THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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ST. LUKE.

Exposition

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Homiletics

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Homilies by Various Authors.

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VOL. I.

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

INTRODUCTION.

I. St. Luke's Gospel received as an Authoritative Writing in the First Age of Christianity.

In the last quarter of the second century—that is to say, in less than a hundred years after the death of St. John—the canon of the New Testament, as we have it now, was generally[1] accepted in all the Churches of the East and West.

How widespread was the religion of Jesus Christ before the close of the second century we have abundant testimony. Justin Martyr,[2] for instance, before the middle of the century, wrote how "there existed not a people, whether Greek or barbarian, whether they dwelt in tents or wandered about in covered waggons, among whom prayers were not offered up in the name of a crucified Jesus, to the Father and Creator of all things." Tertullian, a few years later, living in quite another part of the Roman world, told the heathens that his brethren were to be found filling the camp, the assemblies, the palace, the senate."[3]

Before the year 200 the well-known and voluminous writings of Irenæus in Gaul, Clement in Alexandria, and Tertullian in Carthage, the capital of wealthy Proconsular Africa, testify to the wide and general acceptance of the books composing the New Testament canon. These writings clearly tell us what was the judgment of the Catholic Church at that early period

[1] The books which at that early date had only received a *partial* acceptance were the Epistle to the Hebrews, the two shorter Epistles of St. John, the Second Epistle of St. Peter, the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude, and the Apocalypse.

[2] Justin Martyr, 'Dial. cum Trypho,' 117.

[3] Tertullian, 'Apol.,' 37.

in the matter of the sacred Christian books. They were the holy treasure-house whither men resorted for authoritative statement on doctrine and on practice. Here men sought for and found their Master's words, and the teaching of his chosen followers. In the weekly services of the Church, as early as the middle of the century, we learn from Justin Martyr, the memoirs of the apostles (by which term he designated the Gospels) were read on the same footing as the writings of the prophets of the Old Testament.

Among these books, which in the last years of the second century were among Christians so universally received as authoritative and honoured as Holy Scripture, was *the Gospel according to St. Luke.*

We will now see how far it is possible to trace the *existence* of the Third Gospel from the close of the second century upwards towards the source.

There is no question that it was generally known and received in the last quarter of the second century: *was it referred to as a sacred writing before this date?*

From A.D. 120 *to* 175. *Irenæus*, Bishop of Lyons, in Gaul, succeeded Pothinus in the episcopate about A.D. 177. He tells us how, in his youth, he had been acquainted with Polycarp in Smyrna, who had known St. John. The date of his birth was about A.D. 130. In the writings we possess of Irenæus we find no reference by name to any book of the New Testament; but we meet with such striking coincidences of language and thought with many of those books, that it is perfectly certain he was intimately acquainted with them. St. Luke's Gospel was one of these.

The Canon of Muratori was discovered in the Ambrosian Library at Milan in a manuscript of great antiquity, containing some of the works of Chrysostom. It is but a fragment, yet it gives us, with fair completeness, the judgment of the Western Church on the canon of the New Testament about the year of our Lord 170. The date is clearly ascertained by internal evidence. Among the other sacred books it writes thus of the Third Gospel: "The Gospel of St. Luke stands third in order, having been written by St. Luke the physician, the companion of St. Paul, who, not being himself an eye-witness, based his narrative on such information as he could obtain, beginning from the birth of John."

Justin Martyr, of whose writings we possess several important pieces,[1] was born at the close of the first century, and died about A.D. 165. His works that are preserved may be dated roughly A.D. 130 to 150–160. They contain a mass of references to the Gospel narratives, embracing the chief facts of our Lord's life, and many details of his teaching—never, save in one or two very unimportant details, travelling out of the track of the story of the four evangelists, his many references being free from legendary admixture. These circumstances connected with our Lord's life were

[1] Of the writings which bear now the name of Justin Martyr, two 'Apologies' and the 'Dialogue with Trypho' are genuine beyond a doubt (cf Westcott on the Canon, 'The Age of the Greek Apologists,' ch. ii.).

derived for the most part, he tells us, from certain written records which, he said, rested on apostolic authority, and were used and read in the public assemblies of Christians. He never quotes these records by name, but refers to them simply as "memoirs of the apostles" (*ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων*); two of these, he says, were written by apostles, two by their followers.

His references are for the most part connected with the *teaching* rather than with the *works* of Jesus. He weaves into the tapestry of his story the narratives especially of SS. Matthew and Luke, quoting often the very words of the evangelists. In his 'Apology' Westcott reckons nearly fifty allusions to the gospel history. In the 'Dialogue' about seventy facts peculiar to St. Luke's narrative are introduced by Justin; for instance, the account of the sweat which dropped as blood from the Redeemer in Gethsemane, and the Master's prayer for the passing of "this cup." These "memoirs" which Justin uses so freely, and which he is careful to state were read in the weekly services of the Christians, were, in the estimation of the Church of his time (which was roughly the middle years of the second century), evidently ranked with the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament; and these memoirs of the apostles, it is perfectly certain, were the Gospels we know severally as the Gospels of SS. Matthew, *Luke*, and Mark.

As Justin wrote before and after the year of our Lord 150, we have traced St. Luke's Gospel as an authoritative sacred document a considerable way upwards towards the source.

The testimony of the early heretical schools is very useful to us here, and puts us a further step backwards. About A.D. 140 Marcion, the son of a Bishop of Sinope, claimed to reproduce in its original simplicity the Gospel of St. Paul. He took for his purpose *the Gospel of St. Luke* (which evidently, when Marcion taught, was a universally acknowledged book of Holy Scripture) and ten Epistles of St. Paul. The text of the Gospel and Epistles Marcion altered to suit his own peculiar views.[1]

Valentinus, the author of the famous heresy which bears his name, came to Rome, Irenæus tells us, in the episcopate of Hyginus, and taught there from about A.D. 139 to 160. In the fragments of his writings which are preserved, he cites, among other New Testament books, *the Gospel of St. Luke* as Scripture.[2]

Heracleon, the familiar friend of the heresiarch just alluded to, himself the great Valentinian commentator, has left commentaries on *St. Luke* and St. John, and fragments of these are still in existence. Clement of Alexandria refers to this *commentary on St. Luke*, which must have been put out *before* the middle of the second century.[3]

Cerdo, an heretical teacher who lived still nearer the beginning of the

[1] Cf. Westcott on the Canon, 'The Early Heretics,' ch. iv.; Tertullian, 'Adv. Marc.,' v.; 'Epiph. Hær.,' xlii.

[2] Cf. Westcott on the Canon, ch. iv.; Tertullian, 'De Præscr. Hær.'

[3] Cf. Westcott on the Canon, ch. iv; Clem. Alex., 'Stromata,' iv. 9, § 73.

second century, according to Theodoret, used the Gospels, *especially that of St. Luke*, in his system of theology.[1]

Basilides was one of the earliest Gnostics, who taught at Alexandria about A.D. 120. He thus lived on the verge of the apostolic times. His testimony to the acknowledged books in the canon of the New Testament Scriptures is clear and valuable. We have now but a few pages of his writings still remaining with us, but in these few are certain references to several of St. Paul's Epistles to the Gospel of St. Matthew, St. John, and *St. Luke*.[2]

Tatian, a pupil of Justin Martyr, according to the testimony of Epiphanius, Theodoret, and Eusebius, shortly after the middle of the century, composed what may be called the first *harmony* of the four Gospels—the 'Diatessarôn.' Although Tatian appears to have on some subjects adopted strange and heretical opinions, in general form his harmony or 'Diatessarôn' was so orthodox and helpful that it enjoyed a wide ecclesiastical popularity.[3]

It will materially add to the strength of our argument that the Gospel of St. Luke was generally received by the Churches as authoritative, because divinely inspired, throughout the second century, if it can be shown that the Gospel was publicly acknowledged at the same early date by *national Churches* as well as by individual scholars and teachers.

Two versions belong to this first period of the Church's history—the Peschito-Syriac and the Old Latin (used in North or Proconsular Africa).

The first, the Peschito-Syriac, represents the vernacular dialect of Palestine and the adjacent Syriac in the age of our Lord. Competent scholars consider[4] that the formation of this most ancient version is to be fixed within the first half of the first century. It contains the Gospel of St. Luke and all the books of the received canon of the New Testament save 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, St. Jude, and the Apocalypse, and may be regarded as the first monument of Catholic Christianity.[5]

The second version, the Old Latin, was made in the great and wealthy province of Proconsular Africa, of which Carthage was the chief city, at a very early period.

Tertullian, writing in the latter part of the second century, describes the widespread influence of Christianity in his time. His own important province, no doubt, was before his eyes, when he wrote how "Christians were filling the palace, the senate, the forum, and the camp, leaving their temples only to the heathen."[6] To persecute the Christians in North Africa at the close of the second century would be to decimate Carthage.[7] Tertullian, in his voluminous writings, shows that he recognized a current Latin version (the Old Latin). For the North African Church to have

[1] Cf. Godet, 'St. Luke,' Introd., 6; Pseudo-Tertullian, 'De Præscr. Hær.,' 51. (Westcott doubts the independent authority of this quotation).

