have borne its fruit. The Macedonian Churches (and many a one since) gave not only to their power, but beyond it, their deep poverty abounding to the riches of their liberality (2 Cor. viii. 1, 2). "Now, many would have been ready to censure this *poor widow*, and to think she did ill. Why should she give to others when she had little enough for herself? . . . It is so rare a thing to find any that would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find any that will imitate her! And yet our Saviour commends her, and therefore we are sure that she did very well and wisely" (Matthew Henry).—M.

Ver. 41.—*Jesus lingering in the temple.* This is one of the best-known incidents in the life of our Lord. It is strange that it should be so. If we consider the greatness of his work, we should hardly expect that room would be found in a brief record of it for so trivial an event. It was an every-day occurrence for the worshippers who entered the temple to cast their offerings into the treasury, and not a few widows would be found among them. Yet an evangelist, who was inspired of God to select or reject any of the multitudinous facts of Christ's ministry, did not leave untold the story of the widow's mite; and it is repeated with equal emphasis by Luke. Evidently God judges not as man does. We think much of a philanthropic scheme which loudly asserts itself; but he probably estimates more highly the scheme of some obscure Christian worker, who gathers together the poor and wretched, telling them of a nobler, purer life, and lifting them up towards the light of God's love. In trivial incidents great principles are found, and we should dig in them as for hid treasure. Our Lord Jesus Christ is naturally the Centre of this scene, and we will see what we may of his characteristics as exhibited in it.

I. THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST. For the last time our Lord had appeared in the temple as a public Teacher. Before crowds of people he had once more strongly denounced the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. They were convicted by their own consciences, and incapable of reply, so "they answered not a word;" but, in their desperation and malignity, they resolved the more speedily to put him to death. He knew it perfectly well. Yet, after speaking as the righteous Rebuker of sin, he gladly turns aside to discover and commend a hidden act of goodness. Indeed, he seemed eager to see something which would redeem his Father's house from the wickedness which dishonoured it. Hence "he sat over against the treasury," and watched till he saw one worshipper whose sacrifice he could rejoice over—that of a poor widow, who cast in all the living that she had. That act of hers came to him like a streak of sunshine through the clouds. How tenderly and patiently does he still watch for any glimmer of faith and love in human hearts!

II. THE SERENITY OF CHRIST. His calmness was like the blue of the heavens, unruffled and unchanged by storms that stir the lower atmosphere. An ordinary man, after uttering a rebuke which enraged his foes to madness, would put himself out of reach. He would not linger in their stronghold, which was full of perils to him. But in patience Jesus Christ possessed his soul. He knew his hour had not yet come. He would not hasten away. It might be that some of his hearers would repent, and come to him, confessing and forsaking their sins. So, while many passed him whose beetling brows were black with hatred, he in the court of the women quietly sat and waited. Such serenity was habitual with him. When there was haste and agony and terror in Bethany, Jesus abode three days in the same place where he was. When the warning came, "Depart hence, for Herod will kill thee," he calmly continued his works of mercy. When the armed band followed him into Gethsemane, he confronted them with a calmness that paralyzed them. When he conquered death and rose from the grave, there was no sign of haste—the linen clothes were laid orderly, and the napkin was folded in a place by itself. Too often our hearts are perturbed. We are fussy, anxious, fretful; but, if we will but receive it, this is his legacy: "Peace I leave with you, *my* peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

III. THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST. Our Lord was full of great thoughts, not only respecting this world, but that other world from which he came, with its vivid realities and awful mysteries. He looked on to the future of the work he had begun, and which in a few days would be consummated on the cross—a work which would not only stir Jerusalem, but shake the Roman empire, and go onward through distant ages with growing force, till all nations would call him blessed. Yet here he was, watching a few Jewish worshippers go into their temple; and he notices each one. He sees even this poor widow, whom others brush past with haste or contempt. He knows her struggle and sacrifice and single-heartedness, as she brings that tiny offering, with a blush of shame that it is so little, and secretly lets it fall into the treasury of her God. His condescension is still displayed to the meanest and the humblest worshippers, and broken words, paltry gifts, and feeble efforts will not be without his notice and recompense. May he see, in all Christian assemblies, not the outward formalism which he must rebuke, but prayer and praise, gift and work, which loyal hearts are offering to the Lord their God!—A. R.

Vers. 42—44.—*The widow's mite.* If we get a single ray of light, decompose and analyze it, we may argue from it to all the light that floods the world; to its nature, its source, and its effects. So this act of generosity and devotion, simple and slight though it is in itself, contains in it elements of truth which are world-wide in application. Amongst the many lessons it teaches, we select the following:—

I. THAT GOD'S PEOPLE ARE EXPECTED TO BE GIVERS. Many have a singular objection to insistence upon that. They willingly listen to words of solace; they rejoice in descriptions of heaven; they are not reluctant to hear the errors of their theological antagonists exposed and rebuked: but the duty of Christian giving is scarcely so popular with them. However, "it is enough for the servant that he be as his Master;" and we find that he who taught in the temple also "beheld how the people cast money into the treasury." That treasury was a Divine institution. In spite of abuses, it was for many generations a witness of what God expects; as a recognition of his claims, and of the claims of others, on the part of rich and poor. If God is our Creator and Preserver, if every day we live and every power we have is his gift, we must honour him "with our substance, and with the firstfruits of all our increase." If he has redeemed us by his Son, if "we are not our own, but bought with a price," any sacrifice we make in gift or work should be a source of joy. If we be members of one brotherhood, we are bound to have the same care one for another. We are to do this, not in the way which is easiest to ourselves, most accordant with our tastes, or most likely to bring us credit; but as those who are seeking to become like him, who is kind to the unthankful and to the unworthy.

II. THAT SOME KINDS OF GIVING ARE OF HIGHER WORTH THAN OTHERS. Our Lord did not blame or despise the gifts which the rich made when they cast in much. They were doing what was right. Whether their offerings went to support the temple, or as

a substitute for sacrifices, or for distribution to the poor, they were given towards what was regarded as the work of God. But there was nothing in the offering of the rich which called for the *special* praise bestowed on the widow. 1. *It is to be observed here that Christ commended what most people would blame.* You would probably argue thus: "Two mites were of little importance to the treasury, but of great importance to her. If she had given one and kept the other, she would have showed not only piety, but good sense. As it was her gift was insignificant, and at the same time it was rash and needless." Yet, in the eyes of our Lord, the gift was right; and it was commended for this very reason—that she had cast in all the living that she had. We cannot but be reminded here of an incident in the house of Simon. When Mary broke the alabaster box, and poured the spikenard on her Saviour's head, the disciples said that it was a foolish impulse—that if sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor, it would have been of real utility; now a waste of the ointment had been made. In reply, Jesus taught them that nothing given to God was wasted; that the aroma of such an offering went beyond the world of sense. On both occasions our Lord commended what others blamed. 2. *Further, the reason for his commendation was not what many would expect.* It was not the value of the gift; for two mites was a smaller sum than we could give if we tried to find our smallest coin. Nor was it the object to which the money was given which Christ approved. He knew how much there was of what was false under the glitter of the ceremonial worship of the temple. He had just rebuked the very men who would manipulate these funds. He looked on to the day when the temple would perish, and a nobler Church would arise on its ruins. Hence, in commending the widow's gift, which supported this ritual, he condemned those who withhold their help till an organization is exactly what they wish—who refuse to support what does not accord precisely with their tastes and views. Those who habitually do this crush in their hearts the germ from which gift and sacrifice spring. 3. *The widow's gift was approved because it was the offering of a simple heart, full of love to God.* She wished to show gratitude, and to give a deliberate expression of her confidence in God; and therefore she gave up her living, and threw herself on him who feeds the birds, and never forgets his children. 4. *Most of all the gift was valued because it represented self-sacrifice.* They gave of their abundance—she gave all her living; in other words, herself. Too often we lose the highest blessedness because we do not cross the border-line which lies between self-indulgence and Christ-likeness. When we begin to feel that some service is a burden, and demands a strain, we give it up to some one else to whom the effort would be less! Let us seek the spirit of the poor widow, who knew that God could do without her gift, but felt that her love could not be satisfied without her sacrifice.

III. THAT OUR LORD QUIETLY WATCHES OUR GIFTS AND SERVICES. We may put into the treasury wealth, talents, prayers, tears, etc. None are unnoticed by him. And he looks in order to approve, not to condemn. His disciples might have said, "She is imprudent to give her all; she is priest-ridden; she is supporting a formal worship which is a barrier to the kingdom of Christ." But the Lord looked beneath the surface. He saw the pious intention, the pure purpose, and out of all the chaff on that threshing-floor he found one grain of purity and reality, and rejoiced over it as one finding great spoil.

IV. THAT OUR LORD APPROVES ALL THAT IS DONE IN A RIGHT SPIRIT. He did not praise her to her face, nor in her hearing. When the delicate flower of devotion is taken in the hot hand of popular applause, it withers; but, left in the cool shadow of secrecy, it lives. Hence the widow heard no flattery or approval, though she went home with inward satisfaction because she had done what she could. It is a pleasure to make a sacrifice for one we love. The young girl gives up her money, her position, her future, herself, to the man she loves, and rejoices in doing it. The father will not begrudge it when he looks at his children's faces, though for their sakes he goes off in a shabby coat to his daily duty. Love longs for sacrifice, and glories in making it. Now, it is a sacrifice so inspired which our God approves and commends. In the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, when nothing will be overlooked, services which the doer had forgotten, which the Church thought trivial and the world laughs to scorn, will be recompensed, and even "a cup of cold water, given in the name of a disciple, will not lose its reward."—A. R.

Vers. 1—12.—*The parable of the vineyard; or, unfaithfulness and its reward.* A rude demand upon Jesus for his authority led him to ask in reply "one question" which awakened the consciences of his interrogators and threw them into confusion and difficulty. They were hurrying him on to his final hour, and he must needs take advantage of every opportunity of finishing the work given him to do. Therefore "in parables" he spake both "unto them" and "against them," which but roused their ire, and sent them away to plot and plan for his destruction. No word was needed to declare who was represented by the vineyard. "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." And the details of the parable were minutely historic. How often had "a servant" been sent "that he might receive of the fruits of the vineyard"! How often had he been "handled shamefully"! Now a last chance is offered. "He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them." The rest is prophecy ready to be fulfilled, and so soon to become history also. But the appeal, "What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do?" he does not leave them to answer, but supplies it in simple words and in such manner as to make the reply an admonitory warning. Alas! our eyes behold the precise fulfilment. And the rejected stone is now the Foundation-stone, "the Head of the corner." The parable reveals—

I. A GRACIOUS EXAMPLE OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS AND PATIENCE. It was a direct dealing with Israel, but it was an indirect dealing with all men. The comment is found in the historic development of the history of Israel.

II. A PAINFUL INSTANCE OF HUMAN UNFAITHFULNESS. This, as in all instances of a want of fidelity to important trusts, was sadly disastrous. But not only to them to whom the trust was committed, for all men expiate the sins of every unfaithful one. The condition of society is lowered; good fruits are blighted and cannot be gathered; pains and penalties are incurred which fall heavily upon all. Had every man been faithful to his trust, what a paradise this hard earth would have presented! But the world walks on a lower plane for every unholy life passed upon it. Had that vineyard brought forth its due fruits, all nations would have been made partakers. Of the few small patches which bore, the world has the fruit in those holy records which are as the salt of the earth. But how much of the corn and the oil and the wine is wanting! On this account is presented—

III. A SAD ILLUSTRATION OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. Israel is deposed. The sacred trust is withdrawn. The vineyard is in other hands. The unfaithful husbandmen, as such, are destroyed. Alas for Israel! Her crown is in the dust, her harps upon the willows. She does not with her voice sing the pleasant songs of Zion. She is not the great spiritual power in the earth for which she was designed. Her calling and election she did not make sure. True, for the fathers' sakes she remains a testimony in the earth. But it is as a broken-off branch. The world gains nothing by Israel's rejection. The Gentiles are wise to weep and mourn on her behalf; and, knowing that "God is able to graft them in again," they are wise to pray earnestly for their recovery. "The receiving of them" would be "life from the dead." So let every Gentile believer pitifully behold the nation sitting in the dust, having become the uncircumcision in the spirit: and at this time, alas! "separate from Christ" and really "alienated from the commonwealth of" the true "Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope." Nor can it be otherwise till they who now are "far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ."—G.

Vers. 13—17.—*The tribute money.* Unable to take him with their wicked hands, because they dared not, they send selected men from the Pharisees and the Herodians. They have instructions to lay a trap with a view "to catch him in talk." "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." But these blind catchers thought him to be blind also. In specious words they ply him with a question relating to an oppressive tax. "If he held that payment should be refused, he would compromise himself with the Romans; if he sanctioned it, he would embitter himself both with the Herodians and the ultra-national party." But he who "knew what was in man" knew "their hypocrisy," and in a word, and doubtless with a look, exposed it. "Why tempt ye me?" Then with the coin before their eyes, which was at once the symbol of their unfaithfulness to God and their subjection to man, he threw back upon them the onus of answering themselves in their own conscience and by their own deeds.

Ah! "in the net which they hid is their own foot taken." But Jesus does not only evade the dilemma on which they had cast him; nor does he merely utter a word of condemnation to them who had failed to "render unto God the things that are God's," and who would be only too glad to escape rendering "to Cæsar the things that" were "Cæsar's." But he, in high wisdom, teaches the great truth for all time, that fidelity to the demands of God and fidelity to the constituted powers of earth need not clash. The loyalty of the subject and the obedience of the saint are on the same plane. So a just distribution is made of things pertaining to Cæsar and of things pertaining to God, and yet the true unity of the service rendered to both is declared; and, moreover, as God is above all, the duty to him includes the duty to Cæsar. For our learning we may see—

I. THAT CHRIST BEARS HIS TESTIMONY TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE CLAIMS OF EARTHLY AUTHORITY. The Christian need be under no apprehension of following this principle out to its extremest limits. For if the earthly government be oppressive and unjust, he knows full well that the King of kings has his own methods of deposing; for he believes that "he putteth down one and setteth up another." He has learned to submit even to oppression for conscience' sake. But these questions respect the extreme, the occasional, the exceptional conditions of political life. Fidelity to the constituted head of authority would, according to Christian principles, secure the divinely appointed Head.

II. CHRIST UTTERS HIS EVER-REITERATED DEMAND FOR FIDELITY TO THE INALIENABLE CLAIMS OF GOD. "Render unto God the things that are God's." Is anything not God's? If in truth all is first rendered to him in an honest consecration to his will, then may that which he ordains for the neighbour be given to the neighbour; that which is for the poor to the poor; or that for the family, or for self even, so given; and therefore that which is for "the king, as supreme," to the king may be rendered.

III. LET THE MAN HIMSELF, WHO TRULY IS GOD'S, BE RENDERED UNTO GOD. One has beautifully taught thus: "That which bears Cæsar's image is, as belonging to Cæsar, to be given to him; but that which has God's image belongs to God." Had Israel been faithful to "render" themselves "to God" they would not in those late days have been given up to the Romans, as in earlier days fidelity to God would have kept back the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. The great principle to guide nations and individuals alike is truly to be the Lord's. Then, when he is the God of the nation, all other service and all other obligations fall into their proper order and degree of importance. And he who serves his God in humility will serve his king in fidelity. He who is obedient to the Lord's claims will know how to render the claims of masters, and lords, and rulers, and sovereigns. Not more truly is the Law one, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," than is "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."—G.

Vers. 18—27.—*The resurrection from the dead.* A new class of antagonists now assail the great "Master" with a case of casuistry, designed evidently to bring the doctrine of the resurrection into contempt. "In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of them?" Was this one of the flimsy difficulties on which they relied for a defence of their position, as so often men screen their scepticism behind a mere veil of difficulty? And did they depend in any real degree upon an imaginary inconsistency to warrant them in denying the grandest hopes of the human heart? Be it so or not, they gave opportunity for the most precious defence of the common faith. The Church to-day is rich in an inheritance of defensive writing drawn from the pens of holy apostles and righteous men. But though it is of unspeakable value to her to read the inestimable words of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, yet to them who have wholly committed themselves to Jesus, who truly own him as "Master," and no other, it is most comforting to find him entering the lists against all Sadducean unbelief for all ages. It is enough: Jesus is the defender of the faith. We want no more. In one sentence we read both an answer to the difficulty and a confirmation of the truth: "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven." Thus is clearly revealed—(1) *The fact of the resurrection*; and (2) *the conditions of the resurrection life.*

I. The first clear teaching is, THE DEAD LIVE. "That the dead are raised even Moses

showed;" so little had these sons of Moses understood his words. And now Jesus shows it more clearly, and points to the life as an immortal life: "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." True, this is affirmed of them "that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead." But that "the dead"—that is, all the dead—"are raised Moses showed, as touching the dead that they are raised." Oh, precious words! Thanks be to God, life does not end in a tomb! Abraham and Isaac and Jacob live; yea, "all live unto him," if unto us they die. Jesus points to the source of all error on this as on so many subjects: "Ye know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God." On these two hang all the true faith of men. No one can read "the Scriptures" and deny the resurrection. In Jesus' view the old Scriptures sufficiently affirmed the great truth. And he who in these days would defend himself against the assaults of unbelief must sit at the feet of Jesus. No one can doubt his belief in the resurrection. "And why is it judged incredible?" All difficulties vanish in presence of "the power of God." If the question of the "foolish one" be urged, "How?—How are the dead raised?" the only answer faith should vouchsafe is, "The power of God." And if the further demand is pressed, but "with what manner of body do they come?" it must still be replied, "God giveth it a body." Let the true believer stand by the Word of God. The resurrection rests not for its certainty on a foundation of human ratiocination or scientific deduction, neither is it by them to be overturned. The one impregnable wall of defence for this most precious article of human faith and this most precious condition of human life is in the combined words, "The Scriptures: the power of God."

II. As to the CONDITION OF THE RESURRECTION LIFE. We wait to know this. One only truth is enough to carry with us, an earnest of all—"as angels in heaven." The truths are almost antiphonal: "Neither can they die any more; as angels in heaven."—G.

Vers. 28—34.—*The great command.* One more question ere it could be said, "No man after that durst ask him any question." Alas! on the human side it, like the others, is a mere quibble, or based on one. But though man asks in his folly Jesus never answers according to it, but always according to his supreme wisdom, in a manner so high, so far-reaching, so seriously. He trifled not with the perplexities of men. He knew nations and tribes of men would feed on his words to the end of time, and he gladly bore witness to all those truths against which the human errors in that erring age stood out in humiliating contrast. The Christian teaching grows up out of the Mosaic. The later development of the one system does not set aside a single moral principle of the earlier. The solution of the difficulty which beset a few amidst the many commandments for which priority was urged laid down a permanent principle for all time, and took up into Christianity the essential teaching of Mosaism. We read—

I. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING. One word embodies it—the word "love." To this Christ gave the utmost prominence and the most beautiful illustration. This simple rule engages the devotion of the central energy of the entire life. It describes the first effort of feeble infancy and the ripest experience of the mature Christian age. It is at once the point from which all pure and active obedience takes its departure, and it is the end towards which all spiritual growth and culture tends. It is the alpha and the omega of the Christian spirit. To love, to love God first and supremely, and in that love to love the neighbour, is so complete a dedication of the entire inner man to the service of the Most High, that all commands requiring the details of that service are anticipated. From these branches hang all the rich, ripe clusters of fruitful obedience.

II. THE ELEVATING TENDENCY OF THAT TEACHING, WHICH SETS FORTH THE LOVE OF THE INFINITE EXCELLENCE AS THE HIGHEST AND MOST OBLIGATORY OF ALL ITS REQUIREMENTS. That holy system of spiritual morality first called Mosaism, or Judaism, and now called Christianity, is for ever raised to the highest pitch of excellence and worthiness by making this its central, its almost solitary, command. All that is good in morals, all that is pure in aspiration, all that is beneficent in action, flows from this fountain. The perpetual aim to reach to the most entire love of the most exalted Object of human thought must insensibly raise the moral and spiritual character of

every one who is controlled by so worthy an endeavour. It ensures the recognition of the soul's subjection to the authority of God; it makes the Divine excellences objects of ceaseless contemplation; it subordinates all the aims and activities of life to the holiest purposes; and, while withdrawing the life from the degradations of low and unworthy motives and pursuits, it regulates the whole by an ever-present, powerful, and satisfying principle of life, at the same time preserving the simplicity and moral cohesion—the unity—of the character. Never was a holier law uttered; never were the feet of men directed to a purer, safer path; never was a firmer, truer basis laid on which to found a kingdom of truth, of peace, and of well-being.

III. THE PRACTICAL CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour." To present rules for the government of every hour and the regulation of every transaction of life would be far less effective than to seize upon a principle like this, which underlies all conduct. It may be entrusted with the guidance of the life in the absence of controlling regulations and minute details of obligatory observance. It leaves the spirit free to act according to its own generous impulses or prudent caution. Such a rule prevents the necessity for "Thou shalt not steal;" "Thou shalt not kill." Love embraces all virtues; it fulfils all righteousness. The regulating principle, "as thyself," points to the due estimate of one's own life; such a love for it as would prevent its exposure to evil, and such a discernment of the true interests of life, and the common participation in those interests, as would lead to right adjustment of the relative claims of self and the apparently conflicting claims of others. Truly, "there is none other commandment greater than these." This, indeed, is "much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And he who has come to appreciate the truth and beauty of this is "not far from the kingdom of God;" while he who keeps this commandment already dwells within the security and shares the blessedness of that kingdom.—G.

Vers. 41—44.—*The widow's gift.* How many lessons cluster around this unique incident! The watchful eye which is ever over the treasury of the Lord's temple; the discernment between the gifts that come of "superfluity," large perhaps in themselves, but small in comparison with the abundance left untouched; and the gifts that betoken the penury of the giver, but at the same time declare the entireness with which all his living is devoted to the service of God; and the great Master's principle of judgment. "Many that were rich cast in much;" one that was "poor" cast in little; yet the one "cast in more than all." Let not our thoughts leave the Lord's treasury, and let that treasury denote to us whatever is employed for the right ordering of the Lord's worship in his own holy house; all that is expended in charitable works for the benefit of men, whether in ministering to their spiritual or temporal necessities. The good Lord has himself chosen to represent works of benevolence shown to the suffering and poor to be works done unto himself. All that is thrown into their treasury is thrown into his. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." So it comes to pass that both the Lord and the poor—the Lord in heaven and the suffering and needy on earth—make their appeal to our charity for such help as we may be able to render. In responding to this double appeal let us measure our gifts: 1. *By the claims of our Lord upon us.* 2. *By the necessities of our neighbour.* 3. *By the measure of our sympathy with him and them.*

I. If THE CLAIMS OF OUR LORD guide us, what limit shall we put upon our "gifts"? To him we owe more than our all. To him we are indebted for life and breath, and all things; for the bright light of the morn and the cooling shades of eventide; for reason and affection and friendship. The good and perfect gifts of righteousness, of holy hope, of calm faith, of heavenly love, come down from him. All that is beauteous and bright in life; all that raises us from degradation and need. Ah! the sands on the sea-shore are as little likely to be numbered as the gifts of the Lord's bounty, which lay us under tribute from sheer thankfulness to him.

II. But OUR NEIGHBOUR'S NEED presents little less impressive claims upon us. How multiplied! How various! How imperative! Christian charity needs little labour to find out the suitable channels of its activity. How greatly has that charity grown and multiplied since the Lord cast the first handful of seed into the warm heart of man! Many ages have been characterized by large gifts for the comfort, the physical

need, the spiritual help of man. This present age is not a whit behind the chief in the largeness and variety of its gifts and efforts. To the Lord be praise!

III. But the true spring of all charity and the true quality of it is to be found in A PERFECT UNITY OF INTEREST WITH MEN, AND A PERFECT SYMPATHY WITH THE LORD. True charity is the outflow of the love of God and love of man. It is one of the highest reaches of wisdom to discern the perfect community of interest which every man has with every other. This the Lord saw: this, alas! is but little seen by us. He who can once become possessed of the belief that he has no true and permanent interest which is not identical with the highest interests of his race, has taken the first step towards the attainment of a pure, a boundless, a Divine charity. And he who would sustain this lofty sentiment must learn to see that all he has he holds by the will and for the good pleasure of the Lord on high. He will learn that concerning himself his utmost wisdom is, with St. Bernard, to say, "Lord, I have but two mites, a body and a soul; I give them both to thee."—G.

Vers. 1—12.—*The evil husbandmen.* I. FAITHLESS TO GOD; UNJUST TO MEN. If men do not know God, neither can they know those who are sent of him. The Pharisees were set against Jesus because he was the only living presentment of their own neglected duties to God.

II. VIOLENCE FALLACIOUS TO THOSE WHO EMPLOY IT. The wicked husbandmen blindly slay the emissary. It is of no avail. The Erinys, the fury, the avenging spirit of the dead man, will come back. The violence against Jesus brought about the removal of his murderers from their place.

III. ABUSE OF GOOD MEANS ITS LOSS. "The vineyard given to others." So do great inheritances melt away from their possessors; and the industrious servant comes to the seat of the dissipated lord. The very intelligence that is misused decays; and the loss of influence means loss of moral life.

IV. THE SCALES OF DIVINE AND OF HUMAN ESTIMATION OFTEN DIFFER. A lesson often suggested by Christ. "Men are not what they seem." In science, in literature, in politics, the greatest men often rise up, untrained in the schools, to confute the conventional judgment of the time about education. So in religion. It is difficult to realize that the Saviour was once scoffed at as a rustic, illiterate teacher from Nazareth. Yet so it was. There is a profound wonder in the turns of human life; and so long as we have eyes for the hand and working of God, miracles in the truest sense will never cease.—J.

Vers. 13—17.—*The dialectic of Jesus.* 1. DISHONEST SUBTLETY MATCHED BY CLEAR-SIGHTED WISDOM. We must be, if possible, "wise as serpents," but, above all, honest in purpose. It is the false tongue that stammers, and the fox-like cunning that entraps itself.

II. VERBAL TRUTH MAY CONCEAL HEART FALSEHOOD. They spoke most truly to Jesus about himself, and yet most untruly. So of all words designed to flatter and deceive. There may be a divorce between the tongue and the heart.

III. CONDENSED ARGUMENT. In the use he made of the coin, Jesus suggested a whole train of argument. The coin with its image was a symbol of earthly rule. The kingdom of Jesus is ideal, and independent of the forms of this world (John xviii. 36). The loyalty of the Christian to the kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, teaches him how to act in relation to worldly governments. But Christianity is not to be confounded with politics. "No earthly governments can prevent the spiritual service of God. That should not be rendered to them which is due to God only" (Godwin).—J.

Vers. 18—27.—*Sadducean error.* I. DIFFICULTIES OF BELIEF ARE OFTEN IDLE LUXURIES OF THE MIND. One cannot suppose that these men were really troubled by such a question as they raised. It was sheer idleness, bred of useless school life. And so with many theoretical questions pretended to be of serious importance: pressing into what is inaccessible and kept in reserve by God. They are "solved by walking." Act—act rightly here and now, and the question will solve itself, or cease to interest.

II. DISINGENUOUS REASONING FALLS INTO STUPIDITY. What else but childish is this confusion of earthly relations with the spiritual kingdom? Marriage, birth, and death are time-changes; belong to the idea of earth and time, not to eternity. And the least instructed mind *feels* that this is so. There are enough mysteries in the present life to engage our attention without prying into those beyond.

III. THE RAY OF TRUTH. The one great historic Word, the basis of the national consciousness, sheds its sufficient light upon the question. God does not claim dead objects for his own. Souls that he calls his, "do of his own dear life partake," and "never will he them forsake." It was a mystical interpretation of the ancient Word; and often there are times when we may take refuge in the mystical interpretation, and feel that it is the deepest and the best. "Those who are now dead to men still live in God."—J.

Vers. 28—34.—*The essence of religion.* I. THE LEADING IDEA FOR THE INTELLIGENCE. The unity of God, his personality, his supreme lovableness. "All love is lost save upon God alone."

II. THE LEADING MAXIM FOR THE WILL. To love one's neighbour as one's self Kant said, trying to translate the gospel into his own dialect, "Act so that the maxim of thy will may be the principle of an universal legislation."

III. THE MORAL SURPASSES THE RITUAL IN RELIGION. Surpasses it by including it with itself. Nothing can be offered to God dearer than a just and a loving life. Love, in fact, is the measure of life's worth. And he who believes and acts upon these principles is recognized by Christ as being a Christian.—J.

Vers. 35—37.—*David's Son.* I. DAVID'S PROPHETIC SPIRIT. "He was moved by the spirit of truth when he foretold that his son would rule over all, and when he owned him as Lord." The psalm had originally another bearing. But as all true poesy "smacks of something greater than it seems," and has deeper meanings than meet the eye, so did the words of the psalmist reach forth into remoter times and higher relations.

II. CHRIST'S IDENTIFICATION. "He declared that he was the Son of David, and that his priesthood and kingdom were universal and everlasting."—J.

Vers. 38—40.—*Traits of the scribe.* I. THE SEEMING GOOD OFTEN THRIVE AND ARE HONOURED. Insight into character is rare; men are judged by the outside, and are taken largely at their own valuation.

II. PRETENSION EVER HIDES EMPTINESS, AND OFTEN GUILT. Fixed for ever for our repugnance, hatred, and contempt is the character of the religious pretender in the Gospel. Men need to be warned that there is more danger to the soul in pretending to a piety we have not got, than in merely having none at all.—J.

Vers. 41—44.—*The gift of poverty.* I. THE MOTIVE MAKES THE ACTION SPIRITUAL. It is mechanical, conventional, without relation to the spiritual sphere, otherwise.

II. LOVE MAGNIFIES THE VALUE OF THE SMALLEST GIFT. The flower to the sick person, the penny in the plate, may be worth much. The condition of the world would be intolerable without the multitude of such little deeds.

III. THE TRUE STANDARD OF WORTH IN LIFE SHOULD BE CLEARLY KEPT IN MIND. We confuse mere giving and doing with that which springs from love too much. Let us not despise little things: seeds of love which become great in their result of blessing.—J.

Vers. 1—12. Parallel passages: Matt. xxi. 33—46; Luke xx. 9—19.—*Parable of the vineyard.* I. THE LORD'S VINEYARD. A vineyard is often used in Scripture as an object of comparison. The heart is probably represented under this pleasing and beautiful image in the Song of Solomon, where it is written, "My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." God's ancient people are set forth under the same figure in the eightieth psalm, to denote his care for and kindness to them: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it." And a few verses

afterward we have the touching prayer, "Return, we beseech thee, O God of Hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou madest strong for thyself." In the fifth chapter of Isaiah we have the parable of a vineyard and its explanation, where we are expressly told that the house of Israel is God's vineyard; the men of Judah his pleasant plants; the grapes which he looked for, judgment and righteousness; the wild grapes produced, wickedness and oppression; so that instead of honesty in the dealings of the people there was the cruelty of the oppressor, and instead of the strict administration of justice on the part of the magistrates there was the cry of the oppressed. Every reader of the New Testament is familiar with our Lord's representation of himself as the true Vine, of disciples as the branches, of his Father as the Husbandman, and union with himself as the secret of fruitfulness. The parable in the passage before us is recorded, with slight variation, by St. Matthew and St. Luke. This threefold occurrence of the same parable proves its importance, shows its instructiveness, claims our attention to it, and commands our interest in it.

II. GOD'S CARE OF HIS CHURCH. 1. *The culture of the vine laborious.* The care necessary for the proper culture of a vineyard is surprising, and to those unacquainted with it almost incredible. It is so in the vineyards of the Rhine, for example, at the present day. As you pass along the "wide and winding" river, many a vine-clad hill presents itself to view. Vineyard rises above vineyard, and terrace above terrace, from the bottom to the top of the hill, in some instances to the height of a thousand feet. How beautiful they look! How pleasant to work among them and keep them! you are apt to suppose. If, however, you visit them and talk with the vine-dressers, you will find your supposition a grave mistake. The duty of the vine-dresser is no sinecure. His work is never over. It is continued throughout the year. Every season brings something for him to do. Planting, propping, pruning, plucking the useless leaves, weeding, hoeing, and gathering the vintage occupy all his time. From year in till year out he knows little or no relaxation; his care ceases not all the year round. How beautifully this illustrates God's care of and attention to his people! It was so also in ancient times. There is a fine didactic poem on husbandry by an old poet who flourished nearly two thousand years ago, and whose works are read at school and college still. He has left us a glowing and life-like description of the continuous toil and laborious industry of the Italian vine-dressers in his day. He there tells us that it was indispensable to plough the soil three or four times a year, to break the clods daily, to unload the branches, and thin the leaves. Even in winter the vine, after being bared of its leaves and fruit, has to be subjected to the pruning-knife, the ground to be dug, the lopped branches burnt, and the props brought into the house. Besides, twice in the year the luxuriant leaves, and twice the weeds and brambles, were to be removed. Further, it remained to cut the reeds and willows that grew on the river's bank, and prickly shrubs in the woods, to bind the vines withal and fence them. In addition to all this, the ripening grapes must needs be protected from hail, and rain, and rust, and accidents of the weather. No wonder, then, he adds, that the husbandman's care ran in a circle, nor ending with the closing year, extended to the coming season. So great is the attention in *general* needed by vineyards, whether in ancient or modern times; such and so great God's care for the vineyard of the Church. But particular instances are here enumerated. 2. *The planting.* He planted it. The vineyard *soil* needed to be the choicest and the best. Soil that would do very well for pasturage, or soil that might be quite suitable for tillage, would not answer for a vineyard. Nothing but soil of rich and generous mould would suit the planting of the vine. The *situation* required to be carefully selected. A good deal depended on the aspect, and it needed to be sheltered from the wintry wind, screened from the ungenial cold, and exposed as far as possible to the bright beams of a warm Southern sun, like the sunny slopes of Zion, the sides of Lebanon, or the vale of Eshcol. Hence the prophet says, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard on a very fruitful hill." It naturally followed that vineyards were the most valuable of all property, at least in land. So the Church of God is very precious in his sight. It is very costly, too, for he bought it with his blood; and hence the injunction, "to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." It is a place distinguished for fruitfulness and enriched with blessings; a place of precious privileges, of numerous ordinances, of heavenly light, where the Sun of Righteousness sheds his

brightest beams, and spiritual life is cherished; a place where the Word of truth is possessed, perused, and faithfully preached; where the gospel of his grace is proclaimed; where his Spirit is poured down; where gracious influences are at work and Divine power felt; where the Divine presence is promised and enjoyed; and where every promised blessing is sure to be bestowed and fully realized. The *plants*, moreover, are the most precious—even the best of their kind. Man, in his original state, was made but a little lower than the angels. God made man upright, and thus, when he proceeded from his hands, he was stamped with the Creator's image, possessed of uprightness, and invested with dominion. And man, even in his fallen state, possesses noble endowments and distinguished faculties. He has understanding capable of studying the works and ways of God, affections to love and prize him, a will that can be moved by motives, tender emotions, and far-reaching sympathies—high powers of head and heart. These powers, it is true, are all weakened and misdirected in consequence of sin. But oh! when they are quickened by the Spirit of God and influenced by his grace; in other words, when the sinner is united to the Saviour, when by faith he is engrafted into him and become a living branch of the living Vine, a fruitful branch of the true Vine, he is then a plant of the choicest kind, qualified for yielding spiritual fruit, and capable of showing forth the praises of the Creator. Then does he correspond and come up in some measure to his original condition as God himself describes it: "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" 3. *The fencing.* He set an hedge about it. The people of Israel were hedged in, both politically and physically. The position of Palestine contributed to this separation of its inhabitants. On the north were the slopes of Lebanon, on the south the Idumæan desert, on the west the Great Sea, on the east the Jordan with its lakes, and Peræa beyond. But God's spiritual vineyard was his Church, as existing first among the Jewish people and then in Gentile lands. The direct reference is to the Jewish Church as established under Moses, Joshua, the judges, and the theocracy; the great fence that hedged it in was the Law. But we may go back yet further; for God set an hedge about his Church in Old Testament times, from the call of Abraham, by the covenant of circumcision made with that patriarch, and by the whole written Law, moral as well as ceremonial, given to his descendants. In this way he separated the vineyard of the Church from the wide and wild common of the world. The Law was "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile. But in Christian times, and among Gentile peoples also, the Church is fenced around. There is still a hedge between the communion of saints and the world of the ungodly. Profession of the doctrines which Christ and his apostles taught, and the practice of the duties they enjoined, compose that hedge. Faith in his promises and obedience to his precepts draw the line of demarcation broad and wide between them. The exercise of wholesome discipline keeps the hedge in order. And a Church that does not or cannot exercise this salutary check on its members, saying who are and who are not worthy of its membership, is so far forth powerless for good, or like salt that has lost its savour. The vineyard of which the Prophet Isaiah (v. 5) speaks had a double fence—both a hedge and a wall—as it is written, "I will take away the hedge thereof, . . . and break down the wall thereof." We have frequently seen two hedges round a garden—the outer one of thorn, the inner one of beech. Thus it is with the vineyard of the Lord. A visible profession of Church membership is the outer hedge; an interest in Christ is the inner one—and, it must be added, the essential one. All who have embraced the mercy of God in Christ Jesus are within the enclosure of the Church in the true sense; all who have not are aliens to the commonwealth of Israel. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." These are safe within the hedge. "He that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." All such are outside the hedge. 4. *Important practical question.* Inside this hedge or outside it? This is the question—the great question. What, then, is our position individually? Out of Christ, we are without God, for "no man cometh to the Father but by him;" and without hope, for the hope of the hypocrite will perish; and without happiness, the secret and source of which is to "delight one's self in God, and he gives thee thy heart's desire;" without life, for "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;" and without heaven, for Christ is the way thither, as well as the door of

entrance. In Christ we are sheltered from the storm of coming wrath. The sunshine of the Divine favour rests on us; the fruit of the Spirit is borne by us. We can then say, "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." There is the hedge of Divine providence about the Church, as we read, "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." We are invited to walk about Zion and consider her strong fortifications, counting her towers, contemplating her bulwarks, and considering her palaces, so as to convince ourselves that those defences, unscathed by the assaults of enemies in the past, will remain as impregnable for the future.

"On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes."

5. *Gospel ordinances.* The wine-fat, or vat, was a large stone trough deposited in the ground, to receive the juice of the grape squeezed out in the winepress placed over it. The winepress thus consisted of two parts—a receiver for the grapes, and beneath that a receptacle for the expressed juice. The press above, or upper trough, in which the grapes were placed to be trodden out by human feet, amid songs and shouts of joy, was called by the Latins *torcular;* by the Greeks ληνός, the word used by St. Matthew; and by the Hebrews *gath.* Through a hole in the bottom of this the expressed juice flowed into the vat beneath, or lower trough, which the Romans called *lacus;* the Greeks ὑπολήνιον, the word used by St. Mark in the passage before us; and the Hebrews *yekev,* from a root meaning "to hollow out" or "deepen;" while both words occur together in the Prophet Joel (iii. 13), "The press (*gath*) is full, the vats (*yekavim*) overflow." The winepress and wine-vat were sometimes made out of one block, and communicated by an aperture; sometimes they were distinct stones connected by a tube. If, then, we are to follow out the allegory explaining its particular parts, we may understand by the winepress the ordinances of the gospel, namely, prayer, praise, the Word, and sacraments; though others understand thereby gospel fruits or graces, as charity, thanksgiving, and devotion flowing like wine through it. If, then, we understand by the winepress gospel ordinances, by the wine-vat we may understand the place where the grace conveyed through these ordinances is received and enjoyed. God has appointed certain means for the communication of wisdom, strength, consolation, and every needful gift and grace. These means are the winepress; and the place where these spiritual supplies are obtained and preserved is the wine-vat. Let us take as an example, and in order to illustrate our meaning, the sacrament of the Supper. The Saviour, when he made himself a sacrifice for sin, trod the winepress of God's wrath alone, while "of the people there was none with him." The sacrament of the Supper is a feast after and upon that sacrifice; the place where this feast is dispensed, and its benefits to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace partaken of, is the wine-vat. The bread is a lively emblem of Christ's body, and a striking symbol of the hidden manna; the wine is a true token of his blood, and a sweet foretaste of that wine which we shall drink new in the kingdom of our Father; the table of the Lord, round which the faithful meet and share the feast, is symbolized by the wine-vat. In any case, even if we may not attach a specific meaning to each particular detail, these details imply generally God's care of and provision for his Church. 6. *Practical remarks.* Mark, then, the connection of the press and vat; they go together. So is it with the ordinances, and the place of their administration; the ordinances, and the benefits they convey; the ordinances, and the blessings God gives us to enjoy through them. If we would glorify God, it must be in the manner he has appointed; if we would enjoy him, it must be in the use of the means he has provided; if we would enjoy not only the communion of saints, but also the communications of Divine grace, we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves with the people of God; if we would promote at once the glory of God and the growth of grace in our own hearts, we must "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," and the sanctuary to frequent it duly and devoutly. In a word, if we would be truly wise for both worlds, we shall ask wisdom of God, who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not," waiting at the posts of wisdom's

doors to hear what God the Lord will say to our souls. 7. *The tower.* This was a place of safety and strength for the watching and guarding of the vineyard, and for the protection of its fruits. The temple in the old economy was the tower, and the priests that lodged around might be regarded as acting the part of the watchmen. More usually, however, the prophets are spoken of as the watchmen. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." The faithful preachers of the gospel and pastors of the Christian Church are watchmen now, who watch as those who must give account; while to both teachers and taught, pastors and people, preachers and hearers, the words of the Lord, as addressed to the Prophet Ezekiel, while he sat by the river of Chebar, are applicable still. In that instructive passage we read, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." In consideration of all these careful arrangements, surely God might well say, as he did by the Prophet Isaiah, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

III. GOD'S EXPECTATIONS FROM THE VINEYARD OF THE CHURCH. 1. *He sends his servants to claim a portion of the fruit.* The parable shows in its immediate application the privileges of the Jews, their perversion and abuse of those privileges, and the consequent punishment. If, then, by the husbandmen we understand the ordinary ministers of the Jews' religion, as the priests and Levites; the servants sent were the extraordinary messengers, the prophets raised up on special occasions and for special purposes, and other eminent preachers of righteousness. The householder or owner claimed a portion of the produce. The rent was thus payed in part of the fruit; it was to be in kind, on the well-known *metayer* principle, long so prevalent and still practised in parts of Europe; it was to consist of grapes, not gold. The occupiers acknowledged the claim, but failed, or rather refused, to meet it, and were ruined in consequence. God expects fruit; why should he not? Who ever planted a vineyard that did not expect to eat of the fruit of it? Who, then, will venture to gainsay the justness of God's claims? He is no hard Master; he is no rack-rent Proprietor; he does not "reap where he has not sown, nor gather where he has not strawn;" he never requires impossibilities. 2. *Correspondence between the fruit of the vineyard and the owner's expectations.* The fruit of the spiritual vineyard should correspond with the expectations of the great proprietor in three respects. (1) In *quality* this correspondence should exist. He looks for grapes—good grapes off every vine which he has planted in his spiritual vineyard. There is heart-fruit, consisting of faith, hope, charity, purity, the thoughts being purified by the inspiration of the Spirit; there is the lip-fruit of prayer, praise, holy conversation, edifying discourse, and speech seasoned with salt; life-fruit follows, and is manifested in works of faith, labours of love, patience of hope, devotion of spirit, all holy living, and the necessary sequel in holy dying at the last. In a word, God looks for holiness in all his people. He looks for those blessed and beautiful fruits of which St. Paul writes to the Philippians, when, summing up the Christian graces, he says, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on [or take account of] these things." He looks for those excellences of character, conduct, and conversation which St. Peter recommends to the strangers scattered abroad, saying, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." God the Father had these fruits in view when he planted the vineyard, for he "predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son;" God the Son prepared for them when he gave up the ghost, for it was to "redeem us

from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" God the Holy Spirit provided for them when he renewed us in the spirit of our minds, making us new creatures in Christ Jesus, and so commenced our sanctification. He is waiting and willing to produce them; for "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The gospel calls us to holiness, and when embraced in sincerity and truth, produces it in increasing measure from day to day, leading us to the higher Christian life; for "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (2) But the *quantity* of the fruit borne must be directly proportionate to the grace bestowed. It must be in exact correspondence with the talents God has given us, and the time those talents have been lent us; with the mercies great and manifold which he has conferred upon us; with the privileges with which we have been favoured, and the period of their possession; in a word, with all the opportunities of whatever kind and advantages of whatever sort, which we have been permitted to enjoy. With every talent God is pleased to give us he says, "Occupy till I come." Every one of the blessings bestowed—and oh, how great the number!—lays us under an additional obligation; every mercy imposes increased responsibility. Is it health or wealth? is it influence or example? or any other means of receiving good for ourselves, or imparting it to others? Whatever it is, it adds to our accountability, and, if abused, it will be sure to augment our guilt, and in the end aggravate our condemnation. 3. We are reminded, further, that the fruit must be in *season;* for "at the season," that is, when the season for the fruit arrived, the proprietor sent his servants for the stipulated portion. "When the time of the fruit drew near," says St. Matthew; when sufficient time for growth and for reaching maturity has been allowed, the time of fruit draws nigh. After opportunities of usefulness have been enjoyed, God comes to see how we have employed them. The righteous man yieldeth the right fruit in right quantity, and at the right time. This is his characteristic, as stated in the words of Scripture: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." In the natural world, every season of the year has fruit peculiar to itself. Spring has its flowers, in addition to its buds and blossoms; summer has its plants, and tubers, and waving fields of corn; autumn has its own abundant fruitfulness in golden grain, matured fruits, and ripened grapes. So in the spiritual world and in the vineyard of the Church; in a season of prosperity God expects gratitude as well as gladness; in a season of adversity he expects patient resignation to his will; in a season of depression and consequent privation, he expects dependence on his providence; in provocation he expects meekness; in temptation, resistance by the help of God; in wintry days of darkness, contentment with the Divine allotments; in seasons of sunshine, humility; and in all seasons diligent seeking and faithful serving of God.

IV. GOD'S PUNISHMENT OF UNFAITHFULNESS. 1. *Shameful treatment of God's servants.* These wicked husbandmen went from bad to worse. They were determined that God should get no fruit from his vineyard; and accordingly they maltreated, in the most scandalous and barbarous manner, the servants sent by the proprietor to demand his due portion of the produce. Their conduct shows a gradation of wickedness—they beat, they wound, they kill. The word ἐκεφαλαίωσαν, rendered "wounded in the head," is peculiar, and for this, which appears to be its primary sense, there is no classical parallel. Where it occurs, it is generally used in the secondary sense of bringing under one head or sum: hence it has been variously rendered in accordance with this signification, some explaining it to reckon with one in a summary manner, paying with blows instead of fruit; others to deal with one summarily; and others, again, to complete and bring to a head their maltreatment; but the ordinary rendering of "wounding in the head" is confirmed by the Syriac and Vulgate, and is commonly accepted. More important for us is the historical evidence which the Scriptures of the Old Testament afford of this shameful treatment of God's servants. They were threatened with death, thrown into dungeons, actually slain, stoned, sawn asunder, as passages that readily suggest themselves to any careful reader of God's Word abundantly prove. The special honour reserved for the Son marks his superior rank, and distinguishes him from all others, whether designated servants or dignified with the name of sons of God.

He is the one Son—the well-beloved—claiming and entitled to peculiar reverence; the rightful Heir, too, of the inheritance. Thus, as we read in the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed Heir of all things." The Son took upon him "the form of a servant" while sojourning in our world. 2. *A supplementary parable.* The parable of the vineyard and the wicked husbandmen, with all its fulness of details, omitted—necessarily omitted—one or rather two points, which are supplemented by a parabolic statement from the hundred and eighteenth psalm. Whereas the son and heir is left dead outside the vineyard, as Christ suffered, "without the gate," while the lord of the vineyard himself avenges his death, and punishes the husbandmen for their diabolical conduct; it was necessary to complete the picture by his revival and return to the place of dignity and power, as the Foundation and chief Corner-stone, upbearing and binding together the two walls of the sacred edifice. And not only so; it behoved to represent him as revenging in person his wrongs on those who slew him, according to the one parable, or who rejected him according to the other; while this feature is more fully exhibited by the first and third evangelists, who tell us that "whosoever shall fall on this stone"—that is, stumble and fall over this stumbling-stone of his humiliation—"shall be broken"—sorely bruised (*συνθλασθήσεται*)—and so receive great hurt and grief: "but on whomsoever it shall fall"—in wrath, because of their final impenitence—"it shall grind him to powder;" literally, *winnow* (*λικμήσει*) him, just as the stone cut out of the mountains without hands was seen in prophetic vision to smite and shatter the great world-image, and scatter its fragments like chaff before the winds of the winter. 3. *Improvement of the subject.* The primary reference is to the Jews as a Church and people. Their own conscience made application of it to themselves; hence their indignation, but not their improvement. The transference of the vineyard was not exactly from the Jews to the Gentiles, but to the faithful who should be collected together out of both, and connected by the chief Corner-stone into one. (1) The first lesson taught us here is of a national character. The Jews had great privileges, but their misuse or abuse of those privileges subjected them at last to fearful retribution. God had shown much forbearance, sending servant after servant to call them to repentance and reformation, and last of all and greatest of all, his own Son; but in vain. They refused to return and repent, crowning their wickedness by crucifying the Son of God. At length the cup of their iniquity was full and overflowing; and, forty years after this climax of their enormities, Jerusalem was laid in ruins, the beautiful house in which their fathers worshipped reduced to ashes, and themselves scattered throughout the world. (2) We learn God's mode of dealing with Churches or nations that, like the Jews, are highly privileged, and have long enjoyed instructions and ordinances and spiritual benefits. As he continues blessing after blessing, so he sends call after call, and by his servants summons them to the improvement of those blessings. If they refuse compliance—if they neglect to use those blessings in his service and to his glory—ruin, and that without remedy, shall be, must be, the sad but sure result. The destiny of the Jewish Church was repeated to some extent in that of the Oriental Churches, and in that of the African Churches; and by all these cases the Churches of our own land and of every Christian people are solemnly warned against the misuse of mercies, and the abuse of privileges, and the just judgments of God with which apostate Churches and sinful nations are visited. (3) Individual units make up the aggregate of a nation or the membership of a Church, so in our individual capacity we add our quota to the general guilt on the one hand, or to the purity of a Church and the righteousness of a nation on the other. Therefore are we bound individually to serve God "in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life," and to intercede for the practice and prevalence of that righteousness in all others, which exalts a nation or a people, so that the mercies of God may be improved and his judgments averted. 4. *A practical and personal question.* Are those fruits which God, as we have seen, expects from us, ours? Are we duly meeting his claims upon us? Are we responding to them gratefully and faithfully? Have we, by the constraining mercies of God, and by the constraining love of Christ, and for the love of the Spirit, presented ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service"? Do we appreciate as we ought all God's care and

kindness, our privileges and means of instruction and improvement? Or, like certain vines in the land of Palestine, which, as we read in Scripture, produced poisonous berries, are we bearing fruit of similar poisonous quality? It may be that, instead of grapes, good grapes and proper fruit, we may be bearing grapes—wild grapes, not only inferior in quality, but poisonous in their nature. Our lips, instead of being instruments of righteousness, may be polluted and polluting with falsehood and deceit and evil-speaking; with corrupt communication, levity, and profanity. Our life, instead of a living epistle, seen and legible to all, may be an exhibition of bitterness and wrath and anger; of envy, pride, injustice, and uncharitableness; of sensuality and sinfulness. Our heart, which is the fountain-head and source of all, may, by remaining unrenewed and unpurified, continue the wellspring of evil thoughts, vile affections, and corrupt desires. If this be the case with any of us—which may Heaven forfend!—how great must be the disappointment of the Lord of the vineyard! how base our ingratitude! how awful the doom! how swiftly and suddenly destruction may come! 5. *Fatal error.* Delay is not deliverance. Many flatter themselves, as Agag, that the bitterness of death is past, at the very moment that vengeance is on the road and ready to overtake them. Some regard warnings as words of course, and consequently worthless. Others, like the Jews of old, treat shamefully the messengers of Divine mercy; and neglect, or despise and make light of, or speak evil of, the ministers of religion, forgetting the fact that whoso despiseth the messenger despiseth the Master that sent him. Thank God but few reach this bad eminence in their enmity to God, and the things of God, and the servants of God! We may neglect ordinances and abuse privileges, but, in doing so, we treasure up for ourselves "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" we may despise the terrors of the Lord, and turn a deaf ear to the voice of warning; we may disappoint the reasonable expectations of ministers and members of the Church; we may defraud the great Proprietor of the fruits which his grace was calculated to produce, and which he had every reason to expect; and God may not take vengeance on our evil works speedily; yet that vengeance will be aggravated by delay, and more fearful when it comes. Those guilty of such sinful neglect and abuse of privileges shall in the day of Divine vengeance be swept as with the besom of destruction, or thrown as into a furnace seven times heated, and that for ever and ever. Let us beware of the progressive nature of sin; for if we forget instruction, that forgetfulness will cause us to neglect it; that neglect, again, will lead us to despise it; that contempt for instruction will beget dislike of our spiritual teachers who impart it; and this dislike will engender hatred of the truth in general; and the end, the fearful end, will be destruction irremediable and terrible from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell."—J. J. G.

Vers. 13—17. Parallel passages: Matt. xxii. 15—22; Luke xx. 20—36.—*Question of the tribute money.* I. A SNARE LAID. This tribute money (*κῆνσος*) was the poll or capitation tax payable to the Roman Government, from the time Judæa became subject to the Roman power. Judas of Galilee headed a revolt against this tax, but perished with his followers. If our Lord allowed the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, it would have compromised him with the Jewish nationalists, who would not have been slow to charge him with contempt of the Law of Moses for the words of Deut. xvii. 15, "Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee," were explained by them as forbidding the payment of tribute to a foreign power. If he acknowledged the unlawfulness of such payment, he came into direct collision with the Roman authorities. In the one case, he offended the Judæan patriots and his own Galilean followers; in the other, he incensed the Herodian royalists who acquiesced in Roman rule. On the one side, it was treachery to national and patriotic aspirations and Messianic prospects; on the other, it was treason against the Roman Cæsar and Pilate his governor. Such was the snare laid for him; such was the trap they set in order to catch him. Thus they thought to entangle him, rather, *ensnare* (*παγιδεύσωσιν*) him, in his talk, as a fowler ensnares a bird.

II. THE SUBTLETY WITH WHICH THE SNARE IS LAID. 1. They put the question in such a categorical form as seemed to them to necessitate a simple "yea" or "nay;" thus,

"Is it lawful to give tribute, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?" The double question is to emphasize their earnestness, and to invite a prompt reply, affirmative or negative; though the first question may refer to the lawfulness of the payment, and the second to its expediency or advisability. 2. The *motive* which actuated them to interrogate our Lord so peremptorily was most sinister and insidious. The evangelists, viewing their conduct from different standpoints, characterize it differently. This difference, which we discover by comparing the parallel passages, is most instructive. Their *conduct* in propounding this ensnaring interrogatory was wickedness (πονηρίαν), according to the first evangelist; it was craftiness (πανουργίαν), according to the third; while, according to the second, it was hypocrisy (ὑπόκρισιν). Their question had a close connection with and combined all these three elements; it was conceived in wickedness, cradled in craftiness, and cloaked by hypocrisy. Thus the interrogators acted as spies, or "liers in wait" (ἐγκαθέτους), as St. Luke calls them, while they feigned themselves just men. Our Lord tore off their mask, exposing them in their true colours, and addressing them in their real character, when, according to St. Matthew, he says, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" 3. The *object* they had in view was to embroil the Saviour with the royalists, and so compass his destruction. For this purpose it is plain they desired a negative answer, as appears suggested by the words, "Thou regardest not the person of men," implying such fearlessness as would enable him to reject foreign authority as inconsistent with acknowledging God as their King. Their ulterior object, as stated by St. Luke, was "that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the power and to the authority of the governor;" in other words, to deliver him to the Roman power, rule, or magistracy (ἀρχῇ), and to the lawful authority or jurisdiction (ἐξουσίᾳ) of Pilate, the Roman procurator. 4. Necessity brings together strange companions. The Pharisees were as mean as they were unprincipled, and as untruthful as they were unprincipled and mean. They proved their want of principle by the unnatural coalition which they formed with the Herodians—the patriots so called who opposed foreign dominion with the elastic politicians who owned the Roman power; the foes with the friends of Cæsar; sticklers for the Law with the supporters of an authority deemed inimical to the Law. Their meanness was manifest in the fulsome flattery with which they addressed our Lord; while in their base untruthfulness they pretended to approach him with a quasi-case of conscience, though in reality they were carrying out the counsel for his destruction.

III. THE SAVIOUR'S REPLY. Had he replied in the affirmative, he would have forfeited his popularity; had he answered in the negative, he would have forfeited his life. The latter was the consummation wished for by the members of this unholy alliance of superstition with political expediency. To give vividness to the transaction, our Lord ordered the production of a Roman penny, or *denarius*, a small silver coin of the value of sevenpence halfpenny, or eightpence halfpenny at most. On that coin was an image, the head of the then reigning sovereign, Tiberius, while round it ran the usual superscription or inscription, consisting of the name and titles of the emperor. Our Lord, as if in surprise, asks, half in irony and half in indignation, what all this meant, and whose it was? Their unavoidable answer was, "Cæsar's;" and this very answer broke the snare, and the bird escaped out of the net of the fowler. Then said our Lord—Give back (ἀπόδοτε) to Cæsar what belongs to him; pay back to Cæsar what you acknowledge to be his. The coinage proves the king, the currency affords evidence of his property; while, on the other hand, you render to God the things that are his.

IV. IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE. This principle, so important and far-reaching, though plain enough in its general bearing, has been differently understood. Some have regarded the two parts of the answer as entirely distinct, as though belonging to different spheres, or placed on different planes, and so incapable of clashing or even coming in contact; as though he said, "Pay your taxes, and perform your religious duties, but keep the two things apart." More usually they are understood as two separate departments of human duty, coexisting and compatible; or as standing to each other in the relation of the part to the whole. According to the second of these three views, the payment of civil dues and the observance of religious duties stand side by side together, and as equally obligatory; that is, render to Cæsar, as civil ruler the obedience that belongs to him, and to God, as spiritual Sovereign, the homage of the soul stamped with the Divine image, and therefore his due; or, in a more literal

and narrow sense, according to some, pay the civil taxes to the government of Cæsar, and the *didrachma*, or temple-tribute, for the support of the sanctuary and service of God. We understand it in the larger sense of obedience to our earthly sovereign and duty to our heavenly King, as co-ordinate and coexistent, perfectly compatible but not competitive; or, according to the third view, the former may be regarded as part of the latter. This great principle, properly understood and acted on, would have prevented many an unseemly collision of Church and State, and many a sinful encroachment of one on the domain of the other. It would have prevented the papal power from trampling the crown of kings in the dust, as in the reign of John, and it would have prevented, on the other hand, the persecution of the Church by the State, as in the days of the Puritans. Our Lord intimated by his reply, that so long as the Jews were allowed to worship God according to his own appointment, and enjoyed the protection of the Roman power therein, they were under obligations to contribute to the taxes that supported that power. But these obligations to civil government were not to suspend, or set aside, or in any way interfere with the higher and holier obligations which they owed to God. Duty to God must be the regulating principle of duty to civil rulers; the latter is then part of, or rather part and parcel with, the former. Thus our Lord clearly indicated the respective provinces of civil rulers and of religious teachers—the relative positions of secular authority and spiritual power. Thus he solved the problem of two kings and two kingdoms in one realm; thus he taught obedience to civil governors in temporal things, while in spiritual their duty to God was paramount. No doubt many nice points may present themselves, and many delicate questions may arise in practically carrying out the principle stated; but we are not without light from other parts of Scripture to guide us in the application of this principle, even in cases of greatest difficulty.—J. J. G.

Vers. 18—27. Parallel passages: Matt. xxii. 23—33; Luke xx. 27—40.—*Question of the Sadducees touching the resurrection.* I. IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION. Though the question propounded in this section was proposed for a captious purpose, and in order to entangle, yet, divested of its technicalities, it is a most important one. There is no subject more closely connected with the immortal hopes of man than that to which the above section refers. The doctrine of the resurrection is implied, or directly inculcated, in several passages of the Old Testament. In the New, in which life and immortality are so clearly brought to light, we find many plain statements in regard to it. The whole subject is discussed at large, and fully elaborated in that magnificent chapter, the fifteenth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, while our Lord, in the Scripture under consideration, puts the argument pithily and pointedly in reply to a question from the Sadducees.

II. AN ASSUMPTION. In clearing away the rubbish, with which they overlaid the difficulty whereby they thought to ensnare him, the Saviour charges them with ignoring the mighty power of God, who quickeneth the dead and calleth the things which be not as though they were. He taxes them with resting their reasoning on an unwarrantable assumption, to the effect that the condition of life in heaven would be the same as here on earth, while, on the contrary, the occupants of that spirit-world are as the angels of God. Having, moreover, affirmed their ignorance of those Scriptures which they themselves acknowledged, he proceeds to the proof of the doctrine impugned.

III. IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL. By his quotation from the third chapter of Exodus, he establishes the immortality of the soul. God is the God of the living, for the relationship thus indicated is connected with the bestowal of benefits and blessings, while the dead are beyond the reach of these: but the passage quoted affirms God to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; therefore these patriarchal men, whose earthly tabernacles, long dissolved, had mouldered and mingled with kindred dust, still lived in some sense and state and place. Their souls lived in God's sight and in God's presence and to God's praise. The immortality of the soul is thus a clear enough conclusion, but the proof is not so plain with regard to the resurrection of the body; and yet this is the very point in dispute. It is a well-known fact that several of the heathen philosophers who believed in the immortality of the soul, seem never to have dreamt of the resurrection of the body. How, then, does our Lord's plain proof of the

former doctrine serve the purpose of establishing the latter? This is the difficulty of the passage. The following considerations will resolve it:—

IV. GROUND OF SADDUCEES' DENIAL OF THE RESURRECTION. The chief reason of the Sadducees denying the resurrection of the body was their disbelief in the immortality of the soul. They repudiated the last-named doctrine, and on this very ground rejected the former. They said the soul does not exist apart from, or after, the dissolution of the body. "They gainsay the duration of the soul" is the testimony of Josephus to their opinion on this point. From this they inferred that there is no likelihood of, nor need for, the body to be raised up, as, according to this erroneous opinion of theirs, there was no soul to reanimate, or reinhabit, or be reunited therewith. Our Lord meets inference with inference. Having proved, as we have seen, the immortality of the soul, he thus prepares the way for the corollary, that the body would be raised from the dust of death, and that soul and body would be then and for ever reunited. They insisted on the extinction of the soul at the death of the body, or its non-existence as distinct from that body, and so wished it to be inferred therefrom that the body would not be raised, and no reunion ever take place. The Saviour proves the distinct and undying existence of the soul, and leaves the Sadducees to infer the resurrection of the body and its reunion with that soul from which death had for a time separated it. In this way he opposed the inferential part of his argument to the inferential part of their doctrine, inasmuch as they did not, it would seem, employ expanded argument or developed reasoning. Having demolished the main pillar of their system, he left the frail fabric erected thereon to fall of itself. Our Lord's reasoning, though concise, was nevertheless conclusive.

V. CONFIRMATION. This view of the subject derives some confirmation from a custom of the ancient Egyptians. They embalmed the bodies of their dead, and so preserved them for centuries. Their object, as is with strong probability supposed, was that the mummy corpse might be prepared for the reception of the returning soul, and for reoccupancy by that former inhabitant. If such were their belief, it was doubtless a ray of light derived from revelation, but distorted as usual in such cases. While they anticipated the glorious fact of a reunion of soul and body, they added thereto the fancy that the same body, unaltered and unimproved, would be its receptacle. Revelation, however, confirms the one, but corrects the other; for these vile bodies shall be raised spiritual bodies, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body.

VI. OTHER EXPLANATIONS. Some, we are aware, understand by resurrection in this passage merely a renewal of life, restricting that life to the soul. In this way they remove to some extent the difficulty involved in the reasoning, but destroy at the same time the proper meaning of the word, as might easily be shown from other Scriptures. Paul, for example, speaks of the resurrection in the ordinary and usual sense when he asks, "How are the dead raised up? and with what *body* do they come?" Besides, it is to be observed that, in our Lord's quotation, God is not called the God of the souls of the patriarchs, but of their compound being, consisting of both soul and body. The reference to marriage in the verses preceding also points to the resurrection of the body as well as to the life of the soul. Life is thus implied in relation to both the constituent parts of man—present life for the soul, future life for the body. Others there are who, understanding the argument to relate exclusively to those who die the death of the righteous, elucidate it in this manner. The Scripture cited by our Lord, in which God declares himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, involves the Fathership of God and the sonship of believers, as appears from such Scripture statements as "I will be to him a God, and he shall be to me a son;" also, "I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters." Again, our adoption as children of God includes the redemption of the body, and consequent recovery from the power of the grave, as may be gathered from Rom. viii. 23, "We wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." Now, though this explanation, it must be admitted, is plausible, yet it appears too restricted, and not quite in harmony with our Lord's own words in John v. 28, 29, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

VII. PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS. 1. A few practical thoughts connect themselves with this subject. We learn hence the value of an accurate acquaintance with the

Scriptures of the Old as well as of the New Testament. Our Lord refuted his adversaries as he repelled Satan, by an appeal to the Law and to the testimony. He took every opportunity of putting honour on, and claiming respect for, the Divine Word. It is our safeguard against error. His quotation is from a portion of that Pentateuch which has in recent times been the object of repeated and insidious attacks. 2. We see how our Master meets his opponents on their own chosen ground, and reasons with them after their own favourite mode. They put their objections inferentially; our Lord, who always adapted his discourse, whether sermon, or parable, or argument, to his audience, adopts the selfsame method. The Sadducees believed, at least, the five books of Moses; he quotes from an early portion of those books. He denounced their error with mildness, and demonstrated it from the very Scriptures to the authority of which they themselves deferred. He took the ground from under their feet by hard arguments, not by hard words. Persuasiveness, not abusiveness, characterizes his reasoning. 3. Let us seek grace that we may appreciate as we ought the *comfort* of this doctrine. Our very dust is dear to God. The visible sky above us may pass away, but no particle of this dust shall perish. Let us realize the duty of seeking a part in the resurrection of the just. Let the doctrine have a practical effect upon our lives. With this prospect in view, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness"?

> "Those bodies that corrupted fall
> Shall incorrupted rise,
> And mortal forms shall spring to life,
> Immortal in the skies."

Having this hope within us, let us purify ourselves, and by grace keep the bodily temple undefiled.—J. J. G.

Vers. 28—34. Parallel passage: Matt. xxii. 34—40.—*Question about the greatest commandment.* I. PUERILITIES OF THE PHARISEES. The Pharisees busied themselves about the letter of the Law, but had little practical acquaintance with its true spirit. The Jews generally divided the commandments of the Law into the preceptive and prohibitory—the "Do" and the "Do not;" nor was there anything amiss in this. But the Pharisees, we are told, counted the affirmative precepts, and found them as many as the members of the body; they counted the negative, and reckoned them equal in number to the days of the year, viz. three hundred and sixty-five; they then added them together, and found that the total made up the exact number of letters in the Decalogue. They also divided the commandments into great and small—the more important and the less important, or the heavy and the light; those of greater weight being such commandments as related to the sabbath, circumcision, sacrifice, fringes, and phylacteries. They did not stop with puerilities of this sort, but descended to trifling minutiæ, which we have neither time nor wish to record. Some of their distinctions were of a more mischievous kind, such as preferring the ceremonial to the moral Law, the oral to the written Law, and the trifles of the scribes to the teachings of the prophets. They also taught that obedience to certain commandments atoned for the neglect of others; in some measure like persons in much more recent times, who

> "Compound for sins they are inclined to,
> By damning those they have no mind to."

II. THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN. Our Lord rebuked by his answer those miserable trivialities of the Pharisees, who seemed disposed to bring him into conflict with one or other of the contending parties, headed respectively by Hillel and Shammai. The subject of the question was one about which the schools of these great Jewish schoolmen differed. If he decided in favour of the one, he necessarily offended and lost in reputation as a public religious Teacher with the other; or perhaps they hoped to bring him into contradiction with an answer to the same question which he had sanctioned with his approval. Our Lord shoved aside their rabbinical quibbles, and passed by their hair-splittings and contendings about such petty trifles, to the neglect at once of the spirit and the really weightier matters of the Law. And as "whosoever shall

keep the whole Law, and stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all," our Lord, instead of singling out or specifying any particular commandment of the Law, states two comprehensive precepts which embrace the whole Law; and not only so—he not only reduces the ten commandments of the Decalogue to these two precepts, but underlying these two precepts is one single principle into which they are both capable of being resolved. He thus simplifies the statement of moral duty into a single principle, and that principle itself expressed in the one word "love;" for "love is the fulfilling of the Law."

III. THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE. It has been conjectured that our Lord, when quoting in reply the passage from Deut. vi. 4—9, one of the four Scriptures usually inscribed on the parchment slips of the *tephillin*, or phylacteries, and called *Shema*, "Hear," from beginning with this word, pointed to the lawyer's *tephillin*. This would add to the pictorial or graphic nature of the reply; but nothing could be added to the beauty of the words quoted. He cites the preface, teaching the unity of God in opposition to polytheism, and then proclaims the love of God as the source, and love to man as similar and only second thereto. But *whence* comes this love? Not by nature, for by nature we are "hateful, and hating one another;" only, therefore, by the new birth, when we partake of a new nature; for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things having passed away, and all things having become new." Once we love him who first loved us, we are in the proper position for loving our Father in heaven and our fellow-man on earth. The *manifestation* of this love to man is doing to others as we wish others to do to us, and this exercise of the so-called, and properly so-called, golden rule, is loving our fellow-man as a brother, and son of the same heavenly Father; while our love to that Father is supreme, influencing the affections of the heart, the faculties of the mind, the spiritual powers of the soul or life, and employing the whole strength of all and each of these. God is worthy of all this—worthy of our best affections, worthy of our earliest and strongest love. The practice of this principle would make this earth a paradise, restoring it to all the freshness and happiness of its first and early dawn; rather, would it make a heaven upon earth.—J. J. G.

Vers. 35—37. Parallel passages: Matt. xxii. 41—46; Luke xx. 41—44.—*The counter-question of our Lord.* I. QUESTION OF OUR LORD IN TURN. Our Lord had by this time been asked, and had triumphantly answered, the most perplexing, difficult, and delicate questions that the ingenuity of man could devise. His adversaries had been signally confuted, and covered with shame. These questions were five in all. One concerned his authority; another was political, about the tribute money; the third was doctrinal, about the resurrection; the fourth speculative, about the greatest commandment; and the fifth disciplinary, about the adulteress. By his more than masterly reply to the first, he defeated the Sanhedrim; by his reply to the second, he surprised and silenced the Pharisees and Herodians; by his answer to the third, he confuted, if he did not convince, the sceptical Sadducees; by his reply to the fourth, he satisfied the Pharisaic scribe, learned in the Law; by his answer to the fifth, he settled, if not to the satisfaction of scribes and Pharisees, at least to their shame, the question of discipline. It is now time that, having passed this ordeal, he should retaliate.

II. OBJECT OF HIS COUNTER-QUESTION. Our Lord's design was not so much to show them their ignorance, and overwhelm them with confusion, as to instruct them with respect to the true character and person of the Christ. Their low views were to be elevated, their carnal notions were to be spiritualized, their blind eyes were to be enlightened. Their idea of the person of Messiah was that he would be just a man like themselves; of his position, that he would be a powerful temporal king; and of his reign, that it would extend over a great earthly kingdom. By his question he let light in upon their dark minds in reference to all these subjects. With the Scriptures in their hands, and all their trifling about the minute things concerning the letter, they had no right spiritual apprehension of their long-desired and much-respected Messiah. His question proves to them that Messiah was not only human, but Divine; not only David's Son, but David's Lord; that before his exaltation he must suffer humiliation. They expected a triumphant Messiah, but were not prepared for his lowly condition as a sufferer; they overleaped the cross, expecting all at once and from the first the crown. Crucifixion before glorification was what they could not understand; a spiritual kingdom

of righteousness and peace and joy they would not understand, "their wish being father to their thoughts."

III. PRACTICAL USE OF THE QUESTION. "What think ye of Christ?" was his question, as recorded by St. Matthew. We repeat to ourselves and others the same question —What think we—"What think ye of Christ?" What think ye of his life—that sinless life, that surprising life, that life which believer and unbeliever alike so much admire, and even rival each other in lauding and extolling? What think ye of the events of that life—its purity and yet its suffering, its power and yet its sorrows? What think ye of his death—so wonderful in many ways, so singular in all its aspects, and so efficacious in all respects? What think ye of his resurrection? Are ye risen with him, to seek the things above? Do ye look to him as the firstfruits of a glorious harvest? and are ye seeking a part in the resurrection of the just? What think ye of his ascension? Are ye satisfied that he has ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, and having received gifts, even for rebellious men? And have ye shared in these gifts? What think ye of his intercession? Do ye feel that he is interceding for you, and are ye glad—right glad—of having an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous? By your answers to such questions ye may judge your state, and entertain, we trust, "good hope through grace."—J. J. G.

Vers. 38—40. Parallel passages: Matt. xxiii. 13—39; Luke xx. 45—47.—*Warning against the scribes and Pharisees.* He warns his disciples against (1) their ambition, (2) against their avaricious greed, and (3) against their hypocrisy. We need daily to pray for preservation from all these.—J. J. G.

Vers. 41—44. Parallel passage: Luke xxi. 1—4.—*The widow's mite.* I. THE VALUE INDICATED. A mite (λεπτόν) was something very small; our word to represent it being from *minute*, through the French *mite*. The value of the two was three-fourths of an English farthing. But it was her all, and showed her singular self-denial. Accordingly, our Lord measured the merit of her liberality not by the amount she gave, but by the self-denial which the gift involved.

II. CHRIST SEES ALL THINGS. He saw this poor widow—what she gave and why she gave. He sees all we do and all we think, for he knows what is in man. He sees us to restrain the evil that we do, overrule it, and punish it; he sees us to approve of the good we do, encourage in the present time and recompense it in the time to come.

III. TRUE STANDARD OF LIBERALITY. Christ on this occasion did not overlook the large gifts of the rich; but they could spare these out of their abundance, without stinting themselves or really pitying the poor. He fixed attention on the widow's mite, for it was her all; and so she could ill spare it, and could only be considered as giving it from sympathy with and compassion on the poor. Three things are to be taken into account in our estimate of Christian liberality: (1) the *motive* of giving—it must be the glory of God and the good of man; (2) the *manner* of giving—not by constraint, but of a ready mind, and so God loves the cheerful giver; and (3) the *measure*, which should be just in proportion as God has prospered us.—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1.—And as he went forth out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings! This would be in the evening. According to St. Luke (xxi. 37), our Lord, during the early part of this week, passed his nights upon the Mount of Olives, taking his food at Bethany with Martha and Mary, and spending his days in the temple at Jerusalem, teaching the people. It is most probable that he left the temple by the golden gate on the east, from whence the view of the temple would be particularly striking. We learn from St. Matthew (xxiv.) that our Lord had just been predicting the fall of Jerusalem. It was, therefore, natural for the disciples to call his attention at that moment to the grandeur and beauty of the building and its surroundings. The temple at Jerusalem was one of the wonders of the world. Josephus says that it wanted nothing that the eye and the mind could admire. It shone with a fiery splendour; so that when

the eye gazed upon it, it turned away as from the rays of the sun. The size of the foundation-stones was enormous. Josephus speaks of some of the stones as forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth. One of the foundation-stones, measured in recent times, proved to be nearly twenty-four feet in length, by four feet in depth. But all this magnificence had no effect upon our Lord, who only repeated the sentence of its downfall.

Ver. 2.—**There shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.** The word (ὧδε) "here" is rightly inserted; and the prophecy is justified by scientific investigation. The expression is not hyperbolic. Modern investigation shows that the present wall has been rebuilt, probably on the foundation of the older one.

Ver. 3.—**And as he sat on the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be?** St. Matthew and St. Luke only mention his disciples generally. St. Mark, going more into detail, gives the names of those who thus asked him; namely, Peter and James and John, already distinguished, and Andrew, who enjoyed the distinction of having been the first called. These men appear to have been our Lord's inner council; and they asked him (*κατ' ἰδίαν*) *privately*, or *separately*, not only from the multitude, but from the rest of the disciples. It was a dangerous thing to speak of the destruction of the temple, or even to inquire about such an event, for fear of the scribes and Pharisees. It was this accusation that led to the stoning of Stephen. It is evident from St. Matthew (xxiv. 3) that the disciples closely associated together the destruction of the temple and his final coming at the end of the world. They knew from our Lord's words that the destruction of Jerusalem was near at hand, and therefore they thought that the destruction of the world itself, and the day of judgment, were also near at hand. Hence their questions.

Vers. 5, 6.—**Take heed that no man lead you astray.** The Greek word is *πλανήσῃ*. Their first temptation would be of this kind—that many would come in Christ's name, saying, "I am he;" claiming, that is, the title which belonged to him alone. Such were Theudas (Acts v. 36) and Simon Magus (Acts viii. 10), who, according to Jerome, said, "Ego sum Sermo Dei, ego speciosus, ego Paracletus, ego omnipotens, ego omnia." Such were Menander and the Gnostics.

Ver. 7.—**Wars and rumours of wars.** "Rumours of wars" are mentioned, because they are often worse and more distressing than wars themselves; according to the saying, "Pejor est bello timor ipse belli." **Be not troubled;** be not troubled, that is, so as to let go your faith in me, through fear of the enemy, or through despair of any fruit of your apostolic labours; but persevere steadfastly to preach faith in me and in my gospel. These things **must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet.** There would be a succession of calamities, one leading on to another. But they must take courage, and prepare themselves for greater evils, not hoping for lasting peace on earth, but by patient endurance of evils here, reach onwards to a blessed and eternal rest in heaven. Our Lord, when his disciples asked him, as in one breath, about the destruction of their city, replied obscurely and ambiguously; mingling together the two events, in order that his disciples and the faithful through all times might be prepared, and never taken by surprise. Some of our Lord's predictions, however, clearly refer to the generation then living on the earth.

Ver. 10.—**And the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations.** St. Matthew (xxiv. 14) says it shall be preached "in the whole world, for a testimony unto all the nations" (*ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ, εἰς μαρτύριον*). This literally took place, as far as the inhabited world was concerned at that time, before the destruction of Jerusalem. St. Paul (Rom. x. 18) reminds us that "their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world;" and he tells the Colossians (i. 6) that the gospel was come unto them, and was bearing fruit and increasing in all the world. But even if we regard these expressions as somewhat hyperbolic, it is unquestionable that before the armies of Titus entered Jerusalem, the gospel had been published through the principal parts and provinces of the then inhabited world (*οἰκουμένῃ*). And it is certainly a wonderful fact that within fifty years after the death of Christ, Christian Churches had been planted in almost every district of the earth as then known to the Romans. But if we extend these prophetical sayings so as to reach onwards to the end of all things, we must then understand the expression, "all the nations," in its most unrestricted sense; so that the prophecy announces the universal proclamation of the gospel over the whole inhabited earth as an event which is to precede the time of the end. It is interesting to observe the difference in the amount of knowledge possessed by us of this earth and its population at the present time, as compared with the knowledge which men had of it at the time when our Lord delivered this prediction. It was not until the beginning of the

sixteenth century, nearly fifteen hundred years after Christ, that Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci laid open that other hemisphere which takes its name from Amerigo; and there are few facts more interesting to a philosophic mind than the discovery of this new continent, now so important to us in England as the chief receptacle, together with Australia, of our redundant population. But this new world, as we call it, although there are material evidences that portions of it at least were occupied in very remote times by men of high civilization, was present to the mind of our Lord when he said that "the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations." So that the prophecy expands, as the ages roll onwards and the population of this earth increases; and it still demands its fulfilment, embracing the vast multitudes now dwelling on the face of the earth to the number of about 1,450,000,000. Such a consideration may well lead us to the inference that we are now approaching sensibly nearer to the end of the world. There are no other new worlds like America or Australia now to be discovered. The whole face of the earth is now laid open to us; and there is now hardly any part of the world which has not at some time or other received the message of salvation.

Ver. 11.—**And when they lead you to judgment, and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak.** Our Lord does not mean by this that they were not to premeditate a prudent and wise answer. But he means that they were not to be too anxious about it. In St. Luke (xxi. 15) he says, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay." So here, **it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost** who shall inspire you with wisdom and courage. The words "neither do ye premeditate" (*μηδὲ μελετᾶτε*) are omitted in the Revised Version, as not having sufficient authority.

Ver. 12.—Our Lord further warns his disciples that they would have to suffer persecution even from their own relations, their brethren, and their fathers, who, forgetful of natural affection, would persecute the faithful even unto death. It is related of Woodman, a martyr in Sussex, in Queen Mary's time, that he was betrayed and taken by his father and his brother, and that he comforted himself with the thought that this very text of Scripture was verified in him. Bede says that our Lord predicted these evils, in order that his disciples, by a knowledge of them beforehand, might be the better able to bear them when they came.

Ver. 13.—**And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake** (*ὑπο πάντων*). The faith and preaching of a crucified Saviour was a new thing. Hence everywhere, the Jews, accustomed to their own Law, and the Gentiles, to their own idols, set themselves against the preachers of the gospel, and against those who were converted to it. "All men" means great numbers, perhaps the greater number. Just as, when we say, "The majority are doing anything," we say, in popular language, "Everybody does it." **But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved** (*ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος*). What is "the end" here referred to? Not, I imagine, the end of the age, but the end of the moral probation of the individual. The Greek word for "endureth" is very significant; it implies "a bearing up, and persevering *under* great trials." It is not enough once and again or a third time to have overcome, but, in order to obtain the crown, it is necessary to endure and to conquer, even to the end. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The crown of patience is perseverance.

Ver. 14.—**But when ye see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not.** In the Authorized Version, after the word "desolation," the words "spoken of by Daniel the prophet," are introduced, but without sufficient authority. They were probably interpolated from St. Matthew, where there is abundant authority for them; and thus their omission by St. Mark does not affect the argument drawn from them in favour of the genuineness of the Book of Daniel, against those, whether in earlier or in later times, who reject this book, or ascribe it to some mere recent authorship. The "abomination of desolation" is a Hebrew idiom, meaning "the abomination that maketh desolate." St. Luke (xxi. 20) does not use the expression; it would have sounded strange to his Gentile readers. He says, "When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand." This reference to the Roman armies by St. Luke has led some commentators to suppose that "the abomination of desolation" meant the Roman eagles. But this was a sign from without; whereas "the abomination of desolation" was a sign from within, connected with the ceasing of the daily sacrifice of the temple. It is alluded to by the Prophet Daniel in three places, namely, Dan. ix. 27; xi. 31; xii. 11. We must seek for its explanation in something within the temple, "standing in the holy place" (Matt. xxiv. 15)—some profanation of the temple, on account of which God's judgments would fall on Jerusalem. Now, Daniel's prophecy had already received one fulfilment (B.C. 168), when we read (1 Macc. i. 54) that they set up "the

abomination of desolation upon the altar." This was when Antiochus Epiphanes set up the statue of Jupiter on the great altar of burnt sacrifice. But that "abomination of desolation" was the forerunner of another and a worse profanation yet to come, which our Lord, no doubt, had in his mind when he called the attention of his disciples to these predictions by Daniel. There is a remarkable passage in Josephus ('Wars of the Jews,' iv. 6), in which he refers to an ancient saying then current, that "Jerusalem would be taken, and the temple be destroyed, when it had been defiled by the hands of Jews themselves." Now, this literally took place. For while the Roman armies were investing Jerusalem, the Jews within the city were in fierce conflict amongst themselves. And it would seem most probable that our Lord had in his mind, in connection with Daniel's prophecy, more especially that at ix. 27, the irruption of the army of Zealots and Assassins into the temple, filling the holy place with the dead bodies of their own fellow-citizens. The Jews had invited these marauders to defend them against the army of the Romans; and they, by their outrages against God, were the special cause of the desolation of Jerusalem. Thus, while St. Luke points to the sign from without, namely, the Roman forces surrounding the city, St. Matthew and St. Mark refer to the more terrible sign from within, the "abomination of desolation"—the abomination that would fill up the measure of their iniquities, and cause the avenging power of Rome to come down upon them and crush them. It was after these two signs—the sign from within and the sign from without—that Jerusalem was laid prostrate. Therefore our Lord proceeds to warn both Jews and Christians alike, that when they saw these signs they should flee unto the mountains—not to the mountains of Judæa, for these were already occupied by the Roman army (Josephus, lib. iii. cap. xii.), but those further off, beyond Judæa. We know from Eusebius (iii. 15) that the Christians fled to Pella, on the other side of the Jordan. The Jews, on the other hand, as they saw the Roman army approaching nearer, betook themselves to Jerusalem, as to an asylum, thinking that there they would be under the special protection of Jehovah; but there, alas, they were imprisoned and slain.

Ver. 15.—**Let him that is on the house-top** (ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος) **not go down, nor enter in, to take anything out of his house.** The roofs of the houses were flat, with frequently a little "dome" (δῶμα) in the centre. The people lived very much upon them; and the stairs were outside, so that a person wishing to enter the house must first descend by these outer stairs. The words, therefore, mean that he must flee suddenly, if he would save his life, even though he might lose his goods. He must escape, perhaps by crossing over the parapet of his own house-top, and so from house-top to house-top, until he could find a convenient point for flight into the hill country.

Ver. 16.—**And let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloke** (τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ). This was the outer garment or *pallium*. They who worked in the field were accustomed to leave their cloak and their tunic at home; so that, half-stripped, they might be more free to labour. Therefore our Lord warns them that in this impending destruction, so suddenly would it come, they must be ready to fly just as they were. It was the direction given to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee."

Ver. 17.—**But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days!** Women in this condition would be specially objects of pity, for they would be more exposed to danger. The words, "Woe to them (οὐαί)!" are an exclamation of pity, as though it was said, "Alas! for them." Josephus (vii. 8) mentions that some mothers, constrained by hunger during the siege, devoured their own infants!

Ver. 18.—**And pray ye that it be not in the winter.** According to the best authorities, "your flight" (ἡ φυγὴ ὑμῶν) is omitted, but the meaning remains very much the same. St. Matthew (xxiv. 20) adds, "neither on a sabbath." But this would be comparatively of little interest to those to whom St. Mark was writing. Our Lord thus specifies the winter, because at that season, on account of the cold and snow, flight would be attended with special difficulty and hardship, and would be almost impossible for the aged and infirm.

Ver. 19.—**For those days shall be tribulation, such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation.** These expressions are very remarkable. To begin with, the tribulation would be so unexampled and so severe that the days themselves would be called "tribulation." They would be known ever after as "the tribulation." There never had been anything like them, and there never would be again. Neither the Deluge, nor the destruction of the cities of the plain, nor the drowning of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, nor the slaughter of the Canaanites, nor the destruction of Nineveh, or of Babylon, or of other great cities and nations, would be so violent and dreadful as the overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus. All this is confirmed by Josephus, who says, speaking of this overthrow, "I do not think that any state ever suffered such things, or any nation within

the memory of man." St. Chrysostom assigns the cause of all this to the base and cruel treatment of the Son of God by the Jews. The destruction of their city and their temple, and their continued desolation afterwards, were the lessons by which the Jews were to be taught that the Christ had indeed come, and that this was the Christ whom they had crucified and slain.

Ver. 20.—**And except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he chose, he shortened the days.** St. Matthew's record (xxiv. 22) differs from that of St. Mark in the omission of the words "the Lord," and the clause "whom he chose." If the time of the siege of Jerusalem had lasted much longer, not one of the nation could have survived; all would have perished by war, or famine, or pestilence. The Romans raged against the Jews as an obstinate and rebellious nation, and would have exterminated them. But "the Lord" shortened the time of this frightful catastrophe, for the elect's sake, that is, partly for the sake of the Christians who could not escape from Jerusalem, and partly for that of the Jews, who, subdued by this awful visitation, were converted to Christ or would hereafter be converted to him. We learn from hence how great is the love of God towards his elect, and his care for them. For their sakes he spared many Jews. For their sakes he created and preserves the whole world. Yea, for their sakes, Christ the eternal Son was made man, and became obedient unto death. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." It may be added that a number of providential circumstances combined to shorten these days of terror. Titus was himself disposed to clemency, and friendly towards Josephus. Moreover, he was attached to Bernice, a Jewess, the sister of Agrippa. All these and other circumstances conspired in the providence of God to "shorten the days."