[2] St. Hyppolyti, 'Refutatio Omn. Hær.,' bk. vii., § 20, 25, 26, etc.

[3] Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iv. 29; Westcott on the Canon, ch. iv.

[4] Westcott on the Canon, ch. iii., "The Early Versions."

[5] Professor Westcott. [6] 'Apol.,' ii. 37. [7] 'Ad Scap.,' c. 5.

attained the proportions described by Tertullian at the close of the second century, we must presuppose that Christianity was at a very early period planted in that province, and that its growth was exceedingly rapid. This would necessarily indicate an early date in the second century for the formation of that version in the dialect used in the province, and which Tertullian found evidently in common use.

St. Luke and most of the other books of the canon are found in this Old Latin version quoted by Tertullian; the only omitted writings were the Epistle of St. James and the Second Epistle of St. Peter. The Epistle to the Hebrews did not *originally* exist in this most ancient version; it was added subsequently, *but before* Tertullian's days, *i.e.* before A.D. 200.

Professor Westcott, after an elaborate discussion, concludes positively that the Old Latin version must have been made *before* A.D. 170. *How much more ancient* it really is cannot yet be discovered. This great scholar conjectures that it was, however, coeval with the introduction of Christianity into Africa, and that it was the result of the spontaneous efforts of the African Christians.

The absence of the few canonical books above mentioned in these most ancient versions indirectly are an evidence of their great antiquity. It was not that the first translators had examined the proofs of their authenticity and found them wanting, and in consequence had excluded them; but the truth, no doubt, was that these particular books had never reached the countries in question at the early date when the versions were made.

The omitted Epistles were, from their brevity, as in the case of the Epistle of St. Jude, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, or from the contents being more especially addressed to Jewish Christians rather than to the great Gentile world, as in the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of St. James, less likely to be rapidly circulated. The Apocalypse, from its mystic nature, would naturally be less read, and consequently it would require a longer period to become generally known and accepted.

As might have been expected, *the Gospels of St. Luke* and St. Matthew have left more ample traces in the scattered fragments of early Christian literature which have come down to us than any other of the writings included in the New Testament canon.

We now come to the early years of the second century and the closing years of the first century—roughly speaking, the twenty or twenty-five years which followed the death of St. John. Here, as might be expected from the comparatively few remains of Christian writings of this very early period which we possess, the evidences of the existence and recognition of *St. Luke* and the other books of the New Testament are more rare. Yet even in the scanty fragments still remaining to us of this very early period, we find traces of the inspired writings of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

In that curious religious romance entitled the 'Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,' a writing which Bishop Lightfoot speaks of as "coming

near the apostolic age," and which the best modern scholars generally conceive to have been put out some time between A.D. 100 and A.D. 120, it is evident that much of the New Testament canon was known to the writer, who weaves into the tapestry of his work many of the New Testament thoughts and expressions, and occasionally quotes whole passages more or less accurately. Especially the Gospels of St. Matthew and *St. Luke* are made use of. What is very noticeable in this ancient and curious treatise, written evidently by a Jewish Christian to his own people, is the influence which the books written by or under the influence of *St. Paul* evidently exercised upon the author.

From St. Luke's Gospel twenty-two rare (Greek) words are used by the writer of the 'Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,' of which rare words nineteen are found in no contemporary writer. From the Acts, which may be looked upon as a second part of St. Luke's Gospel, twenty-four rare words are taken, of which twenty are alone found in this book of the New Testament. The anonymous author of the 'Testaments' borrowed from the vocabulary of most of the New Testament books, though from none so largely as from those written by or under the influence of St. Paul.

This most ancient and singular treatise has received in the last few years considerable attention at the hands of scholars. Some consider it honeycombed by interpolations of a later date, but as yet this theory of later interpolation is supported mainly by ingenious conjecture.

Very lately the scholarly Archbishop Bryennios, Metropolitan of Nicomedia, discovered and published the known but long-lost 'Teaching of the Apostles' (Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα Ἀποστόλων). This most ancient treatise probably belongs to the last decade of the first century, possibly to an earlier date. It is largely based on sayings of Jesus Christ reported in the Gospels, especially in that of St. Matthew; but St. Luke's Gospel was distinctly known and used by the writer. One clear reference to the Acts occurs in ch. iv. of the 'Teaching.' The words rather than the acts and miracles of the Lord are dwelt upon. No Gospel is quoted by name.

We have now traced the Third Gospel back to days when probably St. John was still living, certainly to a time when men who had listened to John and Peter, to Paul and Luke, were still living and teaching. The testimony of one of the most famous of these pupils or disciples of the apostles will close our long chain of evidence.

Clement of Rome was the disciple of St. Paul; the oldest traditions, too, couple his name with St. Peter. At a very early period, undoubtedly, in the lifetime of St. John he presided over the Church of the Christians at Rome. It is certain that in the Church of the first century he exercised a powerful and lasting influence. Various ancient writings have been preserved bearing his honoured name. Of these only the first Greek epistle can be confidently pronounced authentic; it has been variously dated, A.D. 68, 70, 95. Whichever of these dates be accepted, its testimony will be the witness of the belief in the years immediately succeeding the martyrdom of Paul, when

certainly many of the pupils and disciples of the twelve still lived and worked among men. We will confine ourselves to this first Greek epistle of unquestioned authenticity.

Clement[1] was evidently a diligent student of the wrtings of Paul, Peter, and John. He occasionally uses words found only in St. Paul; still more frequently those common to SS. Paul and Peter; while the influence of their inspired writings is plainly visible throughout this first epistle. In two passages the Gospels are evidently expressly quoted. The first (cap. xiii.) begins thus: "Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, which he spoke to teach goodness and long-suffering." Then follows a passage in which the writer seems to unite St. Matthew's and St. Luke's accounts of the sermon on the mount; but where, in the opinion of Volkmar, the text of St. Luke predominates (see Luke vi. 31, 36—38). The second is in the forty-sixth chapter, and contains the spirit and indeed the very words of the Lord as reported in Matt. xxvi. 24; xviii. 6; Mark ix. 42; Luke xvii. 2.

Archbishop Thomson sums up generally the evidence for the early reception of the Gospels among the Christian Churches of the first days as inspired authoritative writings, as follows: "In the last quarter of the second century the four Gospels were established and recognized, and held a place that was refused to all other memoirs of the Lord. At the end of the second quarter they were quoted largely, though not very exactly, but the authors' names were not made prominent; they were 'memoirs,' they were 'the Gospels,' and the like. At the opening of the second century the words of the Lord were quoted with unmistakable resemblance to passages of our Gospels, which, however, are quoted loosely without any reference to names of authors, and with a throwing together of passages from all three (synoptical) Gospels" (Introduction to Gospel of St. Luke, by the Archbishop of York, in the 'Speaker's Commentary').

In the last decade, then, of the first century we find that the three first Gospels had been written, and were used as the authoritative basis of Christian teaching. Now, what is the probable story of *the composition* of these Divine memoirs?

To answer this question, let us go back to Pentecost (A.D. 33), and the months and first years succeeding that memorable day.

With startling rapidity the few *hundreds* who before the Ascension, with more or less earnestness, *believed* in Jesus of Nazareth, and accepted him as Messiah, became, after the first Pentecost, *thousands*, and these numbers kept growing in Palestine and the adjacent countries, with an ever-widening tendency. It was necessary at once to teach these "thousands" something beyond the great fact that the Son of God had died for them. The apostles of the Son of God felt at once that they must tell these "thousands" what was the *life* which the Son of God would have those who believed in him *live*. To do this they repeated to the listening crowds their Master's *teaching;* they rehearsed again and again the memorable

[1] Cf. Westcott on the Canon, 'Age of the Apostolic Fathers' ch. i.

discourses which they had listened to by the lake, in the synagogues of Capernaum, in the temple courts; some spoken to them alone in comparative solitude, some addressed to curious and even hostile crowds in the days of the public ministry.

At first, for many months, possibly for years, there was little, or even nothing, written. The apostles and their first disciples were Jews, we must remember—men trained more or less in the rabbinical schools, whose great rule was, *commit nothing to writing*. The training, we must be careful to remember, in the Jewish schools of Palestine in the time of our Lord was almost exclusively *oral*.

Now, the great teachers of the *first* days had all, perhaps, with rare exceptions, been with Christ. Out of their abundant memories of their loved Master's sayings, aided, we may reverently assume, by the Holy Ghost, they reproduced, after taking mutual counsel, just those words, sayings, discourses, which they considered would best paint the picture of the life. He wished "his own" to live. The acts which were done, the miracles which he worked, the incidents which happened, were gradually added in their proper places to complete the picture of "the life to be led," which they painted. Special doctrinal teaching at first was very simple—a few great truths, apparently, and no more, were taught.

Together the first great teachers "remained in Jerusalem, in close communion, long enough to shape a common narrative, and to fix it with requisite consistency. The place of instruction was the synagogue and market-place, not the student's chamber."[1] Provision for the *student's chamber* was made later by one of them, still acting under the Holy Spirit's influence, when John the beloved put forth his Gospel, which dealt rather with doctrine than with life. But in the first days—possibly for many years—the gospel preached by the great teachers was the gospel much as we find it in Mark, or Luke, or Matthew.

An original oral gospel, generally arranged by the apostles in the days immediately succeeding the first Pentecost, with one great general outline repeated over and over again, was, doubtless, the foundation of the three synoptical Gospels. This accounts for the identity of so many of the details, and also for the similarity in the language. It is highly probable that, in the first years, this oral gospel existed in Aramaic, as well as in Greek, to suit the various classes of hearers to whom it was presented.

St. Mark's, on the whole, was probably the first form in which the oral gospel was committed to writing. It is the shortest and the simplest recension of the preaching of the first days reduced to a consecutive history. "The Gospel of St. Mark, conspicuous for its vivid simplicity, seems to be the most direct representation of the first evangelic tradition, the common foundation on which the others were reared. In essence, if not in composition, it is the oldest, and the absence of the history of the infancy brings its contents within the limits laid down by St. Peter for the extent

[1] Professor Westcott, 'Introduction to Gospels,' ch. iii.

of the apostolic testimony."[1] After the writing of St. Mark, it is probable that a considerable period elapsed before St. Matthew and St. Luke were composed. These two longer and more detailed memoirs of the Lord's earthly life represent "the two great types of recension to which it may be supposed that the simple narrative was subjected. St. Luke presents the Hellenic, and St. Matthew (Greek) the later Hebraic form of the tradition."[2]

The three first Gospels, in their present form, were, we believe, put out somewhere between the years A.D. 55 and A.D. 70, the year of the fall of Jerusalem. Some would, however, place the date of *St. Luke* shortly after than before the great catastrophe to the city and temple.

Ancient tradition and modern criticism, however, generally accept this date—A.D. 55 to A.D. 70. The hypothesis which places the publication of any one of the three after the fall of Jerusalem would only give a very few years later as the date.

Of any writings or memoirs upon which the Gospels were founded we have only vague and uncertain traces.

Papias, who lived very near the time of the apostles, and whom Irenæus calls "a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp"—Papias, in a work termed Λογίων Κυριακῶν Ἐξήγησις, "An Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord," of which a few fragments are preserved by Irenæus and others, writes as follows: "Matthew wrote the oracles in Hebrew, and every one interpreted them as he was able."[3] The word in the original for "the oracles" is τὰ λόγια. It is now impossible to be certain what exactly τὰ λόγια includes. Westcott paraphrases τὰ λόγια by "the gospel"—"the sum of the words and works of the Lord." Schleiermacher and others explain τὰ λόγια as "discourses" only. It is likely enough that this was not the same as the Gospel of St. Matthew as we now possess it, but simply a body of the Lord's discourses[4] committed to writing by St. Matthew at a very early period in the Hebrew or Aramaic dialect.

The one other reference to writings on the subject of the Lord's life put out anterior to the synoptical Gospels, is that statement of St. Luke himself in the prologue to his Gospel: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled [or, 'fully established'] among us" (ch. i. 1). Here St. Luke, *without disapproval*, simply mentions others who had already written portions of the gospel story. The statement of the evangelist is studiedly brief, and seems to assume that, in his judgment, none of the "many" who had taken the "story" in hand had been completely successful. He by no means condemns these as inaccurate, and does not imply that he will not make use of them; indeed, by his words, "it seemed good to me also," he

[1] Acts i. 21, 22.
[2] Westcott, 'Introduction to Gospels,' ch. iii.
[3] Routh, 'Reliq. Sac.,' i. vi. p. 14; Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 39.
[4] It is noticeable that the bases of the 'Teaching of the Apostles,' recently brought to light, are the Lord's *discourses* and words rather than his *acts*.

ranges himself on the same platform with these earlier students and writers of the Divine story. The truth probably was that these writings to which he refers were incomplete portions rather than a whole.

To sum up, when St. Luke undertook his great work there was probably current, in the Churches in which he lived and worked, a general oral authoritative gospel, which had grown up in the apostolic circle in very early days, in the months and years which followed the first Pentecost, much in the way we have sketched out above. In different Churches, we may with all reverence assume, existed separate and distinct memoirs and faithful oral traditions—memoirs and traditions written and preserved by men and women, eye-witnesses of the scenes and hearers of the words so preserved; such a memoir, for instance, as that evidently Aramaic fragment which treats of the birth and infancy and childhood of the Redeemer woven into the tapestry of the first two chapters of St. Luke. It is of such pieces as these that St. Luke, no doubt, was thinking when he wrote the first verse of his Gospel.

Of the three synoptical Gospels, the first and third are clearly compilations, arranged with a definite aim, constructed out of materials before the writer. The second, as we have already affirmed, is the simplest, as it is the shortest. It probably represents, if not the very first, at least a very early presentment of the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With the first and second we are not just now concerned.

The third, the Gospel of St. Luke, is the most carefully composed of the three divinely inspired stories of the Redeemer. It is the reply to questionings which would naturally present themselves to a thoughtful, cultured man who had heard, and after hearing had been impressed with the strange beauty and the intense reality of, the story of the cross. There were, to such a man, many things, apart from the simple narrative which formed the groundwork of the preaching of the first days, which called for explanation. *Who* was this strange, marvellous Being, whose love for men —a love passing understanding—had led him to die for men who only repaid his love with the bitterest hate?

> "The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So the All-great were the All-loving too;
> So through the thunder comes a human voice,
> Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> Thou hast no power, nor mayest conceive of mine;
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love;
> And thou must love me, who have died for thee!'
> The madman saith, *He said so;* it is strange!"
>
> (R. Browning, 'An Epistle of Karshish, the Arab Physician.')

Whence came he? *How* and *when* and in *what guise* did he first appear among men? *Where* did he spend the first thirty years of his life? What was his *earthly home?* Who was that honoured and mighty forerunner,

that John, whom Herod had foully murdered? What was the meaning of *the exclusion of Israel*, the chosen people, from his Church?

All these questionings would naturally occur to a cultured listener, who longed to embrace the promises of Jesus, about A.D. 60–70, when the Church was growing into a great and widespread company, and the "story" was being repeated at second and third hand in many a city far away from the Holy Land.

"No one could understand better than St. Paul the need of an exhaustive reply to such questionings, the need of an authoritative history, where an account of the rise and progress of the gospel of Jesus Christ was related with accurate and careful detail. And if Paul, among the helpers who surrounded him, had an evangelist distinguished for his gifts and culture—and we know from 2 Cor. viii. 18, 19 that there was really one of this description—how could he help casting his eyes upon him, and encouraging him to undertake so excellent a work? Such is the task which Luke has discharged" (Godet).

We have said this Third Gospel was *most carefully composed*, with the view of satisfying the requirements of a thoughtful, cultured man, such as was probably that "most excellent Theophilus" to whom the Gospel was addressed.

First, it contained, with its sequel the Acts, not a few historical notices, such as the census of Quirinius, under the decree of Augustus (ch. ii. 1—3); the contemporary Roman and Jewish rulers in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar (ch. iii. 1, 2); Pilate's and Herod's jurisdictions (ch. xxiii. 1, 12); with allusions by name to public persons, such as Cornelius, centurion of the Italian band (Acts x. 1); Herod (Acts xii. 1, etc.; xiii. 1); Sergius Paulus (Acts xiii. 7); the Emperor Claudius's decree (Acts xviii. 2); Gallio the deputy of Achaia (Acts xviii. 12—16); Claudius Lysias, Felix the Roman governor (Acts xxiii. 26); Porcius Festus (Acts xxiv. 27); King Agrippa and Bernice (Acts xxv.); the appeal to Cæsar (Acts xxvi. 32).

Secondly, it embodied in its narrative that beautiful and interesting account of the nativity and the events which preceded it and immediately succeeded it, with a few notices of the boyhood of the Lord. These details, as we have suggested in the Exposition, were evidently procured from information communicated to St. Luke (or St. Paul) by eye-witnesses, many of the details probably by the virgin-mother herself. These two first chapters would answer many a question which would naturally suggest itself to reverent inquirers who had listened to the simple gospel message as first delivered, and had enrolled themselves among the followers of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, the picture of the gradual development of the Church of Jesus Christ is drawn with extraordinary skill and care by St. Luke—its development from Bethlehem and Nazareth to Jerusalem and Rome. On the morning of the nativity, in the opening chapters of St. Luke, the Church is confined to Joseph, Mary, and the holy Babe. To these, just the few shepherds of

Bethlehem are added. The close of the Acts shows us the foundation of the Church at Rome; but Rome was but a branch, an offshoot, of the great Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem. St. Luke traces the various stages in this development—from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Capernaum, from Capernaum to the Galilæan and Peræan villages, then to Jerusalem. The Acts takes up the wondrous story, and shows how the Church, advanced from Jerusalem to the Syrian Antioch, from Antioch to the cities of Asia Minor, from great Asian centres like Ephesus across the seas to the old world-renowned cities of Greece, and then from Greece to Italy, and the story closes with the beginning of the Church at Rome.