Vers. 21, 22.—**And then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ; or, Lo, there, believe it not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets.** Josephus mentions one Simon of Gerasa, who, pretending to be a deliverer of the people from the Romans, gathered around him a crowd of followers, and gained admission into Jerusalem, and harassed the Jews. In like manner, Eleazar and John, leaders of the Zealots, gained admission into the holy place, under pretence of defending the city, but really that they might plunder it. But it seems as though our Lord here looked beyond the siege of Jerusalem to the end of the world; and he warns us that as the time of his second advent approaches, deceivers will arise, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. The word "to seduce" (ἀποπλανᾶν) is more properly rendered, as in the Revised Version, to lead astray. Every age has produced its crop of such deceivers; and it may be expected that, as the time of the end draws nearer and nearer, their number will increase. Sometimes those idiosyncrasies in them which show themselves in lying wonders, are the result of self-delusion; but still oftener they are deliberate attempts made for the purpose of imposing on the unwary. Sometimes they are a combination of both. In the cases to which our Lord refers there is evidently an intention to lead astray, although it may have had its origin in self-deceit. In our day there is a sad tendency to lead men astray with regard to the great fundamental verities of Christianity. And the words of St. Jerome may well be remembered here: "If any would persuade you that Christ is to be found in the wilderness of unbelief or sceptical philosophy, or in the secret chambers of heresy, believe them not."

Ver. 23.—**But take ye heed** (ὑμεῖς δὲ βλέπετε). The "ye" is here emphatic. The disciples were around him, hanging upon his lips. But his admonition is meant for Christians everywhere, even to the end of the world.

Ver. 24.—**But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.** St. Matthew (xxiv. 29) has the word "immediately," before the words "after that tribulation." If this word "immediately" is to be understood literally, then the things spoken of subsequently must be understood in a figurative and spiritual sense. But it would seem more natural to understand "immediately" according to the reckoning of him with whom "a thousand years are as one day." Our Lord now passes away from the events connected with the overthrow of the Jewish polity, and proceeds to speak of things connected with the new dispensation. His mind is now turned to "the last time"—to the whole period between his first and his second advent. The things towards which he was now looking belonged, not to the end of the Jewish dispensation, but to the end of the present age and the present dispensation. Eighteen centuries have passed since the destruction of Jerusalem; and more years, it may be, will come and go before the end. Nevertheless, all this time, although it may seem long to us who are confined within the narrow limits of a short life, is nevertheless, when compared with the eternity of God, but as a moment. "The sun shall be darkened." The signs here enumerated are mentioned

elsewhere as the signs that would appear before the second coming of Christ. (See Joel ii. 31 and Luke xxi. 25, 26.) St. Augustine (Ep. 80, 'Ad Hesychium') says, "The light of truth shall be obscured; because in the great tribulation that shall come on the world, many will fall from the faith, who had seemed to be bright and firm, like the sun and the stars." "And the moon," that is, the Church, "shall not give her light."

Ver. 25.—**And the stars shall be falling from heaven** (ἔσονται ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πίπτοντες), **and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken.** In the great events of the creation recorded in Gen. i. the sun and the moon and the stars did not show their light until that period which is called the fourth day. So in the end of the world, the sun and the moon and the stars are represented as withdrawing their light, perhaps figuratively, but perhaps also literally, in the course of some of the unknown physical changes which shall accompany the winding up of the present dispensation. To this agree the next words, "the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken." The powers may here mean those great unseen forces of nature by which the universe is now held in equipoise. When the Creator wills it, these powers shall be shaken. (See Job xxvi. 11, "The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof;" see also Isa. xxxiv. 4, "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.") As the end of the world approaches, the elements will quiver and tremble.

Ver. 26.—**And then shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory.** St. Matthew (xxiv. 30) introduces here the words, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." Many of the Fathers, as St. Chrysostom, Jerome, Bede, and others, think that this sign will be the cross. Josephus (v. 3) says that shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, a portent like a sword, glittering as a star, appeared in the heavens. But surely the sign of the Son of man at the end of the world will be the Son of man himself coming in clouds. The clouds, covering the troubled heaven and now illuminated by the brightness of his coming, will constitute "the sublime drapery of his presence" (Dr. Morison).

Ver. 27.—**And then shall he send forth the angels.** This represents the great harvest at the end of the world, when the angel-reapers shall be sent forth to separate the wicked from the just. The elect will be gathered **from the four winds** (ἐκ τῶν τεσσάρων ἀνέμων); literally, *out of the four winds*—the winds representing figuratively every corner of the world; or, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. At its extremities, in the horizon, there appears to be the end alike of earth and of heaven, as though earth and heaven joined, and the heaven terminated by melting into the earth and becoming one with it. The expression simply means, "from horizon to horizon," or from every part of the earth.

Vers. 28, 29.—**Now from the fig tree learn her parable;** that is, her own particular teaching. Our Lord makes frequent mention and use of the fig tree, as we have seen already. It is probable that a fig tree may have been near to them. **When her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh.** The branch (κλάδος) would be the young shoot, now become tender under the quickening influences of the spring; and this was an evident sign that the summer was at hand. The Asiatic fig tree requires a considerable amount of warmth to enable it to put forth leaves and fruit. Its rich flavour requires a summer heat to mature it. Aristotle says that the fig is the choice food of bees, from which they make their richest honey. Then the fig tree does not flower after the ordinary manner; but produces flower and fruit at once from the tree, and rapidly matures the fruit. The lesson, therefore, from the fig tree is this—the speed with which she ripens her fruit when she feels the warmth of summer. In like manner, as soon as the disciples perceived the signs of Christ's coming, they were to learn that he was close at hand, as certainly as the ripening fruit of the fig tree showed that summer was at hand.

Ver. 30.—**This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished.** This is one of those prophecies which admit of a growing fulfilment. If the word "generation" (γενεὰ) be understood (as it may undoubtedly be understood) to mean the sum total of those living at any time on the earth, the prediction would hold true as far as the destruction of Jerusalem was concerned. The destruction of Jerusalem took place within the limits of the generation living in our Lord's time; and there might be some of those whom he was then addressing who would live to see the event. His prediction amounted, in fact, to this, that the destruction of Jerusalem would take place within forty years of the time when he was speaking. But it *may* have a wider meaning. It may mean the Jewish people. Their city would be destroyed—their power overthrown. They would be "peeled and scattered." But they would still remain a distinct and separate nation to the end of the world. And there

are other prophecies which show that with their national conversion to Christianity will be associated all that is most glorious in the future Church of God.

Ver. 31.—**Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.** Here is a distinct prediction that the present structure of the universe will pass away; that is, that it will be changed, that it will perish, as far as its present state and condition are concerned; but only that it may be refashioned in a more beautiful form. "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13). With this declaration of our blessed Lord all the discoveries of science coincide. Astronomy and geology alike concur in the conclusion that the whole system of the universe is moving onwards to its change. Our blessed Lord did but affirm that which is demonstrated by science. *But my words shall not pass away*; not merely the words which with his full self-consciousness he had just uttered respecting Jerusalem, but all his other words—all the revelation of God, all the words of him who is the Truth.

Ver. 32.—**But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.** He who from all eternity has decreed the time when this day is to come, is pleased to hide it in the hidden depths of his own counsels. But the eternal Son, and the Holy Spirit, both alike one with the Father, are of his counsels. They are not excluded from this knowledge; they, equally with the Father, know the day and the hour of the end, since they are of the same substance, power, and majesty. Why, then, does St. Mark here add, "neither the Son"? The answer is surely to be found in the great truth of the hypostatic union. The eternal Son, as God, by his omniscience, and as man, by knowledge imparted to him, knows perfectly the day and the hour of the future judgment. But Christ as man, and as the Messenger from God to men, did not so know it as to be able to reveal it to men. The ambassador, if he is asked concerning the secret counsels of his sovereign, may truly answer that he knows them not so as to communicate them to others. For as an ambassador he only communicates those things which are committed to him by his sovereign to deliver, and not those things which he is bidden to keep secret.

Vers. 33—37.—These exhortations, which gather up in a succinct form the practical bearing of the parallel passages and parables in St. Matthew, must not be understood as implying that our Lord's coming in judgment would be during the lifetime of his disciples. The preceding words would teach them plainly enough that the actual time of this coming was hidden from them. But the intention was that, while by the certainty of the event their faith and hope would be quickened, by the uncertainty of the time they might be left in a continual state of watchfulness and prayer. According to the Jewish reckoning, there were only three watches—namely, the first watch, from sunset to 10 p.m.; the second watch, from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; and the third watch, from 2 a.m. to sunrise. But after the establishment of the Roman power in Judæa, these watches were divided into four; and were either described as the first, second, third, and fourth respectively; or, as here, by the terms even, beginning at six and ending at nine; midnight, ending at twelve; cockcrowing, ending at three; and morning, ending at six.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The downfall of the temple.* Our Lord's ministry in the temple was now over. Within those precincts he had taught the teachable, he had rebuked the selfish and profane, he had received the homage of the children, he had healed the afflicted, and he had denounced and warned the unfaithful and the hypocritical. How strange the contrast between the early days, when Jesus had taken his place in the midst of the rabbis, "both hearing them, and asking them questions," and these later days, when the same edifice witnessed his keen and truceless conflicts with the leaders of the nation, whose errors he exposed and whose vengeance he incurred! It was as Jesus left the gorgeous and consecrated building that his disciples, with national pride and affection, pointed out to his eyes the magnificence of the temple, the stupendous stones of which it was composed, and the costly gifts with which it was adorned. Upon this suggestion, Jesus uttered the prediction, which he could not have uttered without emotions of disappointment and distress, "Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down."

I. NOTHING EARTHLY AND HUMAN, HOWEVER STATELY AND SACRED, IS IMPERISHABLE.

It was, no doubt, a splendid spectacle to which his disciples directed the gaze of Jesus. "They stopped to cast upon it one last lingering gaze, and one of them was eager to call his attention to its goodly stones and splendid offerings—those nine gates overlaid with gold and silver, and the one of solid Corinthian brass yet more precious; those graceful and towering porches; those bevelled blocks of marble, forty cubits long and ten cubits high, testifying to the toil and munificence of so many generations; those double cloisters and stately pillars; that lavish adornment of sculpture and arabesque; those alternate blocks of red and white marble, recalling the crest and hollow of the sea-waves; those vast clusters of golden grapes, each cluster as large as a man, which twined their splendid luxuriance over the golden doors. They would have him gaze with them on the rising terraces of courts—the court of the Gentiles, with its monolithic columns and rich mosaic; above this, the flight of fourteen steps which led to the court of the women; then the flight of fifteen steps which led up to the court of the priests; then, once more, the twelve steps which led to the final platform, crowned by the actual holy, and holy of holies, which the rabbis fondly compared for its shape to a couchant lion, and which, with its marble whiteness and gilded roofs, looked like a glorious mountain whose snowy summit was gilded by the sun" (Farrar). Majestic, however, as was the edifice, sacred as were its purposes, ennobling as were its associations, the temple at Jerusalem was not indestructible. All things finding their foundation upon this changing earth, all things reared and fashioned by human hands, are transitory and perishing. Nothing continueth in one stay. "The solemn temples," like "the great globe itself," are destined to decay and destruction. The material perishes, and that which is spiritual alone abides.

II. AN UNFAITHFUL NATION'S GLORY IS, IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, MADE THE SYMBOL OF ITS SHAME. There was nothing which the Jews so valued and reverenced as their temple and all the paraphernalia of the temple-worship. The national life seemed to flow from that sacred spot as from a beating heart. Not only was it, in its situation, its structure, its services, priesthoods, and sacrifices, itself most majestic and imposing; but to the Hebrew mind it was the expression of the peculiar interest and favour of the Supreme. How could the Israelite think, without a shudder of horror and dismay, of the time when the noble building should be laid in the dust; when the chants should be silenced, the altars be overturned, the priests be slain, and the services and offerings be no more? Yet this was the doom which the last and greatest Prophet now foretold—a doom which they might have averted by timely repentance and by cordial faith, but which their rejection of the Christ of God made certain and irrevocable. Thus was Israel smitten in the most vulnerable, the most sensitive point; thus was the rule of the righteous Lord awfully and sublimely vindicated; thus was a lesson of Divine government and human subjection thereto published for the benefit of all generations to come.

III. ALL THAT IS MATERIAL IN RELIGION IS DESTINED TO VANISH AND DISAPPEAR. The temple at Jerusalem was the temple of the Lord; yet it served a temporary purpose, and when this purpose was accomplished it was superseded by the temple of the Lord's Body, and by the imperishable temple constituted by consecrated spiritual natures, and inhabited by the Holy Spirit of God. Human nature is such that men are prone to lay stress upon the outward, the visible, the tangible, the material. Even the truly religious are in danger of regarding the vestment of religion rather than the form it clothes, of hallowing places, observances, offices, and institutions. But Christ's whole teaching is a protest against this natural error and folly. The temple of Jerusalem disappeared; but its disappearance, so far from ruining the prospects and crippling the power of religion, was, in reality, the occasion of placing religion upon a sounder basis, and giving to religion a world-wide and an everlasting sway. Let not men cling too closely to the form; it is the spirit which quickeneth; it is the spirit which endures.

IV. SPIRITUAL TEMPLES ALONE ENDURE FOR EVER. Even the destruction of Jerusalem and its sacred buildings did not involve a universal ruin. What was good in Judaism, what was vital and hopeful in Israel, still survived. There were truths which outlasted the forms in which they had been embodied. There were pure and faithful souls which outlived the institutions amidst which and by means of which they had been called to virtue, to piety, to God. A new Israel arose, as it were, out of

the ashes of the old. A temple statelier and sublimer, based upon a more enduring foundation, and rising to loftier spiritual heights, sprang into glorious being, as the armies of Titus levelled the glory of Moriah with the ground. The living stones of which this heaven-born fabric is composed can never crumble, and the services of this sanctuary shall never cease. Time and space are spurned; earthly forces are powerless; this temple groweth "an holy temple unto the Lord." It is imperishable, because it is spiritual; it is eternal, because it is Divine.

Vers. 3—13.—*The witness of the persecuted.* It was natural enough that the disciples, when the Lord foretold the destruction of the temple, should wish to know *when* an event so stupendous and awful should occur. On their way to Bethany at eventide, the little party, composed of Jesus and his four most intimate friends, paused upon the crown of Olivet, and looked back upon the glorious but guilty city, and upon that edifice which was its proudest ornament and boast. The anxious, awed disciples took this opportunity of asking at what time the disaster foretold by the Lord should take place, and by what signs they might be led to expect its approach. Jesus did not state the exact date of the impending catastrophe, but he did mention certain signs by which his disciples might be forewarned; and he took occasion to forearm them against the troubles which were at hand. His words may not have gratified their curiosity, but they must have established their confidence in their Master, and they must have prepared them for the tribulation and the trial now so near. The great lesson is that Jesus would have his people prepared, especially in times and amid circumstances of affliction and probation, to bear a firm and faithful witness to himself. Our Lord, in this language, enjoins upon his disciples—

I. FIDELITY AMID TEMPTATION AND APOSTASY. Days of trial were at hand; impostors should appear, professing that the Messiah had only now arrived; and by such deceits and pretences many should be led astray from their allegiance to Jesus. Then should the faithfulness of the disciples be tested. It is always so. Rivals come forward at all periods in history, asserting claims which they cannot substantiate, but by which they impose upon the excitable and unstable. Teachers, leaders, systems, philosophies, are ever seeking to displace the Divine Christ from the throne of the human heart, of human society. Let every Christian, when exposed to such assaults, when staggered by the success with which these are too often directed against the professed followers of Jesus, be upon his guard, and listen to the voice of the rightful and authoritative Lord sounding across the ages, "Let no man lead *you* astray!"

II. PEACE OF MIND AMID WARS AND CALAMITIES. The troubles and conflicts which befell the nations during the period which elapsed between the crucifixion of Christ and the fall of Jerusalem, are well known from the records of history. It could have been no easy thing for the Christians to have preserved a quiet mind amidst such constant alarms; nor can we suppose that our Lord intended to forbid or blame the natural and proper sympathy and solicitude which such circumstances must have induced. But he warned them that these events must precede the end, and must not be allowed to fill the mind with dismay, to weaken faith in Divine providence, or to deter from the fulfilment of an appointed ministry. In every age there occur events which, taken and considered alone, might appal the stoutest, bravest heart. But it is for the follower of Christ to bear in mind that light and darkness will contend until the victory of the Redeemer is complete, that the Lord reigneth, and that the convulsions of the nations are the birth-throes of the kingdom of the Christ. It is he who admonishes us, "Be not troubled!"

III. STEADFASTNESS AMID THE HOSTILITY OF FOES. The first followers of Christ were forewarned that they should incur the enmity of authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical. Before councils and in synagogues, at the bar of governors and in the presence of kings, they should be arraigned upon charges true or false, but always with a temper of enmity and with purposes of malice. How were they to demean themselves in circumstances of peril? They were to remember that they were but treated as their Master had been treated before them, that they were honoured by being summoned to act as his *witnesses*, that they were the spokesmen, so to speak, of the very Spirit of God. Amidst trials so severe, they were directed to take heed how they comported themselves—never to yield to fear, to dismiss all anxiety, and to trust

to a heavenly inspiration for their defence. And there is no age in which servants of Christ are not exposed to some of the attacks of the foe, and in which there is not need for watchfulness, fortitude, and courage. Let the persecuted remember that the eye of the Divine Lord is upon them; and let them bear themselves as those who would honour their Leader and maintain his cause—quit them like men, and be strong.

IV. ENDURANCE AMID THE TREACHERY AND DESERTION OF FRIENDS. The great Prophet foretold that discords should reveal themselves among families and social communities; that one should rise up against another. In this way was fulfilled his saying, "I am not come to send peace, but a sword." To most hearts, treason within the camp is more painful and more trying than hostility without. Yet even against this our Lord would have us proof. It is a trial to which most faithful and consistent servants of the Lord Jesus are at some time exposed; it is a trial which shakes the faith and damps the zeal of not a few. Christ calls his people, when so tried, to exercise the grace of perseverance. Whoever forsake Jesus, let their desertion only drive us closer to him we love!

V. NOTWITHSTANDING OPPOSITION, THE GOSPEL MUST BE PREACHED. It is not enough to be steadfast ourselves; we have to think of and to care for others. The glad tidings the followers of Jesus have themselves freely received, it is for them freely to communicate to their neighbours. How devotedly and valiantly the first disciples fulfilled this trust we well know. Not only the twelve, but even more notably others who were raised up in the first age, preached the gospel to all nations whom they were able by any toil and hardship to reach. The light streamed upon many a dark, benighted land, and brought hope and peace, joy and life, to many a wretched heart. The labour of the apostles and their companions was not in vain in the Lord. Far from being deterred by opposition, this seemed to act as a stimulus to new exertions and to new daring. Nor is this function of the Church peculiar to the first age. So long as there are nations unvisited by the news of salvation, so long is there a summons to engage in missionary enterprise. If this can only be done in certain cases at the risk of safety, liberty, and life, so much the more do present circumstances correspond with the predictions of our Lord. "The more danger, the more honour." There is a crown to be gained by following Christ and his apostles in the perils of the holy war.

VI. PATIENCE UNTO SALVATION. It is well known that, whilst multitudes of Jews perished in the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Christians escaped. Faithful to the instructions of their Lord, they were delivered from the ruin and the death which were the fate of their fellow-countrymen. Enduring in constancy and obedience to the end, they were saved. And their exemption from disaster and death was a symbol of the salvation of all those who retain their faith and allegiance amidst the temptations and the trials of this earthly life. Endure! endure unto the end! and the unfailing promise of your Divine Lord shall be fulfilled in your experience. You shall be *saved!*

Vers. 14—23.—*Warnings.* Very clearly did our Lord foresee, and very plainly did he foretell, the consequences which the Jews were bringing upon themselves by their rejection of God's Messiah. The language here recorded is in itself sufficient to convince a candid mind of the justice of the claims of the Lord Jesus to be the Prophet and the Son of the Most High. He sets us an example here of the propriety of uttering truthful warnings, even though they may be painful to the speaker and unwelcome to the hearer.

I. AFFLICTIONS ARE FORETOLD. The severity and variety of these afflictions render this prediction one of the most awful to be met with in the whole compass of Scripture. 1. *National disaster.* It was upon the whole nation, and especially upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the upper and ruling classes, that the retribution fell. 2. *Temple desecration.* This is probably what is designated "the abomination of desolation." The fanatical pollution of the temple by the Zealots was doubtless one of the most distressing accompaniments of the awful siege. 3. *Religious imposture.* In times of general excitement, enthusiastic pretenders are sure to make their appearance. It was so during the uttermost calamity of Israel. And there is no age when the warnings of vers. 21, 22, are not timely and appropriate. 4. *Individual sufferings.* Several

circumstances here predicted, especially the distress in which miserable mothers should be involved (ver. 17), serve to deepen and darken the tone of this picture of calamity.

II. COUNSELS ARE IMPARTED. Christ was not a mere Prophet of evil. He exhibited the approaching dangers, but he provided for the safety and deliverance of those who, amidst general unfaithfulness, should be faithful to him. 1. He directed flight from the scene of distress. As Noah had been sent into the ark, as Lot had been hurried out of Sodom, so the primitive Christians were directed, when Jerusalem should be besieged, to forsake the guilty city and to take refuge in the mountains. There are times when flight is prudence, when life may be preserved for future service. 2. He advised disregard of impostors. To hold to Christ is a sufficient motive for rejecting antichrist. It is condemnation enough of any pretender that he professes to be what we know the Son of God alone can be. 3. He counselled general preparation and watchfulness. "Take ye heed!" Christians are to use their own powers of observation, to exercise vigilance, to meet all circumstances with preparation and discretion. No piety, no attachment to the Saviour, can absolve us from the duty of using our own faculties, of being upon the alert. "Watch and pray!" These are admonitions which are never obsolete; for the need of them is never, whilst we are upon earth, left behind.

Vers. 24—32.—*The second coming.* It is very difficult exactly to discriminate between some words of Christ which refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, and others which refer to our Lord's coming to judge all mankind. There seems to be a designed blending of the references to these events. We are thus taught to remember that we are called to be as men that wait for their Lord.

I. THE CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S COMING. If his words are to be accepted, this great event of the future is not to be denied or questioned. In the fulfilment of the special prediction regarding the downfall of Jerusalem in the lifetime of the generation then living, we have the pledge of the ultimate accomplishment of the larger prophecy. At his trial Jesus repeated the assurance; and his inspired apostles have foretold that he shall come again the "second time without sin unto salvation."

II. THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE TIME OF CHRIST'S COMING. The words in ver. 32 are very distinct. The date of our Lord's return is known only to the Father. If neither the angels nor the Son himself could communicate this knowledge, how ridiculous and presumptuous is the conduct of those who, treating the Scriptures as a riddle, profess to have discovered the secret, and put forth their own fancies and follies as the declarations of the oracles of God! It is wisely hidden from us, and we show our wisdom by contented acquiescence in ignorance.

III. THE SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING. Changes on earth and in heaven are indications of the approaching day. As the leaves of the fig tree tell that summer is nigh, so events will occur which to the understanding mind will herald the Lord's return. Yet even these events do not tell us *when* our Saviour shall appear; but, since they remind us that he is at hand, they answer the purpose, for they put us upon our guard, and admonish us to be prepared.

IV. THE PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING. 1. Heedfulness and observation. 2. Watchfulness. 3. Prayer.

Vers. 33—37.—"*Watch!*" There can be no doubt as to the impression made by these and similar instructions and admonitions, uttered by the Lord Jesus towards the close of his ministry. It was understood by all his disciples that the Master, in leaving the world, retained his hold upon the world's heart and conscience. It was currently believed in the early Church, as it has been believed ever since by all Christians, that the Lord will come again, and will take account of his servants, and especially will inquire into the way in which they have acted as his representatives and ministers among men. Hence the stress which has always been laid upon the duty to *watch*. The apostles not only obeyed, they repeated the commandment of their Lord. Peter admonished his readers, "Be ye therefore sober, and *watch* unto prayer;" John said, "Blessed is he that *watcheth*;" and Paul exhorted thus, "*Watch* ye, stand fast in your faith, be strong!" The very names which the early Christians gave to themselves and their children may be taken as an indication of the prevailing tone of feeling.

Gregory among the Greeks, and Vigilantius among the Latins, both signify simply "The Watcher."

I. WATCH! FOR THIS IS THE CHARGE OF CHRIST IN THE PAST. 1. We are to consider *from whom* this charge proceeds. It is the word of the All-wise, and of One of unique authority. Coming from Christ, this is not counsel, it is command. The general has the right to station a guard, a sentry, and to expect vigilance and fidelity. 2. The *occasion* of the charge gives it a peculiar power and sacredness. It was when the Lord Jesus was leaving his house—to use the figurative language of the text—to sojourn in another country. "While I was with them," were his words in prayer, "I kept them in Thy Name. . . . Now come I to Thee." How can we do otherwise than attach an especial force of obligation to what our Master said when he was about to leave this world, for the salvation of whose inhabitants he had lived, and was about to die? 3. Look into the *charge itself*. He gives to each one his *work*. All his people are his servants; all have a task to accomplish, a service to render, an office to fill. And every one has his own work, for which he is individually qualified, and which is committed to him and to no other. It is a practical, an elevating view of the Christian life, this which is here unfolded to us. All whom Jesus saves and redeems, he commissions and consecrates. And so long as we live here we have a trust to fulfil, a work to do. He invests each one with *authority*. There must be in every community a source of power, a ruling mind; the father in a family, the magistrate or the king in a state. In the Church of the Lord Jesus, he himself is the Head, the Lawgiver, the Fountain of honour, the Judge. Yet he gives authority; not making an order of men lords over his heritage, but authorizing every servant to fulfil his own special duties. The bishop rules, the teacher teaches, the evangelist preaches the gospel, nay, every member of every congregation fulfils his duties, at the bidding and by the authority of the Lord. This conviction should give dignity and devotedness to our daily toil. We are where the Lord has placed us; we are doing what he commands. And he requires each one to *watch*. Working and watching go together; for Christians are like the Jews in the time of Nehemiah, who built the walls of Jerusalem, whilst they were armed and on their guard against the foe. Our Master has left us in the midst of dangers, not to depress our courage, but to quicken our vigilance. This duty devolves especially upon the porter, the janitor. The house contains precious treasures, and it must not be allowed to every stranger to enter, lest the Master's property should be stolen, and the careless keepers dispossessed, and the house occupied by foes. All must watch, that at the Lord's return it may appear that his charge has been kept, and his possessions have been faithfully guarded.

II. WATCH! FOR THERE IS A PROSPECT OF CHRIST'S REVELATION IN THE FUTURE. Whilst we look back to the Lord's departure, and his solemn injunctions and his sacred trust, we look forward to his return, according to his promise. 1. This is an *assured* fact. Our Lord's second coming has been declared by him under many figures, each having its own shade of spiritual meaning and practical profit. He is a Householder, who will come to take account of his servants; a Proprietor, who will come to learn how his agents have traded and what they have gained; a King, who will come to make inquiry into the conduct of his citizens and great officers of state; a Judge, who will come to summon the people before his tribunal. 2. At the same time, the period of the Lord's return is *hidden* from us, and we are informed that to the unprepared it will be sudden and unexpected. Men have been presumptuous enough to foretell, with foolish confidence, what neither the angels nor the very Son of God would communicate. And again and again, in the course of history, there have been outbreaks of millennial fanaticism. But it is easy to see why the close of the age should be reserved as a secret in the Father's mind. Had the Church been told that the advent was near, Christians would have been unfitted for the sober discharge of the duties of life; had the Church been assured that it was remote, such an assurance would have prompted sloth and negligence. 3. Yet we may all live under a sense of the nearness of the Lord's return. The personal interest to us of that return lies in the glory of Christ's kingdom, and in the acknowledgment of our own faithfulness. This life we know is short, and the day of our account is not far off. And Christ would have us live as though he had but gone from us for a season, and were about again to come to us.

"And well I know
That unto him who works, and feels he works,
This same grand year is ever at the doors."

III. WATCH! FOR THIS IS THE PLAIN DUTY OF THE PRESENT. We have spoken of the past and of the future; of the charge given by our Lord whilst yet on earth, and of the prospect of our Lord's return from heaven. But both these aspects of our religion bear upon the life and duty of to-day.

"Trust no future, howe'er pleasant;
Let the dead past bury its dead:
Think, act, in the living present—
Heart within, and God o'erhead!"

1. *Work!* "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Now, whilst strength of body and mind are continued, labour for the Lord who lived and died for you. Now, whilst you have control of your property, use it as stewards for God. Now, whilst you have influence over your domestic and social circle, use that influence for Christ. Ministers of the gospel, parents and teachers of youth, officers of congregations, followers of Jesus in every position of life,—be it yours to work for the Lord you love and honour! To-day is yours; to-morrow may be too late. 2. *Pray!* This you will do, if you realize your dependence for spiritual impulse and power upon the great Source of spiritual grace and blessing. So far from there being any inconsistency between work and prayer, the two blend in perfect harmony. Prayer without work is mockery, and work without prayer is mechanical and powerless. 3. *Watch!* That is, keep guard over yourself and your trust; cherish an attitude of expectation and a feeling of responsibility. Oh for grace to live "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye"! "Ye know not when the time is." Watch! "lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping!"

"Watch, for the night is long;
Watch, for the foe is strong;
Watch, for the treasure's dear;
Watch, for the Lord is near!"

"Happy is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Temple admiration.* In the case of the Jews a natural and venial fault, if not carried to excess. Esteemed the type and pattern of architectural excellence, and one of the wonders of the world. Herod's rebuilding was on a scale of magnificence unknown to their ancestors. The essential features of the temple of Solomon were restored, but these were "surrounded by an inner enclosure of great strength and magnificence, measuring, as nearly as can be made out, one hundred and eighty cubits by two hundred and forty, and adorned by porches and ten gateways of great magnificence; and beyond this, again, was an outer enclosure, measuring externally four hundred cubits each way, which was adorned with porticoes of greater splendour than any we know of attached to any temple of the ancient world; all showing how strongly Roman influence was at work in enveloping with heathen magnificence the simple templar arrangements of a Shemitic people" (Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible'). Josephus, in his 'Antiquities,' xv. 11, 3, speaks of stones "each in length twenty-five cubits, in height eight, in breadth about twelve;" and in the 'Wars,' v. 5, 6, of "some of the stones as forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth." Many of these were of sculptured marble. The reply of Jesus may be read either affirmatively or interrogatively, or with a mixture of both assertion and question. The apodosis is, "*There shall not be left here stone upon stone,*" etc. Thus their lingering gaze is quietly but grandly rebuked, and their thoughts directed with solemn, practical earnestness to the Divine future in which all that pomp of masonry and decoration was to have no place.

I. THE NATURAL MIND IS MOST IMPRESSED BY WHAT IS GREAT AND BEAUTIFUL IN OUTWARD APPEARANCE. The simple Galilean peasants were carried away with enthusiastic admiration of the princely buildings, so unparalleled in their experience. To such an extent was this the case that they were in danger of being ensnared. 1. *Sensuous admiration is easily confounded with spiritual attachment.* The mind, in order to correct this error, must dwell on the spiritual truths of which external objects are but the symbols, and realize that, whilst the latter shall pass away, the former must endure for ever. 2. *The world, in its sensuous totality, is similarly pregnant with temptation to the soul that has not learnt to look through the visible into the invisible and eternal.*

II. THAT WHICH FAILS OF ITS DIVINE IDEA, OR OPPOSES THE DIVINE PURPOSE, SHALL BE DESTROYED. The splendid building upon which they were gazing had ceased to minister to the higher spiritual life of the people, and had, through its officers and representatives, rejected the Son of God. It had thereby sealed the warrant of its own extinction: not one stone should stand upon another. So is it with the individual, institution, or nation which fails to realize its chief end. 1. *This is penal.* There was no process of natural decay, no growing beautiful with age—the sensuous slowly merging into the spiritual; no succession of normal changes ensuring expansion, adaptation, and continuity; but sudden, awful destruction, accompanied by unheard-of misery. God must witness to his righteousness even in judgment. The soul that sins shall die. 2. *It is in order to give place to a worthier realization of the Divine will.* The "house not made with hands" was nearer when this external sanctuary, which had been defiled, was removed. "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John iv. 21—24). Not until the temple had been destroyed would the temple's Lord make advent to the world. Judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Pet. iv. 17). "But on all these points the first and great question is not what is to be done, but who is to do it. Is the reform of the Church to be consigned entirely to politicians and economists, *who only look at the goodly stones and gifts of the temple*, some with an anxious, others with a greedy eye, and care nothing about the service of the sanctuary nor the edification of the worshippers? Or will any part of the work be put into the hands of sincere and zealous and enlightened lovers of the Church? In the latter case we may securely hope for the best. In the other, it is to be feared that, if beneficial changes ever take place, they will have been purchased by great losses and a disastrous experience" (Thirlwall, 'Letters,' vol. i. p. 107).—M.

Vers. 3—5 (and the rest of the chapter generally).—*The signs of the coming of the Son of man.* I. THERE IS A CURIOSITY CONCERNING THE FUTURE WHICH IS NATURAL AND LEGITIMATE. The disciples were not rebuked when they came with their inquiry. It was not so when Peter asked, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John xxi. 21). Some inquiries concerning the future are therefore lawful, others not. How are we to distinguish between them? We may ask *concerning things the knowledge of which is necessary to the rational direction of spiritual aims and efforts.* God has chosen to make known *the general scheme of redemption in its evolution in the world's history.* The prophecies of Scripture ought, therefore, to be studied in the light of contemporary events. The teaching of Christ on this occasion was manifestly the germ of the Apocalypse.

II. THIS CURIOSITY IS GRATIFIED BY OUR SAVIOUR FOR MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ENDS. (Vers. 5, 7, 9, 13, 23, 34—37.) The great discipline of the disciples was to take place after their Master's death, and before the general inauguration of his kingdom. The three general directions of Christ are: (1) *Take heed unto yourselves;* (2) *beware;* (3) *watch.* "It does not behove us to know time and hour, but to observe the signs antecedent to the judgment of God" (Starke). The Holy Spirit is promised, amid all trials and difficulties, to them who truly believe. The gospel itself was to receive universal proclamation, notwithstanding the perils and evils that were to take place. So that the disciples were assured, whatever might occur in the external life of the world, of ultimate glorious realization of all the spiritual ends of God's kingdom.

III. MANY TEMPORARY EVILS WERE TO FORESHADOW, AND TO PREPARE FOR, A PERMANENT DIVINE GOOD. 1. *The catalogue of woes is long, detailed, and specific:* spiritual

delusions; wars, earthquakes, and famines; persecutions; pollution and destruction of the temple; political and cosmical revolutions. 2. *These are all to pass*, in their process tempered and modified by Divine mercy and guidance. 3. And *they were to result in the advent of the Divine kingdom.* The gospel was to be proclaimed and the universal communion of saints to be realized. The political and natural troubles were to be justified by their being made instrumental of moral and spiritual benefits. So in the general experience of Christians "all things work together for good."—M.

Vers. 30, 31.—*The fulfilments of the kingdom of God an evidence of the truth of Christianity.* I. THE WHOLE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND NATURAL CONSTITUTION OF THINGS WAS INFLUENCED BY, AND MADE SUBSERVIENT TO, ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. Compare the history of the world from the death of Christ to A.D. 70. A period of destruction, calamity, and revolution. Judaism deposed from its spiritual leadership, robbed of its prestige, discredited, stunted, and stultified by the very circumstance which awakened and intensified the spirit of Christianity, and (in the Roman empire) led to its world-wide diffusion. The suffering, uncertainty, and newly discovered solidarity of the race tended to prepare mankind for a more spiritual and universal religion. Through the Spirit of Christ the Jewish Christians conquered their conquerors and overcame the world. Witness the testimony of Tertullian as to the number of Christians in the Roman empire in his time.

II. THIS WAS FORETOLD BY JESUS CHRIST. It was a marvellous insight and foresight which could look through such a series of evils and destructions to the ultimate success of his kingdom. And it had not a little to do with the bringing about of the effect anticipated. The period can only be adequately explained from the standpoint of universal history or the philosophy of history, as one of spiritual evolution conditioned and determined by the peculiar doctrines of Christianity.

III. THE VERIFICATION WAS COMPRISED WITHIN THE LIMITS OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE. "*This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished.*" If the destruction of Jerusalem be the terminal point of the various series of events foretold in this chapter, then "this generation" must be literally understood as referring to the persons alive at the time Christ spoke. And, allowing for poetic hyperbole (as in the figurative expressions, "heaven and earth," "sun," "moon," and "stars," "earthquakes," etc.) and the general style of prophetic imagery, the careful student must believe that in the destruction of Jerusalem the great, imminent coming of the Son of man was actually effected, as history proves that circumstances that might fittingly be described by the words of Christ took place and in the order he announced.—M.

Ver. 31.—*The words of Christ and the world-revolution with which they were associated.* I. A PREDICTION OF IT. The date of these utterances and their authorship beyond all reasonable question. A daring forecast, identifying the fortunes of Christianity with vast cosmical movements. Insight such as this more than human; dependent upon perception of unseen principles and absolute faith in God. The immediate effect of the changes predicted is acknowledged to be adverse to the outward circumstances of his followers; yet inwardly and ultimately the result is regarded as beyond question, and declared with unfaltering authority. This predictive element in the gospel not accidental, but essential; its entire credibility as a word of God to man being made to depend upon its fulfilment as a prophecy.

II. A SUSTAINING PRINCIPLE THROUGH IT. The faith of Christians is fostered: 1. *By the fact that all things were foretold:* "I have told you all things beforehand." 2. *By their intelligent perception of the signs, the method, and the outline of God's working.* 3. *By their experience of special Divine grace*—(1) in guidance and indwelling of the Holy Ghost; (2) in experience of special Divine favours, *e.g.* the shortening of the days of tribulation; and (3) in the inward spiritual comfort and edification of the precepts and promises of the gospel.

III. A CAUSE OF IT. As representing the eternal moral principles which underlie and determine the historic evolution of the race. An exciting cause of the hatred to Divine things which was the motive of so much that was done. A directive influence in shaping the destinies of the new institutions and movements which were evolved from the chaos of the old world.

IV. A SURVIVAL FROM IT. Not one has passed away. The great doctrines of Christendom have slowly but surely formulated themselves in sympathetic relation to the experience and progress with which they have been associated. As a *system* of truth, they can be more comprehensively grasped now than at any previous time. The fulfilment of its predictions did not exhaust the moral fulness and depth of Christian truth, or its applicability to the extant problems of future ages. The gospel is thus seen to be, not only for a time, but for all time, the central principle of progress and destiny for the human race.—M.

Vers. 32—37.—*The element of uncertainty in the Christian revelation.* I. TO WHAT IT RELATES. "That day or that hour." Proximately and very evidently these words refer to the precise date of the inauguration of Christ's kingdom, through the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), about forty years subsequent to their utterance. Through that period it was possible for any of those addressed to continue alive, and consequently they were all admonished with respect to it. But, secondarily, the absolute, final coming of the Son of man is referred to adumbratively, and so also all intermediate advents connective of these two terms of the progress of his coming. That the attention of the hearers was specially or particularly addressed to this secondary coming does not appear. There were other words which more clearly indicated it.

II. WHOM IT AFFECTED. That it should affect *believers* could be understood, although at first to them it must have been an occasion of perplexity; that *angels* should not know might be explicable on the ground that it was an earthly evolution of events, and that although in a state of blessedness and spiritual illumination their nature is finite; but that the "Son" should be ignorant is a great mystery. Yet there are considerations which throw some light even upon this. "The Father's absolute omniscience, and his consequent absolute prescience, is assumed by the Saviour, even although the object of the prescience is chronologically conditional on millions of intervening free acts on the part of millions of free agents. When absolute prescience, however, is denied by the Son on the part of himself, he is, of course, referring to himself *as Son, begotten on a certain day* (Ps. ii. 7; Acts xiii. 33) in the Virgin's womb (Luke i. 35). He is, in other words, referring to himself, as he was self-realized in his finite nature, to be for ever distinguished from that infinite essence in which he made the worlds (John i. 3), sustains them (Col. i. 17), sees the end from the beginning (John vi. 64), and 'knows all things' (John xxi. 17). . . . It is only when we proceed on a 'monophysist' hypothesis, and assume that our Saviour's divinity was his only mind, and the soul of his humanity, that overwhelming difficulty is encountered" (Morison). Apart from this, although intimately connected with it, there were *moral* reasons for Christ's remaining ignorant. As "Christ's not knowing rests upon his knowing rightly (in a natural manner), or upon the holy *extension* of his range of vision" (Lange), it follows that this ignorance, referring to a subject of such transcendent consequence in relation to his own work amongst men, must have formed an important element and condition of his moral and spiritual subjection to the Father. He rose through weakness, limitation of knowledge of Divine counsels (although not of Divine *principles*), and finitude of nature, to the full comprehension of the mind of God, and realization of the perfection of the Divine-human personality, beyond the cross. To the spiritual and perfect Christ, therefore, belongs *all power*; for he was *made perfect* through suffering and subjection. His obedience was perfect, and his gradual moral development in act and consciousness because of this limitation of knowledge.

III. HOW IT IS TO BE REGARDED BY BELIEVERS. The parabolic form of Christ's teaching here is very beautiful and striking. Vers. 34, 35 should be translated thus: "As a man away from home, having (or, who has) left his house, and given the authority to his servants, and to each his work, also commanded the porter to watch—'Watch, therefore' (*i.e. so say I,* 'Watch,' etc.), 'for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh,'" etc. (1) With *watchfulness*; that is, sleepless vigilance, which comprehends and leads to (2) *prayer* and (3) *diligence*. And these duties are of universal obligation (ver. 37).—M.

Ver. 34.—"*To every man his work.*" The circumstances under which these words were uttered imparted to them peculiar solemnity. Our Lord had left the temple for

the last time, and in the waning light was walking home to Bethany, when he sat himself down to gaze with lingering love on Jerusalem. The evening sun was still glorifying her palaces; but the light was fading, darkness was coming; and he talked with his disciples of darker shadows about to fall, which would leave her bereft of the light of God. But he looked beyond that—to the time when he would return from the "far country," and, gathering his servants around him, would give each one recompense according as his work should be. During his absence he has given "to every man his work." This clause suggests several thoughts concerning *Christian service.*

I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. It is appointed for "every man" who is in the Lord's household. God works in us in order that we may will and do of his good pleasure. He gives us love to others, and understanding of his Word, an experience of his faithfulness, mental and spiritual faculties, in order to fit us for serving him. Science teaches us that natural agents are so closely related that they are mutually convertible. Motion passes into heat, heat into electricity, electricity into magnetism, magnetism into animal force, and so on in an endless circle. In the sphere of nature God arouses no force which does not arouse another; and though the primal energy passes on into many manifestations, it does not return to him void. So is it in the spiritual realm. He excites in your heart love to Christ, and that arouses thought about him, speech concerning him, activity for him; and these go forth like advancing waves of influence into the lives of others, and none can foresee the end. The Church is not meant to be like the phantom ship of which the poet sings, manned by a dead crew; but is likened to a living "household," in which all the servants are eager, watchful, and diligent; for their Lord has given "to every man his work." (Show the variety of capacities distributed amongst the old and young, the rich and poor, and the diverse forms of Christian service to which these point.)

II. QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE. 1. *Earnestness.* Too often this is fitful. It passes from us uselessly when in contact with the worldly, just as electricity passes off when insulation has been neglected. We want insulation of spiritual force. A modern Christian, surrounded by symbols of idolatry, would not always have "his spirit stirred" within him as Paul did at Athens. The present age is enlightened rather than enthusiastic; self-complacent rather than self-sacrificing. 2. *Love* to Christ and love to souls is the true inspiration of successful Christian service. It is gained at the foot of the cross.

"A life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty."

3. *Constancy.* Such as Paul had, who, amid temptations to indolence, and amid persecutions which might have made him falter, pressed forward steadfastly. "This one thing I do" was the motto of his life. Is it ours? 4. *Watchfulness.* A special exhortation to this lies in the passage before us. Let us watch (1) for opportunities of service, (2) for results of work, and (3) for the coming of the Lord.

III. THE RECOMPENSE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. 1. *There is blessing to be found in doing it.* On the inactive mind and irresolute will doubts will gather, as limpets do on a motionless rock. Powers fairly exercised, whether they be physical, mental, or spiritual, develop by use. 2. *There is blessing awaiting us when we have done it.* It was not without reason that our Lord spoke (ver. 28) of the signs of his coming as being like the indications that "summer is nigh." His advent will be to his people not a winter, but a summer, from which gloom and death will be banished, and in which there will be fruit-gathering after toil, and manifestation of beauty and glory arising from the discipline of the past. That summer is nigh! The world is ripening for it. Our work is preparing for it. Then shall the faithful reap fruit unto life eternal.—A. R.

Vers. 1—37.—*Watching.* This chapter relates almost exclusively to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Yet in its testimony to the Divine power of foretelling future events, it has its evidential value to all students of the person of our Lord; while its central and simple lesson, "Watch! the day of your Lord's coming ye know not," may be profitably reiterated with frequency in the ears of all. One of the disciples, on passing out of the temple, drew the attention of the Master to the massiveness and grandeur of its building. How great! how stable! how wondrous! In this, as in so many instances,

he saw what they saw not; and his thoughts were not as theirs. It must have been to their great surprise that he declared, "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Sad and doleful words follow, as strikingly in contrast to the expectations of his questioners as were the former. The eager desire to know "when shall these things be," was met by threats of deception, war, earthquakes, and famines, the mere presages of trouble, to be followed by personal afflictions, persecutions, hatreds, and deaths, mingled with the uttermost national and religious confusion. The dire symbols were, "the sun shall be darkened," "the moon shall not give her light," "the stars shall be falling from heaven." We who read these words with the picture of Jerusalem's destruction before us, and in the light of modern Jewish history, see a depth of meaning in them which, the words being words of prophecy, the disciples failed to see. Pitifully do our hearts move towards Israel according to the flesh, and pray for the lifting up of the veil that is upon their eyes, that they in a true sense may "see and believe." The lesson is founded upon this prediction of judgment. In interpreting it in its application to ourselves we must see that it teaches—

I. THE EXTREME PERILOUSNESS OF HINDERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BY UNFAITHFULNESS. The Jew was favoured as was no other nation under heaven. Fidelity to the great trust reposed in that people would have been attended with unmeasured Divine blessing; while unfaithfulness resulted in the direst calamity and judgment. Who shall describe the bitterness to Israel of those dread days? A free and wider diffusion of the spiritual kingdom followed. But Israel, in giving birth to a gospel of blessing to the nations, suffered throes of travail "such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and," happily, "never shall be."

II. IN OUR IGNORANCE OF THE TIMES OF GREAT AND SUDDEN CHANGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, OUR HIGHEST WISDOM IS A DILIGENT ATTENTION TO THE DUTY OF THE HOUR. The hour is always uncertain when the Lord cometh to judgment. The indolent spirit that is deluded into neglect because there is no sign of his coming, will be inevitably found "sleeping." How often has the Church been lulled thus to slumber! How often have the most responsible trusts been unfaithfully held! Times of judgment awake the sleepers often to find their work neglected or undone. The watching spirit that momentarily devotes itself to the doing of the Lord's will is the only safe spirit. Such a spirit is never surprised, never taken unawares. It matters not when "the lord of the house cometh," whether "at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning." The watching servant hails and rejoices in his lord's approach.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE FINAL RECOGNITION OF HUMBLE, FAITHFUL, CONTINUOUS SERVICE. 1. The gracious words of warning stimulate to effort. 2. The help of the Divine Spirit is comfortingly promised to the suffering. "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." 3. The perseveringly patient one shall reap in due time. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." 4. The scattered ones whom cruel persecution has driven into all lands shall finally be restored, and the felicities of the heavenly life compensate for the sufferings of earth. "He shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." The Lord's one command, holding all within itself, is "Watch!" "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."—G.

Vers. 1—13.—*Prophetic adumbrations.* I. "MATERIAL TEMPLES, POLLUTED BY MEN'S SINS, MUST PERISH."

II. "THE TEMPLE OF HUMAN MINDS, PURIFIED BY THE DIVINE SPIRIT, WILL ABIDE FOR EVER" (Godwin).

III. THE EDUCATION OF ILLUSIONS. (See F. W. Robertson's sermon on 'The Illusiveness of Life!') God in history is God in disguise. To detect his presence is not always easy. Surface and show are constantly taken for truth and reality.

IV. VAGUE TROUBLES PRECEDE GREAT CHANGES. We live in restless times. "Something is in the air." We know not what is meant; but something is meant. The beginning of a process must not be mistaken for the end.

V. A MORAL PRINCIPLE AND PURPOSE LIES IN ALL CHANGE. This is the secret leaven which occasions all the ferment. Deep was the truth expressed by the philosopher

when he said, "War is the father of all things." Or in the myth, *conflict* and *love* are close companions. In convulsed times, be sure Divine love is profoundly working. Persecution represents the expiring struggles of error and its fellow, passion.

VI. THE CONSTANT HEART NEED FEAR NO EVIL. Nothing can bring us peace but loyalty to principle. Nothing can exempt us from unmanning fears but the sense that truth is on our side. The only secret of eloquence lies here. There is no salvation for the coward, the untrue, and the disloyal. For the true heart there is salvation from every possible danger.—J.

Vers. 14—31.—*Dark sayings.* I. SACRED LITERATURE, LIKE NATURE, IS FULL OF HINTED TRUTH. "Truths in nature darkly join." So in Scripture. The mystic element in Daniel and Scripture generally was fully recognized by Christ.

II. PRUDENCE IN MEN IS THE REFLECTION OF PROVIDENCE IN GOD. It is the light within us. In unsettled times we must be more than usually on our guard. Keen love of truth will make the mind critical and sceptical of the talk that goes on. Let us not have to say, surprised by calamity, "We might have known this before."

III. THERE IS A METHOD AND A SELECTION IN THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE. When the observer of physical nature finds a principle of "natural selection," he finds only the visible counterpart of a law in the kingdom of God. God, through all changes, "gathers his chosen" from the end of the land to the end of the sky.

IV. CHANGES IN THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM ARE NATURAL, AND THOSE THAT ARE NATURAL HAVE A SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE. Changes in plants visibly show forth changes in institutions. Below both is truth, is life. And as Christ is one with life and truth, his words abide. There is a moral conservation of force through all evolutions.—J.

Vers. 32—37.—*Indefinable truth.* I. AN ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY MINGLES WITH ALL THAT IS MOST CERTAIN. We know that certain things must happen, certain forces exert themselves, certain laws be executed in the course of things. But where, when, how? "The rest is silence." And this is spiritually profitable. Imagination and faith live and thrive in the clear-obscure of thought.

II. THERE WERE THINGS UNKNOWABLE EVEN TO JESUS. It is but a small portion of truth that can be rendered into definite conceptions and expressed in words. "Truth in closest words must fail." But Jesus "received from the Father all desirable knowledge" (Godwin).

III. THE MOOD AND HABIT OF MIND IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN DEFINITE KNOWLEDGE. Living is better than any theory of life. Being ready for any emergency is better than being certain about when this or that emergency will arise. "We should be ready every day for what may come any day."

IV. A BRIGHT AND QUICK INTELLIGENCE IS ABOVE ALL NECESSARY FOR THE CONDUCT OF LIFE. We must not dare to "fall behind the times." We must be punctual. It was said of one that he was always "a day too late." Sleepy men and institutions will certainly be shocked out of their lethargy. Christ's warning has been unheeded. Ecclesiastical Christianity has always been a day too late; has risen later than science, than business energy, than private zeal. We lean on one another too much. It is as if each sentinel should go to sleep, trusting to the vigilance of his comrade. Every Christian worker and watcher should act as if the fate of the host depended on him alone.—J.

Vers. 1—13. Parallel passages: Matt. xxiv. 1—14; Luke xxi. 5—19.—*Unexpected events.* I. PROPHECIES. 1. *Distribution of prophetic intimations.* Great diversity of opinion prevails in regard to the predictions contained in this chapter. About one part of it, however, there is unanimity; the early portion contains, as all admit, a prophecy about the destruction of the temple which was literally and actually fulfilled within forty years after it had been uttered. The remainder of the chapter is understood by the majority of interpreters to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world or present dispensation. In relation to this second part there are many divergent theories, but these in the main are reducible to two: (1) that which regards these two subjects as separately and successively exhibited; and (2) that which maintains their coexist-

ence throughout, and according to which they are so blended and intermingled that separation is all but impossible. 2. *Practical observations.* There is (1) the duty of diligently studying prophecy, as a very important and deeply interesting portion of the Divine Word; thus St. Peter says, "We have the Word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place" (Revised Version). But while the study of prophecy is a pleasing duty, we may not forget that it is attended with special difficulties arising from the very nature of the subject. It is evident that the design of prophecy would be frustrated if it were fully understood beforehand; in such a case men would be found desirous, some of antedating, others of defeating, the predicted events. (2) In the study of prophecy we must not strive to be wise above what is written, nor lean too much to our own understanding. We are to have in recollection that "the secret things belong unto the Lord: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children for ever." In our attempts at the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy, in addition to diligent comparison of Scripture under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we are to pursue the study as far as possible along the lines of prophecies already fulfilled. (3) Two uses of fulfilled prophecy are obvious. One is the corroboration of the truth of God's Word, and so a strong confirmation of our faith in that Word; the second is a guarantee for the future from the past. The predictions which have been already and actually fulfilled warrant the expectation that such as still wait for fulfilment shall one day be most certainly accomplished; and then shall the light shed by Divine providence shine so brightly on those portions of the Divine Word now mysterious, that they shall appear plain and clear as noonday. 3. *Character of the disciples' observation.* The object which the disciples had in view, when they called the attention of their Master to the great stones of the temple, is not quite clear. We may consider their remark a casual one, called forth by the sight of such huge structures—such immense stones, measuring, according to Josephus, some of them twenty-five cubits in length, eight in height, and twelve in breadth; others forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth. Or perhaps the numerals in case of the cubits, in both the passages of Josephus, should be the same, namely, twenty-five. The sight of stones of such vast dimensions, of enormous marble blocks, of the gorgeousness and grandeur of the buildings, would justify their remark; still the sight of all these would not vindicate it from being somewhat superficial and commonplace, natural enough to Galilean peasants, and such as might be made by very unsophisticated persons. We may perhaps be warranted, therefore, in reading a deeper meaning into their observation. Might it not be that the thought occurred to them that an edifice of such splendour and magnificence would be no way unsuitable to, nor unworthy of, Messiah's reign and of the temporal kingdom which they still clung to? 4. *The point of time at which the observation was made.* Jesus was leaving the temple, and leaving it for the last time. What solemn thoughts must have occupied his mind as he bade farewell to that beautiful sanctuary! How different they must have been from those of his disciples, in whatever way their words are to be understood! He is now turning his back for ever on the national temple, long the centre of Jewish worship, with its august shrine, where the Shechinah glory had appeared above the cherubim, where the Divine presence in visible symbol had been manifested, where the most solemn acts of religious service had been performed, and where the one living and true God had been worshipped, while polytheism had prevailed in the nations all around. Now, however, the spirit of the theocracy was gone, Judaism had fallen into decrepitude, the national temple still stood in all its splendour; but the great Inhabitant was about to take his departure. The Messenger of the covenant had come suddenly to his temple; but with his rejection and death already determined on, life and light and liberty were on the eve of departing for ever, and the kingdom about to pass into other and more worthy hands. The disciples, who, like other Jews, still indulged the daydream of a worldly kingdom and political independence in connection with Messiah, must have been more than surprised by our Lord's reply. Their pleasant fancies are dispelled; to their fondest aspirations a rude shock is given. They are startled, stunned, and silenced. Stone not left upon stone that shall not be loosened from its place and thrown to the ground! and all this affirmed with the utmost positiveness of assertion! What can it mean? They roll the matter over in their thoughts; they reflect, but cannot persuade themselves that the words are to be under-

stood in their strict, unfigurative sense. The statement is past their comprehension. 5. *Their inquiry.* And now they have left the temple courts, descended the side of Moriah, crossed the Kedron, and are seated on a slope of Olivet. What a lovely prospect is there presented to their gaze! Right opposite and full in view was the temple, with its white marble, its roof and pinnacles overlaid with gold, the prodigious stone substructures already the objects of such admiration, all sparkling in the clear light of an Eastern sky. Here was a sight of such surpassing splendour that it was esteemed equal to one of the wonders of the world; a spectacle of such beauty that once seen it remained ever after a part of sight. Here was a prospect corresponding to the eloquent and withal exact words of Milman, when he says, "At a distance the whole temple looked literally like a mount of snow, fretted with golden pinnacles." And was the glory of all this, like ordinary mundane things, to pass so soon away! The disciples naturally desire more information on this stupendous subject; they have by this time recovered somewhat from their surprise. They break silence by trying to ascertain with certainty and preciseness some particulars in regard to the wonderful event predicted, and its consequences, immediate and remote, implied in the expression, "these things"—an expression erroneously referred by some to the world itself, and by others to the buildings of the temple. They are at once curious and anxious to be informed of the *time* when what was foretold would be fulfilled; of the *sign* of the Saviour's coming for the performance of what he had thus predicted; and further, as we are informed by St. Matthew, of the *end* of the world. 6. *Minuteness in details.* As usual, St. Mark is most minute in his record of particulars, such as an eye-witness, or one writing the words of an eye-witness, would be most likely to take note of. He tells us here the exact *position* of our Lord and his disciples—on a knoll of Olivet, *right* over against (κατέναντι, the κατὰ being intensive) the temple. He also informs us that the disciples who were closest to our Saviour on the occasion, or who were most earnest and urgent in their inquiries which they probably repeated (ἐπηρώτων, imperfect), were Peter and James and John and Andrew. These were the *persons* who spoke in their own name and that of their brethren—acting at once for themselves and the other disciples. There was in this an evident appropriateness. These four disciples, consisting of two pairs of brothers, were the first who had enrolled themselves in the list of discipleship; they were the first of the apostolic band. They had been longest with our Lord, and, it would seem, on the most familiar terms with him; and now they are nearest to him in position, and, on the ground of their close intimacy, venture to put questions from which perhaps the others shrank. Three of these, moreover, had been specially privileged—already on two, as subsequently on another and third occasion—to accompany our Lord. Long attendance on the Master, as the consequence of early and faithful discipleship, would thus appear to have peculiar advantages, and to elevate, not by merit but by grace, to higher privileges. How important, then, for the young to join themselves early to the ranks of Christ's disciples, remembering their Creator in the days of their youth, and coming in early childhood to the Saviour! 7. *Peculiarity in and fulfilment of the prophecy.* We may not overlook, or lose sight of, the prediction that led to the inquiries of the disciples, and of these special favourites who represented the wishes of their brethren, as well as their own, on this occasion. The prediction in question is one of the most remarkable on record, if we consider all the circumstances. There was scarcely anything more unlikely at that time than the overthrow of such a stable fabric, where the buildings and substructures were so massive that Titus himself attributed his triumph to the hand of God. The original temple had been built by Solomon, and having stood for four centuries, was destroyed, after the lapse of that period, by Nebuzaradan, commander-in-chief of the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. It was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, at the head of the restored Jews, somewhat more than five centuries before Christ. This was the second temple; and though it was renewed by Herod the Great, and had several magnificent additions made to it by that king, such as a porch with white marble slabs, towers, and so on, it was still known, not as the third, but second temple. The work of renovation commenced by Herod had continued six and forty years, as we learn from the Fourth Gospel (ii. 20), where we read, "Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building." It was still much more improbable even if, contrary to all expectation and all reasonable calculation of chance, it should be destroyed, that that

destruction would be carried to such an extreme of demolition that no ruins should be left—no, not so much as one stone upon another. Other temples have been destroyed by hostile attack, or fallen into decay and yielded to the corroding tooth of time; but their ruins at least remain, while the magnificence of those ruins attracts the visitor, and excites his admiration or astonishment. Witness the far-famed Parthenon or temple of Minerva at Athens, or the temple of Baalbek, or Karnak, or Luxor. But though the Roman general did his utmost to save the temple, it was destroyed by fire; and subsequently the work of demolition was carried out so thoroughly by the tenth legion, under Terentius Rufus, that the temple area and precincts were dug up. The great peculiarity of the prophecy was its uncommon clearness, distinctness, and definiteness at a time when all the probabilities were against it; while the exactness of its fulfilment has so puzzled infidels, that they have tried to make themselves and others believe that the prediction was *post eventum;* and, finding that impossible and incredible, others have resorted to such miserable shifts as coincidences, lucky guesses, or skilful prognostications. All in vain; for it remains, and must remain, an irrefragable testimony to the truth of God. There was, besides, the fulfilment of an older prophecy by Micah: "Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps." 8. *The perspective of prophecy.* There is a very general agreement that in the predictions contained in this chapter of St. Mark and the corresponding chapters of the other synoptists, the two events of Christ's coming at the fall of Jerusalem, and of his coming at the end of the world or present dispensation, are combined. While some explain this according to the theory of two applications, one primary and another secondary; and others by the typical theory, one event being typical of another, so that the one description covers both; others again prefer that theory of prophecy according to which it exhibits events without regard to the periods of time or portions of space that intervene between them and separate them from each other; just as in the landscape hill rises above hill, while to the spectator at a distance the valleys that lie between, or the interspaces that separate them, are not seen nor observed, and it is only when the summit of each hill is reached that the interval between it and the next is discernible. So we may conceive it to be with respect to the close of the *αἰὼν* which was marked by the fall of Jerusalem, and the completion, or *τέλος*, of the present dispensation or current age.

II. THE SIGNS SPECIFIED. 1. *Enumeration.* There is some slight difference in the enumeration of the signs; they are also divided by some into negative and positive. We prefer dividing them into the immediate and more remote, and enumerate them as follows:—(1) False prophets or pretended Messiahs; (2) wars and rumours of wars, that is, wars actually declared or commenced, and wars threatened or reported as imminent. St. Luke employs, instead of "rumours," the somewhat different expression of "commotions," or "unsettlements" (*ἀποκαταστασίας*); these are the more remote premonitions, for it is added by St. Matthew and St. Mark, "The end is not yet," while St. Luke has, "The end is not immediately." (3) Wars on a larger scale, implied in nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. After these political agitations come physical, as (4) earthquakes; then other providential events, as (5) famines, and troubles, the latter word being omitted in some manuscripts and in the Revised Version; also (6) pestilences. That all these signs preceded the fall of Jerusalem at a greater or less distance from that event, and that, on a still wider area and a still grander scale, they shall precede the winding up of the present dispensation, appears to be the teaching of this portion of Scripture. The intermingling of the predictions relating to the two great events may in some measure be accounted for by the circumstance that the Jews would regard the overthrow of the Jewish state as the signal of, and coincident with, the end of all present things. Other signs of a less general and more personal kind are subjoined, so that we have (7) persecutions befalling the disciples both in and outside of Judæa; and (8) sad apostasies and the evils consequent on such defections, as we learn from the first evangelist; also (9) the proclamation of the gospel proceeding from Jerusalem and Judæa, and its diffusion among all nations, as a witness everywhere to Christ and his salvation. 2. *Verification.* Scripture itself bears witness to the fulfilment of the *first* sign; for St. John says, "Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time;" while Josephus acquaints us with the fact that "the land was overrun with magicians, seducers, and impostors, who drew the

people after them in multitudes into solitudes and deserts, to see the signs and miracles which they promised to show by the power of God." Several names, moreover, are expressly mentioned, of such persons as Dositheus, Simon Magus, Theudas, Barchochab; but it is objected that some of these were too early, and others too late, in point of time. In like manner it may be objected to the statement of the Apostle John, that, while it is so distinct in relation to the fact, it is indefinite with respect to the element of time. But if some were too early and others too late, it is not likely that the intervening period had the good fortune of being freed from their presence; while, from the statements of St. John on the one hand and Josephus on the other, we may rightly conclude a succession of pretenders, and quite a number of them all along, as true coin is seldom for long without its counterfeits. The *second* sign had its verification in the violent deaths of no less than four Roman emperors—Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius—within a year and a half, and the scenes of tumult and bloodshed consequent thereon; while the Jews were assailed with three threats of wars by Caligula, Claudius, and Nero respectively. There were other rumours of wars, in consequence of Bardanes, and subsequently Volageses, declaring, but not carrying out, war against the Jews; as also by Vitellius, Governor of Syria, declaring war against the Arabian king, Aretas. These two signs were among the more remote, for, as we have seen, it is added, "The end is not yet;" that is, the end of the Jewish polity at the destruction of Jerusalem was not to follow immediately. This caution was subjoined to prevent that state of excitement and alarm which the Apostle Paul, at a subsequent period, found it necessary to allay among the Thessalonians. The *third* sign may be illustrated by the general character of the period, which the Roman historian Tacitus describes as "rich in calamities, horrible with battles, rent with seditions, savage even in peace itself;" as also by particular catastrophes, as the conflict between the Syrians and Jews at Cæsarea, in which twenty thousand of the latter perished; another at Seleucia, in which fifty thousand Jews lost their lives; with others similar at Joppa, Scythopolis, Ascalon, and Tyre, recorded by Josephus in his 'Wars of the Jews,' a title of itself significant of the state of the times; while Philo makes mention of a serious outbreak between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria, though at a much earlier period. The *fourth* sign consisted of tremors of the earth, by which towns and cities were often shaken and ruined. These earthquakes were to occur in divers places. Never perhaps, in an equal period of time in the history of our earth, did so many of these fearful convulsions occur, as in the interval between the Crucifixion and fall of Jerusalem. Seneca, in a somewhat rhetorical passage in one of his Epistles, mentions a surprising number of such casualties having occurred in many different quarters, and with the usual disastrous results; in his list of places where earthquakes had taken place are proconsular Asia, Achaia, Syria, Macedonia, Cyprus, and Paphus. Tacitus makes mention of several in different localities—in Crete; in Italy, one at Rome and another in Campania; in Phrygia, at Apamea, and Laodicea. Josephus speaks of one in Judæa; and several others are recorded about the same time. Of the *fifth* sign, or famines, we have the record in the Acts (xi. 28), where Agabus foretold "that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar;" and the testimony of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus to similar effect. The whole time of the reign of Claudius appears to have been one of scarcity; that in the ninth year of his reign appears to have been particularly severe. Three other famines occurred in his reign. During this period, Rome, Syria, and Greece suffered most painfully. From the famines we might naturally infer the existence of the *sixth* sign, or pestilences, even if we had no historical record of their occurrence, according to the old proverb, that "after famine comes pestilence," so neatly expressed in the Greek μετὰ λιμὸν λοιμός. And yet disasters of this kind are recorded—one in Babylonia, by Josephus; one in Rome, which swept away thirty thousand persons in one autumn, by Tacitus and Suetonius. The New Testament itself furnishes proof enough, and more than enough, of the persecutions which were the *seventh* sign. In Acts iv. 3—7 we read of the Apostles Peter and John being arrested, thrown into prison, and brought before the Sanhedrim; in Acts v. 18 we read that they "laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison," and at the twenty-seventh verse of the same chapter that they "brought them and set them before the council;" in Acts xvi. 23, 24, that they "laid many stripes upon them [Paul and Silas], and cast them into prison," where the

jailor "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks;" in Acts xviii. 12 of Paul being brought to the judgment, and in xxiii. 1 of his appearing before the council and being smitten on the mouth, by command of the high priest Ananias. One of the duties of the *Chazzan*, a minister of the synagogue, was to exercise discipline, and of this Paul had his share, when, as he tells us, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one;" and again, "Thrice was I beaten with rods." The εἰς before "synagogues" is pregnant, implying that they were previously brought into the synagogues and then beaten therein. The distinction that makes εἰς refer to the persons present before whose eyes the punishment was inflicted, while ἐν only indicates the place, is more than doubtful. Again, St. Paul affords an exemplification of the succeeding statement that they should "be brought before rulers and kings," having appeared before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa in succession, as recorded in Acts xxiv.—xxvi.; also before Nero, as we may infer from 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17, where he speaks of his first answer, and of being delivered out of the mouth of the lion. Of apostasies, the *eighth* sign, we have both direct and indirect evidence. The latter is found in the many and earnest warnings which the Epistle to the Hebrews contains against such, while evidence of the former kind is supplied by the heathen historian Tacitus. The rapid progress which the preaching of the gospel had made, notwithstanding all the opposition and hindrances, and cruel persecutions, and sad apostasies, is perhaps the most surprising fact of all; while of this we have such incidental notices as the following:—"Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world," writes St. Paul to the Romans; to the Galatians he writes of his own circuit to Arabia, back to Damascus, and then to the head-quarters in Jerusalem; to the Colossians he says of "the Word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you;" and again, in the same chapter (Col. i. 23), he speaks of the hope of the gospel, and adds, "which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." Thus was verified the *ninth* sign.

III. THE MORAL LESSONS INTERSPERSED. 1. *Practical directions.* With the important predictions of this section, and indeed of the whole chapter, practical directions of greatest consequence are blended. Similarly, in the writings of the apostles, we usually find along with exposition of doctrine the enforcement of duty. The principal practical directions of our Lord in this portion of Scripture are mostly of the nature of moral lessons, and are the following:—*Heedfulness*, which is several times repeated in the course of the chapter; *needfulness of perseverance*; *prayerfulness*; and *watchfulness*. Other lessons of great practical importance, though expressed rather as categorical statements or predictions than in the form of directions, like those enumerated, are contained in it. 2. *The first of these great moral lessons.* The *first* of these lessons occurs in the fifth verse, in the words, "Take heed lest any man deceive you." The same, though slightly altered, and in a somewhat different connection, occurs in the ninth verse, in the words, "But take heed to yourselves;" again, in the twenty-third verse, we read, "But take ye heed;" and once more, in the thirty-third verse, it is set as a preface or introduction to other duties: "Take ye heed, watch and pray." In its first occurrence, it warns the disciples against being deceived by others; in the second, it cautions them in reference to their own deportment; in its third occurrence, it calls on them to do their duty, as the Saviour had done his by them in full predictions and directions; while, in its last occurrence in the chapter, its repetition seems designed to add emphasis to the injunctions immediately coming after. This first lesson is as elastic in its application as practical in its nature, which is manifest from the varying context with which it is connected. In its first context in this chapter, it puts us on our guard against deception. As originally applied, it warned the disciples against pretenders to Messiahship—competitive claimants to that dignity, or rather personators of Christ himself, alleging they were himself returned again, according to the promise of his second advent. But in principle and spirit it applies to ourselves, and is needed by Christians at all times. In a world like this, where so many things are not what they seem, we are required to be upon our guard. Satan is watching to impose on us with his lies, and deceive us to our destruction; we must beware of him. Sinners are waiting to deceive us by their enticement; we must beware of them, and when they entice us not yield consent. Sin itself contains the very essence of deception. It promises pleasures; but the pleasures of sin last only for a season, and that season is a short one, while

during that season, short as it is, they do not satisfy. Often instead of pleasure it brings us pain; and it is always pain in the end. In the second of its occurrences, as above specified, the warning related to the deportment of the disciples themselves, in the extremely trying circumstances in which they would often find themselves placed. Other perils and other unsettling circumstances were of a general nature; their attention is now claimed for those more imminent and more immediately affecting themselves. When arraigned before councils or shamefully maltreated in synagogues, when scourged or scorned, amid indignities and insults and injuries, it behoved them, after their Master's example, to bear themselves bravely; when they suffered, to forbear threatening; when evil entreated, to bear up with patience and meekness as well as fortitude. When brought before rulers and kings, magistrates of the lowest and highest rank, they are reminded of the duty then especially incumbent on them—to be valiant for the truth. They were to take heed to themselves, that no unfaithfulness on their part should mar their message which they had for men, high or low, rich or poor, foes or friends, or induce them to keep back aught of the testimony they had to bear. Nay, more, they were to take heed to themselves lest they should esteem Christ's yoke a weariness, or duty to him a drudgery; but, on the contrary, to consider it a privilege to have an opportunity to testify to his cause and claims, however perilous or painful the position. In like manner, whenever opportunity is fairly afforded us to present Christ's claims, or plead his cause, or testify to the truth of his religion, it is incumbent on us joyfully to avail ourselves of it, faithfully to declare the whole counsel of God, to stand up bravely for the truth, and to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." 3. *The second great moral lesson.* The *second* of these lessons is, as already intimated, the necessity of *perseverance.* "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." This, in the first instance, was applicable to the apostles, and peculiarly appropriate in their case; but it has a wider scope and more general bearing. It warns against that *fickleness* which enters on the path of duty with eagerness and seeming earnestness, it may be, but speedily turns aside, as did the Galatians, of whom the apostle had reason to complain, "Ye did run well, but something hindered you." It cautions us against putting our hand to the plough and then turning back, as many do when they realize the arduous nature of the work, or when some discouragement comes in their way, or some formidable obstacle has to be encountered. It urges us to *endurance* amid the toils, the trials, the troubles, the many perplexities, the sore sufferings, and manifold afflictions which the Christian has to endure during this mortal life and strife. It exhorts us to *patience,* withal; we are to endure patiently, that is to say, unmurmuringly. Some endure, indeed, but their endurance loses half its virtue through the complaining and frettings that accompany it. Further, it encourages us to *perseverance* —a manful holding out to the last, and to a brave persistence in the way and work of God, however arduous our task may be, and however difficult or dangerous the path we have to travel. In a word, we are to "stand fast in the faith, quit us like men, and be strong." The path of duty here, as elsewhere and often, shall prove the way of safety. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him; if we bear the cross, we shall wear the crown.

"Then steadfast let us still remain,
Though dangers rise around,
And in the work prescribed by God
Yet more and more abound;
Assured that, though we labour now,
We labour not in vain;
But, through the grace of heaven's great Lord,
Th' eternal crown shall gain."

J. J. G.

Vers. 14—23. Parallel passages: Matt. xxiv. 15—28; Luke xxi. 20—24.—*The end imminent.* I. IMMEDIATELY PROXIMATE SIGNS. Hitherto we have had the signs, more or less remote, of Christ's coming at the fall of Jerusalem, and so an answer to the second part of the question contained in ver. 4. Here, however, we have the immediately proximate sign, or rather an answer to the first part of the question of that same verse, namely, "When shall these things be?" Along with the sign here intimated, we have instructions about the ways and means of escape. But with

respect to the immediately proximate sign or time of the destruction of Jerusalem, we read that it is "the abomination of desolation" foretold by Daniel. The expression is regarded as relating to the Roman army, that brought desolation on the holy city; but whether the actual reference be to the besieging host itself, or to their standards, the eagles, as objects of idolatry, or to the outrages of the Zealots in the sacred courts, is not so certain. The parallel expression in Luke xxi. 20, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh," is deemed by some conclusive for the reference being to the Roman armies; most commentators understand the expression of the Roman eagles planted in *a holy place*, that is, round Jerusalem, first by Cestius Gallus A.D. 66, then by Vespasian two years after, and two years later still by Titus; while a third explanation refers the sign to the atrocities of the Zealots at this time. In this way the sign was twofold—internal and external; the latter consisting of the Roman legions now drawn round the city, the former of the abominations of the Zealots, causing the cup of Jewish iniquity to overflow, and thus directly leading to the desolation that immediately ensued. Two circumstances seem to favour this last view of the matter: the holy place is properly referable to the temple, and the sign of the Roman eagles would be rather indefinite, as they had been seen in Palestine for a considerable period previously. Inward desecration caused by sin in some way issued in outward desolation.

II. PRECAUTIONS SUGGESTED. It is not the duty of Christians more than of non-Christians to rush unnecessarily into peril any more than into temptation; we are not to endanger life and limb recklessly and negligently. Our first duty is self-preservation when no principle is compromised and no matter of spiritual moment is at stake; we are required to use all legitimate means for the preservation of our own lives and the lives of others. Confessors, indeed, have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and martyrs have cheerfully shed their blood, rather than surrender a jot of truth or renounce their allegiance to the Saviour; but there are special occasions and particular circumstances when our duty is to escape from, not court, danger. The disciples, when persecuted in one city, were to flee to another. Our Lord himself, passing through the midst of the wicked Nazarenes, went his way, when they had led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, and would have cast him down headlong. And now he gives directions beforehand for his followers not to imperil their lives needlessly and uselessly, when, by signs of which he forewarns them, they should know that the ruin of Jerusalem was imminent and inevitable, and when the wrath of God was about to be poured out on their unbelieving countrymen. The methods of escape were various. Those who found themselves in Judæa were to flee to the mountains. These, with caves and rocky fastnesses, were favourite places of refuge in time of danger in the land of Palestine; thus, Lot was urgently pressed by the angel to flee to the mountain: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed;" David was hunted by Saul as "a partridge in the mountains." Such as were already on the house-top, or could readily reach it by the steps outside, were not to return into the house to carry off with them any article of property, however prized or valuable, but to hasten their flight with all speed along the flat roofs of the houses till they reached the city walls, and thence make good their escape. Persons engaged in field labour, at which the outer garment (ἱμάτιον) was usually stripped off and laid aside, were not to act so indiscreetly as to run the risk of life itself by returning for the sake of saving an article of raiment probably of no great value.

III. THE THIRD GREAT MORAL LESSON. This, as we have already stated, is *prayerfulness*. Our Lord, after the particular directions enumerated, bethought himself of other cases to which those directions were inapplicable owing to the inability of the persons concerned to comply with them. With tender females in such circumstances of delicacy as precluded the possibility of flight, and with nursing mothers whose womanly affections forbade the thought of abandoning their offspring—with persons thus unfitted for flight, so encumbered as to retard it except through an impossible sacrifice—our Lord expresses the deepest sympathy and tenderest compassion. If, however, we may trace the sequence of thought in the mind of the Saviour as in the human mind in general, the thought of weakness by the law of contrast suggests a power which the weakest can wield and the strongest cannot dispense with, and which in the most untoward circumstances commands success. "And pray ye," says

our blessed Lord, "that your flight be not in the winter." St. Matthew adds, "neither on the sabbath day." The same God who has appointed the end has appointed the means that conduce to that end. One great means is *prayer*. The end and means are connected as links of the same chain. Other means of escape had been prescribed, and even urged on such as could employ those means; some there would be who, from circumstances already indicated, would be precluded from availing themselves of those means; besides, both these classes must, in the dark outlook into the future, anticipate circumstances over which they could have no possible control, such as the season of the year, or the day of the week when the predicted calamities might suddenly burst over them. What, then, was the course to be pursued? Where means were available, prayer was a leverage which imparted to the means a potency multiplied manifold; where the means were not available, prayer was the only element of power that could be employed; while in both cases there were certain obstacles which human power could not overcome, and certain circumstances with which it was incompetent to grapple. It was only by prayer that difficulties of this sort could be vanquished. The *subject-matter* of the prayers our Lord graciously condescends to suggest. They were to pray for the avoidance of the winter, when its cold and inclemency would greatly aggravate the general distress, or when its heavy rains, swollen streams, and winter torrents might render flight or escape impossible. They were to pray that they might not be necessitated to infringe the sanctity of the sabbath, on which a lawful journey did not exceed a mile; and when, the city gates being closed, would either shut them in or shut them out, and in either case cut them off from a place of safety; or when they might expose themselves to punishment from the cruelty of fanatics for a breach of the sabbath law. Our Lord suggested to them such topics of supplication, putting desires into their hearts and words on their lips.

IV. GOD'S GOODNESS TO HIS CHOSEN. "For the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." His elect are his chosen—chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, chosen of God and precious, a chosen generation, called, chosen, and faithful. The privileges of God's people are very many and very great. God avenges his own elect; nothing shall be laid to the charge of God's elect; he will gather them at last from the four winds; while here we learn that those days of direst disasters and unspeakable horrors were shortened for their sake. How great the blessedness of being children of God! The psalmist had affirmed the blessedness of such centuries before; he had affirmed it on the highest authority and for the best of reasons. "Blessed," he said, "is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts. . . . By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation."

V. GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE. The dispensations of God's providence prove, while they illustrate, his goodness to his people. In the present instance the Saviour *warned* his followers; this was the first link in the chain of his love. Acting on this warning, they fled; and God, in his mercy, favoured their flight and facilitated it. In *answer* to the petitions previously taught them and presented, we may be sure, by them, their flight was not in winter, or at least needed not to be so, for the siege commenced in the October of 66 A.D.; the final siege began in the April or May of the year of our Lord 70. Thus they had the opportunity of flight before or at the beginning of the siege, and consequently before the rigours of winter had set in; or, if perchance any delayed their flight and lingered on till near the concluding catastrophe, they in like manner avoided the winter. The consequence was that the Christian Jews effected their escape to Pella, now *Tabathat Fakkil*, near the northern border of Peræa, among the hills of Gilead, on the other side of Jordan, and a hundred miles from the besieged city. The merciful dealings of Divine providence were also manifested by the *curtailment* (ἐκολόβωσε) of the period of distress. In the midst of wrath he remembered mercy, and for his elect's sake he so overruled matters that the siege was brought to a speedy termination. So terrible was the time that, in the words of the evangelist, "except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved." The Scripture statement is fully confirmed by the historical details of Josephus, who makes it abundantly evident that the wretchedness of men and the wickedness of men had then culminated. Unprecedented before, they have remained

without parallel since. It was Passover time, and multitudes thronged the city. What from this state of matters inside the city and the siege outside, famine ensued; its usual attendant, pestilence, followed. Men and women seemed to have divested themselves of the instincts of humanity; nameless barbarities were perpetrated. The city was torn by sedition within—three factions being in constant conflict with each other; war raged without, hundreds of Jewish prisoners being crucified in sight of their friends. More than a million Jews perished in the siege, and ninety-seven thousand were taken captive—some of them sold into slavery, some sent to Egyptian mines, and others reserved for the gladiatorial games. "Those days shall be affliction," according to the correct rendering; and never was prediction fulfilled with more terrible literality. But two circumstances, under Providence, abridged this reign of terrors: one was the terrible energy of the besieger, who pressed the siege and at last stormed the city; and the other was the fearful infatuation of the besieged. The city, which had withstood Nebuchadnezzar more than a year and a quarter, fell before the power of the Roman general in less than five months. Had things continued much longer, Judæa itself would have been desolated, and its inhabitants, including, no doubt, many sincere Christians, would have perished. But God, for his people's sake, shortened those days of shocking suffering and unspeakable sadness. The Saviour again, and for the third time, repeats his exhortation to heedfulness against those who at such a crisis deceived, either consciously or unconsciously, themselves, and who should deceive others by holding forth hopes of deliverance by the coming of the Christ.—J. J. G.

Vers. 24—31. Parallel passages: Matt. xxiv. 29—35; Luke xxi. 25—33.—*The second advent.* I. THE GREATNESS OF THE EVENT. Whether our Lord's coming shall be pre-millennial or post-millennial we stay not to inquire. The great importance attaches to the fact of the second coming of the Son of man, which this section describes and which all Christians believe. The future coming of the Son of man naturally leads us back in thought to his first coming. The world had waited long for that blessed day. Patriarchs had looked forward to it, but it was in faith; prophets saw it, but it was in vision; saints sighed for its approach, but it was still a great way off—they hoped for its arrival, but they died before the promise was fulfilled; servants of God longed for its coming, and when it at length arrived they felt so satisfied that there seemed nothing further for them to desire—the language of Simeon expressed their thoughts, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Angels celebrated it on the plains of Bethlehem, and sang in heavenly carol, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to men." The people of God look forward with equal longing and equal eagerness to the day of Christ's second coming. They look and long for it as the period of complete redemption; they expect it as the time of home-gathering of all their brethren in the Lord; in anticipation of that great deliverance and of that blessed reunion they cry, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

II. THE GLORY OF HIS COMING. He will come, we are taught to believe, personally, visibly, and gloriously. He will come "in the *clouds*." The clouds of heaven serve many important purposes; they screen from the heat of the sun by day, and moderate the radiation of the earth by night. Sometimes they supply from their contents moisture to plants, and bring gladness to the thirsty ground; sometimes they pour down the water that originates springs or swells rivers; sometimes they cover with snow the polar regions. Those cloud-masses, as they float in the atmosphere, now approach within a mile of the earth, again ascend to the distance of five or six miles above its surface. Sometimes they curl in thin, parallel, silvery streaks; sometimes they form dense conical or convex heaps; sometimes, at the approach of night, they spread out in wide low-lying horizontal sheets; sometimes, fraught with storm, they move like a dark canopy overhead; again they unite and form various combinations. At all times they claim our attention, and commend themselves to our admiration by their fantastic forms, their changing colours, their varying density, and their strange combinations. The views of a kaleidoscope are nothing compared with the manifold aspects of the clouds. The clouds of heaven, then, are objects of great beauty, grandeur, and glory. The ancient heathens had a just appreciation of the magnificence of the clouds, and accordingly associated them with their highest conceptions of

majesty. They represented their deities as clothed with clouds, or seated on clouds, or surrounded with clouds, as if to hide from mortal gaze their excessive splendour. In Scripture, also, the true God is represented as making the clouds his chariot, and walking upon the wings of the wind; and, again, we read that "his pavilion round about him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies." When Isaiah predicts the destruction of Egypt and the confusion of its idols from the hand of the Lord, he uses the sublime representation, "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt." Daniel employs similar language in relation to the Son of man: "Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." The representation before us here is in accordance also with our Lord's reply, when, in answer to his question about his Messiahship, he directed their attention from the humility of his first to the honour of his second coming, saying, "Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." So also, when he was going to part from his disciples, when he was going to leave our world, when his feet last stood on Olivet, when he was about to ascend to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God, the cloud became his vehicle, and coming *under* him received (*ὑπέλαβεν*) him out of the disciples' sight; and in that car of cloud he rose onward, and mounted upward to the right hand of the Father everlasting. Thence he shall come again with glorious majesty, according to the promise, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Further, in the Apocalypse, the Apostle John's representation of Christ's coming with clouds is designed and calculated to signify the grandeur and the glory, the solemnity and the sublimity of his second advent: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

III. THE GLORY AND POWER WITH WHICH HE COMES. Every manifestation of glory shall attend him; every symbol of unspeakable splendour shall accompany him; every token of dignity shall signalize him; every adjunct of might and magnificence shall mark his advent. The Son of man shall come with great power and glory; all the holy angels shall swell his train. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and swell that assemblage; they that are still alive, and remain till that dread day, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Can anything be grander than this? Can anything be more august? Can anything be more solemn? Can anything be more awe-inspiring? Is there anything more calculated to overwhelm with consternation the wicked? Is there anything more fitted to create deep and universal alarm among the ungodly? What, on the other hand, can be more inspiriting to the believer? What more encouraging and comforting to the child of God? What more suitable to nerve to high effort and holy purpose than the prospect of being presented faultless in that day, and amid that assembly, and before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy?

> "A hope so great and so Divine
> May trials well endure,
> And purge the soul from sense and sin,
> As Christ himself is pure."

IV. THE OBJECT OF HIS COMING. We may now reflect for a moment on the great purposes for which Christ shall come the second time. At first he came in weakness, but at his next coming he will take to him his great power and reign. At first he came in dishonour, born in a stable, cradled in a manger, being "despised and rejected of men;" but then he shall come in dignity, and so that "every eye shall see him," every tongue confess him, and every knee bow before him. At first he came in a servile, suffering state; but then in awful majesty and glory everlasting—in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father. At first he came to call sinners to repentance; but then to summon each to his reward, be it recompense or retribution, and "to give every man according as his work shall be." It is true that the coming of the Son of man described in the verses immediately before us has for its specific object the grand

assemblage of his saints to meet him; the accessories of the resurrection, the transformation of the living, and the general judgment are left out of sight. From the tribulation connected with the fall of Jerusalem the Saviour had looked far forward into other days, when great changes, whether literal and cosmical, or figurative and political, shall precede and serve as precursors of the second coming of the Son of man. If the language is understood figuratively, the darkening of the sun may denote the eclipse of ecclesiastical authority; that of the moon, the collapse of civil polity; while the stars or potentates shall be falling or waning (the form of the future made up of substantive verb and participle, implying a more durable effect than the simple future). In the parable of the fig tree, however, he reverts to the precursors of the dissolution of the Jewish state and the destruction of its capital; and affirms that, as the tender leaf-buds of the fig tree signified the near approach of harvest-time (θέρος), so the signs already specified in an early part of this chapter indicated the fast-approaching destruction of the sanctuary and city of Jerusalem. If, then, the statement of ver. 30, "that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done," be referred to the end of the Jewish state, the word γενεὰ retains its ordinary sense of generation or contemporary race, which some insist on. If, on the other hand, the end of the age or world be referred to, whether the coming of the Son of man be for the purpose of ushering in the millennium, that is, pre-millennial, or for the final winding up of all things, the word γενεὰ must be understood as equivalent to γένος, race, that is, the people or nation of the Jews, or, according to some, the race of men in general, more especially the *generation* of the faithful.

V. THE DIFFERENT FEELINGS WITH WHICH HIS COMING IS REGARDED. The visit of some distinguished person to our neighbourhood or to our habitation may, according to circumstances, awaken emotions of a very different or even diverse character. Our feelings in view of the expected visit will be either pleasant or painful, according to the character of the visitor or the object of his coming. If he comes as a friend to further our interests, to favour our fondly cherished hopes, and to confer on us certain benefits, we naturally hail his coming with delight and rejoice at the prospect of his speedy advent. If, on the contrary, we have reason to believe that his intentions are hostile, that he means to oppose our plans, that he has some unpleasant measure to enforce or some punishment to inflict, we just as naturally dread his arrival and recoil from his approach. With similarly opposite views and feelings, saints and sinners, believers and unbelievers, look forward to the coming of him to whom this passage refers.—J. J. G.

Vers. 32—37. Parallel passages: Matt. xxiv. 36—51; Luke xxi. 34—36.—*Preparation for Christ's coming.* I. TRANSITION FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM TO THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. Again our Lord passes from the typical event to the antitypical consummation of all things—from the destruction of the holy city to the dissolution of things visible. The limitation of our Lord's knowledge with respect to "that day and that hour" must be understood of his human nature as the Son of man, in which he was subject to such other sinless conditions of humanity as increasing in wisdom, growing in stature, feeling hunger, thirst, lassitude, and the like; or it did not come within the sphere of his prophetic office to reveal it, as it belonged to "the times or the seasons which the Father hath set within his own authority." Our Lord, according to Meyer, knew this κατὰ κτῆσιν, *i.e.* with respect to possession, of which, however, in his humiliation he had divested himself; not κατὰ χρῆσιν, in regard to use, viz. for revelation.

II. THE GREAT EVENTS CONSEQUENT ON HIS COMING. One of these events shall be the *resurrection* of the dead. "Now," says the apostle, "is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept;" but then shall be this world's great harvest-day. Then shall a shout be heard, so loud, so piercing, that it will reach the dull, cold ear of death; the voice of the archangel shall re-echo through the dismal recesses of the tomb, and call to life the buried dead; the trump of God shall resound through the caverns of earth and the caves of ocean, till earth and sea shall give up the dead that are in them. Then shall be fulfilled the saying of our Lord elsewhere recorded, that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth; they that have done good, to the

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." Further, on his coming at the day or hour here spoken of, the Son of man shall *judge* the world in righteousness. The dead, small and great, shall stand before him; the judgment shall be set, and the books opened. All nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and peoples shall be assembled at that bar of God; "we must all appear before that judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or evil." The decisions of that day shall be final, allowing no alteration, no appeal, and no reversal. Not only so; based on the unvarying principles of justice and equity, righteousness and truth, they shall commend themselves to the consciences of all concerned. The condemned and justified alike shall acquiesce in them; sinners shall assent to them as just; saints shall approve of them as gracious; angels shall applaud them as worthy of the Judge; and all intelligences shall acknowledge them to be as impartial as irreversible.

III. THE FOURTH PRACTICAL DIRECTION. The fourth great moral lesson of the chapter is *watchfulness*. This lesson our Lord insists on, repeating it with great earnestness, and conjoining with it the duty of prayerfulness: "Take ye heed, watch and pray;" "Watch ye therefore;" and again, "Watch." The two duties of watchfulness and prayerfulness are frequently associated; thus, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Both together represent Divine and human strength in co-operation with each other. If we watch without prayer, we depend on human strength, and dispense with Divine aid; if we pray without watching, we depend on Divine strength alone, and despise the human means of help which God himself has commanded us to employ. They are the two strong arms of defence against the evil one; and we may not, we cannot, without serious dereliction of duty and gravest danger, part with either of them. This duty of watchfulness is enforced by a beautiful parabolic illustration; though it is not a formal parable, as the words supplied in the Common Version make it. Those words, "For the Son of man is," should be struck out; equally unnatural is it to supply the words, "The kingdom of heaven is;" neither is Kuinoel's mode of supplying the ellipsis by ποιῶ any better; while Euthymius, who seems to refer the words to Christ and to understand the future of the substantive verb, as though it were, "I shall be as a man setting out on a far journey," is even less satisfactory. In addition to this, ἀπόδημος, said of one "already abroad, or an absentee from his people," is confounded with ἀποδημῶν, which signifies "going abroad." Fritzsche rightly explains as follows:—"Res ita habet ut—die Sache verhält sich so wie," and compares therewith the Horatian use of *ut si* in the words, "Ut tibi si sit opus liquidi non amplius urna." So also the Revised Version, correctly renders correctly: "*It is* as *when* a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch." This translation helps us much in the right understanding of the illustration. The man is already abroad; but before he went abroad, he, as a matter of course, left his house, having previously to leaving given authority to his servants in general to manage matters for him in his absence, and having appointed to each in particular his special work; and when on the threshold, as it were, he gave a charge to the porter *also* to watch, and so be prepared for his return.

IV. REASONS FOR THE WATCHFULNESS ENJOINED. Though there is no express application of the illustration, a circumstance which adds much to the ease and grace of the narrative, we are at no loss for, and find no difficulty in making, that application. The Master of the house is our Lord; his disciples, in the first place, are the domestics whom he entrusted with the management of the household when he himself took his departure to the goodly land afar off, appointing each believer his own sphere of labour and the special duty he was bound to perform, and leaving a strict charge of watchfulness with the porter who kept the door; that is, either the ministry in general, who are watchmen on the walls of Zion, or Peter in particular, to whom had been entrusted the power of the keys in opening the door of faith to Jew and Gentile. Nor do we thereby concede anything to the Romanist in reference to Peter's supremacy—a rank which the apostle himself never claimed. Be this as it may, however, the duty of watchfulness is enjoined on all, (1) because the time of the Master's coming back is *unknown*. We know neither the day nor the hour of our Lord's return. No fellow-creature can tell us; no minister nor man can inform us; no angel can give us any

intimation; no messenger from either world can bring us word. "Of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of God." Now, though the coming of the Son of man is not to be confounded with death—for the two events are quite distinct—yet for all practical purposes, and as far as our personal interests are concerned, death is the coming of the Son of man to us individually; for whether he come to us or he call us to him, it is virtually the same thing for us, as then our destiny is finally and for ever fixed. We are urged to watchfulness (2) because this event, which, though not the coming of the Son of man to the Church in its universality, is tantamount to his coming to the Christian in his individuality, is *uncertain* as to time. This great event may be near at hand while we least expect it. This day may be our last on earth, and our first in the spirit-world; on this very night the soul may be required. This very day our lamp may lose its oil and go out in darkness; this very day our tabernacle may totter and tumble into dust; this very day our wondrous harp, with its thousand strings, may go out of tune and lose its melody. "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." What is your lease of life? It is the breath in your nostrils, and at any moment that breath may be withdrawn. In any case—

"Determined are the days that fly
Successive o'er thy head;
The number'd hour is on the wing
That lays thee with the dead."

Further, watchfulness is indispensable, because (3) at his coming he will deal with us *separately and singly*. We shall be assembled in the aggregate, but dealt with in detail. The great fact is as prominently stated, as it is positively sure, that we must each stand in his lot at the end of the days. You, reader, and I and all must soon give an account of our stewardship—must soon be reckoned with for the talents, whether ten, or five, or one, that God gave us; whether we have buried them in the earth, or brought them forth employed, improved, and augmented; whether we have wasted our Lord's goods, or used them in his service and for his glory; whether we have occupied till the time of his coming, or loitered out our day of life. We are required to be watchful, for (4) in the last great day each and all—the one and the many—shall stand *face to face* with the Judge of all the earth. If we pause and ponder the vastness of that crowd, we are almost overwhelmed by the thought. Let us think of all the people of a single nation being brought together; what a crowd they would make! Let us think of all the subjects of a great empire being assembled at one place and at one time; what an assembly that would be! Let us then think of all the inhabitants of one of the quarters of the globe being congregated; what an immense mass-meeting would be thus formed! Yet the thought of the great congregation at the coming of the Son of man far outgoes all that. The assemblage which it implies, and which shall one day take place, shall consist, not only of the inhabitants of a province, or a nation, or an empire, or even a quarter of the globe, but shall comprehend the inhabitants of all provinces, nations, empires, and quarters of the globe, down along the ages and throughout all the centuries of time. And yet not one in all that crowd shall be hidden from the eye of him that cometh in that day; not one shall be able to evade his presence, not one escape his sentence, not one shall be so remote as to be unable to catch a glance of him, not one on whom his eye shall not rest. "Every eye shall see him!"—the eye that contemplated his goodness and his grace; the eye that "beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" the eye that looked and longed for his appearing; the eye, on the contrary, that looked only on the objects of sense and sin, the pomps and vanities of the world, and the follies of life; the eye that never gazed upon the cross, or never cast more than a passing glance thereat, and then turned away in coldness or carelessness, or perhaps contempt; the eye of friend and follower; the eye of foe and false professor. Oh, what a sight to the unpardoned sinner, to the godless transgressor, to the swearer, to the sabbath-breaker, to the slanderer, to the adulterer, to the murderer, to the drunkard, to the liar, to the lewd and licentious, to the unholy and the unjust, to the impure and impenitent! Gladly would the wicked shut their eyes on that sight; gladly would they sink into the bowels of the earth or the depths of ocean to escape the glance of that searching eye! Earnestly will they

pray, who never prayed before, for the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of the Judge. But no, that cannot be; for it is added in another Scripture, "They also that pierced him." We all, whether ministers or members of the Church of Christ, are bound to watchfulness—"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!"—and that lest (5) we should be found among those that *pierced* him. This refers to his actual murderers in the first instance—the Jews that condemned him, the Romans that crucified him, the scribes and Pharisees that plotted against him, the priests and people that persecuted him, the passers-by that wagged the head, the men that scoffed him, and those that scourged him, and they that spat upon him; the fierce mob that cried, "Away with him! away with him!" the judge that condemned him, the disciple that betrayed him—all that imbrued their hands in his precious blood or had aught to do with his death. But we may not stop here. Others have pierced him, too; for we read of those who "crucify Christ afresh, and put him to an open shame." Ah! is there any of ourselves included in that number? Is there any of us who have pierced his heart by our sin, by our disobedience, by our ingratitude, by our backsliding, by our coldness, and by our carelessness? Ah! is there none of us to whom he can say, "See, here are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends"? "Watch ye therefore!" is repeated once and again and a third time. While one of the terms used signifies to keep awake and remain sleepless, the other means to awake or arouse from sleepiness; and thus the sense seems to be, if the distinction is admitted, to guard against sleep overtaking us at the post of duty; or, if unhappily we have been overtaken by drowsiness, to rouse ourselves at once from our slumber and repent of our sinful somnolence. And all the more as we are left in such entire uncertainty and ignorance of the hour when the Master shall come and reckon with us in our individual capacity, and, if we are found culpable, condemn us with the wicked. That hour may be at any of the four watches of the night—nine o'clock, or twelve, or three, or six in the morning. So important is this lesson that our Lord, in St. Matthew's Gospel, enforces it by two parables—that of the virgins and that of the talents; the former inculcating watchfulness over the spirit, and probably implied in ver. 36 of the present chapter; the latter quickening faithfulness in duty, and seemingly epitomized in the two preceding verses of this same chapter.

V. OTHER LESSONS OF THE CHAPTER. 1. *The truth of Scripture.* Besides the lessons already noticed, there are others to which we can only advert. The lessons scattered through this chapter are like flowers in a summer field. Another of these is the truth of Scripture. "Heaven and earth shall pass away." The frame of nature, stable as it now seems, has in it the elements of change. There are changes in the geological strata of the earth beneath us, in the sky above us, in the natural world around us. Great changes have already taken place in earth and sea and sky; great physical changes are daily going on; still greater changes may be expected to occur in time to come. The surest inductions of science point to such changes and collapses. "But my words," said our Lord, "shall not pass away." His words have passed into the spiritual fibre of his people, living in their lives, exhibited in their conduct, illustrated by their character, and consoling them in the hour of dissolution. Statesmen have been guided by them, lawgivers have framed laws by them, philosophers have made more use of them in building up their systems than they have been willing to acknowledge to others, or have even been conscious of, themselves. The words of Christ have for eighteen hundred years or more blended with the inspirations of the poet; they have almost moved in the marble of the statuary, and spoken from the canvas of the painter. Time has not exhausted their fulness; no taint has touched their freshness, nor has aught of their fragrance decayed. Further, the inspiration of Scripture is safely inferred from the statement in ver. 11, "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost," compared with St. Luke's parallel statement, "I will give you a mouth," the expression, "and wisdom," the matter to be expressed. 2. *The publication of the gospel among all nations.* The gospel must first be published. Here was the great end to be attained. We have seen how this was virtually accomplished before the fall of Jerusalem; but the world has widened its boundaries since then. Continents and islands have been added to it; navigation and travel have enlarged geography, and geography has added to the dimensions of the globe, or at least has revealed those before unknown. And still the gospel is preached, and shall be.

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

3. *Watchfulness the lesson of the ages.* Scenes similar to those that preceded Christ's coming at the fall of Jerusalem may be repeated, and repeated over a wider area and on a grander scale. Then, as before, there may be wars—some actual, others rumoured—great international conflicts, and fatal internecine strife; then, as before, there may be physical catastrophes, providential visitations, as the travail-throes of greater events—the travail-pangs in the genesis of the new order of things; then, as before, there may be persecutions, prolonged and repeated, and the severance of the nearest ties of kinship, with universal hatred for the Saviour's sake. Yet, through all, men must possess their souls in patience, or rather, according to the correcter reading, gain their souls, their real life, by patience—patient endurance, not violent resistance. Men may be worn with watching, pining for peace, and aweary for rest; still the same lesson has to be repeated, the same duty practised: "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" Watchfulness is still the duty of the Church and of the Christian.

"Yet saints their watch are keeping;
Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song."

J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1.—Now after two days was the feast of the passover and the unleavened bread; literally, *the passover and the unleavened* (τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὰ ἄζυμα). It was one and the same festival. The killing of the Paschal lamb took place on the first of the seven days during which the festival lasted, and during the whole of which they used unleavened bread. Josephus describes it as "the festival of the unleavened, called *Phaska* by the Jews." The chief priests and the scribes. St. Matthew (xxvi. 3) says, "The chief priests and the elders of the people." The two classes in the Sanhedrim who actually combined to put our Lord to death were those here mentioned by St. Mark. They sought how they might take him with subtlety (ἐν δόλῳ), and kill him. It is, literally, *they were seeking* (ἐζήτουν). The verb with its tense implies continuous and eager desire. They used subtlety, because they feared lest he should escape out of their hands. Moreover they feared the people, lest they should fight for him, and not suffer him to be taken.

Ver. 2.—For they said (ἔλεγον γάρ)—literally, *for they were saying*—Not during the feast, lest haply there shall be a tumult of the people. The same cause induced them to avoid the time of the feast. The feast brought a great multitude of Jews to Jerusalem, amongst whom would be many who had received bodily or spiritual benefits from Christ, and who therefore, at least, worshipped him as a Prophet; and the rulers of the people feared lest these should rise in his defence. Their first intention, therefore, was not to destroy him until after the close of the Paschal feast; but they were overruled by the course of events, all ordered by God's never-failing providence. The sudden betrayal of our Lord by Judas led them to change their minds. For when they found that he was actually in their hands, they resolved to crucify him forthwith. And thus the Divine purpose was fulfilled that Christ should suffer at that particular time, and so the type be satisfied. For the lamb slain at the Passover was a type of the very Paschal Lamb to be sacrificed at that particular time, in the predetermined purpose of God; and to be lifted up upon the cross for the redemption of the world. St. Matthew (xxvi. 3) tells us that they were gathered together "unto the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas." It was necessary to state his name, because the high priests were now frequently changed by the Roman power.

Ver. 3.—And while he was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster cruse (ἀλάβαστρον)—literally, *an alabaster;* as we say, "a glass," of a vessel made of glass—of ointment of spikenard very costly (μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς); and she brake the cruse, and poured it over his head. This anointing of our Lord appears to have taken place on the Saturday before Palm Sunday (see John

xii. 1). The anointing mentioned by St. Luke (vii. 36) evidently has reference to some previous occasion. The narrative here and in St. Matthew and St. John would lead us to the conclusion that this was a feast given by Simon—perhaps in grateful acknowledgment of the miracle which had been wrought upon Lazarus. He is called "Simon the leper," probably because he had been a leper, and had been healed by Christ, although he still retained the name of "leper," to distinguish him from others named Simon, or Simeon, a common name amongst the Jews. *There came a woman.* This woman, we learn from St. John (xii. 2, 3), was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. The vessel, or cruse, which she had with her was made of alabaster, a kind of soft, smooth marble, which could easily be scooped out so as to form a receptacle for ointment, which, according to Pliny ('Nat. Hist.,' xiii. 3), was best preserved in vessels made of alabaster. The vessel would probably be formed with a long narrow neck, which could easily be broken, or crushed (the word in the original is *συντρίψασα*) so as to allow of a free escape for the unguent. The ointment was made of spikenard (*νάρδου πιστικῆς*). The Vulgate has *nardi spicati.* If this is the true interpretation of the word *πιστικῆς*, it would mean that this ointment was made from a bearded plant mentioned by Pliny ('Nat. Hist.,' xii. 12), who says that the ointment made from this plant was most precious. The plant was called by Galen "nardi spica." Hence *πιστικῆν* would mean "genuine" ointment—ointment made from the flowers of the choicest kind of plant. Pliny ('Nat. Hist.,' xii. 26) says that there was an inferior article in circulation, which he calls "pseudo-nard." The Syriac Peshito Version uses an expression which means the principal, or best kind of ointment. The anointing of the head would be the more usual mark of honour. It would seem most probable that Mary first wiped the feet of Jesus, wetting them with her tears, and then wiping off the dust, and then anointing them; and that she then proceeded to break the neck of the cruse, and to pour its whole contents on his head.

Ver. 4.—**But there were some that had indignation**—the word in the original is *ἀγανακτοῦντες, ached with vexation*—among themselves. St. Mark says, "there were some;" avoiding any more particular mention of them. St. Matthew (xxvi. 8) says that the disciples generally had indignation. The murmuring seems to have been general. At length it found a definite expression in Judas Iscariot (see John xii. 4).

Ver. 5.—**For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence, and given to the poor.** Three hundred pence would amount to about £10 12*s.* 6*d.* of English money. It appears from St. John (xiii. 29) that the wants of the poor were carefully attended to by our Lord and his disciples. **And they murmured against her** (*ἐνεβριμῶντο αὐτῇ*); another very expressive verb in the original, *they growled at her; rebuked her vehemently.*

Ver. 6.—It appears from St. John (xii. 7) that our Lord here addressed himself pointedly to Judas in the words, **Let her alone; . . . she hath wrought a good work on me,** a work worthy of all praise and honour. "What," says Cornelius à Lapide, "what more noble, than to anoint the feet of him who is both God and man? Who would not count himself happy, if it were permitted to him to touch the feet of Jesus and to kiss them?"

Ver. 7.—**For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can** (*δύνασθε*) **do them good: but me ye have not always.** The little clause, "whensoever ye will ye can do them good," occurs only in St. Mark. It is as though our Lord said, "The world always abounds with poor; therefore you always have it in your power to help them; but within a week I shall have gone from you, after which you will be unable to perform any service like this for me; yea, no more to see, to hear, to touch me. Suffer, then, this woman to perform this ministry now for me, which after six days she will have no other opportunity of doing."

Ver. 8.—**She hath done what she could.** She seized the opportunity, which might not occur again, of doing honour to her Lord by anointing him with her very best. Our Lord might have excused this action, and have praised it as a practical evidence of her gratitude, her humility, and her love for him. But instead of dwelling on these things, he said, **She hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying.** Our Lord here, of course, alludes to the spices and ointments with which the Jews wrapped up the bodies of their dead before their burial. Not that this was what Mary intended. She could hardly have dreamed of his death and burial so near at hand. But she was moved by the Holy Spirit to do this, at this particular time, as though in anticipation of his death and burial.

Ver. 9.—**Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her** (*εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς*). "Mnemosyné was the mother of the Muses, and so called because, before the invention of writing, a retentive memory was of the utmost value in every effort of literary genius" (Dr. Morison on St. Mark). When our Lord delivered this prediction, none of the Gospels had been written; nor

had the gospel been preached at this time throughout the then known world. Now it has been published for more than eighteen centuries; and wherever it is proclaimed, this deed of Mary's is published with it, in continual memory of her, and to her lasting honour.

Ver. 10.—**And Judas Iscariot, he that was one of the twelve** (ὁ εἷς τῶν δώδεκα), **went away unto the chief priests, that he might deliver him unto them.** The betrayal follows immediately after the anointing by Mary. We may suppose that the other disciples who had murmured on account of this waste of the ointment, were brought to their senses by our Lord's rebuke, and felt its force. But with Judas the case was very different. The rebuke, which had a salutary effect on them, only served to harden him. He had lost one opportunity of gain; he would seek another. In his cupidity and wickedness he resolves to betray his Master, and sell him to the Jews. So while the chief priests were plotting how they might destroy him, they found an apt and unexpected instrument for their purpose in one of his own disciples. Judas came to them, and the vile and hateful bargain was concluded. It marks the tremendous iniquity of the transaction that it was "one of the twelve" who betrayed him—not one of the seventy, but one of those who were in the closest intimacy and nearness to him.

Ver. 11.—**And they, when they heard it, were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought** (ἐζήτει)—*he was seeking;* he made it his business to arrange how the infamous plot might be managed—**how he might conveniently deliver him unto them** (πῶς εὐκαίρως αὐτὸν παραδῷ); literally, *how at a convenient season he might betray him. And they, when they heard it, were glad;* glad, because they saw the prospect of the accomplishment of their wishes; glad, because it was "one of the twelve" who covenanted to betray him. *They promised to give him money.* St. Matthew (xxvi. 15) tells us the amount, namely, thirty pieces of silver, according to the prophecy of Zechariah (xi. 12), to which St. Matthew evidently refers. These pieces of silver were shekels of the sanctuary, worth about three shillings each. This would make the whole amount about £4 10s. of our money; less than half the value of the precious ointment with which Mary had anointed him. Some commentators, however, think that this was only an instalment of what they promised him if he completed his treasonable design. *How he might conveniently deliver him unto them.* St. Luke (xxii. 6) explains this by saying, "in the absence of the multitude;" that is, when the people were not about him, and when he was in private with his disciples. **And so he betrayed him at night,** when he was alone with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Ver. 12.—**And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and make ready that thou mayest eat the passover?** The first day of unleavened bread would begin on the evening of the Thursday (the 14th day of the month Nisan). *Where wilt thou that we prepare?* They do not inquire in what city or town. The Passover could not be sacrificed anywhere but in Jerusalem. The question was in what *house* it was to be prepared.

Ver. 13.—**And he sendeth two of his disciples.** St. Luke (xxii. 8) informs us that these two were Peter and John. It is characteristic of St. Mark's Gospel throughout that Peter is never mentioned oftener than is necessary. **Go into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water.** The bearing of the pitcher of water was not without its meaning. It was a solemn religious act preparatory to the Passover. This man bearing a pitcher of water was not the master or owner of the house. The owner is distinguished afterwards by the name οἰκοδέσποτης, or "goodman of the house." The owner must, therefore, have been a man of some substance, and probably a friend if not a disciple of our Lord. Tradition says that this was the house of John whose surname was Mark; and that it was in this house that the disciples were assembled on the evening of our Lord's resurrection, and where, also, they received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost. It was to this house that Peter betook himself when he was delivered by the angel out of prison. Hence it was known, as one of the earliest places of Christian worship, by the name of "Cœnaculum Sion;" and here was built a church, called the Church of Sion. It was the oldest church in Jerusalem, and was called by St. Cyril, "the upper church of the apostles." (See Joseph Mede, p. 322.)

Ver. 14.—**The Master saith, Where is my guest-chamber** (κατάλυμα μου); literally, *my lodging.*

Ver. 15.—**And he will himself show you a large upper room furnished and ready.** He himself, that is, the goodman of the house; perhaps John Mark. This upper room was furnished and ready (ἐστρωμένον ἕτοιμον); furnished, that is, with table and couches and tapestry, and in all respects ready for the purpose.

Ver. 16.—**And they made ready the passover.** This would consist in obtaining the Paschal lamb, and taking it to the temple to be sacrificed by the priests. It would

then be brought to the house to be cooked; and the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the wine would have to be provided, and the water for purification. After all these preparations had been made, the two disciples would return to their Master.

Ver. 17.—**And when it was evening he cometh with the twelve.** It was in the evening that the lamb was to be eaten. Peter and John having returned from their preparation, the twelve (including Judas Iscariot) all went back with their Master to Jerusalem.

Ver. 18.—**Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray me, even he that eateth with me** (*ὁ ἐσθίων μετ' ἐμοῦ*). Much had doubtless happened before our Lord said this; but St. Mark only records the important circumstances. These words of our Lord were uttered with great solemnity. The presence of the traitor was a burden upon his spirit, and cast a gloom over this usually joyous festival. A question here arises whether Judas remained to partake of the Holy Communion when our Lord instituted it. The greater number of the Fathers, and amongst them Origen, St. Cyril, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and Bede, consider that he was present; and Dionysius says that our Lord's words to him, "That thou doest, do quickly," were intended to separate him from the rest of the twelve as one who had partaken unworthily; and that then it was that Satan entered into him, and impelled him onwards to this terrible sin.

Ver. 19.—**They began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I?** The disciples were naturally disposed to be joyful at this great festival. But their Master's sorrow and his words, and the solemnity with which they were uttered, cast a shadow over the whole company; and the disciples began to be sorrowful. The words, "And another said, Is it I?" are omitted by the best authorities.

Ver. 20.—**And he said unto them, It is one of the twelve, he that dippeth with me in the dish.** St. Mark here uses the present participle (*ὁ ἐμβαπτόμενος*), bringing the action close to the time when he was speaking. St. Matthew (xxvi. 23) has (*ὁ ἐμβάψας*) "he that dipped his hand," using the aorist form. St. Mark's form is the more graphic. The dish probably contained a sauce called *charoseth*, into which they dipped their food before eating it. The following appears to have been the order of the events:—First, our Lord, before he instituted the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, foretold that he would be betrayed by one of his disciples; but only in general terms. Then came the eager question from them, "Is it I?" Then Christ answered that the traitor was he who should dip his hand together with him in the dish. But this did not bring it home to the individual, because several who sat near to him were able to dip with him in the dish. So that our Lord had as yet only obscurely and indefinitely pointed out the traitor. Then he proceeded to institute "the Lord's Supper;" after which he again intimated (Luke xxii. 21) that "the hand of him that betrayed him was with him on the table." Upon this, St. Peter hinted to St. John, who was "reclining in Jesus' bosom," that he should ask him to say definitely and by name who it was that should betray him. Our Lord then said to St. John, "He it is, for whom I shall dip the sop, and give it him" (John xiii. 26). Our Lord then dipped the sop, and gave it to Judas Iscariot. Then it was that our Lord said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly" (*ὃ ποιεῖς, ποίησον τάχιον*) (John xiii. 27). Then Judas went straightway to the house of Caiaphas, and procured the band of men and officers for the completion of his horrible design.

Ver. 21.—**For the Son of man goeth** (*ὑπάγει*)—goeth, departeth from this mortal scene: the reference is, of course, to his death—**even as it is written of him**; as, for example, in Ps. xxii. and Isa. xli. It was foreordained by God that he was to suffer as a victim for the sins of the whole world. But this predestined purpose of God did not make the guilt any the less of those who brought the Saviour to his cross. **Good were it for that man if he had not been born.** The Greek is *καλὸν ἦν αὐτῷ, εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος*: literally, *good were it for him, if that man had not been born.* Better not to have lived at all than to have lived and died ill. Existence is no blessing, but a curse, to him who consciously and wilfully defeats the purpose of his existence. St. Matthew (xxvi. 25) here introduces Judas as asking the question, "Is it I, Rabbi?" And our Lord answers him affirmatively, "Thou hast said." This was probably said in a low voice. Had it been said so as to be heard by others, such as Peter and John, they might have risen at once to inflict summary vengeance upon the apostate traitor.

Ver. 22.—The last clause of this verse should be read thus: **Take ye: this is my body** (*Λάβετε· τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ σῶμά μου*). The institution of this Holy Sacrament took place at the close of the Paschal supper, but while they were yet at the table. The bread which our Lord took would most likely be unleavened bread. But this does not surely constitute a reason why unleavened bread should be used ordinarily in the celebration of the Holy Communion. The direction of the Prayer-book of the English Church is wise and practical, "It shall suffice that the

Bread be such as is usual to be eaten." *This is my body;* that is, sacramentally. St. Augustine ('Sermo.,' 272) says, "How is the bread his body? and the cup, or that which the cup contains, how is that his blood? These are, therefore, called sacraments, because in them one thing is seen while another thing is understood" (quoted by Dr. Morison, p. 392).

Ver. 23.—**And he took a cup.** There is no definite article either here or in St. Matthew.

Ver. 24.—**This is my blood of the covenant.** There is not sufficient authority for the retaining of the word "new" (καινῆς) in the text.

Ver. 25.—**I will no more drink** (οὐκέτι οὐ μὴ πίω) **of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.** It is observable that our Lord here calls the wine "the fruit (γέννημα) of the vine," after he has spoken of it as sacramentally his blood. Our Lord here refers to the time of the regeneration of all things, when the heavenly kingdom shall appear in the fulness of its glory; and when his disciples, who now feed upon him sacramentally and by faith, shall then eat at his table in his kingdom, and drink of the river of his pleasures for ever.

Ver. 26.—**And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives.** Some suppose that this was one particular hymn out of the Jewish service-books appointed for use at the close of the Paschal supper. The word in the Greek is simply ὑμνήσαντες. What they sang was more probably the Hallel, consisting of six psalms, from Ps. cxiii. to Ps. cxviii. inclusive. *They went out unto the Mount of Olives.* It was our Lord's custom, in these last days of his earthly life, to go daily to Jerusalem, and teach in the temple, and in the evening to return to Bethany and sup; and then after supper to retire to the Mount of Olives, and there to spend the night in prayer (Luke xxi. 37). But on this occasion he did not return to Bethany. He had supped in Jerusalem. Besides, he knew that his hour was come. So he voluntarily put himself into the way of the traitor (John xviii. 2).

Ver. 27.—**All ye shall be offended.** The words which follow in the Authorized Version, "because of me this night," are not to be found in the best manuscripts and versions. They appear to have been imported from St. Matthew. *Shall be offended* (σκανδαλισθήσεσθε); literally, *shall be caused to stumble.* Our Lord was to prove "a stone of stumbling" to many, not excluding his own disciples. Even they, under the influence of terror, would for a time lose confidence and hope in him. **For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad.** This is a quotation from Zechariah (xiii. 7), "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd." This passage brings out in a remarkable manner the Divine agency in the death of Christ. *The sheep shall be scattered abroad.* The disciples all forsook him and fled, when they saw him actually in the hands of his enemies. They felt doubtful for the moment whether he was indeed the Son of God. "They trusted that it was he who should redeem Israel;" but now their hopes gave way to fear and doubt. They fled hither and thither like frightened sheep. But God gathered them together again, so that when our Lord rose from the dead, he found them all in the same place; and then he revived their faith and courage. Our Lord and his disciples had no settled home or friends in Jerusalem; so they had no other place to flee to than that upper chamber, where, not long before, Christ had kept the Passover with them. The owner of that house was a friend; so thither they went, and there Christ appeared to them after his resurrection.

Ver. 28.—**Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.** This our Lord said to reassure them. Galilee was more like home to them than Jerusalem, and they would there be less afraid of the unbelieving Jews.

Ver. 29.—**But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.** Our Lord had just distinctly stated that they would all be offended, and therefore these words of St. Peter were very presumptuous. Conscious of his own infirmities, he ought to have said, "I know that through my own infirmity this may easily happen. Nevertheless, I trust to thy mercy and goodness to save me." Just such is the Christian's daily experience. We often think that we are strong in the faith, strong in purity, strong in patience. But when temptation arises, we falter and fall. The true remedy against temptation is the consciousness of our own weakness, and supplication for Divine strength.

Ver. 30.—**Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice.** The day had begun. It began at six in the evening. It was already advanced. This second crowing of the cock is mentioned by St. Mark only; and it forms an additional aggravation of Peter's sin. The "cockcrowing" was a term used for one of the divisions of the night (see ch. xiii. 35). But it appears that there were three times at which the cock-crowing might be expected—namely, (1)

early in the night, between eleven and twelve; (2) between one and two; and (3) between five and six. The two cockcrowings here referred to would be the two last of the three here mentioned. It would probably be about 2 a.m., when the first trial of our Lord took place in the house of Caiaphas.

Ver. 31.—**But he spake exceeding vehemently** (ἐκπερισσῶς ἐλάλει), **If I must die with thee** (ἐάν με δέῃ), **I will not deny thee.** The right reading (ἐλάλει, imperfect) implies that he kept asserting over and over again. He was, no doubt, sincere in all this, but he had yet to learn his own weakness. St. Hilary says on this, "Peter was so carried away by the fervour of his zeal and love for Christ, that he regarded neither the weakness of his own flesh nor the truth of his Master's word."

Ver. 32.—**And they come** (ἔρχονται)—here again St. Mark's present gives force to the narrative—**unto a place which was named Gethsemane.** *A place* (χωρίον) is, literally, *an enclosed piece of ground*, generally with a cottage upon it. Josephus tells us that these gardens were numerous in the suburbs of Jerusalem. St. Jerome says that "Gethsemane was at the foot of the Mount of Olives." St. John (xviii. 1) calls it a garden, or orchard (κῆπος). The word "Gethsemane" means literally "the place of the *olive-press*," whither the olives which abounded on the slopes of the mountain were brought, in order that the oil contained in them might be pressed out. The exact position of Gethsemane is not known; although there is an enclosed spot at the foot of the western slope of the Mount of Olives which is called to this day *El Jesmániye*. The real Gethsemane cannot be far from this spot. Our Lord resorted to this place for retirement and prayer, not as desiring to escape the death that awaited him. It was well known to be his favourite resort; so that he went there, as though to put himself in the way of Judas, who would naturally seek him there. **Sit ye here, while I pray.** St. Matthew (xxvi. 36) says, "While I go yonder and pray."

Ver. 33.—It appears that our Lord separated himself from all the disciples except Peter and James and John, and then the bitter agony began. **He began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled** (ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν). These two Greek verbs are as adequately expressed above as seems possible. The first implies "utter, extreme amazement;" if the second has for its root ἄδημος, "not at home," it implies the anguish of the soul struggling to free itself from the body under the pressure of intense mental distress. The three chosen disciples were allowed to be witnesses of this awful anguish. They had been fortified to endure the sight by the glories of the transfiguration. It would have been too much for the faith of the rest. But these three witnessed it, that they might learn themselves, and be able to teach others, that the way to glory is by suffering.

Ver. 34.—None but he who bore those sorrows can know what they were. It was not the apprehension of the bodily torments and the bitter death that awaited him, all foreknown by him. It was the inconceivable agony of the weight of the sins of men. The Lord was thus laying "upon him the iniquity of us all." This, and this alone, can explain it. **My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.** Every word carries the emphasis of an overwhelming grief. It was then that "the deep waters came in," even unto his soul. "What,' says Cornelius à Lapide, "must have been the voice, the countenance, the expression, as he uttered those awful words!"

Ver. 35.—Our Lord now separated himself, though apparently, as St. Luke (xxii. 41) says, only "about a stone's cast" from the three disciples, and threw himself on the ground in mortal agony, and prayed that this hour of his supreme mental anguish might, if possible, pass from him.

Ver. 36.—**And he said, Abba, Father.** Some commentators suppose that our Lord only used the Hebrew or Aramaic word "Abba," and that St. Mark adds the Greek and Latin synonym (πατήρ) for the benefit of those to whom he was writing. But it is far more natural to conclude that St. Mark is here taking his narrative from an eye and ear witness, St. Peter; and that both the words were uttered by him; so that he thus, in his agony, cried to God in the name of the whole human family, the Jew first, and also the Gentile. We can quite understand why St. Matthew, writing to Jews, gives only the Hebrew word. **All things are possible unto thee.** Speaking absolutely, with God nothing is impossible. But the Deity is himself bound by his own laws; and hence this was impossible, consistently with his purposes of mercy for the redemption of the world. The Lord himself knew this. Therefore he does not ask for anything contrary to the will of his Father. But it was the natural craving of his humanity, which, subject to the supreme will of God, desired to be delivered from this terrible load. **Remove this cup from me.** The "cup," both in Holy Scripture and in profane writers, is taken to signify that lot or portion, whether good or evil, which is appointed for us by God. Hence St. John is frequently represented as holding a cup. **Howbeit, not what I will, but what thou wilt.** Our Lord has no sooner offered his conditional prayer than

he subordinates it to the will of God. St. Luke (xxii. 42) here says, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Hence it appears that there was not, as the Monothelites taught, one will, partly human and partly Divine, in Christ; but there were two distinct wills, one human and the other Divine, both residing in the one Christ; and it was by the subjecting of his human will to the Divine that he wrought out our redemption.

Ver. 37.—**And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldest thou not watch one hour?** St. Luke says (xxii. 45) that they were "sleeping for sorrow." So on the Mount of Transfiguration he says (ix. 32) that they were "heavy with sleep." This rebuke, which St. Mark tells us here was pointedly addressed to Peter, seems to glance at his earnest protestations of fidelity made not long before. And our Lord calls him by his old name of Simon. In St. Matthew (xxvi. 40) it is less pointed; for there, while our Lord looks at Peter, he addresses them all. "He saith unto *Peter*, What, could not *ye* watch with me one hour?" This is just one of those graphic little incidents which we may suppose St. Mark to have received directly from St. Peter.

Ver. 38.—**Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.** The great temptation of the disciples at that moment was to deny Christ under the influence of fear. And so our Lord gives here the true remedy against temptation of every kind; namely, watchfulness and prayer—watchfulness, against the craft and subtlety of the devil or man; and prayer, for the Divine help to overcome. **The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.** Here our Lord graciously finds excuses for them. It is as though he said, "I know that in heart and mind you are ready to cleave to me, even though the Jews should threaten you with death. But I know also that your flesh is weak. Pray, then, that the weakness of the flesh may not overcome the strength of the spirit." St. Jerome says, "In whatever degree we trust to the ardour of the spirit, in the same degree ought we to fear because of the infirmity of the flesh."

Ver. 39.—**Saying the same words.** The repetition of the same words shows his fixed determination to submit to the will of his heavenly Father. Although the human nature at first asserted itself in the prayer that the cup might pass from him; yet ultimately the human will yielded to the Divine. He desired to drink this cup of bitterness appointed for him by the will of God; for his supreme desire was that the will of God might be done.

Ver. 40.—**And again he came, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy** (καταβαρυνόμενοι); literally, *weighed down*. They had not deliberately yielded themselves to sleep; but an oppressive languor, the effect of great sorrow, had come over them, so that they could not watch as they desired to do; but by an involuntary action they ever and anon slumbered. **They wist not what to answer him.** They had no excuse, save that which he himself had found for them.

Ver. 41.—**And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough** (ἀπέχει); **the hour is come.** Some have thought that our Lord here uses the language of irony. But it is far more consistent with his usual considerate words to suppose that, sympathizing with the infirmity of his disciples, he simply advised them, now that his bitter agony was over, to take some rest during the brief interval that remained. *It is enough.* Some commentators have thought that the somewhat difficult Greek verb (ἀπέχει) would be better rendered, *he is at a distance;* as though our Lord meant to say, "There is yet time for you to take some rest. The betrayer is some distance off." Such an interpretation would require a full stop between the clause now rendered, "it is enough," and the clause, "the hour is come;" so that the passage would read, "Sleep on now, and take your rest; he (that is, Judas) is yet a good way off." Then there would be an interval; and then our Lord would rouse them up with the words, "The hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." This interpretation all hangs upon the true rendering of the word ἀπέχει, which, although it might be taken to mean "he," or "it is distant," is nevertheless quite capable of the ordinary interpretation, "it sufficeth." According to the high authority of Hesychius, who explains it by the words ἀπόχρη and ἐξαρκεῖ, it seems safer on the whole to accept the ordinary meaning, "It is enough."

Ver. 43.—**And straightway, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve.** How the stupendous crime is here marked! It was so startling a fact that "one of the twelve" should be the betrayer of our Lord, that this designation of Judas became linked with his name: "Judas, one of the twelve." He comes not only as a thief and a robber, but also as a traitor; the leader of those who were thirsting for Christ's blood. St. Luke (xxii. 47) says that Judas "went before them," in his eagerness to accomplish his hateful errand. **And with him a multitude** (not a great multitude; the word πολὺς has not sufficient authority). But though not a great multitude, they would be a con-

siderable number. There would be a band of soldiers; and there would be civil officers sent by the Sanhedrim. Thus Gentiles and Jews were united in the daring act of arresting the Son of God. St. John (xviii. 3) says that they had "lanterns and torches;" although the moon was at the full.

Ver. 44.—**Now he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he; take him, and lead him away safely.** Why was Judas so anxious that Christ should be secured? Perhaps because he feared a rescue, or because he feared lest our Lord should hide himself by an exercise of his miraculous power; and so Judas might lose the thirty pieces of silver.

Ver. 45.—**And when he was come, straightway he came to him, and saith, Rabbi; and kissed him** (κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν); literally, *kissed him much*. The kiss was an ancient mode of salutation amongst the Jews, the Romans, and other nations. It is possible that this was the usual mode with which the disciples greeted Christ when they returned to him after any absence. But Judas abused this token of friendship, using it for a base and treacherous purpose. St. Chrysostom says that he felt assured by the gentleness of Christ that he would not repel him, or that, if he did, the treacherous action would have answered its purpose.

Ver. 47.—**But a certain one of them that stood by drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear** (ἀφεῖλεν αὐτοῦ τὸ ὠτίον). We learn from St. John (xviii. 10) that this was Peter. St. John also is the only evangelist who mentions the name (Malchus) of the high priest's servant. Malchus would probably be prominent amongst them. St. Luke (xxii. 51) is the only evangelist who mentions the healing of the wound by our Lord.

Ver. 48.—We learn from St. Matthew (xxvi. 52) that our Lord rebuked his disciples for their resistance; after which he proceeded to rebuke those who were bent upon apprehending him. **Are ye come out, as against a robber** (ὡς ἐπὶ λῃστὴν), **with swords and staves to seize me?** The order of events in the betrayal appears to have been this: First, the kiss of the traitor Judas, by which he indicated to those who were with him which was Jesus. Then follows that remarkable incident mentioned only by St. John (xviii. 4—6), "Jesus . . . went forth, and saith unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, was standing with them. When therefore he said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground." The presence of Christ in his serene majesty overpowered them. There was something in his looks and manner, as he repeated these words, "I am he," words often used before by him, that caused them to retreat backwards, and to prostrate themselves. It was no external force that produced this result. The Divine majesty flashed from his countenance and overawed them, at least for the moment. At all events, it was an emphatic evidence, both to his own disciples and to this crowd, that it was by his own will that he yielded himself up to them. Perhaps this incident fired the courage of St. Peter; and so, as they approached to take our Lord, he drew his sword and struck off the ear of Malchus. Then our Lord healed him. And then he turned to the multitude and said, "Are ye come out as against a robber, with swords and staves, to seize me?"

Ver. 49.—**But this is done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.** This, as it stands in the original, is an incomplete sentence; in St. Matthew (xxvi. 56) the sentence occurs in its complete form. In both cases it has been questioned whether the words are those of our Lord, or whether they are the comment of the evangelist. On the whole, it would seem more probable that they are our Lord's words, which seem almost required to conclude what he had said before.

Ver. 50.—**And they all left him, and fled.** But soon afterwards two of them, Peter and John, took courage, and followed him to the house of the high priest.

Ver. 51.—**And a certain young man followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him, over his naked body: and they lay hold on him.** St. Mark is the only evangelist who mentions this incident; and there seems good reason for supposing that he here describes what happened to himself. Such is the mode in which St. John refers to himself in his Gospel, and where there can be no doubt that he is speaking of himself. If the conclusion in an earlier part of this commentary be correct, that it was at the house to which John Mark belonged that our Lord celebrated the Passover, and from whence he went out to the Mount of Olives; what more probable than that Mark had been with him on that occasion, and had perhaps a presentiment that something was about to happen to him? What more likely than that the crowd who took Jesus may have passed by this house, and that Mark may have been roused from his bed (it was now a late hour) by the tumult. *Having a linen cloth* (σινδόνα) cast about his naked body. The *sindon* was a fine linen cloth, indicating that he belonged to a family in good circumstances. It is an unusual word. In every other place of the New Testament where it is used it refers to the garment or shroud used to cover the

bodies of the dead. The *sindon* is supposed to take its name from Sidon, where the particular kind of linen was manufactured of which the garment was made. It was a kind of light cloak frequently worn in hot weather.

Ver. 52.—**But he left the linen cloth, and fled naked.** This somewhat ignominious flight is characteristic of what we know of St. Mark. It shows how great was the panic in reference to Christ, and how great was the hatred of the Jews against him, that they endeavoured to seize a young man who was merely following with him. It shows also how readily our Lord's enemies would have seized his own disciples if they had not taken refuge in flight.

Ver. 53.—**And they led Jesus away to the high priest.** This high priest was Caiaphas. But we learn from St. John (xviii. 13) that our Lord was first brought before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas. Annas and his five sons held the high priesthood in succession, Caiaphas, his son-in-law, stepping in between the first and the second son, and holding the office for twelve years. It is supposed that it was in the house of Annas that the price of the betrayal was paid to Judas. Annas, though not then high priest, must have had considerable influence in the counsels of the Sanhedrim; and this will probably explain the fact of our Lord having been first taken to him.

Ver. 54.—**And Peter had followed him afar off, even within, into the court** (*εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν*) **of the high priest.** This court was the place where the guards and servants of the high priest were assembled. Our Lord was within, in a large room, being arraigned before the council. St. John informs us (xviii. 15) that he himself, being known to the high priest, had gone in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; and that he had been the means of bringing in Peter, who had been standing outside at the door leading into the court. We now see Peter among the servants, crouching over the fire. The weather was cold, for it was early springtime; and it was now after midnight. Peter **was warming himself in the light of the fire** (*πρὸς τὸ φῶς*), and so his features were clearly seen in the glow of the brightly burning charcoal.

Ver. 55.—**Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death, and found it not.** Their supreme object was to put him to death; but they wished to accomplish their object in a manner consistent with their own honour, so as not to appear to have put him to death without reason. So they sought for false witnesses against him, that they might deliver the Author of life and the Saviour of the world to death. For in real truth, although they knew it not, and were the instruments in his hands, he had determined by the death of Christ to bestow on us both present and eternal life.

Ver. 56.—**For many bare false witness against him, and their witness agreed not together.** Whatever things these witnesses brought forward were either false, or self-contradictory, or beside the purpose.

Vers. 57, 58.—**And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.** St. Matthew (xxvi. 60) says that they were two. What our Lord had really said was this—we read it in St. John (ii. 19)—"Destroy this temple; and in three days I will raise it up." These words the false witnesses perverted; for they assigned to Jesus the work of destruction which he left to the Jews. He did not say, "I will destroy;" but "Do ye destroy, and I will rebuild." Nor did he say, "I will build another;" but "I will raise it up," that is, from the dead; for St. John tells us that "he spake of the temple of his body," in which, as in a temple, there dwelt the fulness of the Godhead. He might have said plainly, "I will rise from the dead;" but he chose to speak as in a parable. According to their witness, however, our Lord's words would appear as little more than an empty boast, certainly not as anything on account of which such a charge as they desired could be brought against him.

Vers. 60, 61.—**And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? . . . But he held his peace, and answered nothing.** The high priest would naturally be seated at the top of the semicircle, with the members of the Sanhedrim on either side of him, and the Accused in front of him. Now he rises from his seat, and comes forward into the midst (*εἰς τὸ μέσον*), and demands an answer. But Jesus answered nothing. It would have been a long and tedious business to answer such a charge, which involved a garbled and inaccurate statement of what he had said. It would have answered no good purpose to reply to an accusation so vague and inaccurate. Our Lord knew that, whatever his answer was, it would be twisted so as to make against him. Silence was therefore the most dignified treatment of such an accusation. Besides, he knew that his hour was come. **The high priest now asks him plainly, Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed?** Here he touches the point of the whole matter. Christ had frequently declared himself to be such. Caiaphas, therefore, now asks the question, not because he needed the information, but that he might condemn him.

Ver. 62.—To this question our Lord returns a plain and candid answer, out of reverence for the Divine Name which, as St. Matthew and St. Luke tell us, had been invoked by the high priest, and also out of respect for the office of the high priest, by whom he had been put upon his oath. St. Chrysostom says that our Lord answered thus that he might leave without excuse all those who listened to him, who would not hereafter be able to plead in the day of judgment that, when our Lord was solemnly asked in the council whether he was the Son of God, he had either refused to answer, or had answered evasively. This answer of our Lord is full of majesty and sublimity. He is arraigned as a criminal, standing in the midst of the chief priests and scribes, his bitter enemies; and it is as though he said, "You, O Caiaphas, and you the chief priests and elders of the Jews, are now unjustly condemning me as a false prophet and a false Christ; but the day is at hand when I, who am now a prisoner at your judgment seat, shall sit on the throne of glory as the Judge of you and of all mankind. You are now about to condemn me to the death of the cross; but I shall then sit in judgment upon you, and condemn you for this terrible guilt of slaying me, who am the true God and the Judge of the world."

Ver. 63.—**And the high priest rent his clothes** (*διαῤῥήξας τοὺς χιτῶνας*); literally, *his tunics*; St. Matthew (**xxvi. 65**) has *τὰ ἱμάτια*, literally, *his garments*. None but people of rank wore two tunics. The Greek verb here rendered "rent" implies violent dramatic action. The Jewish tunic was open under the chin, and large enough to receive the head, so that it could easily be placed over the shoulders, by inserting the head. When the wearer wished to give this sign of indignation or grief, he would seize the garment at this opening with both hands, and violently tear it asunder down to the waist. But it was unlawful for the high priest to do this in a private grief (Lev. x. 6). Some of the Fathers think that by this action Caiaphas involuntarily typified the rending of the priesthood from himself and from the Jewish nation.

Ver. 64.—**They all condemned him to be worthy of death** (*ἔνοχον θανάτου*). There were, therefore, none there but those who were known to be opposed to our Lord. It will be remembered that all these proceedings were illegal.

Ver. 65.—**And some began to spit on him.** St. Matthew (**xxvi. 67**) says, "Then did they spit in his face." That Divine face, to be reverenced and adored by every creature, was exposed to this vile contumely; and he bore it patiently. "I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa. l. 61). **And the officers received him with blows of their hands** (*οἱ ὑπηρέται ῥαπίσμασιν αὐτὸν ἔλαβον*).

Ver. 66.—**And as Peter was beneath in the court.** The room in which the Sanhedrim were assembled was an upper chamber.

Ver. 67.—**And seeing** (*ἰδοῦσα*) **Peter warming himself, she looked upon him** (*ἐμβλέψασα αὐτῷ*). She looked upon him, in the light of the fire, so as to see his features distinctly. This was one of the menial servants who attended to the outer door of the court, and perhaps had been the one to let in Peter; so that she could say with some confidence, **Thou wast also with the Nazarene, even Jesus.**

Ver. 68.—**But he denied, saying, I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest.** "This shows the great terror of Peter," says St. Chrysostom, "who, intimidated by the question of a poor servant-girl, denied his Lord; and who yet afterwards, when he had received the Holy Spirit, could say, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.'" *I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest.* Every word here is emphatic. It amounts to this: "So little do I know who this Jesus is, that I know not what you say or what you ask concerning him. I know not who or what he is or anything about him. A question has been raised as to the number of times that Peter denied our Lord. The narratives are best explained by the consideration that all the denials took place in the house of Caiaphas. Furthermore, the accounts of the evangelists may be reconciled thus: First, Peter denied the Lord in the court of the high priest, when he was first asked by the maidservant, as he sat over the fire (Matt. xxiv. 69); secondly, he denied him with an oath; thirdly, when urged still more, he denied him with many oaths and execrations. The cock crew the first time after the first denial, when we read (Matt. xxvi. 71) that he went out into the porch (*προαύλιον*). This crowing would be about one or two in the morning. The second crowing would not be until five or six. This shows us the length of time that the proceedings lasted. It was doubtless as Jesus passed through the court that he gave Peter that look of unutterable pain and grief which moved him at once to repentance.

Ver. 72.—**And when he thought thereon, he wept** (*καὶ ἐπιβαλὼν, ἔκλαιε*, not *ἔκλαυσε*). The word implies a long and continued weeping.

This concludes the preliminary trial, the whole proceedings of which were illegal.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The plot.* The apprehension and death of Jesus were brought about by a combination between his foes and a professed friend. The avowed enemies employed the necessary force, and secured the authority of the Roman governor for his crucifixion; and the disciple suggested the occasion, the place and time of the capture, and delivered his Master into the hands of the malignant persecutors. The events of the first three days of this Passion week had been such as to enrage the Pharisees and scribes beyond all bounds. The only way in which it seemed possible for them to retain their threatened influence, necessarily diminished and discredited by their repeated public confutation, seemed to be this—to strike an immediate and decisive blow at the Prophet whom they were unable to withstand upon the ground of argument and reason.

I. THE ENEMIES WHO PLOTTED AGAINST CHRIST. These seem to have included all classes among the higher orders of society in Jerusalem, who, whatever their distinctions, rivalries, and enmities, concurred in hatred of the Holy One and the Just. The chief priests, who were largely Sadducees, the scribes, and the Pharisees, who were the most honoured leaders of the people in religion, all joined in plotting against him who attacked their various errors with equal impartiality, and whose success with the people was undermining the power of them all.

II. THE CRAFT AND CAUTION OF CHRIST'S ENEMIES. It was in accordance with the nature of such men that they should have recourse to stratagem. Open violence was scarcely after their manner, and was out of the question in this case; for many of the people honoured the Prophet of Nazareth, and would probably have interfered to protect or to rescue him from the onset of his enemies. Upon days of great popular festivals the people thronged every public place, where Jesus might be found teaching those who resorted to him; and those who delighted to listen to Jesus would certainly resist his capture. The opposition of Christ's enemies to his teaching had been captious, and it is not surprising to find that their plot for his destruction was cunning and secret.

III. THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S ENEMIES—HIS DESTRUCTION. This had, indeed, been foreseen and foretold by himself; but this does not lessen the crime of those who compassed his death. The resolution to slay Jesus seems to have been taken because of the popular impression produced by the raising of Lazarus, and because of the discussions which had only just now taken place between him and the Jewish leaders, whom he had overcome in argument and put to silence. Thus, he had come up to the metropolis with the intention of so conducting his ministry as he was well aware would bring down upon him the wrath of his bitter foes.

IV. THE SEASON AND OCCASION OF THIS PLOT. It was at the time of the Passover assemblies and solemnities that these deliberations took place. In this there was a coincidence which was not unintended, and which did not escape the observation of the Church. "Christ our Passover"—our Paschal Lamb and Sacrifice—"was slain for us." The Lamb of God came to take away the sin of the world. His death has become the life of humanity; his sacrifice has wrought the emancipation of a sinful race.

Vers. 3—9.—*Tribute of grateful love.* A singular interest attaches to this simple incident in Christ's private life. Proud and foolish men have tried to turn it into ridicule, as unworthy of the memory of a great prophet. But they have not succeeded. Our Lord's own estimate of Mary's conduct is accepted, and the world-wide and lasting renown promised by Jesus has been secured. The record of the graceful act of the friend of Jesus is instructive, touching, and beautiful. And the commendation which the Master pronounced is an evidence of his human and sympathizing appreciation of devotion and of love.

I. THE ACCEPTABLE MOTIVE TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE IS HERE REVEALED. Mary was prompted, not by vanity and ostentation, but by grateful love. This had been awakened both by his friendship and teaching, and by his compassionate kindness in raising her brother from the dead. What Jesus appreciated was Mary's love. Services and gifts are valuable in Christ's view, not for themselves, for he needs them not, but

as an expression of his people's deepest feelings. Let Christians consider what they owe to their Saviour—salvation, life eternal. They may well exclaim, "We love him, because he first loved us." Acceptable obedience does not come first, for in such case it would be a form only; but if love prompts our deeds and services, they become valuable even before Heaven.

II. THE NATURAL MODES OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. These are severally exemplified in this incident. 1. *Personal ministry.* Mary did not send a servant; she came herself to minister to Jesus. There is some work for Christ which most Christians must do by deputy; but there is much work which may and should be done personally. In the home, in the school, in the Church, in the hospital, we may individually, according to opportunity and ability, serve the Lord Christ. What is done for his "little ones" he takes as done for himself. 2. *Substance.* Mary gave costly perfume, estimated to have cost upwards of ten pounds of our money. She had property, and therefore gave. All we have is his, who, when he purchased us with his blood, purchased all our powers and possessions. It is a precious privilege to offer him his own. "It is accepted according to what a man hath." 3. *Public witness.* Mary anointed the Master's feet in the presence of the company, and thus declared before all those assembled her devotion to him. It is good for ourselves that we should witness to our Saviour, and it is good for others who may receive our testimony. It is a disgrace to professing Christians when they are ashamed of the Lord who redeemed them.

III. THE TRUE MEASURE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. She did, it is recorded, what she could; she gave what she had to give. This is an example worthy of universal imitation. We are reminded, as it were paradoxically, of two apparently opposed characteristics of Christian action and liberality. 1. *How much* devoted friends of Christ may do! Men may do much for harm and evil; and, on the other hand, what good even one person has sometimes accomplished in private life! What *can* be done *should* be done. 2. Yet, *how limited* are men's powers! If Christians could do more than they do, how vast a field of labour stretches around them! We are limited in our powers for usefulness. Our means may be small, our circle of influence restricted. Our powers of body and of mind are often a restraint upon us; our life is brief, even at the longest. The sister of Bethany could not do what others might; nevertheless, what she could do she did. And we are never to rest in inactivity and indolence, because the claims are so many, and our powers are so small, and our opportunities so few.

IV. THE APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. 1. The Lord accepts what his friends bring to him, as the expression of their love, in proportion to their means and powers. He is not influenced by men's regards. Good men as well as bad men often disapprove wise and benevolent actions. He judgeth not as man judgeth. 2. The Lord rewards the grateful and devoted friends who minister unto him. He enlarges their opportunities of usefulness and service here. "To him that hath shall be given." And he will hereafter recompense them in the resurrection of the just, when he shall say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

APPLICATION. 1. Let Christians give love its way, and follow where it leads. There is no danger of our loving our Saviour too ardently, or of our serving him too zealously. 2. If your means of showing devotion be but few, fret not; only let it be said, "They have done what they could."

Vers. 10, 11.—*The traitor.* That there should be a traitor in the camp of our Lord's followers and professed friends, may be regarded as an instance of the Divine forbearance, which tolerated one so unworthy, and also as a fulfilment of the predictions of Scripture. The fact is, however, one which is fraught with instruction and warning to every disciple of the Lord.

I. THE AGGRAVATIONS OF THE TRAITOR'S GUILT. These are to be recognized in two circumstances which have been recorded regarding Judas Iscariot. 1. He was not only a disciple and follower of Jesus; he was actually *one of the twelve.* These were admitted to an especial intimacy with Jesus; they knew his movements, they shared his privacy, they heard his language of friendship and partook his counsels. All this made the treachery of one of this select band the more guilty and reprehensible. 2. He was entrusted with office in the little society to which he belonged. The treasurer

of the twelve—although, doubtless, their means were always small—Judas bare the bag, and made the purchases necessary for the wants of the companions, and even gave from the general poverty for the relief of those poorer than they. He was accordingly a trusted official, who abused the confidence reposed in him.

II. THE MOTIVES TO THE TRAITOR'S GUILT. These were probably two. 1. Judas was dissatisfied with his Master's methods. Doubtless his expectations were of a carnal character; he wished Jesus to declare himself a King, and to assign to his twelve friends posts honourable and lucrative in this new kingdom. It may have been to hasten on this catastrophe that the Iscariot acted as he did. 2. Judas was covetous, and was prompted in his treason by the love of money. He secured from the chief priests the thirty shekels which formed the customary price of a slave—"the price of him that was valued!" Surely it is a warning against avarice and covetousness, to find a professed friend of Jesus misled by these degrading vices!

III. THE OUTCOME OF THE TRAITOR'S GUILT. 1. It might have been difficult for our Lord's enemies to have seized him had they not been in the confidence of one of his companions. There were obvious reasons why the arrest could not have taken place at Bethany or in Jerusalem. It was the duplicity and treachery of Judas that suggested the garden of prayer as the scene of this disgraceful apprehension. 2. To Judas the consequences were terrific. In remorse and despair he afterwards took his life. 3. Yet how was all this overruled for wise and gracious ends! The treachery of the Iscariot was the occasion of the crucifixion of Jesus, and this was the means of the salvation of the world!

Vers. 12—26.—*The Paschal supper.* The Lord's Supper is a distinctively Christian ordinance. Yet this record shows us that it was our Lord's design that it should be linked on to an observance with which his disciples were already familiar. He thus took advantage of a principle in human nature, and connected the associations and recollections which to the Hebrew mind were most sacred, with what was to be one of the holiest and most pathetic engagements of his people throughout all time.

I. THE OCCASION AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. 1. The *place* in which this festival was first celebrated was provided by willing friendship. The circumstantial narrative points to the high probability that some wealthy friend of the Lord Jesus placed the guest-chamber of his house at Jerusalem at the disposal of the Master whom he honoured. There was something very appropriate in the consecration in this manner of the offices of human love. 2. The *time* is very instructive and pathetic. It was evening; it was the last evening of rest and peace our Lord should enjoy; it was the evening which preceded the day of his sacrifice. 3. The *company* consisted of the twelve favoured companions of Jesus. Judas was at the meal, but retired before the institution of the Eucharist. How sacred and congenial a gathering! How sweet and touching this calm which came before the bursting of the storm! 4. The *occasion* was the observance of the Paschal meal. Thus the light of the Hebrew Passover was shed upon the Christian sacrament and Eucharist. Thus it was suggested to the apostle that "Christ our Passover was slain for us."

II. THE TROUBLE WHICH SADDENED THE SUPPER. Evidently this made a deep impression upon all who took part in the meal. They saw that their Master was distressed, and they felt with him the touching sorrow. The treachery of Judas was known to him who needed not to be told what was in man. The grief which weighed down the heart of the Lord was communicated by him to all the sympathizing members of the group. The sin which was bringing Jesus to the cross was gathered up and made visible and palpable in the conduct of the traitor. And the sensitive nature of our High Priest was affected and oppressed by it.

III. THE SPIRITUAL IMPORT OF THE SUPPER. 1. It was a *commemoration* of the Lord's sufferings and death. The broken bread was intended to keep in perpetual memory the body which was broken; the wine poured out to recall to Christian hearts throughout all time the blood which was shed. 2. It was a *symbol.* Here is the explanation of the Lord's own words concerning eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man. Thus are we taught and helped to feed on him by faith who is the Bread of life.

IV. THE PROPHECY AND PROMISE OF THE SUPPER. It had a first chief bearing upon

the past, yet it pointed on to the future; it prefigured the marriage supper of the Lamb. In the kingdom of God the heavenly wine should be quaffed; in the upper temple the plaintive hymn of the sacrament should be exchanged for the triumphal anthem of the glorified, immortal host and choir.

APPLICATION. 1. The blood was shed for many; have we shown our consciousness that it was shed for us? 2. Let every communicant tremble lest he betray the Lord, and ask with concern and contrition, "Lord, is it I?"

Vers. 27—31.—*Anticipation.* Long before had our Lord clearly realized what would be the end of his ministry of benevolence and self-denial. The prospect of ungrateful violence leading to a cruel death had not deterred him from efforts for the good of those whom he loved and pitied. And now that the blow was just about to fall upon him, his mind was no less steadfast, although his heart was saddened.

I. JESUS ANTICIPATES HIS OWN SUFFERINGS, AND THE RESURRECTION WHICH SHOULD FOLLOW HIS DEATH. 1. He foresaw that, as the Good Shepherd, he should be smitten. He was to lay down his life for the sheep, that they might be saved and live. 2. He foretold that he should rise, and should be found in Galilee in an appointed place. This assurance gives us an insight into the considerate kindness of the Redeemer, who not only resolved to triumph for mankind, but took care for his own friends that their solicitude might be relieved, and that his intimacy with them might be renewed.

II. JESUS ANTICIPATES THE CONFUSION AND UNFAITHFULNESS OF HIS DISCIPLES. Sorely as this prospect must have distressed his heart, he was not by it to be deterred from his purpose. He foretold to his friends how they were about to act, that they might learn a lesson of their own frailty and dependence upon unseen aid. 1. Offence and scattering were foretold concerning all. This, as the record informs us, came to pass; for in the hour of his apprehension "they all forsook him, and fled." 2. The denial of the foremost and the boldest of the twelve was also foretold. Peter loved Christ, had displayed a remarkable insight into Christ's nature, and now professed, in the ardour of his attachment, a readiness to die for his Lord. It was as though nothing that could distress the Divine Saviour should be wanting to his sufferings and sacrifice; he consented even to be denied by the foremost of the select and beloved band. 3. Jesus knew the hearts of his disciples better than they knew their own. They vehemently asserted their attachment, their devotedness, their unswerving fidelity. But he knew the underlying nature which afforded at present no foundation for their resolutions and protestations. And he was evidently prepared for what actually happened; it did not take him by surprise. Only after his ascension, and the baptism with the Spirit, could the apostles withstand the onset of the foe, the rage of the persecutor.

PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Learn the frailty and feebleness of human nature. 2. Learn the steadfastness and the love of the Saviour. 3. Learn the necessity of dependence upon Divine grace to keep from falling.

Vers. 32—42.—*Gethsemane.* How pathetic is this scene! Here we are in the presence of the sorrow of the Son of man; and there is no sorrow like this sorrow. Here we see Christ bearing our griefs, carrying our sorrows—a load beneath which even he almost sinks! It is not to us a spectacle merely of human anguish; we are deeply and personally interested in the agony of the Son of God. It was for our sake that the Father spared not his own Son. It was for our sake that Jesus, our High Priest, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto God, and learned obedience by the things which he suffered. The last quiet evening of fellowship has been passed in the upper room at Jerusalem by Jesus and the twelve. The last discourse—how full of encouragement and consolation!—has been delivered. The last, the most wonderful and precious, prayer has been offered by the Master for his disciples. Instead of returning, as on the earlier evenings of the week, to the seclusion of hospitable Bethany, the little company proceed to a spot where Jesus was wont to retire, from the excitement of the city ministry, for meditation and for prayer. By the light of the Paschal moon they pass through the open gate, and, leaving the city walls behind them, descend into the valley of the Kedron. Every heart is full of the sacred words which have just been spoken, and silence falls upon the pensive group. On the slope of Olivet they halt at an enclosure, where aged olive trees cast a

sombre shade, and the rocks offer in their recesses a meet scene for lonely prayers. It is the garden of the olive-press, well known to every member of the band. Leaving the rest behind him, Jesus takes with him the favoured three, who are witnesses to the awe and deadly sorrow that come upon him. He entreats their sympathy and watchfulness, and then withdraws to a spot where in solitude he pours out all his soul in prayer. The hour indeed has come. The ministry of toil is over, and the ministry of suffering and of sacrifice only now remains. He is straitened until the last baptism be accomplished. The shadow of the cross has often before darkened his holy path; the cross itself is just upon him now. Hitherto his soul has been almost cloudlessly serene; in this hour the tempest of sorrow and of fear sweeps over him and lays him low. There is no resource save in prayer. Earth rejects him, man despises him. So he turns to heaven; he cries to the Father. He is feeling the pressure of the world's sin; he is facing the death which that sin, not his, has merited. It is too much, even for Christ, in his humanity, and he implores relief. "Oh that this cup may pass untasted!" Yet, even with this utterance of natural feeling, there is blended a purpose of submission: "Not my will, O my Father, but thine, be done!" It is the crisis of agony, unexampled, never to be repeated! An agony of grief, an agony of prayer, an agony that finds its vent in every pore. Angelic succour strengthens the fainting and exhausted frame. Is there human sympathy with the Sufferer? Surely the dear friends and scholars—they are praying with and for him! His craving heart draws him to the spot, to find them neither watching nor praying, but asleep! He treads the wine-press alone! It is an added drop of bitterness in the bitter cup. "What, could ye not—not even Peter—watch with me—not for one short hour?" Alas! how feeble is the flesh, even though the spirit be alert and active! The prayer of Jesus, repeated with intensest fervour, gains in perfectness of submission. Thrice he retires to renew his supplication, with a growing acquiescence in the Father's will; thrice he approaches his chosen friends, each time to be disappointed by their apathy. But now the victory has been won. Jesus has wrestled in the garden that he may conquer on the cross. He leaves his tears and cries behind. For the eleven there is no further opportunity for sympathy; for the Master there is no more hesitation, no more outpouring of personal distress. He loses himself in his work. With the cross before him, a former exclamation seems to arise from the depths of his spirit: "For this cause came I unto this hour." He goes forward to meet the betrayer and his band. "Rise up, let us go; behold, he is near who betrays me!"

I. OUR SAVIOUR'S SUFFERINGS IN HIS OWN SOUL. It is noticeable that, up to this point in his earthly career, Jesus had maintained singular tranquillity of soul and composure of demeanour. He had been tempted by the devil; he had been calumniated by his enemies; he had been disappointed in professed friends; but his calm seems to have been unruffled. And it is also noticeable that, after his agony in the garden, he recovered his equanimity; and both in the presence of the high priest and of the governor, and (generally speaking) when enduring the agonies of crucifixion, showed the self-possession, the dignity, the uncomplaining resignation, which have been the occasion of world-wide and enduring admiration. But this hour in Gethsemane was the hour of our Lord's bitter grief and anguish, when his true humanity revealed itself in cries and tears, in prayers and prostration, in agony and bloody sweat. How is this to be accounted for? That his nature was pre-eminently sensitive we cannot doubt. Never was a heart so susceptible to profound emotion as the heart of the High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because he had been in all points tried and tempted even as we are, though without sin. But what occasioned, in this hour, feeling so deep, anguish so poignant? To a certain extent we can clearly understand his sorrows, but there is a point here at which our finite understanding and our imperfect human sympathies necessarily fail us. It is clear that Jesus foresaw what was approaching. He was not ignorant of the hostility of the Jewish leaders, of the treachery of Judas, of the fickleness of the populace, of the timidity of his own disciples. And, by his Divine foresight, he knew what the next few, awful hours were to bring him. There awaited him bodily pain, scourging, and crucifixion; mental distress in the endurance of the insults of his foes, the desertion of his friends, the ingratitude of the people for whom he had laboured and whom he had benefited. All this we can understand; but what careful reader of the narrative can deem even all this a sufficient

explanation for woe unparalleled? It is, indeed, true that the sufferings and death of Jesus were undeserved; but this fact, and his own consciousness of innocence, might rather relieve than aggravate his distress. The fact is that, when we read of his being amazed and appalled—"exceeding sorrowful unto death," and asking that if possible he might be spared the approaching experience of shame and anguish—we are compelled to regard our Saviour in the light of our Representative and Substitute. His mind was, in a way we cannot understand, burdened with the world's sin, and his body was about to endure death which he did not deserve, but which he consented to pass through that he might be made perfect through sufferings, and that he might give his life a ransom for many. In the garden of the olive-press the Redeemer endured the unprecedented pressure of human sin and human woe!

II. OUR SAVIOUR'S PRAYER TO THE FATHER. The words of Jesus are reported somewhat differently by the several evangelists, from which we may learn that it is not so much the language as the meaning which is important for us. 1. Observe the *address:* "Abba, Father!" It is clear that our Lord was conscious of the personal favour and approval of him to whom he was rendering obedience, never so acceptable as in the closing scenes of the earthly ministry. 2. The *petition* is very remarkable: it was that the hour might pass, and that the cup might be taken away untasted. We are admitted here to witness the workings of Christ's human nature. He shrank, as we should do, from pain and insult, from slander and cruelty. Although he had forewarned his disciples that there was a baptism for him to endure, a bitter cup for him to drink, now that the time approached, the trial was so severe, the experience so distressing, that had he been guided by his individual feelings he would fain have avoided a doom so unjust and so overwhelming. 3. The *qualification* added explains what would otherwise be inexplicable. Jesus did not absolutely ask for release; his condition was, "If it be possible," and his conclusion, "Not my will, but thine, be done!" There was no resistance to the Father's appointment; on the contrary, there was perfect submission. Not that the Father took pleasure in the Son's sufferings, but the Father appointed that the ransom should be paid, that the sacrifice should be offered.

III. OUR SAVIOUR'S CLINGING TO HIS DISCIPLES. Very touching is our Lord's attachment to the eleven; "he loved them unto the end;" he took them with him to the garden. And very touching is his craving for human sympathy. Although his anguish could be best endured alone, he would have the little band not far off, and the favoured three he would have close by him. If they would watch with him one hour, the one only, the one last remaining hour of fellowship—if they would pray for themselves, perhaps for him—it would be a solace to his tender soul; to be assured of their sympathy, to be assured that, even on earth, he was not alone; that there was, even now, some gratitude, some love, some sympathizing sorrow, left on earth. Why Jesus should have gone thrice to see whether his three nearest friends were watching with him in the hour of his bitter woe, seems only to be explained by considering his true humanity, his heart yearning for sympathy. Even his prayers, fervent though they were, were interrupted for this purpose! There is a tone of reproach in his final permission, "Sleep on now!"—now that the glimmering of the torches is seen through the olive boughs as their bearers cross the deep ravine, now that the step of the traitor falls upon the ear of the betrayed. A sad reminder of "the irreparable past;" an everlasting expostulation, again and again in coming years to ring in the ear of each slumberous, unsympathizing disciple, and rouse to diligence, to watchfulness, to prayer.

IV. OUR SAVIOUR'S RESIGNATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE FUTURE BEFORE HIM. His bodily weakness was supported by angelic succour. His spirit was calmed by prayer, and by the final assurance that from the cross there was no release, except at the cost of the abandonment of his work of redemption. From the moment that the conflict was over, and his mind was fully and finally made up to accept the Divine appointment—from that moment his demeanour was changed. Instead of seeking sympathy from his disciples, he spoke words of authority and encouragement to them, in their weakness and their panic. Instead of falling upon his knees or upon his face, in agony and tears, he went forward to meet his betrayers. Instead of seeking release from the impending fate, he offered himself to his foes. He put forth his hand to take the cup from which he had so lately shrunk. He boldly met the hour which, in the prospect, had seemed almost too awful to encounter. He had now no will but his Father's, no aim

but our salvation. Even now he saw "of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied." "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame!" The unity of the Saviour's sacrifice is thus apparent. He was obedient unto death; and the triumph of the spirit in Gethsemane was part of his filial and perfect obedience. Indeed, it would seem that the price of our redemption was paid, spiritually, in the garden; and, in the body, upon the cross!

APPLICATION. 1. This representation of our Saviour's character is peculiarly fitted to awaken our reverence, gratitude, and faith. As we trace our Saviour's career of active benevolence, our minds are constantly impressed with his unselfishness and pity, his willingness and power to relieve the wants, heal the disorders, pardon the sins, of men. But when we behold him in suffering and anguish, and remember that he consented to this experience for our sake, for our salvation, how can our hearts remain untouched? The innocent suffers in the place, and for the benefit of, the guilty. If we are the persons benefited, how sincere should be our thanksgiving, how lowly our adoration, how ardent our faith, how complete our devotion! 2. In the demeanour of our Saviour in the garden there is much which we shall do well to imitate. His patient endurance of grief and trouble encountered in the path divinely appointed, the absence of any hatred or vindictiveness towards his foes, his forbearance with his unsympathizing friends, and, above all, his submissive prayer offered to the Father,—all these are an example which all his followers should ponder and copy. Whilst we cannot suffer as he did for the benefit of the whole human race, our patience under trouble, our perseverance in resignation, and consecration to the will of God, are qualities which will not only prove serviceable to ourselves, but helpful and advantageous to some at least over whom our influence may extend. 3. Nothing is more fitted to deepen our sense of the enormity of human sin, nothing is more fitted to bring our sinful hearts to penitence, than the contemplation of the dread scenes of Gethsemane. Jesus was oppressed by a burden of sin—the sin of others, which we may take as an example of the sins of mankind, and ourselves—all of which he then bore. The coldness and callousness of the eleven, the treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Peter, the malice of the priests, the fickleness of the multitude, the injustice of the Roman governor, the unspiritual and unfeeling insolence of the rulers,—all these in this awful hour pressed heavily upon the soul of Jesus. But these were only samples of the sins of humanity at large, of the sins of each individual in particular. He took all upon his own great heart, and bore them, and suffered for them, and on the cross submitted to that death which was their due penalty. In what spirit should we contemplate these sufferings of our Redeemer? Surely, if anything is adapted to bring us in lowly contrition before the feet of God, this scene is pre-eminently so adapted. Not indeed in abject, hopeless, terror, but with humble repentance and confidence. For the same scene that reminds us of our sins, reminds us of Divine mercy, and of the Being through whose sacrifice that mercy is freely extended to every contrite and believing suppliant. This is the language of every Christian who is a spectator of these unparalleled woes: "He loved me, and gave himself for me!" 4. And what more fitted to awaken within the breast of every hearer of the gospel a conviction of the greatness and sufficiency of the salvation which is by Christ unto all who believe? There is no extenuation of the seriousness, the almost desperateness, of the sinner's case; for sin evidently needed, if this record be true, a great Saviour and a great salvation. The means used were not trivial to bring sinners to a sense of their sin and need, to make it consistent with the Divine character to pardon and accept the contrite sinner. "Ye were redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ!" Therefore, without hesitation or misgiving, receive Jesus as your Redeemer; "be ye reconciled to God!"

Vers. 43—52.—*Betrayal and arrest.* The agony and the betrayal are most closely related. Neither can be understood apart from the other. Why did Jesus so suffer in the garden, and endure sorrow such that there was none like it? Doubtless it was because he was anticipating the approaching apprehension, and all the awful events which it involved. His soul was darkened by the knowledge that the Son of man was about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. And how came Jesus, when the crisis arrived, to meet his foes so fearlessly, and to bear his pain and ignominy with patience so inimitable, so Divine? It was because he had prepared himself in solitude, by

meditation, prayer, and resolution; so that, upon the approach of his foes, his attitude was one of meekness and of fortitude. We observe here—

I. AN EXHIBITION OF HUMAN SIN. It seems as if the iniquity of mankind reached its height at the very time when the Saviour bore it in his own body, in his own soul. As the awful and sacred hour approached when the Good Shepherd should lay down his life, sin appeared almost omnipotent; the Lord confessed as much when, upon his apprehension, he said to his captors, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Observe the combination of the various forms of sin manifested on this occasion. 1. *The malignity of the conspirators* is almost incredible. The chief priests, scribes, and elders had long been plotting the death of the Prophet of Nazareth. It had all along been the case that his truthful and dignified assertion of his just and lofty claims, and the performance of his best deeds, excited their worst feelings. They had especially been angered by his miracles of healing and help; both because they led the people to regard him with favour, and because they were a rebuke to their own indifference to the people's welfare. And it was probably the raising of Lazarus which determined them, at all hazards, to attempt the destruction of the Holy One and Just. Their own deeds were evil, and they hated the light. Hence their hateful and cruel conspiracy. 2. *The baseness of the authorities.* The Sanhedrim leagued itself with the Roman governor. With the temple servitors and officers were conjoined the band from Antonia. Discreditable to the Roman authorities, and disgraceful to the Jewish, was this leaguing together for a purpose so unjustifiable. Ecclesiastical and civil authorities concurred in reversing the true canon: they were a praise to evil-doers, and a terror to those who did well. 3. *The treachery of the betrayer.* Whatever may have been the motive of Judas, his action was traitorous and flagitious. Pretending still to be Jesus' friend, he conspired with his enemies against him, took their money to betray him, and even used to his disadvantage the knowledge his intimacy gave him of his Master's habits of devotion. Unparalleled was the baseness with which the traitor betrayed the Son of man with the kiss of the seeming friend. In suffering all this, our Lord showed his readiness to submit for our sake to the uttermost humiliation, to the keenest anguish of soul. 4. *The cowardice apparent in the time, place, and manner of the Lord's apprehension.* His indignation with these circumstances the Lord did not conceal. Why did not his enemies seize him in the temple, instead of in the garden? when teaching in public, instead of when praying in private? by day, instead of in the partial darkness of the night? Why did they come armed as against a robber, when they knew him to be peaceable and unresisting? If all this shows some consciousness of our Lord's majesty and authority, it certainly reveals the depth and degradation of the iniquity which could work deeds at once so foul and so cowardly. 5. *The timidity and desertion of the disciples.* Shall we call this excusable weakness? If so, it is because we feel that we might have acted as they acted had we been in their place. But, in truth, it was sin. They could not watch with him when he prayed, and they could not stand by him when he was in danger and encompassed by his foes. There is something infinitely pathetic in the simple statement, "They all left him, and fled." Even Peter, who had protested so lately his readiness to die with him; even John, who had so lately reclined upon Jesus' breast; even the young man (was it Mark himself?) whose affectionate curiosity led him to join the sad procession, as it passed through the still streets of Jerusalem!

II. A REVELATION OF CHRIST'S DIVINELY PERFECT CHARACTER. Circumstances of trial prove what is in men. When the sea is smooth and the wind is still, the unsound vessel seems as stout and as safe as that which is seaworthy; the tempest soon makes the difference manifest. Even our sinless, holy Lord shines out more gloriously in his adversity, when the storm breaks upon his head. 1. We recognize in him a calm and dignified demeanour. He had been disturbed and distressed in his solitude, and his feelings had then found vent in strong crying and tears. But his agitation has passed away, and his spirit is untroubled. He meets his enemies with unquailing boldness of heart and serenity of mien. 2. We are impressed with *his ready, uncomplaining submission to his fate.* He acknowledges himself to be the One whom the high priests' myrmidons are seeking; he offers no resistance, and forbids resistance on the part of his followers; he acts as One who knows that his hour has come. There is a marked contrast between the action of our Lord on this and on previous occasions. Before, he

had eluded his foes, and escaped from their hands; now, he yields himself up. His conduct is an illustration of his own word: "No one taketh my life away from me; but I lay it down of myself." 3. We remark *his compassion exercised towards one of his captors.* The impetuous Peter aims a blow at one of the attendant and armed bondsmen; but Jesus rebukes his friend, and mercifully heals his foe. How like himself, and how unlike all beside! 4. We admire *his willingness to fulfil the Scriptures and the will of God.* It was a moment when, in the case of an ordinary man, self would have asserted its claims, and the purposes of Heaven would probably have been lost sight of. It was not so with Jesus. The word of the Father, the will of the Father,—these were pre-eminent in their authority.

III. A STEP TOWARDS CHRIST'S SACRIFICE AND MAN'S REDEMPTION. If the whole of our Saviour's career was part of his mediatorial work, the closing stages were emphatically *the* sacrifice. And it was in Gethsemane that the last scene opened; now was the beginning of the end. 1. We discern here *conspicuous self-devotion.* Jesus appears as One baring his breast for the blow. From this moment he has to suffer, and of this he is evidently clearly conscious, and for this prepared. 2. His action is evidently in *obedience to the Father;* he treads the path the Father marks out, and drinks the cup the Father presents to his lips. 3. He already *stands in our place.* The innocent and holy One submits to be treated as a guilty offender; the most benevolent and self-denying of all beings allows himself to share the contumely and the doom of the criminal. He is "numbered with the transgressors." Unmerited sufferings and insults are endured for our sake by the very Son of God. 4. *Thus he prepares for death.* "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter." He is bound as a victim, to be laid upon the altar. His sensitive nature tastes, in anticipation, the agonies of the cross. Already he is taking to himself, that he may bear it and bear it away, the sin of the world.

APPLICATION. How deserving is such a Saviour as this narrative portrays of the faith of every sinner, and of the love and devotion of every believer! His forbearance, patience, and compassion show the tenderness of his heart, and the firmness of his purpose to save. This may well justify the confidence of every poor, sinful, helpless heart. His love, his sacrifice, demand our grateful trust. And to such a Saviour what adequate offering can be presented by those who know his power and feel his grace?

Vers. 53—65.—*The trial before Caiaphas.* Surely this is the most amazing scene in the long history of humanity! The Redeemer of mankind upon his trial; the Saviour at the bar of those he came to save;—there is in this something monstrous and almost incredible. But the case is even worse than this. The Lord and Judge of man stands at the tribunal of those who must one day appear before his judgment-seat. They judge him in time whom he must judge in eternity. It is a spectacle the most affecting and the most awful this earth has ever witnessed.

I. THE TRIBUNAL. Jesus has already been led before the crafty and unrighteous Annas. He is now led into the presence of the high priest, the Caiaphas (son-in-law to Annas) who has declared that it was good that one man should perish for the people; which meant, that it was better that the innocent Jesus should die, rather than that the ruler's influence with the people should be imperilled by the prevalence of the spiritual teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth. With Caiaphas are associated, first informally, and then in something like legal fashion, the chief priests, elders, and scribes. It appears that these are mainly of the Sadducees, of the party who aimed at political power. The tribunal before which Jesus is arraigned is composed of the Sanhedrim, so far as it may be said to exist at this time. It is observable, accordingly, that the accusers of Jesus are his judges. These are the men who sent down spies into Galilee, to lay in wait and tempt Jesus, and catch him in his speech. These are the men who instigated the cavillers who, in the public places of Jerusalem, opposed the teaching of the Lord with foolish questions, uncandid criticisms, unfounded calumnies. These are the men who, after the raising of Lazarus, plotted against the mighty One, and resolved that they would have his life. These are the men who themselves sent out the band that apprehended Jesus in the garden. He appears, therefore, at the bar of those who have watched and pursued him with eager malice, who have persecuted him with unscrupulous hatred, and who have now got him within their toils. Such was the court before which Jesus appeared. From a tribunal like this there was no prospect, no

expectation, no possibility, of justice. This Jesus had long foreseen, and for the consequences Jesus was perfectly prepared.

II. THE EVIDENCE. When the judges condescend to become the accusers, it is no wonder that they *seek* evidence against the accused. In such circumstances Jesus must be obviously, undeniably innocent, if no charge can be substantiated against him. False witnesses appear; but so flagrantly inconsistent are their unfounded accusations, that even such a court, so prejudiced, cannot condemn upon testimony so mutually destructive. At length, however, false witnesses stand up, who distort a memorable saying of Christ into what may be construed as a disparagement of the national temple which all Jews regard with pride. Jesus, speaking of the temple of his body, had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rear it again." This saying is misrepresented, and made to appear the utterance of an intention to destroy the sacred and noble edifice. Even so, however, the witnesses agree not. If this is the worst charge that can be brought against Jesus, and if even this cannot be substantiated; if no remembered words can be twisted so as to give some colour for condemnation before a tribunal so constituted and so prejudiced; then this is certain, that the ministry of Jesus must have been discharged with amazing wisdom and discretion. At the same time, the sin of the Lord's enemies appears the more enormous and the more inexcusable. Jesus was not condemned upon any evidence, any testimony, against him.

III. THE APPEAL AND ADJURATION. 1. The president of the court, stung with disappointment, springs from his seat, indignant at the silence and calmness of the accused; and, with most unjudicial unfairness, interposes, and endeavours to provoke Jesus into language which may inculpate himself. But he is met with a dignified demeanour and with continued silence. 2. This effort being in vain, the high priest *adjures* the accused, and requires him to say whether or not he persists in the claims which he has made in the course of his ministry to be the Messiah, and the Son of the Blessed. Let him say "No," and he is for ever discredited and powerless; let him say "Yes," and then his admission may be construed into a claim which may be represented to the Roman procurator as a treasonable assumption of royal power. The intention of the judge in this proceeding was evil; but an opportunity was thus given for the great Accused publicly to put himself right with the court and with the world.

IV. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND DECLARATION. Our Lord does not think it worth while to refute witnesses who have refuted themselves and one another. But now that the ruler of the people puts him upon his oath, and requires of him a plain answer to a plain question, Jesus breaks his silence. 1. He acknowledges what he has often asserted before, that no claim can be too high for him to make with truth. If he is to die—and upon that he has resolved—Jesus will die, witnessing to the truth and for the truth. He is the foretold Deliverer, the anointed King, the only Son of the Blessed and Eternal. This he will not conceal; from this avowal nought shall make him shrink. 2. He adds that his high position and glorious office shall be one day witnessed by his persecutors and judges, as well as by all mankind. There is true sublimity in such an avowal, made in such circumstances and before such an assembly. To the view of man Jesus is the culprit, powerless before the malice and the injustice of the mighty, and in danger of a cruel and violent death. But in truth the case is otherwise. He is the Divine King, the Divine Judge. His glory is concealed now, but it shall shine forth in due time and ere long. Men on earth shall bow in his Name, receive his laws, and place themselves beneath his protecting care. The world shall witness his majesty, and all nations shall be summoned to his bar, and heaven shall crown him "Lord of all." What striking harmony there is between this profession and expectation of Christ on the one hand, and on the other that wonderful statement of an apostle, "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame"

V. THE SENTENCE. 1. The avowal is treated as a confession. No witnesses are now needed. From his own mouth he is judged. The charge, which Jesus' own language is held to justify and substantiate, is one of blasphemy. And, if Christ were a mere man, this charge was just. 2. The whole court concurs in the judgment. The president is eager to condemn, but not more eager than his assessors. One mind moves them all—a mind of malice and hatred, a mind rejoicing in iniquity, grasping at the fulfilment of base hopes. 3. The sentence is death. It was a foregone conclusion. The destruction of Jesus had been resolved upon long since. Death for the Lord of life; death for

the Benefactor of mankind; death for the innocent but willing Victim of human ferocity and human sin!