Nor does St. Luke alone depict with his great skill the *geographical* development of the Church of Jesus Christ. He describes, too, how the *work* of the Divine Master and his chosen instruments developed. First, we have the story of the birth and growth of the pioneer, John the Baptist; then the birth and childhood of Jesus himself. He paints the beginning of his organized Church, when he summons the twelve out of the number of believers who gathered round him soon after he began his public ministry among men.

The wants of the growing organization soon called for more workers. In the Third Gospel the solemn summons of the seventy is related. For a moment the advancing work seems arrested by a fatal blow, and the death of the Master on the cross puts, as it seems, a final stop to the new Church and its work; but the Resurrection, which St. Luke describes as quickly following, gives a new and irresistible impulse to the Church and the Church's work among men. The same men are at work, and the same Master is guiding their labours. But the homeless Master is no longer guiding them as they walked together among the fields of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem, but from his glory-throne in heaven; and the men, the same men, are quite changed: it is as though they had drunk of the waters of another and stronger life.

Luke describes in the Acts, the sequel to his Gospel, the rapid progress and the swift though orderly development of the now great and numerous Church. Deacons are chosen to assist the apostles; then we read of prophets and teachers and elders, of the foundation-stories of a great and powerful organization.

II. Some of the Special Features of St. Luke's Gospel.

We have dwelt upon the position of St. Luke's Gospel as a great Christian writing in the earliest days of Christianity, its teaching being considered as absolutely authoritative, as containing the mind, even the very words, of the Divine Founder. We have shown how it was received before four score years had been counted from the Ascension Day, not only by all the Churches, but by the principal heretical sects which sprang up so soon in the Christian story; and our data for this general very early acceptance

of the Third Gospel were drawn, not merely from the scanty fragments which remain to us of individual scholars and teachers, but from versions which were the public work of whole Churches. Its author and his peculiar school of thought will be presently discussed. We will now proceed to a more detailed consideration of some of the contents of the Gospel named after St. Luke.

Of the three synoptical Gospels, St. Luke, though not the longest, is the fullest, that is, it contains the most details of the Saviour's life on earth. And some of these details peculiar to St. Luke are of very high importance in their practical teaching, as also in their bearing on the blessed life.

Among the more striking of these are—the raising of the son of the widow of Nain; the episode of the woman who was a sinner kneeling at the feet of Jesus when he was at the banquet given in the house of Simon the Pharisee; the tears which the Master wept over Jerusalem; the famous parables of the good Samaritan, with its broad, universal teaching; the parable showing how and why Jesus loved the lost—the lost *drachma*, the lost *sheep*, and the lost *son;* the parables of Lazarus and Dives, of the unjust steward, the unjust judge, the Pharisee and the publican, etc.; the prayer on the cross for those who were doing him to death; the promise to the dying thief hanging on the cross by his side; the walk to Emmaus, and the conversation during the walk after the Resurrection.

We must not omit here to mention two considerable sections of this Gospel which contain many peculiar details touching the life or the teaching of Jesus, which alone are told by St. Luke. (1) The first two chapters treating of the infancy and boyhood of the Saviour. (2) The account of that prolonged journey, or perhaps four distinct journeys, toward Jerusalem related in ch. ix. 51—xix. 27. Some of the events related in this important section, and some of the words spoken by Jesus on these journeyings, are repeated in one or other of the evangelists, notably in St. John; but much in this great section is peculiar to St. Luke.

III. The Especial Teaching of St. Luke.

St. Luke's Gospel has been charged by some critics with teaching certain doctrines alien to the teaching of primitive Christianity, in some respects differing from the teaching in St. Matthew or in St. John.

These critics complain that St. Luke, different to the older apostles, teaches in the Third Gospel "a universalism"—a breaking-down of all legal privileges and class distinctions, a free admission of all sinners alike to the mercy of God upon their repentance, a universality in Christ's promises, which jars upon some minds peculiarly constituted and specially trained, in the nineteenth century equally with the first.

There is no doubt that this Divine picture of the Lord's life and teaching that we call St. Luke's was mainly the work of that great servant of Jesus Christ whom men call Paul, only we maintain that there is no real

difference between the fundamental doctrines taught in this Gospel and those laid down in the first, the second, and the fourth. We believe simply that in St. Luke—and the Epistles of St. Paul repeat the teaching—the universality of Christ's promises are more distinctly marked; the invitations to the careless, to the wanderer, to the forsaken of man—"les reprouvés" of this world—are more marked, more definite, more urgent. The doctrines of the four Gospels are the same, only in St. Luke this special feature of the Blessed One's teaching is more accentuated.

See how St. Luke alone, in his short *résumé* of the Baptist's preaching, dwells upon that peculiar feature of Isaiah upon which that great forerunner evidently laid great stress, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." Luke ignores all privilege of race, or caste, or training, by tracing back the ancestry of the Redeemer to *Adam*. Abraham is ignored here. In several cases faith alone wins forgiveness. The story of the good Samaritan reads a sharp, stern lesson, and suggests a grave warning to the self-styled orthodox of every age, from the first century to the nineteenth. The reasons why Jesus loved the "seeming lost" of the world are strangely but beautifully shown in the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. The parable of the marriage supper accentuates the same teaching. The ingratitude of the nine Jewish lepers, painted in the strongest colours, sharply contrasts with the gratitude of the despised alien *Samaritan;* and the Lord's blessing in the latter case anticipates a possible tremendous reversal of human judgments at the last great day.

In these and such-like teachings in the Third Gospel, although there is a danger of their being pressed by expositors too far, many grave and anxious thoughts, however, are suggested, and warn us against hasty and imperfect estimates of others, on whom, perhaps, in our short-sighted judgment we look down.

This Gospel certainly dwells with peculiar emphasis on the infinite love and compassion of Jesus, which induced him, in his endless pity, to seek, yes, and to save, souls among all sorts and conditions of men.

It is especially the Gospel of hope and love, of pity and of faith. Very beautifully are these thoughts exemplified by the sayings of Jesus on the cross, reported by St. Luke. It is the Gospel of *hope*. The Divine Victim prayed for his murderers. There was *hope* still, even for them. Of whom shall *we*, then, despair? It is the Gospel of *love*. He so loved the men doing him to death that he could, in his great agony, *pray* for them. It is the Gospel of *pity*. He was so sorry for the poor ignorant but repentant thief dying by his side that he could promise him *paradise*. It is the Gospel of *faith*. With his last breath he could commend his departing spirit to his Father and ours.

"This is the Gospel from which shines most brightly the light of redemption, forgiveness, restoration, for all the human race; the two earlier Gospels are illuminated by the same light, for it is the light of the Spirit of Christ; but if differences are to be noticed at all, this is one of the most

distinctly marked. . . . Many of the Lord's parables and words reported only by St. Luke lead the mind of his readers to understand the infinite love and pity of Jesus which led him to seek and save in every region and class. Before this love all questions of class break down. The door of redemption is opened wide; the Pharisee fails of forgiveness, and the penitent publican secures it. The priest and Levite pass on the other side, but the good Samaritan tends the wounded man. Simon the Pharisee, the host of Jesus, learns a new lesson from our Lord when the sinful woman is allowed to draw near and to wash the feet of Jesus. All this points to a breaking-down of all legal privileges and distinctions of class, and to the admission of all sinners alike to the mercy of the Lord upon their repentance. *God hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted them of low degree*" (Archbishop Thomson).

Some critics, too, have found fault with what they term Luke's heresy in regard to his bold assertion of the rights of the poor against the rich, alleging that, in St. Luke's presentment of the teaching of Jesus Christ, only the poor *as such* appear to be saved, the rich, on the other hand, seem condemned *as such*.

There was, we know, a tendency in the early days of Christianity to exaggerate the so-called blessings of poverty, and to depreciate the so-called curse of wealth or comparative wealth. We see it in the mistaken attempt in the primitive Church of Jerusalem, where, at all events, the greater number of members parted with their possessions and attempted to live a life of Christian communism. The disastrous result is told in the New Testament story, where the deep poverty of the Church of Jerusalem, the consequence of their mistaken interpretation of their Master's words, is frequently and pointedly alluded to. Later a distinct sect arose, the Ebionites, when this teaching concerning the evil of riches was pressed home in an exaggerated form.

But it is a strange mistake to see in St. Luke's Gospel any encouragement to this curious misunderstanding of the Lord's words and parables. Our Master saw and pointed out that there was a special compensation for poverty. Less tempted, less wedded to this life, the faithful poor man stood often fairer for the kingdom of God than his seemingly more fortunate, wealthier brother. But we see very clearly from St. Luke's teaching that it is never poverty which saves, or wealth which condemns. It was the Samaritan's righteous *use* of his substance which won the Lord's smile of approval.