VI. THE INSULTS. Again and again, in the course of that awful night, that awful morning, was the Lord of glory treated with derision, ignominy, and contempt. The record is almost too distressing to be read. We can read of the agony in the garden, of the anguish of the cross, but we scarcely know how to read of the treatment our Saviour met with from our fellow-men, from those he came to save and bless. The spitting, the buffeting, the mockery, the blows,—those will not bear to be thought upon. We may believe, we cannot realize, the record!

APPLICATION. 1. Here we behold sin at its height, raging and seemingly triumphant. Whether we look at the witnesses who maligned Jesus, the court which condemned him, or the officers who abused him, we are confronted with appalling proofs of the flagitiousness of human sin. 2. Here we behold innocence in its peerless perfection. No fault is found in Jesus. Even his demeanour, amidst all this injustice, is consummate moral beauty. His unruffled calm, his Divine dignity, his immovable patience,—all command the profoundest reverence of our heart. 3. Here we behold a willing Sacrifice. Jesus is "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." With these stripes we are healed. These are a part of the suffering Jesus bore for us. That we may be freed from condemnation, he is condemned; that we may live, he is delivered unto death. 4. A glorious example is here presented for our imitation. "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps . . . who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that *judgeth righteously.*"

Vers. 66—72.—*Peter's denial.* The story of our Saviour's humiliation and suffering is a story not only of the malice and the injustice of his enemies, but of the frailty and unfaithfulness of his professed friends. It is true that the priests and elders apprehended him with violence and condemned him with unrighteousness; and that the Roman governor, against his own convictions, and influenced by his weakness and his selfish interests, condemned him to a cruel death. But it is also true, that of the twelve chosen and intimate associates one betrayed him and another denied him.

I. THIS CONDUCT WAS AT VARIANCE WITH PETER'S USUAL PRINCIPLES AND HABITS. No candid reader of the Gospel narrative can doubt either the faith or the love of this leader among the twelve. His confidence in the Master and his attachment to him were thoroughly appreciated by Christ himself. Had not Jesus named him the Rock? Had he not, upon the occasion of his memorable confession that Jesus was the Son of God, warmly exclaimed, "Blessed art thou," etc.? A warm and eager nature had found a Being deserving of all trust, affection, and devotion; and the Lord knew that in Peter he had a friend, ardent, attached, and true. He admitted the son of Jonas into the inner circle of three; he was one of the elect among the elect.

II. THIS CONDUCT WAS AT VARIANCE WITH PETER'S PREVIOUS INTENTION AND PROFESSION. When the seizure and capture were approaching, the Lord warned his servant that he would be found unfaithful. Peter's declaration had been, "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death;" "If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee." And he was no doubt sincere in this bold and confident declaration. But sincerity is not enough; there must be stability as well. The professions of the ardent, experience teaches, must not always be taken with implicit trust. Time tries all; and endurance in trial is the true test of character. Peter's fall is a lesson of caution to the confident and the ardent.

III. THIS CONDUCT WAS FORESEEN AND FORETOLD BY THE LORD JESUS. The Master knew his servant better than he knew himself. In warning him of his impending fall, Christ had assured Peter that only his prayers should secure him from moral destruction.

IV. THIS CONDUCT MUST BE EXPLAINED BY THE COMBINATION IN PETER'S MIND OF LOVE AND FEAR. It was his affection for Jesus which led this apostle to enter the court, and to remain in the neighbourhood of the Lord during his mock-trial. The others had forsaken their Master, and had fled; John only, being known, and Peter, being introduced by his friend, clung thus to the scene of their Master's woe. Peter, like John, felt unable to desert his Lord. Strange that he should feel able to

deny him. He felt for his Master, but he feared for himself. Cowardice for the time overpowered the courage which first brought him to the spot and then deserted him.

V. THIS CONDUCT IS AN INSTANCE OF THE TENDENCY OF SIN TO REPEAT ITSELF. A single falsehood often brings on others in its train. To get it believed, the liar lies again, and confirms his falsehood with oaths. Peter found himself in a position in which he must either repeatedly deny his Lord, or else expose his own falseness, and run into the very danger which he had sinned to escape. Ah! how slippery are the paths of sin! How easy it is to go wrong, and how difficult to recover the right way! Who knows, when once he lies, or cheats, or sins in any way, where, if ever, he shall stop? How needful the prayer, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not"!

VI. THIS CONDUCT COULD NOT ENDURE THE REBUKE OF CONSCIENCE AND THE REPROACH OF CHRIST. There was inconsistency between what Peter felt in his inmost heart, between the prayers which he was wont to offer, and what in this night he did and said. The falsehood and the fear were on the outside of his nature; below, there was a sensitive conscience and a loving heart. It was the look of the Master, as he was led through the open court, and met his faithless servant's eye, which melted Peter's heart, recalling in a moment the warning which had been disregarded and the profession which had been belied. If there had not been a heart, a conscience, responsive to the appeal and the reproach conveyed in that look, those eyes would have met in vain. All Christ's servants are liable to temptation, and it is possible that any one among them may be betrayed into faithlessness towards Christ; but it is only where there is true love that there is susceptibility to the Saviour's tender expostulation and affectionate rebuke. It is thus that the Lord makes manifest who are his; he shames them because of their own weakness and cowardice, and awakens what is best within them to a sense of personal unworthiness, and to a desire of reconciliation and renewal.

VII. THIS CONDUCT WAS THE OCCASION OF SHAME AND CONTRITION. "When he thought thereon, he wept." Thought, reflection, especially upon the words of Jesus, are fitted to bring the misguided soul to itself. It is the haste and hurry of men's lives which often hinder true repentance and reformation. "They that lack time to mourn lack time to mend." These tears were the turning-point, and the earnest and the beginning of better things. Another evangelist relates to us at length the restoration of Peter to favour, and his new commission of service. But the simple words with which this narrative closes furnish the key to what follows, to the rest of Peter's life. Judas's sin led him to remorse; Peter's sin led him to repentance. The root of the difference lay in the two men's distinct and opposed characters. Judas's principle was love of self; Peter's was love of Christ. The recovery, which was possible for the one, was therefore morally impossible for the other.

APPLICATION. 1. A warning against self-confidence. 2. A suggestion as to the spirit in which to encounter temptation: Watch and pray; look to Jesus! 3. An encouragement to true penitents.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 3—9.—*The precious spikenard; or, the impulse of the absolute.* The house of Simon the leper was a familiar resort to Jesus. It is Mary the sister of Lazarus who now approaches him as he reclines at meat. Let us look at—

I. HER ACT OF DEVOTION. The nard or spikenard was an unguent of the East. It was "genuine" and costly. Probably it had been kept against that day. She now entered, probably at first unperceived, and, breaking the neck of the alabaster cruse, poured the precious nard upon the Saviour's person (John says his feet; Matthew and Mark, his head; probably both received the anointing). John adds, "And wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." The offering was: 1. *Sudden.* It was given ere any one could interfere. The *breaking* of the cruse may also have pointed to the quick, spontaneous impulse which prompted. The woman who had come forward so unexpectedly, at once retired again before the tumult and anger her act had occasioned. 2. *It sprang from secret sources of reverence*

and love. The disciples could not comprehend it. They were not consulted. It expressed her own feeling unshared with any other. 3. *It was oblivious of cost.* The price put upon it by the disciples—three hundred *denarii*—was about ten pounds of our money, but of greater actual value at that time. Mary belonged to a respectable family, and could probably afford the gift, although its purchase would tax her personal means. Of that she does not think. It is freely given, poured out without care or stint upon him for whom it had been designed.

II. THE CRITICISM TO WHICH IT EXPOSED. The disciples "had indignation among themselves." It presently broke forth in reproaches and murmurs. The action was stigmatized as purposeless "waste." Another use it might have served, viz. the relief of the poor, was mentioned. This judgment was partly honest, partly knavish; wholly ignorant and wrong. "What is not outwardly useful may be highly proper;" and men ought to be very careful in pronouncing upon religious offerings. A higher platform of principle is often affected by those who are really less spiritual.

III. CHRIST'S VINDICATION. "Why trouble ye her?" They had no business to interfere. 1. *The act was commended.* "A good [noble, beautiful] work." He saw the inward character of it. In his sight alone was it justified. 2. *It was defended as more opportune and urgent than almsgiving.* "Ye have the poor always with you, . . . but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying." Many and mingled feelings prompted the offering—gratitude for the restoration of Lazarus, adoration of the character of Jesus, recognition of him as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," as the Lord of life and death, etc.; but may not the foremost motive have been the reverent one which sought to do honour to One about to die? She who sat at the feet of Jesus divined his teaching more deeply than his professed followers. How are we to characterize this emotion which overcame her? It was deep, pure, unselfish, overwhelming. May it not fitly be termed "the impulse of the absolute"? It is the essence of religion. Thus the devout soul responds to the infinite sacrifice. Martyrs, apostles, missionaries, have felt its power. It obeyed a higher reason than the rudimentary religious experience of the apostles could comprehend. When the "length, and breadth, and depth, and height" of the passion of Jesus are perceived, no gift can fully express the sense of worship and obligation that arises. The highest sentiments of human nature are appealed to, and all the resources of our life are at his service, at the same time that we are profoundly conscious how far short they fall of his deserts or the claim he has upon us. It is a transaction, when it takes place, which others cannot judge; it is between the soul and its Lord.—M.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The spirit that betrays.* I. SELFISHNESS. An exaggeration of the natural principle of self-love. Judas, as chief representative of this spirit, shows the virtues of his great vice, and naturally enough becomes keeper of the bag, containing the earthward dependence of the band. He looks at everything from this point of view. Already his thrift or prudence has degenerated into avarice, the more quickly owing to the grace which he resisted. The money value of the offering is at once appraised, the spiritual worth being wholly discounted.

II. THIS IS REPRESENTED (by St. Matthew and St. Mark) AS NOT CONFINED TO ONE INDIVIDUAL. In truth, every disciple had a share of it, although in a few it was more strongly manifest, and in one it may be said to have become incarnate. St. John, who is more given to this personalization of principles, speaks only of Judas. This, then, is a general danger to which the Church is liable, and requires the most careful self-examination. It can only be washed out of the soul by frequent and copious baptisms of Divine purity; it can only be consumed by the constant fire of the Divine love.

III. HERE IT IS CALLED INTO GREATER STRENGTH BY THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE. It is provoked by the display of self-forgetful affection. Why so? 1. *Because it fails to discern the imminence and significance of the Divine event spiritually revealed to the soul of Mary.* 2. *Because, in resisting that spirit, its own evil is exaggerated and confirmed.* It seeks, therefore, to discredit the special manifestation of the spirit of devotion taking place. The indirect form of Divine charity, viz. alms, is declared preferable to the direct, viz. self-sacrificing devotion to God in Christ. How often is this exchange actually made in the history of the Church; almsgiving (with all

its attendant corruptions) taking the place of the soul's immediate allegiance to Jehovah! But on this occasion it is only a cloak for a deeper depth of selfishness, perhaps hardly confessed to himself by the chief culprit. He would by-and-by have stolen the worth of the gift, diverting it thus wholly from its rightful destination. Soon this self-seeking will declare itself in selling the Christ himself for money; a lesser sum (thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave) being temptation enough.—M.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Volunteering to betray.* The "and" connects this with the preceding paragraph, not only historically but psychologically. His present action was (immediately) determined by the gift of Mary and the mild rebuke of the Master.

I. THE CRIME CONTEMPLATED. To deliver up Christ to his enemies. Whether he fully realized how much was involved as a result of this step is uncertain. He might imagine that not death, but the checking of his Master upon the career he had marked out, would ensue. But there is recklessness as to any consequences, provided he himself should be no loser. In robbing the alms from the bag, he was guilty of a breach of trust; in this new development of his master passion the unfaithfulness culminated. It is manifest that the spiritual side of Christ's ministry had for him no value. It was only the earthly rewards that might attend on discipleship that made it attractive to him. Was it to force the hand of the ideal, unpractical Christ that he sought to deliver him up? A miracle of deliverance might then result in a realization greater than his most brilliant hopes could depict, and thus his (passing) act of villainy be condoned. Or was it in sheer disgust and desperation respecting the course affairs seemed to be taking that he conceived of his deed? We cannot tell. In a mind like that of Judas there are depths beyond depths.

II. THE MOTIVE. That *selfishness* was at the root we may be sure. *Avarice* is the direction it took. He proposed money, and asked how much (Matt. xxvi. 15). Thirty pieces of silver a small sum? Yes, but he might be at that moment in real or fancied need, or the amount might be looked upon as a mere instalment of further reward, when he might have made himself useful, perhaps necessary, to the rulers. *Fear of consequences*, if he followed Christ further in the direction in which he was moving, may also have influenced his mind. And there can be no question as to the immediate impulse of *wounded feeling*, through baffled dishonesty and the sense that Christ saw through him. Falling short of the higher illumination and power of the Spirit, he was at the mercy of his own base, earthly nature.

III. CONSPIRING CIRCUMSTANCES. The background to all this mental and spiritual movement on the part of Judas is the attitude of the chief priests and scribes, "seeking how they might take" Christ. But for opportunity afforded the treachery of Judas might have remained an aimless mood or a latent disposition, instead of becoming a definite purpose. In this consists the danger of unspiritual states of mind: they subject those in whom they are indulged to the tyranny of passing influences and circumstances.—M.

Vers. 12—16.—*Preparing for the Passover.* The festival of "unleavened cakes," or "unleavened bread," commenced on the night of the 14th of Abib or Nisan (Exod. xii. 16) after sunset; that day, corresponding to our 16th of March, was therefore popularly called the first of the festival, because it was the preparation day for it. This preparation of the Passover, *i.e.* the killing of the lamb, etc., had to take place between three and six o'clock, the ninth and twelfth hours of the solar day. "Sacrificed," or "killed," has the force of "accustomed to sacrifice or kill." The room was to be "furnished," literally "strewn," *i.e.* the tables and couches were to be laid; and it was to be ready, *i.e.* cleansed, etc., in conformity with ceremonial purifications. A considerable amount of work had to be carefully gone through ere all things would be ready. The lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, wine, and "conserve of sweet fruits," had to be purchased; the lamb had to be slain by the officiating priest in the temple; and then it had to be roasted with the herbs. From the circumstances connected with this preparation in the case of Christ and his disciples we see—

I. THE REPRESENTATIVE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST. The disciples looked to him for direction. They spoke of *him*, and not themselves severally, as being about to observe the Passover, which indicated, not that they themselves were not going to observe it,

but that they ranged themselves under him as constituting, so to speak, his household. That they should have to seek his direction at the last was no proof of carelessness, but only of habitual dependence upon him; and it pathetically suggested how closely their circumstances corresponded with the typical character of the first celebrants, who as strangers and sojourners partook of the hasty feast. Fittingly enough, he who sought at birth the shelter of an inn, goes to such a place to observe the Passover with his disciples, in a separate and distinct capacity from that of any other household in Israel. They were to ask, "Where is *my guest-chamber?*" it was he who was to entertain.

II. HIS REGARD FOR THE OBSERVANCES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE LAW. This is shown in the careful attention he gave to the details of the feast. Whether the arrangements made were due to the exercise of supernatural foresight, or merely to the natural forethought and human care of Christ, it is impossible to determine. In the former case, the "man bearing a pitcher of water," who was to meet them, would be indicated as a Divine token; in the latter, the man would be simply arranged for with the master or "goodman" of the hostelry. Either way, the feast was really prepared for by Christ, and no regulation was neglected. When the poverty, homelessness, and personal danger of the Saviour are remembered, his observance of the Passover will be seen to possess an emphasis and intention quite special.

III. THE CONTINUITY IN WHICH THE "LORD'S SUPPER" STANDS. It was a "moment" or stage of the Paschal feast, and therefore a portion of the same celebration. Doubtless the feast would be protracted, or at any rate the actual eating of the lamb would be distinguished in time from the partaking of the bread and wine, which came a little later, as a new commencement after Judas had withdrawn at the bidding of the Master. In this way the retrospective character of the eating and drinking is quite natural. The two great feasts of Judaism and Christianity are thus vitally connected, the new celebration being a survival of the old one, and a perpetuation of its spiritual meaning. In such instances do we see the continuity of essential ideas, observances, and institutions throughout the varying phases and progressive stages of religious development.

IV. THE SPIRITUAL PREPARATION OF CHRIST FOR THAT WHICH THE PASSOVER SYMBOLIZED. It is just in the attention to these minute details, paid by One to whom in general the "spirit" was ever of so much more consequence than the "letter," that the inward preparedness of the Saviour is suggested for his great sacrifice. The whole typology of the sacred festival had been spiritually realized by him, and its connection with his own death. In Matthew's Gospel this foreboding consciousness of doom, elevated into a higher mood by spiritual willinghood, is expressed: "The Master saith, *My time is at hand,*" etc.—M.

Vers. 17—21.—*The betrayer denounced.* I. THE SHADOW AT THE FEAST. Not *fear*, as of a criminal under sting of conscience; nor *over-anxiety*, the spectre that sits with the worldling at his board; but *moral repugnance expressing itself in sympathetic sorrow.* An inward sense of interrupted sympathy and fellowship.

II. THE BETRAYER INDICATED. It is necessary to declare what it is which prevents the full communion of the household of Christ. This is done in order: 1. *To awaken the spirit of self-examination and self-distrust.* "Is it I?" Therefore the indication given is general and anonymous. 2. *To characterize and accentuate the moral hideousness of the crime.* It was shown to be an evil foretold from afar. The betrayal is to take place, "that the Scripture [Ps. xli. 9] may be fulfilled, *He that eateth my bread* [or *his bread with me*] *lifted up his heel against me*" (John xiii. 18). And so, anticipatively, a new evidence is furnished by which to identify Jesus as the Messiah (John xiii. 19). As done by one enjoying the benefits of the Christian household, and reclining in pretended communion with the Lord, it is declared to be an act of the basest treachery and ingratitude. 3. *As a personal discovery determining the further action of the guilty one.* The special sign given was perceived by Judas alone, although explicitly mentioned. In answer to John's inquiry (the question of spiritual love), the partaking, which is here spoken of as a general thing, is specialized in a definite way with respect to the individual meant (John xiii. 26). The further command is given, not to do the deed, but, as he is determined even then to do it, to do it quickly

(John xiii. 27, 30). Thus the foulest crime against the Son of God is determined and accelerated amidst communion and sacred celebration—a psychological truth. 4. *As an occasion for solemn lamentation over the miserable destiny of Judas.* The "woe" is not spoken so much as a denunciation, but rather in commiseration. All the good of life is spoken of as forfeited—and more than forfeited. "The apophthegm is rather remarkable when microscopically examined, for, strictly speaking, nothing would be *good* to a man who never existed. But our Saviour's meaning is not microscopic, but obvious, and most solemn. *A man's existence is turned into a curse to him when he inverts the grand moral purpose contemplated in its Divine origination*" (Morison). At the feast of love there is ever a sense of mingled reprobation and sympathy with respect to sinners.

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF GOOD AND EVIL STATED. "The Son of man goeth," etc. *Evil is overruled and made the occasion of good.* Not that it is thereby necessitated: it is still the product of the free-will of the creature. Yet is it foreseen, and the operation of good is modified so as to produce the greater good. That Christ should die was foreordained; it was the expression of an eternal determination of the Divine nature; but the particular circumstances affecting the external character of his death were not foreordained. And, therefore, as freely committed, *evil is not altered in its moral character by the result flowing from its being divinely overruled.* Judas was a criminal awfully and uniquely wicked, and his "woe" is wailed forth by Infinite Love himself!—M.

Vers. 22—25.—*The Lord's Supper.* A good title, as it was an evening meal; and it was appropriated to a new and special purpose by our Lord, in connection with whom its significance is received. He is the Host, while his disciples are the guests. Consider it—

I. IN RELATION TO THE PASSOVER. The general meaning of the Passover was perpetuated in a spiritual sense. There was: 1. *A transfer.* Not of the whole Passover, but of a portion. It was during the progress of that meal, "as they were eating," that this particular occurrence took place. "He took bread [or *a loaf*]," thus adopting that, and the cup which was passing round, as something distinct from the main portion of the Passover meal, viz. the eating of the lamb itself. The cup was usually passed round three times, the bread frequently. We can conceive Christ's manner unusually solemn and impressive, as he raised these otherwise subordinate elements of the Paschal feast into prominent distinctness. 2. *An interpretation.* He took the brittle cake of unleavened bread and broke it, saying, "This is my body;" and the cup, saying, "This is my blood." The doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation are philosophical refinements upon the simple meaning of the phrases, and lead inevitably to contradiction and absurdity. Christ was alive before them, and using his body, as he spoke. It must, therefore, have been distinct from the bread. "When our Lord said that the bread which he took in his hands was his body, and that the wine which he held in the cup was his blood, he used a simple figure of speech, such as he often employed. He called himself bread, a door, a vine; meaning that these objects resembled and so represented him. The words are understood figuratively by all, and must be so. Controversies merely concern the nature of the figure. . . . The Romanist interpretation is figurative. It supposes a figure without a precedent, a miracle without a parallel; and it attributes the salvation of men, not to the actual death of Christ, but to what he did with the bread and wine. As the Passover was simply a symbolical service, the addition to it would be regarded as similar" (Godwin). "Note that, according to our Saviour himself, the liquid contained in the cup was not literal blood, but *the fruit of the vine*" (Morison).

II. IN ITSELF. 1. *A covenant or testament.* It was "a disposition of things," by virtue of which the good to be obtained through the obedience and sacrifice of Christ is secured to those who believingly partake. It is a "testament," inasmuch as it was to have effect after Christ's death, and through the fact and manner of that death believers were to become heirs of the blessings it secured. This "agreement," which is contained in the covenant-idea, is a mutual affair, and involves mutual obligations. It also, after the precedent of ancient Israel, constitutes the true recipients God's people and him their God. The thing handed over is not the body and blood, but

that life and grace which they represented. 2. *A communion.* "Take ye." "He gave to them: and they all drank of it." It is only as a communion that the covenant has effect. To those who have received the life and spirit of Christ there is forgiveness and peace. Their sins are blotted out, and they are *passed over* in the mercy of God. And so the act of communion is a spiritual one, and involves fresh realization of the meaning of the great facts of atonement, and the duties of the reconciled children of God. 3. *An anticipation.* There is to be another feast, when the Saviour comes to his people, and his people enter with him into the scene of the "marriage supper of the Lamb." It was Christ's last earthly Passover: he looked thence confidently forth to the final victory over sin and death, and the consummation of all things. 4. *A thanksgiving.* "Eucharist." In view of all the blessings to be conferred through Christ's death, and as acknowledging the mercy and love of God in common viands and (as symbolized by them) in the benefits of salvation.—M.

Vers. 22—25.—*The Lord's Supper a celebration of death.* It is elsewhere spoken of as a "memorial," *i.e.* a funeral feast for the Saviour. Not merely a vain regret, an indulgence of disconsolate affection, but—

I. A CELEBRATION OF DEATH AS COMPLETED SELF-SACRIFICE. 1. *Therefore all that was most precious in the life was secured, in the highest degree and the best way, as a blessing for others.* The early disciples were not handling mangled, useless remains, but touching a living spirit, pregnant with grace and power and inspiration. The "body" and "blood" of Christ, kept from moral corruption and death, were a spiritual fruit "rich and rare." 2. *And believers are made partakers of the spiritual fulness of Christ's perfected nature, in receiving the "elements" of his "body" and "blood."*

II. A CELEBRATION OF DEATH AS THE REVELATION AND AVENUE OF IMMORTALITY. This "funeral feast" is full of hopeful, confident anticipation, because in the death that is celebrated: 1. *The higher spiritual life is seen as the result of the sacrifice of the earthly nature.* It is in the voluntary and obedient laying down of this earthly life that Christ set free his Spirit as an influence to savingly affect mankind, and satisfied and commended that perfect righteousness which is the ground of acceptance and union with God, the true life of the Spirit. 2. *A foretaste is given of the final victory of righteousness over sin and death.* The Captain of salvation, about to enter into final conflict with the powers of darkness, confidently looks forward, and invites his followers to look forward with him, "to glory, and honour, and immortality." In prospect of the final feast of victory and joy that was set before him, he was ready to go down into the gloom and shadow of death.—M.

Vers. 27—31.—*Peter's denial foretold.* Christ's thoughts dwelt constantly upon the prophecies that foretold the sufferings and death of the Son of man. They were passing through his spiritual consciousness, voluntarily adopted as the expression of his own inward life, and consequently wrought out in external actions. He now quotes Zech. xiii. 7. It taught him how absolutely solitary his position would be in judgment and death, as other passages had done; and suggested to him the reason for it.

I. THE UNIVERSAL DEFECTION OF THE DISCIPLES BEFORE CHRIST'S DEATH WAS A SPIRITUAL NECESSITY. They could not understand or allow it. It seemed so unnatural and unlikely. But their Master felt, by gauging his own spirit, how much would be required to enable them to be steadfast, and how wanting they were in the higher principles of spiritual life. He accepted the situation, and sought beforehand to prepare his disciples for the revelation of their own weakness, that when it took place it might not destroy all hope or desire to return to their fidelity. It was, then, at once in expression of his own inward Messianic consciousness, and in order to their warning and instruction, that he quoted the prophecy. How was this desertion of their Master a necessary experience? Because the realization of absolute oneness with Christ in the spirit of self-denial, or rather of love, would only be possible after his own sacrifice, as its ground or condition. They were, meanwhile, still in a state of pupilage or infancy. They could not understand the reason of his strange path, so unlike what they had anticipated. Had they been able to stand by the Lord when he was delivered up, they might have been their own saviours, and his work would not have been requisite.

II. SELF-CONFIDENCE IN ASSERTING ITS SUPERIORITY TO THIS LAW WOULD ONLY THE MORE SIGNALLY ILLUSTRATE IT. Peter, the representative of theoretic faith, was strong in his contradiction to this statement. It was he who had said, "Lord to whom can we go?" etc., and who had heard the approving response, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17); and who had been called the *rock*. He therefore goes forward in the strength of his own convictions, and courts the disaster he sought to avoid, and that in an exaggerated form. (The seeming discrepancy between the evangelists as to the crowing and crowing twice is easily explained.) That very day, nay, that night, ere the dawning, he should deny his Lord thrice, *i.e.* absolutely and utterly; and, that he might test his Master's faithfulness and his own failure, the sign was given—"before the cock crow twice." His bold self-confidence and resolute endeavour to be with Christ were shown in his penetrating the hall of justice, and mingling in the very crowd amidst which the Saviour stood. But this only provoked the challenge before which all his manhood quailed. The others did not orally deny Christ, because they had fled beforehand.

III. BUT WITH THE WARNING A WORD OF HOPE AND COMFORT WAS UTTERED. The Shepherd would reassemble his scattered flock, when he went before them into Galilee. But they could not receive the saying upon which that depended—"after I am raised up." It was to be lodged in their consciousness, nevertheless, to be recalled again when its fulfilment took place, and to be put on record as another evidence of the faith. Then they would no longer be told, "Whither I go ye cannot come," as he would give his Spirit to them.—M.

Vers. 32—42.—*The agony in the garden.* I. ITS SORROW. 1. *The manner in which it was experienced.* There were premonitions. All through life there ran a thread of similar emotions, which were now gathering themselves into one overwhelming sense of grief, fear, and desolation: it was crescent and cumulative. He did not artificially create or stimulate the emotion, but entered into it naturally and gradually. Gethsemane was sought, not from a sense of æsthetic or dramatic fitness, but through charm of long association with his midnight prayer, or simply as his wonted place of retirement in the days of his insecurity. As a good Israelite observing the Passover, he may not leave the limits of the sacred city, yet will he choose the spot best adapted for security and retirement. 2. *At first awakening conflicting impulses.* He craved at once for sympathy and for solitude. The general company of disciples were brought to the verge of the garden, and informed of his purpose; the three nearest to him in spiritual sympathies and susceptibilities were taken into the recesses of the garden, into nearer proximity and communion. And yet ultimately he must needs be alone. All this is perfectly natural, and, considering the nature of his emotion, explicable upon deep human principles: "Sympathy and solitude are both desirable in severe trials" (Godwin). There was a sort of oscillation between these two poles. 3. *To be attributed to the influence of supernatural insight upon his human sympathy and feeling.* What it was he saw and felt cannot be adequately conceived by us, but that it was not emotion occasioned by ordinary earthly interests or attachments we may assure ourselves. The exegesis which sees in "exceeding sorrowful to die" a reason for concluding that it was the idea of dying which so overwhelmed our Saviour, may be safely left to its own reflections. The "cup" he felt he had to drink to its dregs he had already alluded to (ch. x. 38). It had "in it ingredients which were never mingled by the hand of his Father, such as the treachery of Judas, the desertion of his disciples, denial on the part of Peter, the trial in the Sanhedrim, the trial before Pilate, the scourging, the mockery of the soldiery, the crucifixion, etc." (Morison). "He began to be sore amazed [dismayed, sorrowful], and to be very heavy [oppressed, distressed]," are terms which are left purposely vague. He saw the depths of iniquity, he felt the overwhelming burden of human sinfulness. 4. *He betook himself to prayer as the only relief for his surcharged feeling.* The safest and highest way of recovering spiritual equilibrium. Well will it be for a man when his grief drives him to God! There is no sorrow we cannot take to him, whether it be great or small.

II. THE SOLITUDE. 1. *Symbolized by his physical apartness from the three disciples.*

"Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" We may not intrude. God only can fathom its depths and appreciate its purity and intensity. 2. *Suggested by their failure to "watch."*

III. THE CONFLICT. The physical effects of this are given by St. Luke. His prayer was a "wrestling," not so much with his Father as with himself. But the struggle gradually subsides to submission and rest. This shows itself in his detachment from his own emotions and attention to the condition of his disciples, and soon in his movement towards the approaching band of the betrayer. There is a complete "grammar" of emotion gone through, however, ere that spiritual result is attained. Uncertainty, dread, the weakness of human nature, are overcome by the resolute contemplation of the Divine will. His own will is deliberately and solemnly submitted to his Father's, and the latter calmly and profoundly acquiesced in as best and most blessed for all it concerns.—M.

Vers. 43—50.—*The betrayal.* It involved in its very conception a rude, profane intrusion upon our Lord's devotions. At the head of the band was Judas, and with him the Roman soldiers with their swords, and the servants of the chief priests with staves (cudgels, thick sticks). Having met the temptations of the soul in the solitude of prayer, the Lord is now the better able to meet the external trials of which the garden is also the scene.

I. THE PRETENDED FRIENDS OF CHRIST ARE HIS WORST ENEMIES. Only a disciple can betray as Judas did. The kiss and salutation of respect, "Rabbi!" have become classical.

II. NOT THE SKILL OR FORCE OF HIS CAPTORS, BUT HIS OWN MEEKNESS AND MERCIFUL PURPOSE, RENDERED THEIR SCHEME EFFECTUAL. There was no surprise, for the Victim of the treachery was fully aware of it, and, indeed, warned his disciples of the approach of the band (ver. 42). As a stratagem, the midnight expedition was therefore a failure. And there is something unspeakably ludicrous in the portentous weapons which were thought necessary, and the large number of men. This is the sting of many a carefully hatched villainy, viz. that eventually it loses even the merit of originality or cleverness. The wisdom of this world is in any case no match for the wisdom of God.

III. THE INTERESTS OF CHRISTIANITY ARE NOT SERVED BY FORCE OR VIOLENCE. It was Peter whose impulsiveness had betrayed him into the thoughtless act. Hidden probably by the darkness, he was not detected, save by the eye of the Master. Had it even been expedient to oppose force with force in the general conflict of Christ with the world-power, on that occasion the odds were tremendous (cf. Matt. xxvi. 52).

IV. THE SON OF MAN HAD TO MEET THE ONSET OF EVIL ALONE. His prediction was fulfilled (ver. 27).—M.

Vers. 43—50.—*The betrayal.* I. A TRANSCENDENT CRIME. Because of: 1. *The character of Jesus.* 2. *The betrayer's relations to him.* Ingratitude. Callous selfishness. Breach of trust. 3. *Circumstances of the act.* Intrusion upon holy retirement. Simulation of highest regard and purest sentiment. The spiritual interests of humanity trifled with.

II. A SUPREME FOLLY AND FAILURE. Overdone. Foreseen. Ending in contempt and misery.—M.

Vers. 53—65.—*Jesus at the bar of Judaism.* I. THE CHARACTER OF THE EVIDENCE AGAINST HIM. 1. *Not in support of any clear and definite indictment.* 2. *Encouraged by a desire on the part of the judges to incriminate.* "They sought witness." The death of the Prisoner a foregone conclusion. 3. *The accusations unreliable and conflicting.*

II. HIS REPLY TO HIS ACCUSERS. *Silence:* (1) Because of their character, and (2) his own. The impressive dignity of this attitude. He would not justify himself before an earthly tribunal.

III. HIS ANSWER TO THE HIGH PRIEST'S QUESTION. *He declared himself the Messiah and the Judge of all the earth.* This was done out of respect to the representative character of the high priest, and in order to assure and inform faithful Jews.

IV. How this was construed. *As blasphemy:* either (1) on the ground of imaginary, or feloniously represented, resemblance of the words, "I am," to Jehovah's Name; or (2) because the claim was *a priori* assumed to be false.

V. He was rejected and dishonoured by those he came to save, out of sheer wantonness and unbelief.—M.

Vers. 54, 66—72.—*Peter denying Christ.* The seeming discrepancies of the accounts by the evangelists of Peter's threefold denial are explained on the ground of their independency of one another, and their making prominent various portions of a lengthened and complex series of actions. "Three denials are mentioned by all the evangelists, and three occasions are distinguished; but on some of these there was more than one speaker, and probably more than one answer." This circumstance was—

I. An evidence of the power of evil in good men. This is the great lesson of the sins of the saints. There ought to be continual watchfulness, and living and walking in the Spirit. 1. *It is not well to expose one's self to temptation unless from the highest motives.* Curiosity seems to have been the ruling principle in Peter's mind. He was following the highest good, but not as perceiving it to be so, or truly desiring it—a perilous state of things. There are many unworthy followings of Christ, which have the "greater condemnation." Duty and self-sacrifice will, on the other hand, carry men safely through the most terrible trials. 2. *Low views of Christ's character and office tend to unworthy conduct.* The whole spiritual state of Peter was such as to expose him to the perpetration of the worst actions, and this arose from prevalence of false conceptions of Christ's person and work. His attitude and occupation immediately beforehand ("afar off;" "warming himself") have been regarded by many as symbolical of his spiritual position with regard to his Master. Scepticism and mental confusion on religious subjects, if not corrected or neutralized by close fellowship with Christ, or loyalty to the highest truth one knows, have sad moral results. Peter was still clinging against hope to his idea of a worldly Messiah. 3. *Evil words and actions, if once indulged in, are the more easily repeated and aggravated.* He proceeds from an equivocation—"I neither know nor understand what thou sayest"—to a stronger and more direct negative, and then to oaths and profanities.

II. An evidence of the necessity and power of Christ's atonement. Even good men like Peter, if left to themselves, will grievously err and sin. How are men in such a position to be recovered? 1. *There must therefore be a saving principle outside, and independent of, ourselves.* It is by virtue of his completed sacrifice in spirit that Christ by a look recalls his fallen disciple, and thus shows: 2. *The power of his Spirit to redeem.* In connection with such a power over spirit and conscience the greatest sins may be made the turning-points of repentance. Memory was appealed to, and the outward signs predicted by the Saviour served as a spiritual index or clock of conscience. The cockcrowing has also an element of hope in it; it marked the dawning of a new day of penitence and enlightenment.—M.

Ver. 6.—"*She hath wrought a good work on me.*" Describe the feast in the house of Simon the leper, and distinguish the incident from that which is recorded in Luke vii. Indicate Mary's reasons for loving the Lord, with all her heart and soul and strength, and show that this act of exquisite self-abandonment was the natural expression of her love. Learn from the subject the following lessons:—

I. That an act which is pleasing to our Lord may be misconstrued and condemned by his disciples. All the disciples were guilty of murmuring against Mary, but John points out that Judas Iscariot began it. Entrusted with the bag in which the common fund was kept, he had carried on for some time past a system of petty thievery. It has been suggested that, as our Lord knew his besetting sin of avarice, it would have been kinder not to have put this temptation in his way. There is, however, another aspect of this question. Evil habits are sometimes conquered by a tacit appeal to honour and generosity. An outward habit may be got rid of by removal of temptation, but absence of temptation does not root out the sin. In effect our Lord said to Judas, "I know your sin, but yet I put this money in your charge; for surely you would not rob the poor, defraud your brethren, and dishonour me!" This appeal might have saved Judas; but he yielded to his sin till it damned him. Such a

man would be likely to feel aggrieved at this generous act of Mary's. He felt as if he had been personally defrauded. He knew that if this spikenard, which had vanished in a few minutes of refreshing fragrance, had been sold he would have had the manipulation of the proceeds. Therefore he was angry with Mary, and angry with the Lord, who had not rejected her offering. We can easily understand the feeling of Judas. But how was it the disciples re-echoed his complaint? They sided with him, although they certainly were not actuated by his base motive. Well, we all know that if a word of censure be uttered in the Church it swiftly spreads, and is like leaven, which soon leavens the whole lump. Suspicion and slander find easier access to men's hearts than stories of heroism and generosity. Weeds seed themselves more rapidly than flowers. The disciples had more to justify their fault-finding than we sometimes have. They were plain peasants, who had never known the profusion of modern life, and they were aghast at the idea of such a prodigality of luxury as this. From all they knew of their Lord they supposed that he would have preferred the relief of the poor to any indulgence for himself, and that he himself would have been disposed to say, "To what purpose is this waste?" Many now imagine that they can infallibly decide what will please or displease their Lord, yet in their condemnation of others they are often mistaken. Mary, no doubt, was discouraged and disappointed. Her gift had been the subject of thought and prayer, and now that her opportunity had come for presenting it she eagerly seized it. She was prepared for the sneers of the Pharisees; but surely the disciples would be glad to see their Lord honoured. At their rebuke her heart was troubled; her eyes filled with tears as she thought, "Perhaps they are right. I ought to have sold it." Then Jesus looked on her with loving approval, and threw over her the shield of his defence.

II. THAT ANY SERVICE WHICH IS THE OFFSPRING OF LOVE TO THE LORD IS ACCEPTABLE TO HIM. He perfectly understood and approved her motive, and therefore was pleased with her offering. Whether it came in the fragrance of this ointment, or in the form of three hundred pence, was of comparatively little consequence. It meant, "I love thee supremely," and therefore he was glad. Naturally so. When a child brings you the relic of some feast which you would rather not have, yet because it has been saved from love to you, you eat it with as much gusto as if it were nectar from Olympus. Why? Because you judge of the gift from the love it expresses; and this, in an infinitely higher sphere, our Lord also does. Unlike us, he always knows what the motive is, and about many an act condemned by his disciples he says, "She hath wrought a good work on me." Καλόν, translated "good," means something beautiful, noble, or lovely. Mary's act was not ordered by the Law, nor dictated by precedent, nor suitable to everybody; but for her, as an expression of her love, it was the most beautiful thing possible. She poured her heart's love on Jesus when she poured the spikenard from the broken cruse.

III. THAT A GIFT OR ACT PROMPTED BY LOVE TO THE LORD MAY HAVE FAR MORE EFFECT THAN WE DESIGN. "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying." Some argue from this that Mary knew Jesus was about to be crucified, and would rise again from the dead, so that this would be the only time for such anointing. I doubt that. Probably she had no distinct, ulterior design when she simply did what her love prompted. But in commending her Jesus in effect said, "In this act she has done more than you think—more than she herself imagines; for she is anointing me for my burial." In God's Word we find that we are credited for the good or for the evil latent in our actions, by Divine justice or in Divine generosity. We read of some standing before the Judge of quick and dead who are amazed at the issues of their half-forgotten acts for or against the Saviour. "When saw we thee an hungred or athirst?" etc. This was the principle on which Christ attributed to Mary's act a result she could not have foreseen.

CONCLUSION. This is true of evil as of good. There is not a sin you commit but it may beget other sins, and in effect as well as in memory the words are true, "The evil that men do lives after them." For the far-reaching effects of sinful words and deeds, of which he may know nothing till the day of judgment, the sinner is responsible to God. What an encouragement is here to steadfast continuance in well-doing! That which has the smallest immediate result may have the greatest ultimately. The story of Mary's inexpressible love has had far greater effect in blessing the world than the

distribution of three hundred pence among the poor, which human judgment might have preferred.—A. R.

Ver. 12.—*The Passover.* The Passover was by far the most important of the Jewish feasts. The disciples of our Lord were sure that he, who ever fulfilled the righteousness of the Law, would not fail to observe it. Their reminder of what they supposed he had forgotten, but which really was the subject of far profounder thought with him than they could fathom, immediately led to the remarkable incidents which are here recorded—the strange provision of the feast by a secret disciple, and the spiritual institution which Christ founded on the ancient rite. There were truths set forth by the Mosaic festival of which the Jews were never to lose sight, and which are full of significance to us. A few of these we will recall.

I. THE PASSOVER REQUIRED A SPOTLESS VICTIM. In this, as in many other Jewish ordinances, the spiritual was represented by the visible. The victim might be chosen from the goats or from the sheep. (Kids were offered as late as Josiah's reign (2 Chron. xxxv. 7), although in our Lord's time only lambs were sacrificed.) This was of less consequence than the rule that the victim chosen should be "without blemish." Not deformed, sickly, or injured. 1. *Doubtless this taught the worshippers to offer their best*, and do so cheerfully, with humble acknowledgment of the Divine right. The Jews learnt the lesson. Their religion cost them something, and they nobly responded to its claims, as we see when the tabernacle was erected and when the temple was built. Christians, in their gifts and in services, too often act as the Israelites would have done had they chosen their blemished and sickly lambs for sacrifice. 2. *Besides, this provision was significant of the sacred purpose to which the victim was devoted*, and symbolical of the moral integrity of the person it represented. The male of the first year, in the fulness of its life, stood for the firstborn sons of Israel, who were spared, while it died. 3. *Nor does this exhaust the meaning. The spotless lamb points to him of whom John Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"* to him who "offered up himself;" to him of whom we read, "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot."

II. THE PASSOVER REQUIRED PERSONAL PARTICIPATION. It might have seemed to human wisdom hardly reasonable that deliverance from a pestilence should be the result of sprinkling the blood of a slaughtered lamb on the two side posts and lintel of the door; but he would have suffered the penalty of his rashness who had run the risk of his incredulity. Every saved household had its own lamb, and every saved one in that household was compelled to remain, for his safety, in the blood-sprinkled house. This arrangement, on the basis of family relationship, was not made so much for convenience as it was to sanction and sanctify home life, and to teach all who were united by earthly love to find their centre in the Paschal lamb. The Israelites were not saved because they were descended from Abraham, but because of the blood sprinkled in faith and obedience.

III. THE PASSOVER WAS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY PENITENCE AND SINCERITY. 1. *The use of unleavened bread was ordained.* Leaven, the presence of which was strictly forbidden, was a symbol of moral corruption, which the people were to put away from their hearts. Christ Jesus warned his disciples against "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." St. Paul (1 Cor. v. 7, 8), referring to evil in the Church, said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." More than anything else our Lord rebuked insincerity. As the King of truth he still says, "He that is of the truth heareth my voice." 2. *Bitter herbs were also to be eaten at the Passover.* Not because they would give flavour to sweeter food, nor as a mere accompaniment to it, but as an essential part of the feast. The bitter bondage of Egypt was thereby represented, which was overpowered by the sweetness of the lamb. It may symbolize the bitter sorrow with which we should mourn our guilt.

IV. THE PASSOVER WAS A SOURCE OF PEACE, AND A PLEDGE OF PROGRESS. 1. The Israelites in Egypt knew that judgment was falling around them, and in that ominous dreadful night the peace of each one was proportioned to his trust in the appointed means of deliverance. 2. Those who partook of the feast were prepared

for the march through the Red Sea and the wilderness, until Canaan was reached and won.—A. R.

Vers. 22—24.—*The Lord's Supper.* The Lord's Supper was the natural outgrowth of the Passover. The broken bread, which was made a symbol of our Lord's broken body, had been seen and partaken of for generations by the Jews, who had regarded it as "the bread of affliction" which their fathers once ate in Egypt. "The cup of blessing," transformed into "the communion of the blood of Christ," was the third cup in the feast, which followed on the distribution of the Paschal lamb, and preceded the singing of the Hallel. The whole Passover was a symbolical festival of remembrance, and this we believe the Lord's Supper was intended to be. It was not to be a repeated sacrifice, as Gregory the Great was the first to suggest, but was a feast to be eaten in remembrance of the Saviour. No symbols could be more appropriate. The bread represented the Bread of life; the broken bread that it was broken for us. The wine was "the blood of the grape" (Gen. xlix. 11), poured out from the true Vine (John xv. 1), which was its Source. The expression, "This *is* my body," surely could not have been taken in any literal sense by the disciples, who had their Lord in his physical presence visible amongst them when he spoke. It was equivalent to "This represents my body;" just as elsewhere we read, "The field *is* the world;" "I am the true Vine;" "Leaven . . . which is hypocrisy" (see also Gal. iv. 24; Heb. x. 20). What, then, are some of the advantages of this commemorative feast?

I. IT REPRESENTS THE PROPITIATORY CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S DEATH. His blood was shed for many, for the remission of sins. His death was not merely a martyrdom; it was an atonement. He gave his life for the sheep. The prophets foretold this (Isa. liii.); the apostles declared it (Rom. v.); the redeemed praise the Lamb who was slain, because he washed them from their sins in his own blood.

II. IT REMINDS US OF THE NECESSITY FOR PERSONALLY PARTAKING OF CHRIST. "Take, eat: this is my body." What we eat and drink becomes a part of ourselves. Once our Lord said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Food is useless unless we partake of it. Christ came to us in vain unless we trust him as our own Saviour and Lord.

III. IT IS IN ITSELF A MEANS OF GRACE. This is to be proved in experience rather than by Scripture. Just as a word which we can see or hear conveys a thought which we cannot see or hear, so the bread and the wine convey thoughts of Christ, of his sacrifice, of his claims, of his love, which refresh and strengthen our inmost life.

IV. IT IS A PROCLAMATION OF FELLOWSHIP. 1 Cor. x. 16, etc., "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." A "communion" is that of which we are common partakers, and St. Paul argues that by eating and drinking together thus we proclaim our unity; just as the Israelites in Egypt, on the night of the Exodus, met in families, each finding its centre of thought and safety in the Paschal lamb. It is the idea of the family, and not of the priesthood, that God makes the germ of the Christian Church. Those in it are to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ." By the extension of the Church will come about the true brotherhood, for which the world still sighs.

V. IT IS A PLEDGE OF FIDELITY. The "sacramentum" was the oath taken by the Roman soldier that he would never desert the standard, never turn his back on the foe, and never be disloyal to his commander. By our presence at the sacrament we pledge each other, before God, that with his help we will be true men, more courageous, more pure, more victorious, than before.

VI. IT IS A SIGN OF SEPARATION. The Egyptians had no part in the Passover. The scribes and Pharisees were not invited to the upper room. Judas, so far as we can judge, left before the new rite was instituted. St. Paul spoke of the duty devolving on the Church at Corinth to remove the immoral from fellowship. Yet all true disciples, though they may doubt as Thomas did, or deny their Lord like Peter, are invited to eat and drink with each other, and with their Lord.—A. R.

Vers. 32—35.—*Gethsemane.* The Mediator between God and man experienced all the vicissitudes of human life. From the loftiest height of joy he plunged into the deepest depths of distress. Because of the fulness of his nature he surpassed us in these

experiences, alike in the glory of the Transfiguration and in the agony of Gethsemane. Therefore we are never beyond the range of his sympathy. We are all familiar with the outward circumstances of this incident, but the wisest of us knows but little of the depths of its mystery. Indeed, although our interest in the scene is intense, although we feel it is fraught with the destiny of our race, we shrink with hesitation from speaking much of it. A sense of intrusiveness overpowers those who are conscious of ignorance and sin, when they would gaze on that sinless agony of grief. It seems as if our Lord still said to his disciples, "Sit ye *here*, while I shall pray." The place whereon we stand is holy ground.

I. THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR. 1. *There is mystery about his agony.* Our recognition of the proper deity and humanity of our Lord leads us to expect seeming contradictions in him. They appear in his intercessory prayer. In one breath he speaks as the Son of God, in another he wrestles as a weak man might do. Sometimes he pleads as a Mediator, and sometimes he expresses himself with Divine majesty and authority. It is so with our Lord's agony, which must ever be a stone of stumbling to all who refuse to recognize that they only know in part and prophesy in part. Thus some assert that this experience contradicts the composure and resolution with which our Lord had previously announced his sufferings; and that his prayer is in antagonism with his omniscience as the Son of God. Here is the Prince of peace seemingly destitute of peace; the world's Redeemer wanting deliverance; the Comforter himself needing consolation. As the old myth reminds us, we sometimes come across a fact which appears like a glittering ring which a child could lift when we walk around it and talk about it; but, when we try to lift it, we find it is no isolated ring, but a link in a chain which we can hardly stir, for it girdles the earth and reaches heaven and hell! "Behold, God is great, and we know him not; and darkness is under his feet." 2. *There is a meaning in this agony.* We gain some little insight into it when we remember the vicarious nature of Christ's sufferings; that "the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all." If Jesus Christ were only a great Prophet, who came to enlighten the world, he might now seem to have lost his courage. If he were only an Exemplar of unconditional resignation or heroic endurance, he was surpassed by others. All points to the conclusion that his sufferings were not like those of Job, or Jeremiah, or Paul, or Stephen, but were unique in the world's history. He, the sinless One, was the Representative and Substitute of the sinful world.

II. THE TROUBLED BELIEVER may find instruction and comfort in this experience of his Lord, especially in the consciousness of his sympathy. 1. *Sympathy was longed for even by our Lord.* He wanted to have near him those who could best understand him, so that in the thought of their affection and prayer he might find comfort. It failed him. They were overpowered by sleep, and when aroused, they fell back into the old drowsiness. It was another pang in his anguish. He trod the winepress *alone*. How tenderly he feels for lonely sufferers! 2. *Absence of sympathy intensified prayer.* When our trouble is very heavy it has a tendency to paralyze prayer, and makes the heart stony; but we should rather follow him who, being in an agony, prayed the more earnestly. If, in answer to prayer, the cup is not taken away, still the prayer is not useless. Paul thrice besought the Lord in vain to remove the thorn in the flesh; but he had an answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And our Lord came forth from the place of prayer as one who had already gained the victory. 3. *Earnestness in prayer led to absolute submission.* When we pray we realize with growing intensity that there is another will besides ours and above ours firm and wise and good. If God sees further than we see; if he knows what would harm and what would bless us, when we do not; if he looks not only to this little life, but to the eternity to which it leads; let us seek in prayer to know what his will is, and then say, even though it be with tears, "Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."—A. R.

Ver. 36.—*The cup of experience.* The mystery of our Lord's suffering is beyond our power of accurate analysis. We cannot fathom the depths of sin and grief which he experienced. We must not suppose that, because we are so familiar with this narrative, we know all its significance. At the most we have only felt one wave of the sea of sorrow which sobbed and swelled in his infinite heart. Only one phase of this many-sided subject will engage our attention. Leaving the atoning nature of the sufferings

of our Lord, we will now regard him as the Representative of his people, their Forerunner in this as in all things. The "cup" is a figure familiar enough to all students of Scripture.

I. THE CUP OF EXPERIENCE may be represented by the cup which was the symbol of the mockery and shame and grief the Saviour suffered. 1. *The phrase reminds us that our joys and griefs are measured.* A cup is not illimitable. Full to the brim, it can only hold its own measure. (1) *Our joys are limited by what is in us, and by what is in them.* If a man prospers in the world, his wealth brings him not only comfort, but care, anxiety, and responsibility, so that he may occasionally wish himself back in his former lowlier lot. And family joys bring their anxieties to every home which has them. No one drinks here of an ocean of bliss but he thanks God for a "cup" of it, measured by One who knows what will be best for character. This is true even of spiritual joys. The time of ecstasy is followed by a season of depression. The Valley of Humiliation is passed, as well as the Delectable Mountains, by Christian in his pilgrimage. Nowhere on earth can we say, "I *am* satisfied;" but many, like the psalmist, can exclaim, "I *shall be* satisfied." (2) *Our griefs are limited also.* They are proportioned to our strength, adapted for our improvement. Even in the saddest bereavement there is much to moderate our grief if we will but receive it: gratitude for all our dear one was and did; gladness over all the testimonies of love and esteem in which he was held; hope that by-and-by there shall be the reunion, where there shall be no more sorrow and sighing, and where "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes." God does not let an ocean of sadness surge up and overwhelm us, but gives us a cup, which we may drink in fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. 2. *The phrase in our text suggests not only measurement, but loving control.* Our Lord recognized, as we may humbly do, that the cup was filled and proffered by him whom he addressed as "Abba, Father." In one sense the events in Gethsemane and on Calvary were the results of natural causes. Integrity and sinlessness called forth the antagonism of those whose sins were thereby rebuked. Plain-spoken denunciations of the ecclesiastical leaders aroused their undying hate, and no hatred is more malignant than that of irreligious theologians. Judas, disappointed and abashed, was a ready instrument for evil work. Yet, behind all this, One unseen was carrying out his eternal purpose, fulfilling his promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Hence Jesus speaks not of the plot accomplished by his foes, but of the cup given him by the Father. We are at an infinite remove from him, yet, as the same law which controls worlds controls insects, so the truth which held good with the Son of man holds good also with us. We may recognize God's overruling in man's working, and accept every measure of experience as provided and proffered by our Father's hand.

II. THE PURPOSE OF ITS APPOINTMENT. That it comes from our "Father" shows that it has a purpose, and that it is one of love, not of cruelty. It is not like the cup of hemlock Socrates received from his foes, but like that potion you give your child that he may be refreshed, or strengthened, or cured. 1. *Sometimes the purpose respects ourselves.* Even of Jesus Christ, the sinless One, it is said he was "made perfect through sufferings;" that as our Brother he might feel for us, and as our High Priest might sympathize, being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Much more is the experience of life a blessing to us who are imperfect and sinful; correcting our worldliness, and destroying our self-confidence. 2. *Sometimes the purpose respects others.* It was so with our Lord pre-eminently. He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "None of us liveth unto himself." If our cup of blessing runs over, its overflowings, whether of wealth, or strength, or spiritual joy, are for the good of those around us. If our lot be one of suffering, we may in it witness for our Lord, and from it learn to console others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God.—A. R.

Vers. 39—43.—*Sorrow, sleep, and sin* When a dear friend is in trouble our footfall is quiet and our voice hushed. Even children are awed to silence when they see the face they love stained with tears and pale with anguish. How much more does stillness of soul become us when we enter into the Garden of Gethsemane and see the Lord we love in his agony! Christ completed the cycle of human temptations in Gethsemane. In the wilderness he had been tempted to desire what was forbidden, to

obtain provision in a wrong way, to manifest Divine power in an act of presumption, to gain the kingdom by force and fraud. Now he was tempted to avoid what was ordained. And to do what we ought not, not to do what we ought, sums up all temptations. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In this mysterious scene we discern a concentration of human history.

I. THE SIN-FORGETTING CHURCH is represented by the disciples who failed their Lord. 1. *They did not understand the necessity and dreadfulness of Christ's struggle with the powers of darkness.* They allowed natural weariness to overcome them, so that they had no share in the conflict endured near them and for them. As little does the Church share the purpose of Christ in the redemption of the world from sin; nor does she see the need for being in an "agony" about it. Is there the feeling about sin, even about our own sin, that there should be? Are we not too often like those who, under the shadow of Christ's sorrow, slept, though he himself had said, "Tarry ye here, and watch"? 2. *Nor did these disciples reach the source of power that night.* It was impossible to find victory through human passion, as Peter discovered after he had drawn and used his sword. Indiscriminate zeal, which will attack heretics and sceptics with bitter words and penalties, is sure to fail. Power to overcome is found in obedience to the command, "Watch and *pray*." To watch without praying is presumption; to pray without watching is fanaticism. The difference between our Lord and his disciples was this: they refreshed themselves by natural means, and he by spiritual; they fell back on sleep, and he on prayer—just as too often we rely on human agencies, and not on Divine. 3. *Their confusion and indecision increased as they diverged from their Lord.* He became more calm, and more sure of victory. They became more heavy with sleep, more cowardly and unprepared, till they all forsook him and fled. Only when they assembled again in his Name to pray in the upper room were they endued with power from on high. "Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober," lest again he should say, "Sleep on now, and take your rest. . . . Behold, the Son of man is betrayed."

II. THE SIN-COMMITTING WORLD. (Ver. 43.) 1. While the disciples slept, the hostile world was alert. This vigilance was a rebuke to their sloth. Still it is so. Frequenters of haunts of pleasure are often more eager than members of Christ's Church to invite their companions to join them. 2. Those who assail the cause of Christ are animated by different motives. Some are malignant, as the priests were; others join in the popular cry, though it be "Crucify him!" The mob in Jerusalem had little idea what they were doing—casting out of the world the Son of God, who had come to be their Saviour and Friend. Men's acts have more in them than appears; and some who are simply careless will be amazed to find themselves reckoned amongst his foes! The world had no power over Christ except through the traitor Judas. The weakness of the Church, the inconsistency or apostasy of Christians, ever lead to the most successful attacks. Judas knew where Jesus resorted, and betrayed him by a kiss. The fall of one sentinel may prove the destruction of the camp.

III. THE SIN-BEARING SAVIOUR. It is no figment of theological imagination that he himself took our infirmities, that "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." He made atonement for us, as well as learnt sympathy with us. He took the cup of bitterness that we might receive the cup of blessing.—A. R.

Ver. 54.—*Following afar off.* The story of Peter's denial is not omitted by any of the evangelists. They were more anxious for truth than for reputation. They set before us the strongest disciple at his weakest moment without a word of wonder, of blame, or of excuse. Our text indicates the state of mind which led to his fall. He was just beginning his descent to the depths of shame. Because he "followed afar off" he found the door of the house shut against him, cutting him off from John and from his Lord. Outside, alone, in the dark, he became more despondent as he reflected that Jesus was in the power of his foes, and that any attempt at rescue had been rebuked by himself; so by the time John came out he had given up hope, and still stood afar off from his Lord, amidst his foes. Then and there occurred this moral tragedy in Church history. Let us consider—

I. SOME MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD HAVE INDUCED PETER TO FOLLOW CLOSELY. 1. *The remembrance of his own professions.* When Jesus had asked, "Will ye also go away?"

Peter had made a noble response; and when an earnest warning had been uttered a few hours before this, he had exclaimed, "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I." He meant his promises, and to abide by them; but though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. The world is fair in expecting more from those who are professed followers of Christ. Flight is more disgraceful to a soldier in uniform than to a camp-follower. 2. *Peter's recognized leadership of his brethren* was another reason for close following. The Lord indicated that Peter would be their leader from the first, and the disciples acquiesced in this, always making way for him to speak and act on their behalf. His responsibility was the heavier. If he had continued to watch, they would have done so; if he had followed closely, they might have rallied. The failure of one was the failure of all. Each one is responsible to God for the talent, position, or force of character which constitutes him a leader of men. To whom much is given, from him much is required. 3. *The loneliness of the Lord ought to have appealed to Peter's heroism and generosity.* We can hardly understand how, with his noble impulses, he could have left Jesus alone amongst his foes. Yet how often do Christians now fail to stand forth like men to rebuke wrong-doing at any risk! The fact that they alone represent their Lord amid evil companions, is an appeal to all that is chivalrous in them to speak. 4. *The remembrance of Christ's personal love to him might have drawn him nearer.* Jesus had dealt gently and generously with Peter. He had chosen him, with two of his brethren, to see his glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, and to see something of his dire agony in the garden. He had been faithfully warned of danger, and assured of the intercession of his Lord. Yet all seemed forgotten, and he only "followed afar off." It is when we realize the words, "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*," that we can say, "My soul followeth hard after God."

II. SOME EXCUSES WHICH PETER MIGHT HAVE URGED FOR HIS CONDUCT. 1. *It seemed as if he could do no good to his Lord.* He had tried in his own way to defend him, but had been rebuked, and no other way seemed open. He forgot that, though his Master had refused the use of physical force, he would have gladly welcomed human sympathy. John had deeper insight. Amid the sea of hatred which surged around him, our Lord saw at least one face which expressed love and sympathy. Utilitarianism sometimes keeps us from beautiful and graceful acts, because we do not see immediate, practical good in them. We should probably not have poured out the spikenard as Mary did, but should have joined with those who asked, "To what purpose is this waste?" Let us never follow afar off because we do not see the practical advantage of walking closely with our Lord. Heaven's best blessings are too subtle to be tabulated. 2. *It seemed as if evil would befall himself if he stood close beside his Master.* On entering the palace amongst this excited rabble, he might fear personal violence, especially if he were recognized as the assailant of Malchus. He wished, therefore, to conduct himself as one of the miscellaneous crowd. In doing so he put his soul in danger, instead of his body. "He that saveth his life shall lose it," his Lord had said, and Peter learnt the meaning soon. This mingling of courage and cowardice puts many a man in danger. May God give us the whole-hearted fidelity which even Peter failed that night to show!—A. R.

Ver. 70.—*A detected disciple.* This chapter is crowded with contrasts. 1. The unmeasured love of Mary of Bethany shines radiantly beside the unexampled treachery of Judas Iscariot. 2. Contrasts occur also in the experience of our Lord. He passes from the fellowship of the upper room to the solitude of Gethsemane; from the secrecy of prayer to the publicity of a mock-trial before his foes. 3. There are also great changes visible in the spiritual condition of certain disciples. Judas appears amongst the chosen disciples, listening to the Master's words and eating at the same table with him; and a few hours after he is seen at the head of a band of ruffians, betraying his Lord with a traitorous kiss. Peter, in the garden, starts forth as a hero in defence of his Master; but in the palace of the high priest, with trembling heart, denies all knowledge of him. To this last scene our text points us. (Describe it.)

I. THAT THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE CAUSE OF CHRIST AROUSES UNCOMPROMISING HOSTILITY. Peter was experiencing this in the palace of Caiaphas. 1. *Paganism was instinctively hostile to Christ's teaching.* Far-seeing men amongst the Gentiles soon saw its drift. They spoke of the apostles, not inaptly, as men who would

turn the world upside down. Christ's doctrine of brotherhood would be the destroyer of slavery. His inculcation of purity and righteousness threatened licentious pleasures and tyrannous exactions. Men who could win high positions by force or fraud, and immoral people, who loved brutal or sensual amusements, would unite in antagonism to the Christian faith. Some would hate it the more intensely because their worldly interests were associated with the continuance of paganism. Many a Demetrius saw that his craft was in danger, and priests, with their crowds of attendants, would contend zealously for the idolatry which gave them their living. They would have granted Christ Jesus a niche in their Pantheon; but his followers claimed that he should reign supreme and alone. 2. *The Jews, however, were the first instigators of opposition.* Christianity threatened to destroy their national supremacy by inviting the Gentiles to all the privileges of the kingdom of God. They hated a Messiah who came not to deliver them from political bondage, but from their own prejudices and sins. 3. *Heathenism in our own day, whether at home or abroad, is at enmity with Christ.* The vicious, who live to gratify their passions, the worldly, who would make this life their all, as well as the idolaters in distant lands, hate the teachings of our Lord. 4. *Even in nominally Christian society there is sometimes seen an ill-suppressed dislike to earnest fidelity to Christ's cause.*

II. THAT A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST, IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, MEETS WITH A TEST OF HIS MORAL COURAGE. We all appreciate the heroism of the apostles, who, with their lives in their hands, witnessed for their Lord before Jews and pagans, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for his sake. Equal courage is occasionally exhibited in lives which are unromantic and prosaic, which endure each day the bitterness of scorn and shame. 1. *Sometimes a Christian shows heroism by speech.* Profanity is thus rebuked, slander is silenced, impurity is indignantly reproved, and the cause of Christ defended against mockery. It is well when this can be done without any sign of a Pharisaic spirit or of a censorious temper; so that from the tone of the defence the godless are compelled to say, "These men have been with Jesus, and have learnt of him." 2. *Silence may also be on occasion the display of courage.* If one, by reason of youth or sex, cannot speak, witness may be borne by quitting the scene where Christ is dishonoured. The responsibility for witness-bearing is the heavier in proportion to the weight of our influence. The effect of Peter's denial was the greater because he was like a standard-bearer in the army of Christ. Even although his testimony might not have changed the opinion of one in the crowd around him, he was none the less bound to give it; and our Lord was grieved because he withheld it.

III. THAT VERY TRIVIAL THINGS MAY SOMETIMES REVEAL ASSOCIATION WITH JESUS CHRIST. Peter had no expectation of being discovered. He was a stranger; the crowd was large, and the excitement great; it was dark, and attention seemed centred in Christ Jesus, to the exclusion of all beside. A question unexpectedly put necessitated an answer, and his rough Galilean brogue increased the suspicion to a certainty that he was a peasant who had come up with Jesus from Galilee, and was intimate enough with him to know of his secret and sudden arrest. 1. Even the nominal connection with Christ which we all have as Englishmen is betrayed by speech in foreign parts; and how often is the work of our missionaries hindered there by dishonest traders, or profligate sailors and soldiers, who are supposed to be "Christians," but who by word and act deny the Lord! 2. Others, who have been under direct Christian influences in their homes, are sometimes tempted, at school or in business, to keep that fact secret, as if it were something to be ashamed of. But when some small phrase or act unexpectedly betrays the truth, and one of those standing by says, "Surely thou art one of them, . . . thy speech agreeth thereto," then comes the crisis, the turning-point, on which the whole future will hinge. Happy is it if then they are saved from Peter's fall! 3. Occasionally those who are devout disciples wish, like Nicodemus, to remain secretly so. They wish to avoid all responsibility, and therefore make no profession of their love. Little do they suspect how many are discouraged by their failure to avow their loyalty to their Lord. Let all our influence everywhere be consecrated to him.

CONCLUSION. *The hall of judgment is still standing.* Christ Jesus is being examined and questioned now by men who resent his claims. Still we hear the cry, "Prophesy! who is it that smote thee? Tell us something new. Work some miracle now, that we

may believe thee." And to it all Jesus answers nothing. His Church is keeping close beside him, as John did, and is glad to share his reproach. But many are like Peter; they have followed afar off, so that the world should not notice them. They would not be so near as they are, but that others have led them, as John led his brother apostle. Yet, after all their friends have done, they are still outside, in the courtyard, among the foes of their Lord. They hope that all will end well; they dare not help in the conflict, so they keep far enough away to retain their popularity, and yet to see the end. As the light of the fire revealed Peter, as his speech further betrayed him, so something has called attention to these, and companions begin to say, "Surely thou art one of them." What shall the answer be? Shall it be, "I know him not;" or shall it be, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee"?—A. R.

Vers. 1—9.—*The alabaster cruse.* A scene of great interest and beauty is described in these words and in the supplement supplied by St. Matthew and St. John. On the last sabbath eve before his crucifixion, Jesus came to Bethany. In the house of Simon the leper a feast was made in his honour. The disciples were there, and, of necessity, Martha and her sister Mary, and Lazarus. What a representative group! Simon, the type of suffering, healed, and restored human nature. Lazarus, a living testimony to the Lord's power over life and death—a blossom from the tree of life plucked in that early spring-time, promising a final fruitfulness in richness and beauty. Martha, who in her true character served, type of all faithful, diligent, practical, hardworking disciples. Mary, who also served in her way, with her heart full of meditative love; the incarnation of pure, rapt, fervent devotion, and the sanctity of deep thought. And the disciples were there. Those wonderful men, who have led and will continue to lead the world, as the pillar of cloud of old time led the hosts of God through the desert. And the Master was there, sanctifying all life, as he was the Spring of all. Jesus was there, about whom we cannot say too much. They had met in his honour, for he received honour and hospitality from lowly men. They were met in his Name, and he was "in the midst." Around, outside, were the assailants, the Pharisees and the multitude, the powers of the world, surrounding as with a black drapery; while all within was pure and white and heavenly, save the stream of hot breath from one earthly spirit, himself set on fire of hell. Judas was there. Our thoughts must fix themselves, first, *on the silent deed of Mary;* then *on the open word of Judas;* then *we must hear the words of Jesus*, who, on this occasion at least, made himself a Judge and a Divider over them.

I. THE DEED OF MARY. (Ver. 3.) No reason for the act is assigned. Is one needed? Was it the offering of gratitude, or duty, or love? Was there goodness enough in that heart to lead it to do a kind action spontaneously, without respect to any previous personal obligation? Was there a sufficiently clear discernment of the true character of the distinguished Guest to compel her to offer her best gifts? We know not. One thing we know—Lazarus was there, "whom Jesus raised from the dead." Then upon that head so hot, and upon those feet so weary, she pours her costly perfume; pours it freely, so "that the house was filled with the odour."

II. Could any one have suspected a spot could be found in this almost heavenly feast? Alas! so is it with all things and all times of earth. Though all the college of the apostles was there; though there was one who had been raised from the dead, and one whose body had been purified and made anew; though all had seen the miracles which he did; though there were renewed and chastened spirits present, types of perfect love and faithful service; and though the Master himself was in the midst, on that sweet last sabbath eve;—yet even in this Eden of blessing was the trail of the serpent to be seen. Hearken (vers. 4—6), poor human nature! Though Heaven itself come down to us, we tarnish it with some earthly foul breath.

III. Jesus, by his words, passes judgment on Mary's deed and on Judas's pronouncement upon it. He appears for her defence. "Why trouble ye her?" (vers. 6, 8, 9). He may have been troubled, but in self-forgetfulness he thinks of her as she did of him. The work was a good one. "She hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying." Did she really know the meaning of her act? Did she really know that he would so soon be taken away? Then, to her quick apprehensive grief, he was dead already. Did she unconsciously predict his burial, or was love quick-witted here? We

know not; but who can tell what she learnt at his feet? Probably she knew not on this quiet sabbath evening that on the next he would be in the tomb, or her heart would have been broken as well as her alabaster box. But if her gift of grateful love meant more than she supposed, it was only as all gifts of love do. They go beyond the discernments of intellect and judgment; they reach further; they mean more. So is it with all works done to Jesus. When we comfort the sorrowful, or minister to the sick or destitute, or do any "good work" in him and for him, he makes them symbolize himself. They show forth his praise. They reveal his spirit. As to the poor and our help of them, who, to our disgrace, are always with us. Let us see how Jesus honours even their lot by placing himself in the position of a receiver of doles of charity and human kindness. And let us, undeterred by the misuse which some make of our gifts, still break our alabaster boxes. Let us pour over the world the fragrance of a godly life, the sweetness of our Christian temper, the labour of our Christian zeal, the gifts of our Christian love.—G.

Vers. 10, 11, 17—21, 43—52.—*Betrayal.* We now approach the darkest of all the dark hours through which our Redeemer passed in this world, so overcast with clouds. "The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of men." It was by "one of the twelve," and "unto the chief priests," and for "money"!

I. What lessons on THE FRAILTY OF THE POOR HUMAN HEART! The hand that received "the sop," that dipped into the same dish with Jesus, received into its hardened palm the miserable pittance—a slave's price. Ah! even in the presence of the holy One could he plot and scheme for his delivery. Let us, when we decry the deed, bow our heads lowly, remembering that we share the same frail nature. How barefaced the lie—walking, reclining, talking with the little band, carrying their common purse, and so trusted by them all, yet stealing away in the darkness to meet his enemies and plot with them how, "in the absence of the multitude," he could deliver him unto them! And going so far as to choose the symbol of brotherly affection—a kiss—to be the sign by which in the darkness they should distinguish him! "Woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born." Truly so; for what theory or process of restoration could prevent the name Judas from being for ever the symbol of treachery and base desertion and sordid misery. "Woe," indeed! "And he went away and hanged himself." It is impossible to contemplate the heights from which men have fallen into deep abysses, without a feeling of shame and humiliation. But it would be wrong to think of them without being warned by them of the sad possibilities to which we are all exposed.

II. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF OFFICE TO SECURE ITS RIGHTFUL SPIRIT. The parallel of Judas's infamy is found in the men who stood as the head and representatives of the very religion it was Jesus' high mission to fulfil and perfect. How deplorable is the contrast between the sanctity of the position held by these officials and the spirit in which they held it! It was theirs to be the leaders of religious thought, and the embodiment of the religious spirit. But the sad testimony is borne to the insufficiency of official relationship to secure the true spirit of office. Truly may the Shepherd say, "I was wounded in the house of my friends;" and the poor one, "yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

III. THE POWER OF COVETOUSNESS. And this was all for money! Well might it be written, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." But it is needful to return to the preceding incident to find the hidden clue to such a deed of darkness. St. John has left the sad record, "He was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein." So, yielding little by little to the love of pelf, this chosen one, who harboured the demon of covetousness within the folds of his dress, had lost all strength of virtue, and being overcome of evil, and under the influence of a master-passion, sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver—"the price of him that was priced, whom certain of the children of Israel did price." But our thoughts should rest less upon the faithless disciple or the more faithless priests than upon the patient, submissive One who drank so deeply of our cup. He who descended to that lowest condition of human shame was found, like the slaves in the market, "priced" and sold. Revolting from that

unfaithfulness which could sell a friend for gain, from that love of self which could crush all the fine and noble and generous feelings of the heart, even closing it to the sweet, winning voice of him who spake as never man spake—revolting equally from that deceitfulness which could occupy holy office without the slightest apprehension of the sanctity of demeanour, or the slightest possession of the purity of spirit due to such a position—let us mark and imitate the lowly, patient, self-possessed, forgiving, trustful spirit of him who endured all that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, that the will of the Father might be done, that the redemption of the lost might be effected.—G.

Vers. 12—16, 22—26.—*The Lord's Supper.* During the process of the betrayal, the "first day of unleavened bread" came round, and "the Master," with "his disciples" in "a large upper room furnished and ready," sat and together partook of the Passover. It was the last time. The long series of observances begun in Egypt had now come to an end. Before the next year should bring round the time of the Passover, it would be "fulfilled in the kingdom of God." A deeper and wider meaning would be given to it. Another Lamb would be slain, whose blood, sprinkled by faith, would cleanse the "conscience from dead works." New symbols would supplant the old, by means of which the Lord's death should be showed forth until his coming again. The simplicity of the newly appointed ordinance stands in marked contrast to all the elaborate rites of the earlier service, and to the scarcely less elaborate forms of the extreme schools of the Christian Church.

I. THE ELEMENTS. Taking up the common articles of their daily food, he made them symbolize himself. The "bread" his "body;" the "wine" his "blood." Anything more simple could not have been conceived, anything more ready-at-hand, more truly universal. At the same time, he glorified that food by making it to represent, to memorialize, himself—his body given and his blood shed, through which spiritual life and nourishment were secured for them. Thus materials and spirituals are united; and a portion of our daily food may be taken in remembrance of him who gives life to the world, and "feeds the strength of every saint."

II. THE REPRESENTATION. To the simple "This is my body" of St. Mark, St. Luke adds, "which is given for you"—given up unto death on your behalf. He who "gave himself"—his entire personality—for our sins, gave his body "unto death, yea, the death of the cross." This is the sacrifice offered "once for all," "when he offered up himself." The blood represents, he says, "my blood of the covenant;" or, in St. Luke's words, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you." It is "shed for many unto remission of sins." Both are to be taken with the impressive and tenderly touching words, "This do in remembrance of me."

III. THE COMMAND. "Take ye;" "Take, eat;" "Drink ye all of it;" "This do in remembrance of me;" "This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." With these words our Lord enjoins on his disciples the observance of this simple, central Christian rite; and they form the warrant for the observance of *the Lord's Supper*. Gathering together the several words of direct and indirect reference to this Christian service, we see how it is the centre from which radiate many lines of relation to the entire circle of the Christian life. 1. It is *an affectionate memorial service*, bringing to remembrance the entire self-devotion of the Redeemer—"in remembrance of *me*." It calls up all that the one word *me* represents, with an especial allusion to the supreme act of self-immolation, "I lay down my life." 2. It is *a covenant service*. He who drinks of the cup places himself under the bonds of the new covenant, and receives at the same time the seal of the certain inheritance of all covenant blessings (see Heb. viii. 6—12). 3. It is *a service of communion*. It symbolizes our joint participation with the whole body of Christ (1 Cor. x. 14—17). It declares the perfect oneness of the Church of Christ: "We, who are many are one bread, one body;" and it affirms our perfect community of interest: *we* "all eat the same spiritual meat;" *we* "all drink the same spiritual drink." 4. It is at once a service of lowly confession and humble faith, of exulting hope—"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come"—of brotherly love. It is to the believer the pledge of all blessing and help; while from him it is the pledge of all obedience. And the Eucharistic song speaks of the life, the fellowship, and the joy of heaven.—G.

Vers. 27—31, 66—72.—*Peter's fall.* The painful declaration that the words of the prophet, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad," would find their fulfilment in them, and in "All ye shall be offended," roused Peter's spirit, and with a bold but mistaken estimate of his own courage and devotion, he fearlessly, even presumptuously, affirmed, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." St. Luke has preserved for us words which throw much light upon the incident of Peter's fall, and upon the position which Peter held amongst the disciples: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren." So Satan, the enemy of man, the agent for testing his religious character, has made demand to put all the disciples into his sieve. Men sift wheat to reveal and separate the useless from among the valuable—the bad from the good. Such is the good end of temptation. Brought to bear upon the great Master himself, it was powerless. He could say, "The prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me." There was no chaff mingled with that pure grain. Assailing Judas—alas! how little of any thing but husk! In Peter how strange a mixture! In each of us? Peter, warned by the first prophetic admonition, by the parabolic words of Jesus, and by the yet more definite assurance that ere "the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice," repeats his boast of fidelity with an emphasis, "If I must die with thee, I will not deny thee." The sieve is ready. Peter is accosted by a woman, "one of the maids of the high priest." "Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus." The story is well known, and needs not to be repeated. The word of Jesus found its exact fulfilment. "Thrice" did he deny, "and straightway the second time the cock crew." "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." It was enough; with broken heart he "went out, and wept bitterly."

Let us learn: 1. Our constant liability to be tempted to evil. Go where we will, temptation assails us. Amidst the blessedness of Eden or the sanctities of the temple, the tempter hides. The felicities of home, the marts of trade, the seclusions of contemplation, are all as open to the evil presence as to the air of heaven. Our steps are dogged, our life assailed. Surely for this—for such an exposure of the precious life—a sufficient justification can be adduced. 2. One end of temptation is to search out existing evil for its exposure and destruction. On the elevated plateau, over the hardened and smooth floor, the wheat is shaken from the sieve. The gentle winds blow aside the chaff, for which the consuming fire is prepared, and the pure grain falls to the ground. Peter little knew that cowardice and fear lay lurking beneath the folds of his dress; but temptation revealed them. As men pass the magnet through the metal dust to discover and separate the particles of iron from more precious metals, and those particles respond, leaping up to the attractive force; and as men test the strength of iron beams by means of heavy weights or blows; so the wily temptation tests the purity of our hearts and the strength of our principles, and draws forth the lurking evil, that, being exposed, it may be separated ere it ruins the whole life. 3. If by temptation a weakness or flaw is discovered, our wisdom is, by penitence and contrition, to return for recovery and healing. We may be sadder and humbler, but we shall be wiser. Happy for us if we have strength so to do, and not, Judas-like, in blank self-despair and self-disgust, sink to rise no more. 4. But a further lesson is to guard against those evils which are the especial cause of danger to our spiritual life. Each has his own especial liability. Peter's was not covetousness; Judas was not in danger from pride of power. Our danger is always as the amount of alloy in our character—the amount of chaff amongst the wheat. 5. Again, let us seek the removal of our own peculiar faults by the winnowing fan and purging fire of the Spirit, that we may not be exposed to the destructive surprises of sudden temptation. 6. An additional lesson is so to guard our spiritual life that the current of our thoughts be pure. How often a coloured stream, or one holding earthy salts in solution, gives its own tint to the banks, or determines the growths on either side! Well also is it for us to separate from those habits of life which are condemned by any conviction of right. 7. The great lesson, on the surface of this incident, is the necessity for humility—that we boast not of our religion, that we presume not on our power; but, in lowly dependence on the strength of Divine grace, walk warily, watching lest we enter into temptation.—G.

VERS. 32—42.—*Gethsemane.* With reverent steps and bent head must we approach this scene. It would be improper to intrude upon the privacy of the Saviour's suffering had not the Spirit of truth seen fit to "declare" this also unto us. The disciples, with the three exceptions, were excluded by the words, "Sit ye here, while I pray." And even from the favoured three "he went forward a little," "about a stone's cast." Then, "sore troubled," and with a "soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death," he "fell on the ground," kneeling, with his face to the earth. Then, from that spirit so sorely wrung, the cry escaped, which has ever been the cry from the uttermost suffering, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Thrice the holy cry was heard, and in so great "an agony" that "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground," though strengthened by "an angel from heaven." Thrice the words of uttermost submission, "Thy will be done!" completed his act of entire surrender and self-devotion. "The will of the Father," which had been his law through life, was no less his one law in death. For all ages and for all sufferers Gethsemane is the symbol of the uttermost suffering, and of the supremest act of devotion to the will of the Father on high. Its depth of suffering is hidden in its own darkness. The bearing of this hour upon the great work of redemption, as well as the precise references of the Redeemer in his words, and many other solemn questions that this scene suggests, deserve the most careful thought. But we turn, as in duty bound, to consider its instruction to us. By him, who taught us to pray, we have been led to desire the accomplishment of the Divine will. By him, who is ever for us the Example of righteous obedience, we have been constrained to seek to bring our life into conformity with that will. And by him, from whom our richest consolations have descended, we have been led to submission and lowly trust in the times of our deepest sufferings. We would that his example should gently lead us to keep the sacred words upon our lips, "Thy will be done!" If we would use them in the supreme exigencies of our life, we must learn to use them as the habitual law of our life. Therefore, let us so use them that they may express: 1. *The abiding desire of our heart.* 2. *The habit of our life.* 3. *The uppermost sentiment in the hour of our trial and suffering.* The former steps lead to the latter. We cannot desire the will of the Lord to be done by our suffering unless we have first learnt to submit to it as the law of our activity.

I. "THY WILL BE DONE!" IS TO BE THE ABIDING DESIRE OF OUR HEARTS. The habitual contemplation of the Divine will is likely to lead us to desire its fulfilment. We shall see, if faintly, the wisdom, the goodness, the pure purpose, which that will expresses. It is a desire for the Divine Father to do and carry out his own will in his own house on earth, "as it is in heaven." Seeing God in all things, and having entire confidence in the unsullied wisdom and unfailing goodness of the Father on high, it desires both that he should do his own will in all things, and that by all that will should be sought as the supreme law. It knows no good outside of the operation of that will. Within its sphere all is life, and health, and truth, and goodness; without is darkness and the region of the shadow of death.

II. As our prayer becomes the true expression of our desire, we shall seek to embody it in our daily conduct. It will then become THE HABIT OF OUR LIFE. Our great Exemplar said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me;" "I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me;" "I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." And the spirit of his obedience is uttered in one word: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy Law is within my heart." How blessed to have a "will of the Lord" to turn to for our guidance! How holy a Law is it! The truest greatness of life is to hold it in subjection to a great principle. There can be no higher one than "the will of the Lord." Devotion to a great principle transfigures the whole life; it makes the very raiment white and glistering.

III. But there are exigencies in life when the crush of sorrow comes upon us. He who has habitually sought to know and observe the will of the Lord in his daily activity will easily recognize the Divine will in his sufferings; and to bow to that will in health will prepare him to acquiesce in it in sickness. To say, "Thy will be done!" when health and friends and possessions all are gone, needs the training of days in which all the desires of the heart have been brought into subjection. Many things transpire which are contrary to the Divine will; but obedient faith will rest in the

Divine purpose, which can work itself out by the least promising means. Though held in "the hands of wicked men," it will cry, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."—G.

Vers. 53—65; ch. xv. 1—5.—*Heaven's righteous King at earth's unrighteous judgment-seat.* "They led Jesus away to the high priest." So he appears before that ecclesiastical tribunal, whose duty it was to see that his own laws were obeyed. He who is the true Judge is arraigned before one who will prove himself to be the real culprit. But an accusation must be brought, even though the court is an unjust one. To this end "the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus." Their efforts were vain, for though "many bare false witness against him," yet "their witness agreed not together." Then, with directness, the high priest questioned him, asking the all-important question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus, who knew how to maintain a dignified silence when suborned men bare false witness, and who knew equally how to reply with withering and confusing words when foolish men presented quibbling questions, boldly and promptly replied to the demands with an authoritative "I am." And then, in lowly humility, he bore further witness to the truth, saying, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." With rage and indignation the high priest tears his clothes, and declares his words to be "blasphemy," which could only be true on the supposition that he was bearing false witness. He appeals for judgment, and the universal testimony is, "He is worthy of death." The ecclesiastical court has condemned him. "Straightway in the morning," after due consultation on the part of "the whole council," they "bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate." He is now arraigned before the civil tribunal. Pilate's direct inquiry, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" The reply, "Thou sayest," is an affirmative. Pilate has no idea of a spiritual kingship. In each court Jesus is tried, and found guilty. Pilate could have no fear that the calm Prisoner before him, who confessed his kingdom to be "not of this world," would be able to establish his claim, and having his interest in him excited by various circumstances, is disposed to release him. But the instant assertion, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend," and his desire "to content the multitude," and lest there should be an uproar, "delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." Underneath all this show of human judgment we must see other forces at work. In "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" we must find the roots of this delivering up. The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. Nor must we lose sight of that voluntary consecration of himself to the will of the Father which guided Jesus when he laid down his life that he might take it again. Other aspects of this remarkable incident come into our view, when we hear Jesus refusing to make the appeal which could bring to his help "more than twelve legions of angels," and that because he would that "the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." It is needful to group together the various details given by the several writers, each throwing into prominence one or other important feature of the scene, and it is equally needful to read the records in the light of various portions of the epistolary writings of Paul and others, especially that to the Hebrews. There we see the end it was designed should be answered by his appearing "as a lamb before her shearers—dumb." But the judgment of Jesus is really the judgment of his accusers; of them at whose bar he is arraigned, and by whom his sentence is pronounced. We see in it the most humiliating condemnation of itself by its unwarranted condemnation passed by the Jewish nation upon its innocent Victim. Even Pilate declared he found no fault in him; nor would he have delivered him up had he not been hounded on by zealots, whose sensibilities he feared in his weakness to excite, and whose tool he lent himself to be. This repudiation of the truth, this despisal of holiness—holiness as exhibited in the life of One who has become the world's type of righteousness—and this revolt from the will of the Father as declared in the writings of the acknowledged prophets, condemns them as children of error, of unholiness, and of wicked disobedience.—G.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Approach of the end.* I. "A TIME OF SILENCE AND SOLITUDE PROPERLY PRECEDES THE DAY OF DEATH."

II. "WITH THE HIGHEST ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY, AND MUCH WORLDLY PRUDENCE, THERE MAY BE GREAT WICKEDNESS" (Godwin).—J.

Vers. 3—9.—*Anointing for martyrdom.* I. PURE LOVE RISES ABOVE THE CONSIDERATIONS OF THRIFT. Logic must give place to love. The full heart disdains the question of money expense. Habitual extravagance is one thing, the redundancy of grateful affection is another. We are never safe, in conduct or in thought, except when we follow the heart's lead.

II. SYMPATHY PRESERVES THE JUDGMENT FROM ERROR. The disciples did not understand the woman's act. Christ lifted it into the light of truth. There is a narrow scale of judgment—of those who stand too close to the act, and see only its immediate bearings. To see truly we must see far. There is a *perspective* of acts. This Christ points out. The acts of instinctive faith and love, of obedience and loyalty, are worth more than those based upon prudence and calculation.

III. THE DEATH OF CHRIST MEASURES THE WORTH OF ACTS. This act will go down in history inseparable from his death. It was a forecast and a memento. The loving self-devotion of the Saviour attracts the like from those who surround him and who know him.

IV. THE TRUEST REWARD OF GOODNESS IS TO BE HELD IN THE LOVING RECOLLECTION OF OTHERS. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." One great man prays, "Lord, keep my memory green!" A poet turns the wish into song, that he may be "only remembered by what he has done."—J.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Black conspiracy.* I. "THE BEST INFLUENCES FOR GOOD MAY BE RESISTED AND BECOME VAIN."

II. "HYPOCRISY PREPARES FOR DISHONESTY AND ALL WICKEDNESS" (Godwin).—J.

Vers. 12—21.—*The Paschal supper.* I. THE DUTIFUL MIND IS THE CLEAR-SEEING AND THE PREPARED MIND. What struck the evangelists was the calm foresight and method of Jesus. It was like the strategy of a general; the presence of mind of one who holds the clue to events, because he knows the moral sequence. On another occasion "Jesus himself knew what he would do." Here the disciples "found even as he told them." So generally, "everything will be found as Jesus has declared."

II. THE PUREST SOCIETY IS NOT FREE FROM AN IMPURE LEAVEN. A Judas among the twelve; and an incipient Judas in the conscience of the rest. Better for us, instead of looking round for *the* Judas, to look into the heart to discover how much of Judas is there.

III. THERE MAY BE A COINCIDENCE OF DIVINE APPOINTMENT AND HUMAN GUILT IN THE SAME ACT. It is in the law of things that the good should suffer from human violence. But it is not in the law of things that any man should take part in that violence. We may not be able to seize the secret unity of principle behind the seeming contradiction of the knowledge of God and the responsibility of man. But the latter is our *fact*, clear and definite. The former is of the "secret things that belong to the Lord our God."—J.

Vers. 22—25.—*Eucharistic service.* I. THE SYMBOLIC BREAD AND WINE. Eating and drinking are the most significant physical acts of life. For they are the foundation of life. Hence the act is appropriate as a symbol of the foundation of spiritual life. The appropriation of Christ by the intelligence and will is analogous to the appropriation of food in the process of digestion.

II. THE SERVICE IS THE VISIBLE SEAL OF A NEW COVENANT. Which is a continuation, an enlargement or evolution of the old; founded on better promises. Objectively, the grace of God is more clearly revealed and abundantly poured forth in the New Testament than in the Old. Subjectively, the conditions of blessing are purer and simpler. The spiritual act of faith includes them all, including the man as a whole.

III. IT IS DESIGNED AS MEMORIAL. The form, the words, the spirit of the loving and suffering Saviour, appear and reappear at each celebration. It is the memorial of devotion for our sakes, and the reminder to us of the duty to live not for ourselves, but for the spiritual ideal contained in him.

IV. IT IS DESIGNED TO BE PROPHETIC. "Until that day!" Our purest earthly joys are the buds of celestial flowers. The reunion of the family on feast-days speaks of the reunion in heaven. All our best earthly joys are promises of better joys in heaven. The scene of the Lord's Supper lifts us out of the commonplace associations of life. We realize in it prophetically the truth of our personal and social existence.—J.

Vers. 26—31.—*Warnings.* I. HUMAN NATURE IS NOT TO BE DEPENDED ON. The most loyal hearts are not fear-proof. Men act much like sheep; are gregarious both in good and in evil. Often they will follow a leader through the greatest dangers; remove the leader, and throw them upon themselves, and courage vanishes, and we know how frail a thing our nature is. Jesus foreknew all this.

II. YET DIVINE LOVE TRUSTS OUR NATURE. Jesus knew that he should return and again gather these scattered sheep. If our salvation depended on ourselves, all were lost. It is the power and the wisdom greater than ourselves which deliver us from ourselves; and there is no worse enemy to be found than the treacherous heart within our breast.

III. IDLE RESOLVES. "Sincere purposes are not sufficient to ensure steadfastness." Good men have said that the more resolves they make, the more sins they find they commit. This may not be strictly so. Still, to add to the original fault the fault of a broken resolve, does hurt to the soul. All experience teaches us our frailty. And the practical lesson is—not to indulge in offensive protestations of humility before our fellow-men, but to see ourselves as we are, and seek strength, not in self-dependence, but in God-dependence.—J.

Vers. 32—42.—*Gethsemane.* I. THE SPIRIT'S NEED OF OCCASIONAL SOLITUDE. We need to collect and concentrate ourselves. "We must go alone. We must put ourselves in communication with the internal ocean, not go abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men. I like the silent church before the service begins better than any preaching. How far-off, how cool, how chaste the persons look, begirt each one with a precinct or sanctuary! So let us always sit" (Emerson).

II. ITS NEED TO THROW ITSELF ON GOD. We ask advice of others too much, and depend on human sympathy when we ought only to depend on God. But God does not speak his deepest messages to men amidst a mob, but in the desert, when they are alone with him. Amidst the confusion of opinion and conjecture, his will becomes clear to us. In solitude it shines, the pole-star of our night. His will is ever wisest and best. It is ever possible to follow:—

> "When duty whispers low, 'Thou must,'
> The soul replies, 'I can!'"

It is ever safest:—

> "'Tis man's perdition to be safe
> When for the truth he ought to die."

III. THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS AND PRAYER. Porphyry says, in his affecting life of the great philosopher Plotinus, that the latter, though full of suffering, never relaxed his attention to the inner life; and that this constant watchfulness over his spirit lessened his hours of sleep. And he was rewarded by an intimate union with, or absorption in, the Divinity. He was ever interrogating his soul, lest it should be yielding to fallacy and error. This was the great man of whom his disciple again says, that he was ashamed of having a body. Even in ascetic extremes, there are lessons for us. "The spirit indeed is forward, but the body is feeble."—J.

Vers. 43—52.—*Violence and meekness.* I. THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-COMMAND. How majestic does the Saviour appear in this refusal to employ force against force! Moral grandeur is illustrated against the background of brute violence. It is but the show of violence that can ever be opposed to the majesty of truth. The Divine and the spiritual is conscious that it cannot be hurt. Evil, having no real substance nor personality, flees from it.

II. IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IS OUR SURE REFUGE AMIDST THE PREVALENCE OF

EVIL. "Thus it is, and thus it must be." Chance is an unmeaning word, when the soul is bound up in God's will.

"This is he men miscall Fate,
Threading dark ways, arriving late;
But ever coming in time to crown
The truth, and hurl wrong-doers down."

J.

Vers. 53—65.—*First trial of Jesus.* I. JUDICIAL INJUSTICE. *Optimi corruptio pessima.* The judge who should represent on earth the equal dealing of God, may turn the name of justice into a mockery. Names will not influence men to right if the heart be not right. Under the name and garb of judge, men have sometimes concealed the worst passions, the most arbitrary instincts. So do extremes meet in human life. Only in God do names and realities perfectly correspond.

II. TRUTH ITSELF MAY BE REPRESENTED AS IMPOSTURE. The Saviour is here made to appear an impostor. It is the triumph of party-spirit. Misrepresentation within every one's power. Insight into character is rare. We ought to take no second-hand estimate of character. The wrong we do to others by false construction is great; still greater may be the wrong we do ourselves.

III. YET IN THE END TRUTH IS ELICITED BY OPPOSITION. The majesty of the Saviour is enhanced in proportion as he is assailed. God is revealed in him and upon him, and his glory is reflected from human falsehood and villainy.

"Though rolling clouds around his breast are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on his head."

IV. THE TEMPORARY SUCCESS AND ETERNAL FAILURE OF CONSPIRACIES. Here the noble and mean combined to dishonour the Christ of God, to treat him as if he had been the offscouring of the earth. So later were his disciples treated. But where are those conspiracies and conspirators now? For a small moment they triumphed; everlastingly they are branded with shame and defeat. What feeble folly were those blows aimed at the head of the meek and unsuffering kingdom!

"This is he who, fell'd by foes,
Sprung harmless up, repulsed by blows;
He to captivity was sold,
But him no prison-bars would hold;
Though they seal'd him in a rock,
Mountain chains he did unlock."

J.

Vers. 66—72.—*Extremes meet in character.* I. SELF-CONFIDENCE AND WEAKNESS. What is a man without self-reliance? Yet it seems to fail, and offers no security in temptation. In a true self-reliance is contained dependence and trust. Confidence in our thought is right, if we recognize that our true views are revealed to us; that it is not we who think, but God who thinks in us. Separated from our root in God, whether in thought or will, we become mere individuals. Once isolate the picture of yourself and your powers and activities from the Divine whole to which it belongs, and it will soon be found that you are in a false position.

II. IMPETUOSITY AND DELIBERATION. We admire the generous eagerness of Peter, but it topples over into precipitous haste. And the hasty falsehood is followed by the deliberate persistence in it. Brazening it out one moment, the next he breaks into a flood of remorseful tears. "Who can understand his errors?" Easy to criticize Peter, not easy to act better. Let us humbly own that he represents us all, in greater or less degree. Our life oscillates between extremes. God can make profitable to us the experience of our sins and errors. The chemistry of his love can bring our tragic scenes to a happy ending.—J.

Vers. 1—11, 18—21, 43—50. Parallel passages: Matt. xxvi. 1—16, 21—25, 47—56; Luke xxii. 1—6, 21—23, 47—53; John xviii. 2—12; xiii. 21—35.—*The*

betrayal by Judas. I. INTRODUCTION TO JUDAS. The individuality of Judas comes prominently before us in this chapter. We make his acquaintance in the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. We are introduced to him in connection with the alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; for though not mentioned here by name, we know from the other evangelists that he was among those who felt indignant at the supposed waste of the ointment, and who expressed that indignation by murmuring against the worthy woman who had poured it on the Saviour's head. Either Judas had muttered dissatisfaction, and others of the disciples, in their simplicity, concurred, or Judas was spokesman of others who, accustomed to scant ways and means, were surprised at what naturally enough appeared to such men extravagant expenditure. "When his *disciples* saw it, they had indignation," according to St. Matthew's narrative; "There were *some* that had indignation within themselves," is the record of St. Mark; "Then saith one of his disciples, *Judas Iscariot*, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" is the explicit account furnished by St. John. There was only the one single point of contact between Judas and those of the other disciples who agreed with him about the matter of waste. Their motive differed from his; their thoughts were not his thoughts. The large-hearted liberality of this loving woman was, however, rightly comprehended by the Master himself, and justly commended by him. Our curiosity is not gratified by any particulars of information about Simon. Whether he was a brother of Lazarus, or a brother-in-law, being Mary's husband, or some other relative, or only a friend, we neither know nor need to know. The meaning of the epithet πιστικῆς is also little more than a matter of conjecture. Some of the Greek and Latin interpreters understand it to mean *genuine* or pure, and connect it with πιστός, faithful; others hold the meaning to be potable or *liquid*, from πίνω; while Augustine derives it from the name of the place whence it came, that is, Pistic nard. The Vulgate and Latin versions render it *spicati*; and similar, too, is our English spikenard, as the name of a fragrant oil extracted from the spike-shaped blossoms of the Indian *nardus*, or nard-grass. The costliness of this unguent was well known among the ancients; hence Horace promised Virgil a nine-gallon cask of wine for a small onyx box of this nard; while the evangelist informs us that the value of Mary's alabaster box of ointment was upwards of three hundred pence, that is, of Roman coinage, each *denarius* being equivalent to sevenpence halfpenny or eightpence half-penny of English currency. The amount would thus be about ten guineas.

II. MARY'S LIBERALITY. This liberality of Mary had its origin in deep devotedness to our Lord, but her devotedness was the outcome of enlightened faith. She had a correct understanding of his character and claims. A believer in his Divine commission and in his kingly authority, she did not stumble as many at the prospect of his death. She knew he was to die, and hence she anticipated that sad event by the exceedingly expensive preparation in question. The custom of employing perfumes on such an occasion has an illustration in the record of King Asa in the sixteenth chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, where we read, "They laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art." The disciples of Christ surpassed the generality of their nation in the knowledge of, and belief in, his person as Messiah; but though they had full faith in his Messiahship, they still clung to the notion of a temporal kingdom, with all its high honours and earthly distinctions. From this arose the difficulty which they had in reconciling themselves to his death, or rather the stumbling-block which his death placed in the way of their faith, as the two disciples to whom Jesus joined himself on the way to Emmaus, after speaking of his death and crucifixion, added, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Mary's faith excelled theirs as much as theirs excelled that of the Jews in general. Her faith did not fail in prospect of Messiah being cut off, her love was not chilled by the coming coldness of his death, nor did her hope go out like a taper in the darkness of his sepulchre. She believed that as Messiah Jesus would die and revive and rise and reign. She believed, and her faith worked by love. She believed, and therefore she poured the precious ointment ungrudgingly on her Saviour's person.

III. THE BESETTING SIN OF THE TRAITOR. Judas is usually held up as a monster of iniquity, and his sin regarded as something diabolical. While we would not

diminish by one iota the heinousness of his sin, nor say one word in extenuation or mitigation of his guilt, we feel that, owing to certain exaggerated representations of his criminality, the lessons to be learnt from his character and conduct are to a large extent lost. On the contrary, if we carefully analyze his character and examine his career, we shall find much to learn, at least by way of warning, from the sad lesson of his life. Of course, by placing him outside the pale of humanity altogether, and regarding him more as a fiend than a man, we leave ourselves without any common measure whereby it is possible to compare his career with that of ordinary mortals. Now, we hold that he was just in roll with common men, though by his sin in its results he rose at last to such an exceptionally bad eminence. He was, as is admitted on all hands, a bad man, a wicked man, and a man as wretched as he was wicked. All the elements of evil in his character, however, may be resolved into one besetting sin, and that sin was *avarice*. His greed of gain was insatiable, and he loved gold much more than God. This inordinate love of money was the root of the evil in his nature. This love of money is a growing sin, for, as the old proverb has it, the love of money increases as much as the money itself increases—nay, it usually increases much faster. He was naturally avaricious, and he gave full swing to his natural disposition. Here we learn a lesson of the greatest utility and of very general application. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read of "the sin which doth so easily beset us." The case of Judas exemplifies the baneful tendency and the fatal result of such a single besetting sin. Most people have some propensity in excess, some strong passion, some evil principle in their nature more likely to overpower them than any other. It is of vital importance to ascertain what the weak point is, in what direction it lies, and where the risk of entanglement is greatest. A physician is careful in the very first instance to discover the seat of the patient's disease, and its nature. So we should look carefully into our heart and out upon our life till we find out the source of weakness; and once it is discovered—nor can the discovery be a matter of any difficulty to the honest inquirer—we must be ever on our guard against it, and use every available means to fortify ourselves in that particular quarter. However strong our character may be otherwise and in other respects, one besetting sin, unless resisted and shunned, will ruin all. One weak link will spoil the strongest chain, and no chain is stronger than its weakest link; one small opening in a dam will flood a district, or even a province.

IV. OFFICIAL DIGNITY, OFFICIAL DANGER. It often happens that a man is placed exactly in that situation in life which, owing to his peculiar disposition, is fraught with greatest danger to him. Thus, for good and wise ends, God in his providence is pleased to try us, as gold is tried, that we may be proved and purified and strengthened. When so situated we need to seek daily increase of faith that we may be kept from falling, and constant supplies of grace that it may be sufficient for us. Judas had been clever at finance, and in consequence became bursar of the little society. This situation of purse-bearer was one of extreme danger to a man like Judas; his hand was too often in the purse, his fingers were too frequently on the coins it contained. With such an opportunity without and such a disposition within, what, in the absence of restraining grace, could be expected? His greedy disposition, combined with the temptation of his office, was too much for him; his covetousness developed into thievishness. He failed to check the evil propensity; he did not resist the strong temptation. The first act of pilfering was committed. The Rubicon was crossed; the line of demarcation between honesty and dishonesty became fainter and fainter, and was gradually effaced. Other acts of petty pilfering succeeded; and though we have little reason to suppose that the disciples' purse had ever been a deep or heavy one, or that it ever contained more than supplied the bare necessaries of daily life, yet we have much reason to believe that the paltry peculations of the purse-bearer were a constant drain upon it. "He was a thief," our Lord tells us plainly, "and carried the bag." Here we have a second lesson, which is the absolute necessity of resisting the first temptation to evil; for as the habit grows by indulgence, the power of temptation diminishes by resistance.

V. DISAPPOINTED AMBITION. The chief attraction to Judas had probably been the prospect of a temporal king and earthly kingdom; and thus of some lucrative position or highly remunerative office in the service of that king and in the affairs of that kingdom. Others of his fellow-disciples had been looking forward to posts of honour—to sit on thrones in the future Messianic kingdom. Judas cared less for honour than

for profit, and however he may have esteemed such honour, it was mainly as the way to wealth. But now our Lord had referred in terms unmistakable, once and again, to his death and burial, this gave a rude shock to the hopes of the traitor, and seemed to cut off at once and for ever the prospect of worldly gain. This was a bitter disappointment to the greedy spirit of Judas; the cup of plenty was rudely dashed away as he was about to raise it to his lips; the time of discipleship he looked upon as a dead loss; his profits had been small at best, but the prospect of improving his circumstances is now blighted; and his occupation is gone. Tantalizing, and even torturing, as all this must have been to *him*, another disappointment, though of a minor sort, is added. A sum of three hundred *denarii*, or more, that is to say, upwards of ten guineas, had been profusely lavished in a way and for an object with which he had not the least possible sympathy, nay, in a manner as he thought highly reprehensible. It was sheer waste, and worse, for no one gained anything; the poor were not benefited—"not that he cared for the poor," except as a matter of hypocritical pretence; he himself missed the disbursement of a sum from which he could have appropriated a percentage that might have been a crumb of comfort in present disastrous times and during the dull days he must now look forward to. But there was even more than this; he must have felt himself by this time an object of suspicion; conscience must have made him aware of this; he must have known that the Master, at all events, saw through the thin disguises that concealed his real character from ordinary eyes. He did not feel at home with the brotherhood; and, his occupation being gone, a spirit of recklessness was creeping over him. Besides, he was stung into hostility by the severe but well-deserved reproof which our Lord now saw right to administer to him. "The poor always ye have with you," said our Lord; and it was thus hinted that it was his duty—part of his office—to look after them, and that opportunity was never wanting for that purpose. Thus wrought on, Judas bethought himself that it was high time to look to his own interests; and, having failed in one direction, to try the opposite.

VI. WARNINGS WASTED. It is truly astonishing what effect the continued indulgence of a single sin has in hardening the heart, searing the conscience as with a hot iron, blinding the mind, and banishing for a time at least all feelings of shame and even of common humanity. The black crime soon to be committed had cast its shadow before. More than one hint had been given, more than one warning note had been sounded; but all to no purpose. The first intimation appears to have been after our Lord had washed the disciples' feet, impressing by that expressive symbolic action the great lesson of humility on all his followers. On that occasion he said, "Now ye are clean, but not all" (John xiii. 10). In the second section of this chapter, where the traitor is again referred to, words of warning still more distinct are uttered: "One of you which eateth with me shall betray me;" and while all of them, "one by one," as St. Mark particularly mentions, deprecated with surprise and sorrow such an impeachment, asking, "Is it I?" or literally, "It is not I, is it?" Judas had the amazing effrontery to pretend innocence, and ask with the rest, "Is it I?" The intimation about the betrayer being "one of the twelve, he that dippeth with me in the dish," and the individual who should receive the sop, may have been whispered into the ear of the beloved John, and through him to Peter; but the final fearful warning was uttered aloud and in the hearing of all. And yet that terrible sentence, "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born," had no effect on him; at all events, it failed to shake his diabolical purpose. It is possible that during the first shower of questions—each asking, "Is it I?"—Judas had sat silent, either sullenly through contempt, or conscious-stricken; that subsequently, with an air of careless coldness, and in order to conceal the confusion of the moment, he asked not, "Lord, is it I?" but "Rabbi, is it I?" when he received the answer, "Thou hast said," in the affirmative, unheard perhaps except by the disciples John and Peter, who sat close by. The expression, too, which our Lord added, namely, "What thou doest, do quickly," though heard by all, was misunderstood, and referred by them to directions about the purchase of requisites for to-morrow's feast, or making distribution to the poor; but it must have been perfectly comprehended by the traitor himself. At all events, on receiving the sop, he went out immediately, and, in spite of all, pursued his foul and fiendish purpose. All these checks, all these warnings, were utterly ineffectual. His besetting sin, growing like the mountain snowball, and

gathering within its compass other elements, as disappointment, resentment, ingratitude, and envy, had now become too powerful to be overcome. The sin that might have been checked effectually at the first had now become uncontrollable; the evil one, who might have been successfully resisted at the commencement, had now gained complete mastery over this wretched man. To such a fearful extent was this the case, that the evangelist informs us that "Satan entered into him." In no other way, as it seems, could the enormity of his crime be accounted for. No wonder it is added, "And it was night." It was night with earth and sky—night with all its darkness, night with that dark heart of the traitor, night in every sense with that unhappy man! How all this inculcates, as another and a third lesson, the importance of cultivating prayerfulness of spirit, and enforces the necessity of praying frequently and praying fervently, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"!

VII. ANOTHER SCENE IN THE TRAITOR'S LIFE. We now open another chapter in his history. The bargain is struck, the sum weighed and delivered, and in the paltry sum thus realized we have another proof of the grovelling spirit of this unspeakably mean and mercenary man. He has secured the thirty pieces of silver, or thirty shekels—some £3 15s. of British money. Both parties seem satisfied with the bargain. The chief priests are glad of the promised opportunity of arresting in private him whom the dread of popular tumult or probable rescue prevented them arresting in public. Public opinion was still so favourable to the Prophet from Galilee, and had such force, that, hostile as the Jewish authorities were, they dreaded, and with good reason, the risk of a public apprehension. Judas, too, is content with his pieces of silver. We almost fancy we see him, like Milton's picture of Mammon in the nether world, eyeing with furtive, downcast glance the proceeds of his bargain. But the satisfaction of the wicked seldom lasts long. We scarcely think that Judas at first realized the consequences of his wickedness; we cannot believe that he at all anticipated the sequel of his crime. Perhaps he thought that he who had wrought so many miracles would work one in self-defence, and not allow himself to be apprehended; or perhaps he thought that, if arrested, he would escape out of the hands of those who came to apprehend him; or it may be he thought Jesus would now be forced to set up the expected kingdom. All his calculations are at fault.

VIII. THE ACTUAL BETRAYAL AND APPREHENSION. Some two hours have elapsed from the revelation of the traitor and his departure from that upper room, when a motley multitude of men, armed with swords and staves—some of them Levitical guards from the temple, others Roman soldiers from the tower of Antonia, together with priests and elders—is marching down the hillside from Jerusalem to the valley of the Kidron. Already they have crossed the brook and reached the garden. But what mean those lanterns, for the Paschal moon is at the full? Perhaps the moon was obscured by clouds, or shining dimly that night; or the deep shadows of the hills and rocks and trees made the light of the lanterns necessary. The concerted signal was not really needed, owing to our Lord's forwardness to meet his fate. Had he pleased, he might have frustrated the attempt, as by a word he felled them to the earth (John xviii. 6); he might have ordered to his help twelve legions of angels, had he been unwilling to suffer. And yet, willing as he was to suffer, he is equally willing to save; his sufferings were in our stead, and for our sake. His ready willinghood to undertake for us and die for us assures us of equal willinghood to have the benefit of those sufferings transferred to us. The traitor's kiss, which was a *fervent* one (*κατεφίλησεν*), was the signal for arrest. From this we learn the terms of familiarity and friendship that existed between Christ and his disciples. Nor is he changed, or become colder in his friendship for his true followers; he is as cordial as ever, and still bends on earth a Brother's eye. His address to Judas, however, is too strongly expressed in the Common Version. The term "friends" (*φίλοι*) he reserves for his true disciples; the word addressed to Judas is *ἑταῖρε*, which signifies "companion" or "acquaintance," and does not necessarily imply either respect or affection.

IX. THE COWARDICE OF SIN. Cowardice is generally associated with sin, so true it is that "sinful heart makes feeble hand." Our first parents, after their sin against God, hid themselves among the trees of the garden. The chief priests and elders, with the captains, are here charged by our Lord with cowardice. "Be ye come out," he asks, "as against a brigand or bandit (*λῃστήν*), with swords and staves?" Had he

been an evil-doer, why did they not apprehend him publicly in the broad light of day as he taught in the temple? Poor, sinful souls! their cowardly spirits shrank from this; the power of public opinion, or the dread of a rescue, or the danger of a riot, they could not brave; but now skulkingly, secretly, stealthily, at the dead hour of night, they came upon the Saviour by surprise, with a strong posse of men well armed. Their sin was seen in their cowardice. Our Lord is now in the hands of his enemies. He had healed the servant's ear—the right ear (St. Luke and St. John)—having asked freedom to stretch forth his arm to touch and heal the wounded ear, saying, "Suffer ye thus far;" if the words do not mean—Excuse resistance to this extent. Judas has betrayed him; all the disciples—even John the beloved and Peter the brave—have forsaken him and fled!—J. J. G.

Vers. 12—17, 22—25. Parallel passages: Matt. xxvi. 17—19, 26—29; Luke xxii. 7—13, 19, 20; 1 Cor. xi. 23—34.—*The old dispensation merging in the new.*—I. THE PASSOVER AND THE INSTITUTION OF THE SUPPER. 1. *Comparison of the records.* The memorial Passover differed from the Egyptian or original Passover in several points. A still greater change is now made. The substance now takes the place of the symbol. The antitype supersedes the type. The true Paschal Lamb—Christ our Passover, about to be sacrificed for us—being come, the Jewish Paschal lamb disappears. The unleavened cakes and wine, formerly only secondary and subordinate, now become the primary and principal elements of the feast, as representing the body and blood of the Lamb to be slain. The idea of Christ's sacrificial death, previously intimated with more or less clearness, is now fully exhibited. In the fact of the particulars being foretold there is a close resemblance to that prediction which preceded the triumphal entry. The record of the Lord's Supper is fourfold. It is recorded by three evangelists and by one apostle. These are the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke; with Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. Some points are brought out more fully or distinctly in one, and some in another, of these; accordingly, a brief comparison of their respective records with each other helps to a better understanding of the whole. (1) Instead of "blessed," used by St. Matthew and St. Mark, St. Luke and St. Paul employ the expression, "gave thanks." (2) In addition to the statement of "This is my body," found in St. Matthew and St. Mark, St. Luke and St. Paul give an explanation, the former adding, "which is given for you;" the latter, "which is broken for you;" while both enforce it by the suitable exhortation, "This do in remembrance of me." (3) St. Luke and St. Paul append a note of time—"after supper," or "when he had supped." (4) Whereas (*a*) St. Matthew and St. Mark say simply, "This is my blood of the new testament, St. Luke and St. Paul introduce the word "cup," and alter the arrangement of the sentence, in this way rendering the whole clause clearer and more explicit; thus, "This cup is the new testament [more correctly 'covenant,' Revised Version] in my blood." Mark alone (*b*) supplements the accounts of the other evangelists by stating the fact, "They all drank of it." (5) St. Matthew and St. Mark have, "shed *for* many," using the preposition περί equivalent to *in behalf of*, or *for the benefit of*; but St. Luke has "shed for you," employing ὑπὲρ which, from the idea of superposition, covering, defence, or protection, may mean *in the stead*, or *place*, or *room of*, and so conveying the idea of substitution, though not so distinctly and definitely as ἀντί. (6) St. Matthew alone points out the purpose in the expressive words "for the remission of sins." (7) It is also to be noted that the original word for "shed" is ἐκχυνόμενον, a present participle passive, and so signifying literally *being shed*, as though the sufferings were already begun, the passion entered on, and the sacrifice commenced. These four records of the inspired penmen, each writing from his own standpoint, but all under the direction of the Holy Spirit, furnish a full exhibition of this ordinance in its different aspects; while they impress us with its solemnity and sacredness, deepening the interest we should take in it and the importance to be attached to it. Besides, there is usually this difference between the record of the same fact or truth when presented in a Gospel and then in an Epistle, that the record of the former is historical, that of the latter doctrinal; the former contains the plain narrative, the latter its practical application; the concise enunciation of the former finds its complete development in the latter; the direct statement of the Gospel is commented on or treated somewhat controversially in the Epistle. 2. *The Author of this ordinance.* The Lord

Jesus Christ is the Author of this solemn institution; both evangelist and apostle refer its appointment to him. He is sole King and Head of his Church. His kingship is the result of a Divine decree. "I have set my King," says Jehovah, "on my holy hill of Zion." The government, both legislative and executive, is in his hand, as the prophet had foretold, "and the government shall be upon his shoulders." He is also "Head over all things to the Church." Not only so; this ordinance in particular is his special appointment, for it is the memorial of his death, and keeps the memory of his dying love green in the Christian's soul. To him, therefore, we owe its institution, the manner of its observance, the time of its continuance, and the persons admissible to its enjoyment. Nor is there any ordinance more closely identified with the Saviour than this ordinance of the Supper. He is its "all in all," its Alpha and Omega. The words are his, and speak of him; the symbols are his, and point to him; the blessings embodied are his, being the purchase of his blood; the praise is his, for "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, . . . to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." The new covenant, with all its benefits, present and prospective, is his, for he ratified it. 3. *Abuses.* Little more than a quarter of a century had elapsed when human abuses were beginning to overlay this holy ordinance in the Church of Corinth, so common is it for man to leave an impure print on all his hand doth touch. A reformation of the holy rite had become necessary, and a republication followed. The abuses removed, and the ordinance restored to its original simplicity and sanctity, St. Paul received it by revelation, and republished it in his First Epistle to the Corinthian Church, as he says, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." With this fresh publication of it, we have a fuller exposition of its nature, and increased obligation for its observance; while it is restamped, as it were, with the seal, and resanctioned by the signature of the Church's Head. 4. *The time of its appointment.* The time of its appointment was "the same night in which he was *betrayed*." This of itself, apart from all other evidence, is proof positive that Jesus was more than man. It was the night when the Jewish Sanhedrim concerted measures for his apprehension; when chief priests and scribes and rulers were planning his condemnation and plotting his death; the night when one of his own disciples played the part of traitor and betrayed him into the hands of his deadliest foes; when another disciple denied him, and all forsook him; the night when he was to be delivered to his persecutors—to their malice and mockery and the worst tortures that their malevolence could devise.

> "'Twas on that night, when doom'd to know
> The eager rage of every foe,
> That night in which he was betray'd,
> The Saviour of the world took bread."

It was the *eve* of his crucifixion; nor were the events of the coming morrow unknown to him. From the unrelenting hatred of his enemies, and the steady purpose of their persecuting fury, he might have anticipated them; he might, without much risk of error, have forecast them. But with him it was no forecasting of probabilities; he clearly foresaw all, and consequently in a measure foretasted all. Had he been a weak mortal and nothing more, the certainly approaching danger and disaster must have occupied his thoughts and oppressed him with grief. In this case he would have been insensible to the wants, and incapable of administering to the comforts, of others; he would have been too much occupied with himself and his own position to spare any thought for the concerns, or make any provision for the consolation, of his friends. On the contrary, instead of concentrating his thoughts on himself and the crisis just at hand, his thoughts were engrossed with his followers then, thenceforth, and onward for ages yet to come. All his thoughts, all his feelings, all his sympathies, were enlisted on the side of his disciples, and exercised for their benefit. The self-abnegation that had characterized the whole course of his life became yet more conspicuous, if that were possible, at the period when he came within measurable distance of death and dissolution. Self was absolutely lost sight of, the interests of his people bulked so largely that they occupied the whole field of vision. 5. *A comparison.* A comparison has frequently been instituted between the life and teaching of the Saviour and Socrates—between the Prince of peace and the prince of pagan philosophers. Their respective

sentiments on the eve of execution may for a moment be compared, or rather contrasted, here. On the part of Socrates we find a sort of posthumous ambition, present doubt, and practical indifference. There was posthumous ambition; for he allowed his vanity to be flattered by reckoning on the praises of posterity, and referred, with a feeling half of self-gratulation and half akin to revenge, to the false position in which his death would be sure to place his enemies, and especially his accusers. There was present doubt; for beautifully as he reasoned on the subject of immortality and a future state on previous occasions, now, in the presence of the great change, he doubted whether he himself or his friend Crito, who was to survive him, were likely to fare better. There was practical indifference; for the interests of his family and the upbringing of his children appear to have cost him little or no concern. With our Lord, on the other hand, there was no borrowing of comfort from the praises of posterity; his chief concern was for the well-being of posterity. There was no shadow of a cloud upon futurity; all was bright and blissful there. There was, instead of indifference, the deepest and most absorbing concern for the spiritual well-being and everlasting welfare of his friends and followers through all coming time. Far be it from us to undervalue the sage of Athens—he was one of the lights of heathendom; but we find him to the last human, intensely human; while Jesus was both Divine and human—unmistakably Divine, and yet truly human. 6. *Use of monuments.* Monuments draw attention to the facts of history and to the incidents of biography. How many thousands there are who would never have heard of Nelson, or Wilberforce, or Wellington; or who would have remained ignorant of their great achievements, and of the stirring times in which they lived, were it not for the monuments erected to their memory! How many have had their minds directed by some monument or other memorial to the life and times of men of whom otherwise they would never have heard even the names, or studied the history, or reflected on the lives however eventful! Thus it is, in a higher sense, with the institution of the Supper; it is a monument to Christ, and helps to keep up the remembrance of him, which would else have been more or less forgotten. It reminds men of his death, and shall continue to do so till he come again; it reminds us of the debt of obedience we owe to his dying command, "Do this in remembrance of me;" it reminds us, too, of a day when he will come "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

II. THE NATURE OF THE ORDINANCE. *A sacrament, not a sacrifice.* The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, not a sacrifice. We reject and reprobate the teaching of those who regard the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice—the so-called sacrifice of the Mass or the offering up of the bread and wine converted into the flesh and blood of Christ; and who represent it as a bloodless, yet true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for both the living and the dead. Nothing could be more contrary to or contradictory of the Word of God. In forming a correct notion of this ordinance, of which the passage before us contains the institution, it may be helpful to clear away the rubbish which, in the course of time, accumulated round it. In doing so it may be well to state what *it is not*, and then what *it is*—to exhibit the *negative* side of this sacrament, and then the *positive*. 1. In the first place, then, we reject the doctrine of transubstantiation held by the Latin Church. This doctrine, first formulated by the Abbot of Corbey, Paschasius Radbert, in the beginning of the ninth century, first denominated *transubstantiation* by Hildebert of Tours in the beginning of the twelfth century, and made an article of faith by the Lateran Council in the beginning of the thirteenth century, means the conversion or change of the elements of bread and wine into the real body and blood of our Lord. We repudiate this dogma (1) as opposed to *Scripture;* for St. Paul calls the elements after blessing by the same name as before, saying, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup;" thus they are still bread and wine as much and the same as ever. It is (2) contradicted by the evidence of the *senses;* for handle them, and they remain the same; taste them, they are the same; smell them, they are the same; they are still bread and wine, with all their sensible qualities or accidents, as they are called, unchanged. Now, the testimony of the senses ranks the highest—the testimony of the most credible witnesses cannot overthrow it, and to refuse the information of the senses overturns the certainty of all knowledge; while one of the acknowledged tests of Scripture miracles is an appeal to the senses. It may fairly be admitted that one single sense may, under certain circum-

stances, err, but it can be corrected by the others; whereas all the senses together cannot and do not err. It is (3) repugnant to *reason*, which convinces us that the material body of Christ cannot possibly be in heaven and on earth at the same moment; that is, at the right hand of the Majesty on high and on thousands of earthly altars at the same time. In this case the flesh and blood of Christ would be present, while their sensible qualities are absent; on the contrary, the sensible qualities of bread and wine would be present, while those substances themselves are absent. Thus we should have the subject without the accidents in the one case, and the accidents without the substance in the other. But this is palpably absurd, for substances are known by their qualities, and qualities do not exist apart from their substances. Once more, (4) this dogma is derogatory to the *sacrifice* of Christ—that great sacrifice offered once for all and for ever, because it represents it as needing continuous repetition in the so-called sacrifice of the altar. Moreover, (5) it destroys the very nature of a sacrament, for every sacrament necessarily consists of two parts, a sign and a thing signified—"an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;" in other words, a sensible object and certain spiritual blessings set forth and sealed by that object. But transubstantiation does away with the sign altogether, and puts the thing signified in its place. We reject the doctrine of transubstantiation, then, because of the absurdities it involves, as also because of the superstitions connected with it, and the idolatrous practices engrafted on it. 2. In the second place, we reject the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation, which teaches that though the substance of the elements is not changed, yet the body and blood of Christ are mysteriously but really and corporeally present *in*, *with*, and *under* the elements, and are received corporeally with the mouth by communicants along with the symbols. Though this opinion is rather speculative than otherwise, though it does not convert the sacrament into a sacrifice, though it does not lead to the adoration of the elements, and though it does not impart to the sacrament a physical virtue apart from the dispositions of the recipient, yet it involves several grave difficulties. It necessitates a literal interpretation of the words of institution, and so a substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament. The Lutherans are at pains to define this presence. It was not a change of one substance into another (*μετουσία*), nor the mixing of one substance with another (*συνουσία*), nor the inclusion of one substance in another (*ἐνουσία*), nor the absence of substance (*ἀπουσία*); but the real coexistence or presence (*παρουσία*) of the one substance with the other, that is, the earthly with the heavenly. For this purpose, however, a communication of properties is requisite, so that the humanity of Christ shares the omnipresence of his divinity. The Lutheran doctrine, it is true, makes the ubiquitous presence of the body of Christ unique and peculiar to the Lord's Supper. It is further alleged that the humanity of Christ is at the right hand of God, and that the right hand of God is everywhere; therefore Christ, as to his humanity, is everywhere present. It is plain, however, that this omnipresence of the flesh and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the Supper is contrary to the nature of a body, and thus self-contradictory. Besides, this omnipresence of the body and blood of our Lord would imply their presence in every ordinary meal as well as in the Lord's Supper. Neither is it a sufficient or at all satisfactory answer to this to say, as Lutherans do, that omnipresence in this case means no more than accessibility, that is, the fact of being everywhere given, for the body and blood, if thus given and received everywhere, would be everywhere operative. 3. In the third place, we do not agree with the Zwinglians, including Zwingle himself, Carlstadt, Myconius, Bucer, Bullinger, and the reformers of Zurich, who went to the opposite extreme from the Lutherans. They regarded the elements as signs or symbols, and nothing else and nothing more; these they held to be memorials of the absent body of our Lord. The tendency of the Zwinglian doctrine was to lessen the efficacy and lower the character of this sacrament. Looking upon the elements as mere signs, viewing them as memorials and not means of grace, denying the special presence of the Saviour, they made the sacrament of the Supper little, if anything, more than a bare act of commemoration or a mere badge of profession. And so it happens that the doctrine of the Supper, as set forth by Zwingle himself, is that still held by Remonstrants and Socinians to the present day. Here we are reminded of the memorable conference that once took place on this subject. For a full account of the discussion, the district where it was held, and the disputants on the occasion, we must refer the reader to the description by D'Aubigne, which, as usual, is at once picturesque

and instructive. We can only notice the fact in its bearing on the subject of the Supper. On an eminence overlooking the city of Marburg stands an ancient castle. Away in the distance sweeps the lovely valley of the Lahn. Further still, the mountain-tops rise one above another till they are lost in the clouds or disappear in the remote horizon. In that old castle was an antique chamber, with vaulted roof and Gothic arches. It was called the Knight's Hall. There, more than three centuries and a half ago, a conflict took place, not with carnal weapons, but intellectual and spiritual. Princes, nobles, deputies, and theologians were there. The combatants were the mighty Luther and the mild Melancthon on the one side, with the magnanimous Zwingle and the meek Œcolampadius on the other. It was this very subject that formed the ground of debate. Luther held by the literal sense, dogmatically repeating "This is my body," while his opponents urged the necessity of taking the words figuratively. And here, in passing, it may be observed that much as both Romanists and Lutherans insist on the literal sense of the words, they are figurative even according to their interpretation. As used by the Romanists they are an instance of the figure synechdoche, as used by Lutherans they are a metonymy, while as used by Protestants in general they are admitted to be metaphorical. 4. Now, in the fourth place, and in opposition to all these, we give in our adhesion to the creed of the great majority of the Reformed Churches on this doctrine. Here it is necessary to bear in mind that, among the Reformed themselves, Zwingle occupied one pole, Calvin held the opposite, while the form of the doctrine ultimately agreed on and acquiesced in by the great body of Reformed communions was intermediate. Zwingle's view, as already seen, made the sacrament of the Supper symbolical and commemorative, reducing it to a mere sign; Calvin, on the other hand, held that believers receive an emanation or supernatural influence from the glorified body of Christ in heaven. The illustration he employed made his meaning plain: it was to this effect, that the sun is absent and distant from us in the heavens, but his light and heat are present with us and enjoyed by us on earth. The Reformed, however, maintained that believers received the sacrificial virtue of Christ's atoning death. Eventually the *Consensus Ligurinus* (1549 A.D.) was drawn up by Calvin. The immediate object was to harmonise the Zwinglians and Calvinists; but it accomplished much more than this. It embodies the doctrine of the Supper which is held by all the Reformed Churches. The various Reformed Confessions are in harmony with it. The second Helvetic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, which constitute the doctrinal standards of the Reformed Churches of the Continent; the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England; the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, are in full accord with it. The doctrine of these Churches and Confessions may be expressed in, or rather compressed into, the following brief statement, slightly modified from the Westminster Confession:—"The body and blood of Christ are as really but spiritually present to the faith of believers in this ordinance as the elements themselves are to their outward senses." Hence it comes to pass that while we outwardly and visibly partake of the sensible signs, which are bread and wine, we inwardly and faithfully receive Christ and him crucified with all the benefits of his death. The real presence of Christ is enjoyed by his people in this sacrament; but that presence is not bodily, it is spiritual. His body broken and blood shed are present, not materially, but virtually; by this we mean that the beneficial effects of his sacrificial death upon the cross are conveyed to the faithful recipient. These benefits are received, not by the mouth, but by faith. The whole is made effectual by the Holy Spirit to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

III. THE DOCTRINES MADE VISIBLE BY THE SUPPER. *Nature of a sermon.* A sermon is intended to explain some doctrine, or enforce some duty, or both. The great object to be attained is the glory of God in Christ and the Christian's good. The sacrament of the Supper has often been compared to a sermon; but it is a sermon to the eye —a visible sermon, if the expression be allowed. It is a sermon, too, that thus visibly sets forth several of the leading doctrines of our holy religion. 1. The first doctrine visibly exhibited in the Lord's Supper is the *Incarnation.* The Incarnation, or Christ's coming in the flesh, was the great event of the ages; for "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." "The everlasting Son of the Father," when he took upon him to deliver man, "did not abhor the Virgin's womb;" and so, in the language of one of the Church's creeds, he "was incarnate by the Holy

Ghost of the Virgin Mary." Now, the *bread* symbolizing the body, and the *wine* the blood, both together set forth the body of flesh with the living fluid that circulates through it; and thus the elements of bread and wine teach the doctrine of the Incarnation, speaking to us the same language as the Evangelist John, when, in the first chapter of his Gospel, he tells us, at the first verse, that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" and then adds, at the fourteenth verse, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The bread and wine, therefore, inculcate the same sacred truth as the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." 2. The second doctrine visibly taught in the Supper is that of the *Atonement*, or the setting-at-one of persons alienated. The parties in this case are God and men, the latter alienated, and enemies in their minds by wicked works, the carnal mind being enmity against God; while "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." This setting-at-one is the work of reconciliation, from which, however, atonement only differs as being the more comprehensive term, and including not only the reconciliation itself, but the means by which reconciliation is effected. The atonement, then, or those sufferings of the Saviour by which reconciliation is accomplished, in other words, the bruising and breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood, are set forth visibly by *breaking* the bread and *pouring out* the wine in the Lord's Supper.

"Bread of the world, in mercy broken,
Wine of the soul, in mercy shed,
By whom the words of life were spoken,
And in whose death our sins are dead;

"Look on the heart by sorrow broken,
Look on the tears by sinners shed;
And be thy feast to us the token
That by thy grace our souls are fed."

3. The third doctrine presented to the eye in the sacrament of the Supper is that of *Faith*, by which we feed on Christ to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. The exercise of faith on the Son of God is symbolized by our *eating* the bread and *drinking* the wine. These same acts of eating and drinking are employed by our Lord in the sixth chapter of John to symbolize and signify the exercise of faith. Thus he says in the chapter cited, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;" and again, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day;" still further it is added, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Thus the most intimate fellowship with Christ, the closest union and communion with him, life spiritual here and everlasting hereafter, together with part in the resurrection of the just, are conditioned by and connected with that faith of which eating and drinking are the symbols.

"Sweet feast of love Divine;
'Tis grace that makes us free
To feed upon this bread and wine,
In memory, Lord, of thee.

"Here conscience ends its strife,
And faith delights to prove
The sweetness of the bread of life,
The fulness of thy love."

4. The fourth doctrine thus visibly taught in the Lord's Supper is the *Communion* of saints. The word "communion" implies our discharging some duty together (*munus*)—doing something in common. At the Lord's table we partake of bread in common and of wine in common—the same bread and the same cup; and this *common participation* is a visible manifestation of the doctrine of the communion of saints. Hence the apostle says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of

Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." This communion of saints is based on union to Christ. As branches, we are grafted into the living Vine, and thence draw life and strength and nourishment; as living stones, we are built up into a spiritual temple, the foundation being apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief Corner-stone; as members of his mystical body, we are knit by joints and bands to him as the living Head. By virtue of this union of all true Christians with Christ, they have communion each with the other. We have common privileges, common benefits, common blessings, and common duties. We have hopes and fears in common, joys and sorrows in common, trials and triumphs in common; and all these not merely in connection with the same congregation or the same Christian communion, but to some extent "with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Oh that Christians realized this more in their own souls, and exhibited it more in their lives, and manifested it more to the ungodly world around! Oh, when shall the great intercessory prayer be fulfilled: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"! Oh, when will that proof of the divinity of our Lord's mission be given to an unbelieving world and a misbelieving age! Oh, when shall the holy Church cease to be rent asunder by schisms, distressed by heresies, and oppressed by the scornful!

"Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses
With every grace endued."

5. The fifth doctrine is that of the glorious second *Advent*—that advent which the Church is looking for and hasting to. But this doctrine is presented in the communion, not visibly, but orally; not to the eye, but to the ear, in the words, "Ye do show the Lord's death *till he come.*"

IV. THE SACRAMENTAL SIGNS; THEIR SIGNIFICANCE. 1. *The sacramental elements.* These are two in number—bread for nourishment and wine for refreshment. One of these might serve the purpose; then why are two employed? Two are employed instead of one (1) for *assurance.* Thus we read in relation to Pharaoh's dream, "The dream is doubled to Pharaoh twice, because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." In like manner the two signs show the certainty of the covenant and strengthen our faith in its provisions. Like the everlasting covenant made with David, well ordered in all things and sure, the promised blessings of the New Testament are firmly established, being "Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus." Their bestowal on the specified conditions is sure, soon, and certainly coming to pass. Again, they are (2) for *apprehension;* that is, in order that they may be rightly and more readily apprehended. Thus two signs were granted to Moses, as it is written, "If they will not believe nor hearken to the voice of the first sign, they will believe the voice of the latter sign;" the reason assigned being the character of the Israelites, stiffnecked and hardhearted as they were. So God, because of our slowness of apprehension and hardness of heart, has added sign unto sign, mercifully accommodating himself to us, the frail and fallen children of men. But (3) they imply *abundance.* While they quicken our faith and help us to a clearer view of Christ, they exhibit the plenitude of his resources, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," and "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," the ample supplies he has in store for our necessities, the full forgiveness and plenteous redemption that are found in him, the rich abundance of all needful gifts and necessary graces, as also the sufficient nourishment he bestows on us. 2. *The sacramental actions.* Some of these are performed by the administrator, others by the recipient. On the part of the former they are *taking, blessing, breaking,* and *giving.* The *taking* symbolizes the assumption of our nature, "the mystery of the holy incarnation." The *blessing* signifies separation from a common to a special purpose, from an ordinary to a sacred use, as also thanks-

giving to God for the unspeakable gift of his Son, for the means of salvation thus made available, and for this solemn ordinance itself as a sign and seal of the benefits bestowed —in a word, for all the mercies of his covenant, for all his love to our souls, for all his faithfulness to his promises, for all he has done, is doing, and has promised to do. The *breaking* is expressive of the breaking and bruising of his body; that is, the painful death on the cross, the pouring out of his life unto death, the making of his soul an offering for sin to satisfy Divine justice, to pacify Divine wrath, and purchase salvation for us. The *giving* denotes the gift of the Father, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" the gift of the Son, of whom the believer can say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" every needful gift, for "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—the gift of all things, for "all things are yours, because ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The Christian's inventory is as follows:—"Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come;" all are yours, because Christ is yours—Christ, in the glory of his Godhead, in the dignity of his person, in the suitability of his offices, in the perfection of his work, in the sufficiency of his atonement, in the power of his resurrection, in the prevalency of his intercession, in the preciousness of his promises, in all the blessedness of his benefits; no benefit kept back, no blessing withheld, and no promise excepted. Thus he is "made of God to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and thus we are "complete in him." There are also sacramental actions on the part of the recipients—*taking, eating and drinking, dividing.* These also are significant. Our *taking* implies intelligent acceptance of Christ and cordial reception of him. We embrace him fully as he is offered freely. We take him in all the capacities pertaining to his person or identified with his work. We take him as our Teacher, to be taught to know and believe and do the truth; as our Sin-bearer, who bore our sins in his own body, suffering, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God; as our King, to rule in us and over us and for us. We take him as our Saviour and Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob, that we may be saved from the guilt and filth of sin, from the pollution and power of sin, from the defilement and dominion of sin; we take him as "the Lord our Righteousness" and Strength; as the Beloved of our soul—the chief among ten thousand in our esteem. We take his laws for our direction, his love for our consolation, his precepts to guide us, his promises to gladden us; his cross in time, his crown in eternity; for if we bear the cross now, we shall wear the crown hereafter. Thus St. Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and again, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." By *eating and drinking* we understand the necessary application. Bread must be eaten in order to nourish, and wine drunk that it may refresh. The elements thus entering our bodies incorporate with our system and become part of our frame. As the application of Christ by faith unites us with Christ, so by this symbolic application of his body and blood that union becomes still closer. By such sacramental action, too, we profess publicly our union with Christ, and proclaim to the Church and to the world that Christ is one with us and we with him—Christ formed in our heart the hope of glory, and our life hid with Christ in God. By eating and drinking we say in action what Thomas said in words, "My Lord and my God;" we claim sacramentally that mutual relationship which the Spouse in Canticles claims verbally when she says, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." The *dividing*, according to the direction in St. Luke, "Take this and divide it among yourselves," is expressive of practical communion with each other in the charities and amenities of life; consequently of hallowed fellowship, Christian affection, and brotherly love; of the widest, yet tenderest, sympathies with all followers of our common Lord, with all fellow-travellers to the heavenly home, and with all fellow-heirs of the future glory in our Father's house above. 3. *The sacramental words.* These comprise an *injunction*, an *explanation*, and an *obligation*. The *injunction* or command is comprehended in the following terms:—"Take, eat;" "This do in remembrance of me;" "Drink ye all of it;" "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." The *explanation* consists of the two following sentences:—"This is my body, which is broken for you;" "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Here there

is an obvious reference to the words of Moses, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you" (Exod. xxiv. 8). The *obligation* or enforcement applies to the whole, and is contained in the single sentence, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show ['ye proclaim,' Revised Version] the Lord's death till he come." 4. *Concluding observations.* The Lord's Supper is thus not a sacrifice, but a feast after a sacrifice, and a feast upon a sacrifice. It is a wellspring in the wilderness, a green spot in the desert, a feast to refresh us on our pilgrimage, and a foreshadowing of that feast above, where "many shall come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and sit down [recline] with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." We are constrained, somewhat reluctantly, to pass over several interesting topics in this connection—the *reasons* for partaking of this sacrament, the *uses* to be made of it, the *benefits* to be derived from it, as also the *qualifications* for worthily observing it. Here we may just notice in regard to the latter (1) that a man must prove himself, and so partake; (2) discern or discriminate the Lord's body by faithful apprehension and spiritual appreciation; and (3) discern or discriminate himself and his relation to his Lord. Failing these he incurs judgment, viz. judicial visitation. Yet mercy mingles with such judgment, for it is the chastening of our heavenly Father for our good, and to prevent our final condemnation with the ungodly world.—J. J. G.

Vers. 26—42. Parallel passages: Matt. xxvi. 30—46; Luke xxii. 39—46; John xviii. 1.—*The agony in Gethsemane.* I. SCENE AND SEVERAL CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THE AGONY. 1. *Anticipation.* From the entrance of our Saviour upon his public ministry his life was one of continued trial. All along symptoms of the approaching crisis appeared, all along the bitter cup was steadily filling, all along the clouds were gradually gathering. At length, towards the close of his career, the storm-clouds in all their fury burst upon him. After his last entrance into Jerusalem the bitter cup became brimful, and he was now to drink and even drain it to its very dregs. The anticipation of those sufferings he was to undergo had made a deep impression on his mind; forebodings of them had frequently disturbed his repose, dread of them overwhelmed his spirit. He foresaw all, he anticipated all, he in a measure foretasted all; accordingly, several days before his passion, he cried out, "Now am I troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I to this hour;" or, as some erroneously read it, "What shall I say? Shall I say *this*, Father, save me from this hour?" 2. *Preceding circumstances.* On examining the circumstances that precede the agony, we find that the Wednesday and the Thursday before the Passover our Lord himself spent at Bethany, while on the latter day his disciples went to Jerusalem to engage an apartment and prepare a lamb for the coming solemnity. When the evening of the day was come, Jesus also repaired to Jerusalem. Having there joined the disciples, he sat down with them to the sacred feast which had been prepared, and which he purposed to render still more sacred by engrafting thereon (as we have seen) the new festival to be observed in remembrance of himself, as a memorial of his death, and in exhibition of his body broken and blood shed for many for the remission of sins. Such were the order and connection of events. The Passover had been observed—that Passover which he had desired so earnestly to eat with his disciples. The sacrament of the Supper had been instituted by our Lord, and kept for the first time in company with his faithful followers. Subsequently he had delivered that touching and pathetic, yet most consolatory and truly sublime discourse recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of the Gospel of St. John. He had poured forth, out of the fulness of his heart, that fervent and beautiful prayer contained in the seventeenth chapter of the same Gospel. He had warned the disciples against deserting him in the hour of temptation. He had selected three of them specially to attend him in his sorrows. Then, late at night, after delivering the discourse and praying the prayer and making the arrangements referred to, he left the city for the scene of his agony. 3. *The scene.* The place where this occurred was a spot often frequented by our Lord and his disciples. On this account St. Luke does not designate the place by name; he merely says, "When he was at the place." St. John accounts for the traitor's knowledge of the place from its being a frequent resort of the Saviour: "Judas also," he says, "knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples." The

place was a garden, little more than half a mile from the city of Jerusalem, and only a stone's throw from the brook Kidron, situated on the western slope and near the foot of the Mount of Olives. That garden had not been laid out for the production of herbs, but as an olive plantation. The name of that garden, as given by St. Matthew and St. Mark, was Gethsemane, so called from two words meaning "oil-press." As just intimated, it appears to have been a frequent and favourite resort of our Lord and his disciples. To that spot he often went as a meeting-place with his disciples scattered through the city during the day, according to the meaning assigned by some to the term συνηχθη, rendezvoused. Thither the Saviour often retired from the world, and to be alone with God. Thither he often repaired for prayer and meditation. There he often spent the night in intercourse with Heaven. There, amid the deep gloom of that solitary plantation, was the place of the memorable and most affecting scene to which this section refers. That garden, if tradition has rightly marked the site, remains to the present day. That enclosure still stands, surrounded by a wall formerly of loose stones but now plastered and whitened, and contains eight large and venerable olive trees. Up to the present time it is a gloomy and forsaken place, yet from its associations it must ever be to the Christian a sweet and sacred spot. To this day it is a peculiarly sombre as well as solitary place, with that rude stone wall enclosure and those grey old olive trees. It was here an event took place the full purport of which eternity perhaps can alone reveal. At all events, for suffering and sorrow it ranks next to the Crucifixion itself. But sad and sorrowful as are the memories associated with Gethsemane, it is invested with a sacredness that makes it unspeakably dear to every Christian heart.

"Gethsemane can I forget,
And there thine anguish see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember thee?"

Let us imagine ourselves, then, in that sombre and solemn enclosure on the eve of man's redemption, in company with our Lord and along with Peter and James and John. The same three had been spectators of the Transfiguration. The same three had stood by while their Master restored to life the ruler of the synagogue's daughter. The same three are now privileged to be witnesses of that fearful struggle of the Redeemer's soul, called in this passage his agony. And as we stand in that society and on that spot, eastward rises high above us the lofty summit of Olivet. Westward we are overshadowed, or at least our view is shut in, by the gigantic walls of the holy city. Below us lies the valley of the Kidron, with the little freshet from which it takes its name. Yonder at a distance, amid the gloom of the overhanging olive trees, is seen the Saviour's person dimly revealed by the pale light of the silvery moon. It is a chilly night, but chilly as is the night-air, the warm perspiration bursts forth from every pore, moistens every limb, and falls like big drops of blood down to the ground.

II. THE STRUGGLE AND ITS SEVERITY. 1. *Meaning of the term.* The word "agony" is due to St. Luke, and employed by him only in the record of this transaction; while the use of this word helps considerably to the right understanding of the whole. The idea of pain so usually associated with agony is not the exact sense of the word. It rather means *conflict* or struggle. It was a word which the Greeks applied to their games. Thus the runner in the race, the pugilist in the combat, and the wrestler in the contest, were properly said to agonize. *Pain* connected itself with the word only as a secondary and subordinate notion. But what was the nature of this struggle? It could not be with sin, for he had no sin; he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." It was not with the development of any unholy tendency or the uprising of any evil passion; from all such his humanity was exempt. Nor yet are we without a hint respecting the *source* whence the struggle proceeded. If we compare an expression at the close of the temptation with another in the narrative of the agony we may arrive at a tolerably safe conclusion. In the first-named passage Satan is said to have left our Lord for a season, or rather *until a convenient season*; while in this passage the subject of prayer, which he suggests to his disciples, was the avoidance of temptation. Putting these two things together, we have good ground to believe that the suitable

season for another onslaught of the evil one had arrived; that the attack was renewed; that Satan had returned; that the tempter, though foiled once and again before, had resumed with increased facilities, or from a vantage-ground, or at a more favourable opportunity, the terrific trial. A passage in the Epistle to the Colossians favours this view. It is there (Col. ii. 15) said that he stripped off or put away from himself the hostile principalities or powers that clung to him like a deadly Nessus-robe. The thrice-repeated assaults of Satan in the wilderness had been repelled, and the tempter defeated, but only for a time. The attack was renewed in Peter's effort to dissuade the Saviour from suffering; and unconscious as the apostle was of the source whence the suggestion sprang, it was none the less a device of the great enemy, as we may infer from the sternness of our Lord's rebuke when he said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." But the tempter was again baffled and beaten. Once more, however, the prince of this world mustered all his forces for the last and fiercest onslaught. This was the hour and power of darkness, beginning with the agony and ending with the Crucifixion. And now Satan and the powers in league with him are not only vanquished, but Jesus "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them," as we read in that passage of Colossians; that is, they were boldly exhibited as trophies by the Victor, and led in triumph as captives bound to the Conqueror's car. 2. *Point of attack.* Still curiosity would desire information with respect to the particulars of the present trial, or the character of the struggle in which the Saviour is now engaged. What was its turning-point? Was he pressed to repudiate the responsibility he had assumed for sinners, and did the struggle consist in resisting such pressure? Was he tempted to renounce the great work of man's redemption? Was there a shrinking of the flesh from the terrible ordeal that was fast approaching, while the spirit drew in the opposite direction? It can be no matter of surprise that the pure humanity of our Lord should recoil from what was coming in the near future, for he foresaw it all—the sneer, the scorn, the spitting, and smiting; the robe of mockery, and the thorn crown, together with the scourging and suspension on the cursed tree. We cannot wonder that the anticipation of all this, and vastly more, should produce a struggle of no ordinary kind in the breast of the Son of God. But whatever the exact nature of the struggle was, from whatever cause he agonized, one thing is perfectly plain, and that is the extreme intensity of the agony. 3. *Evidence of its intensity.* So unspeakably intense was its severity, that he sweat as it were great drops or clots (*θρόμβοι*) of blood which ran down to the ground. With reference to this proof of its severity, several similar instances of sweating blood have been adduced. Ancient authors and modern writers alike record cases of it. Diodorus of Sicily mentions bloody sweat as resulting from the bite of Indian serpents. Aristotle speaks of it as caused by a diseased state of the blood. Some recent medical authorities reckon it among the consequences of excessive terror or extreme exhaustion. But by far the most striking case of all is one narrated by the infidel Voltaire. In his essay on the civil wars of France, he says that the king, Charles IX., soon after the Bartholomew Massacre, was attacked by a strange malady, which carried him off at the end of two years. His blood was always oozing out, forcing its way through the pores of the skin—an incomprehensible malady, against which the art and skill of the physicians were unavailing. This, he adds, was regarded as an effect of the Divine vengeance; but elsewhere he attributes it to excessive fear or violent agitation, or to a feverish and melancholy temperament, admitting that other cases of the same have occurred.

III. THE SAVIOUR'S SORROW AND ITS SOURCE. 1. *The description of his sorrow.* There is a climax in this description. He began to be sorrowful; his *soul* was sorrowful, *exceeding* sorrowful, even unto *death.* He was *amazed,* and very *heavy.* One of the words here employed is peculiar. It denotes, according to one derivation, *satiety,* but according to another a state and consequent feeling of *strangership*—a sort of home-sickness. How applicable to the Saviour's sorrow! He must have been more than satiated with earth, and homesick, if we may use the expression, for heaven. But, looking deeper down, we find three words descriptive of the Redeemer's sorrow, which require closer and more careful consideration. The original word for being *sorrowful* (*λυπεῖσθαι*) is in this narrative peculiar to St. Matthew; that for being sore *amazed* or stunned (*ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι*) is only used by St. Mark; while those equivalent to *very heavy* (*ἀδημονεῖν*), and to the soul being *exceeding sorrowful* (*περίλυπος*) even unto death, are common to

both. The first expression is one of frequent occurrence, but is here intensified by a subsequent compound and several adjuncts. Further, while the seat of this sorrow is the soul, the sorrow itself is exceeding and overwhelming, and enwraps the soul, the soul being distressed all round—grieved on every side (περί). Nor is that all; it is so excessive that soul and body seem ready to part, or actually to part, under the pressure and the death-pang to be anticipated. If it be not the fulfilment of, it is at least in correspondence with, the words of the psalmist—

"The pains of hell took hold on me,
I grief and trouble found."

The next term, that peculiar to Mark, imports a complex state of feeling made up of *horror* and *amazement*, or extreme alarm and consternation, approaching to stupefaction or being stunned, while here, again, an augmenting particle increases the notion to the highest degree. Once more, the former of the two words employed by St. Matthew and St. Mark in common, whatever origin is assigned to it, is used to denote a state of distress that combines at once *dejection* of mind and *disquietude* of spirit, or anxiety and anguish. 2. *The cause of this sorrow.* Now, those words and phrases employed in describing the Saviour's sorrow, weighty as they are in themselves separately, when taken together represent an extreme of sorrow and a weight of woe which no utterances of human speech appear adequate fully to express. To this sorrow may be applied the words of the prophet, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." It is now time to inquire into the cause or causes from which such sorrow sprang. To what must we attribute this sorrowfulness, this sore amazement, this extreme heaviness and exceeding sorrowfulness of soul even unto death? We may answer (1) *negatively.* To attribute it to fear of death would be a glaring outrage on all probability, and the gravest libel on the Son of God. Who has not heard of that Athenian sage who philosophized so calmly and conversed so pleasantly with his friends till the poison-cup did its work? Many a soldier, both in ancient days and modern times, has faced death fearlessly and unshrinkingly. Many a soldier of the cross has displayed equal, and in cases not a few still greater, heroism. Not only men, but delicate matrons and tender maidens, have heroically braved the persecutor's rage, and bidden him do his worst. In the days of the martyrs, many courageously and cheerfully encountered death in its most ghastly form. Some endured the most cruel tortures without complaint. Some were torn to pieces by wild beasts. Some were left to look at the ocean's tide as it approached nearer and nearer, rising higher and higher till they sank in the gurgling wave. Some were sawn asunder. Some were crucified with the head downwards. Some went upward from the stake in a chariot of fiery flame. And is it possible that the Founder of our faith had less fortitude in the near prospect of death than many of his weakest followers? Many, supported by a good cause and a good conscience, have despised death, and surrendered life unhesitatingly and unfalteringly. Many, of different ranks and different ages and of both sexes, have submitted to a death of cruellest torture, undaunted and undismayed. Hundreds have in their last moments illustrated the words of the poet—

"Resting in the glorious hope
To be at last restored,
Yield we now our bodies up
To earthquake, fire, and sword"

Is it, then, for a moment supposable that the servant should so far surpass his Master, and the disciple his Lord, that what caused the latter such agony and anguish was matter of exultation and triumph to the former? We answer (2) *affirmatively.* What, then, was the cause of the Saviour's sorrow? Was his case different from any or all of those referred to? Yes, most certainly; they were wide as the poles apart. Those illustrious heathens, those great and good men, those noble martyrs, those death-defying followers of the Saviour, stood each in his own lot in the end of the days. Not so the Saviour: his was a *representative* capacity; he was the second Adam—his people's federal Head. He came to give his life a ransom for many, to bear the sin of many, and to be numbered with the transgressors. He came to take the place of the guilty, and to stand

in the stead of millions. Then the sword of justice was to be unsheathed against the Shepherd, the man that was God's Fellow. The Shepherd must lay down his life for the sheep, else they must perish, and perish entirely, and perish everlastingly; "for the wages of sin is death," and "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

"Die man, or justice must
Except some other as able and as willing pay
The rigid satisfaction—death for death."

The exact relation of the Saviour's sufferings to the penalty incurred we need not dwell on here. Whether it is a relation of *diversity* (aliud pro quo), as Grotius maintained; or of *equivalence* (tantundem), according to others; or of *identity* (idem), in accordance with the view of a third class, we shall not attempt to determine further than to reject the first, and express our preference for the second rather than for the third. Further, as his life had been stainless, his death must be *sinless*. Holy and harmless as that life had been, his death must be equally free from sin and separate from sinners. But now came the severest test and sorest trial. If the awful sufferings in near prospect should weaken his purpose; if, foreseeing the shame and pain and torture, his resolution should give way; or if, what would equally defeat his undertaking, his heart should conceive or cherish any feeling of revenge; or if the burning sense of wrong should provoke complaint, or any word of impatient murmuring should escape his lips; if, in a word, any sin were to mingle with thought or feeling, or find utterance in speech, his life-work would miscarry and the whole would end in irreparable failure. No wonder, then, that, in view of all this mighty burden which he bore—in view of the dread responsibility laid upon him, in view of that mountain-load of sin he was to transfer to himself and bear away, in view of that great sacrifice which he was to offer, in view of the great satisfaction he was to make, in view of that great salvation he was to effect, the Saviour's humanity began to shrink. If we turn to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, a passage written more than seven hundred years before the time of our Lord's agony, we find at once a comment on that agony and a key to its cause: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," or, more literally rendered, "The Lord hath made the iniquities of us all to meet or fall on him," or, more strictly still, "The Lord hath made the iniquities of us all to rush on him." In those words thus understood our sins are figuratively represented as beasts of prey, and Jesus is their Victim; or as cruel enemies, and Jesus is the Object on which their vengeance vents itself. Like bulls of Bashan, they beset him round. Like ravening and roaring lions, they gaped upon him with their mouths. Other adversaries, less powerful but more vexing, compassed him like dogs. It was as though fiercest foes of every kind and on every hand assailed him.

IV. THE SUPPLICATION AND THE STRENGTH THEREBY SECURED. 1. *The meaning of this cup.* No wonder he prayed, "Let this cup pass from me." The meaning of "cup" here is obviously suffering and sorrow—a bitter mixture to be drunk. Thus Isaiah (li. 17) says, "O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out;" while in the seventy-fifth Psalm we read that "in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." A similar figure is found in Homeric poetry ('Iliad,' xxiv. 528)—

"Two urns by Jove's high throne have ever stood;
The source of evil one, and one of good.
From thence the cup of mortal man he fills;
Blessings to these, to those distributes ills.
To most he mingles both: the wretch decreed
To taste the bad unmix'd, is cursed indeed."

But while the figure itself is clear, the fact underlying it is not so clearly or easily understood. 2. *The mixture in this cup.* What elements mingled in this cup? What were the bitter ingredients in the mixture it contained? It was not, as already seen, the mere shrinking of our Lord's humanity from death, however painful and shameful, though we do not by any means exclude this element. Neither was it an apparition of

the evil one in some form specially dreadful and terrible, as some have conjectured. There was something worse than all this—something more and bitterer still. There can be little doubt, though some seem to think otherwise, that the assaults of the Prince of darkness were peculiarly powerful at this juncture, and went to make up part of the bitterness of this cup. Of this we are not without some intimation from our Lord himself, for before entering Gethsemane he says, "The prince of this world cometh," and before leaving the scene of the agony he adds, "This is your hour, and power of darkness." From all this, and from the circumstance already adverted to, that Satan had relinquished his attempt only until another and more suitable season arrived, we have reason to conclude that Satan was again at work during the agony, that he was renewing with redoubled energy his fiery darts, deterring from the work that was being done, and at the same time in every way depreciating its worth. The conflict foretold in the garden of Eden was to be fought out in Gethsemane; the heel of the Seed of the woman was to be bruised, and the head of the old serpent to be crushed. It was not strange, then, that the serpent should hiss most horridly, while his head was thus being crushed. It were strange indeed if, when the spoiler was to be spoiled, the captor deprived of his prey, and captivity led captive, Satan should not rouse himself to one fearful, final effort to retain at once his power and his prey. His temptation then mingled in and embittered the draught which the Saviour was to drink and drain to its dregs. Whatever the nature of Satan's suggestion may have been, whether resistance to the Divine will, or refusal of the destined draught, or desertion of the post assigned, or something yet more shocking, it is needless to inquire. It is enough to know that when our Lord tasted the cup he turned aside, so exceeding bitter was that mixture; a dark cloud passed over the serene spirit of the Son of God; his inward vision was obscured; the Father's will became invested in mystery, and the cross in blackness. 3. *Other ingredients in the cup.* Another ingredient in that cup was the withdrawal of the Divine presence—the hiding of his heavenly Father's face. Sin shut man out of Paradise; sin excludes man from the favour of God. The Saviour took our sin upon him; he became our Substitute; he acted as our Surety; he stood in our stead, and eventually offered himself a Sacrifice for us. He thus exposed himself to the temporary withdrawment of the light of the Divine countenance. Nor can anything be more trying or more painful to a child of God than the loss of the Divine fellowship for a season. When deprived of the sensible enjoyment of Divine communion, he is comfortless. It was thus with Job (xxiii.): "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him." Similar is the complaint of the psalmist in the eighty-eighth psalm: "Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." If a child of God, a sinner saved by grace, feel so acutely the hiding of God's countenance, how unspeakably more the sinless Son of God! This withdrawal of God's presence—favourable presence—is one element, perhaps a main element, in the misery of the world of woe, and forms no small part in the punishment of the lost. But this part of the Saviour's distress had a positive as well as a negative side. Not only was there deprivation of the joys of Divine favour and fellowship, the overclouding of his heavenly Father's face; there was in all probability some actual infliction of chastisement, as may fairly be inferred from the strong language of the prophet, when he says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." But of all the bitter ingredients in the cup of the Saviour's suffering, nothing would pain him more than the sense of our sins being laid upon him, that he might be made sin for us; and the sight of that accursed thing, so abhorrent to his pure nature, as the burden he was to bear; together with the consciousness of the close connection of sin and death and hell. It was then that sorrow arose on every side; sufferings, with concentrated bitterness, overwhelmed him. The hatefulness of sin, God's indignation against it, that loathsome load of human guilt he was to bear, the work he was to go through in order to remove it, the wrath of Heaven manifested against it,—all these ingredients mixed together in that bitter cup. 4. *His supplication.* It was then he prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here we find, side by side

with the deepest suffering, the meekest submission. The prayer is conditioned by possibilities. If justice can be satisfied, if redemption can be effected, if the government of God can be upheld, if, consistently with all this, sinners can be saved without such excess of sorrow, so let it be! The prayer was prayed three times. He went away and prayed; he kneeled down and prayed; he fell on his face or on the ground and prayed. Thus he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears. His prayer was heard and answered, and yet the cup did not pass away. He was "heard in that he feared" ("for his godly fear," Revised Version); or, according to another rendering of the words, "he was heard, and delivered from the fear of death." Though the cup was not removed, the dread of death was thus taken away; at all events, strength was imparted. 5. *The strength secured by his supplication.* "There appeared an angel unto him, strengthening him;" literally, *infusing* strength (*ἐνισχύων αὐτόν*). The immediate consequence of this increased or renewed strength was more earnest and energized supplication: "He prayed more earnestly (*ἐκτενέστερον*)." Strictly speaking, he continued praying (*προσηύχετο*), and that more intensely; the tense (imperfect) of the verb and the qualifying adverb imply prayer sustained and intensified. But intensely earnest as his supplication for the removal of the cup had been, it was equalled by the entire surrender of his own will to that of his heavenly Father. He had said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (so St. Matthew); he had said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (so St. Luke); while here, according to the record of St. Mark, he says, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." And once more, as we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew, he said, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." As though he had said,—I feel it may not be; I know I must drink it; and as I must I will. Not as I will, but as thou wilt. Thy will be done. 6. *His example.* He was in all things an Example for us. We may pray, and with perfect propriety, for deliverance from danger, or disease, or difficulty, or distress of any kind. If the answer come directly and as desired, it is well; if not, succour of some sort will be brought us, strength suitable and grace sufficient will be given us; in either case, our duty is submission to a will that is wiser than our own, and a full surrender of ourselves into the hands of our heavenly Father, who, in disposing all things to his own glory, disposes them at the same time for our good. The address, as reported by St. Mark, repeats the word for "Father;" thus "Abba" is the Aramaic for "Father," and to it is added the Greek word of the same signification. It may be that (1) St. Mark, as frequently, explains the vernacular Syriac of Palestine in our Lord's day by the equivalent Greek word; or (2) the repetition may imply intensity of feeling and strong emotion, just as the thrice-prayed prayer imports intense earnestness of spirit; or (3) it may be that by this conjunction of two terms, Oriental and Occidental—the one used by the Jew, the other by the Greek—our Lord meant to express his interest on behalf of both Jew and Greek. Further, it has been questioned whether the shrinking of our Lord's humanity on this occasion was in view of all the sufferings as a whole which, in the capacity of our Surety, he was to endure, or only of those apparently incidental and possibly unessential sufferings, occasioned, for example, by the treachery of one disciple, the denial by another, the desertion of them all, the Jewish trial and the Roman trial, the scourging, spitting, scoffing, and such like. We can hardly thus separate the essential from the unessential, the indispensable from the incidental, in our Lord's sufferings. As a man, he shrank from the wrath of God; but his ultimate submission to that sorest of all trials showed triumphantly his obedience to his heavenly Father's will. Thus, in order to save his people, his endurance was complete and his example perfect.

V. THE SLEEPINESS OF THE DISCIPLES AND THE SADNESS THAT CAUSED IT. 1. *Object of the disciples' watching.* The Saviour had selected three disciples, as already seen, to be with him. No doubt one object, perhaps the primary object, in view was that they might be eye-witnesses of his agony, and bear testimony thereof to his Church. But another object, and one little if at all less in importance, was that they might be near him for sympathy and support. It was with this view, no doubt, he had said, "Tarry ye here, and watch with me." But even of this human succour he was deprived, for ever as he came to them—once and again and a third time in the interval of prayer—he found

them asleep; so Jesus was left alone in his agony. 2. *Nature and cause of their sleepiness.* And yet it was not a sleep of stupidity, or insensibility, or want of sympathy, in any sense. The cause was the very opposite. And here it is noteworthy that while the other evangelists record the *fact*, Luke, the beloved physician, alone assigns the *cause*. How characteristic of his profession! From his skill in physiology he here tells us that "he found them sleeping for sorrow;" just as afterwards, from his knowledge of psychology, he accounts for disbelief from joy where he says, "While they yet believed not for joy." And so it was from very sorrow that they slept. It is not an unusual experience that sorrow acts the part of a narcotic, and sadness causes sleep; thus the psalmist says, "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness." And a merciful arrangement it is that men under such circumstances can sleep for a season and forget their sorrows. 3. *Different explanations.* The words which Jesus addresses to his drowsy disciples have been variously understood. Some take them (1) interrogatively,—Do ye sleep now and take your rest? This seems favoured by the parallel in St. Luke, "Why sleep ye?" As though he said,—Is it a time for indifference or indulgence of this sort? Is a time of present distress and approaching danger a suitable season for sleep? Others take them (2) as a sort of sorrowful irony, as if he said,—Sleep on now if ye can, and if that be possible, in such perilous circumstances. But (3) many prefer taking them as a permission slightly tempered with reproof, viz.,—Sleep for the interval that remains. I can now calmly watch and wait alone; the season of needful sympathy is past. He thus implies, moreover, according to Chrysostom, that he has no need of their help, and that he must by all means be betrayed. We may suppose that between this and the following verse some interval of time elapsed, and that then Judas and the band approached when Jesus roused the disciples with the words, "Rise, let us be going." The whole is thus, no doubt, perfectly consistent and clearly intelligible. Intermediately, however, occurs another difficult expression, ἀπέχει, which in the active voice refers sometimes to local distance, and sometimes signifies to have back, or get again, or receive in full, and so to be satisfied. According to the first signification, the word is here rendered by some personally and with reference to Judas—(*a*) *he is far off*, or (*b*) in relation to the crisis of the agony—*it is past*; while (*c*) the great majority of interpreters, in accordance with the second meaning of the word, translate it impersonally—*it is sufficient*, or enough. Thus understood, if taken in close connection with what precedes, the sense is,—Sleep on now and take your rest: it is enough; your *watching* is no longer required; but, if connected with what succeeds, it signifies,—It is enough: you have had sufficient *sleep*; the hour is come. By combining (3) and (*c*) we get what on the whole is most in agreement with both text and context; that is to say,—Sleep during the rest of the interval that may be allowed you, and take your rest; I require you to watch no longer. Then, after the lapse of a short interval, or even as an after-thought occasioned by the sight or sound of the enemy's approach, he checks himself in the additional words, "The hour is come . . . rise up, let us go."

VI. THE CHIEF OBJECT OF THE AGONY. 1. *Preparation.* One great object of the agony was, as we conceive, preparation for the final, fearful struggle near at hand. The Saviour was to brace himself for the conflict. Hence the difference between the agony and crucifixion was this: The agony was, if we may so say, the prelude, the crucifixion the performance; the one was—with reverence be it spoken—the rehearsal, the other the reality; the one was the anticipation, the other the accomplishment; the one was the *will*, the other the *work*. The language of the one is,—I am willing—I am going to suffer, and so put an end to sin; that of the other is,—I have already and actually suffered, and so put away sin for ever. The grand issue of Gethsemane was preparedness for future and final suffering, and, if put in words, it would be,—I am ready, and in no way reluctant to suffer; while from Calvary proceeds a shout of triumph over suffering endured to the uttermost and attainment of finality as expressed in the words, "It is finished." In the agony we see the sinless human nature of our Lord shuddering in sight of sin, and on the brink of fearful suffering because of sin, though not his own; in the crucifixion we see the same nature sustaining the load of human sin, and succumbing under the consequent suffering and sorrow, yet victorious even when vanquished, and conquering by being slain. The agony was a forecasting of the final struggle; it was going over all beforehand—going over all in mind, in spirit, and in body too; the crucifixion was the successful realization of the same. Once the agony was

over, the bitterness of death was to some extent past. 2. *The loneliness of our Lord in his sufferings.* In all this the Saviour was alone—as much alone in the garden as on the cross, in his agony as in his crucifixion. Sleep on now, he said; you have let the opportunity of sympathizing with and sustaining me pass by. Such, at least, is one not unnatural interpretation of the words. Miserable comforters ye have been, yet I blame you not; the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Sleep on now—it matters not; for the struggle is over, and over without your co-operation; of the people there was none with me. I have trodden the winepress alone, from first to last. They had been saddened by the prospect of losing their Lord and Master, by his pathetic discourses, by his touching intercession, and by his present supplication, and in consequence they slept. 3. *Summary.* In summing up the lessons to be learnt from this subject, we are taught (1) the terrible nature and fearful evil of sin. It was the cause of our Lord's agony—of the intense struggle, the overwhelming sorrow, the bloody sweat. The three chief ingredients in that bitter cup were, first, the unspeakable and indescribable load of human guilt; for though guilt in its moral demerit is not transferable, yet in liability to punishment it is. On the Lamb of God was laid the sin of the world, and he took it away; on our great High Priest were laid the iniquities of us all; the pressure of our transgressions rested on his head, as the sins of Israel on the head of the scapegoat. But another element entering into the cause of his agony was the temptation of Satan. The hour of darkness had come, the powers of darkness were doing their worst, the hosts of darkness rushed to the conflict. What fiendish power they exerted, what fiery trial they occasioned, what foul temptations they suggested, what fearful struggle they engaged in, we cannot even conjecture. A third element, and the worst of all probably, was the hiding of his heavenly Father's face; it commenced in the agony, continued during the crucifixion, and culminated in those words of awful import, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But (2) the next great lesson is connected with prayer. And here we find several important particulars suggested by the prayer of our Lord in his agony—the matter of prayer, the manner of it, the posture in it, the spirit of it, the intensity of it, and the success of it. From the *matter* of the Saviour's prayer we learn the allowableness of supplicating relief from circumstances of distress or disaster, as far as is consistent with God's will and expedient for us. The *manner* sanctions not vain repetition, but only such repetition as great earnestness frequently employs. The *posture* was kneeling, then prostration even on the cold and clammy ground. The *spirit* was that of perfect submission to the Divine will, with devout and holy resignation to his Father in heaven: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The *intensity* included increasing earnestness; it was the outpouring of the heart with continued importunity and augmented fervour. The *success* consisted not in the removal of the cup but of the fear, and in communicated strength and encouragement fortifying for the coming ordeal. Again, (3) there is an affecting contrast. While all within was storm, all without was calm. Nature all around was tranquil; the moon was shedding her mild radiance over the top of Olivet, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the valley of the Kidron; no wind was blowing, no leaf was stirring, and no ripple moving. All was hushed in silent awe and wrapt in profound astonishment at the bloody baptism with which Jesus was baptized that night.—J. J. G.

Vers. 53—72. Parallel passages: Matt. xxvi. 57—75; Luke xxii. 54—62; John xviii. 13—27.—*The denial by Peter.* I. THE CAUSES THAT LED TO PETER'S SIN. 1. *The first cause of Peter's sin.* The first cause, as we may infer from this very chapter, was *self-confidence.* Our Lord foretold the smiting of the Shepherd, as predicted long before in ancient prophecy—of himself the good Shepherd, appropriating the title; and along with the smiting of the Shepherd, he foretold, as a consequence, the scattering of the sheep. Peter, yielding to the impulses of his own ardent and impetuous nature, repudiated the notion of desertion thus implied. He did so in a manner that involved an invidious comparison of himself with others, and an overweening opinion of his own strength of will and purpose of fidelity. "Although" (καὶ εἰ, equivalent to "even if," viz. a supposed case not likely to exist; εἰ καὶ read by Tregelles, equivalent to "although," viz. a case really existing) "all shall be offended, yet will not I," were his somewhat boastful or egotistical words. The smiting of the Shepherd may be a stumbling-block to others—to all of them, but not to me; the others may fall over it, yet will not I;

the rest may act the cowardly, unmanly part indicated, breaking and scattering like feeble sheep soon as the wolf is seen to approach, but not I. I will prove myself the rock-man, and stand my ground in face of all danger, and in spite of all enemies. Thus Peter exalted himself at the expense of others; he also presumed too much on his own strength, and took too much credit for his own courage. Peter possessed physical courage, we have good reason to believe, but he lacked moral courage; nor do these two qualities always go hand in hand. There may be great physical courage with but little moral courage, and much moral courage where physical courage is defective. Peter was courageous enough—or rash enough, some might be disposed to say—to cut off the ear of a manservant of the high priest; but he was cowardly enough to quail before the glance of one of the maids of the high priest. He had physical courage enough to do the deed of violence, but not moral courage enough to tell the truth to an inquisitive, intermeddling, though perhaps light-hearted, thoughtless girl. If we *contrast* the conduct and character of two comrade apostles, John and Peter, we shall find a confirmation of our view. As compared with Peter, John had less physical courage, for on a subsequent occasion, as we read, "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. . . . Yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre." This is a very interesting and instructive statement. They both ran, in their eagerness and expectancy, to the rifled sepulchre; but John, being the younger and therefore swifter man, outran Peter, and reached the sepulchre before him. But there he paused; he had not the physical courage to enter that gloomy abode; a sudden awe arrested him. At length Peter came up, and as soon as he arrived at the place, without fear, or dread, or hesitancy, without stop, or stay, or a moment's pause, he dashed in. "Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre." On this occasion Peter proved himself the physically bold, courageous man; while John, though younger and stronger probably, was the physically timid and hesitating. The scene shifts to the palace of the high priest; and these two apostolic men change places. John is now the bold, courageous man—morally so, for he "went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest; but Peter stood at the door without." John was known to the high priest, and known to him as a disciple of Jesus, and yet he went boldly into the palace, neither ashamed nor afraid to acknowledge his discipleship. Not only so, he spoke to the portress, and got Peter admitted. But now came Peter's turn and time of weakness. Though John, a man of much less physical courage, had gone in boldly, and then gained admission for his companion, yet Peter, with far less moral courage, is frightened into sinful denial of his discipleship in the first instance by the brusque boldness of a somewhat pert maid. And yet, notwithstanding all this, a certain cause, or at least somewhat of an excuse, may be found for Peter's moral cowardice, as compared with the moral courage of John at this juncture. Peter was conscious of a crime with which John had no complicity or connection—a crime that might shape itself into a constructive charge of an attempt at rescue. He had cut off the ear of Malchus, and so he may have dreaded the consequence of that act, or the more serious charge of interfering with the officers in the discharge of their appointed duty, in order to prevent the capture of his Master. These considerations may have increased the apprehensions of Peter, and added to the supposed danger of his position. The fact of discipleship of itself did not involve peril of any kind, and so John breathed more freely and moved about at large in the palace of the high priest without dread of danger. 2. *A second cause leading to Peter's sin.* A second cause leading to Peter's sin was *unwatchfulness* and neglect of prayer. When our Lord, in the Garden of Gethsemane, found the three disciples sleeping, he addressed himself specially to Peter, with the words, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?" and then he spake words of warning to all: "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." A curious incident, in a certain respect the converse of this, though generally overlooked, deserves well, we think, to be noticed in this connection. In the warning just referred to, our Lord passed from the particular to the general, from the singular to the plural—from Simon to the associated apostles. In the warning recorded by St. Luke (xxii. 31, 32), and which introduces the passage of that Gospel parallel to ch. xiv. 37, 38, of the Gospel before us, our Lord passes in reverse order from the plural to the

singular—from the whole of the apostles to Peter; thus: "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked [or 'demanded'] to have *you*, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for *thee*, that thy faith fail not," where it is remarkable that Satan's demand comprehended all the apostles—the rest as well as Peter, as seems clearly implied in the plural ὑμᾶς, while our Lord's supplication embraced him in particular, as must be inferred from the singular σοῦ. Just as Satan had demanded all the apostles, including Peter, so our Lord prayed for all the apostles, but for Peter in particular. It was not without reason that our Lord thus individualized in his supplication for Peter, for he it was that stood in greatest peril. The most confident of them all was the most imperilled of them all. Some, like Judas, were soon to be blown away, or had already been blown away, as chaff, and had been separated from the good grain; but the word "wheat" applied to the remainder had in it both comfort and encouragement, while the Saviour's great intercessory prayer was a guarantee of safety. The fact, moreover, that he prayed for Peter specially and individually, affords strong consolation to all the children of God in every age and clime. Not one of all is forgotten by him who ever lives to intercede; not one of all is forsaken by the all-prevailing Intercessor. No doubt some may be disposed to object, and say that after all, and notwithstanding all, Peter fell. How is this reconcilable with the prevalence of the Saviour's prayer? He fell, but he rose again; he fell, and fell far, but did not fall away; he fell sadly for a time, but he did not fall finally and for ever. And this is the very thing implied in the form of the word rendered "fail;" for it is not the simple verb, but ἐκλείπῃ, or, according to the critical editors, ἐκλίπῃ, which signifies to fail *out and out, utterly*, or *finally*. Thus this utter and final failure was exactly the thing prevented by the Saviour's intercession. But, reverting to Peter's want of watchfulness, we can find no hint nor indication of any kind in all this chapter, or in the parallel sections of the other Gospels, that would lead us to believe that Peter paid proper, or indeed any, attention to the warning of our Lord. We search in vain for proof that he watched against going into the place of temptation, or that he watched against the company where he might expect to be assailed with temptation. There is no evidence whatever that he either watched against the approach of temptation, or that he prayed for grace to resist the tempter or strength to overcome his temptations. He seems, in fact, to have had no idea whatever of the danger that was drawing near him so stealthily and so suddenly, and no suspicion of the snares which Satan was so subtly drawing round him; neither does he seem to have used the means which his Master had urged on him as necessary for safety and defence. He appears to have let the warning entirely slip, or for a time to have let it sink into oblivion. Accordingly, we find that, when years afterwards he called to mind his fearful neglect and its well-nigh fatal consequences, he addresses to others a most solemn warning, in words that echo his own mistakes, and the means he should have taken to avoid it; for in his First Epistle (v. 8) he writes, "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

3. *A third cause of Peter's sin.* A third cause of Peter's sin was his following Christ *afar off*. This, of course, refers literally to the fact that Peter followed our Lord at a distance, keeping considerably aloof. He followed him, but at a long interval between; he followed him, but not close or near at hand. Instead of walking side by side, or close behind him, he kept away and afar off. It was, doubtless, the fear of man that kept Peter at this distance; it was the fear of man that thus unnerved him; it was the fear of man that prevented him coming immediately after his Master, as he should have done. He wished to be near his Master, but his heart failed him. He wished, we are sure, to be with his Master, but he lacked moral courage to share the reproach of Jesus of Galilee. It was not the personal risk so much as the ridicule he shrank from. This physical distance was a sign of moral distance, and a symbol of the condition of others as well as Peter, when they follow Christ afar off. Peter's duty was to have been at his Lord's side, or close behind him, or in some way near at hand. So with ourselves. Instead of following Christ afar off, we are bound by privilege as well as duty to follow him closely; instead of following him afar off, we must follow him faithfully; instead of following him fitfully, we are to follow him fully; instead of following him sneakingly, we are to follow him fearlessly; instead of following him by constraint, we are to follow him freely and of a ready mind; instead of following

him for a short space of time, we are to follow him all our life, and so always. From Peter's disastrous fall and foul denial of his Master, we learn the important lesson of following Christ freely, fully, fearlessly, faithfully, and for ever. Distance from Christ is real danger, nearness to him is true safety. Distance from the Sun of Righteousness is coldness, darkness, and spiritual death; nearness to him is love, light, and life. In Canticles the question is asked, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" If this refer to the Church, as we are of opinion it does, it is a picture of her true attitude. The world is the wilderness through which the Christian is passing, and from which he is ascending to a better and promised land; while it is on the arm of Christ that he leans. Thus leaning on Christ, looking to Christ, and living by the faith of Christ, we journey safely from the wilderness of earth to the promised land of heaven. Away from his presence, away from his power, we are every moment in greatest peril; away from the range of his protection and the guidance of his providence, we expose ourselves to the temptations of the evil one, and speedily become his easy prey. 4. *The fourth cause of Peter's sin.* The fourth cause of Peter's sin was bad company. "He sat," we read, "with the servants" of the high priest, "and warmed himself at the fire." What was this but going into the company of his Master's enemies? This was mixing, and without necessity, with the enemies of the Saviour. He thus went with his eyes open into the place of peril, among the attendants of the high priest and the adversaries of his Lord and Master. Here there is every reason to believe he would hear little good of any kind spoken; while he would be sure to hear his Master's name vilified, his character slandered, and his cause reproached. In all this contempt and reproach there is too much cause to believe Peter must for the time have concurred. Possibly he not only agreed with them, but acted as they did, the better to conceal his real connection with Christ. It is shocking even for a moment to suppose that Peter was so weak and so wicked, during the short space he consorted with such company, as to join them in reviling his Master. Suspecting him, as they did, of being Christ's disciple, and finding him thus readily uniting with them in heaping scorn upon his Master, what must they have thought of that Master? What estimate could they form of either disciple or Teacher? Must they not have concluded that Christ's discipleship was neither happy nor honourable? Must they not have inferred, and inferred with reason, that the disciple of such a Master was knave, or fool, or villain? When, on the other hand, we consider what Peter should have done and what he might have done at the time of his Master's difficulty and danger, we almost blush for the name of disciple so degraded and disgraced! Had he been true to his confession of the Christ, had he been staunch in his adherence to his Master, he would either have kept out of the company which he knew consisted of his Master's bitter enemies, or, if he found it necessary to stand by or sit among them, he would have defended him at whatever risk.