IV. The Author of the Third Gospel.

The earliest traditions of the Church, and the writings which we possess of her teachers—of men who lived in the century following the death of St. John—the "remains," too, of the great heretical teachers who taught for the most part in the first half of the second century, all bear witness

that the author of the Third Gospel was identical with the writer of the Acts, and that this person was the St. Luke well known in the days of the beginnings of Christianity as the companion and friend of St. Paul. Most of these early references in some form or other connect St. Luke's work with St. Paul.

Among the more interesting and important of these, *Irenæus*, writing in Southern Gaul *circa* A.D. 180, says, "Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by him (Paul)" ('Adv. Hæres.,' iii. 1); and again, "That Luke was inseparable from Paul, his fellow-worker in the gospel, is shown by himself. . . . Thus the apostles, simply and without envying any one, handed down to all these things which they themselves had learned from the Lord; thus, therefore, Luke also . . . has handed down to us the things which he had learned from them, as he witnesses when he says, 'Even as they delivered them to us which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word'" ('Adv. Hæres.,' iii. 14).

Tertullian, who lived and wrote in Proconsular Africa in the last years of the second century, tells us how "Luke's digest was usually ascribed to Paul" ('Adv. Marcion,' iv. 5; see too 'Adv. Marcion,' iv. 2).

Eusebius, the Church historian, writing a little more than a century later, and who spent much of his life in collecting and editing the records of the first beginnings of Christianity, relates that "Luke, who was a native of Antioch, and by profession a physician, for the most part a companion of Paul, and who was not slightly acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us two books divinely inspired. . . . One of these is the Gospel. . . . And it is said that Paul was accustomed to mention the Gospel according to him, whenever in his Epistles speaking, as it were, of some Gospel of his own, he says *according to my gospel*" ('Hist. Eccl.,' vi. 25; see also St. Jerome, 'De Vir. Illustr.,' c. 7). And this apparently generally received tradition, which at all events very closely connects the Third Gospel with St. Paul, receives additional confirmation when the teaching and occasionally the very expressions of St. Luke's Gospel are compared with the teaching of the Epistles of St. Paul. The very important section of St. Luke's Gospel which describes the institution of the Lord's Supper, closely even in verbal coincidences, resembles St. Paul's account of the same blessed sacrament (comp. too 1 Cor. xv. 3 with ch. xxiv. 26, 27).

Then in the teaching. It is universally agreed that there is a general affinity between St. Paul and St. Luke. It is in the Third Gospel that especially those doctrines which are commonly termed Pauline are pressed with peculiar force. Both Paul and Luke, in their teaching, bring into special prominence the promise of redemption made to the whole human race, without distinction of nation or family, ignoring in the gracious offer *all* privilege whatsoever. "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." Many of the parables told only by St. Luke, notably that of the good Samaritan; in the parable-stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, illustrating the love of Jesus shown in seeking the lost—read as

examples of the teaching pressed home in the Pauline Epistles, homely, vivid illustrations taken from the everyday life of Syria and Palestine. The appearances of the risen Jesus after the Resurrection almost exactly correspond with those related by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv.).

That a close connection existed between Paul and Luke we know from several allusions to Luke in the Epistles of Paul: "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you" (Col. iv. 14); "There salute thee, Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus. . . . Lucas, my fellow-labourer" (Philem. 24); "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. iv. 11).

Some expositors have thought that this friendship of Paul and Luke only began at Rome, a city in which Luke was residing as a physician, and that he met the great apostle during his first imprisonment there, and was converted to Christianity during Paul's captivity, in which we know that many persons had access to him. This supposition would not be contradicted by the three special notices of Luke in the Pauline Epistles, two of them—that to the Colossians and the letter to Philemon—having been written from Rome during that imprisonment, and the third notice, in the Second Epistle to Timothy, occurring in a letter written some years later, when the apostle was confined a second time in Rome.

But the intimacy between Paul and Luke, we confidently believe, began much earlier. A very general and absolutely uncontradicted tradition, which dates from the early days of Christianity, ascribes the authorship of the Acts to St. Luke. Now, in this very writing, in three passages, two of considerable length, the author of the Acts passes abruptly from the third person to the first person plural. Thus the narrative changes from "and as *they* went through the cities," etc. (Acts xvi. 4), to "loosing from Troas, *we* came with a straight course to Samothracia," etc. (Acts xvi. 11), as though *the writer*—universally, as we have seen, acknowledged to be *St. Luke*—had joined the little band of missionaries who accompanied St. Paul at Troas (Acts xvi. 10). If this be, as is most probable, the case, then he must—having at some *previous* (unknown) date become acquainted with St. Paul—as early certainly as A.D. 53, have joined himself to St. Paul's company when the apostle was at Troas. With Paul, still following the Acts narrative, St. Luke journeyed as far as Philippi. Then, in Acts xvii. 1, when the apostle leaves Philippi, the third person is again used in the narrative, as though St. Luke was left behind at Philippi. After some six or seven years, again at Philippi, where we lost sight of him, in the course of what is termed the third missionary journey, the use of the first person plural—"These going before tarried for *us* at Troas, and *we* sailed away from Philippi"—indicates that the writer, St. Luke, had again joined St. Paul (Acts xx. 5). With the apostle he passed through Miletus, Tyre, and Cæsarea to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 5; xxi. 18). During the two years or more of St. Paul's imprisonment at Cæsarea (whither he was sent from Jerusalem after his arrival at that city with St. Luke), St. Luke was probably with or near him, for when the apostle was sent under guard as a prisoner of

state from Cæsarea to Rome, St. Luke again evidently was with him; for throughout the voyage which ended in the memorable shipwreck and the subsequent stay at Melita, and on the voyage from Melita in the ship of Alexandria, we find the forms "we" and "us" used: "Then when *we* came to Rome;" "when the brethren heard of *us*." During that long period of imprisonment at Cæsarea, it is highly probable that St. Luke, acting under the immediate direction of his master Paul, made that personal investigation, searched out eye-witnesses of the events of the life of love, conversed with survivors—less than thirty years had elapsed from the Resurrection morning, it must be remembered, when Paul lay in his Cæsarean prison—procured memoranda in the possession of the holy women and others, and with the help and guidance of his great master, aided by the Holy Spirit (A.D. 60–62), we even think compiled much of what is known now as "the Gospel according to St. Luke." During the Roman imprisonment, which immediately followed A.D. 63–64, the work, and not improbably its sequel the Acts, was finally revised and put out.

We thus possess traces of an intimate friendship between the older and the younger man for a period of some twelve years—A.D. 53 to 64; for how long previous to A.D. 53 and the meeting at Troas (Acts xvi. 10) the friendship had existed we have no data even for conjecture.

V. "Luke, the Beloved Physician" (Col. iv. 14).

"And Luke, who was a native of Antioch, and by *profession a physician*, for the most part a companion (τὰ πλεῖστα συγγεγονώς) of Paul, and who was not slightly acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us two books divinely inspired, proofs of the *art of healing souls*, which he won from them" (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 4).

"Luke, *a physician* of Antioch, not unskilled in the Hebrew language, as his works show, was a follower (*sectator*) of the Apostle Paul, and the companion of all his wanderings. He wrote a Gospel of which the same Paul makes mention," etc. (St. Jerome, 'De Vir. Illustr.,' c. 7).

"The Gospel according to Luke was dictated by the Apostle Paul, but written and put out (*editum*) by Luke, the blessed apostle and *physician*" (Synopsis Pseudo-Athanasii, in Athanasii 'Opp.').

The above-quoted references from Eusebius, Jerome, and the pseudo-Athanasius, tell us that the words of St. Paul (Col. iv. 14), when he referred to his friend Luke as "the beloved physician," very generally coloured all tradition in the early Church respecting the writer of the Third Gospel.

The profession of physician in the early days of the empire was filled almost exclusively by freedmen or the sons of freedmen (*libertini*). This calling implied a considerable amount of scientific knowledge, and shows that Luke the physician certainly belonged to the class of educated men. Dean Plumptre, of Wells, calls attention to the well-known list of the members of the household of the Empress Livia, the consort of Augustus Cæsar, compiled from the *Columbarium*, a sepulchre which was opened at

Rome in 1726. This "list" gives many examples of names with the word "medicus" attached to them.

It is remarkable that, with the exception of Hippocrates, all the extant medical writers were *Asiatic Greeks*—such as Galen of Pergamus, in Mysia; Dioscorides of Anazarba, in Cilicia; Aretæus the Cappadocian. Hippocrates, though not an Asiatic Greek, was born and lived in close proximity to the coast of Asia, being a native of Cos, an island off the coast of Caria.

In the first century of the Christian era no medical school stood higher, and few so high, as that of Tarsus, in Cilicia. There was a great temple of Æsculapius at Ægæ, only a few miles from Tarsus, which was resorted to by sick persons from all countries, who came to consult the priests or brotherhood of the Asclepiadæ.