II. THE AGGRAVATIONS OF PETER'S SIN. 1. *Ingratitude.* Peter had been on the most familiar terms with his Master, and had been highly favoured by him. Of the chosen, he was one of the choicest; of the elected, he was one of the *élite*. With James and John he shared the Saviour's closest intimacy. Like them, he was with him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and was privileged to witness that wondrous scene and see that glorious sight. Like them, he was admitted to the solemnities of the death-chamber, and was present at the restoration to life of the daughter of Jairus. Like them, he had been invited to accompany his Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, and to watch with him during the agony and bloody sweat. Still more, our Lord had commended his good confession of the Christ the Son of God, and traced it to heavenly revelation; he had bestowed on him the honourable surname of "Rock-man," in acknowledgment of his firmness and the foundation he should help to lay; besides, he had promised him a high position and also distinguished privileges in his kingdom. Peter had walked to him on the water, and been kept from sinking by his Master's hand. Yet now, for all these special marks of friendship and favour that had been lavished on him, he shows himself utterly and basely ungrateful. He turned his back on his best and kindest Friend, denying all knowledge of him. Now, when a return of friendship was most needed, he not only failed to act the part of a friend in need, and reciprocate the kindness he had received, but actually consorted with his bitterest enemies. 2. *False-*

hood. When our Lord stood in most need of sympathy, Peter, as we have seen, stood aloof or ranged himself on the side of his enemies. When he might have given valuable testimony in favour of his Master, silence sealed his lips, and he refused to acknowledge him. Nor was this all; he falsified to the most fearful extent and in the foulest manner. He denied all or any knowledge of Jesus; he repeated the denial in the most positive way; he backed his repeated falsehood with an oath. When challenged the third time, he "began to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man." Surely one falsehood of the kind indicated would have been bad enough and wicked enough, but its repetition once, again, a third time, greatly aggravated the sin and augmented Peter's guilt. The violence of language which was prompted by, and which gave expression to, his virulence of feeling is difficult to account for. There was fear of detection and imagined danger, but there must have been rage as well, to explain his violent and passionate language. Several of the bystanders recognize him; a kinsman of Malchus is there who had seen him in the garden; his Galilean dialect bewrays him; accusations crowd upon him; proofs multiply against him. Peter gets irritated, and completely loses his temper and self-control. At the supposed discrepancy, or at least difficulty, in Peter's denial of his Master we can only glance. The *place* of the first denial was by the fire in the high priest's hall, or quadrangular court under the open air (*αὐλή*), while that of the third is not specified. The place of the second was in the *προαύλιον* according to St. Mark, and the *πυλῶνα* according to St. Matthew; while St. John tells us that he was standing and warming himself. Now, the fire was in the open court (*αὐλή*), the passage from this to the street was *προαύλιον*, and the portal or entrance door of this passage was *πυλών*. He had removed to a short distance from the fire, but not so far as to lose the influence of its heat or warmth. With respect to the *persons*, the first question that called forth his denial was put by the portress. On the occasion of the second denial the same maid addressed the bystanders, who echoed her words, so that several persons (male *ἕτερος*) and (female *ἄλλη*) another maid different from the portress—all (*εἶπον*, plural) assailed Peter with their inconvenient and unwelcome questions. In replying to or repelling these, Peter kept denying (*ἠρνεῖτο*, imperfect). At the third denial more of the bystanders (*οἱ ἑστῶτες* of St. Matthew, and *οἱ παρεστῶτες* of St. Mark), with some other different person (*ἄλλος τις* of St. Luke) as ringleader, drew attention to his being a Galilean; while the relative of Malchus confirmed this by alleging that he had seen him in the garden. There is thus neither real difficulty nor discrepancy of any kind. 3. *Profanity and perjury.* By this time Peter is excited and enraged. Goaded to madness, he breaks out into language of shocking profaneness. The falsehood already repeated he backs by an imprecation. He also swears the lie, invoking the name of Jehovah and calling the omniscient One to witness his reiterated untruth, and thus lays foul perjury on his soul. He began, we read, to anathematize, that is to say, he used a formula of imprecation such as "God do so to me and more also," thus cursing himself if what he said was untrue; but, besides this, he employed the customary formula of an oath, invoking God as witness of his words, false as he knew them to be. Naturally impetuous and passionate, and in youth, or before his discipleship, perhaps addicted to profane swearing, he relapsed into his old sin in order to corroborate his statements and to force credence on the incredulous. One sin leads to another; one lie especially needs another to support it. The bystanders must have known little of Jesus' character and teaching, or Peter's profanity of itself would have convinced them that he knew not that Teacher—nothing, at least, of his spirit and doctrine. Could it be possible that Peter, in the madness of his rage and fear, meant by his profanity to leave this impression on his questioners, and that there was thus a method in his madness? At all events, he spoke as one who was a stranger to the fear of God and the ordinary dictates of religion, not to speak of discipleship to a Teacher who said, "Swear not at all . . . but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay." 4. *Other aggravating circumstances.* There were several other circumstances of aggravation which we can only indicate, and may not dwell on, among them the following:—The faithful and frequent warnings he had received, and had received so recently; his own vehement protestations of loyalty and fidelity to his Master—that if all others should be offended he would not, that if he should die with him he would not deny him in any wise. There were also other considerations connected with the denial that greatly added to the sin: there were the circumstances and time—

our Lord being now deserted, delivered into the hands of cruel enemies, and dragged before inexorable judges; there were the persons to whom the denial was addressed, namely, servants and other humble officials, with little influence and less power, not magistrates or functionaries invested with authority; there were the flagrant breaches of Peter's own positive and repeated promises. All are forgotten or falsified! Alas, what is man! At the strongest but weakness, and at the best but imperfection!

III. PETER'S REPENTANCE. 1. *Extenuating circumstances.* We may just notice, very briefly, in connection with Peter's repentance, certain extenuations of his sin. His sin, largely the outcome of his own impulsive nature, came on him with the suddenness and strength of an unexpected impulse. There had been no premeditation, no *deliberate plan*, and no deceitful design, as in the case of Judas. His plans and purposes had all been of the very opposite character; his determination and resolutions had all tended in the very contrary direction. He did *not remain* in his sin, *nor* ever afterwards *repeat* it. The sin was exceeding great and the guilt enormous, but it would have been still more so had he continued it, or persevered in it, or subsequently returned to it. Satan took him by surprise, as though asleep or off his guard; but once roused from the lethargy into which he had fallen, or brought back to the post which he had abandoned, he never again wandered from the path of duty or sank in sin. 2. *How he was recalled to duty.* Two circumstances were the means externally, or the occasions of reminding Peter of his sin and recalling him to duty. But, while all the evangelists record Peter's sin, St. Mark alone records the second crowing of the cock, which was one of the two circumstances referred to; and St. Luke alone records our Lord's look at Peter, saying, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." The first crowing of the cock had passed unheeded. St. Mark, who gives us such an exact transcript of Peter's fall and feelings, probably from Peter's own lips, informs us that it was not till the second or regular morning cockcrow that Peter was brought to the recollection of his Lord's warning and his own sin. It was then he awoke as from a troubled dream or terrible nightmare; while much about the same time our Lord, either from the open front of the chamber in which the trial had been proceeding, or as he passed across the courtyard from the apartments of Annas to the palace of Caiaphas, turned towards Peter and looked him into repentance. 3. *His repentance.* The same evidence of repentance is found in the words, "He went out, and wept bitterly" (ἔκλαιε, he continued weeping aloud; not ἐδάκρυε, he shed tears). The participle (ἐπιβαλὼν) attached to this verb is variously rendered. The most usual and probable meaning assigned to it is that of our version, "When he thought thereon," that is, cast (his mind) on it. Some explain it, "He began to weep," as in the margin of the Revised Version, as well as of the Authorized Version; others, "He flung his mantle over his head;" others, again, "He flung himself forth [*i.e.* on the ground] and wept." Further, it is understood by others in the sense of *abundantly*, that is, "He wept abundantly," also in the margin of Authorized Version; while a more interesting explanation, if well founded, is, "He cast his eyes on him and wept," as if Peter reciprocated his Lord's look, and consequent compunction of soul vented itself, not in a transient outburst, but in a long-continued, copious flood of tears. Thus, while the Evangelist Luke records the look of Christ on Peter, the Evangelist Mark, if this rendering be at all tenable, records the corresponding look of Peter on Christ; so that, when eye met eye, Peter was overpowered by strong emotion, and gave way to his deep grief by bitter (πικρῶς, St. Matthew and St. Luke) weeping. 4. *Real repentance distinguished from remorse.* It is very important to distinguish true repentance from mere regret or remorse; while a contrast of the case of Peter with that of Judas will materially help us to see and clearly comprehend the difference. Certain elements are common to both, and these we must eliminate before we can rightly distinguish them. On the part of Judas there was sorrow of the intensest kind—remorse of the most distressing nature; there was the fullest and most ingenuously candid confession; there was also the strongest possible desire to make any and all the reparation that was possible. All these elements are found in true repentance; but as they are found also in the remorse of Judas, they are common alike to genuine repentance and mere remorse. The first material point of difference is that the sorrow of the true penitent is caused by the sight of sin in *itself*, apart altogether from its consequences; the sorrow of remorse is occasioned chiefly, if not entirely, by those *consequences*. Judas did not foresee the terrible consequences of his sin; he

little dreamt, perhaps, that it would lead to Jesus being evil entreated, condemned, and crucified. When he pocketed the reward of iniquity, he felt satisfied with the bargain and sure that the Master would find some way of escape. Had this been the case; had no ill consequences resulted from his treachery; had nothing beyond the arrest of Jesus taken place, and no worse results followed;—Judas, there is reason to believe, would have felt neither sorrow nor shame at what he had done; nay, he would have had a feeling of satisfaction rather than a sense of sin. He would scarcely have shrunk from the society of the apostles; he would have been able to find some pretext or frame some excuse for all that had happened. But the consequences of his treachery—the terrible consequences—made all the difference. Greedy as Judas was, and mean as he was, and treacherous as he was, he was by no means a cruel man or a man of blood. When, however, contrary to his expectation, the most appalling consequences were certain to ensue; when a judicial murder and a cruel death awaited the Master whom he had betrayed; then Judas for the first time saw his sin in its consequences, and was overwhelmed with the sight. It was quite different with Peter. His sin, heinous as it was, did not produce any such fearful effects as the sin of Judas. His denial of his Master did not lead to his apprehension; it had nothing to do with his condemnation; it did not cause his death. Peter saw it not in any such consequences, but in its own baseness and sinfulness. He saw the iniquity of his sin as committed against his loving Lord, as a sin against truth and righteousness, as a sin against goodness and justice, as a sin by which he wronged conscience and hurt his own soul. The sight filled his heart with sorrow and shame, while his eyes brimmed over again and again with salt and bitter tears. The next point of difference is that the true penitent seeks *mercy*, but the subject of remorse sinks in despair. Of this also we have a striking illustration in Judas and Peter respectively. The former confessed his guilt, acknowledged the innocence of his Master and the injury he had done him; not only so, in self-abhorrence and loathing he flung back the price of blood. But all this sorrow and remorse fell short of repentance; true penitence was as far off as ever. He had no heart to pray; no heart to seek God's face and favour free; no heart to sue for mercy. His heart was hardened, not softened, by sin; the blackness of despair enveloped him; blank ruin stared him in the face. Not so Peter: he sorrowed, but after a godly sort; instead of giving himself up to despair, he sought mercy. He was humbled, not hardened; the tears he shed washed his eyes, and his spiritual vision became clearer; he saw the blackness of his sin, but he saw also the benignity of the Saviour. That look of his Master had pierced his heart with a feeling of his guilt, but brought withal a sense of Divine grace; he was fully alive to the misery of sin, as also to the mercy of the Saviour. After the terrible storm which had swept across the horizon of his soul, the rainbow of hope remained upon the cloud, reflecting the sunshine of heaven on the tears of sorrow shed by the penitent. He saw his iniquity to be very great, yet he sued for pardon. He looked not away from, but to, the Saviour whose heart his sin had pierced, and mourned in bitterness.

IV. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. *A picture.* Our Lord and his apostles are often seen grouped together in a picture; the Gospels exhibit a moral picture of the group. In this picture there is much dark shading; but this dark shading helps to bring out more clearly the bright and brilliant colours of the picture and to enhance its beauty. If there were no dark shading in it, it would represent angelic life in heaven rather than human life on earth; in that case, the very perfection of the figures would diminish its fitness for our warning or comfort. 2. *Good educed from evil.* Peter, when restored (ἐπιστρέψας), was better fitted to help others. His own weakness became by grace a source of strength to others. When he had turned again, and been restored (as those referred to in ἐπεστράφητε, 1 Pet. ii. 25) to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, he was better able from his own experience to keep other sheep from straying, or restore them from their wanderings. 3. *A lesson never forgotten.* The circumstances connected with Peter's sin were so engraven on the tablet of his memory as never to be forgotten, as is evident from several passages of his Epistles and his speech as recorded in Acts. When he would warn men against one of those mistakes which caused his sin, he says (1 Pet. v. 8), "Be vigilant," or "*watchful*" (Revised Version). When he charged the Jews with the foulest crime, he expresses that charge in words that echo his own dark deed: "Ye *denied* the Holy One and the Just;" "Ye denied him in the presence of

Pilate," as we read in Peter's speech (Acts iii. 13, 14). When he pictured the highest state of spiritual prosperity, he describes it as freedom from *falling*: "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Pet. i. 10). His most solemn warning is, "Beware lest ye also . . . fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Pet. iii. 17). The change that was effected in Peter after the descent of the Holy Spirit is wonderful, for in the early part of Acts we find him possessed of moral courage equal to his natural physical courage, and on all occasions acting a bold, manly, and courageous as well as prominent part. Whatever grace we need, we are thus encouraged to seek the Spirit to supply.

V. THE OMITTED PORTIONS OF THIS CHAPTER. 1. For section vers. 51, 52, peculiar to St. Mark, see Introduction. 2. For section vers. 55–65, containing the account in part of the Jewish trial, see beginning of next chapter, where that trial is concluded.—J. J. G.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1.—And straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate. *Straightway in the morning* (εὐθέως πρωΐ). The proceedings recorded in the last chapter terminated probably between five and six; the cock-crowing helps to fix the time. Now came the more formal trial. The whole Sanhedrim united in consultation. All the proceedings hitherto had been irregular and illegal. Now, for form's sake, they tried him afresh. But there was another law which was also violated. It was now Friday. In capital cases, sentence of condemnation might not legally be pronounced on the day of the trial. Yet our Lord was tried, condemned, and crucified on the same day. They "bound him," that he might be impeded in any attempt to escape. They "carried him away" (ἀπήνεγκαν), with the semblance of force; although we know that he went "as a lamb to the slaughter." How truly might it be said of these chief priests and elders, "Their feet are swift to shed blood!" *And delivered him up to Pilate.* Judæa now was added to the province of Syria, and governed by procurators, of whom Pontius Pilate was the fifth. It was necessary for the Jews to deliver Christ over to the Roman power; because the power of life and death had been taken from them since they became subject to the Romans. "It is not lawful for us," they say (John xviii. 31) "to put any man to death;" that is to say, they could not put to death without the authority of the governor. Our Lord predicted of himself, "They shall deliver him to the Gentiles."

Ver. 2.—Art thou the King of the Jews? It appears from St. Luke (xxiii. 1—5) that when Pilate demanded particularly what the charges against Jesus were, on account of which the Jews urged that he should be crucified, they alleged these three things: (1) that he perverted the nation; (2) that he forbade to give tribute to Cæsar; (3) that he said that he was Christ, a King. Whereupon Pilate, who had heard by many of the blameless life, the pure doctrine, and the famous miracles of Jesus, goes at once to the point, and asks him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"—a question which, of course, affected the position of Cæsar. Our Lord's answer, **Thou sayest** (σὺ λέγεις), was in the affirmative, amounting to this—"Thou sayest that which is true."

Ver. 3.—And the chief priests accused him of many things. The words in the Authorized Version, "but he answered nothing," are not to be found here in any of the best manuscripts or versions. But they are to be found in St. Matthew (xxvii. 12); and Pilate's question in the next verse confirms St. Matthew's statement, and makes the sentence unnecessary here. Our Lord answered nothing, because all that they had to say against him was manifestly false or frivolous, and unworthy of any reply. St. Augustine says on this, "The Saviour, who is the Wisdom of God, knew how to overcome by keeping silence."

Ver. 4.—It would seem that Pilate had led Jesus out of his palace, into which the Jewish priests could not enter (John xviii. 28), lest they should be defiled by entering a house from which all leaven had not been scrupulously removed. This would have been a violation of their religious scruples; and therefore he went out into the open court, and there heard the accusations of the chief priests. It is supposed that the building occupied by Pilate was the palace built or rebuilt by Herod near the gate of Jaffa, north-west of Mount Zion. It was doubtless occasionally occupied by Pilate, and it was conveniently situated, being near to Herod's palace—the old palace of the Asmoneans, between it and the temple.

Ver. 5.—Pilate marvelled. He marvelled that the innocent Saviour, wise and eloquent, standing before him in peril of his life,

should remain silent when thus vehemently accused by the leading men of the Jews. Pilate marvelled at his forbearance, his calmness, his contempt of death; from all of which he argued his absolute innocence and holiness, and resolved to do everything in his power to deliver him. The silence of a blameless life pleads more powerfully than any defence, however elaborate.

Ver. 6.—St. Mark omits here what took place next in the order of events, namely, the sending of our Lord by Pilate to Herod (Luke xxiii. 5). This was Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee; and Pilate, apparently convinced of our Lord's innocence, hoped to escape the responsibility of condemning an innocent man, by handing him over to Herod; for Pilate had heard that our Lord was a Galilean. Moreover, he hoped to accomplish another good result, namely, to recover the favour of Herod, which was desirable on political grounds. The first intention failed; for Herod sent our Lord back to Pilate in mockery, "arraying him in gorgeous apparel" (*περιβαλὼν ἐσθῆτα λαμπρὰν*). But the second succeeded: "Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day" (Luke xxiii. 12). There was now, however, another resource. **At the feast** (*κατα ἑορτὴν*)—literally, *at feast-time*—**he used to release unto them one prisoner, whom they asked of him** (*ὅνπερ ἠτοῦντο*). In St. John (xviii. 39) we read that Pilate said, "Ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover."

Ver. 7.—**And there was one called Barabbas, lying bound with them that had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder.** Pilate appears to have thought of Barabbas, not doubting but that, by limiting their choice between him and Jesus, he would secure the liberation of our Lord. But Pilate little knew the temper of the chief priests and scribes, and their bitter hostility to Christ. The word "Barabbas," better written "Bar-Abbas," means "son of father."

Ver. 8.—**And the multitude went up and began to ask him to do as he was wont to do unto them.** *Went up* (*ἀναβὰς*). This is the reading to be preferred to the old reading, "crying aloud" (*ἀναβοήσας*). The reading *ἀναβὰς* is supported by the Sinaitic, the Vatican, and the Cambridge manuscripts; also by the Old Italic, the Gothic, and other versions. The Æthiopic Version combines the two, "going up and crying aloud." The geographical position of Pilate's residence quite justifies the use of the term *ἀναβὰς*.

Ver. 9.—Pilate doubtless hoped that they would ask for Jesus. He knew that the chief priests had delivered our Lord for envy. That he could not help observing, as a shrewd Roman judge, from their gestures and manner. And then he knew also, at least by report, of the purity of Jesus, and of the holy freedom with which he rebuked their vices. So he thought, reasonably enough, that if the chief priests wished to destroy him for envy, the people, who had experienced so many kindnesses from him, would desire that he should live.

Ver. 10.—Envy was the low passion that influenced the chief priests. They saw that Jesus was gaining a great and increasing influence over the people by the sublime beauty of his character, by the fame of his miracles, and the constraining power of his words. And hence they concluded that, unless he was arrested in his course, and put out of the way, their own influence would soon be gone. The whole world was going after him. Therefore he must be destroyed.

Ver. 11.—**But the chief priests stirred up the multitude** (*ἀνέσεισαν τὸν ὄχλον*), **that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.** St. Matthew (xxvii. 20) says, "They persuaded the multitudes" (*ἔπεισαν τοὺς ὄχλους*). St. Mark's word (*ἀνέσεισαν*) implies a rousing of their bad passions; agitating them to a blind zeal for his crucifixion.

Ver. 12.—**And Pilate again answered and said unto them, What then shall I do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?** The word "again" has the support of three great uncials, and the best of the cursives. Pilate did not give way without many an inward struggle. And now at last he puts the matter, so to speak, in their own power; so that it might be an act of their clemency, and that they might have the honour of saving our Lord's life. But it was all in vain. For the chief priests had resolved to press for his crucifixion, little dreaming that they were doing what "God's hand and God's counsel had before determined to be done." Pilate puts the question before them with much shrewdness and tact. He speaks of our Lord as one whom "they called the King of the Jews." He appeals to their national pride and their national hopes. Would they degrade themselves, and extinguish their hopes, by giving up to the most ignominious of deaths one who had established such claims upon their reverence and their love?

Ver. 13.—**And they cried out again, Crucify him.** These words might seem at first to justify the old reading in ver. 8, adopted in the Authorized Version, "crying aloud." But there the word was *ἀναβοήσας*, here it is *ἔκραξαν*. Moreover, in ver. 14, it is not (*περισσοτέρως*) "the more exceedingly," but (*περισσῶς*) "they cried exceedingly."

Ver. 15.—And Pilate, wishing (*βουλόμενος*) **to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.** St. Luke and St. John are more full in details here. From their narratives it appears that when Pilate found that his attempt to rescue our Lord, by putting Barabbas in contrast with him, had failed, he next hoped to move the multitude to pity by the terrible punishment of scourging, after which he trusted that they would relent. Scourging was a vile punishment, inflicted on slaves. But it was also inflicted upon those who were condemned to death, even though freemen. This scourging, which was a part of the punishment of crucifixion, was of frightful severity. Horace ('Sat.' i. 3, 119) speaks of it as "horribile flagellum." But it appears from St. John (xix. 1) that the scourging of Jesus took place before his formal condemnation to be crucified; we may therefore suppose that it was not a part of the ordinary punishment of crucifixion. At all events, there is nothing, upon a careful comparison of the narratives, to lead us to the conclusion that our blessed Lord was scourged twice. In fact, Pilate anticipated the time of the scourging, in the vain hope that he might by this means save our Lord from the capital punishment. A comparison of the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark with that of St. John will make this clear; for they all three refer to one and the same scourging. Recent investigations at Jerusalem have disclosed what may probably have been the place of the punishment. In a subterranean chamber, discovered by Captain Warren, on what Mr. Fergusson holds to be the site of Antonia, Pilate's prætorium, stands a truncated column, no part of the structure itself, but just such a dwarf pillar as criminals would be tied to to be scourged. The chamber cannot be later than the time of Herod (see Professor Westcott on St. John xix.).

Ver. 16.—And the soldiers led him away within the court, which is the Prætorium; and they call together the whole band. This was the principal court of the palace, where a large number of soldiers were always quartered. "The whole band" would be the "cohors prætoria" of Cicero; Pilate's body-guard.

Vers. 17, 18.—And they clothe him with purple, and plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it on him; and they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! *They clothe him with purple* (*ἐνδύουσιν αὐτὸν πορφύραν*). So also says St. John (xix. 2, *ἱμάτιον πορφυροῦν*). St. Matthew says (xxvii. 28), "They put on him a scarlet robe (*περιέθηκαν αὐτῷ χλαμύδα κοκκίνην*)." Purple and scarlet are not such very dissimilar colours. Purple is a royal colour; and the *chlamys* of St. Matthew was a short military cloak of scarlet, intended to be a kind of royal livery. St. Cyril says that the purple cloak symbolized the kingdom of the whole world, which Christ was about to receive, and which he was to obtain by the shedding of his most precious blood. It was designed in mockery of his claim to be a King, and it probably had a reference to his supposed insurrection against Cæsar. All this was permitted by Pilate, in order that he might the more easily, after this ignominious treatment, deliver Christ from the extreme sentence. *And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it on him.* The crown of thorns was in all probability woven from the *Zizyphus spina Christi* (the *nâbk* of the Arabs), which grows abundantly in Palestine, fringing the banks of the Jordan. This plant would be very suitable for the purpose, having flexible branches, with leaves very much resembling the ivy leaf in their colour, and with many sharp thorns. The pain arising from the pressure of these sharp thorns upon the head must have been excruciating. *And they began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!* (*Χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων*). This word, *χαῖρε*, was an ancient form of salutation; here used by the soldiers in bitter mockery of his claim to be a king.

Ver. 19.—And they smote his head with a reed—the same reed, according to St. Matthew (xxvii. 29, 30), which they had first put into his right hand as a sceptre, to complete the mocking symbolism—**and did spit upon him** (*ἐνέπτυον αὐτῷ*). The verb is in the imperfect; they did it again and again.

Ver. 20.—And when they had mocked him, they took off from him the purple, and put on him his garments. The silence of our blessed Lord during these wanton and aggravated insults is very remarkable, and also the total absence of any legal grounds for his condemnation. **And they lead him out to crucify him.** Assuming the palace of Pilate to have been near the gate of Jaffa, north-west of Mount Zion, and the place of crucifixion that now assigned to it, within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre,—the distance would be about one-third of a mile.

Ver. 21.—And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go with them, that he might bear his cross. It seems from St. Matthew (xxvii. 32) that our Saviour bore his own cross from the palace to the gate of the city. The tablet, with the inscription afterwards attached to the cross, would be carried before him; and a certain number of soldiers would be appointed to go with him to the place of execution, and to see the sentence carried out. Having passed out through the gate

of the city, they met one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and they compel him (ἀγγαρεύουσι); literally, *they impress him*. The Cyrenians had a synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts vi. 9), and this Simon may probably have been one of those who had come up to keep the Passover. He must have been a Hellenistic Jew, a native of Cyrene, on the north coast of Africa. Alexander and Rufus, his sons, were no doubt, at the time when St. Mark wrote his Gospel, well-known disciples of our Lord. St. Paul, writing to the Romans (xvi. 13), sends a special salutation to Rufus, "chosen in the Lord, and his mother, and mine;" a delicate recognition by St. Paul of something like maternal care bestowed upon him by the mother of Rufus. It is probable that his father Simon, and perhaps his brother Alexander, may have been dead by this time. Rufus is also honourably mentioned by Polycarp in his Epistle to the Philippians. There is a tradition, mentioned by Cornelius à Lapide, that Rufus became a bishop in Spain, and that Alexander suffered martyrdom. *To go with them, that he might bear his cross.* St. Luke (xxiii. 26) adds the touching words, "to bear it after Jesus (φέρειν ὄπισθεν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ)."

Ver. 22.—**And they bring him** (φέρουσιν αὐτὸν); literally, *they bear him*. At ver. 20 another word has been used (ἐξάγουσιν), "they lead him out." It seems as though, when they had reached the gate of the city, they saw symptoms that our Lord was fainting under his burden; and so they pressed Simon into the service, that he might be ready to assist. At first our Lord carried his own cross. Tradition says (Cornelius à Lapide) that the cross was fifteen feet long, the transverse limb being eight feet; and that he so carried it that the upper portion rested on his shoulder, while the foot of the cross trailed on the ground. When they saw that he was breaking down under the weight of the cross, they laid it on Simon, that they might the more quickly reach the place of crucifixion. **The place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.** "Golgotha" is a Hebrew, or rather Chaldaic, word, applied to the skull on account of its roundness, that being the idea which lies in the root of the word. The Greek equivalent to the word is Κρανίον; and this is rendered in the Vulgate, *Calvaria*, a skull, from *calva*, bald. St. Luke is the only evangelist in whose Gospel (xxiii. 33) this word (Κρανίον) is rendered "Calvary." In the Revised Version it is rendered "the skull." The place was so called, either from its having been the spot where executions ordinarily took place (though in this case we might have expected to find it called τόπος κρανίων rather than κρανίον); or, more probably, it was derived from the configuration of the place itself, perhaps a round-like mound, or knoll, sufficiently elevated to be seen at a little distance and by a large number. As to the actual site of Golgotha, recent researches seem to have done much to confirm the ancient tradition. The Bordeaux pilgrim, A.D. 333, says, "On the left side of the original Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the hillock (*monticulus*) Golgotha, where the Lord was crucified. Hence, about a stone's throw distant, is the crypt where his body was deposited." St. Cyril of Jerusalem alludes to the spot frequently, and there was no doubt about it in the time of Eusebius, A.D. 315. Professor Willis says that the rock of Calvary still stands up, some fifteen feet above the pavement. "It appears likely," he says, "that in its original state this rock was part of a little swell of the ground that jutted out from the slope of Sepulchre Street, and probably always formed a somewhat abrupt view on the west and south sides" (see 'Speaker's Commentary' on St. Matthew). Captain Conder (*Palestine Exploration Fund, Quarterly Statement* July, 1882) thinks that he shall be able to show that the traditional Golgotha is the site of the original temple of Ashtoreth, and that this temple was the Jebusite sanctuary before David took Jerusalem, and round which the sepulchres of the kings were hewn after the worship of Jehovah had consecrated the temple hill.

Ver. 23.—**And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.** There were two occasions on which drink was offered to our Lord during the agonies of his crucifixion. The first occasion is that mentioned by St. Matthew (xxvii. 34), when they offered him wine mingled with gall. This was a kind of stupefying liquor, a strong narcotic, made of the sour wine of the country, mingled with bitter herbs, and mercifully administered to dull the sense of pain. This was offered before the actual crucifixion took place. It is to this first occasion that St. Mark here refers. The words in the original are (καὶ ἐδίδουν αὐτῷ ἐσμυρνισμένον οἶνον), "they were giving, they offered him." *But he received it not.* He would not seek alleviation of the agonies of the crucifixion by any drugged potion which might render him insensible. He would bear the full burden consciously. The second occasion on which drink was offered to him was after he had been some hours on his cross, and when the end was drawing near; and it was then given in answer to his exclamation, "I thirst." This drink does not appear to have been mingled with any stupefying drug; and we do not

read that he refused it. St. Mark does not record this second occasion.

Ver. 24.—**And they crucify him** (*καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτὸν*). Such is the most approved reading. The evangelist states the fact without staying to dwell on the painful circumstances connected with the act of nailing him to the cross; and passes on to the mention of other things. **They part his garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take.** The outer robe and the tunic would have been removed previously to the crucifixion. St. John (xix. 23) here goes into details. "They took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout." *His garments* (*τὰ ἱμάτια*). This would be the loose, flowing outer dress with girdle. The tunic (*χιτών*) was a close-fitting dress, worn underneath the *ἱμάτιον*. There were four soldiers employed for each crucifixion. St. Cyril refers to the clothes of criminals as the perquisite of the executioners. Here was another ingredient of bitterness in our Lord's cup, that he saw before his eyes his garments torn by the soldiery, and his tunic divided to them by lot. But he divested himself of these garments of mortality, that he might clothe us with life and immortality.

Ver. 25.—**And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.** The third hour would literally be nine o'clock. But we gather from ver. 33 that our Lord was on his cross, and still alive, at the sixth hour, that is, at twelve o'clock. The simplest mode of solving the chronological difficulty seems to be this: The Jews divided their day into four parts, which they called hours, namely, the first, from six to nine; the third, from nine to twelve; the sixth, from twelve to three; and the ninth, from three to six. It was, then, within the third hour, that is, between nine and twelve, that they crucified him; and it was from the sixth to the ninth hour that he was actually upon his cross. St. John employs the Asiatic mode of computing time.

Ver. 26.—**And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.** This would probably be the shortest form of inscription, and in Latin, "Rex Judæorum." All the evangelists mention the inscription; but no two of them in precisely the same words. It appears by a comparison of them that the whole title was, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." In the case of remarkable prisoners the accusation was written on a white tablet, and carried before them as they went to the place of execution. It was then placed over their heads when the cross was erected. St. John tells us that our Lord's title was written in three languages—Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. Such appears to be the proper order of the words, namely, the national, the official, and the common dialect. St. Mark, writing at Rome, would naturally mention the Latin title. It is quite possible that the superscription may have varied in the different renderings in which it was given. It is evident from St. John (xix. 19—22) that the title was much canvassed by the Jews and the chief priests. Bede says that this title was fitly placed over his head, because, although he was crucified in weakness for us, yet he shone with the majesty of a King above his cross. The title proclaimed that he was after all a King; and that from henceforth he began to reign from his cross over the Jews. And therefore Pilate was divinely restrained from making any alteration in the title, so that it should mean anything less than this.

Ver. 27.—**And with him they crucify two robbers** (*λῃσταί*)—not "thieves" (*κλέπται*); St. Luke (xxiii. 32) shows that these two robbers formed a part of the procession to Calvary; but they were crucified after our Lord—**one on his right hand, and one on his left.** We know from St. Luke (xxiii. 40) that one of these malefactors was saved; while it would appear that the other died in his sins. And thus Christ upon his cross, between these two men, and with the title of King over his head, presented a striking and awful picture of the final judgment. Such is the view of St. Ambrose on St. Luke xxiii., and of St. Augustine, who says, "This cross, if you mark it well, was a judgment-seat. For the Judge being placed in the midst, the one who believed was set free; the other who reviled him was condemned; and thus he signified what he will do with the quick and the dead. Some he will place on his right hand, and some on his left" (Augustine, Tract. 31 in S. Johan.).

Ver. 28.—This verse is omitted in the oldest manuscripts. It is supposed to have been taken from St. Luke (xxii. 37).

Vers. 29, 30.—**And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads.** Here was another fulfilment of prophecy, and another aggravation of the misery of Christ. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him" (Ps. xxii. 7, 8). The torment of crucifixion itself was terrible; but it was a still greater torment to the Crucified to be insulted in his agony. Our Lord may well have had these words in his mind, "They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they tell of the sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded" (Ps. lxix. 26). *They that passed by.* Calvary was probably near to

one of the thoroughfares leading to the city; so that there would be a continual stream of persons passing to and fro; more especially at this time, when Jerusalem was thronged with visitors. And no doubt the words of the accusation against him in its incorrect form would pass freely from mouth to mouth, **Ha! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself.** If you could make such a boast as this, show your power by coming down from the cross.

Ver. 31.—The chief priests and the scribes are more bitter than the people. In fact, they had all along endeavoured to rouse the bad passions of the people against our Lord. And now they take advantage of this his present degraded condition to renew the old charge that his miracles of healing had been wrought by Beelzebub, because, if they had been wrought by God, God would have interposed in this his sore extremity and have set him free. **He saved others.** They cannot deny this fact. But they now try to turn this fact against him, by alleging that he who pretended to work miracles upon others, wrought them, not by the finger of God, but by Beelzebub, seeing that, if they had been wrought by a Divine power, the same power would now be exercised for his deliverance. They desired to take advantage of this public opportunity of exposing him as an impostor, and so they hoped to get rid of him, and at the same time to blot the very name of Christianity from out of the earth.

Ver. 32.—Christ might have come down from the cross; but he would not, because it was his Father's will that he should die upon the cross to redeem us from death. So he despised the taunts of the wicked, that he might teach us by his example to do the same. If he had chosen to descend from the cross, he would not have ascended. He knew that the death upon the cross was necessary for the salvation of men; and therefore he would go through the whole. He withheld the exercise of his power. His omnipotence restrained the natural longings of his suffering humanity to escape from these unutterable torments. So he would not come down from the cross, although within three days he would rise from the grave. And yet there was no word of indignation against his tormentors. On the contrary, he proclaimed mercy; for as he hung on his cross he said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Ver. 33.—**And when the sixth hour was come.** This would be midday, twelve o'clock; and the darkness continued until the ninth hour, that is, three o'clock. This supernatural darkness came when the day is wont to be at its brightest. The moon was now at the full, so that it could not have been caused by what we call an eclipse, for when it is full moon the moon cannot intervene between the earth and the sun. This darkness was doubtless produced by the immediate interference of God. An account of it is given by Phlegon of Tralles, a freedman of the Emperor Adrian. Eusebius, in his records of the year A.D. 33, quotes at length from Phlegon, who says that, in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was a great and remarkable eclipse of the sun, above any that had happened before. At the sixth hour the day was turned into the darkness of night, so that stars were seen in the heaven; and there was a great earthquake in Bithynia, which overthrew many houses in the city of Nicæa. Phlegon attributes the darkness which he describes to an eclipse, which was natural enough for him to do. The knowledge of astronomy was then very imperfect. Phlegon also mentions an earthquake. This brings his account into very close correspondence with the sacred narrative. **There was darkness over the whole land** (*ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν*). "Land" is a better rendering than "earth." We are not informed precisely how far the darkness extended. Dionysius says that he saw this phenomenon at Heliopolis, in Egypt, and he is reported to have exclaimed, "Either the God of nature, the Creator, is suffering, or the universe is dissolving." St. Cyprian says, "The sun was constrained to withdraw his rays, and close his eyes, that he might not be compelled to look upon this crime of the Jews." To the same purpose St. Chrysostom, "The creature could not bear the wrong done to its Creator. Therefore the sun withdrew his rays, that he might not behold the deeds of the wicked."

Ver. 34.—**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?** St. Mark here uses the Aramaic form Ελωϊ. St. Matthew refers to the original Hebrew. St. Mark in all probability took his form from St. Peter. It seems from hence that our Lord was in the habit of using the vernacular speech. **Why hast thou forsaken me?** (*εἰς τί με ἐγκατέλιπες;*). This might be rendered, *Why didst thou forsake me?* It is generally supposed that our blessed Lord, continually praying upon his cross, and offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, recited the whole of the psalm (xxii.) of which these are the first words, that he might show himself to be the very Being to whom the words refer; so that the Jewish scribes and people might examine and see the cause why he would not descend from the cross; namely, because this very psalm showed that it was appointed that he should suffer these things.

Ver. 35.—Notwithstanding the supernatural darkness, there were those who

lingered about the cross. Indeed, the darkness would add greatly to the awfulness of the place. It was out of that darkness that the voice of Jesus was heard; and inasmuch as Elias, or Elijah, was believed to hold some relation to the Messiah, it was natural for some of those who stood by to understand the words to mean that our Lord was actually calling for Elias.

Ver. 36.—There is a slight difference here in the narratives. St. Matthew (xxvii. 49) says, "And the rest said, Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him." Here in St. Mark the words are recorded as having been spoken by him alone who offered our Lord the vinegar. According to St. John (xix. 28), the offering of the vinegar followed immediately upon the words of our Lord, "I thirst." This drink was not the stupefying potion given to criminals before their crucifixion, to lull the sense of pain, but the sour wine, the ordinary drink of the soldiers, called *posca*. The reed was most probably the long stalk of the hyssop plant. Dr. J. Forbes Royle, in an elaborate article on the subject, quoted in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible' (vol. i. p. 846), arrives at the conclusion that the hyssop is none other than the caper plant, the Arabic name of which, *asuf*, bears a strong resemblance to the Hebrew. The plant is the *Capparis spinosa* of Linnæus. The apparent difference between the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark may be reconciled by weaving in the narrative of St. John with those of the synoptists—the "Let be" of the soldiers in the one case being intended to restrain the individual from offering the wine; and the "Let be" of the individual, corresponding to our "Wait a moment," while he answered our Saviour's cry, "I thirst."

Ver. 37.—**And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.** The three synoptists all mention this cry, which appears to have been something different from the words which he uttered at or about the time of his death. It was evidently something supernatural, and was so regarded by the centurion who stood by; and who had no doubt been accustomed to scenes like these. Usually the voice fails the dying, more especially when the natural forces have been weakened by long agony, as in the case of our Lord. It seems, therefore, the right conclusion that he cried out, just before he expired, by that supernatural power which his Godhead supplied to him; and thus he showed that, although he had gone through all the pains which were sufficient in ordinary cases to produce death, yet that at length he did not die of necessity, but voluntarily, in accordance with what he had himself said, "No one taketh my life from me. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John x. 18). Victor Antiochanus, in commenting upon this chapter, says, "By this action the Lord Jesus proved that he had his whole life, and his death, in his own free power."

Ver. 38.—**And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.** There were two veils—one before the holy place, and the other before the holy of holies. The holy place would correspond to what we call the nave of the church, in which the priests were continually present; the holy of holies would correspond to our chancel choir—the holiest part of the building. This was always kept closed; nor might any one enter it but the high priest, and that only once in the year, on the day of expiation. The veil which was rent at our Lord's death was that which was placed before the holy of holies; it was called the καταπέτασμα. The outer veil was called κάλυμμα. It was the duty of the officiating priest, on the evening of the day of preparation, at the hour of evening prayer, which would correspond to the time of our Lord's death, to enter into the holy place, where he would of course be between the two curtains, or veils, the outer veil, or κάλυμμα, and the inner veil, or καταπέτασμα. It would then be his business to roll back the κάλυμμα, or outer veil, thus exposing the holy place to the people, who would be in the outer court. And then and there they would see, to their amazement, the καταπέτασμα, the inner veil, rent asunder from the top to the bottom. These veils or curtains, according to Josephus, were each forty cubits in height and ten in breadth, of great substance, very massive, and richly embroidered with gold and purple. Now, this rending of the veil signified (1) that the whole of the Jewish dispensation, with its rites and ceremonies, was now unfolded by Christ; and that thenceforth the middle wall of partition was broken down, so that now, not the Jews only, but the Gentiles also might draw nigh by the blood of Christ. But (2) it further signified that the way to heaven was laid open by our Lord's death. "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." The veil signified that heaven was closed to all, until Christ by his death rent this veil in twain, and laid open the way.

Ver. 39.—**And when the centurion, which stood by over against him** (ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ) **saw that he so gave up the ghost.** The words, "so cried out," are not in the most important authorities. It was the business of the centurion to watch all that took place, and to see that the sentence was executed. He must have been standing close under the cross; and there was that in

the whole demeanour of the dying Sufferer, so different from anything that he had ever witnessed before, that it drew from him the involuntary exclamation, **Truly this man was the Son of God.** He had observed him through those weary hours; he had noticed the meekness and the dignity of the Sufferer; he had heard those words, so deeply impressed upon the faith and reverence of Christians, which fell from him from time to time as he hung there; and then at last he heard the piercing cry, so startling, so unexpected, which escaped him just before he yielded up his spirit; and he could come to no other conclusion than this, that he was in very deed God's Son. It has been supposed by some that this centurion was Longinus, who was led by the miracles which accompanied the death of Christ, to acknowledge him to be the Son of God, and to be a herald of his resurrection, and was ultimately himself put to death for the sake of Christ in Cappadocia. St. Chrysostom repeats the common report, that on account of his faith he was at last crowned with martyrdom.

Ver. 40.—**And there were also women beholding from afar** (*ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι*). St. Matthew (xxvii. 55) says that there were many. Amongst them were **Mary Magdalene, and Mary** the wife of Clopas, or Alphæus, and **mother of James the less and of Joses,** called brethren of our Lord, and the mother of Zebedee's children, that is, **Salome.** The mother of our Lord had been there until the time when, having with St. John crept as near the cross of Jesus as she might venture, she was consigned by our Lord to St. John's care, and taken away by him. St. Mark mentions this to show the faith and love of these holy women, because in the very presence of the enemies of Christ they dared to stand by his cross, and shrank not from testifying their piety and devotion. St. John says that they stood near. He must have known; for at one time at least he was standing near. St. Matthew and St. Mark speak of them as at a distance. They were at a distance, no doubt, for the most part, as compared with the soldiers, whose duty it was to be in close attendance and to keep the people off. But these devoted women came as near as they could, so as to see and hear their Lord. Perhaps they were sometimes further off and sometimes nearer, as they saw opportunity, or as the humour of the officials suffered them.

Ver. 41.—From this verse we learn that these women **followed him, and ministered unto him when he was in Galilee;** and that **many other women came up with him unto Jerusalem.** The sublime beauty of his character, and the spiritual influence which he wielded, attracted them; and they were able to minister to the various needs of his humanity.

Ver. 42.—**And when even was now come.** The sabbath commenced on the Friday evening at six o'clock. The evening commenced at three o'clock. Our Lord must be buried before six o'clock.

Ver. 43. — **Joseph of Arimathæa.** St. Jerome says that this city was called Ramathaim-Zophim (the lofty place), where dwelt Elkanah and Hannah of old, and where Samuel was born. Joseph was most probably a native of Arimathæa; but he was now a citizen and counsellor of Jerusalem. **He was an honourable counsellor** (*εὐσχήμων βουλευτής*), *a councillor of honourable estate* (Revised Version). St. Matthew says he was a rich man. It is evident that he regarded himself as a settled inhabitant of Jerusalem, since he had thus provided himself with a place of sepulture. He was **waiting for** (*προσδεχόμενος*)—literally, *looking for*—**the kingdom of God.** St. Matthew (xxvii. 57) says that he was a disciple of Jesus. These circumstances explain his desire to bury our Lord. **He boldly went in** (*τολμήσας εἰσῆλθε*)—literally, *he took courage and went in*—unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. A poor man would not have dared to approach Pilate for such a purpose as this. St. Chrysostom says, "The courage of Joseph is greatly to be admired, in that, for the love of Christ, he exposed himself to the danger of death." The fact that he was "looking for the kingdom of God" explains his conduct. It shows that he believed in Christ, and through his grace hoped for everlasting salvation; and in this hope he thought little of showing his reverence for Christ, and so "boldly went in unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus."

Ver. 44.—**And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.** It must have been somewhat early in the afternoon, probably not long after three o'clock, when Joseph went. The day being the Preparation, the Jews were anxious to satisfy the letter of the Law (Deut. xxi. 13), and that, more especially, because the coming sabbath was a "high day." So they had gone early to Pilate to obtain permission to accelerate the deaths of the sufferers by the terrible additional punishment called *σκελοκοπία*. This violence was not inflicted upon our Lord, because he was already dead; and so another Scripture was fulfilled, "A bone of him shall not be broken." But it was necessary that Pilate should be assured of the fact that death had taken place before he gave up the body; and thus, in the providence of God, another evidence was given of the reality of Christ's death. Joseph

asked for the body (*σῶμα*). Then Pilate asked the centurion "whether he had been any while dead." The verb here is in the aorist, and the adverb means "formerly" (*εἰ πάλαι ἀπέθανε*); literally, *if he died some time ago.*

Ver. 45.—**And when he learned it of the centurion, he granted** (*ἐδωρήσατο*) **the corpse** (*τὸ πτῶμα*) **to Joseph.**

Ver. 46.—**And he bought a linen cloth** (*σινδόνα*). This was a fine linen garment, or shroud, something like that in which the young man fled the night before (ch. xiv. 51, 52). **And taking him down** (*καθελὼν αὐτὸν*). It appears from these words that Joseph himself, assisted probably by Nicodemus and others, actually took the body of our Lord down from the cross, wrapped the *sindon* round him, and laid him in his own new tomb, which had been hewn out of the rock. The word rendered "tomb" is *μνημεῖον*, as being intended to be a memorial of the departed. **And he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.** The door here means "the opening," or "entrance." Thus, while our Lord died with the wicked, he was with the rich in his death (Isa. liii. 9).

Ver. 47.—**And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid** (*ἐθεώρουν ποῦ τίθεται*); literally, *were beholding where he was laid.* These women were two of the group mentioned at ver. 40. They remained, after the body of our Lord had been deposited, in sad and silent contemplation. The women appear to have broken up into two groups. One group went alone to purchase spices and ointments, which it was necessary for them to do before six o'clock, when the sabbath commenced; in readiness for the embalming. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses and Salome appear to have bought them after six o'clock on the Saturday night.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—15.—*The trial before Pilate.* How true it is that "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all"! Jesus was first examined by Annas, then tried before Caiaphas, the high priest, then formally condemned by the Sanhedrim. But these mock-trials, with all their injustice and their indignities, were not enough to exhaust the appointed humiliation and suffering. Christ must needs be brought before the Roman governor, who had come up from Cæsarea to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover. In order that he might endure the curse attaching to every one that hangeth on a tree, in order that he might fulfil his own prediction that he should die by crucifixion, he must needs be sentenced, not merely by a Hebrew, but also by a Roman tribunal. The passage before us exhibits the several agencies by which the condemnation of Christ was brought about.

I. THE MALICE AND ENVY OF THE PRIESTS. Pilate "perceived that for envy the chief priests had delivered him up." They both hated the spiritual teaching of the Prophet of Nazareth, so much at variance with their own; and they were jealous of the influence which he had acquired over the people, not only in Galilee, but in Judæa. The hatred and envy of the priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes, had been abundantly shown by their treatment of Jesus for some time past, but was made more apparent by the events of the past night. Their apprehension of him in the garden, their treatment of him before the high priest, had been flagitiously malicious and unjust. And now their charge against him at the bar of Pilate—a charge virtually of political treason against the authority of the Roman empire—was a proof of the length to which their hatred and hypocrisy could proceed. They brought this charge, simply because they thought that this would tell most against him in the estimation of the procurator.

II. THE FICKLENESS AND THE UNPRINCIPLED CHOICE OF THE MULTITUDE. But a few days ago the crowds in the streets of Jerusalem had welcomed the Prophet of Nazareth with the cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Of those who thus hailed the triumphal entry of the Nazarene, probably the greater part were Galileans. And the apprehension of Jesus had been effected at night; the trial of Jesus had been hurried on before the day, probably with this intent, that the pilgrims from the north of Palestine, who were so largely adherents of Jesus, might be prevented from taking any steps to rescue the Prisoner, or at all events from making a demonstration on his behalf. Yet the populace inhabiting and sojourning in the city cannot be acquitted of proverbial fickleness. The minions of the priesthood, no doubt, led the way, and raised the first shouts of popular outcry against Jesus. The multitude were instigated by the sacerdotal party and their adherents to

this position of hostility, this ferocious howl for the blood of the Innocent. The infamous choice of the populace, who preferred Barabbas to Jesus, is one of the most distressing incidents of the awful martydom. A rioter and murderer was apparently represented as a champion of national independence, whilst "the Holy One and the Just" was charged with being the enemy of the temple and its services and solemnities. In this way the people were wrought upon to demand the death of the precious and the liberation of the vile.

III. THE WEAKNESS, SELFISHNESS, AND FEAR OF THE ROMAN GOVERNOR. After all, the responsibility of capital punishment lay with Pilate. Had he stood firm for justice and right against lawlessness and violence, Jesus would have been saved. But so it was not to be. The governor's own conviction of the innocence and excellence of the accused are evident, both from his language, "Why, what evil hath he done?" "I find no fault in him," and also from his repeated though unsuccessful, because irresolute, efforts to save his life. It is clear that Pilate admired and respected the Prisoner, whilst he despised the accusers and the mob. Yet he yielded to the savage outcry, from a desire to content the Jews, with whom it was his interest to stand well, and from fear lest, if he acquitted the Prisoner, his conduct might be misrepresented to the emperor to his disadvantage, and so might prove the occasion of his ruin. Desire of popularity, fear of the tyrant's frown,—these were the two motives which, in the mind of the cynical and selfish procurator, outweighed all considerations of righteousness and humanity. So it came to pass that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

IV. THE CONFESSION AND THE DEMEANOUR OF CHRIST HIMSELF. The demeanour of Jesus was dignified and honourable, but far from fitted to procure his release. Silence, when false witnesses testified against him, only infuriated his foes. Before the Jewish tribunal he acknowledged that he was the Messiah and the Son of God. Before Pilate he confessed himself a King—a confession which, however explained as a claim to spiritual dominion, was an embarrassment to his well-wisher and judge. And his reminder that there was a higher, because a Divine, authority, to which all earthly authority is subordinate, was itself irritating to a proud and absolute ruler. There was a marvellous mingling of boldness and meekness in the conduct of the innocent and holy Prisoner. Morally, this demeanour exculpated him; but legally it was to his disadvantage. And his confession of royalty became his sentence of condemnation; written upon his cross for the apparent vindication, but for the real and eternal censure, of those who accused and of him who sentenced him. Thus did Jesus "witness a good confession before Pontius Pilate."

APPLICATION. 1. Observe the force and virulence of sin taking possession of human nature, and corrupting and degrading it. The malice, bigotry, and falsehood of the priests, the fickleness and unreasoning fury of the mob, the selfishness and cowardice of the governor,—all illustrate the length to which sin can go. The innocence and benevolence of the Victim render more conspicuous the enormity of his foes. 2. Observe the faultless and beautiful spirit displayed by the Sufferer, the absence of all resentment or complaint, the meek submission to all that he needs must suffer. A Being so morally perfect demands our admiration and our worship, invites our confidence and our love. 3. Consider the price of our redemption. Jesus bore all this injustice, these insults, for man. He was condemned that we might be acquitted; he was slain that we might live.

Vers. 16—20.—*Christ mocked.* During this awful night and morning our Lord thrice underwent the suffering and indignity of public and vulgar derision. First before the high priest, at the hands of the officers and servants of Caiaphas; then again when he was set at nought and mocked by the brutal soldiery of Herod Antipas; and now yet once more, when Pilate delivered him into the keeping of the Roman soldiers, a company of whom were about to lead him forth to crucifixion. Insult was added to insult, and his bitter cup ran over.

I. THE MOCKERS. The whole band or cohort are said to have joined in the ribald sport in the Prætorium. What they did, it must be remembered, they did largely in ignorance. These Roman legionaries knew nothing of a Messiah, and were probably utterly unacquainted with the character and career of him whom Pilate had delivered over to them. Their insensibility to human suffering was equal to their indifference to

human innocence and virtue. All they knew was that their master, though professedly convinced of Jesus' blamelessness, was yet content to give him up into their hands to ill treat and to put to a shameful death. We cannot, therefore, wonder at their insolence and cruelty. Yet we cannot read the sad story without feelings of shame and of sorrow, as we remember that persons belonging to our race, and sharing our nature, should have inflicted such indignities upon "the Holy One and the Just," upon the world's Friend and Saviour.

II. THE MOCKERIES. These were many, base, and repeated. 1. Jesus was invested with a purple robe. Probably this was a military cloak, whose crimson hue might render it an emblem of the imperial purple. 2. He was crowned with a circlet of thorns, another symbol of royalty, doubtless roughly woven from the stem of a prickly shrub. 3. He was addressed as "King." Utterly incapable of understanding a moral sovereignty, a spiritual sway, these coarse soldiers, to whom force was all, insulted the meek and unresisting Sufferer by the use of a title which from their lips could be only derisive. 4. He was saluted with the semblance of honour and homage; they "bowed the knee, and worshipped him." 5. They smote his sacred head with the sceptre-reed. How affecting this treatment! The very fact which should have been Christ's claim to respect, confidence, and adoration—his royal authority over the conscience and heart of humanity—was turned into a ground of reproach and a matter of reviling. Thus men treated their Divine and rightful King.

III. THE STERN REALITY TO WHICH THE MOCKERY WAS A PRELUDE AND A CONTRAST. Knowing what was before the Condemned, decency and humanity should have led them to spare him these insults. But when they were over, there was worse to come. The purple was stripped from his form; his own garments were placed on him; the beam of the cross was laid upon his shoulders; he was thrust into his place in the rude procession; and then was led away to crucifixion.

APPLICATION. 1. Admire the meekness of him "who, when reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not." Never was sorrow like his sorrow, and never patience like his patience. 2. Recognize the true royalty which a spiritual judgment may discern underlying the mockery and derision here recorded. See in Jesus a King, though crowned with thorns. 3. Learn to confide in a Saviour whose purpose to save was so resolute and so benevolent, as is apparent here. A salvation procured at such a cost is a salvation of which none should hear unmoved, and which none who needs it should hesitate or delay to accept.

Vers. 21—32.—*The crucifixion.* The bigots and the mob have gained their end, and now have their own way with "the Holy One and the Just." The power of Rome is brought into the service of Jewish fanaticism and malice. All evil influences have conspired together. Now is their hour and the power of darkness. The world's sin has culminated in the rejection of the world's Saviour. All happens as has been foreseen in the counsels of God, and foretold by inspired prophets and by the Son of man himself. The Christ of God is crucified.

I. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CRUCIFIXION. The story is very simply told; there is no endeavour to excite feeling by any other means than by the clear and artless relation of the facts. But this is enough to awaken the sympathy of every mind capable of realizing the injustice of Christ's enemies, and the meekness, compassion, and fortitude of the Sufferer. 1. *The bearing of the cross.* That Jesus, exhausted by the events of the past night and of this morning, by the wakeful hours, the scourging and the insults he had endured, should now be incapable of carrying the instrument of his final sufferings, is natural enough. The soldiers, indisposed themselves to bear the burden, beneath which they see the Sufferer sinking, impress into the service a Cyrenian Israelite, who has come to the Passover now celebrating at Jerusalem, and who has been sleeping in one of the villages near the city, but is on his way to the scene of the sacred solemnities. What seems to the soldiers and to the mob a degradation, is to become an honourable and happy memory to Simon, whose family is destined in after years to hold a high place in the regard of the Christian community, and whose name is henceforth to be linked with that of the Redeemer by this sacred and touching association. 2. *The approach to Golgotha.* Imagination has filled the void wisely left by the evangelists; and the *via dolorosa* has been marked by "stations," each of which has

been signalized by some episode of suffering, mercy, or sympathy. The spot where the execution of the iniquitous sentence took place may have been to the north-west of the city, and the name—"the place of a skull"—may have been derived from its form, rounded and bare. It needs no fanciful legends to endear a spot so memorable to the heart of Christendom; the pathos of the plain fact is enough. Calvary—"lovely, mournful Calvary"—was the scene of Immanuel's passion. 3. *The offering of myrrh-mingled wine.* The compassion of the ladies of Jerusalem is said to have provided a soporific, stupefying, narcotic draught, to be administered in humanity to the criminals who were condemned to die a painful and lingering death. It seems to have been in conformity with custom and from motives of sympathy that the draught was offered to Jesus.

"Fill high the bowl, and spice it well, and pour
The dews oblivious: for the cross is sharp;
The cross is sharp, and he
Is tenderer than a lamb."

His refusal was owing to his determination to accept to the full the lot of undeserved pain and anguish appointed for him. "Thou wilt feel all, that thou may'st pity all." He had already exclaimed, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" and it would seem that this cup of woe could not be drunk except by the retention of his faculties to the very last. 4. *The parting of his garments.* These were the perquisite of the executioners, who divided amongst themselves some of his raiment, and who cast lots for the seamless robe. This was not only the fulfilment of a prediction, but it was an element in the humiliation and self-sacrifice of the Son of man.

II. THE CRUCIFIXION AND ITS ACCOMPANYING CIRCUMSTANCES. "They crucified him;" such is the brief notification of the most stupendous crime committed in the history of mankind. Every circumstance recorded in such a connection is worthy of attention. 1. There is *a note of time.* It was the third hour, *i.e.* nine o'clock in the forenoon. From this we infer how hurried had been the proceedings since the break of day, and how prolonged were those sufferings, which did not close until three in the afternoon. 2. There is *a memorandum of the superscription.* This was the accusation, upon which, unproved and misrepresented, Pilate had been induced to sanction this legal murder. A King crucified, and crucified by his subjects; no wonder that such a crime should be disowned, or rather such a stigma resented, by the priests and elders. When Pilate persisted that the inscription should remain, he bore witness unconsciously alike to the spiritual royalty of Jesus and to the flagitious rebellion of the leaders of the Jewish nation. The cross was in truth Christ's earthly throne, the symbol of a world-wide empire. He had said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." 3. There is an account of *his companions upon the cross.* If anything could possibly add to the ignominy of our Saviour's death, it was the society in which he suffered. Barabbas had, indeed, been released; but there were two robbers condemned to death, and awaiting the execution of their sentence. Accordingly, advantage was taken of the opportunity to carry out the sentence against the Christ and the criminals upon the same occasion. Thus was he "numbered with the transgressors," and an additional stigma attached to him by his association with the vilest of the vile. No wonder that the ignorant and unspiritual made this a ground of reviling against Jesus, and of reproach against his followers.

III. THE MOCKERY THAT FOLLOWED THE CRUCIFIXION. To add to the insults, the jeering, the scoffing, which Jesus had endured during his trials, it was permitted that his dying hours should be disturbed, and his dying agonies intensified, by the mockery of various classes of his foes. 1. The *passers-by* railed on him. With the customary contempt for the fallen and deserted, those passing in and out of the city insulted the Crucified, with gestures of derision and tones of contempt, recalling the language in which he had asserted his authority, and contrasting it with his pitiable condition, terrible sufferings, and apparent helplessness. 2. The *chief priests and scribes,* who had been foremost in effecting his downfall, were prominent in glorying over the work of their hands, and in scoffing at him upon whom they had wreaked their vengeance. From their lips came the language which, intended to be a reproach, was

really, and has ever been deemed, one of the most glorious tributes ever paid to the Redeemer: "He saved others; himself he cannot save!" When they asked that he should come down from the cross upon which their malice had raised him, and professed their willingness upon such evidence to believe in him, we cannot doubt that their words were hollow, vulgar mockery. 3. That no element of misery might be wanting in the Saviour's anguish, it was permitted that the very thieves should join in the raillery with which Jesus was encompassed and tortured. This, indeed, only gives an additional touch of pathos to the story of the penitent thief which St. Luke tells so exquisitely, and shows, in the brighter colours of contrast, the powerful gentleness and unselfish pity of the dying Saviour.

APPLICATION. 1. Admire the submission and meekness of Christ's demeanour. 2. Consider with gratitude the redemptive purpose which animated and sustained the Sufferer. 3. Learn to glory in that cross, which, from an emblem of shame, has by Christ been transformed into a symbol of salvation.

Vers. 33—41.—*The death of Jesus.* Jesus had, in the course of his ministry, raised the dead to life. Three such instances are recorded in the Gospels; and it is intimated that there were other cases which have not been circumstantially related. And now the time came for himself to die, to accomplish at Jerusalem the decease he had foreseen and foretold. That he might have avoided this fate is obvious; and he had himself declared that no man took his life from him. The time, however, had arrived for him to lay down that life of himself, in submitting to be, "by wicked hands, crucified and slain."

I. The evangelist relates CIRCUMSTANCES PRECEDING CHRIST'S DEATH. 1. The darkness which brooded over the city, and over the whole land, for the space of three hours (from 12 until 3 p.m.), was apparently supernatural, and has usually been regarded as a manifest token of Nature's sympathy with her Lord. It was an appropriate accompaniment to the sad and awful event that was transpiring. 2. The utterance of desertion and of woe. The dying Saviour's cry has ever been regarded as affording a glance into the innermost, the sacred, the unfathomable mysteries of his soul. Explain it we cannot; disregard it we dare not. Surely, this cannot be regarded as a mere exclamation of distress! Surely, it cannot have been wrung from the Redeemer by the severity of bodily pain and anguish! It has been well said that the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings. The only explanation of the cry, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is that furnished by the mental agonies which the world's Redeemer was enduring, which clouded his sense of the Father's favour. On the one hand, we cannot suppose this language to have been a mere cry of distress; on the other hand, we cannot conceive that the Father had withdrawn his favour from his well-beloved Son, who was now proving himself to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The fact is that the burden of the world's sins and sorrows pressed like a dense cloud upon his soul, and obscured from his view the shining of the Father's face. 3. The ministry of pity. Although at the commencement of the crucifixion Jesus had refused the stupefying draught which had been offered him, now that he had hung six hours upon the cross he was consumed with an intolerable thirst. The expression of his distressing sensation seems to have followed upon the cry of desertion. A bystander, doubtless in pity, offered him a sponge filled with the sour wine which was the soldiers' ordinary drink, and it would seem that he did not now refuse the alleviation offered. It is not easy to understand who could have so misapprehended his cry as to suppose the dying Sufferer to invoke the ministry of Elijah; though it is easy to believe that some would jeeringly propose to wait for the prophetic intervention. 4. The dying cry. Mark gives no words; but from the other Gospels we learn that, immediately before his expiring, Jesus uttered aloud two ever-memorable sayings: viz. "It is finished!" and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" It is clear, therefore, that the cry was not an inarticulate utterance of pain. There was an expression of his conviction that his ministry of humiliation was ended, that the purpose of his incarnation was completed, that nothing more remained for him to do on earth. And in addition to this utterance, which was ministerial, was another, which was personal. As he had said "*My* God," so now he says "*Father*," an address which proved his possession of the assurance of his Father's undiminish-

and undimmed approval. The hour of agony and dissolution was thus an hour of triumph: Christ's work was completed, his obedience was perfected, his acceptance was assured, his victory was achieved.

II. The evangelist records THE FACT OF CHRIST'S DEATH. How simply is it related!—"He gave up his spirit." In one word is recorded, without exaggeration, without a word to heighten the effect, without a comment of any kind, the most stupendous, pathetic, and momentous event which this world has witnessed. The Being who was "the Life" bowed his head in death. He who, whilst his hour was not yet come, had eluded his foes, now submitted to the felon's doom. The Lord of immortality, who was to hold the keys of death and of the unseen world, saw and tasted dissolution, though not corruption. He knew, though the spectators, friends and foes alike, were ignorant of the fact, that his death was destined to be the life of the world. He had foretold that, when lifted up from the earth, he should draw all men unto himself; that the grain of wheat should fall into the earth and die, and should bring forth much fruit. And the events which have followed have verified the Saviour's words. Even those who have no disposition to regard Christ's character and work as supernatural cannot be blind to the fact that the cross has proved a tree whose fruits have been for the satisfaction, and whose leaves have been for the healing, of the nations. But, to us Christians, the death of Christ was the redemption of our souls.

"Oh, never, never canst thou know
What then for thee the Saviour bore,
The pangs of that mysterious woe
Which wrung his bosom's inmost core.

"Yes, man for man perchance may brave
The horrors of the yawning grave;
And friend for friend, or son for sire,
Undaunted and unmoved expire,
From love, or piety, or pride;
But who can die as Jesus died?"

III. The evangelist puts upon record CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES FOLLOWING UPON CHRIST'S DEATH. 1. One incident occurs which is typical of the influence of our Saviour's death upon the elder, the Jewish, dispensation: the rending of the temple veil. This curtain screened off the holiest place, which was representative of the Divine indwelling, and at the same time of the necessity of a mediatorial scheme by which God can admit men to his fellowship and favour. And when this veil was rent, it was signified that by the death of Jesus, the true High Priest, the way was made open into the presence of a holy God. The distinction between Jews and Gentiles was abolished, and a Divine mediation was declared available for all mankind. 2. The witness of the centurion was an earnest of the world's witness to the crucified Redeemer. It was the manner of Jesus' death—the demeanour and the language of the innocent, uncomplaining, forgiving Sufferer, the darkness and the general awe—which together produced upon the mind of this Roman officer the impression that this was, not merely no criminal, but no ordinary mortal; that he had been superintending the crucifixion of a Son—*the* Son—of God. It is significant that, in his death, our Lord effected the conversion of a sinful fellow-sufferer, and the enlightenment, to say the least, of one so little likely to be prepossessed in his favour as this Roman officer. 3. Mention is made of the gaze of some of those who had been, and still were, the faithful friends of Jesus. The mother of the Lord had been led away from the painful scene by the disciple to whose care she had been entrusted by her dying Son. But Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome the wife of Zebedee, are mentioned as, with others, lingering at some distance from the cross, and yet within sight of it, to behold the end. Whilst their services could be of use to him, they had attended his steps and supplied his wants; and now that they could do no more for their beloved and revered Master, they remained near his dying form, to watch with him, to sympathize with him to the last, to hear his dying words, to keep him in sight until the lifeless body should be disposed of, and hidden from them in the earth. Sweet is the thought that, when his disciples forsook Jesus and fled, when he had to endure

the anguish caused by the treachery of one, the denial of a second, and the desertion of others, there were devout and attached women who would not leave the sacred spot, or take their eyes from off the hallowed form. Even by human devotion and love Jesus was not utterly forsaken, was not left utterly alone. Some there were who had proved his kindness, tested his wisdom, profited by his authority during his ministry, whose hearts changed not towards him in the hour of his darkness, anguish, and woe. Memorable is the ministry of those holy and affectionate women, who are recorded to have been "last at the cross, and earliest at the tomb."

APPLICATION. Christ's death is: 1. To sinners the means of salvation. The Lord paid on the cross the ransom-price of the souls of sinful men; he bore our sins; he redeemed us with his precious blood. Here is pardon, healing, and life, for those who receive the good tidings with sincere faith. 2. To suppliants the assurance of the gracious answer of Heaven to their prayers. "If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will he not with him also freely give us all things?" 3. To struggling souls the inspiration of resistance and endurance, the earnest and pledge of victory. "Our old nature is crucified with him;" "Reckon ye yourselves dead unto sin." 4. To Christian teachers and preachers the theme of their ministry. In this Paul is an example to us all, who exclaimed, "We preach Christ crucified;" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Vers. 42—47.—*The burial of Christ.* The reality of the death of our Lord Jesus has been questioned, at various times and upon various grounds. Some have denied the possibility of a resurrection from the dead, and have absurdly supposed that Jesus only fainted or swooned, and that his recovery from a swoon was reputed among his followers to be a resurrection. Against all such unreasonable and incredible assumptions the record of the evangelists, who relate his burial, and that in the most minute and circumstantial manner, ought to be regarded as definitely and certainly conclusive.

I. THE APPLICANT. Of Joseph of Arimathæa we know only what is recorded in connection with Christ's interment. In circumstances he was rich. His rank was that of a member of the Sanhedrim; his character is described in the words, "a good man and a just;" his religious position may be inferred from the two facts, that he waited for the kingdom of God and that he was a disciple of Jesus, though secretly, from fear of the Jews, whilst his view of what had taken place with respect to Jesus is expressly put upon record in the statement that he had not consented to the counsel and deed of the priests and elders. His coming forward on this occasion is an instance of the way in which circumstances may bring out virtues, such as courage and fidelity to conviction, which have long been latent.

II. THE APPLICATION. The boldness with which Joseph asked for the body is mentioned as something to his credit, for such a step would certainly not commend him to his fellow-citizens and fellow-councillors. As the Jews approved of the burial of the dead in every case, and as it was not considered decent that the bodies of the crucified should be exposed upon the coming sabbath of Paschal solemnities, there was the more obvious ground for this appeal. And it was seemly and honourable in Joseph to wish to rescue his Master's corpse from the indignity of a criminal's interment. The procurator had no ill will to Jesus, and perhaps took a pleasure in what would offend the priests. At all events, he was amenable to bribery. His surprise was excited by the tidings that Jesus had already expired, concerning which he required to be satisfied by an official report. Whether or not he received money from Joseph, he readily gave permission to him to take possession of the body. In the case of Joseph, who begged the body of Jesus, and of Nicodemus, who purchased the spices and aided in the interment, we see a remarkable instance of the power of the cross—of the death and love of Jesus—to overcome the fears excited by a regard to the world's opinion, and by a wish to stand well with the world. The cross brings out latent love and undeveloped courage, and leads to boldness and confession.

III. THE ENTOMBMENT. In preparation for this the body was taken down from the cross, was wound in linen bought for the purpose, being enfolded in fragrant myrrh and aloes. Joseph was the owner of a garden near to Calvary, where in the solid rock was hewn a tomb, destined probably for the reception of his own remains—what we might term a family vault. In this suitable and peaceful sepulchre Joseph, aided (as John

tells us) by Nicodemus, laid the sacred form in which the Lord of life and glory had laboured and suffered for mankind. Against the entrance of the grave a huge stone was rolled, to secure the resting-place from intrusion. Thus, as in a garden Christ had endured his agony, in a garden he rested in the repose of death. How cherished in the memory and heart of Christendom were and are these sad and sacred scenes, none can be ignorant. Christ's "precious death and burial" have been celebrated in Christian hymns, commemorated in Christian ordinances, embalmed in Christian liturgies of prayer and intercession. The crucifixion, the descent from the cross, the mourning of the faithful women (the *pieta*), the entombment of the Saviour,—all these have been favourite and congenial themes with Christian painters. And of all subjects of Christian preaching, none are so pathetic, so melting, so fitted to awaken contrition for sin, so fitted to produce contempt for the world, as the topics suggested by these mournful incidents. It is solemnly affecting to think of this earth as being, during those sacred hours, the sepulchre of the Son of God.

IV. THE WITNESSES OF CHRIST'S BURIAL. It is observable that the holy and faithful women, who had ministered to Jesus in his public career, who had stood in the neighbourhood of the cross, and who had seen him die—they who were to be the first witnesses of his resurrection,—these were present at the entombment, as loth to part from the Lord whom they honoured and loved, as lingering for the last look upon the form of him to whose words they had so often listened with joy, and at whose hands they had received blessings priceless and immortal.

APPLICATION. 1. The moment when sin seems triumphant is the moment when Divine Providence is preparing for its confusion and destruction. To Christ's enemies his death appeared simply the end of his holy ministry, and when his lifeless form was committed to the grave they deemed his influence for ever at an end. Yet, in truth, now was about to commence the reign of him who tasted death for every man, but was about to ascend to the throne of spiritual empire. 2. The burial of our Saviour is to us the token of his love and of the completeness of his mediatorial work. That he did not shrink from even the ignominy and the weakness of the grave should be to us an assurance of his perfect humanity, his complete sympathy, and a pledge that the salvation which he did and suffered so much to secure shall be thorough and complete, shall be sure and everlasting. 3. The burial of Christ is to be, in a spiritual sense, shared by all his believing and renewed people. We are one with Christ, in his death and in his resurrection. And, as if to show how thoroughly we participate in our Saviour's death unto sin, we are represented as even buried with him. By baptism or consecration unto his death we are said to enter, as it were, his tomb; that, dying unto sin, we may rise again and live unto righteousness, holiness, and God. 4. The interment of our Lord seems to cast most precious and consolatory light upon our own and our friends' mortality. That there is naturally a repulsiveness in the grave and in dissolution is not denied. Yet to know that our gracious Lord deigned to taste death for every man, and to be laid to rest in a cave of the earth, is to be fortified against the unpleasing and distressing associations which are all that unbelievers connect with dissolution. When the lifeless form of a good man is borne to the grave, let us think of such an event in close connection with the burial of him who was and is the Lord of life. 5. Secret disciples should take encouragement from the conduct of Joseph and Nicodemus. Remember this, that whilst you have less excuse than they had for concealing your faith and disguising your attachment to Jesus, you have more reasons and stronger inducements to open confession. The Lord Jesus has not hidden his love for you; he has expressed it in words, and proved it by sufferings as well as actions. And he expects that you should boldly avow yourselves his, that you should confess him before men. Then he will not be ashamed of you before his Father and the holy angels.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Jesus at the bar of the Roman power.* In its officers and agents representative of the whole Gentile world; so that the whole human race is involved in his condemnation and death.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE FURTHER REFERENCE. To obtain authority for carrying out

the death-sentence. This would not be allowed to a simple Jewish tribunal. The step taken was, therefore, a practical abdication of their theocratic pretensions. Hatred drives men into inconsistency and hypocrisy.

II. THE CHARGE MADE. Not the same as that upon which they themselves condemned him, but such an interpretation of it as would most readily render him liable to the judgment of the Roman government.

III. HIS REPLY TO PILATE. An idiomatic equivalent for "Yes," "I am so." The question is understood as an assertion put interrogatively, "Thou art the King of the Jews?" "The rationale of the idiom is that *when the interrogative form is withdrawn from the class of interrogations referred to, the saying that remains is the reality*" (Morison). A similar purpose to that which animated the reply to the high priest is here apparent. The Roman world was certified as to the dignity of Christ. In John's Gospel (xviii. 36—38) the true interpretation of this title as a moral and spiritual one is recorded as having been given by Christ to Pilate. It involved no treason, therefore, against the Roman power.

IV. THE GENERAL DEMEANOUR OF CHRIST TOWARDS HIS ACCUSERS. *Silence.* 1. *A marvel.* The calmness of the Prisoner was unlike the behaviour of prisoners generally, and appeared supernatural. 2. *It was equivalent to an appeal to a higher tribunal.* 3. *An impressive moral victory.*—M.

Vers. 6—15.—*Christ or Barabbas.* I. A REVELATION OF THE HATRED OF THE NATURAL MIND FOR TRUTH AND GOODNESS. Several ancient authorities are in favour of readings here and elsewhere which would give us, "Jesus Barabbas" (*i.e.* son of a father or rabbi), as the full name of the "robber" who was here the favourite of the populace. If this be so, there would be two of the name Jesus, and the choice would thus be strikingly emphasized. The character of Barabbas as a rioter and murderer is glossed over by the semblance of patriotism, as he is said to have been engaged in the insurrection caused by Pilate's appropriation of the corban of the temple for building an aqueduct. In any case the personal character is utterly subordinated, and motives of policy prevail. The season of the Passover recalled the historic sparing of Israel's firstborn and the destruction of Egypt's. The positions seemed now to be reversed, or Israel deliberately assumed the character of Egypt, preferring that the guilty should be set free. We have here the self-conviction of: 1. *Perverted religious instincts.* In the case of the chief priests and people of the Jews. Their whole religious training ought to have prepared them to receive Christ. 2. *Popular opinion unguided by the Spirit of God.* A prey to unscrupulous influences, to false sentiment, and to passing excitements. 3. *Spiritual indifference.* In the person of Pilate, in whom it lent itself readily to unprincipled diplomacy and the surrender of innocence.

II. A PARABLE OF THE CHOICE EVERY MAN IS CALLED UPON TO MAKE. 1. *In daily life.* Minute occurrences in which the contrasts may not seem so striking, or the choice so final. Their ultimate influence in the determination of character and destiny. 2. *In the great crises of religious decision.* It is well at such times to consider carefully the respective ends of the courses of conduct that present themselves.

III. A SYMBOL OF THE CENTRAL MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION. In the gospel the method of salvation is that the innocent shall suffer for the guilty. Jesus the Christ thus became the substitute of Barabbas the robber. The latter only gained the prolongation of his earthly life thereby; a questionable benefit. But those who believe in Christ as the vicarious Sacrifice and voluntary Self-sacrificer for sinners will receive eternal salvation.—M.

Vers. 16—20, 29—32.—*The mockery of Jesus.* The scene, the courtyard of the governor's residence; the actors, the Roman soldiery and the Son of God; and the awful fate that awaited the Sufferer, render this mockery one of the most impressive incidents in human history. It was deliberate, brutal, and inhuman.

I. WHAT IT WAS IN HIM THAT WAS MOCKED. The crown and the purple and the sham homage are interpreted by the cry, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 1. *It was his kingly pretensions they ridiculed.* So the Jews had laughed to scorn his prophetic office. To those Roman soldiers, impressed with the grandeur of the power they themselves represented, the claim to be king of a small and subject land like Palestine was

very petty. They could afford, so they thought, to laugh at it; even as Pilate was not afraid to have released him who preferred it. 2. But even more *did they despise his title as a theocratic King.* How far these citizens of the empire of law were from realizing the true character of the kingdom of righteousness! Had he even been recognized by the Jews themselves as their ruler, the nation was too small, too insignificant in a political or military point of view, to be of any consequence. There was no suspicion in their minds of danger to the Roman empire, or of the influence which his moral and spiritual character was to wield in the new ages of the world. It is, although they knew it not then, by virtue of this same moral majesty and power that he, in turn, has become the Conqueror of mankind, and is maintaining and extending his sway in regions where mouldering ruins and obsolete statutes are all that remain to witness to Rome's vanished greatness. It is the mockers themselves that are now ridiculous.

II. HOW MEN MAY MOCK HIM STILL. There is a feeling of human tenderness that is outraged as we imagine the meek Sufferer amidst the brutal throng. But the true sentiment that ought to be awakened is that which concerns the principles of righteousness and truth, of which he was the embodiment and representative. It is for them he would have us solicitous even to jealousy. Men still wound and mock Christ: 1. *When they render to him a merely nominal homage.* "When we pervert the truth of the Word for our own evil ends, we scourge the Son of man; when to justify our evils we fabricate a system of ingenious error, and thus exalt our own wisdom above the wisdom of Jesus, we plait a crown of thorns and put it on his head; when we substitute our own righteousness for the righteousness of Christ, we clothe him with a purple robe; when we are inwardly worshippers of self and outwardly worshippers of the Lord, our worship of him is a mocking salutation of 'Hail, King of the Jews!' while every presumptuous sin we commit is a stroke inflicted on the Son of man" (W. Bruce). 2. *When they ignore the moral nature of his power,* relying on material and external means instead of spiritual. When they use the methods of business in a business spirit, or even the arts of diplomacy, to advance his kingdom. So men clothe Christ in the insignia of Herod. "The kingliest King was crowned with thorns!" 3. *When they would accept the advantages of his kingdom without observing its conditions.* As when persons profess to enjoy the preaching and ordinances of the gospel, but do not carry its doctrines into practice; or when they are "straightway offended" at the tribulations and privations which true discipleship involves.—M.

Vers. 31, 32.—*The Saviour's helplessness.* A paradox. The situation as regarded by those who surrounded the cross was manifestly in contradiction with the pretensions of Jesus. This *primâ facie* impression was not accidentally produced, but belonged, so to speak, to the very essence of the gospel as a "mystery;" and it had its ends to serve in the inscrutable wisdom of God. That it tended at first to conceal the true character of the Saviour's sufferings there can be no doubt; but as certainly it prepared the way for subsequent spiritual revelation. It served—

I. TO EXCITE ATTENTION. This apparent self-contradiction in the career of Jesus was a matter of public notoriety. Had it been overlooked by any, the enemies of the truth were eager to point it out. There is something piquant to the curiosity and speculation of men in a matter which wears such an aspect.

II. AS A MEANS OF AVENGING THE TRUTH UPON ITS ADVERSARIES. How quick they were to seize upon it and turn it to the best advantage! For a little while they had it all their own way. So infatuated were they, that they put the seeming contradiction in the strongest possible form; the antithesis is all but perfect. Not quite so, however. They had to confess that he *had* "saved others." The monuments of his work remained, and facts are hard to discredit. There was something in the very sound which would recall histories of gracious sympathy and help; miracles of saving power. It was precisely this element of stubborn matter of fact which could not be accounted for on the theory of mere pretension, and which in turn vitiated their argument. A thousand presumptions will not disprove, but must yield to, a single fact. Now, the fact of Christ's miraculous works is certified to us by those who sought to discredit and disprove them. Out of their own mouths are they condemned. They are self-sentenced to a vicious mill-round of mere logic. The natural man cannot understand the heavenly mystery.

III. As a means of disciplining and rewarding faith. 1. That the disciples themselves did not comprehend it at first is evident from the Gospel narrative. It must have been hard for them to see what appeared the falsification of their hopes; harder still to be taunted by those who had so cruelly slain their Master. What part may it not have had in the "cup" the Saviour himself had to drink? 2. But by this very discipline it prepared them for the inner and spiritual "discerning of the Lord's body." Their spiritual susceptibilities were awakened, and they began to realize the meaning of the mystery. Gradually they were to emerge from the bewilderment and perplexity. Peter and the rest of the disciples travelled far ere they reached Pentecost, but each step in the journey of their faith was a revelation of the secret of Jesus. It was not to human force he had submitted, but to his Father's will. The necessity that bound him to the cross was a spiritual one. It was because he wished to save others absolutely that he would and could not save himself.—M.

Vers. 40, 41.—*Women watching the cross.* The prominence of women in the Gospel narrative suggests the fact that Christianity has done more to awaken the spiritual nature of women, and to furnish them with a sphere for the exercise of their special gifts and graces, than any other religion. For the first time the gospel gave to woman dignity and recognized position in spiritual things. In the gospel, the feminine as well as the masculine aspects and phases of morality are represented. Why were they at the cross?

I. A proof of their attachment to Christ. 1. *They had already shown this.* They were, some of them, of good social standing, and had command of considerable means. This advantage they had employed in the interests of Christ and his work—"they ministered unto him" when he was in Galilee. And the service they rendered involved a certain inconvenience and trouble, for they had to follow him almost as much as his apostles. 2. *Now they gave even more signal evidence.* Modestly retiring to the outskirts of the rabble, they persistently watched him. They might have been excused by ordinary scruples from witnessing the horrible scene, but they could not allow themselves to go away. He still represented their highest spiritual interest, and they were willing to brave anything for his sake.

II. A trial of their love. It rose into heroic resolution and sacrifice. 1. *How typical their experience was of that which their sisters have had to go through in all ages!* They stood by helpless, unable to render any further service. It was not for them to attempt a rescue when brave men had forsaken him and fled. But they could show the virtue of passive endurance. They could prove to the Sufferer that their love was unabated, their faith forlorn, but not dead. So many a noble wife, sister, or mother has had to stand by when loved ones have been done to death, or ruined by great concerns in which they might not interfere. They have been able only to trust and wait and pray, to comfort when they could not deliver. One consolation remained to them—they *had* done what they could. 2. *To so try it was the grandest recognition of its genuineness.* They were accounted worthy to suffer with Christ. Their affection was to pass through the fires seven times refined. Peter might be faithless, and the rest of the disciples sadly fail, but *they* could watch with the Saviour as his spirit sank beneath its accumulated woe.—M.