A modern scholar, Dr. Hobart, of Trinity College, Dublin, has lately written an exhaustive treatise[1] of considerable length to show that the language of St. Luke, both in the Gospel and Acts, is very largely impregnated with technical medical words—words which none but a trained physician would have thought of using; words, too, employed in the general story in the course of relation of events not connected with healing a disease or any medical subject; the very words, in fact, which were common in the phraseology of the Greek medical schools, and which a physician, from his medical training and habits, would be likely to employ.

1. In the general narrative in the *Third Gospel* and the *Acts*, there are a number of words which were either distinctly medical terms or commonly employed in medical language, such as ἴασις, θεραπειά, συνδρομή, etc.

2. There are, again, certain classes of words which were used in medical language in some special relation.[2] St. Luke alone uses the special terms for the distribution of nourishment, blood, nerves, etc., through the body, such as διανέμειν, διασπείρειν, ἀναδιδόναι; and the terms to denote an intermittent or a failing pulse, such as διαλείπειν, ἐκλείπειν, etc.

3. The same combination of words are used by St. Luke as we find in medical writers, as for instance, τρῆμα βελόνης, δακτύλῳ προσψαύειν, θρόμβοι αἵματος, etc.

4. Other words are found, too, in this Gospel used very rarely save by medical writers in the sense which they bear in St. Luke's writings, as ἀνακάθιζεν, to sit up, ἐκψύχειν, to expose, etc.

5. Several curious indications of the writer of the Third Gospel and the Acts being a medical man are discoverable in the words made use of for marking time, such as ἑσπέρα, μεσημβρία, μεσονύκτιον, ὄρθρος; the first two of which are peculiar to him, and the last two almost so, as μεσονύκτιον is used but once outside his writings (Mark xiii. 35), and ὄρθρος, too, but once (John viii. 2). These latter were the usual times and the usual terms to denote them, for the accession or abatement of disease, visiting patients

[1] 'The Medical Language of St. Luke,' by the Rev. W. K. Hobart, LL.D., printed in the Dublin University Press series, 1882.

[2] Ibid., Introd., p. xxxiv.

applying remedies, etc. Dr. Hobart quotes Galen, 'Meth. Med.,' ix. 4, and other well-known Greek medical writers in support of this.

As we should expect from the physician-evangelist, in the accounts of the miracles of healing medical language is carefully employed.

In many parallel passages St. Luke will be found to use a term strictly medical, the other evangelists one less precise, the terms chosen by St. Luke being words all of which were in common use with the Greek physicians.

In such important sections, for instance, as in the account of the agony in the garden, described by all the three synoptists, St. Luke's relation, different from the other two, possesses all the characteristics of medical writing, detailing carefully, in medical language, the prostration of strength, and the outward and visible effect on his human frame of the inner anguish of our Lord.[1]

It is a very probable hypothesis to ascribe the connection of the two friends, Paul and Luke, in the first instance, to help given to the great apostle in one of those many and grave illnesses to which, from many casual references in his writings, we know the apostle was subject.

VI. Conclusion.

With the exception of (1) the direct but casual notices in the Epistles of St. Paul, and the indirect allusions to himself in the later chapters of the Acts above referred to, where in the narrative the third person is changed for the first; (2) the universal tradition of the early Church that Luke, the companion of Paul, was the author of the Third Gospel; (3) the internal evidence contained in the Gospel and in the Acts, which plainly shows that the writer was a physician;—with these exceptions nothing further definite or trustworthy is known respecting Luke. Epiphanius and others mention that he was one of the seventy disciples; Theophylact believes that he was one of the two disciples who met with the risen Jesus on their walk to Emmaus. These suppositions *may* be true, but they are uncertain. The well-known tradition that Luke was also a painter, and painted portraits of the blessed Virgin and of the chief apostles, and even of the Lord himself, rests only on the statement of Nicephorus, of the menology of the Emperor Basil, drawn up in A.D. 980, and of other late writers, but none of them are of historical authority.[2]

After St. Paul's martyrdom (A.D. 67–68) our knowledge of St. Luke is only vague, and rests on uncertain tradition. Epiphanius ('Contr. Hæres.,' lib. ii. vol. ii. 464, edit. Dindorf) tells us that, after the death of his master, he preached in Dalmatia, Italy, Macedonia, and Gallia. Gregory Nazianzen mentions that St. Luke was among the martyrs. Nicephorus relates the manner of his martyrdom—how that, whilst working for the cause in Greece, he was hanged upon an olive-tree.

[1] Hobart, 'The Medical Language of St. Luke,' pt. ii. sect. lvi. p. 80.

[2] Archbishop Thomson, 'Introduction to St. Luke,' p. xli.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

THE origin of the Gospels—the four histories which relate in detail the circumstances of the foundation of Christianity—will ever be an interesting study. *Here* we shall never know the exact truth of the compilation of these writings, the foundation-stones of all our hopes and fears; a reverent, scholarly speculation is all that can be offered to the student of the Divine memoirs. The speculation, however, probably in this case comes very near the truth.

After the Ascension and the events of the first Pentecost, which quickly followed their Master's return to heaven, the twelve and a few others who had walked in the company which followed Jesus during the years of his public ministry no doubt often met together and talked over the teaching and the acts of their risen and now glorified Master. As time passed on, a certain number of these acts, a certain number of the public and private discourses in the apostolic company, became adopted as the usual texts or subjects of the teaching and preaching in the assemblies large and small gathered together by the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem and the neighbouring towns and villages, subsequently in other parts of the Holy Land, in Syria, and in more distant countries—in Africa and Italy. We may assume that the Holy Spirit aided the composition of these apostolic summaries by bringing to the memory of these holy men the more important of the words and acts of the Lord Jesus, spoken and done when in their midst.

That some such early authoritative summary existed among the first preachers of the faith we may positively assume, (1) from the *general* harmony of the facts and teaching of the first three Gospels; (2) from the almost total absence of any other traditional sayings and doings of the great Master besides those contained in the four Gospels.

Some twelve traditional sayings besides those related by the four, and those of no great importance, are all that we possess; no record of other miracles of any description have come down to us.

Years passed on. The precious treasure of the apostolic records, the simple memories of his words and acts preserved, and no doubt arranged in some order, were enough for the first preachers and teachers of the faith of Jesus of Nazareth.

There were, no doubt, many rough attempts to write these down on the part of apostles and their pupils. These are most probably the writings to which St. Luke alludes, without disparaging them, in his preface to his Gospel, in the words, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us."

But something more accurate in the way of written memoirs was necessary for the Church, as the number of believers multiplied, and the original friends of the Master were one by one taken from their

midst—the men who had seen the presence and heard the voice. When the first fervour of enthusiasm had passed away, or rather when the Church had so multiplied that, in the case of the great majority of its members who had only *heard* of Jesus, this fervour of enthusiasm had never been experienced at all, something of a critical spirit of inquiry sprang up in the various congregations. Who, for instance, was this Jesus of Nazareth, whom the apostles and their pupils preached? Whence came he? Who was that strange teacher John, who baptized him, and, so to speak, introduced him to Israel? Such natural questions necessitated the putting forth, on the part of the leaders of the new faith, documents at once comprehensive as well as authoritative.

Each of the four Gospels supplied an evident want of the early Church; each was the answer, on the part of responsible men, to the natural inquiry of some great section of believers.

The preface to the Gospel of St. Luke, with which we are at present concerned, with great clearness relates how its compiler, having availed himself of all the written and oral apostolic traditions then current in the Church, had personally, with careful and continuous research, traced up these various traditions to their very source, and, having arranged his many facts, presented the whole continuous story to a man of high rank in the Christian congregations, one Theophilus, a noble Greek or Roman, who may be taken as an example of a large class of inquiring earnest Christians of the years 70—90 A.D.

Vers. 1—4.—AN INTRODUCTION.

Ver. 1.—**Forasmuch as many have taken in hand.** The Greek in which St. Luke's Gospel is written is generally pure and classical, but the language of the little introduction (vers. 1—4) is especially studied and polished, and contrasts singularly with the Hebrew character of the story of the nativity, which immediately follows. St. Luke here, in this studied introduction, follows the example of many of the great classical writers, Latin as well as Greek. Thucydides, Herodotus, Livy, for instance, paid special attention to the opening sentences of their histories. The many early efforts to produce a connected history of the life and work of the great Master Christ are not, as some have supposed, alluded to here with anything like *censure*, but are simply referred to as being *incomplete*, as written without order or arrangement. They most probably formed the basis of much of St. Luke's own Gospel. These primitive Gospels quickly disappeared from sight, as they evidently contained nothing more than what was embodied in the fuller and more systematic narratives of the "four." **Of those things which are most surely believed among us.** There was evidently no questioning in the Church of the first days about the truth of the story of the teaching and the mighty works of Jesus of Nazareth. It was the incompleteness of these first evangelists, rather than their inaccuracy, which induced St. Luke to take in hand a new Gospel.

Ver. 2.—**Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word.** The general accuracy of the recitals contained in those early Gospels is here conceded, as the source of these primitive writings was the tradition delivered by the eye-witnesses of the acts of Jesus; among these eye-witnesses the apostles would, of course, hold the foremost place. The whole statement may be roughly paraphrased thus: "The narrative of the memorable events which have been accomplished in our midst many have undertaken to compose. These different narratives are in strict conformity with the apostles' tradition, which men who were themselves eye-witnesses of the great events, and subsequently ministers of the Word, handed down to us. Now, I have traced up all these traditions anew to their very sources, and propose rewriting them in consecutive order, that you, my lord Theophilus, may be fully convinced of the positive certainty of those great truths in which you have been instructed." *Eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word;* witnesses of the events of the public ministry of Jesus, from the baptism to the Ascension. These men, in great numbers, after Pentecost, became ministers and preachers of the Word.

Ver. 3.—**Having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first;** more accurately rendered, *having followed up* (or, *investigated*) *step by step all things from their source.* St. Luke, without depreciating the accounts of the life and work of Jesus then current in the Church, here sets out his reasons for undertaking a fresh compilation. His Gospel would differ from the early Gospels: (1) By going back much further than they did. It is doubtful if these primitive Gospels began earlier than with the ministry of John and the baptism of Jesus. St. Mark's Gospel—which, perhaps, represents one of the earliest forms

of the apostles' preaching and teaching,—does not go further back than those events. St. Luke gave Theophilus, among other early details, a history of the incarnation and the infancy of the Blessed One. (2) By presenting the whole story in a consecutive form. Hitherto, apparently, "apostolic tradition probably had a more or less fragmentary character: the apostles not relating every time the whole of the facts, but only those which best answered to the circumstances in which they were preaching. This is expressly said of St. Peter, on the testimony of Papias, or of the old presbyter on whom he relied: Πρὸς τὰς χρείας ἐποιεῖτο τὰς διδασκαλίας ('He chose each time the facts appropriate to the needs of his hearers'). Important omissions would easily result from this mode of telling the great story" (Godet). **Most excellent Theophilus.** The term rendered "most excellent" (κράτιστε) denotes that the friend of Luke for whom nominally his Gospel was written was a man of high rank in the Roman world of that day. Nothing is known of his history. He was most likely, from Luke's connection with Antioch, a noble of that great and wealthy city, and may fairly be taken as a representative of that cultured thoughtful class for whom in a measure St. Luke especially wrote. The title κράτιστε, by which the Theophilus is here addressed, we find several times applied to high Roman officials, such as Felix and Festus (Acts xxiii. 26; xxiv. 3; xxvi. 25).

Ver. 5—ch. ii. 52.—THE GOSPEL OF THE INFANCY. The critical reader of the Gospel in the original Greek is here startled by the abrupt change in the style of writing. The first four verses, which constitute the introduction, are written in pure classical language; the sentences are balanced, almost with a rhythmical accuracy. They are the words evidently of a highly cultured mind, well versed in Greek thought. But in the fifth verse, where the history of the eventful period really begins, all is changed. The narrative flows on clearly with a certain picturesqueness of imagery; the style is simple, easy, vivid; but at once the reader is sensible that he has passed out of the region of Greek and Western thought. The language is evidently a close translation from some Hebrew original; the imagery is exclusively Jewish, and the thoughts belong to the story of the chosen people. It is clear that this section of St. Luke's writing, which ends, however, with ch. ii., is not derived from apostolic tradition, but is the result of his own investigation into the origin of the faith of Christ, gathered probably from the lips of the virgin mother herself, or from one of the holy women belonging to her kinsfolk who had been with her from the beginning of the wondrous events. St. Luke reproduced, as faithfully as he could in a strange tongue, the revelations—some perhaps written, some no doubt oral, communicated to him, we reverently believe, by the blessed mother of Jesus herself. The story of these two chapters is what St. Luke evidently alludes to when, in his short preface (ver. 3), he writes of his "perfect understanding in all things from the very first (ἄνωθεν)."

Vers. 5—25.—*The vision of Zacharias in the temple.*

Ver. 5.—**There was in the days of Herod, the King of Judæa.** The Herod here alluded to was the one surnamed "the Great." The event here related took place towards the end of his reign. His dominions, besides Judæa, included Samaria, Galilee, and a large district of Peræa. This prince played a conspicuous part in the politics of his day. He was no Hebrew by birth, but an Idumæan, and he owed his position entirely to the favour of Rome, whose vassal he really was during his whole reign. The Roman senate had, on the recommendation of Antony and Octavius, granted to this prince the title of "King of Judæa." It was a strange, sad state of things. The land of promise was ruled over by an Idumæan adventurer, a creature of the great Italian Republic; the holy and beautiful house on Mount Zion was in the custody of an Edomite usurper; the high priest of the Mighty One of Jacob was raised up or deposed as the officials of Rome thought good. Truly the sceptre had departed from Judah. **A certain priest named Zacharias;** usually spelt among the Hebrews, *Zechariah;* it means "Remembered of Jehovah," and was a favourite name among the chosen people. **Of the course of Abia.** Ἐφημερία (course) signified originally "a daily service." It was subsequently used for a group of priests who exercised their priestly functions in the temple for a week, and then gave place to another group. From Eleazar and Ithamar, the two surviving sons of the first high priest Aaron, had descended twenty-four families. Among these King David distributed by lot the various tabernacle (subsequently temple) services, each family group, or course, officiating for eight days—from sabbath to sabbath. From the Babylonish exile, of these twenty-four families only four e-

turned. With the idea of reproducing as nearly as possible the old state of things, these four were subdivided into twenty-four, the twenty-four bearing the original family names, and this succession of courses continued in force until the fall of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple, A.D. 70. According to Josephus, Zacharias was especially distinguished by belonging to the first of the twenty-four courses, or families. **Of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth**; identical with *Elisheba*, "One whose oath is to God." Both the husband and wife traced their lineage back to the first high priest—a coveted distinction in Israel.

Ver. 6.—**And they were both righteous before God.** "One of the oldest terms of high praise among the Jews (Gen. vi. 9; vii. 1; xviii. 23—28; Ezek. xviii. 5—9, etc.). It is used also of Joseph (Matt. i. 19), and is defined in the following words in the most technical sense of strict legal observance, which it had acquired since the days of Maccabees. The true Jashar (upright man) was the ideal Jew. Thus Rashi calls the Book of Genesis 'The book of the upright, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'" (Farrar).

Ver. 7.—**And they had no child.** This, as is well known, was a heavy calamity in a Hebrew home. In the childless house there was no hope of the long looked-for Messiah being born in it. It was not unfrequently looked on as a mark of the Divine displeasure, possibly as the punishment of some grave sin.

Ver. 9.—**His lot was to burn incense**; more accurately, *he obtained by lot the duty of entering and offering incense.* The office of burning incense gave the priest to whom this important lot fell the right of entering the holy place. It was the most coveted of all the priestly duties. The Talmud says the priest who obtained the right to perform this high duty was not permitted to draw the lot a second time in the same week, and as the whole number of priests at this time was very large—some say even as many as twenty thousand—Farrar conjectures that it would never happen to the same priest twice in his lifetime to enter that sacred spot.

Ver. 10.—**And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.** This would indicate that the day in question was a sabbath or some high day. Dean Plumptre suggests that, lost among that praying crowd, were, "we may well believe, the aged Simeon (ch. ii. 25) and Anna the prophetess (ch. ii. 36), and many others who waited for redemption in Jerusalem."

Ver. 11.—**And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord.** Critics have especially found grave fault with this "Hebrew" portion of our Gospel, complaining that it needlessly introduces the marvellous, and brings uselessly into everyday life beings from another sphere. Godet well answers these criticisms by observing "that as Christianity was an entirely new beginning in history, the second and final creation of man, it was natural that an interposition on so grand a scale should be accompanied by a series of particular interpositions. It was even necessary; for how were the representatives of the ancient order of things, who had to co-operate in the new work, to be initiated into it, and their attachment won to it, except by this means? According to Scripture, we are surrounded by angels (2 Kings vi. 17; Ps. xxxiv. 7), whom God employs to watch over us; but in our ordinary condition we want the sense necessary to perceive their presence—for that condition a peculiar receptivity is required. This condition was given to Zacharias. Origen ('Contra Celsum') writes how, "in a church there are two assemblies—one of angels, the other of men, . . . angels are present at our prayers, and they pray with us and for us." **Standing on the right side of the altar of incense.** The angel stood between the altar and the shew-bread table. On entering the holy place, the officiating priest would have on his right the table with the shew-bread, on his left the great candlestick, and before him would be the golden altar, which stood at the end of the holy place, in front of the veil which separated this chamber and the dim, silent holy of holies.

Ver. 12.—**He was troubled.** This was ever the first effect produced by the sight of a spirit-visitant.

Ver. 13.—**Thy prayer is heard.** What was the nature of this prayer? The Greek word (δεήσις) used here implies that some *special* supplication had been offered, and which the angel tells had been listened to at the throne of grace. The righteous old man had not, as some have thought, been praying for a son,—he had long resigned himself in this private sorrow to the will of his God; but we may well suppose that on that solemn occasion he prayed the unselfish patriotic prayer that the long looked-for Messiah would hasten his coming. **His name John**; the shortened form for *Jehochanan*, "the grace of Jehovah." Under various diminutives, such as Jonah, it was a favourite Hebrew name.