Vers. 42—47.—*The burial of the Crucified.* I. Provided for by God. There are several striking proofs of providential arrangement in the burying of the Saviour. He never stipulated as to where or how he should be buried; his mind was too much occupied as to how he should die. Yet were great things to turn upon the manner, the time, and the place of his burial. He whose angels hid the grave of Moses, was equally careful to make known the place where his Son lay. The sepulchre was new, and in the midst of a garden, therefore isolated from other graves. The identity of the risen One is thus secured against all possibility of mistake. In inspiring the agents through whom the burial was effected, God fulfilled his own eternal appointment. The death, hastened by the unusual delicacy of the Sufferer, and the intervention of the sabbath, secured on the one hand that "not a bone should be broken," and, on the other, that he should be buried on the day before the sabbath, his rest in the grave coinciding with the sabbatic rest of the Creator, fulfilling the week, so to speak, of the old economy.

and ending with the beginning of the first day of the next week, thus ushering in a new economy, a new creation. The garden-tomb of Joseph a fit resting-place for him who was to be the Firstfruits of the resurrection. If the cross was shameful, the tomb was honourable. "They had appointed him a grave with the despised; and among the honoured (did he obtain it) in his death" (Isa. liii. 9, Lange's translation).

II. VOLUNTARILY EFFECTED BY MEN. 1. *A victory of faith.* A "councillor of honourable estate" is moved by an inward impulse to make this his own special concern. The tragic circumstances of the last few hours had touched his heart and kindled his enthusiasm; and he and his friend Nicodemus—"the same who came to Jesus by night"—casting off all secrecy or fear of man, vied with one another in paying the last tribute of respect to the illustrious Dead. His simple request was an act of faith; the boldness which rendered it so effectual was a victory of faith. Already the power of the cross was being felt. The centurion, the governor, Joseph, and Nicodemus alike confess to its influence. 2. *A tribute of love.* How careful are the two in their preparations! The linen cloth and the spices are the offering of affection, which follows its object even to the tomb. As in Mary's spikenard, the question of expense is put wholly out of sight. The richest and best that they may offer are brought forth for the occasion. 3. *In token of undying hope.* The spices arrested the process of corruption, and witnessed to the expectation of the resurrection.—M.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The foes of Jesus.* It is remarkable that the evangelists speak of their Lord's enemies with such unruffled calmness. If our dearest friend had been subjected to inhuman treatment, ending in his death, we should have held up the names of his oppressors to the execration of the world. But in the Gospels we look in vain for a strong epithet, or a burst of indignant declamation. This was not because the evangelists were deficient in love to their Lord, but because they had caught something of the spirit of him "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again," and because they had learnt that amid these strange, sad scenes the Divine purpose was being fulfilled, and that he who was the Victim of sinners was the Sacrifice for sin. Hostility to the Lord Jesus Christ is the irrefragable proof of man's antagonism to goodness and truth. The cross of Calvary, stained by his blood, is a witness at once to the depravity of man and the infinite love of God. Hatred to goodness was never more pronounced and desperate, for goodness was now both incarnate and aggressive. It was no longer an abstraction, but a Person; no longer inert, but active. The Jews were generally left unmolested, because they were content to dwell as a peculiar and separate people, without assailing idolatry in others. But our Lord and his disciples endeavoured to make the truth known and felt. Moses said in effect, "Keep yourselves from surrounding peoples, lest ye be defiled." Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The old economy was represented by the temple, which was compact, perfect, kept free from the defiling tread of the heathen; the new was represented by the mustard seed, which would grow under the open sky till it became a tree, and many nations found rest under its shadow. It was partly because Jesus Christ was aggressive in his work that the world rose in arms against him. Let us study the characteristics of some of his foes, and discover their motives, that we may be on our guard against becoming their modern representatives. In the two verses we have chosen we have glimpses of the priests, of the people, and of Pontius Pilate.

I. THE PRIESTS WERE HOSTILE TO OUR LORD FROM PRIDE. They should have been the first to welcome him. As Jews they were familiar with the utterances of the prophets, and as priests they should have known the meaning of the sacrifices they offered. They had heard the preaching of John when he announced Messiah, and they had again and again had evidence respecting the work and teaching of Jesus. But pride summoned prejudice to build up an obstacle impervious to all assaults. Their social dignity refused to recognize this peasant Teacher; their intellectual culture spurned the utterances of the Prophet of Nazareth; and their ecclesiastical prestige held it to be incredible that a carpenter's Son should be "the Light of the world." In our day, too, pride has such disastrous influence. Many admit that Jesus Christ was a pattern of benevolence and of moral purity; but when he declares himself to be an infallible Teacher of Divine truth, when he claims superhuman power, when he demands submission to his will, they rise against him, as those did who once exclaimed,

"For good works we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; because thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

II. PILATE WAS HOSTILE TO OUR LORD FROM POLICY. He saw at a glance the vindictiveness of the priests, and the innocence of him they accused; and, after a few minutes' conversation, frankly said, "I find in him no fault at all." But this was followed by a pitiful struggle and fall. He tried to rid himself of responsibility by sending the Galilean to Herod; he offered to release him, not on the ground of innocence, but as an act of grace, usual at the Passover; he cruelly scourged him, in the hope that this would satisfy the bloodthirsty mob. But when these devices failed, and the people threatened Pilate himself, as a traitor to the emperor, he delivered Jesus to be crucified. He fell through moral cowardice, brought about by former crimes, fearing lest he should lose office and honour unless he fell in with the demands of this brutal crowd. Things seen rule the man who has no faith in things unseen. Personal interests seemed more to him than the life or death of one poor Prisoner. He yielded to clamour; and though at the time he knew it not, he crucified the Christ.

III. THE PEOPLE WERE HOSTILE TO OUR LORD FROM PASSION. "The chief priests moved the people." They would urge that Jesus had been condemned by their own orthodox court, and that it was the duty of every patriot to induce the Romans to support its decisions; and they would further urge that Barabbas, the leader of an insurrection, was a friend of the people and a champion of their liberties, so that he was to be preferred to Jesus of Nazareth. The mass of the people were not intelligently hostile to our Lord. Some knew little of him, and thought that the Sanhedrim was best able to judge of such questions; and others went with the popular current, whether it led them to shout "Hosanna!" or "Crucify him!" Hence they were included with the soldiers in the prayer of our Lord, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."—A. R.

Ver. 33.—*Darkness around the cross.* When we remember who he was who was dying amidst the mockery of the world he came to save, we are no longer incredulous about this statement. The "Light of the world" was in darkness, the Saviour was refusing to save himself, the King of glory was wearing thorns as his crown, and had ascended the cross as his throne. The event referred to in our text is one of many examples of the deep and secret connection existing between the kingdoms of nature and of grace. We believe that the Invisible created the visible, and still acts upon it, producing now and again transmutations of its energies, though never making a break in their continuity, and that when Christ Jesus came forth from the invisible world there was manifested in him a peculiar communication between these two realms. In him was seen the connection which had so often been indicated in the Divine economy, *e.g.* a curse had accompanied man's spiritual fall. Promises of temporal good were associated with moral worth. Images drawn from the "desert" and the "trees" and "rivers" by the prophets found their justification in the truth uttered afterwards by St. Paul, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," etc. The darkening of the sun was the testimony of Nature to her dying Lord; a hint that creation is dependent on him, that Nature is supported by unseen spiritual powers, and that the fate of the earth is involved in the kingdom of God. It is no meaningless portent described here, but an event which had its teaching both immediate and remote. Consider—

I. THE EFFECTS OF THIS DARKNESS ON THOSE AROUND THE CROSS. 1. *This supernatural gloom would increase the solemnity of the event.* As the darkness grew denser, silence would fall on the gibing tongues and every noisy laugh would be stilled; and as the gloom deepened into unearthly night over the busy streets, the open fields, and the sacred temple, many would ask themselves, "What meaneth this?" Carelessness and flippant scepticism are always out of place in view of the cross. If the narrative be mythical, it should at least be rejected intelligently and seriously; for, if it be true, it involves stupendous issues to us all. 2. *It hid his agony from the onlookers.* Faithful friends and, above all, the loving mother stood there till they could bear no more; and God would not suffer them to be tried above bearing, so darkness shrouded the Sufferer. And the foes of our Lord were shut out from a scene too sacred for them to witness. Beyond what was necessary, the well-beloved Son should not be exposed to

their brutal jeers. 3. *It was an admonition to our Lord's foes.* They were readers of Old Testament Scriptures, and knew well how their fathers had been dealt with. They remembered that in the day of their national deliverance darkness had fallen on Jehovah's foes, and had proved the precursor of heavier plagues, and therefore we do not wonder that some went home "beating their breasts," and saying, "What next?" Would that they had turned even then!

II. THE SUGGESTIONS OF THIS DARKNESS TO THE WORLD. 1. *It indicated the going out of the world's Light.* Jesus had plainly declared, "I am the Light of the world;" "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." To some, at least, such words would come back with new meaning and power. To reject Christ is to shut off light from the soul, and become ready for the outer darkness. A Christless world was set forth when the sun was darkened. 2. *It suggested the ignorance of the Gentiles and the malignity of the Jews.* The soldiers were brutal, yet knew not what they did. Pilate, in political scheming, had lost all sense of righteousness and truth, and so in ignorance delivered Jesus to be crucified. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." On the other hand, the Jews had in themselves the fulfilment of the words, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." 3. *It reminded the Church of the mystery of the Atonement.* The death of the Lord Jesus had a Godward as well as a worldward aspect. It was to attract human love, but at the same time to reveal Divine love. When the darkness passed away, and the sun shone upon the cross, the returning light was like the bow of promise after the Flood—a sign of peace between man and God, and a pledge of "the rainbow round about the throne," in the land where all give thanks to God and to the Lamb that was slain.—A. R.

Ver. 43.—*Joseph of Arimathæa.* In comparison with the leading apostles of our Lord Joseph of Arimathæa was not distinguished. He had not the spirituality of St. John, nor the prominence of St. Peter, nor the world-wide influence of St. Paul. We are consciously turning from the generals of Christ's army to contemplate one of the ordinary soldiers; but it was he who, when his natural leaders had fallen, stepped to the front and proved himself a hero. We know but little of Joseph beyond such facts as these: he was a rich man, respected by his countrymen as one who was "good and just;" a member of the Sanhedrim, who refused his consent to the resolution passed that Jesus should be put to death; and a resident in Jerusalem, who, having prepared for himself a new grave, dedicated it to his crucified Lord. We may learn valuable lessons from his courage and fidelity, the more so if we blend together all the references made to him by the evangelists.

I. THAT WE OUGHT TO REFUSE OUR CONSENT TO A WRONG, EVEN THOUGH OUR REFUSAL WILL NOT PREVENT ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT. Except for Nicodemus, Joseph stood alone in protesting against the action resolved on by the council against Jesus. He was, no doubt, strongly urged to yield to the majority, so that the council might appear united in the endeavour to put down One who had disregarded its authority. But although his protest was seemingly powerless, he resolutely persisted in it, and to the last he "did not consent to the counsel and deed of them." He was an example in this to all who conscientiously object to habits and practices which obtain in their own sphere of activity, be they politicians, men of business, or boys and girls at school. But let all such be sure that a real principle is at stake, not a prejudice, and that they are not moved by self-assertion, obstinacy, or pride.

II. THAT BY BRAVELY DOING WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE RIGHT WE EMBOLDEN AND HELP OTHERS. Joseph required courage on the council, and still more now when he went in to Pilate to beg the body of Jesus. So terrible was the hatred felt against Jesus by the chief priests that the procurator himself had trembled before it, and Peter, with his fellow-disciples, had forsaken the Lord. Yet Joseph stepped to the front as a friend of the crucified One, and Nicodemus followed him. All men of decided convictions thus influence others. Thousands thanked God secretly for the stand which Elijah made on Carmel. Multitudes wait to be led aright by those whose character and ability bring responsibility.

III. THAT IF WE GO RIGHT ONWARD IN THE PATH OF DUTY WE SHALL SUCCEED BETTER THAN WE EXPECT. When Joseph undertook his mission he knew that he

might risk his life, or at least his reputation; that he might be called on to pay a heavy and prohibitory ransom as a bribe to the governor; or that he might be refused with scorn and insult. Yet, when he went in boldly to Pilate, to his own amazement, his request was freely granted! Many have had a similar experience: *e.g.* the Israelites when they obeyed the command, "Go forward," and saw the sea divide before their advancing footsteps; and Peter, who followed the angel and found the great gate of the prison open of its own accord. Apply this to typical experiences in a Christian's life.

IV. THAT A CRISIS COMES IN THE HISTORY OF MEN WHICH DETERMINES THEIR WHOLE FUTURE. The crucifixion of Jesus constituted a crisis to Joseph. Under the influence of sorrow and indignation he was prompted to this step, and the future destiny of this secret disciple depended upon his taking it. Such times come to us all. Our spiritual life has not always the same even flow. Occasionally we are strangely, strongly moved to resolve, to speak, or to act, and tremendous issues depend upon our obedience to God-given impulse. If the vessel aground on the harbour bar is not set free when the tide is highest, she will be wrecked in the coming storm.

V. THAT THE MOVING CAUSE OF DECISION FOR GOD IS THE CROSS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. Joseph had listened to the teaching of Jesus, and witnessed his superhuman works, but till now had been a disciple "secretly," for fear of the Jews. That position was a false one, and so long as he was in it he was deficient in gratitude and courage. But when he saw Jesus on the cross he felt as the centurion did when he cried, "Truly this was the Son of God;" and henceforth he was known as the Lord's disciple and servant. Christ's death has been to millions the beginning of new life.

VI. THAT GOD WILL FULFIL HIS PURPOSES WHETHER HIS AVOWED SERVANTS ARE LOYAL TO HIM OR NOT. The twelve were scattered and the Church seemed destroyed, when suddenly there came forth from their former obscurity two secret disciples, who took upon themselves the work which others had left. And in all ages God has his faithful ones who are sometimes unrecognized by the Church; yet, filled with his Spirit, they shall aid in establishing the kingdom of the crucified, and now risen, Christ.—A. R.

Vers. 6—15.—*Barabbas; or, the evil choice.* A strange custom prevailed. To appease the anger of the rabble, and to curry favour with them, Pilate was wont, on the recurrence of certain feasts, to release a prisoner, giving the mob permission to choose who should be the favoured one. At this feast "the multitude went up and began to ask him to do as he was wont to do unto them." Knowing that "for envy the chief priests had delivered him up," he tested the feeling of the multitude by asking them if he should release "the King of the Jews," thus giving them the opportunity of repudiating the deed of the priests. The question hangs as in a balance. The voice of a rabble is called upon to decide the fate of "the Son of man. On that voice hinges (apparently) the course of the work of the world's redemption. The die is cast. The multitude make their election. The choice is proclaimed in a wild, uproarious cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas." So the besotted rabble declare their spirit, their low moral condition, their attitude towards truth and righteousness. Barabbas, we learn, was "a robber," and he was cast into prison "for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder." Thus they "denied the holy and righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto" them. Nothing could more clearly declare the spirit they were of. Sadly and in silence many pure hearts mourned while the rabble gave vent to their evilness, pouring forth the uttermost malignity as a flood to sweep away "the Prince of life." The insensate tools of a corrupt, self-condemned priesthood, they, by yielding all too readily to them who should have guided them into the right way, become identified with "the chief priests" in a choice which for ever brands them with the utmost vileness. The spirit of the people must be judged by their attitude towards Jesus on the one hand, and towards Barabbas on the other; and a word is sufficient to declare it. In the one we behold the Teacher of righteousness, who had endeavoured to enforce the laws of God. He represented truth. To it he bore witness. He denounced evil in thought, in word, in deed. He opened to the feet of the people the path of virtue; he pointed to the gates of the eternal city, and gave men assurance of immortality. Never had the world looked upon so perfect an embodiment of pure goodness; never will it look upon his like until he himself appear again

and every eye beholds him. The other is the embodiment of evil. His name is the synonym of it. The one name men dare not assume from its loftiness; the other they would not from its lowness. But this rabble-host chooses the evil one, and so declares its spirit is in accord with his. It is self-condemned. How painfully we read: 1. The perilous influence which unscrupulous leaders may exert over an undisciplined, untutored mob. 2. How possible it is for the human heart so to deceive itself that the highest representatives of the purest system of truth and morals may be debased into an alliance with the most corrupt and degraded, and may prostitute the holiest functions to the most evil ends. High priests of God may lead men to the service of the devil. 3. The sad consequences of (1) a blinded intelligence, (2) an undisciplined moral nature, (3) a corrupt prejudice. High priests and people have their way. "Their voices prevailed." And Pilate, moved with fear, and evidently against his convictions of right, "to content the multitude," "released him . . . whom they asked for; but Jesus he delivered up to their will." Thus the world to-day demands its Barabbas and rejects Jesus. Truth, goodness, charity, patience, heavenly mindedness—all that is pure and good—is sacrificed, and by "the multitude" still evil is preferred, and they, alas! are "content."—G.

Vers. 16—32.—*The crucifixion: the human deed.* To the contemplation of that supreme fact in history, around which the thoughts, the hearts, of men gather more and more, we are directed by the few sad, solemn words, "Pilate . . . delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified." The preliminary incidents are minutely related. They describe the most solemn mockery ever perpetrated. The scourging first. He is stripped to the waist, his hands tied behind him; his bent back is beaten with leathern thongs weighted at the ends with bits of lead or sharpened bone. Bleeding, he is led within the court, "the Prætorium," where the whole cohort of soldiers vent their ingenuity in exposing their Victim to ridicule. They cast a purple-dyed military cloak over him; with their hard hands they twist twigs of *nâbk*, with its long, hard, sharp spikes or thorns, into a mock-crown, and press it down upon his fever-heated brow. In his yielding hand they thrust a reed, and bow their knees in mock submission and homage, and with coarse gibes hail him "King of the Jews." Snatching the reed from his hand, they beat him with it on his bleeding head; they strike him with their fists or with rods; and in the direst indignity spit upon him. Then, "wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe," he is led out. To this uncomplaining Sufferer—this smitten and forsaken One—Pilate calls the attention of the multitude with words which, like those he wrote, float on through the ages, bearing their different message as the listening ears differed—"Ecce homo!" The echoing cry from the mingled voices of "the chief priests and the officers" arose above all others, "Crucify, crucify!" A miserable squabble between Pilate and the Jews ends in his "Behold your King!" and their reply, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him! . . . We have no king but Cæsar." In the temple Judas is casting down "the thirty pieces of silver," making confession, in a repentance all too late, "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood," and his agonized spirit seeks a vain relief in a hasty destruction of a life he cannot support. Jesus, "bearing the cross," is led away to be crucified, when, sinking, exhausted with suffering, beneath its weight, he is relieved by its being laid on "one Simon of Cyrene"—the first in a long line of lowly cross-bearers who endure the shame for Jesus' sake. "And they bring him unto the place Golgotha." One only spark of humanity is left. "They offered him wine mingled with myrrh." Then upon a cross—symbol of the uttermost degradation and shame, and more than a symbol of the uttermost suffering—they stretched his sacred, quivering limbs, piercing his hands and his feet with rough nails. Thus "*they crucified him.*" Then from out of the most indescribable agony of body broke forth the gentle murmur of a loving heart in modest prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Ah! they crushed, they broke that heart; but it sent forth only the sweet fragrance of its love, as a crushed flower its perfume. But he is not alone. "With him they crucify two robbers, one on his right hand and one on his left." Thus is he "numbered with the transgressors." "Racked by the extremest pain, and covered with every shame which men were wont to heap on the greatest criminals; forsaken and denied by his disciples; no sigh escaped his lips, no cry of agony, no bitter or faltering word; only a prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies. They had acted in

blindness, under the influence of religious and political fanaticism; for, to use St. Paul's words, had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Surely they could not know, or it would not have to be recorded in one sentence: "And they crucify him, *and part his garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take.*" So hard, so insensible! In presence of the central fact in the world's history, men gamble!

Here we must find our lessons, in the contrasted intensity of interest in human salvation which is shown from above, and that careless, blind indifference which marks men "before whose eyes Jesus Christ [is] openly set forth crucified." The world must see itself represented in the actors on that dread evening; and each of us may see himself in one or other of the many surrounding "*the Man*" on that day of darkness, doom, and death. Let each bring himself into presence of that cross—the true judgment-seat—of Christ, and there test his heart, and try and prove his life. And further, let each one learn how his hand is not wanting among those rude hands that smote that tender flesh; nor his words from those that fell on that quick ear; nor his sins from those that burdened that too heavy-weighted heart.

"Our sins of spite were part of those that day,
Whose cruel whips and thorns did make him smart;
Our lusts were those that tired him in the way;
Our want of love was that which pierced his heart:
And still when we forget or slight his pain,
We crucify and torture him again."

G.

Vers. 33—41.—*The crucifixion: the Divine words.* Seven words are counted by them who now treasure his sayings, as spoken by Jesus on the cross. Each evangelist contributes his portion towards the little perfect stock.

I. The first was A WORD OF PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS, itself a forgiveness. "I forgive them: do thou, O Father, forgive." It was a word of excuse for them who did it ignorantly and in unbelief. "They see only a malefactor: open their eyes that they may see and know." If the prayer may be offered for them who, with wicked hands, crucified the Lord of glory, because they did it ignorantly, learn we that such a prayer may be offered, and surely will be heard, for all ignorant, blinded ones who, in sinning against the Lord, are sinners against their own souls. In proportion as we sin wilfully, having knowledge of the truth and of what we do, we put ourselves further and further away from the possibility of forgiveness. How true is it that men to-day sin, not knowing what they do! This prayer covers all sin, for no one knows truly and fully what he does when he sins against Christ.

II. The second word is A WORD OF PROMISE IN RESPONSE TO PRAYER AND CONFESSION. The time was brief; the last moments of the twelfth hour were hurrying past. In the heart of one of the malefactors some early teaching remained to quicken the conscience into life; and the punishment of crime was working its right effect. "We indeed justly . . . we receive the due reward of our deeds." The word which passed the sacred lips, unmoistened with the stupefying wine, were words of life and healing and promise in response to the prayer, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." What faith is here! Faith in the kingdom, in the coming, in the readiness to hear! "Jesus" may not have had the same meaning to him it has to us. The reply to a dying, penitent thief has been a fountain of life to many. "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

III. A third word was A WORD OF TENDER, FILIAL LOVE. The languid, bloodshot, half-closed eyes turned, and "Jesus . . . saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved." The fountain of love was not stayed; the holy heart was well-nigh breaking, yet it beat truly in all filial affection. From out of his great suffering he thinks of her, and thinks with fervent love. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured!" He is still her Son, henceforth to be represented in the "son" who is now to regard her as "mother." But he makes provision for her future. Ere those lips which spoke so often to the disciple "whom he loved" were closed, he uttered one last word to him, revealing the deep thought of the Sufferer's heart, and committing to him a sacred charge he would entrust only to one "whom he loved"—"Behold thy mother." It is all beauti-

fully human; but as all human deeds, when they are true and beautiful, approach the Divine, so was this beautifully Divine. It was enough. A wish from that heart and those dried lips was sacred. "From that hour the disciple took her unto his own home"—took her with the sword piercing through her soul.

IV. A fourth word is FROM THE VERY ABYSS OF SUFFERING—perhaps from a greater depth than any word arose that ever escaped from the lips of man. Darkness was over the land; darkness was over the pure Sufferer's soul. The words present the deepest of mysteries; we cannot open it. Was it, as has been suggested, the effect of the combination of profound mental anguish with the well-nigh intolerable pangs of dissolution, rendered all the more natural and inevitable in the case of One whose feelings were so deep, tender, and real; whose moral consciousness was so pure, and whose love was so intense? Had his abiding conviction of fellowship with God for the moment given way under the pressure of extreme bodily and mental suffering? Was it a mere passing feeling, *as though* he were no longer sustained by the power of the Divine life? Surely more than this. Ah! who can know? It is only as we descend to these depths that we can understand how dark, how cold, how sad they are. Mere words can never convey an idea of suffering. The bitterness of this cup he only knows who drinks it. *What* is the forsaking by the God to whom he still clings—"My God, my God"—and "why" is he forsaken, remain for us depths into whose darkness we may peer but cannot fathom.

V. A fifth word is FROM THE POOR FEVERED FRAME. Fainting from loss of blood, from acute pain, from unrelieved suffering. "I thirst." Truly he may say, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." The former cry ascended to heaven; this sinks upon the earth. A moistened sponge on a hyssop rod brought him temporary relief, and brought him strength sufficient to utter—

VI. A sixth word, uttered with "a loud" (was it a triumphant?) "voice," declaring, "It is finished." Yea, all is finished, notwithstanding the efforts of wicked men to prevent it. They unconsciously wrought out that which the Divine "hand and counsel foreordained to come to pass." "It is finished;" yea, Jesus' work is finished. The great end is reached. The last supreme act, or consummation of the continuous act of that life which was "one offering of himself," is now in process of completion. So far as relates to the toil, and service, and sacrifice, and suffering of earth, all is finished; and the last act of the conscious life, the last breath of the living frame, the last word of the lips of truth, seal the whole past.

VII. And in a seventh word, with one supreme effort to that Father from whom he seemed momentarily separated, he yields up himself—"gave up his spirit." Now are the words fulfilled, "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father."—G.

Vers. 42—47.—*The entombment.* The sabbath hurried on—the day of rest. Joseph of Arimathæa, "a councillor of honourable estate, who also himself was looking for the kingdom of God," begged permission of Pilate to have the body of Jesus for interment. Pilate, being satisfied of the death of Jesus, "granted the corpse to Joseph." Then with tender hands he wrapped the body in a linen cloth and laid it in a tomb; "and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb." Now the work is complete. The human rage is satisfied. The voice of the accuser is silent. The Divine condescension is perfect. It could descend no lower. The grave is the goal of human weakness. It is the lowest step; then begins the upward ascent. The humiliation being complete, the exaltation begins. The grave is really the pathway to glory and honour. Jesus, who has sanctified every path of life, now sanctifies the grave. He has withdrawn the sting from death; he dissipates the darkness from the tomb. And though we cannot desire the grave, yet it is no longer the repulsive, loathsome place it had ever been. Christ in the tomb of Earth plainly speaks to us many lessons.

I. Concerning him, it teaches us that NO DESCENT WAS TOO GREAT FOR HIM TO MAKE IN HIS LOVING SERVICE TO THE CHILDREN OF MEN. He who stooped so low as to be born in a manger, sharing his first bed with lowing oxen, stoops lower still in making ready for the children of men their last sleeping-place. He who washed the feet of his disciples shared the grave with guilty men. Forasmuch as they whom he was not

ashamed to call brethren must needs die and be buried, "he also himself in like manner partook of the same;" as "it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren," he refused not this.

II. Concerning the grave, it is A SANCTIFICATION OF IT. We need not be ashamed to descend into this valley of humiliation, for our "Head" has gone before. If we can endure the sufferings of our cross, we can despise the shame of our tomb. We need not fear to die, for he hath brought "to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil;" nor need we fear to lie down in the tomb, for Jesus lay there.

> "'Tis now a cell, where angels use
> To come and go with heavenly news,
> And in the ears of mourners say,
> 'Come, see the place where Jesus lay.'"

It is not the final goal of the human feet, as we shall soon learn. Its bolts can be withdrawn; its seal can be broken; its stone can be rolled away. The grave may be the pathway to the throne.

III. But it brings home to our hearts CHRIST'S CLAIM UPON US FOR OUR UNDYING GRATITUDE. Never shall we repay that debt. Even the bitterest cup he will drink for us; the most laborious service he will undertake for us; the uttermost humiliation he will endure for us. We owe all to him in the constitution of our life and its surrounding conditions; we owe no less the entire redemption of our life from all evils; we owe the smoothing of the rough places of life, our uplifting above the pains of life, and we owe the sanctification and perfecting of life. Truly we owe all. Only by reverent faith, by lowly service, by growing love, can we acknowledge our deep-abiding debt. This we may perfect by a calm and trustful yielding up our life to our Father on high, both in the daily dying to self and in a final committal of all to him, breathing out our life into his hands.

> "So, buried with our Lord, we'll close our eyes
> To the decaying world, till angels bid us rise."

G.

Vers. 1—20.—*The second trial.* I. IT ELICITED THE INNOCENCE OF JESUS. Charges were made that he had excited sedition through the country, had prohibited the Roman tribute, and had claimed royalty. The last only had any show of plausibility in it. Jesus admitted his kingship, but declared it in immortal words to be the sovereignty of truth over the consciences of men. Reading the narratives of the other evangelists, we gain a clear impression of the innocence of Jesus, as it was exhibited to all who looked on, and defied the inventions of malice. Especially is that innocence reflected from the bearing of Pilate. To him our Lord replied when he asked for information; but met the accusations of the priests with a silence equally significant. And Pilate was struck dumb with conviction. Character is self-sufficiency. It is "centrality; the impossibility of being displaced or overset." Words will not prove innocence; it speaks louder in silence. Passion and unreason illustrate it. We are generally more anxious to avoid misconstruction than to act as we think right. Jesus teaches us to be servants of the truth, and to be indifferent to the constructions of our enemies. God and the angels are the true spectators of our actions; and the judgment of posterity will reflect the judgment of God.

II. IT ELICITED HIS PERFECT LOYALTY. There must come a time when the truths we have professed will demand to be sealed by our action. Christ had taught men to "seek first the kingdom of God;" to postpone everything to duty; to take heed to the light within; to esteem the soul of greater worth than the whole world. His conduct now falls into harmony with his words; and perfect music flows through the world from both. He preferred the fulfilment of duty to the preservation of life.

III. IT ELICITED HUMAN INJUSTICE AND VICE. Socrates told his judges at Athens that it was they who were really on their trial. So it was the Sanhedrim, and also Pilate, who were on this occasion tried and condemned. The ages have since been reverberating their damnation. Expediency and worldly favour were in one scale; right, innocence, truth, in the other. The former dipped. Worldly authority was

opposed to spiritual majesty; the former struck a blow at the latter, which recoiled with Divine effect. The condemnation of Christ was an outrage upon the conscience of the world, both Jewish and pagan. Pilate's illustrious countryman, Cicero, had taught with enthusiasm that the useful and the right form a unity; that the useful can never be put before the right without defeating the social good ('De Officiis,' iii.). An action can never be useful unless it is first right. Here was a great reversal of that order. That Jesus should die is expedient, said the Sanhedrim; but not right, said their conscience. On other grounds, Pilate took the same position; while his wife, like a second conscience, would have restrained him. In similar crises of personal experience, let us remember that to subordinate right to expediency is to condemn the Lord of life afresh.

IV. IT ILLUSTRATES THE METHODS OF PROVIDENCE. When innocence suffers and violence prevails, the foundations of moral order seem to be shaken, and the righteous exclaim, "What shall we do?" The face of Providence seems obscured. But God is One who hideth himself. What we call the evil in nature may be the disguise of his wisdom; and not less does he conceal himself behind the evil of men. Here the greatest evil on their part gave occasion for the greatest good.

V. IT ILLUSTRATES THE ILLUSIVENESS OF APPEARANCES. Jesus is insulted by Roman soldiers; himself the spiritual Emperor of mankind. He is mocked with a semblance of royalty; the mocking expresses an eternal fact. "Ridicule is the test of truth." Beware of mockery and insolence; we may be defying the Spirit of God. Seek below the praise and the blame of men, their applause and their abuse, for the eternal fact. Judge not of Christianity by what men say of it, but by itself. Estimate not its divinity by the worldly honour that attaches to it; but rather by the dishonour of the many, and the loyalty and life of the few. Truth and meekness, truth and spiritual force,—these are mightier than all falsehood and scorn.—J.

VERS. 21—32.—*The Crucifixion.* I. THERE MAY BE A BLESSING IN ENFORCED SERVICE. Simon the Cyrenian is raised into the light of history; perhaps to teach us this. No nobler honour for the Christian than to reflect, "I have been called to bear the cross." And for some to reflect, "I was forced into carrying the cross I would have refused, or left on the ground." So with that other Simon, surnamed Peter.

II. PAIN IS RATHER TO BE STRUGGLED WITH THAN ARTIFICIALLY SUPPRESSED. We seek anodynes for our troubles. Jesus teaches us to react against them by the force of faith. In the hour of duty we are to seek presence, not absence, of mind; to collect our faculties, not to distract them.

III. WHAT IS PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE MAY BE MORALLY IMPOSSIBLE. Christ could have come down from the cross in the former sense, *could not* in the latter. He presents the ideal of suffering service for us, and the revelation of God's ways. There may be things which God cannot do, in our way of speaking, because he knows they are not well to be done. We, at least, cannot save ourselves at the expense of duty, and must be content to appear foolish or impotent to many. Suffering and salvation are facts eternally wedded and at one.—J.

VERS. 33—39.—*Death of Jesus.* I. THERE MAY FOR A TIME BE AN ECLIPSE FOR THE FAITHFUL. "No light!" There is an extremity of trial in these words. No hope! The very sun of life seems extinguished, and all worth of existence vanished. Reason can find no foothold in this darkness.

II. YET THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE DARKNESS. Out of it comes the cry of faith. The first words of a long-remembered psalm break from the lips of Jesus; a psalm that rises out of the minor into the major key, from the darkness into the blaze of prophetic vision. Doubtless in that moment the soul of Jesus passed swiftly through the whole scale of that psalmist's experience, and rose into joy upon the wings of thanksgiving.

III. MAY THE TERMINUS OF LIFE AND OF SERVICE BE IDENTICAL! We may breathe this prayer before the cross of Christ. Our work finished, what need have we to tarry? Pericles, in his oration over those who fell for Athens' good, says that, devoting their lives which had been usefully passed in peace on the field, their happiness and their life ended at the same moment. As Christians, our ideal is service, terminable only with life. "Too busy with the crowded hour to fear to live or die." May we

"Obey the voice at eve obey'd at prime;
Lowly faithful, banish fear,
Right onward drive unarm'd;
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
And every wave is charm'd."

IV. FINIS CORONAT OPUS. "Many signs showed that he who died upon the cross was the Son of God." "Regard the end." It reflects its light upon the whole course from its beginning. What deep conviction of sin, of righteousness, of judgment; of the frailty of man, the power and wisdom and the love of God, roots itself in the cross of Jesus! It is an end which is a beginning.—J.

Vers. 40—47.—*The burial.* I. FAITH THRIVES IN SORROW. Remoter disciples draw near, and secret disciples come forth, in the hour of humiliation and defeat. The sun sets, but not their hope; and the stars rise, but their faith is earlier up.

II. LOVE SURVIVES ALL LOSS. Its burning ray, like that of a hidden gem, flashes out in the gloom. The nobleness of Christ had taught them to master selfishness and despair. His form was enshrined in the "amber of memory." They who had been all eye when he was present, were all recollection now that he was gone.

III. GRIEFS ARE CERTAIN, JOYS COME BY SURPRISE. It was certain that Jesus was dead; and none expected his resurrection. There is change, not loss, in the kingdom of the spirit. God takes away a good to restore it in a new form. Disappointment vacates the heart for higher blessings. His revelation is in light and shadow.—J.

Vers. 1—15. Parallel passages: Matt. xxvii. 1, 2, 11—26; Luke xxiii. 1—7, 13—24; John xviii. 28; xix. 16.—*Judicial processes.* I. JESUS SENT FROM THE SANHEDRIM TO PILATE—FROM THE JEWISH TRIAL TO THE ROMAN TRIAL. 1. *The first stage of the Jewish trial.* After the arrest at Gethsemane, our Lord was conducted back to the city, across the Kidron to the palace of the ex-high priest Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the actual high priest that same year. The influence of this functionary was very great; his age, astuteness, riches, power, perhaps presidency of the Sanhedrim—all contributed to it. In answer to the inquiries of Annas about our Lord's disciples and doctrine, the Saviour appealed to his teaching in the synagogue, in the temple, always in public; and referred him to his auditors on these occasions. This reply was construed into disrespect towards the ex-high priest, and resulted in the first act of violence, apart from the arrest itself; for one of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of his hand or with a rod (*ῥάπισμα*), as rendered in the margin. This was the *first* of the *three* stages of the Jewish trial. Here we remark (1) that both Jews and Gentiles took part in arresting Jesus and conducting him to the high priest. "The band and the captain," or *chiliarch*, that is, tribune, formed the Roman or Gentile element; while the "officers of the Jews" composed the Jewish element. Thus from first to last "the Gentiles and the people of Israel" combined against the Lord and his Anointed. The mention (2) of both Annas and Caiaphas as high priests by St. Luke (iii. 2) tallies with the fact that, owing to the arbitrary interference of the Romans, there might be several high priests alive at the same time; that is, those who had held the office and been deposed, and the person actually exercising the office. Of course, according to the Law of Moses, there could only be one high priest at a time, and that rightful high priest was the hereditary representative of Aaron. Even in the Roman period the high priesthood had not become a yearly office, though the frequent depositions and displacements occasioned many changes and much confusion. Thus Annas had been deposed in the twelfth year of our era by Valerius Gratus, the immediate predecessor of Pilate in the procuratorship of Judæa; yet, so great was his influence, that he had his own son Eleazar, his son-in-law Caiaphas, and four other sons subsequently appointed to the high priesthood. (3) The preliminary inquiry before Annas might elicit information with regard to the extent of discipleship, and so of sympathy among the rulers, as in the case of Nicodemus, that might be calculated on; not only so, it would result in a prejudgment of the case through the shrewdness and influence of the ex-high priest. Further, a higher object—an object most probably not dreamt of by either Annas or Caiaphas—was antitypical. We read in Lev. xvi. that on the great day of Atonement, Aaron laid both his hands upon the head of the live, or scape, goat, and

confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat; and sent him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat bore upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited. Similarly, the high priests concerned in this trial were, in the exercise of an analogous function, pronouncing sin to be upon the head of the Victim before he was led forth to crucifixion. 2. *The second stage of the Jewish trial.* The second stage of the Jewish trial consisted of an informal investigation before Caiaphas and a committee or commission of the Sanhedrim. In order that a conviction might be obtained, it was necessary to secure two witnesses at least to depose to some definite charge. But while the testimony of some was irrelevant, that of others was self-contradictory. At length two volunteered to testify in the case. For this testimony, such as it was they were obliged to travel back over a period of some three years. Then, fixing on certain words of our Lord at the first Passover after entering on his public ministry, in reference to the temple, they either misunderstood them, or misinterpreted and consequently misrepresented them. The words in question were constructed into contempt of the temple; this contempt, if fully proved, would have constituted a capital charge, just as, in the case of the protomartyr Stephen, the charge was that he ceased not to speak "blasphemous words against this holy place and the Law." But this charge was not substantiated; the evidence broke down in consequence of the disagreement of the witnesses. Our Lord had said, "*Destroy* (λύσατε) this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (ἐγερῶ, a word quite suitable to resurrection, but no way appropriate to rebuilding); "but he spake of the temple of his body." One of the witnesses perverted this into, "I *will* destroy (καταλύσω) this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build (οἰκοδομήσω) another made without hands" (ch. xiv. 58); the other testified, "I *can* destroy (δύναμαι καταλῦσαι) the temple of God, and build (οἰκοδομῆσαι) it in three days" (Matt. xxvi. 61). Accordingly, St. Mark adds, "Neither so did their witness agree." What our Lord had spoken in a figurative sense they applied literally; for *upraising* they substituted *building*; what was really a promise they twisted into a threat; if they themselves destroyed their temple, he promised replacement. The temple had long been distinguished by the Shechinah glory or visible presence of Jehovah, yet was doomed to destruction; the human body of Jesus, in which dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily, when raised up would supersede the inhabitation of God in the literal temple. 3. *Pretence of legality.* What now can the members of the Sanhedrim present on this occasion do? They wish to keep up the semblance of law and justice, but the evidence has signally failed. The condemnation of Jesus is a foregone conclusion, in whatever way it is to be effected, and still the appearance of legality must be maintained. A clever thought occurs to the mind of the high priest, and in default of evidence he resorts to the desperate expedient of causing Jesus to criminate himself. Accordingly, standing up into the midst (εἰς μέσον), and thus passing from his seat to some conspicuous position, as St. Mark graphically describes it, he adjured Jesus most solemnly to declare if he were indeed the Messiah, that is, "the Christ, the son of the Blessed," viz. if he claimed to be not only the expected Messiah, but also to be a Divine person—the Son and equal of God. Whereupon followed the avowal by which he criminated himself, and gave ground of condemnation. Though he had acknowledged the confession of Peter to the same effect, and even commended it; though he had accepted the same or an equivalent title on the occasion of his public entry into Jerusalem, he had not as yet publicly claimed it. Now, however, he avowed it in the most public manner, in the presence of the high priest and members of council. According to St. Mark, this avowal was expressed by "I am;" according to St. Matthew by "Thou hast said;" while in St. Luke's report of the third Jewish trial, the two are combined with a trifling variation, namely, "Ye say that I am." 4. *Hypocrisy in high places.* If our Lord had remained silent, they would have probably charged him with imposture; now that he confessed his Messiahship and future exaltation, they proceeded to condemn him for blasphemy. The council sought nothing further; they wanted only evidence against him —something to inculpate, not to exculpate, him. They did not wish to hear the grounds of his claim; they wanted no explanation. With the Jews the setting up of a claim to any Divine attribute was regarded as blasphemy; the claim of Christ, according to their opinion of him, came under the Mosaic law of blasphemy. And now the hypocrisy of the high priest is something shocking. As the highest ecclesiastical functionary of the

nation, and the principal officer of its great council, his duty surely was to investigate the confession and claim of one who professed to embody the hopes of the nation, and to scrutinize the true nature of that claim, the real meaning of it, the grounds on which it rested, the reasons of it, and the evidence for it. On the contrary, he grasped with avidity at the prospect of a condemnation. His sense of justice was no higher than his sense of religion; on anything that might tend to explain, or extenuate, or exculpate, he shut his eyes and closed his ears. But what is still more disgusting in the conduct of this ecclesiastic was his abominable hypocrisy. He feigned abhorrence at the crime which he was so anxious to establish. Glad as he was to have this constructive crime of blasphemy to allege, he pretended the most extreme horror by tearing his garments from the neck to the waist. Here, indeed, was "spiritual wickedness in high places." 5. *The third stage of the Jewish trial.* This was the more formal trial; it was held at dawn of day, and in the presence of the whole Sanhedrim (ὅλον τὸ συνέδριον). The previous trial, being held at night, was invalid; besides, it had been conducted only by a representation—an influential representation or committee of the Sanhedrim, consisting, it is probable, mainly of the priests. At the present stage the whole council was present, with its three constituent parts—elders, chief priests, and scribes. This is the meeting of council mentioned in the first verse of the present chapter, and in the parallel verses of St. Matthew and St. Luke, viz. xxvii. 1 of the former, and xxii. 66 of the latter. The object was to ratify a predetermined decree. They also found it necessary for their purpose to change the charge, and consequently also the venue. It was more, perhaps, with the object of consummating than of ratifying their sentence that this meeting was hastily summoned. The judicial murder which they had decided on was not in their power to carry out. Had it been so, stoning would have been the death-penalty. A deputation of an influential and imposing kind waited upon Pilate, to whom the Prisoner is now transferred, either hoping, through the facile condescension of the procurator, to get the case remitted to themselves for execution, or to devolve it on the Roman governor.

II. THE ROMAN TRIAL, OR TRIAL BEFORE PILATE. 1. *Incidents leading to crucifixion.* Crucifixion was a mode of death unknown to Jewish law, and unpractised by the Jewish people. It was fearfully familiar as a mode of execution among the Romans—this we learn from their writings; as, "Thou shalt not feed the crows on the cross," of Horace; "It makes no difference to Theodore whether he rots on the ground or aloft, *i.e.* on the cross," of Cicero; also from such expressions as the following:—"Go, soldier, get ready the cross;" "Thou shalt go to the cross." It was not, however, till the Roman period that it was introduced into Judæa. It was only after Jew and Roman had come into collision, and had taken respectively the position of conqueror and conquered, of sovereign and subject, that this cruel mode of death found its way into the Holy Land. And yet, strange to say, long years before the Romans had risen to pre-eminence and power, and centuries before Judæa had been catalogued as a province of their vast empire, it had been foretold that Messiah's death would be by crucifixion. We refer to the well-known prediction in the twenty-second psalm, where we read, "They pierced my hands and my feet" ("piercing my hands and my feet," according to Perowne; "geknebelt ['fastened,' as the extremities were in crucifixion] meine Hände und Füsse," according to Ewald). Before that prophecy was fulfilled a long series of events had to be evolved; dynasties had to rise and fall; a kingdom had to pass through the hands of many successive rulers and become extinct; an empire, the greatest of ancient times, had to rise to unprecedented power; that kingdom had to be absorbed, and become a province of that empire. In a word, Judæa had to become tributary and Rome triumphant before the event could take place. The facts referred to changed the complexion of our Lord's trial. Of the many charges they might have manufactured, such as violation of the sabbath law, contempt of oral tradition, purification of the temple, heretical teaching, or esoteric doctrines of a dangerous kind, they elected that of blasphemy, grounded on his own confession of divinity, or of being "the Son of God;" while he strengthens the admission by foretelling that, *besides* (πλήν) the verbal avowal, they would have ocular proof when they should see him—the Son of man as well as Son of God—"sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." This admission was, as we have seen, extorted after the suborned witnesses had entirely broken down, and the two best of

them had shamefully perverted and prevaricated; but, notwithstanding, it was seized by the high priest from his false notions of Messiah as an acknowledgment of the charge preferred. Stoning was the mode of death which the Law appointed for that crime; but though the Jews could pass sentence, they could not execute it. One of the signs of Messiah's advent thus stared them in the face; "the sceptre had [thus] departed from Judah, and a lawgiver from between his feet." Accordingly, they were obliged to have recourse to the Roman procurator, Pilate; but then they knew that he would not interfere with their religious controversies. What now is to be done? They take new ground; they change the accusation from blasphemy to treason, in order to subject their Prisoner to the secular power. 2. *Charges preferred.* The charge was really constructive treason, but their indictment as first advanced consisted of three articles. They charged him (1) with perverting the nation; (2) with forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar; and (3) with affirming that he himself was Christ, a King. Pilate pays no attention to the first and second, and only notices the third. His mode of procedure was in accordance with the Roman respect for law and sense of justice. He refused to confirm the sentence of the Sanhedrim, and proceeded to hold a private and preliminary examination (*ἀνακρίσις*: as we read in Luke xxiii. 14, *ἀνακρίνας*), having removed Jesus into the Prætorium, or governor's palace. This examination Pilate conducted in person, as he had no *quæstor*; and was satisfied of the harmlessness of the title of King by the Saviour's explanation that his kingdom was not of this world. Pilate was convinced of our Lord's innocence, but hearing Galilee mentioned, he at once caught at the idea of shifting the responsibility, or at least sharing it with Herod Antipas, and at the same time of conciliating the tetrarch by an act of courtesy; and in consequence remitted (*ἀνέπεμψεν*) the accused to Herod's as the higher court, or technically from the court *apprehensionis* to the court *originis*. Herod, having been disappointed by seeing no miracle performed by the reputed miracle-worker, and dissatisfied by his dignified silence, sent him back to Pilate, arrayed in a white or gorgeous (*λαμπρὰν*, from *λάω*, to see) robe, thus caricaturing his candidateship or claim to royalty, and thereby hinting to Pilate that instead of a punishable offence, it was rather a matter of contempt and ridicule. Pilate is perplexed, and no wonder; his vacillation now begins to take effect. He sins against his sense of justice as a Roman magistrate; he sins against conscience; he proposes a most unjust and unlawful compromise, namely, the chastisement (*παιδεύσας*) of an innocent person. But this concession, unrighteous as it was, did not satisfy; and again he tried to avail himself of the custom of releasing one at the feast in compliance with the clamour of the multitude; but the cry of the populace, instigated by the agents of the priests, was, "Not this man, but Barabbas." By a symbolic act, this weak judge seeks to transfer the guilt to the infuriate mob, and still clinging to the hope that the multitude would be content with a compromise, he delivered Jesus to be scourged, and that, not with the rods of the lictors, but with the horrible scourge tipped with bone and lead (*φραγελλώσας*). 3. *Retrospect at the indignities.* The first act of insult and violence was, as we have seen, during the inquisition by Annas, who sought to entangle him by insidious interrogatories, when one of the officers struck Jesus with his hand or with a rod (*ῥάπισμα*), as St. John informs us. The next was in the course of the second Jewish trial, which was conducted by Caiaphas, and by which the confession of being "the Christ, the Son of God," was extorted. In describing this sad scene, no less than five forms of beating are mentioned by the Evangelists Matthew and Mark and Luke. The latter has (1) *δέροντες*, properly to skin or flay, and then beat severely; (2) *ἔτυπτον*, imperfect, they kept smiting him; (3) *παίσας*, to inflict blows or strike with violence; St. Matthew has (4) *ἐκολάφισαν*, they buffeted with clenched fist; and (5) *ἐῤῥάπισαν*, they struck with open palms or rods; while St. Mark has *ῥαπίσμασιν . . . ἔβαλλον*, they received him with blows of the hands or strokes of rods. It was on this occasion they did spit in his face and blindfold him, derisively bidding him "prophesy, who is it that smote thee?" with many other vilifications, in some or all of which the members of the council, as well as the menials of the court, took part. We now hasten from such a disgraceful scene—from the scornful spitting, the shameful scoffing, the savage smiting, the ribald revilings, the shocking cruelties, and the savage barbarities of the miscreants of the Sanhedrim—and pass on to his treatment by Herod. He joins with his men of war in setting him at nought and mocking him, and arrays him in a gorgeous robe, as if to caricature

his pretensions, or, as some think, a bright or white robe, as though in mimicry of his candidature for royal honours. Thus sent back to Pilate, he is scourged by the procurator's command. The very thought of that scourging makes the blood run cold and the heart sick. All that preceded, cruel as it was and devilish as it was, caused but little of bodily pain as compared with the scourging. He had indeed suffered dreadfully, in both body and mind. He had been betrayed by one disciple, denied by another; three slept when they should have sympathized; at length all forsook him and fled. He has been hurried from one tribunal to another—from the Sanhedrim to the Roman governor, from the Roman governor to the Tetrarch of Galilee, and from Herod back to Pilate. See him the night preceding in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the midst of his agony, when perspiration bathed his body, and that bloody sweat trickled in big drops down to the ground. See him now in the place where he is scourged, cruelly scourged, his face marred, his body mangled, the quivering flesh fearfully torn with the bits of lead and bone plaited into the leathern thongs, while he is still barbarously smitten, and savage stripes inflicted on him. See him again, surrounded by a band of ruffian soldiers—provincial or rather Roman soldiers, to their disgrace be it recorded—who plait a crown of *nâbk* thorns, and press it down so that the sharp and prickly points more painfully pierce his temples and lacerate his bleeding brows. While his body is still smarting from the wounds made by the scourging, while the blood is still running down on every side from the thorn-crown, while insult is being heaped on insult and added to injury, they smite his sacred head with a reed as if to gash that head more brutally, and leave the thorns yet deeper in the skin. One other act in that bloody tragedy precedes and prepares for the crucifixion itself. Instead of the gorgeous or white robe with which Herod and his men of war had, in their bitter mockery, clothed him, the Roman soldiers of the governor arrayed him with the military scarlet or purple war-cloak, mimicking the imperial purple. He is stripped a second time—the mock-garments are pulled off him, and his own put on; and thus all his wounds are opened afresh and their pain renewed. During the mock-coronation, in which the leaves of thorn burlesqued the imperial wreath of laurel, the reed the royal sceptre, and the soldier's cloak the emperor's purple, they spat upon him, they smote him on the head, they bowed the knee in mockery, and they scoffed him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 4. *Pilate's last effort to release him.* Once more Pilate makes another effort to prevent the crucifixion of Christ. Though scourging was usually the frightful preparation for crucifixion, yet Pilate is most anxious to proceed no further. He seeks to have it regarded, perhaps, in the light of trial by torture without anything worthy of death being elicited, or perhaps he wishes to have it accepted as a sufficient substitute for crucifixion. With some such purpose—a purpose, as it is generally and properly understood, of commiseration—he exhibits the Saviour in that unspeakably sad and sorrowful plight—worn, wan, and wasted; his features here befouled with spitting, there besmeared with blood; his face disfigured by blows—marred more than any man's and his countenance more than the sons of men; while blood-drops trickle from many a wound down on the tesselated pavement. He calls their attention to this woe-begone and most pitiable spectacle, saying, in words that have thrilled many a heart, and shall thrill thousands in the generations that may be yet to come, "Behold the Man!" But in vain. The only response was a louder, sterner, fiercer cry: "Crucify him! crucify him!" He deserves to die, "because he made himself the Son of God." Moved to the inmost depths of his being, Pilate struggles on for his release; but, amid the loud clamour for the Victim's blood, there are ominous growls that boded a possible impeachment on the charge of treason against the governor himself. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend;" "We have no king but Cæsar." Shame upon those bloodthirsty hypocrites who could say so; though they hated Cæsar and all his belongings, and were real rebels at heart! And shame upon that cowardly judge, who, as a Roman magistrate, quailed before such cruel clamour, and had not the courage of his own certain convictions! 5. *Agencies co-operating to compass the crucifixion.* If we glance for a moment at the various influences that were at work to compass our Lord's death upon the cross, we find in the foreground the envy and malice of chief priests and rulers; the mean-spirited avarice of the wretched traitor Judas; the want of firmness and thorough conscientiousness on the part of Pilate; the fury of a fickle

mob misled by designing demagogues; the submission of the soldiers to the orders of their superiors;—all obeying the propensities of their own nature, though ignorant of the reason or the results; all fulfilling the predictions of Scripture, though not knowing it; and all accomplishing the purposes of God, though not intending it. But in the background, as we shall see in connection with the crucifixion itself, it was sin on the part of man, and substitution on the part of the Saviour. "He bore our sins," says the apostle, "in his own body on the tree." It was determinate counsel and foreknowledge on the part of God. In accordance with that counsel and foreknowledge, and in consequence of our sin and the Saviour's substitutionary self-sacrifice, "ought not Christ to suffer these things?" Was it not necessary for him to become "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"?—J. J. G.

Vers. 16—41. Parallel passages: Matt. xxvii. 27—56; Luke xxiii. 26—49; John xix. 17—37.—*The closing scene.* I. THE CRUCIFIXION AND ACCOMPANYING EVENTS. 1. *The words of the Creed.* The words of the Creed, "crucified under Pontius Pilate," are familiar to almost every young person who has been trained in the Christian religion. All down the centuries the name of this Roman knight, who was Procurator of Judæa under the Proprætor of Syria, has been associated with the greatest crime that has blotted and blackened the page of history since the beginning of the world. He was a descendant of the great Samnite general, C. Pontius Telesinus, and so belonged to the Pontian *gens.* His surname, Pilatus, is usually derived from *pilum*, a javelin, and so means "armed with a javelin;" though others connect it with *pileatus*, from *pileus*, a cap worn by manumitted slaves, implying that he had been a freedman, or the son of one. His head-quarters were at Cæsarea, on the sea, but during the Jewish feasts, when such crowds assembled in Jerusalem, in discharge of his duty he came up to Jerusalem to keep order. In like manner Herod, whose usual residence was at Tiberias, had come up to Jerusalem to keep the feast, ostensibly in conformity to the Jews' religion, but more especially to conciliate the favour of the Jewish people. It thus happened that the tetrarch and Roman governor were both at Jerusalem at the same time—the former occupying the old Asmonean palace, and the latter Herod's Prætorium a palace of Herod the Great, or perhaps a part of Fort Antonia. 2. *Pilate's embarrassment and earnestness to secure the Saviour's acquittal.* He had offended the Jews by bringing the Roman standards to Jerusalem, and had been obliged to retrace this step; he had quarrelled with them about secularizing the corban, or sacred treasury money, to provide a suitable water-supply for Jerusalem; he had been engaged in a deadly feud with the Samaritans; and had mingled the blood of the Galilæans with their own sacrifices. He was thus on bad terms with the people of every province in the land, and could not, therefore, afford further to provoke their wrath. On the other hand, he had had three warnings—the voice of his own conscience, the dream of his wife, Claudia Procula, and the announcement of Jesus' mysterious title of "Son of God." On the one side was the fear of the Jews whom he had so deeply offended, and fear also of compromising himself with the emperor, now that his patron Sejanus had fallen; on the other were his remaining sense of justice, his respect for Jesus as an innocent man, perhaps as something more—so that Tertullian says of him, "Jam pro conscientia Christianus"—and the threefold warning already mentioned. In consequence he does his best, in his perplexing circumstances, to have Jesus released; for he sent him to Herod, then offered to release him as a favour, according to an established custom. Next he thought to substitute scourging for crucifixion; and when that had failed, he appealed to their pity. But all to no purpose. What was he to do? Why, assert, as he was bound to do, the power of the Roman law, maintain the cause of justice, and obey the voice of conscience at all hazards. But instead of this he vacillated at the beginning, temporized afterwards, and yielded to his fears in the end. Unhappily, he allowed fear for his personal safety to stifle the voice of conscience. 3. *The crucifixion.* Crosses were of different sorts and shapes. There was the *crux simplex*, or simple cross, which was rather a stake on which the body was impaled; there was the *crux decussator*, or St. Andrew's cross, in the form of the letter X; there was the *crux immissa*, or Latin cross, in the form of a dagger with point downward †; there was the *crux commissa*, in the form of the letter T. On account of the inscription the form of the cross on which our Lord suffered is generally supposed to have been

that of the third sort. And now we are arrived at the last sad scene in that shocking drama. Criminals usually carried their cross, or the cross-beams of it, as they went to execution; hence the term *furcifer*, or cross-bearer. Jesus, exhausted by all he had previously endured, and crushed beneath that heavy cross, sank by the way. Simon, an African Jew, is impressed into the service (ἀγγαρεύουσι, send out a mounted courier, from the mounted couriers ready to carry the royal despatches in Persia; then force to do service, compel) and compelled to carry the Saviour's cross. Jesus is fastened to that cross; his hands and his feet are pierced with nails; the cross is hoisted, and with a rude and sudden dash it is sunk deep into the earth. There the bleeding Victim hangs, his bones disjointed, his veins broken, his wounds freshened, his skin livid, his face wan, his strength exhausted; blood flows from his head, blood from his hands, blood from his feet, blood from his opened side. There he hangs, wounded, tortured, fainting, bleeding, dying. There he hangs upon that cursed tree, the passers-by reviling him and wagging their heads, soldiers mocking him, rulers deriding him, malefactors railing on him,—a fearful fourfold mockery. He is offered vinegar and gall (or wine and myrrh, *i.e.* wine myrrhed, or made acid), but, in the first instance, will not drink, lest it should blunt the pain of dying or cloud his faculties; "The cup that my Father gave me, shall I not drink it?" He suffers the withdrawment of his heavenly Father's countenance, and in consequence exclaims, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" At length, with a loud voice, he cries out, "It is finished!" and bows his head in death. We do not marvel at the accompanying circumstances, strange and marvellous as they were. No wonder the sun drew back from the spectacle, and shrouded his glorious rays in darkness, rather than gaze on such a scene. No wonder that dense darkness settled on the land for three long hours. No wonder earth trembled and quaked in horror at the foul deed that had been done. No wonder that rocks rent and graves opened, and the tenants of the tomb came forth as though in consternation, shocked at human sinfulness, and in sympathy with the heavenly Sufferer. No wonder the veil of the temple, strong and thick, is torn in twain from top to bottom, for the humanity of the Saviour is torn with thorns, and smitings, and nails, and spear-thrust; while he is pouring out his life unto death. 4. *The inscription.* The *main* part of the superscription, viz. "The King of the Jews," is found in the record of each evangelist—the same in all and correct in each. In one it is completed by the name, "Jesus," which a Roman, proud of the purity of his speech, and jealous of preserving it, naturally enough left out of the Latin title; in another it is supplemented by the name of the place, "Nazareth;" while the words "This is" are only introductory. Otherwise the inscription was trilingual, and exactly recorded as written in the three languages by three of the evangelists respectively, while St. Mark records the actual charge—the superscription of his *accusation* (αἰτίας) common to them all; and this was the assumption of royalty. 5. *The time of the crucifixion.* The crucifixion really commenced at 9 a.m. The darkness began at noon; death took place at 3 p.m. The apparent discrepancy between the synoptists and John xix. 14 is not to be removed by the similarity of the Greek numerals for six and three (ϛ′ and γ′) respectively, and the supposed substitution or rather misreading of the former for the latter in the Johannean Gospel. The reconciliation is more probably effected by a difference of time-reckoning—the synoptists adopting the Jewish and St. John the Roman method. Thus the delivery and preparations began at 6 a.m. according to the latter.

II. THE DESIGN OF THE CRUCIFIXION. 1. *Not for personal chastisement.* The design could not in any sense be for *personal* chastisement, for Jesus had been "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" it is expressly stated, too, that he was "cut off, but not for himself." Neither could it be as an *example*, for the example of One perfectly innocent suffering so severely would only discourage the guilty, and might well drive them to despair; for if this were done to a green tree, what would be done to a dry—if the guiltless suffered so fearfully, what might the guilty expect? Besides, if Christ suffered as an example, what possible good could his example do to those that lived before his day? Neither was it for *confirmation* of his teaching—to confirm the doctrines which he taught and seal them with his blood; for some of the prophets had done this before him, several of the apostles did so after him, and the martyrs all down the ages have suffered in like manner. And yet, though thus entitled, according to the

theory in question, to stand on the same platform with Jesus, of none of them could it ever be asked, with the expectation of an affirmative answer, "Was he crucified for you?" Of no one in all the glorious company of the apostles, or in all the goodly fellowship of the prophets, or in all the noble army of martyrs, or in all the holy Church throughout all the world, could it be said, "He was crucified for you." How, then, are we to account for the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God; for the indescribable distress that overwhelmed him during those sufferings? What reason can we render for the transcendent value ascribed to the gift of God's Son—that unspeakable gift; for the incomparable worth of the boon, so that all other benefits sink into insignificance when placed beside it? How are we to explain the fact that, amid the utmost chariness of human eulogy, we find the highest praises everywhere throughout this Book lavished on the Son of God? How comes it to pass that while we are instructed to "cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" we are invited to look up with greatest reverence to the Man Christ Jesus, as placed far above the proudest pinnacle of earthly grandeur, and his name raised high above every name, so that in honour of that name "every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"? Even in heaven the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, as he had been slain, is still the marvel of the universe; while the key-note of the song sung by the redeemed in glory, and ever sounding along the arches of the sky, is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." What is the solution of all this? We have no doubt, and feel no difficulty in giving a decided and definite answer to all questions of the sort proposed, for Scripture itself supplies that answer. It is because he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many;" it is because he "hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;" it is because he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," suffering, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God;" it is because "he was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" it is because in him "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Why, again, are there so many Scriptures all bearing on this same subject? Just to exhibit it under its various aspects and from sundry standpoints; just to explain it more clearly and enforce it more fully; and, still more, to awaken our liveliest interest in it, and impress us with a due sense of its supreme and paramount importance. 2. *The sufferings of the cross vicarious.* Objections have been urged against the fairness of the holy suffering in the stead of the unholy, and the objectors strive to explain away the fact of such substitution. To such objectors we reply—If you object to the fairness of the holy suffering in the room of the unholy, and seek to explain it away, we object to the fairness of what you can never explain away—of what you must admit, however reluctant, and cannot deny, however desirous. If you object to the holy suffering in place of the unholy, we object to the holy suffering at all; and yet you are bound to acknowledge that the Holy One has suffered, and cannot venture, so long at least as you credit the Gospel narrative, to gainsay the historic fact. But perfect holiness is justly entitled to happiness, and by the law of Heaven is (as it should be) entirely exempt from suffering; and therefore, unless the Holy One suffered in the room and stead of the unholy, his sufferings would not only be most unjust, but at the same time altogether meaningless. 3. *The doctrine of substitution in both secular and sacred history.* Of the very many instances of this doctrine of substitution met with in the pages of both sacred and secular history, a few examples may be here adduced. Judah intreated Joseph that he might be kept instead of Benjamin—a bondman in his room. After an address of most pathetic and powerful pleading, he says, "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father." In the days of King David an unnatural war broke out. Rebels banded themselves against their sovereign; his son became their leader. A disastrous battle was fought in the wood of Ephraim, and the young man Absalom was slain. One messenger follows on the heels of another, saying, "Tidings, my lord the king;" while his question is once and again the same, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The king, it is plain, would rather have lost the battle than his son; he would have parted with his kingdom

rather than his son; nay, he would have given life itself for his son's life. For now, when he has learnt at length that that fair and favourite son had fallen by the hand of the martial but merciless Joab, "the king," we read, "was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Even Caiaphas enunciated the doctrine, though ignorant of its true bearing and unconscious of the great truth it involved, when he "gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people." The sins of the whole people laid on the head of the scapegoat, the sins of the individual person transferred to the head of the sin offering,—such acts as these symbolically teach the same. When we turn to the secular classics, we find that one of the sublimest poems and simplest tragedies of antiquity is based on the doctrine of substitution; it represents a deity suffering in the cause of humanity and on account of favours bestowed on man. Another instance, and one containing the most genuine example of conjugal affection in the old Greek drama, represents a wife giving her life a substitute for that of her husband. So familiar was this doctrine to the ancients. The great Theban poet, with wonted power, sketches in a few stirring sentences the loyalty and love of the brave Antilochus in defence of his aged parent Nestor, the renowned knight of Pylos. Enfeebled by years and endangered by younger warriors, his horse wounded by the archery of Paris, his chariot impeded, and himself fiercely assailed by the Ethiop Memnon, the old man, in trepidation of spirit, called loudly on his son for succour; nor did he call in vain. Promptly was his call heard and heeded. The faithful son proved his devotion to his sire; he hastened to his side; he defended him from the strong spear of the assailant; he saved that sire's life, but not without the sacrifice of his own; he rescued his parent from ruin, but received his own death-blow; he averted the fate that impended over his father, but at the expense of his own heart's blood. Hundreds of years have rolled away since that deed of daring and devotedness was done, and still it is enshrined in the immortal verse of the Pindaric muse, and the hero's memory embalmed among the younger men of ancient days as first in affection to his father. Again, we admire the Roman poet's graphic delineation of the battle-scene in which the gallant son of Mezentius fell. We admire still more the filial affection of that son who, when the deadly blow had been aimed at his father, interposed himself in his father's stead, received the blow, lost his own life, but saved his father's. "By thy death I live, my son; by thy wounds I am saved!" the veteran warrior exclaimed. In like manner the Son of God took the sinner's place, and stood in the sinner's room; and in the words of inspiration, the sinner who trusts in him can say, "He was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities: the chastisement of my peace was upon him; and with his stripes I am healed." For us the Saviour hung upon that cross; for us that frame writhed in agony; for us those limbs quivered in torture; for us that ghastly paleness overspread his face; for us those eye-strings broke in death; for us that side was pierced with the rude soldier's spear; for us he suffered and for us he died. 4. *The power of the cross in conversion.* The first convert of the Greenland mission was a robber-chief, called Kajarnak. That mission had long been unsuccessful; the missionaries had been sorely tried. At last, disheartened, they were about to leave the country, when one day the bandit, with his followers, came to rob the mission tent. On entering, he saw the missionary writing, and wondered what it meant; the missionary explained to him that, by the marks he was making on the paper, he could tell the thoughts that had passed through the mind of a man called John hundreds of years before. "Impossible!" exclaimed the savage chief. The missionary, who was finishing his translation of the Gospel of St. John, read to these heathen Greenlanders the record of the crucifixion as contained in the nineteenth chapter of that Gospel, on which he was then employed. The chieftain and his men were strangely interested in the narrative. At length Kajarnak, with much emotion, cried out, "What had the man done that they treated him so?" The missionary addressed him in reply, "That man did nothing amiss, but Kajarnak has done much wrong; Kajarnak murdered his wife; Kajarnak has robbed as well as murdered; Kajarnak has filled the land with violence; and that man was bearing the punishment of Kajarnak's sins that Kajarnak might be saved." Tears rolled down the cheek of the rude robber-chief, and he besought the missionary to read him all that over again, "for,"

he added, "I too would like to be saved." We do not wonder that the story of the cross had such a powerful effect on the first convert in Greenland. 5. *Christ's death on the cross a satisfaction.* The death of Christ did not cause God to love us, but, on the contrary, was the expression of that love; it did not originate God's love to man, but, contrariwise, was the effect and evidence of that love; and in accordance with this we read that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." A mighty debt was due to the government, law, and justice of God, as well as to his truth and holiness and purity; that debt was sin. This huge hindrance barred the way of access to communion and fellowship with God; but God himself appointed, accepted, and applied the means for the removal of that hindrance and the reopening of the way. Again, the sun is always shining, though we do not always see it; either clouds overspread the sky and cover the fair face of day, or earth rolls round upon its axis, and so during the hours of night we are turned away from the sun. Notwithstanding this, the sun is ever sending out his rays; and when the clouds scatter, or the earth rolls round again, his full-orbed brightness beams upon us, we see him in the splendour of his shining; and "a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." So the face of God is ever shining, but the clouds of sin darken the sky above us and separate between us and our God; by the death of Christ those clouds are driven away, and that severance ceases; we are brought back into the clear light of unclouded day, and bask in the bright effulgence of our heavenly Father's face. The death of Christ on the cross thus bridged the chasm that sin had made; it spanned the gulf that iniquity had fixed; it opened the new and living way to yon bright world above. By the cross is the way of safety and salvation; for by that cross our sins were expiated, by that cross propitiation was effected, by that cross atonement was made. By that cross, moreover, the Creator and his fallen creature were brought together; by that cross man and his Maker were reconciled; by that cross the offended Sovereign and the rebel sinner were set at one again. In that cross we see the vicarious suffering of one for many, the wondrous substitution of the just for the unjust, the punishment of the sinner inflicted on the Saviour. Through that cross we see the Law magnified, justice satisfied, truth vindicated, government established, sin punished, God glorified, our debt cancelled, the handwriting against us blotted out, and the believing sinner saved.

"Thus from the Saviour on the cross
A healing virtue flows;
Who looks to him with lively faith
Is saved from endless woes."

6. *Double aspect of Christ's death on the cross.* The death of Christ on the cross is a purification as well as a propitiation; it is the source of sanctification and the ground of satisfaction. In reply to the question of the elder in Revelation, saying, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" the answer is returned, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." So, also, in Heb. ix. 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" There is a seeming incongruity in blood purifying. We speak of being defiled with blood or stained with blood, but Scripture speaks of blood cleansing, which is the opposite. We may to some extent illustrate this by certain ceremonies that had to be gone through in olden times by a person who had committed homicide. Among the ancient Greeks the person in question forfeited life. The soul of the slain was supposed to demand life for life, but that life might be redeemed or bought off by the vicarious substitution of a victim. This victim was usually a ram, the slaying of which symbolically denoted the surrender of the guilty man's own life. This was the ceremony of atonement to appease the soul of the slain, and was called *hilasmoi*. But another ceremony was needed—a ceremony of purification to fit the man, whose guilt had been atoned by the propitiatory sacrifice just mentioned, for intercourse with his fellow-men. He then stood on the fleece of the ram of atonement or propitiation, in order to come into the closest possible contact and most intimate connection with the victim which had, as we have seen, vicariously represented him, when an animal of another kind was

slaughtered as a victim of purification, and slaughtered in such a way that the blood which spurted from the wound fell upon the hands of the homicide, and thus the human blood which still cleaved to his hands was conceived to be washed away by the blood of this second victim. This process was called *katharmoi*, and thus was he purified. The custom to which we have alluded, borrowed, like so many other heathen customs, from scattered and distorted fragments of Divine truth, shows, among other things, that the idea of cleansing by means of blood was familiar to the ancients. At the same time that we use this illustration we do not understand the blood of the cross in the gross literal sense, but understand by it the death of Christ upon the cross, and, as that was a bloody one, we are not surprised that it should be called in several Scriptures his blood. The death of Christ (1) as a *propitiation* turns away the wrath of God, due to sin, from man: this is its propitiatory efficacy. It turns away man from sin: this is its purificatory effect. God loved us with an everlasting love, but sin he hates with an infinite and everlasting hatred. As a Friend God loves us, but as a Lawgiver he denounces our sin, as a Judge he condemns it, and as a King he must root it out of his dominions altogether. The love of God is like a mighty river. It has flowed from eternity in the majesty of its strength and in the glorious fulness of its stream; but sin rose as a vast obstruction to the current—it lay like a formidable boom across the stream. At length, in the fulness of time, the cross of Christ broke through the boom, forced aside the obstruction, and opened up the channel; and now the sinner, sheltered beneath the shadow of that cross, can say, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou hast comforted me." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." How? "Not imputing unto men their trespasses;" not charging us with those offences by which we justly incurred his displeasure and merited his wrath; forgiving them, forgetting them, and so reconciled to us, and reconciling us to him, through the blood of the cross. But the death of Christ (2) is a *purification*. It purifies the whole man; its purifying influence goes on, and is needed, till death. "The blood of Jesus Christ," we read, "cleanseth us from all sin." No doubt it cleanseth as a propitiation from the guilt of sin, but more especially it cleanseth as a purification from the filth of sin. It cleanseth the soul from the love of sin and the body from the practice of it; the faculties from thoughts of sin, the members of the body from works of sin. The hands are purified from deeds of darkness; they are fitted for and filled with works of faith and labours of love on earth, and thus prepared for sweeping the harps of gold and swelling the symphonies of heaven. The eyes are purified; they are cleared of scales, and opened to see the wondrous things of God's Law, and the gracious things of both Law and gospel. Thus, too, are they prepared for gazing on the radiant splendour of the eternal throne and the glories of the upper sanctuary. The ears are opened to hear what God the Lord says to his servants, and are thus prepared at length for drinking in the music of the skies and for being charmed with the melodies of heaven. The feet are kept back from every false step and every wrong way, and furnished as though with wings to move readily and rapidly in the way of God's commandments; and thus they are prepared at last to stand upon the glassy sea and tread the golden streets. The head is freed from every iniquitous scheme, and enlightened to comprehend the Divine counsels of mercy; and thus it is prepared to wear a crown, fair in its form, fresh in its colouring, brilliant in its lustre, unfading in its beauty, and amaranthine in its bloom. The heart is purified from every propensity to evil; it overflows with the love of God on earth, and waits to have that love still more intensified amid the raptures and ecstasies of heaven.

III. LESSONS TAUGHT US BY THE CROSS. 1. *God's hatred of sin* is seen in the cross. We trace the wrath of God in the waters of the flood that swept away the antediluvians; in the sin-ruined cities of which few fragments remain to tell where once they were; in the dreary waters that roll over the desolated plain where Sodom and Gomorrah once stood; in the peeled and scattered and sifted race whose fathers' awful imprecation, "His blood be upon us, and our children," called down the withering curse of Heaven; in that dark abode where the angels that kept not their first estate are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day; in that region of despair where the finally impenitent are doomed to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. And yet the wrath of God, we think, is revealed in clearer light and blazoned

in more glaring characters in the sacrifice of the cross, because "God spared not his own Son," when that Son undertook the penalty of our sin, "but delivered him up for us all." 2. *The highest morality comes from the cross.* No theory of morals is so persuasive, no precepts so powerful, as the picture of dying love exhibited in the cross. "The love of Christ constraineth us," says the apostle; "because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again" (Revised Version); and also, "He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" and once more, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Oh, how can we go on in sin if we reflect, as we ought, that sin crucified the Lord of life and glory; if we reflect that it was sin inflicted those wounds upon him; if we remember that sin caused him that agony of soul as well as anguish of body, when, in the language of the prophet, he might well say, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger;" if we consider that our sin was laid upon him and borne by him when "he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and when "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"? The way to purify our fallen humanity and elevate the standard of morality is not by moral lessons, however proper and useful in their own place, but by leading sinners to the foot of the cross, and by pointing to that cross as embodying three arguments, than which there is nothing more potent or more powerfully persuasive in all the universe besides. The first argument which the blood that flowed on that cross embodies is the mercy of God the Father, in reopening the channel of his love which sin had dammed up and closed. The second argument is the love of God the Son, in assuming our nature, in agonizing and sweating, in being smitten and scourged and spit upon and scorned, in being cruelly crowned and crucified; and all to "finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." The third argument is the grace of God the Holy Spirit, in sprinkling the blood thus shed on the conscience, when he brings home the death of Christ, in the power and demonstration of faith, to the sinner's heart. How is it possible to resist this triple argument? How is it possible to go on in sin, which caused our Lord such suffering, and when such love—the love of the Trinity—is constraining us to abandon it for ever? 3. *The innocence of the Sufferer.* Heaven and earth attested his innocence. Friend and foe bore witness to it. A noble Roman lady, wife of the governor, warned her lord, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." Pilate himself, the judge, informed chief priests and people, "I find no fault in this man." Again a second time, having assembled chief priests and rulers and people, he affirmed publicly and positively Jesus' innocence in the following strong terms:—"Behold, I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for he sent him back unto us; and behold, nothing worthy of death hath been done by him" (Revised Version). Once more, for the third time, he asserted his innocence, saying, "Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him." Judas, the traitor, admitted the same thing, saying, "I have betrayed innocent blood." The Roman centurion, who superintended the execution, cried out, "Certainly this was a righteous man;" and again, after he had seen the earthquake and those things that were done, "Truly this was the Son of God." One of the malefactors, his companion in suffering, frankly acknowledged, "This man hath done nothing amiss." The whole record of his trial furnishes the plainest and most positive evidence of his innocence. Satan had tried him, and found nothing in him. God the Father had owned him three times by an audible voice from heaven. He had committed no offence against the religion of the land, no crime against the laws of his country, no sin against God. He went about continually doing good; he was acknowledged to have done all things well; he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

"We hold him as condemn'd by Heaven,
An outcast from his God,
While for our sins he groan'd, he bled,
Beneath his Father's rod.

"His sacred blood hath wash'd our souls
From sin's polluted stain;
His stripes have heal'd us, and his death
Revived our souls again."

4. *His seven sayings on the cross.* Of these three are recorded by St. Luke, other three by St. John, and the remaining one by both St. Matthew and St. Mark. The first of those seven sayings, or seven words, is a *prayer* for his murderers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." There is no doubt that they were acting in ignorance and unbelief; yet they were not excusable on that account, for men are accountable for their belief, and especially so when they have abundant means of rectifying their misbelief or removing their unbelief. The spirit of forgiveness which this prayer breathes is truly wonderful. There is an entire absence of revenge and of all vindictiveness, and yet this was only the negative side; there was the positive feeling of love to his enemies, pity for his murderers, and prayer for those who used him so despitefully. Thus he practised what he preached, and exemplified what he taught in the condition of the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." The second of those words is a *promise* to the penitent sufferer beside him: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." At first it would appear that both malefactors had railed upon him, or the plural is used idiomatically for the singular. One became penitent, rebuking the railing of his fellow-sufferer. By faith he looked to the pierced One at his side, and mourned. His faith became marvellously strong in an incredibly short space. The right rendering of his prayer in the Revised Version makes this more manifest: "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." The common rendering of *into*, as if it were εἰς with the accusative, would imply that Jesus passed into his kingdom at the hour of his dissolution, so that faith would not have long to wait; but the expression "in thy kingdom" (ἐν with the dative) points not to the immediate future like the former, but to the more distant future when Jesus would come again in his kingdom; and still the faith that prompted the petition patiently looked forward to that far-off day. Thus there is no sinner beyond the reach of mercy; no time too late to seek salvation; and no prayers of faith rejected. The soul united to Jesus is safe in his arms, and admitted to glory soon as separated from the body. The third saying is a *provision* for his widowed mother in her sore bereavement: "Woman, behold thy son!" and to the disciple he said, "Behold thy mother!" It was to the beloved John the intimation was given to treat the Virgin mother as his own mother, while Mary was to regard and depend on John as her son. The hint was understood by both; the new relationship was accepted, John undertook the responsibility, and Mary confided herself to his care. Jesus, as he hung in agony, was thus mindful of his mother, making careful provision for her. What a lesson of filial love is taught us here! What a lesson of dutifulness to a parent, especially when that parent is bereaved and desolate! The fourth saying is a *position* of spiritual loneliness: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here there is faith, but faith wanting the assurance of sense. There is faith in Jesus acknowledging God as his God; but a sense of the Divine presence is absent. The complaint of Divine abandonment is caused by that absence, and the deserted soul is in agony. The condition of the Christian is sometimes similar—when, like Job, he goes forward, but God is not there; backward, but he cannot perceive him; and when he turns himself to every side, but cannot find him. But oh, how great the difference! Such a season of darkness is for the most part occasioned by sin; so in our Saviour's case it was indeed for sin, but not his own! The fifth is the *pain* of bodily suffering: "I thirst." The pain of thirst is worse to bear than that of hunger; when long continued it is distressing in the extreme. Men who have travelled in a desert district or under a tropical sun can realize the severity of this condition. In the case of our Lord there was a peculiar aggravation. Near the cross had been placed a vessel of sour wine (*posca*) for the use of the soldiers, the sight of which would increase the feeling of thirst and pain on the part of the Sufferer. Nor was that all; among the cruel mocking of our Lord in the earlier stage of the crucifixion was the circumstance that the soldiers tantalized him by raising to his lips their jar or sponge of vinegar, and then suddenly withdrawing it, for we read, "The soldiers also mocked him . . . offering him vinegar." The sixth is the *perfection* of his work: "It is finished." As has been beautifully said, "Finished

was his holy life; with his life his struggle, with his struggle his work, with his work the redemption, with the redemption the foundation of the new world."

"'Tis finished!' was his latest voice:
These sacred accents o'er,
He bow'd his head, gave up the ghost,
And suffer'd pain no more.

"'Tis finish'd!' The Messiah dies
For sins, but not his own;
The great redemption is complete,
And Satan's power o'erthrown.

"'Tis finish'd!' All his groans are past;
His blood, his pain, and toils,
Have fully vanquished our foes,
And crown'd him with their spoils.

"'Tis finished!' Legal worship ends,
And gospel ages run;
All old things now are pass'd away,
And a new world begun."

The seventh is *presentation* of his spirit to his Father: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Many a time have these words waked a corresponding sentiment in the dying Christian's breast; many a time have they been used by the dying Christian to express his soul's surrender to God. Similarly the protomartyr's "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Likewise in the language of ancient piety, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Hence too we infer the immateriality of the soul, and its independence of the body. Here also we learn how to die, yielding our soul into the hand of our heavenly Father.—J. J. G.

Vers. 42—47. Parallel passages: Matt. xxvii. 57—61; Luke xxiii. 50—56.—*The burial.* I. SECRET DISCIPLES. Among secret disciples of our Lord were Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus. The residence of the former was Ramah, or Ramathaim, the name signifying a hill; while some identify it with Ramleh in Dan, others with Ramathaim in Ephraim, and others, again, with Ramah in Benjamin. But the character of the man is of much more importance to us than his place of abode. Accordingly, one evangelist describes him, as has been ingeniously pointed out, according to the Jewish ideal, as a *rich* man,—so St. Matthew; a second according to the Roman ideal, as an honourable (*εὐσχήμων*) councillor, or councillor of honourable estate (Revised Version),—so St. Mark; while a third according to the Greek ideal, as good and just, somewhat similar to the Greek *καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός*, implying a person of good social position and respectable culture, and thus presumably of correct morals,—so St. Luke. In any case, the third Gospel represents him as a moral man and a religious man—two characteristics that should never be dissociated. We are further informed that Joseph, being one of the seventy Sanhedrists, protested against the conduct of the Sanhedrim in their condemnation of our Lord. Though it is not expressly stated, we may be sure that Nicodemus, the same who is characterized as coming to our Lord by night, if present, joined him in the protest; but they were a small minority, and so the majority of that body accomplished their counsel and crime. Of Joseph's discipleship St. Matthew says, "Who *also* himself was Jesus' disciple;" and St. Luke, "Who *also* himself waited for the kingdom of God." The *also* in both cases implies that he was a faithful follower of Christ, though in secret, as well as the more open disciples; while St. John tells us the reason of the secrecy in the words, "secretly for fear of the Jews." He now laid aside his timidity, and proved himself no longer deficient in Christian courage; for he went in boldly (*τολμήσας*) to Pilate and craved the body of his Lord. Though "not many mighty according to the flesh, not many noble," are called; yet, thank God! there are still some such. Among these, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, a master in Israel, a Sanhedrist, or member of the great national council, who had absented himself, or at all events refused consent to the condemnation, "brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight," for his burial. On mention of Nicodemus, it is remarkable we are still reminded

of his night interview with our Lord. "He that came to Jesus by night," says St. John, and again, "which at first came to Jesus by night," as is added by the same evangelist. Now he too has been emboldened by the cross. Joseph, on obtaining the body, laid it in his own new tomb, so that the prediction was fulfilled to the effect that, though his grave was made with the wicked intentionally, that is, according to the intention of his enemies, yet was actually with the rich in his death. Crucified with malefactors, it was intended and expected that he would share their fate in burial. Not so, however; for though he died as a criminal, he was not buried as one.

II. THE SURPRISE OF PILATE. The usual time for death to supervene in the case of persons crucified was some three days, the very shortest a day and a half. Consequently Pilate expresses his astonishment, and requires the evidence of the centurion to satisfy him of Jesus' death. He first asks in surprise if he were already dead (*τέθνηκε*), and then, calling the centurion, inquires if he had been any while dead (*ἀπέθανε*). Here the accurate use of the Greek tenses is worthy of attention, and brings out the governor's amazement more clearly. His first inquiry is expressed by the perfect, and refers to the *state*—if he was already in the state of death; satisfied of that, and not a little surprised, he asks an *additional* question (*ἐπηρώτησεν*) of the centurion, and in this second inquiry he employs the aorist in relation to the *occurrence*—if death had occurred any length of time previously, or how long, in any case to make sure it was not a swoon. It has been stated and maintained, on respectable medical authority, that the direct cause of Christ's death was rupture of the heart. In that case the blood passed from the interior of the heart out into the heart-sac, and, like all extravasated blood, separated into the red clot and watery element. This would agree well with the suddenness of the Saviour's death, after only some six hours on the cross—a circumstance which, as we have just seen, took Pilate himself so much by surprise; whereas crucifixion usually caused death by exhaustion, and after many hours' lingering. This would also agree well with the *loud* voice of that cry which the Saviour uttered when he yielded up the ghost. This would agree well with the quantity of blood shed to fill that fountain, of which the prophet speaks, saying, "In that day there shall be a *fountain* opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness;" for in crucifixion the loss of blood is diminished by the nails choking up the wounds they make. This would agree well with such Scriptures as the following:—"Reproach hath broken my heart;" "My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels." This would, moreover, agree well with the fact that when he poured out his soul unto death, his bodily sufferings, bitter as they were, had less effect than his mental agony in producing that death. This would still further agree well with what occurred when the soldier pierced the Saviour's side with his broad-headed spear. That rude Roman had no command to inflict such a wound; it was mere bootless barbarity on his part. The body was dead; why gash it so, except perhaps to make sure it was death and not syncope? Nevertheless, he fulfilled prophecy without thinking it; he realized the opening of the prophet's fountain without knowing aught about it. He made a passage for the blood and water already escaped from that broken heart; he helped to open the fountain that cleanseth from all sin.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLOOD AND WATER. The blood and water that flowed from the fountain thus opened in the Saviour's side are significant of the two great blessings which believers partake through Christ. There was blood for redemption, water for regeneration; blood for remission, water for renewal; blood for pardon, water for purity; blood to put away the guilt of sin, water to purge away its filth; blood for justification, water for sanctification; blood for atonement (and this is the special work of the Son of God), water for purification (and this is the province of the Spirit of God); blood and the sacramental wine is a symbol of it, water and the baptismal element is a sign of it. Thus the two great agents in salvation—the Son of God and the Spirit of God; the two great works they accomplish—redemption and regeneration; the two great doctrines of a standing and spiritual Church—justification and sanctification—are kept fresh in the memory and visible to the eye by the sacramental seals of the covenant. In allusion, probably, to this St. John (1 Epist. v. 6) says, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with water only, but with the water and with the blood" (Revised Version). These two must always go together; these two flowed forth together from the pierced side of the Saviour; these two the

apostle has joined together. These two form the streams of the prophetic fountain; and by means of the twofold stream of this fountain "ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flow'd,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

IV. THE FUNERAL. The funeral consisted, as far as we can learn, of few persons. There are only four persons named by name as present on the occasion—two men and two women; though it is probable that a few females besides, who had accompanied him from Galilee, were also at least spectators, as St. Luke tells us that "the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid." Joseph wrapped the body in the fine linen he had purchased, and sprinkled the myrrh and aloes among the folds, then laid the body in the rock-hewn tomb, and rolled a stone of large size to close therewith the entrance of the sepulchre. In these several operations, but especially in that of rolling the huge stone, Joseph was assisted, we may be certain, by Nicodemus, and both by their servants or attendants; while Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of Joses, and the other women from Galilee, were looking on. They beheld (*ἐθεώρουν*), carefully observing the place and manner of the sepulchre.—**J. J. G.**

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ver. 1.—And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices (*ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα*) **that they might come and anoint him.** A hasty but lavish embalming of our Lord's sacred body had been begun on Friday evening by Joseph and Nicodemus. They had "brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight" (John xix. 39). This would be a compound—the gum of the myrrh tree, and a powder of the fragrant aloe wood mixed together, with which they would completely cover the body, which was then swathed with linen cloths (*ὀθόνια*), also steeped in the aromatic preparation. Then the *sindon* would be placed over all. Compare the *ἐνετύλιξεν* of St. Luke (xxiii. 53), as applying to the *sindon*, with the *ἔδησαν* of St. John (xix. 40) as applying to the *ὀθόνια*. This verse records a further stage in the embalming. What had been done on the Friday evening had been done in haste, and yet sufficiently for the preservation of the sacred body, if that had been needful, from decay. The remaining work could be done more carefully and tenderly at the tomb. Observe the aorist in this verse (*ἠγόρασαν*), "they bought;" not "they had bought."

Ver. 2.—And very early on the first day of the week (*λίαν πρωΐ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων*), **they come** (*ἔρχονται*)—not "they came," St. Mark is fond of the graphic present—**to the tomb when the sun was risen. They bought the spices that they needed on the Saturday evening, after the sabbath was past; and then set out early the next morning, reaching the tomb when the sun was risen.**

Ver. 3.—And they were saying (*ἔλεγον*) **among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?** The usual form of tombs in Palestine was the following:—There was generally an approach to the tomb open to the sky; then a low entrance on the side of the rock, leading into a square chamber, on one side of which was a recess for the body, about three feet deep, with a low arch over it. The stone here referred to by the women would be the stone which covered the actual entrance into the vault. It would probably be not less than six feet in breadth and three in height. This great stone had been rolled by Joseph to the mouth of the tomb; and then he had departed. Now, as the women approached, "they were saying (*ἔλεγον*) among themselves, Who shall roll us away (*ἀποκυλίσει*) the stone?" They had seen the arrangements, and had observed the size of the stone on the Friday evening. (ch. xv. 47).

Ver. 4.—And looking up (*ἀναβλέψασαι*), **they see** (*θεωροῦσιν*) **that the stone is rolled back** (*ἀποκεκύλισται*): **for it was exceeding great** (*μέγας σφόδρα*). At this point we learn from St. John that Mary Magdalene ran away to tell Peter and John (John xx. 2).

Ver. 5.—And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe; and they were amazed. They enter the tomb, the expression "tomb" including the ante-chamber. They see that the stone has been rolled back, so as to expose the entrance into the place where Jesus had lain. On that stone a young man was sitting. The angel appeared in the form of a young man, because youth indicates the vigour, the beauty, and the strength of angels. The good angels always appear in beauty and comeliness of form. There will be no deformity in heaven. The angel appeared as arrayed in a white robe. This white robe, or *talar*, indicated a heavenly spiritual being. St. Matthew (xxviii. 3) says that "his countenance was like lightning," flashing with splendour, and his raiment was as white as snow. It may be that he appeared more terrible to the keepers (Matt. xxviii. 4), and that he abated something of his dazzling brightness when he appeared to the women; but "they were affrighted" (ἐξεθαμβήθησαν); literally, *they were amazed.* Amazement was the dominant feeling, though probably not unmingled with fear.

Ver. 6.—**And he saith unto them, Be not amazed**—μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε, the same word—**ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, which hath been crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold, the place where they laid him**; that is, *behold, here is the place where they laid him* (ἴδε, ὁ τόπος). St. Matthew (xxviii. 6) says, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Δεῦτε, ἴδετε τὸν τόπον). This seems to imply that the women actually entered the inner chamber, and saw the very place where the Lord lay. Who does not see here how irrefragable is the evidence of his resurrection?

Ver. 7.—**But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.** St. Gregory ('Hom. in Evan.') says, "If the angel had not named Peter, he would not have dared to come amongst the disciples. Therefore he is specially named, lest he should despair on account of his denial." It was evidently intended as a special message of comfort to Peter. St. Luke (xxiv. 34) records the personal appearance of our Lord first to Peter. Here St. Mark, with characteristic modesty, keeps Peter in the background. In ch. xiv. 28 our Lord is recorded to have said, "After I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee." He would go before them as their Shepherd, and lead them to that part of the Holy Land which, as he had honoured it before his resurrection, so he would honour it again now.

Ver. 8.—And they went out—the word (ταχὺ) "quickly" is omitted—**and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them** (τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις)—*agitation and ecstasy*; they were in a state of the utmost excitement. **And they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid.** The vision of angels had terrified them. They were probably afraid to say anything to any one, on account of the Jews, lest it should be said that they had stolen the body of Jesus. It has been well remarked that independent accounts of events occurring in a time of supreme excitement, and related by trustworthy witnesses, but from different points of view, naturally present difficulties which cannot be cleared up without a full knowledge of all the particulars. (See 'Speaker's Commentary' in Matt. xxviii. 9.)

Ver. 9.—**Now when he was risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven devils.** St. Luke (viii. 2) mentions that "seven devils had gone out of her;" and St. Mark repeats it here, to show the power of love and penitence, that she was the first to be permitted to see the risen Saviour. The vision of the angel had scared her, and she said nothing; but the actual sight of her risen Lord gave her confidence, and she went immediately, in obedience to his command, and told the disciples (see John xx. 11—18). She had lingered about his tomb; her strong affection riveted her to the spot.

Ver. 10.—**She went and told** ἐκείνη πορευθεῖσα ἀπήγγειλε) **them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.** The aorist here indicates immediate action. This word πορεύεσθαι occurs again in vers. 12 and 15, but nowhere else in St. Mark's Gospel. It is to be noticed, however, that it occurs twice in the First Epistle of St. Peter, and once in his Second Epistle. This seems to connect St. Peter with the writer of these verses.

Ver. 11.—**And they, when they heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, disbelieved** (ἠπίστησαν). They refused to believe on the bare statement of Mary Magdalene, although M. Renan says, "Sa grande affirmation de femme, 'Il est ressuscité!' a été la base de la foi de l'humanité." They did not believe her until the risen Lord stood before them. (See 'Speaker's Commentary' (St. Mark), p. 297.)

Ver. 12.—**And after these things he was manifested in another form unto two of them, as they walked** (πορευομένοις) **on their way into the country.** This appearance is doubtless the same as that which is related fully by St. Luke (xxiv. 13).

Ver. 13.—**And they went away and told it unto the rest: neither believed they them.** This want of faith happened by the per-

mission and providence of God. "This their unbelief," says St. Gregory, "was not so much *their* infirmity as *our* future constancy on the faith."

Ver. 14.—**And afterward** (ὕστερον δὲ) **he was manifested** (ἐφανερώθη) **unto the eleven themselves** (αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἕνδεκα) **as they sat at meat.** There is an emphasis here on the word "themselves." The former appearances had been to persons not having any official character. But now he appears to the eleven apostles, when they were all gathered together at the close of that memorable day. "Unto the *eleven*." If, as seems evident, this appearance refers to the day of our Lord's resurrection, there would be only *ten* present; for Thomas was not then with them. Still, they might be called the eleven, because the apostolic college was reduced to eleven after the betrayal by Judas; so that they might still be called the eleven, although Thomas was absent. St. Bernard says on this, "If Christ comes and is present when we sit at meat, how much more when we kneel in prayer!" **He upbraided them** (ὠνείδισε). This is a strong word of rebuke. They ought to have received the testimony of competent witnesses. But their doubts were only removed by the evidence of their senses; just as afterwards in the case of Thomas. St. Mark is always careful to record the rebukes administered by our Lord to his apostles.

Vers. 15, 16.—**And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation** (πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει). **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.** Here is a considerable interval of time, not noticed in any way by the evangelist. *And he saith unto them*; not on the day of his resurrection. It would seem that this charge was delivered to them in Galilee, and that it is the same as that recorded in St. Matthew (xxviii. 19), which was again repeated immediately before his ascension from Bethany. *Go ye into all the world*; not into Judæa only, but everywhere. This command has expanded with the discovery in later times of new portions of the inhabited earth; and must ever be coextensive with geographic discovery. *Preach the gospel to the whole creation*; that is, "among all nations." Man is the noblest work of God. All the creation is gathered up in him, created after the image of the Creator. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.* These words are very important. The first clause opposes the notion that faith alone is sufficient for salvation, without those works which are the fruit of faith. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*; that is, he that believeth, and as an evidence of his faith accepts Christ's baptism, and fulfils the promises and vows which he then took upon himself, working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, shall be saved. *But he that disbelieveth shall be condemned* (ὁ δὲ ἀπιστήσας, κατακριθήσεται). The condemnation anticipates the doom which will be incurred by continual unbelief.

Vers. 17, 18.—**And these signs shall follow them that believe.** Such evidences were necessary in the first dawn of Christianity, to attract attention to the doctrine; but our Lord's words do not mean that they were to be in perpetuity, as a continually recurring evidence of the truth of Christianity. St. Gregory (on 1 Cor. xiv. 22) says, "These signs were necessary in the beginning of Christianity. In order that faith might take root and increase, it must be nourished by miracle; for so even we, when we plant shrubs, only water them until we see that they are taking root, and when we see that they have rooted themselves, we cease to water them. And this is what St. Paul means where he says 'Tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to the unbelieving' (1 Cor. xiv. 22)." **In my name shall they cast out devils.** St. Mark, of all the evangelists, dwells most perhaps on this, as characteristic of our Lord's work, and as the evidence of his supreme dominion over the spiritual world. **They shall speak with new tongues.** This was the first intimation of the great miracle to be inaugurated on the day of Pentecost. The gift was continued but for a very limited time. **They shall take up serpents.** The instance of St. Paul at Melita (Acts xxviii. 3—5) would be familiar to St. Mark's readers. **And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them.** There are some few traditionary notices of the fulfilment of this promise; as in the case of "Justus Barsabas," mentioned by Eusebius ('H.E.,' iii. 19), and of St. John, mentioned by St. Augustine. It may be observed of this passage, that no one could have interpolated it after the cessation of the signs to which it refers, which took place very early.

Ver. 19.—**So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven.** Here is another interval. The evangelist has gathered up some few of the most important words and sayings of Christ; and now he takes his reader to Bethany, the scene of our Lord's ascension. It has been well observed (see Bishop Wordsworth, *in loc.*) that the fact of the Ascension is gradually revealed in the Gospels. St. Matthew does not mention it at all. St. Mark refers to it in this brief and very simple manner. But St. Luke describes it with great fulness, both in his Gospel and in the Acts of the

Apostles, throughout which book he leads his readers to contemplate Christ as ascended into heaven, and as sitting at God's right hand, and as ruling the Church and the world from the throne of his glory.

Ver. 20.—**And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen.** These words are alluded to in several passages by Justin Martyr (about A.D. 160), and, for the reasons given above, could not have been written later than the time of miracles being wrought. They form a fitting introduction to the Acts of the Apostles. Cornelius à Lapide concludes his Commentary upon St. Mark with the following beautiful apostrophe of St. Augustine:—"O kingdom of everlasting blessedness, where youth never grows old, where beauty never fades, where love never waxes cold, where health never fails, where joy never decreases, where life never ends!"

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The empty sepulchre.* In this passage there is no direct narrative of the Saviour's resurrection. The evangelist probably tells what, and only what, he had heard from credible and well-known witnesses. There were no such witnesses to the act of the Lord's emergence from the tomb. But the Marys and Salome had stated what they had seen and heard. They declared that, although they went early to the sepulchre, they found it both open and empty. They related their interview with the young man, the angel, who informed them that Jesus had risen. And it is upon their testimony that the evangelist bases in the first instance his gospel of the resurrection.

I. LOVE WILL FIND OCCASIONS AND WAYS OF EXPRESSING ITSELF. In our Lord's ministry, devout and attached women had often provided for his wants. When the end of that ministry arrived, these affectionate friends were found faithful to their Master; they were amongst the witnesses of his crucifixion and his death. Nor did they then withdraw, but lingered by the lifeless body until it was deposited in the new-hewn tomb. Even then their love was not satisfied; it remained for them to finish the rites which had been so hastily performed by Nicodemus and Joseph, and so abruptly suspended by the sunset which was the commencement of the Jewish sabbath. Behold them, accordingly, in the garden immediately after sunrise. On the past evening they have purchased spices; and they have now, at early morning, come, laden with the fragrant preparations, to perform the last offices to the body of him they have long honoured and loved. The incident reminds us of the grateful and most graceful tribute offered to Jesus by the sister of Lazarus, who poured the costly perfume over the sacred feet of her Lord, her Benefactor. In both cases the value and the charm of the services are owing to the love by which they were inspired. Love followed Jesus, not only in the way, and into the dwelling, but to the cross and to the grave. They who truly love the Lord Christ will find opportunities in abundance of proving their affection.

II. WE IMAGINE DIFFICULTIES WHICH GOD HAS ALREADY SOLVED FOR US. No wonder that these feeble women questioned one with another, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Strong men had closed the entrance to the tomb by placing this huge stone against it; how should this barrier to the carrying out of their intentions be removed? They looked up, and lo! the stone was rolled away. This had been done at daybreak by the celestial messenger. Very similar is much of Christian experience. We perplex ourselves, it may be, with speculative difficulties. Nature and revelation teem with mysteries. To our finite and untrained, inexperienced intelligence it must be so. Our penetration is too dull, our wisdom is too short-sighted; our powers, knowledge, and opportunities are all unequal to the task. But all is clear to that Being who is infinitely wise; and when we lift up our eyes we shall in due time see the resolution of our doubts. We perplex ourselves, it may be, with practical difficulties. How shall we do our work—that work being so vast, and we so helpless? How shall we train our family, conduct our business, discharge our responsibilities? We cannot tell. But, looking unto him, we shall be lightened. He shall bring our way to pass. We perplex ourselves, it may be, with difficulties as to the Church and kingdom of Christ. How shall the Lord's people be awakened to zeal, or reconciled in unity, or qualified for the work assigned them in a dark and sinful world? Our mind

is baffled by the problem, which we have no means of solving. Let us go on our way. When we come to our difficulty, we may perhaps find that it is gone. Let us leave the problems of the future to be solved by him with whom all is one eternal "now." Let us commit the distant in space and in time to him to whom belong alike the far-off and the near. There is no stone so exceeding great that he cannot roll it away; none that he will suffer to hinder or delay the execution of his own purposes.

III. CHRIST MAY BE SOUGHT IN THE GRAVE, BUT HE IS FOUND IN THE RISEN LIFE, THE SPIRITUAL REALM. Notwithstanding that Jesus had foretold both his death and his resurrection, the disciples were overwhelmed with astonishment at his crucifixion, and were amazed and incredulous at the tidings of his triumph over the grave. The men do not seem to have come to the tomb until they were summoned; the women came, but they came to embalm the dead, not to welcome the living—the risen. It needed that they should be assured "He is risen; he is not here!" in order that the current of their mournful thoughts should be arrested and reversed. In the tomb they did not find him, but they met him in his glorious resurrection-body. There are many who still commit the same mistake regarding our Saviour. They think of his bodily and earthly life, of its outward incidents and of its tragic close. They think of him as if his ministry and his mediation came to an end on Calvary. They do not think of him as risen, as living in human society, as working in human hearts, as governing and blessing human lives. Yet, for us, what is the significance of the Redeemer's rising from the dead? Is it not just this—that the Saviour's resurrection-life is his moral and spiritual sway over humanity? It is not in his body that his presence consists. It is in the penetration of the world's moral nature by his ever-present, all-pervading Spirit; it is in the transformation of the world's moral life by the power of his sacrifice, his obedience, his self-denial, his benevolence. Many a king and conqueror has died, after a life of ambition, a career of slaughter and of oppression. The death of such has been welcome, for it has put an end to a power for mischief which has cursed the world. But every teacher, every discoverer of truth, has implanted in the soul of humanity a seed which has outlived himself. How much more does the Divine Light and Life of men continue to illumine and to inspire the world, which first rejected him, and then found out his inestimable worth, his incalculable power!

IV. THE MOST WELCOME AND GLORIOUS REVELATION IS RECEIVED AT FIRST WITH FEAR, ASTONISHMENT, AND SILENCE. Of the women we read, "They were amazed;" "trembling and astonishment came upon them;" "they were afraid;" "they said nothing to any one." It is a strange effect to follow from such a cause. Nothing could be so welcome and so joyful as the news which greeted them. But it was too startling, too surprising, too unexpected. They "departed with fear and great joy," just as the eleven afterwards "disbelieved for joy." There is news which seems too good to be true. Even so now there are doubting souls, who fain would believe in a Divine Saviour, and who withhold their faith, not from unspirituality of nature and habit, but from the intensity of their appreciation of the blessing needed—the revelation of Divine favour, and the prospect of a glorious immortality. Let such raise their minds to the height of the Divine benevolence. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Such an interposition is surely worthy even of the Supreme! "That our faith and hope might be in God." Surely such an end may be believed to justify the most unexampled revelation and the most stupendous display of power. It is well that the tidings should be received with some sense of their amazing importance and their unique bearing upon the state and prospects of mankind.

V. THE NEWS OF THE RESURRECTION IS GOOD TIDINGS TO BE PUBLISHED ABROAD. The faithful women were directed to act as messengers. They have been called "the apostles of the apostles." They were to find Peter and the other disciples, to tell them that Jesus had risen, and to direct them where they should meet him. This they did, and in so doing they set an example to Christians in all coming time. Whatever else may be said of the resurrection of Jesus, this must be said of it first and foremost: It is good news, worthy of all acceptation. As such the apostles received it, and as such they published it. In the record of their ministry, nothing is so prominently put forward as their preaching Jesus and the Resurrection. A risen and

glorified Saviour was the Saviour they preached—a Saviour who had died, but who liveth evermore. Glad tidings to be proclaimed in every language and to all mankind!

APPLICATION. 1. Let us learn to live a life of faith in a risen, exalted, reigning Saviour and Lord. Our religious life should receive its impulse and its motive from looking upwards to the Lord of life. 2. Let us regard it as our sacred ministry to publish as good tidings the truth that Christ is risen. This is the office and privilege of the Church of him who was dead and is alive again, and lives for evermore.

Vers. 9—14.—*Disbelief convinced.* The day of Christ's resurrection was a day which opened in gloom and closed with gladness. In the morning our Lord's disciples and friends were mourning their Master's death, were grieving at what they deemed their forsaken and friendless lot; in the evening the same persons were rejoicing in a risen and triumphant Redeemer. They had found the key to their perplexities; they had received a new impulse and aim, the power and the promise of a new life. To what was it all due? Simply to this: they exchanged unreasonable disbelief for reasonable faith.

I. THE EVIDENCE DISBELIEVED. In some cases we are justified in refusing our assent to testimony; in others we are justified in withholding that assent until the testimony is confirmed. Such was not the case on the occasion under consideration. The evidence was that of credible persons, and of persons whom the eleven knew to be credible. Mary of Magdala, and Cleopas, and his companion were well known to the company of our Lord's friends and disciples. They were persons of unquestionable veracity. They had been themselves convinced against their own persuasions and prejudices. Mary had gone to the grave to complete the rites of burial—a proof that she was not expecting the resurrection. The two who walked to Emmaus regarded the death of Jesus as the destruction of their hopes; they were sad of countenance and slow of heart. If the testimony of Mary were rejected as that of an enthusiast, how could the testimony of the two companions be disputed? Besides, from the other Gospels we know that the other women had also borne witness to having seen Jesus, and that the Lord had appeared to Simon, who had announced the good news to the others. Testimony so varied, repeated, and credible as this deserved a better reception than was accorded to it. But whatever was said of the rising of the Lord Jesus, the disciples during that day disbelieved.

II. THE EXPLANATION OF THIS DISBELIEF. There must have been and there were reasons, or rather motives, for the attitude of the unbelieving disciples. According to this passage, grief was one explanation. The sorrow which possessed the hearts of Christ's friends, when they saw him insulted, tortured, and slain, was deep and poignant. Time had not elapsed for that grief to be allayed. They were still prostrate beneath the anguish which had crushed their hearts. They would hear of nothing that might alleviate and soothe them. And with grief was mingled disappointment. Their mounting hopes were smitten as with a bolt, and fell lifeless to the earth. They had looked for conquest, and they thought they saw defeat. They had looked for a kingdom, and lo! their King was slain. Doubtless, the sentiments of all were expressed in the pathetic lament, "We trusted this had been he who should have redeemed Israel." Such hopes, so crushed, could not easily arise again. Minds so amazed, staggered, utterly perplexed, were all unready to welcome tidings of encouragement. The storm-blast had passed over the tree and snapped the trunk in twain; the calm and the sunshine could not rear the prostrate head.

III. THE BLAMABLENESS OF THIS DISBELIEF. When the Lord himself appeared unto them he doubtless made allowance for their feelings. Yet it is here recorded, "He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." This implies that they ought to have felt and acted otherwise. 1. And they would have done so had they cherished a juster view of the nature of the Lord himself. Had they remembered the witness borne to him by the Father, had they recalled his own lofty claims, had they pondered his wonderful works, and especially his miracles of raising the dead to life, then the tidings that he had risen would not have fallen upon unreceptive minds. 2. Further, the disciples should have remembered the Lord's promises, some of which had been given in figurative language, but some of which had been couched in the plainest

terms. He had said that, after being put to death, he would rise on the third day. How is it that they had so utterly forgotten a promise so express and so surprising? 3. And they should have borne in mind the predictions of the Old Testament regarding the Messianic kingdom, which should be based upon humiliation and suffering, but should be built up in glory. Jesus himself reproached them for having missed the purport of the Messianic prophecies: "Ought not Christ to have," etc.?

IV. DISBELIEF VANQUISHED. What Christ's messengers could not do, he did himself. What could not be wrought by testimony, was wrought by evidence of eyesight and hearing. The change which came over the disciples demands attention. Their conversion from disbelief to faith was: 1. Instantaneous. For long hours they had resisted the witness of those who had seen the risen Lord; but, upon themselves seeing him, they yielded an immediate assent. 2. It was complete and joyful. There was no further questioning, and no further sadness. For a moment "they believed not for joy; but "then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Their minds went quite round; from doubt they passed to confidence, from depression to exhilaration. 3. And this conversion was enduring. Never did they hesitate in their own testimony. They thenceforth regarded themselves as witnesses of the resurrection, and spake boldly of what their eyes had seen, their ears had heard, their hands had handled, of the Word of life.

V. THE LESSONS OF THEIR DISBELIEF. 1. It makes the testimony of the disciples the more valuable. Clearly, those men were not credulous, were not disposed or prepared to believe. It must have been conclusive evidence indeed which convinced them. There can be no danger in accepting the testimony of such men as these. 2. It is a rebuke to those who, through hardness of heart, believe not in a risen Saviour. With the clear, full evidence which we possess, we shall indeed be blamable if we withhold our cordial faith from him who for us died and rose again. "Blessed," says the Lord, "are they who, not having seen, yet believe."

Vers. 15—18.—*The great commission.* Whether these words were spoken at once upon one occasion, or whether they are the summing up of many words uttered by our Lord between his resurrection and ascension, one thing is clear—they are the unburdening of his great heart of what was the load chiefly pressing upon it. Why had he condescended to live upon earth, to fulfil a ministry of humiliation, to endure unequalled woes, to die a death of ignominy and of shame? Surely not that after his departure from earth all things might be as before. But rather and only that, as the great foreseen result of his earthly advent and ministry, a new and heavenly power might be introduced into humanity, a new spiritual kingdom might be set up in the world, and a new day might dawn upon the long, dark night of time. Hence the gospel which he caused to be proclaimed, the commission which he entrusted to his disciples and especially his apostles. Hence the authority Jesus entrusted to his servants, and the vast sphere he contemplated for their labours of witness and of work.

I. THE COMMISSION ENTRUSTED TO THE CHURCH. 1. What they were to take. "The gospel," glad tidings of salvation and eternal life through a Divine Redeemer, who died for the world's sins, and lives for the world's eternal life. 2. To whom they were to take it. "To the whole creation," *i.e.* to all mankind, of every race and every language, as what is intended for all and is adapted to all. 3. Who were to take it? The eleven first received the sacred charge, but all Christ's disciples who should believe through them on his Name were entrusted with this great commission. "Freely," said Christ, "ye have received; freely give." No order of men, but the whole Church, receives this sacred trust.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY LAID UPON THE WORLD TO WHICH THE GOSPEL COMES. A great alternative is propounded. There is no middle course supposed. Belief and baptism are the condition of salvation; disbelief ensures condemnation. We may well admire the wisdom and the condescending compassion which determined such a condition as faith as the condition upon which the highest spiritual blessings may be enjoyed. It is possible to the youngest, to the least learned, to the feeblest of men. Yet it is a mighty principle; being able, when directed towards a Divine Saviour, to secure all good which man can need and God can give, both for time and for eternity.

III. THE CREDENTIALS ACCOMPANYING THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL. 1. What

they were. There are enumerated: power to exorcise demons, power to speak with tongues, immunity from harm by poison or by serpent-bite, the ministry of supernatural healing. 2. Why they were given. It was to authenticate the message and the messengers. As in Christ's ministry spiritual authority was indicated by miraculous works, so was it in the ministry of Christ's followers and apostles. As a matter of fact, attention was thus drawn to the Word of life. 3. Why they were withdrawn. *When* this exactly was we cannot perhaps decide; but as the purpose of their bestowal was temporary, it is evident that when this purpose was answered, and Christianity was launched upon the waters of the world, it was in accordance with Divine wisdom that miracles should cease.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Ascension.* Christ ascended on high. How could it be otherwise? He came into this world in a manner and with accompaniments so remarkable, he lived in this world a life so singular and unique, that it was but appropriate that he should quit this world as none other has ever done. What is meant by his being "received up"—where "heaven" is,—this we do not know; our knowledge is limited, and our power of conceiving the eternity and infinity around us is feeble. One thing we do see, and that is, that Jesus finished his work on earth and then departed; and one other thing we see, almost as clearly, viz. that the moral, spiritual work which was the object of his mission, so far from coming to an end with his bodily departure, really then commenced, and has been proceeding ever since. *How* he interests himself in it and carries it on, we can only tell in general and scriptural language; *that* he does so, is plain to every spiritually enlightened man. St. Mark, who plunged at the outset so boldly into his task of relating "the gospel of the Son of God," here, with characteristic brevity, clearness, and vigour, tells the last portion of his narrative—the ascension of the Saviour into heaven, and the consequent continuation of his work on earth.

I. THE ASCENSION IS THE COMPLETION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S EARTHLY MINISTRY. To those who believe that the Lord Jesus arose from the dead, the narrative of the Ascension can present little difficulty. It is impossible to believe that he who consented to die, and who conquered death, could again enter the grave. It remained for him to quit the earth without dying; and what we read of his resurrection-body leads us to believe that this was not only possible, but natural and easy. In fact, the Ascension may be regarded, not as the consequence so much as the completion of the Resurrection; and, in apostolic language, the two events are sometimes referred to in one and the same expression. How explicitly had Jesus foretold this great event! Early in his ministry he had declared, "No man hath ascended into heaven, save he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." Expostulating with the cavillers at Capernaum at a later period, he had asked them, "What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" And on the day of his resurrection he had directed Mary to take to his disciples this message: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." The foresight and authority of our Saviour were proved by the correspondence between his words and the event which exactly fulfilled them. The Ascension implied that all the purposes of the incarnation and advent of the Redeemer were accomplished. What he came to do, to suffer, and to say, he had already done, suffered, and said. He did not leave the earth until on earth there was no more for him to do. In his recorded intercessory prayer, addressing his Father, he said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

II. THE ASCENSION IS THE COMMENCEMENT OF OUR SAVIOUR'S REIGN. We are too prone to think of human life as if it closes when the last breath is drawn and the heart beats no more. We forget that this is but the birth to the higher, the proper, the eternal life. Similarly with our view of the Redeemer's ministry of service, his tenure of priestly, royal office. We are too prone to regard his life as closing with the conclusion of our Gospel narratives. We follow him in thought until the cloud, descending upon Olivet, receives him out of our sight, and then we say, "It is all over! His course is run, his work is finished!" But it is not so. The very contrary of this is the case. That Christ's ascension draws a sharp line of demarcation, is true; but the one side is finite, the other is infinite. We can comprehend

the one; the other baffles all our powers of penetration. The steps of Jesus through this earthly pilgrimage are steps which we can trace; but we lose sight of them, and faith alone can follow, when he ascends on high. This, however, is certain to us, that, with the ascension of Jesus, the second, the more spiritual, the more beneficent, the more enduring stage of this Divine ministry, commenced. He did much in his humiliation; he is doing more in his glory. He came to found a kingdom; he went to administer it; and he must reign until his foes become his footstool. Contemplate the Son of man as he is here represented, no longer wearing the disguise of feebleness and submitting to the insults and the hatred of the wicked. His days of toil, of hunger, and of weariness, his nights of exposure and of mental conflict, are over. No more is he to endure the misrepresentations of the hypocritical and the malicious; no more to baffle the insidious snares of the crafty and the unscrupulous; no more to be patient under the cold mockery of the unspiritual and ungrateful. His deeds of mercy shall never again be attributed to the powers of evil; never again shall those he fain would benefit seek to cast him headlong from the precipice; nor shall he sigh because of the hardness of heart and insensibility of his foes. It is well that he has gone through it all; that he has been despised and rejected of men, that he has been overwhelmed with the baptism of suffering, that he has drunk to the dregs earth's bitter cup of woe. All this is well. But it is better that it is past and over; that he takes with him into the unseen state the memory of his humiliation, his obedience, his death; that he enters upon his purchased possession; that he sees "of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied;" that he is "received up into heaven, and sits down on the right hand of God." What are we to understand when told that Christ "sat down" in heaven, and by the Father's side? The evangelist speaks here in such a way as to convey to us important religious truth. Christ's earthly ministry had been one of unrest and homelessness; from the commencement of his public labours until those labours ended on the cross, few had been the intervals of repose. With the Ascension began the period of rest. The seat upon the throne is becoming to royalty: the monarch sits whilst the courtiers, guards, and attendants stand. So the expression implies the kingly dignity of Immanuel. He has exchanged the crown of thorns for the diadem of empire. "On his head are many crowns." Further, a judge sits upon the judgment-seat, whilst the criminal stands at his bar. Jesus not long before had stood, as the vilest culprit might have done, before the malignant Caiaphas, before the vacillating, unrighteous Pilate. Now, no longer the accused, he is the just, majestic, and almighty Judge, ordained by God to be the Judge of quick and dead. How bold and plain, although metaphorical, is Mark's language here! "The Lord Jesus sat down at the right hand of God." "The right hand of God" is one of those expressions, so frequent in Scripture, which are used, in condescension to our infirmities, to convey to us, in a striking and effective manner, truth otherwise not easily communicated. A courtier, when at the right hand of his sovereign, is near him, is readily addressed; is in a position either to give information or to receive instructions; can easily obtain a signature, or an authority or warrant under the sign-manual; is in a position to introduce to the king any applicant or petitioner; in brief, occupies a post of privilege, trust, influence, honour, and authority. And when our Saviour is pictured as at the right hand of God, we are to understand that he is the Mediator, through whom the Divine power and guidance, favour and blessing, are bestowed upon those in whom he has shown himself interested by undergoing on their behalf the labours and the sacrifices of the earthly humiliation. No wonder, then, that the position occupied by Christians is described in language so rich, full, and inspiriting—that all things are declared to be theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

III. THE ASCENSION WAS THE PREPARATION FOR A NEW AND SPIRITUAL ECONOMY. The bodily absence of the Redeemer was the condition of a new dispensation of spiritual power and of world-wide extent. Hitherto the evangelizing journeys of the twelve had been restricted in scope and local in range; they had gone only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and they had directed attention to the speedy approach of the kingdom. But the aim of Jesus was one of universal benevolence; other sheep, not of the Israelitish fold, were to be brought in; he was to draw all men unto himself. This was to be done by spiritual agencies, which were dependent upon the

removal of the Lord to heaven. In fact, the ascension of the Lord Jesus was, in the Divine counsels, the condition and the occasion of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, in the manner and measure distinctive of the new, the Christian dispensation. He himself had put this with great plainness before his disciples' minds: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you." This was a doctrinal statement of the nature of a revelation. What was the intelligible and manifest fact corresponding to it? Surely this—that the earthly mission of the Saviour being complete, the gospel was to be preached, and should be made, by a spiritual force acting on human natures, the means of awakening men to a new conscience of sin, a new yearning for holiness, a new purpose of an unselfish and unworldly life. It is no more unreasonable to attribute the fruits of the gospel to the Spirit of God, than it is to attribute human purposes to the spirit of man. It is a spiritual universe, and things material and outward actions are nothing but the garb and utterance of what is spiritual. If there be truth declared, revealed, and if there be a nature capable of receiving, feeling, responding to truth, there is one all-sufficient explanation of this wonderful and beneficent correspondence, and that is, the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit of God. The ascension of Christ changed the life of the apostles, and through them, the history of the world. 1. Now and henceforth there was an express *theme for them to publish*. This was the gospel, the good tidings, which only now was complete, and so divinely perfected by all that Jesus had done and suffered, that it was adapted to fulfil the purposes of Divine wisdom. Before, the disciples had directed attention to what was to come; now, to what had occurred actually and really. Christ had died for men's sins, according to the Scriptures; he had arisen from the dead for their justification and salvation. Around the great central facts of Christ's birth, crucifixion, and resurrection gathered all the Divine truths which constituted the gospel. Accordingly, in the first place, the facts were related as facts abundantly attested, and as facts of interest and precious moment to all mankind. And, when these facts were believed, then they were explained, and (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit given from above) the inspired apostles taught their bearing upon the position and prospects of the sinful race of man. It should never be forgotten that our religion consists in something more than laws of life, sentiments of virtue, promises of help, hopes of immortality. In accordance with the constitution of things, all these depend upon and flow from the great central facts relating to the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Besides having a theme, the apostles of our Lord now had *a commission which authorized them*. They did not go unbidden, without instructions, without authority, upon this errand of mercy and blessing to mankind. He who had all power in heaven and in earth had given them their commission. He had said "Go!" and they went; not in their own strength and wisdom, but in his. The same warrant and authentication abides with the Church of Christ throughout all the ages. The apostles were, as the name implies, those who were *sent;* in this respect, as distinguished from personal endowment and equipment, an apostolic mission is entrusted to the whole body of Christ's followers to the end of time. 3. *The sphere* within which this commission was to be executed was world-wide. "Go ye into all the world," Jesus had said, "and preach the gospel to the whole creation." "Make disciples of all nations." A grand and noble design, worthy of the source whence it emanated, in the heart of him who is "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." The habitable globe is the field in which the Christian missionary is called to work; for the human race is the object of Divine compassion, the destined participant in the bounty of the Divine beneficence. None, however large-hearted and compassionate, can complain that the operations of mercy and benevolence are restricted and restrained. 4. In fulfilling this commission, the heralds of Christ's gospel were assured that they should enjoy, not only personal assistance, but the assistance involved in undoubted *credentials*, by which they and their message should be commended to the attention of men. (1) The Lord wrought with them. They were workers, but they were fellow-workers with him. What was to be done in the renewal of human hearts, and the transformation of human character, was not to be done by the exercise of merely human power. A Divine energy and operation were alone adequate to secure results so difficult, so glorious. (2) Signs followed. Signs, *i.e.* of a Divine presence and energy. There were such in abundance, as is evident

from the record in the Acts of the Apostles. Signs outward, manifest, obvious to every eye, as in the case of those miracles of healing which accompanied the ministrations of the first Christian preachers. Signs of a less obtrusive, but of an even more convincing character, as in the case of those Jews who were delivered from formalism, those Gentiles who were emancipated from idolatry, those flagrant transgressors of the moral law who were turned from darkness unto light, and from the service of Satan unto God. (3) Thus the Word was confirmed. Miracles, preaching, all were means to an end, and that end the establishment and extension of a spiritual kingdom. For the Word of God was no mere instrument of music to charm the ear and captivate the imagination; it was and is "the sword of the Spirit." Its work is to conquer, to subdue, to govern; and this work it does with incomparable keenness of edge, with incomparable force and efficiency. It has been promised, "My Word shall not return unto me void." It has proved itself a Word of power, a Word of salvation, a Word of life.

APPLICATION. 1. In heart, let Christ's people ascend with their ascended Lord and Leader. "Risen with Christ," "set your affection upon things above." 2. In life, let Christians seek to execute their Master's parting commission. He has left them a trust to fulfil, a work to do; let them not be found slothful, but diligent and watchful. 3. In hope, let all who "love his appearing," look forward to his return. For in like manner shall he come again, to receive his people to himself. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*Resurrection proofs.* The last days of the manifestation of God in Christ were signalized by a great deprivation and a great recovery. A life beyond the dread confines of the grave completed the cycle of wonders associated with the earth-life of Jesus. This, although not sufficiently realized ere it actually occurred, is a part of a continuative development. It is no awkward and hasty fragment joined on to another and more legitimate narrative. To intelligent students of the life, it appears the sublimely consistent outcome of all that preceded the death. The evangelists, from the very beginning of their histories, prepare one almost unconsciously for such a *dénouement.* It is in a sense the necessary conclusion towards which they move, and it throws into new relations and proportions all the preceding events. The earthly actions and experiences of Christ are sufficiently verified, but *in describing them the evangelists do not seem to think of having to furnish proof.* It is only *when they begin to tell us of the resurrection* that all is alertness, and *that conscious collation of evidence takes place.* This is the arcanum of the faith which must be preserved from all uncertainty; this fact must be certified that all else may be made intelligible and morally effectual. And *the moral significance of the Resurrection is even more insisted on than its physical wonder.* It is the defeat of evil machinations, and a triumph over every precaution of his enemies.

I. SOME IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION. The number and variety of Christ's appearances have been noted by the evangelists. The spiritual nature perceives the supplementary effect and educative efficiency of his resurrection fellowship. There is also a marked absence of all appearance of collusion. 1. Conspirators would have striven to keep the grave sealed until its emptiness should be discovered. 2. The Roman watch was all but inviolable. 3. Those who might be expected to conspire remained at a distance, and were informed of the event. 4. Many of them at first refused to believe the news. 5. From the Emmaus and embalming incidents, we see that most of the disciples did not look for his (at all events immediate) reappearance.

II. THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION. The question of those who deny the physical, yet emphasize the ideal and spiritual resurrection—"What can a few pounds more or less of dust and ashes matter?"—is shallow and impertinent. 1. *The senses were appealed to:* sight, hearing, touch; physical results were produced; fellowship was realized with him under physical conditions (the fish and honeycomb). 2. *He was not recognized at first.* A great change had, therefore, been produced. And *such a thing might be looked for.* Mary, Emmaus, Thomas and the stigmata. 3. *The*

manner of disappearance as described is suggestive of a real body (Acts i. 9; Luke xxiv. 50, 51).

III. THE BEARINGS OF THIS FACT UPON CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE. In considering these, we see how the foregoing question betrays an incapacity for discussing the highest practical problems. 1. *Christ came to save the entire nature*—body, soul, and spirit. He is, therefore, himself the Firstfruits and the Type. There is, in his resurrection state, a hint as to the possibilities of our material nature when completely purified and redeemed. 2. *The bodily resurrection of Christ is a more signal marvel than the spiritual alone would have been, and was at the same time more susceptible of sensible demonstration.* 3. *It was in harmony with the method of his miracles, and the grand key to them.* How the moral element in this life grew and expanded into ever more powerful effects and general relations! At last, when earnestly and carefully regarded, doubt is overwhelmed by it. How it appeals to our sense of the highest fitness, and answers the unconscious longings of the spiritual life!—M.

Vers. 3, 4.—"*Who shall roll us away the stone?*" Two things occurred together in attempting the last service to the buried Christ—weak, though willing and loving instruments, and a practically insurmountable difficulty. They themselves were unable to roll away the stone which closed the sepulchre, "for it was exceeding great." This experience has often been repeated.

I. HOW FOREBODINGS OF DIFFICULTY IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE OFTEN ARISE. 1. *By discounting the help of Christ.* They thought him dead and helpless. 2. *By calculating only one's own resources.* Looking inward. The healthy outward and upward look at the indications of Providence and experience.

II. HOW THE GOOD INTENTION OF LOVING HEARTS IS REWARDED BY THE SAVIOUR. 1. *By finding the difficulty which had been anticipated already removed.* 2. *By finding the intended service rendered unnecessary.* The empty grave at first a disappointment, but afterwards a source of joy.—M.

Ver. 6.—"*He is not here.*" I. THE PLACE WHERE CHRIST HAS BEEN IS NOT ALWAYS THE PLACE WHERE CHRIST IS.

II. IT IS A LIVING AND NOT A DEAD CHRIST THAT CHRISTIANS ARE TO SEEK.

III. THEY THAT TRULY SEEK CHRIST WILL, EVEN THROUGH DISAPPOINTMENT, LEARN WHERE TO FIND HIM.

IV. THE DUTIES OF SORROWING LOVE ARE DISPLACED BY THE DUTIES OF REJOICING FAITH.—M.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The gospel the Word of the ascended Lord.* These words, at the end of Mark's account, give the great sequence of our Lord's manifestation. The Ascension was the divinely necessary result of the Resurrection; the gospel is the necessary fruit on the human side of the experience produced in the hearts of the disciples by his life and work. Such a series of events could not end in silence. As in life, so in death, resurrection, and exaltation, Jesus Christ "could not be hid." The preaching of the gospel is a result, therefore, of an express command and an inward impulse. The two verses are in sequence to the preceding account, and the one to the other, logically, spiritually, and potentially. Notice in this connection—

I. THE POINT AT WHICH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL BEGINS. At the final withdrawal and exaltation of Jesus. 1. *Its subject is a completed one.* 2. *The various portions of it are self-evidently connected, and mutually interpret one another.* The final transcendent issues of the contest of Christ with sin and death are each representative and interpretative of what preceded and led up to them. The life and its relation to the Divine purpose, prophetic anticipation, and human yearning, would be incomprehensible without this glorious trinity of consummations: death, resurrection, and ascension.

II. THE POWER IT REPRESENTS. The power of a finished work of atonement, a victory over death and hell, and an exalted, glorified humanity. 1. *The highest exaltation has been reached by him of whom it speaks.* He is invested with Divine power, and executive authority in the universe of God. Whether there be any such *place* as the "right hand of God" may be a curious question; that there is a *state* which such a

phrase describes is a matter of spiritual revelation and experience. "*All power* is given," etc. 2. *Its tone is therefore authoritative in the highest degree.* The gospel is a throne-word. Preachers are ambassadors. The dignities and pretensions of earth are nothing to them. The Lord through them "*commands* all men everywhere to repent." Herod is a sad illustration of what occurs when even a king attempts to patronize the gospel. 3. *This pretension is confirmed by practical proofs.* The works accompanying it and resulting from it are "signs." You cannot explain them unless on the highest ground. Although physical miracles have ceased, spiritual results are still more demonstrative and glorious. In changing the heart, renewing the nature, purifying the affections, the "Word of his power" achieves what nothing else can. And such signs are to be looked for whenever and wherever it is proclaimed. "The Lord working with them"—*everywhere*, because *ascended* and *glorified.*

III. THE PEOPLE IT CONCERNS. "And they went forth, and preached *everywhere.*" This was no accident or caprice of choice: *he commanded it* (ver. 15). But it is also divinely fitting that this should be so. 1. *The gospel is intended for all men.* 2. *It is adapted to all men.* 3. *The work of Christ's servants is to seek the salvation of all men.* Until all have had an opportunity we must continue to preach: *that is our responsibility.* It is not said that all will believe or be saved: *that is the responsibility of those who hear.* Only of this are we certain: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, *not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pet. iii. 9).—M.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The stone rolled away.* Day was dawning on Jerusalem when the women saw this strange sight. Day was dawning in their hearts too, for slowly and surely the darkness of doubt and grief was stealing away. And day was dawning on the whole world, and on all future ages of history, for the Sun of Righteousness had risen, bringing life and immortality to light. No three days in human history were so momentous as these of which the context speaks; for it was on them that the great conflict between death and life was fought out, and for ever won, by the Captain of our salvation. (Describe the varied feelings which swayed the minds of Christ's foes and friends after the Crucifixion, as they thought of his quiet grave in the garden.) The resurrection of Jesus Christ was put boldly in the forefront of apostolic teaching. Of all the miracles, this was the chief; of all evidences of the supernatural, this was the most important. In almost every recorded address and extant letter, this is insisted on as the cardinal fact of the Christian faith; indeed, Paul says, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain."

I. WE RECOGNIZE THE STONE ROLLED AWAY FROM THE SEPULCHRE AS BEING TO US A SIGN OF CHRIST'S VICTORY. 1. Accepting the fact of our Lord's resurrection, not only as proved by the credible, concurrent, and cumulative evidence of trustworthy men, but on the ground that this fact alone will rationally account for the victory of the Christian faith over men of all nations and conditions, we do not wonder at its prominence in New Testament teaching. Because Christ has risen, his death becomes more than a martyrdom for the truth; it appears as the voluntary offering of himself on the part of One who said of his life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." It is the sign that God was still well pleased with the beloved Son, for it was the Divine reversal of the world's judgment upon him. It is a proof that the same Jesus who once walked this weary world still lives, with the old sympathy and power to help, fulfilling his promise, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It is the pledge to us, the only pledge we have in history, that the splendid utterances of St. Paul about the resurrection of the saints will have their fulfilment. For the redeemed, as well as for their Lord, heavenly hands have rolled away the stone that once sealed the grave. 2. The victory of Christ on the Resurrection morning was dramatically complete in its details, and in this we see a suggestion of the absoluteness of his triumph over his foes. The Gentiles had mocked and crucified him; he passed by their strong guard without an effort. The Jews had accomplished their purpose against him; the seal of the Sanhedrim was broken. Death had seized upon him, and some had cried, "Himself he cannot save;" but, the Son of God, it was not possible that he should be holden of death. The grave had closed over him; but he passed through its portals resistlessly, as Samson came forth

from Gaza, bearing on his shoulders its gates of brass and bars of iron. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet"—the pride that will not let us become as little children; the self-will that declares, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" the lusts which, like the horses of the sun, would drag their victims to destruction; the death that strikes down all our defences, and tears away our dear ones from our embrace. Victory over these will be his, not ours. To the eye of faith the rolling away of the stone appears to be the loosening of the keystone in the great fortress of sin and death, of which at last there shall not be left one stone upon another.

II. THE STONE ROLLED AWAY MAY ALSO BE REGARDED BY US AS A REMINDER OF EXPECTED DIFFICULTIES UNEXPECTEDLY REMOVED. It was natural enough that these feeble women should say among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" For a moment it appeared as if all their labour of love, in the preparation of spices, would be thrown away—that the last tender ministry must be given up. But as they went forward, trembling yet hoping, they discovered that the difficulty they had dreaded was gone. God had done for them what they could not have done for themselves. Too often we discourage ourselves by thinking of future difficulties, until they loom so large in our imagination that we turn back from the path of duty. 1. It is so with our *anxieties about temporal things*. But whatever lies in the future, let us go on steadfastly and trustfully, and by-and-by we shall make the conquered difficulty an Ebenezer, which shall witness to others of the fact, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." 2. Similarly we must deal with *some difficulties respecting Christian doctrine*. "Whosoever shall *do* the will of God shall know the doctrine." 3. So let us go on also to *attempt our appointed work for God*; and the difficulties which are insurmountable by us will be removed by hands mightier than our own.—A. R.

Vers. 1—18.—*The Resurrection.* In the early dawn—"at the rising of the sun"—on the morning after the sabbath—that one most wondrous sabbath, the last of the old series—hasty feet were hurrying to the sepulchre. They were those of Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome. Love drew them thus early to the sacred tomb. But they were bringing "spices that they might come and anoint him," so far were they from expecting what had taken place. It does not appear that any of the disciples were looking for the Resurrection. As they neared the place a difficulty suggested itself to them: "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?" To their astonishment, it was rolled away. "Entering into the tomb," they found not the body as they expected; but "they saw a young man [an angel] sitting at the right side, arrayed in a white robe." Calming their affrighted spirits, he declared for the first time, "He is risen; he is not here." The few details of the excited doings of that first morning of the week—that first Lord's day—have a deep interest, which their meagreness cannot destroy, if indeed it abates it. Again and again Jesus appears to the disciples, now in smaller, now in larger companies, and gives them as true and deeply settled an assurance of his resurrection as was before given of his death. To that resurrection we turn as to the signal incident in the life of the world's Redeemer—the central fact in all human history. Nothing abates the significance of the Incarnation; but the raising up of the dead body into life is supreme in its bearing on the history of the human race.

I. The resurrection of Christ is THE CRUCIAL TEST OF THE WORLD'S REDEMPTION. "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain." Then the whole structure of Christianity is shaken to its foundations. It has no longer its present significance. It has wrought only imaginary changes. "Ye are yet in your sins." It has deluded its most devoted adherents. Itself aiming at truth, exalting, glorifying it, it has deceived and disappointed the hopes of its faithful ones. "They also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." The Christian Church has never shrunk from the alternative, exulting in its jubilant assurance, "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead." Herein the completeness of the atoning work of Christ is demonstrated, the warrant of faith in that atonement is presented, and the end of all is attained in the righteousness of men. With a divinely attested atonement, of which, to avail themselves, men are warranted in appropriating by faith the justification—the righteousness

which they need. He "was delivered up for our offences, and was raised for our justification."

II. The resurrection of Christ is THE FIRM GROUND OF HUMAN HOPE. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Back to this event the eye of the believer has turned to see the assuring sign. Our friends lie still in the grave; but the Church has never since that early morning looked to a Christ in a tomb. It is easy to see how the horizon of the human life would be overclouded had we to think of the Redeemer as still in the grave.

III. THE BRIGHTEST ASPECT OF HUMAN LIFE is seen in the resurrection of Christ. Life with or without a future suggests the two utmost extremes. The barest glimmer of a possibility of a future life beyond the grave would be the greatest enrichment of that life had there not been a previous assurance of it. This fact added to human life transforms it at once. It is an inestimable possession. What possibilities does it not open before our eyes! What an encouragement to patience! "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." The resurrection of Christ throws an altogether new light upon all human history; but its brightest light is thrown upon the gloom of the future.

IV. The resurrection of Christ is THE ILLUSTRIOUS EXAMPLE OF THE UNIVERSAL RESURRECTION. "Christ the Firstfruits." The ingathering and presentation of the first-fruits must be taken as the pledge of the ingathering and presentation of the entire harvest. The inspired teaching on this lofty subject is such as to give the utmost assurance and comfort. The "weakness," the "dishonour," the "corruption," with which we are made familiar by death, stand in contrast with the "incorruption," the "glory," the "power," which we learn shall characterize the resurrection. While the casting off the "natural body," to be clothed with "a spiritual body," the exchange of "the earthy" for "the heavenly," is exemplified in the one Example which is for every believer the most comfortable assurance.

V. The resurrection of Christ is THE COMPLETE DEMONSTRATION OF TRIUMPH. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." It has ever been held that the Resurrection was the Divine seal of testimony to the perfectness and acceptability of the work of Christ. The rage of wicked men, the antagonism of error, the whole power of the enemy, triumphed in crushing the truth; but the Resurrection is a demonstration of complete superiority to all, and casts its illuminating comment upon the words, "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." These and many other teachings cluster around this most precious incident in the history of this typical life. He who would derive the utmost advantage therefrom must needs share the experience of the holy apostle: "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. iii. 8—11).—G.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The Ascension.* And now after "he was manifested" many times, showing "himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days," and having taught to his disciples, in the new light of his resurrection, "the things concerning the kingdom of God," he—"the Lord Jesus"—"was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God," "the heaven" receiving him "until the times of restoration of all things." Now the holy, earthly life of Jesus is terminated. He has "ascended on high;" now the luminous pathway to heaven is open; now the eyes of the disciples of the Lord Jesus are ever turned upward, and their steps tend to heaven. Now the great truth is exemplified; life ends not in a grave, nor even in a resurrection from the dead, but in an ascension into heaven. This is the true goal. This the final hope. The regained Paradise is not on earth, but on high. The home of the weary is in "my Father's house." The world's rest is in heaven. Now life is a pilgrimage; men "seek a country," "a better country, that is, a heavenly;" and "God hath prepared for them a city." The typical life is a perfect

one; the cycle is complete. He "came down from heaven." He has ascended up "where he was before." So is it with the revelations of Holy Scripture. They begin in an earthly paradise; they end in a heavenly one. Such is the cherished hope of all believers. We must consider the ascension of Jesus in its bearing upon his own life, and upon the life and hope of his disciples, and upon the aspect of human life generally.

I. The Ascension into heaven is THE JUST VINDICATION OF THE LIFE AND CLAIMS OF JESUS. The position which he assumed amongst men as the Son of God, as the Saviour of the world, as the Judge of human actions; the call which he addressed to men to believe in him, to accept his teachings as of supreme authority, to trust in him for salvation and eternal life; and the great promises which he held out to men;—all needed a demonstration of their validity. To the patient reader of the Gospels this demonstration is afforded again and again "by divers portions and in divers manners." But all would lack their crowning affirmation had Jesus remained enchained by death, or had he not ascended up on high. It were impossible to believe in such a Mediator as still in the grave. The Ascension, which is the necessary consequence of the Resurrection, is the complement of the Incarnation. Such a life and such a death as Jesus' demanded a triumph and a vindication. It was, in the absence of the Resurrection, the failure of the truth. Sin, error, the world, conquered the truth and righteousness of heaven. So for the one brief sabbath—the dead lull in the world's active history—it seemed to be; but the Resurrection, completed in the Ascension, is the effectual vindication of truth and of righteousness, as it is the vindication of the righteous One.

II. Not less is the Ascension THE VINDICATION OF THE WORLD'S FAITH IN JESUS. They who accept a teacher as authoritative, who commit great interests into his hands, who have so great faith in him as to entrust their reconciliation with God into his hands, who accept him as a mediator between themselves and God, who depend upon him for eternal life, who concentrate all their hopes of the future upon his word, must be prepared to justify their conduct. That justification is found in the Ascension. Too great a confidence cannot be placed in One concerning whom it may be said, "The third day he was raised again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God." Jesus, who vindicated himself in every step of his progress, vindicates also the daily, humble, entire faith of "them that put their trust in him."

III. There is a step further. THE CONDUCT OF THOSE WHO REJECT CHRIST AWAITS VINDICATION. Where shall it be found? Given the facts of Jesus' life, his death, his resurrection, and ascension on high, where can any justify their repudiation of him? Precisely as faith and obedience are vindicated, so is unbelief and neglect condemned. The bearing of Christ's ascension on the universal life is of so great significance, that its rejection imposes the heaviest penalties on the disobedient. Not only is their own life debarred the beneficent influences of so great a fact, and the long train of facts of which it is the completion, but the life of others surrounding is proportionately injured. He who has faith in a great truth throws the influence of his encouragement over the faith of all amongst whom he moves, while he who abides in unbelief tends to wither the confidence of those around him. His example is contagious, and his life is impaired in its character. It cannot, therefore, exert the same beneficial influence upon others that it might do if under the control of great truths. Men must sooner or later vindicate to their fellows their conduct towards them. If it be good, the world's testimony will be joined to the Divine testimony. If evil, the world's condemnation must be added to that of the eternal Judge. Man's highest wisdom is to place himself near to great truths, that he may feel their power and elevation; and, by a thorough sympathy with them, be prepared to extend their influence far and wide. How greatly the world to-day needs men having faith! Such only can move the mountains which stand in the way of human progress and blessing. No truths have equal power for the uplifting, the ennobling, the appeasement, the satisfaction, the glorification of the human life, as have those which, beginning with the Incarnation, end with the ascension into heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ; "to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—G.

Vers. 1—8.—*The sepulchre.* I. SELF-REWARDING LOVE. The women obey the longing to serve, though they know not how. Of love it is said, "All other pleasures are not worth its pains." In lavishing care upon the remains of one beloved, we show that the

proper objects of love are persons. It is not to the love of an abstraction, but to the love of himself, that Christ calls us. The suffering in this world are to us as the body of Jesus.

II. ANGELIC MINISTRY. "Angels minister to the followers of Christ, and share their joy." The chain of sympathy is electric between earth and heaven; and all that we know in sorrow and joy has its immediate reflection and response above.

III. THE EMPTY TOMB. The contents have escaped, as some ethereal vapour eludes its bonds. He could not be holden of the tomb. It bore witness to his resurrection; and earth is no more a sepulchre, but a portico to heaven.—J.

Vers. 9—14.—*Appearances of the risen One.* I. THEY WERE REPEATED AND VARIED. So in the history of the Church and the world; there are epochs of the manifestation of Christ and of apparent concealment. Though history in one sense repeats itself, in another it does not. Christianity is the exhibition of the new in the old, the old in the new. And so in the individual.

II. THEY WERE MET BY PREJUDICE. New truth finds in us something ever to overcome. The victory over a prejudice gives us cause for thanks; what we really possess of truth we possess because we have resisted it. We do not understand it till we have contended against it. "We may believe more surely in the Resurrection, because they were so slow to believe."

III. THE SPIRITUAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE REAL EVIDENCE. Unless we see that Christ's resurrection coincides with spiritual truth and needs, we shall not see it at all. Mediate knowledge can never be free from doubt; certainty lies in that which is immediate.—J.

Vers. 15—18.—*Final utterances.* I. CHRISTIANITY IS A GOOD MESSAGE FOR ALL MANKIND.

II. ALL WHO HAVE AFFIANCE IN CHRIST ARE MEN CONSECRATED AND SAVED.

III. IF FAITH BE POSSESSED, ALL NECESSARY CONFIRMATIONS OF FAITH WILL BE GRANTED.

IV. IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, THE OUTWARD IS ONLY OF VALUE AS SIGNIFICANT OF THE INWARD AND SPIRITUAL.—J.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The Ascension.* I. THE ASCENT OF CHRIST FOLLOWS FROM HIS DESCENT. His glory was conditioned and prepared for by his self-humiliation for our sakes.

II. HE IS NOW IN THE SEAT OF SPIRITUAL POWER AND GLORY. The right hand of God is a figure of omnipotence. This power is felt in and through all the thought and development of the world.

III. THIS POWER IS FELT IN HUMAN WORKS OF LOVE. Good signs ever are following the course of the good message. Faith working by love in us corresponds to power working by love in God. For us there is Divine encouragement to work for humanity in this last page—

> "In dens of passion and pits of woe,
> To see God's love still struggling through,
> To sun the dark and solve the curse,
> And beam to the bounds of the universe."

Vers. 1—18. Parallel passages: Matt. xxviii. 1—15; Luke xxiv. 1—49; John xx. 1—23.—*An eventful day.* I. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. 1. *The morning of our Lord's resurrection.* The first day of the week on which the events recorded in this section of the chapter took place was an eventful one. On the morning of that day we are placed side by side with some weeping women. They are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome the wife of Zebedee. They had loved their Lord in life; they had stood by him in death; they had cleaved to him on the cross; and now his lifeless corpse is to them an object of affectionate concern. In the grey dawn of the morning twilight they quit their couch, they leave their cottage, and, setting out, come to the tomb (ἔρχονται, present, "come," so St. Mark,

graphically) with the spices and perfumes they had carefully prepared, the sun by this time having begun to rise. But lo! in their confusion and haste and sorrow they have overlooked an important fact; they have not known, or forgotten, the efforts of his enemies to make sure the sepulchre, already secured with a great stone, sealing it with the imperial signet and setting a guard. In their hurry they have forgotten all this—the stone, the seal, the sentry. Soon as the thought occurs to them they look anxiously at each other and sorrowfully inquire, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Of the stone, at least, they were well aware. 2. *The rolling away of the stone.* Not pausing for an answer, they press forward to the sepulchre. On reaching the spot their fears are disappointed and their expectations exceeded. An earthquake had shaken the place, an angel had descended; and when they looked up (ἀναβλέψασαι, another graphic trait) they see that the stone is rolled away. So is it with many another stone of huge dimensions—with many a stone of difficulty and doubt and danger. So with the stone that barred the entrance of the heavenly world against the sinner; so with the stone that closes the grave's mouth where the dear dead dust of loved ones lies; so with the stone that may be laid on the spot where our own ashes shall one day repose. The rolling away of this stone from the sepulchre of the Saviour involves the rolling away of all these stones. 3. *The evening of the same day.* In the evening of the same day two lone pilgrims are traversing the pathway between the vineyards. They are journeying to a little village embosomed in vine-clad hills, and seven miles distant from Jerusalem. They are glad to escape from town; for a heavy heart seeks solitude. Their Master had been crucified, their hopes had been dashed, and their fond anticipations disappointed. They were returning home in sadness, for what was there in the capital to interest them now? All that had been dear to them there was now gone, and to all appearance gone for ever, for their Lord and Master was no more. The lovely scene around, the bright sky above, the cheerfulness of the season, but little harmonized with their sadness of heart and sorrow of spirit.

> "The spring in its beauty on Carmel was seen,
> And Hermon was dress'd in its mantle of green;
> While the pathway which led to Emmaus was made
> All fragrant and cool by the olive trees' shade;
> The dove in Jehoshaphat's valley was wailing,
> The eagle round Olivet proudly was sailing:
> But all was unheeded, for doubt and dismay
> Were distracting those two lonely men on their way."

They walked and talked, and talked and walked, beguiling the difficulties of the way, and forgetting the lapse of time. They commune and reason together; they balance probabilities. They comment on the early visit of the women to the sepulchre, on the stone being rolled away, and the vision of the angels, and so for a moment they entertain a faint hope that their Master might have risen, and would now restore the kingdom to Israel. But that hope is like a brief glimpse of sunshine which the dark clouds soon blot again from the sky. Immediately it occurs to them that the words of the women had been treated as an idle tale. Their wish might have been father to the thought, while hope and love are proverbially quick-sighted. Why had Peter not seen the vision? Why had John not been privileged with the sight? A third traveller overtakes them. He joins their company. He asks the cause of the sadness pictured on their countenance; he inquires the subject of their communings; he converses with them cordially and confidentially; their heart was burning within them while he spake to them by the way and while he opened to them the Scriptures. These two scenes—one in the morning, the other in the evening of the same day; the former described by St. Mark and St. Matthew, the latter by St. Mark, but more fully by St. Luke (xxiv. 13—35)—occurred on the day of our Lord's resurrection from the dead.

II. A VISIT TO THE SAVIOUR'S TOMB. 1. *The place where they laid him.* "The place where they laid him," as St. Mark terms it, or the place where the Lord lay, was the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. We visit the tomb of an earthly friend; we venerate the place of our fathers' sepulchres; we gaze pensively on the green hillock that overlays the mortal remains of one we love; with willing hand we plant the shrub—the myrtle or the cypress—which marks the place where the heart's treasure is enshrined;

we snatch the early flowers of the spring and strew them on the grave of some dear one gone; carefully we wreathe the garland and place it on the spot or hang it on the shrub that points it out. Many a time have we stood in cemeteries more like a flower-garden than a garden of the dead, and admired the care, the tenderness, and the affection of surviving relatives, as evinced in the plants and wreaths and flowers which ornamented the last resting-place of the departed. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," was the invitation of the angel to the women in the parallel record of St. Matthew. The passage of the Gospel before us is thus a visit to a tomb—to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa, the tomb where Jesus lay, the tomb of the dearest Friend we ever had, the tomb of the most loving One that ever lived, the tomb of him who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," of the good Shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep, of him in regard to whom the believer can say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." 2. *Object of our visit to the Saviour's sepulchre.* The followers of the false prophet Mahomet make their weary pilgrimages from year to year to that impostor's tomb. We pity their delusion, we pray for their deliverance; but we admire their devotedness. The mighty military enterprises that roused the martial spirit of European peoples during the Middle Ages, and employed the hands and hearts of bravest warriors, had for their object the rescue of the holy sepulchre from the possession of the infidel, and the protection from injury and insult of all Christian pilgrims who might please to visit that shrine. The conception was a grand one, but somewhat gross—gigantic in one sense, and yet grovelling in another. The subject of our section leads us in the same direction; but our visit is spiritual, not literal; it is not to the mere geographical position, but to the glorious Person who made a brief repose there, and accomplished a triumphant resurrection therefrom. 3. *The lessons to be learnt from this visit.* When we visit in this sense the place where they laid him, the first lesson we are taught by it is (1) the *lowliness* of our Lord. It was wondrous condescension on his part to visit earth at all. For the Holy One to come into this sin-blighted world, for the eternal Word to be made flesh and dwell among us, for the Son of God to be made of a woman, made under the Law, for the King of saints to endure the contradiction of sinners, for the King of glory to make himself of no reputation,—in a word, for him who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, to take upon him the form of a servant, was surely most astonishing humiliation. But for that high and holy One, not only to empty himself and become obedient to death, and a death so painful and so shameful as that of the cross, but to enter the region of the dead, to be laid in the tomb, and to lie as a corpse in the cold grave where they laid him,—this may well challenge the surprise of man, as it commands the study of angels. We admire that patriot king who quitted for a time his throne and left his kingdom and travelled through the nations of Europe, visiting their dockyards, their workshops, and their manufactories, and actually working as a mechanic, in order that when he returned home and resumed the reins of government he might benefit his kingdom and improve his subjects. Still more are we astonished at Charles V., who had done daring deeds of chivalry, gained brilliant victories, achieved great successes, exhibited strokes of skilful diplomacy, and wielded a mighty power among the potentates of Europe, at length, as though wearied with royalty and fatigued with dominion and surfeited with splendour, giving up and resigning all, retiring into private life, and spending the remainder of his days in a cloister. But what was the temporary resignation of the Czar of all the Russias, or the final abdication of him who wore the imperial crown of Germany and swayed the proud sceptre of Spain, compared with the King of kings and Lord of lords resigning the sovereignty of the universe for the stable of Bethlehem, the crown of glory for the cross of Calvary, the sceptre of heaven for the garden sepulchre? "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." (2) "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," and consider the lesson of his *love*, for it was his love that laid him there. It was love that made him submit to the indignities which, as we have seen, were heaped upon him—the scoffing, and scourging, and spitting, and smiting. It was love that subjected him to the insults of priests and people, to the sentence of an unjust judge, the torture of a most cruel death, and the disgrace of an ignominious execution. It was love that thus nailed him to the cross and suspended him on that cursed tree, as the gazing-stock of earth and heaven. So was it love that bound him in the habiliments of death, wrapped

him in the cerements, and laid him in the coldness of the tomb. Was it strange, then, that the sun suffered an obscuration when the Saviour expired, that the sky put on mourning when the Lord of glory gave up the ghost, or that the frame of nature shook when the Divine Upholder of its system died? Was it strange that rocks rent as if in commiseration of what might rend even a heart of stone? Was it strange that graves opened and their ghastly occupants came forth, and with bloodless face and skeleton form entered the holy city, and moved through the streets in grand and solemn silence, or flitted as strange and fearful apparitions among the living population that passed along the thoroughfares, when he who was the living One, having all life in himself, entered the abode of death and was laid in the grave? Long before, a dead man had started into life, when he was laid in a prophet's grave and touched a prophet's bones. Was it strange if the dove cooed plaintively in the valley of the Kidron, if the vine drooped mournfully on the hillside, if the brook murmured dolefully as it rolled over its pebble bed that night? Was it strange that the disciples hung their heads in sorrow, in sadness, and in silence, when their Master was entombed? "Come, see the place where they laid him," and "where the Lord lay;" and will not love beget love? Will you not love him who thus loved you, or rather can you forbear loving him who thus loved you first of all and best of all? Who ever heard of love like this before? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" but while we were yet sinners, and therefore enemies, "Christ died for us." (3) "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," and reflect on a third lesson which is taught us there. This lesson respects the *light* that is thus shed into the gloom of the grave, and into the dreariness of that dark and narrow house. Darkness had reigned in all deathland before, but then life and immortality were brought to light. In some places, where railways run beneath high hills, all at once you pass out of the light of day into a dark subterranean passage. In a moment or two you find that tunnel not so dark as at first you thought it; the lamps on either side relieve the gloom and interrupt the darkness. By-and-by you quit the tunnel and emerge into the light of day, brighter and more beautiful, you think, than before because of the very contrast. The grave was a dark subterranean passage once; no light entered it, no ray brightened it; but now lamp after lamp is hung up in it, and on the other side the Christian finds himself in the everlasting light and unclouded brightness of heaven.

III. THE GRAVE WHENCE THE LORD ROSE: THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. 1. *Honour shown Christ in death.* "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him;" and mark the honour paid him there. Even in death he was not unhonoured. A few faithful females, a few devoted though dejected disciples, refused to believe that the past was only a delusion, the present merely a dream, and the future altogether darkness. They entertained an undefined expectation, and that expectation now glimmered before their mind's eye like the meteor of a moment, anon disappeared, leaving the gloom still denser. It was a dark hour with the disciples of our Lord, but it was the hour before the day-break. These few faithful followers, however, ceased not in their attention to the body and attendance at the grave. They watched and waited, and visited the spot. The Jewish ruler Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathæa, a rich and honourable counsellor, as we saw in the preceding chapter, failed not in tender devotedness and affectionate dutifulness to the lifeless corpse. 2. *Honour of a higher kind.* Greater glory awaits that body. The resurrection work of wonder takes place. Scarce had the morning of the third day arrived, scarce had the morning-star announced its early dawn, when the mediatorial reward began to be bestowed, and the faithfulness of the eternal covenant became manifest. Come once more, and see the place where the Lord lay, and as it can never be seen again. There—O wondrous sight!—lies the Prince of life; he is sleeping the sleep of death—silent and still as the grave where they laid him. Satan exults, the hosts of darkness hold jubilee, all pandemonium triumphs, hell cannot contain its satisfaction, if aught like satisfaction ever enters there. But hark! a voice from heaven echoes through that sealed sepulchre; it is the voice of God. The words "Awake, arise!" resound. In an instant the grave-clothes drop from off the body; without the help of human hand they are wrapped together and carefully laid aside; the napkin falls from the face; the stream of vital fluid circulates through the veins; the limbs that a moment before had been stiff and stark in death are in motion. The

form of sinful flesh—of a servant and a sufferer—is laid aside for ever. The Saviour rises; he rises in glory indescribable; he rises by his own and his Father's power; he rises triumphant over death, and the Conqueror of the grave. The angels of God come down to do him honour; one of them rolls away the stone and opens the sepulchre; the keepers shake and become as dead men; earth becomes tremulous for joy under the feet of its risen King; all nature puts on its fairest spring attire and joins in celebrating the Redeemer's triumph. Thus on all sides are re-echoed the words, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." 3. *Positive proof of his resurrection.* If you have any doubt of this, you need not go further for proof, and proof to demonstration, than the lie of the adversaries. "His disciples," say they, "came by night, and stole him away while we slept." What! eleven disciples overpower a company of Roman soldiers armed to the teeth, or roll away the huge stone in silence, or enter the tomb in secrecy, or range things so securely there? Or, granting this, how could they carry the body unnoticed through the streets of Jerusalem, while thousands bivouacked in or patrolled those streets and thoroughfares at that Passover season, and while the full-orbed moon shone down upon the scene? Or, allowing this, is it likely that Roman soldiers would sleep on guard while death was the penalty, or that a whole detachment of them should all fall asleep at the same time? Or, conceding even this, suppose they slept, how could they see the purloiners of the body, or how could they say whether disciples did it or not? We need not stay to answer these questions; they sufficiently show the truth of the statement, "He is not here: for he is risen."

IV. REASONS FOR THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD. 1. *It was necessary for justification.* We have visited the empty tomb, and now we may inquire *why* he lay there and rose thence. It was in the first place for our justification. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." "By his death," says one, "he paid our debt, in his resurrection he received our acquittance." Another says, "Had no man been a sinner Jesus had not died, had he been a sinner he had never risen again." In other words, his death shows his sufferings for sin, his resurrection proves full satisfaction made by those sufferings. The meaning of his death is summed up in the words, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;" the meaning of his resurrection runs thus: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." His resurrection was thus his acquittal from the obligations he had come under, and our absolution through him from the debt we owed, so that, once united to him by faith, our persons are justified, our sins remitted, and our services accepted. Thus we see the meaning of that empty tomb. It is as though the voice of the Eternal proclaimed in thunder-tones through all the universe, "This is my beloved Son," in whose person and work, in whose life and death, "I am well pleased." His resurrection is the full recognition of the Redeemer's work. It is the protest of Heaven against the accusations with which he was loaded. It is the vindication of him whom Jew and Gentile condemned as deserving of death. It is the authoritative announcement that the work was finished, the debt paid, justice satisfied, the Law fulfilled, obedience rendered, punishment endured, wrath exhausted, sin put away, righteousness brought in, Satan vanquished, and God glorified. It is the consent of Heaven to the cancelling of the handwriting that testified against us. Therefore "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth." And had he not all power, as Jehovah's Fellow, from everlasting? Yes, but now he has it as our Mediator; he holds it on our behalf, and exercises it for our benefit. Therefore "he received gifts." And why needed he gifts in whom all fulness dwelt, and who shared the Father's glory? As Head over all things he received them for his people's use, "even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." And did not God love him when he was in his bosom, before all worlds? Yes, but now he loves him as our Representative, and us in him; and consequently the apostle prays so earnestly to "be found in Christ." He is "crowned with glory and honour." And why? That he might communicate to us that glory which, as God, he had laid aside, and as Mediator resumed, and thus make his own peculiar

privilege the common property of all believers. 2. *It was necessary also for our sanctification.* "Planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;" "As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so should we also walk in newness of life." To live habitually in any known sin is to deny practically that sin is death; to indulge presumptuously in sin is to ignore the fact that Christ has risen from the dead; to persevere in sin is to resist the influence of Christ's resurrection, and shut our ears to the loud call that comes from the empty tomb, saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." We turn to some practical illustrations of the subject of sanctification. What is a saint? He is one that is risen with Christ, and acts accordingly, seeking the things that are above. Though in this world, he is not of it; he is above it. His conversation, treasure, heart, hope, home,—all are in heaven, whence he looks for the Saviour. Among the currents in the Atlantic Ocean is the great Gulf Stream; it has been called a river in the ocean. The water of this stream is on the average twenty degrees higher than the surrounding ocean; it preserves its waters distinct from those of the sea on either side, so that the eye can trace the line of contact. It retains its physical identity for thousands of miles, casting branches and fruits of tropical trees on the coast of the Hebrides and Norway. It greatly influences the Atlantic, keeping one-fourth of its waters in constant motion. The sanctified person—that is, the saint—is like that Gulf Stream; he is in the ocean of this world, but he has no affinity with it; he is not conformed to it; he has a higher temperature, for "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." Nevertheless, his influence is great and always for good; he keeps the dead waters from stagnation and in healthy movement.

"With Christ the Lord we died to sin,
With him to life we rise;
To life which, now begun on earth,
Is perfect in the skies."

3. *The resurrection of Christ is necessary for our resurrection.* "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them that slept;" "He has destroyed the last enemy, and that is death." During the reign of Augustus Cæsar a reverse befell the Roman army in the densely wooded valley of the Lippe. It was led by Varus to quell an insurrection of the Germans. The legions got embarrassed amid the entanglements of the forest; they fell into disorder; a violent tempest coming on at the same time aggravated their difficulties; four and twenty thousand of them were cut to pieces, and the general fell upon his sword. Six years after succeeding legions reached the plain, where lay the bleaching bones of former comrades, strewn in disorder or piled in heaps as they had fought and fallen. Fragments of weapons, limbs of horses, heads of men stuck on trunks of trees, were to be seen on every hand. In groves hard by were the savage altars where tribunes and centurions had been victimized; while those who survived that fatal field pointed out the place where lieutenants were butchered, standards taken, Varus wounded, crosses erected for the captives, and the eagles trampled underfoot. In addition to all, in a night-vision the ill-fated Varus, smeared with blood and emerging from the fens, seemed present to the imagination of his successor, and beckoning him to a like defeat. The description of the whole scene by Tacitus, the Roman historian, is vivid and terrible in the extreme. Ever after throughout his reign the Emperor Augustus was heard at times to exclaim, "Varus, Varus, give me back my legions!" So, when we reflect on the ruins of frail humanity—the wreck of generation after generation—we may well imagine Mother Earth appealing to Death in pitiful accents, and exclaiming, "Death, Death, give me back my sons and daughters; restore to me my children thou hast slain." That appeal shall be heeded one day, not by Death, but by him who was swallowed of Death—swallowed as a poison, and so destroyed the destroyer. Christ, by his resurrection, says to Earth, widowed and weeping over the graves of her children, "Weep not! I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." To Death he says at the same time, "O Death, I will be thy plagues! O Grave, I will be thy destruction!" Further, he will not only raise us up, he will fashion the body of our humiliation and make it like his own glorious body. Plants and animals have their proper habitats; different

species demand different situations; different vegetable tribes are allotted to different latitudes and different elevations. The palms of the torrid zone will dwindle and die in the temperate; the trees of the temperate, again, shrink into shrubs in the frigid. Such is the difference of latitude. That of elevation has a similar effect. A French traveller tells us that, in ascending Mount Ararat, he found at the foot the plants of Asia, further up those of Italy, at a higher elevation those of France, then those of Sweden, and at the top those of Lapland and the northern regions. Just so we shall be adapted to our future dwelling-place. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" therefore the living shall be changed, the dead quickened, and all God's people, quick and dead, glorified together; "for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

V. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. Come, "behold the place where they laid him," and there see the fruits of Christ's death and the benefits of his resurrection; come, seek the pardon and peace which the justified possess; come, secure the holiness and happiness of the sanctified; come, entertain the "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." 2. We have considered the lowliness of Christ, and dwelt on his love, and now we may rejoice in the light he has shed on the tomb. We are hastening to that "bourn whence no traveller returns." As we advance, desire fails; a little longer, and the grasshopper will be a burden. Once we reach the summit we soon go down the hill, and it is well and wisely so arranged.

"Heaven gives our years of failing strength
Indemnifying fleetness,
And those of youth a seeming length
Proportion'd to their sweetness."

3. "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified." So, too, we seek Jesus, though condemned as a Nazarene in the spirit of the contemptuous question, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" We seek Christ crucified, though to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness. We are not ashamed of the offence of the cross. Nay, like Paul, we glory in that cross. The day was when Paul gloried in his pedigree, for he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews; in his sect, for he belonged to the straitest sect of the Jews' religion, being a Pharisee; in his morality, as touching the Law blameless; in his learning, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; in the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, being circumcised on the eighth day; in his Roman franchise, born free; in his citizenship, a citizen of no mean city—his native Tarsus, beautifully situated in the plain and on the banks of the Cydnus; in his persecuting zeal, haling men and women to prison. But once his eyes were opened, once his heart was renewed, once he obtained mercy, then his ground of glorying was altogether changed. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." 4. We shall not see his face until either we stand on the sea of glass, or his feet stand again on Olivet; we cannot hold him as those who "met him by the way . . . and held him by the feet, and worshipped him;" we cannot minister to him as certain women in the days of his flesh; we cannot serve him at food like Martha, nor pour oil on his head like Mary. What, then, remains for us to do? How are we to express our love to him? We are to think of him, believe on him, pray to him, accept him for our King and submit to his laws, call on his name, take the cup of salvation and keep his memory green in our souls, show forth his death, glory in his resurrection, partake of the sacrament of the Supper—it is the memorial of his death; and delight in the sabbath—it is the monument of his resurrection. 5. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," and let the sight encourage you. Dread not death; you believe in him that conquered it. Dread not the grave; you love him who lay in it. Dread not hell; you believe in him who rescued you from it. But dread sin and depart from it; "go and sin no more."—J. J. G.

Vers. 19, 20. Parallel passages: Luke xxiv. 50—53; Acts i. 9—12.—*The Ascension.* I. CIRCUMSTANCES IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING. Our Lord led the apostles out "as far as to Bethany," on the eastern slope of the mount of Olives, a mile, or somewhat more than a mile, below the summit of the ridge, whence they afterwards returned by the

way across the mount to Jerusalem. The middle summit of Olivet, Jebel-et-Tur, is, however, the traditional place of ascent. He has led ourselves further than to Bethany, for he has led us all our life till now; while all the way by which he has led us has been strewn with blessings—blessings temporal and spiritual. When he had led them as far as to Bethany (ἕως εἰς, or ἕως πρὸς, as far as towards Bethany, or the descent that led down to the village, or over against it), he lifted up his hands and blessed them. The high priest of the Aaronic order had three things to do—offer sacrifice, make intercessions, and bless the people in the name of the Lord. What a beautiful benediction was put into his lips and pronounced upon the people, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace"! Better and more beautiful, if that be possible, are the blessings which our great High Priest invokes on our behalf and commands upon us. Of these we have a specimen in his intercessory prayer, as contained in the seventeenth chapter of St. John.

II. THE PARTING. "He was parted from them," or "stood apart from them (διέστη)," as it is expressed by St. Luke. Amid certain cheerful tones one sorrowful note is struck, one sad word occurs, one painful sentiment is expressed. Some find the motto of this world in the words, "Man weeps;" others write it in the words, "We part;" a yet higher and better authority has expressed it in the words, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This last combines the other two, for this world is a vale of weeping and a place of parting. What tongue could tell the painful partings that from time to time take place? Who could count the bitter tears that are shed? Those partings ofttimes wring the stoutest heart and wet the manliest cheek. At the railway station, or before going on board the emigrant ship, many a sorrowful separation we have all seen. The separation caused by death usually lasts the longest, and is, therefore, in proportion sorrowful. Yet it is not all pain in the parting of a Christian; this passage suggests an element of pleasure. When our Lord was parted from his disciples, he was carried up to heaven; when the Christian is parted by death from friends, loving and beloved, he sleeps *by* Jesus, and them that so sleep the Lord will bring with him. The day, moreover, is coming when Christian friends, parted by death, shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with one another, and with our Lord.

III. THE ASCENSION ITSELF. The expressions employed to describe our Lord's ascension are, "He was received up into heaven," St. Mark; "Carried up into heaven," St. Luke; while in Acts we read (1) that "he was taken up," an expression similar to that of either Gospel; and again, (2) that "he went up" or "he went" (Revised Version). Here, then, we have the power of the Father and the Son. As he rose by his own and his Father's power, he ascended by the same. Further, it may be implied that he went up with joyfulness to those realms of glory whence he had descended while the Father welcomed him home, and took him to that paternal bosom where he had been before all worlds. It must have been a splendid sight to witness. Some time ago we stood where many thousands were assembled to see an aeronaut ascend. With gradual ascent the aerial machine rose; upward and upward it glided; higher and higher still it mounted, while majestically and magnificently it moved. At length a silvery cloud received it, and screened it from the view; again, on emerging from the cloud, it pursued its way along the sky till it dwindled to a dark spot in the distance, and then passed out of sight. How grand, we thought, must have been the sight, apart from every other consideration, of our Lord's ascent from that spot where his feet last stood on Olivet! If, when our Lord was transfigured, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white as the light—if on that occasion his face and figure assumed somewhat of heavenly splendour—equally or more resplendent and heavenly, we may well suppose, was his appearance as he rose from earth in his journey through the sky. The glory of heaven was round about him; that glorified body shot upward with wondrous buoyancy. Enoch was translated—we are not told how; Elijah was borne up amid a whirlwind by a chariot of fire and horses of fire; Jesus, who had walked upon the waves, now mounts upon the winds, making the cloud his chariot and upborne on the wings of the wind. Glorious in his appearance, glorious in his motion, glorious in all the indescribable grandeur of his heavenward ascent, he proceeded on his way till a cloud—a bright cloud, a cloud silver-lined and beautiful—coming *underneath* received (ὑπέλαβεν) him as in a chariot, and hid him from their eyes.

IV. HIS ATTENDANTS. Neither went he alone; thousands of invisible beings formed his escort and carried him aloft. To this perhaps the psalmist, foreseeing it in prophetic vision, may allude when, in the sixty-eighth psalm, he says, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." No conqueror ever enjoyed such a triumph, no monarch ever had such a train. At length they reach the high battlements of heaven; the accompanying angels demand admittance; standing without the portals, they raise the voice like the sound of many waters as they say or sing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The angels within respond, making inquiry, "Who is this King of glory?" Then both, uniting in full chorus together, sing, "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." The Father everlasting takes him by the hand, and sets him at his side, and there he sits for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

"Who is this King of glory—who?
The Lord, for strength renown'd;
In battle mighty, o'er his foes
Eternal Victor crown'd.

"Who is this King of glory—who?
The Lord of hosts renown'd;
Of glory he alone is King,
Who is with glory crown'd."

V. THE WITNESSES OF THE SCENE. The witnesses of the scene were men on earth and angels from the sky—the one to testify that he rose from earth, the other to bear witness that he entered heaven. The former fact may perhaps be expressed by ἐπήρθη, the other by ἀνελήφθη; while his intermediate progress and journey between may be expressed by ἀνεφέρετο, imperfect, and πορευομένου, participle—both marking his gradual ascent. The human spectators, struck with the grandeur of the scene, stood as if riveted to the spot, and continued gazing up into heaven as though they would never be satisfied with seeing such a sight; or perhaps the surprise it occasioned was blended with sorrow, as if their Lord and Master had gone from them never to return. But two angels, apparelled in white, comforted them with the assurance that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from them into heaven," shall come again in like manner through the riven sky visibly and gloriously. The human witnesses of the Ascension felt personally interested in the result, the angelic looked pryingly into the things connected therewith. The sorrow of the disciples was succeeded by great joy, for though they had lost his bodily presence, his spiritual presence—nearer, closer, in every place, and at all times—is promised them instead.

VI. THE PLACE WHENCE HE ASCENDED. The place of the Ascension suggests a lesson of instruction and comfort. A garden on the western slope of Olivet had been the place of his sorest trial and the scene of his deepest tribulation prior to the Crucifixion; an upland on the eastern side, or near the summit of the same hill, was the place of his triumph. On one side was the dark enclosure, still noted for its sombre aspect and gloomy olives, where the Saviour agonized, sweating great drops of blood, and praying for the bitter cup, if possible, to pass; on the other side was the spot whence he ascended. There, too, men and angels met—men asleep from sorrow and oblivious of sympathy, an angel ministering strength and succour to the suffering Son of God; here men are rapt spectators, and angels swell his train. On one side of the mount were sorrow and suffering, on the other glory and triumph. May it not to some extent be the same with ourselves? The valley of Achor, which means "trouble," has often proved the door of hope. "We glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Humiliation goes before exaltation; the cross precedes the crown: "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together;" while our trials here shall enhance our triumph hereafter.

VII. THE PURPOSES SERVED BY THE ASCENSION. One purpose was *triumph* over his and our enemies. Having spoiled principalities, or reft them from him, he made a show of them openly. It was a custom of antiquity for a conqueror on the day of his triumph to have captives bound to his chariot and dragged along at his chariot-wheels. So with Christ. When he led captivity captive, he bound to his chariot-wheels sin, Satan, death, and hell. Sin he buried in his own grave, having borne its penalty. As for

Satan, the old serpent, he has bruised his head, destroying his works. Death he overcame by dying, and through death he has destroyed him that had the power of it; while in him and by him we can adopt the tone of triumph and say, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" Of the grave he has said, "I will be thy destruction;" and the day is hastening on apace when the earth shall cast forth her dead. Another purpose of the Ascension is the *bestowal of gifts*. On the day of a triumph the conqueror distributed many and costly gifts, sometimes dealing them out deliberately, and sometimes throwing them broadcast among the multitude. We read of Julius Cæsar, on the occasion of a great triumph, bestowing munificent donations on his soldiery, and distributing many gifts of grain and gold to the people as they crowded around. A greater than Cæsar or Solomon is here. Jesus, on the day of his triumph, having receiving gifts for triumphal distribution, "gave gifts unto men . . . he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Even on the rebellious he has conferred his favours, "that the Lord God might dwell among them." From the day of his ascension until now he has lavished on his people, with unstinted generosity and most bountiful hand, the benefits of salvation and the results of his redemptive work.

VIII. PREPARATION ABOVE. Having made provision for us when he was here below, he is gone to prepare a place above. He ascended to provide a place for us; and, having prepared it for us, he is now preparing us for it. In his Father's house are many mansions; he is gone to prepare one of those mansions for each of his followers. A mansion! Here is a word that denotes stability and implies duration. The most solid structure that ever man reared shall yield to the tooth of time. The pyramids of Egypt shall one day, we doubt not, be levelled with the sands of the desert that blow around them. The Roman Colosseum shall perish. The Parthenon of Athens shall be left without one pillar standing. St. Peter's and St. Paul's shall become heaps of rubbish. The castles of kings, that seem to defy decay, shall moulder. Earth itself shall be removed, and its everlasting hills shaken. But all the many mansions in glory shall be durable as the throne of God himself, and stable as the pillars of the universe.

"O Lord, thy love's unbounded—
So full, so vast, so free!
Our thoughts are all confounded
Whene'er we think on thee:
For us thou cam'st from heaven,
For us to bleed and die,
That, purchased and forgiven,
We might ascend on high."

J. J. G.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

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