Ver. 14.—**Many shall rejoice at his birth.** The gladness which his boy's birth was to bring with it was to be no more private family rejoicing. The child of his old age, who was to be born, would be the occasion of a true national joy.

Ver. 15.—Great in the sight of the Lord. To the pious old Jewish priest the strange visitant's words would bear a deep signification. Zacharias would quickly catch the angel's thoughts. His son was not to be the Messiah of the people's hope, but was to be like one of those great ones loved of God, of whom the women of Israel sang on their solemn feast-days—one like Samson, only purer, or Samuel, or the yet greater Elijah. Could all this deep joy be true? **Shall drink neither wine.** The old curse then as now. God's heroes must be free from even the semblance of temptation. They must stamp their high lives, from the beginning, by the solemn vow of self-denial and abstinence. It is remarkable how many of the great deliverers and teachers of the chosen people were commanded from childhood to enrol themselves among the abstainers from all strong drink. **Nor strong drink.** The word σίκερα includes all kinds of fermented drink except that made from the grape; it was especially applied to *palm* wine.

Ver. 16.—And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. The state of the people at this period was indeed unhappy. The dominant Italian power had introduced into Syria and Palestine the vices and profligate life of Italy and Greece. The great Syrian city Antioch, for instance, in vice and sensuality, had gone far beyond her conqueror, and was perhaps at that time the most wicked city in the world. In the court of Herod, patriotism and true nobility were dead. The priests and scribes were for the most part deeply corrupted, and the poor shepherdless common folk only too readily followed the example of the rich and great. The boy who was to be born was to be a great preacher of righteousness; his glorious mission would be to turn many of these poor wanderers to the Lord their God.

Ver. 17.—In the spirit and power of Elias. There was a confident hope among the Jews, dating from the days of the prophecy of Malachi, some four hundred years before the vision of Zacharias, that the days of Messiah would be heralded by an appearance of the Prophet Elijah. The selfsame expectation is still cherished by every pious Jew. **To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.** The usual explanation of these words of the angel, who uses here the language of Malachi (iv. 5, 6), is that the result of the preaching of this new prophet, who is about to be raised up, will be to restore harmony to the broken and disturbed family life of Israel, whereas now the home life of the chosen race was split up—the fathers, perhaps, siding with the foreign or Roman faction, as represented by Herod and his friends; the sons, on the other hand, being Zealots attached to the national party, bitterly hostile to the Herodians. So also in one house some would belong to the Pharisee, others to the Sadducee, sect. These fatal divisions would, in many cases, be healed by the influence of the coming one. There is, however, another interpretation far deeper and more satisfactory; for nothing in the preaching of the Baptist, as far as we are aware, bore specially on the domestic dissensions of the people; it had a much wider range. The true sense of the angel's words here should be gathered from prophetic passages such as Isa. xxix. 22, 23, "Jacob shall no more be ashamed, neither shall his face wax pale, when he seeth (בְּרָאתוֹ) his children become the work of my hands;" Isa. lxiii. 16, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer!"—The patriarchs, the fathers of Israel, beholding from their abodes of rest the works and days of their degenerate children, mourned over their fall, and, to use earthly language, "were ashamed" of the conduct of their unworthy descendants. *These* would be glad and rejoice over the result of the preaching of the coming prophet. Godet well sums up the angel's words: "It will be John's mission then to reconstitute the moral unity of the people by restoring the broken relation between the patriarchs and their degenerate descendants."

Ver. 18.—Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man. There was something evidently blamable in this hesitation on the part of Zacharias to receive the angel's promise. It seems as though the radiant glory of the messenger, as he stood before the curtain of the silent sanctuary in his awful beauty, ought to have convinced the doubting old man of the truth of the strange message. The words of the angel, which follow, seem to imply this. What! do you doubt my message? "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of the Eternal." Others in Old Testament story before—for instance, Abraham (Gen. xv.) and Gideon (Judg. vi.)—had seen and listened to an angel, had at first doubted, but had received in consequence no rebuke, no punishment, for their want of faith. Zacharias was, however, condemned, we learn, to a long period of dumbness.

Ver. 19.—I am Gabriel. The meaning of the name *Gabriel* is "Hero of God," or "Mighty One of God." In the canonical books only two of the heavenly ones are mentioned by *name*. *Gabriel* (here and Dan. viii. 16 and ix. 21) and *Michael*, which signifies "Who is like God" (Jude 9; Rev. xii. 7; and in Dan. x. 13, 21;

xii. 1). Of these two blessed spirits whose names are revealed to us in the Word of God, their appointed work seems to be in connection with the human race and its enemies. *Gabriel* is the special messenger of good news. He comes to Daniel, and tells him of the restoration of Jerusalem; to Zacharias, and announces the birth of his son, and declares what his glorious office would consist in; to Mary of Nazareth, and foretells the nativity. *Michael*, on the other hand, appears as the warrior of God. In the Book of Daniel he wars with the enemies of the people of the Lord; in Jude and in the Revelation of St. John he is the victorious antagonist of Satan the enemy of the Eternal. The Jews have a striking saying that Gabriel flies with two wings, but Michael with only one; so God is swift in sending angels of peace and of joy, of which blessed company the archangel Gabriel is the representative, while the messengers of his wrath and punishment, among whom Michael holds a chief place, come slowly. **That stand in the presence of God.**

"One of the seven
Who in God's presence, nearest to his throne,
Stand ready at command, and are his eyes
That run through all the heavens, and down to the earth
Bear his swift commands, over moist and dry,
O'er sea and land."
('Paradise Lost,' iii. 650.)

Milton derived his knowledge of the *seven* from the apocryphal Book of Tobit, where in ch. xii. 15 we read, "I am Raphael, one of the *seven* holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." In the very ancient Book of Enoch we read of the names of the four great archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael.

Ver. 21.—**And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.** The Talmud tells us that even the high priest did not tarry long in the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. The same feeling of holy awe would induce the ministering priest of the day to perform his functions with no unnecessary delay, and to leave as soon as possible the holy place. The people praying in the court without were in the habit of waiting until the priest on duty came out of the sacred inner chamber, after which they were dismissed with the blessing. The unusual delay in the appearance of Zacharias puzzled and disturbed the worshippers.

Ver. 22.—**When he came out, he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple.** Something in the face of the old man, as, unable to speak, he made signs to the congregation, told the awestruck people that the long delay and the loss of speech were owing to no sudden illness which had seized Zacharias. We know that, in the old days of the desert wanderings, the children of Israel could not bear to look on the face of Moses when he came down from the mount after dwelling for a brief space in the light of the glory of the Eternal. Zacharias had been face to face with one whose blessed lot it was to stand for ever in the presence of God. We may well suppose that there lingered on the old man's face, as he left the sanctuary, *something* which told the beholder of the presence just left.

Ver. 24.—**And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months.** Various reasons have been suggested for this retirement. It seems most probable that, amazed at the angelic announcement, the saintly woman went into perfect retirement and isolation for a considerable period, to prove well the words of the angel, and to consider how she best could do *her* part in the training of the expected child, who was to play so mighty a part in the history of her people.

Vers. 26—38.—*The annunciation of the Virgin Mary.* The recital contained in this little section is peculiar to this Gospel of St. Luke. It lay outside what may be termed the apostolic tradition. It neither helps nor mars the moral or dogmatic teaching of the men trained in the school of Jesus of Nazareth. It simply answers a question that probably few of the converts of the first quarter of a century which succeeded the Resurrection morning cared to ask.

We do not suppose that the true story of the birth of Jesus Christ was any secret, any precious *mystery* in the Church of the first days. It was known doubtless to the leading teachers, known to many of their hearers, but it was evidently unused as a popular text for preaching. It probably was not among those "memoirs" of the apostles which were read and expounded in the first forty years in the public synagogues and in the quiet upper rooms of so many of the cities of Syria, and in not a few of the towns of Egypt, Greece, and Italy. Nor is the reason of this doubtful; the wondrous story of the child Jesus' birth would add little to the simple faith of the first believers in the Crucified.

Of miracles and works of wonder they had heard enough to convince them that,

if these were true, surely never man had worked like this Man. They had heard, too, of the crowning sign of the Resurrection. There were men in those first days, scattered abroad in all lands, who had *seen* these things, who knew that the Master had died on the cross, and who had seen him, touched him, and spoken to him *after* his resurrection. The mysterious miracle of the incarnation was not needed for the preaching of the first days.

But time went on, and naturally enough many of the thoughtful cultured men who had accepted the doctrine of the cross began to say—We ought to have the true story of the beginnings of these marvellous events authoritatively written down. Here and there we have heard something of the birth and childhood, why have we not the details authenticated? Men like Paul and Luke felt that such natural questionings should be answered. And hence it came to pass that, moved by the Holy Spirit—under, we believe, the direction of Paul—Luke went to the fountain-head, to the blessed mother herself, to those holy women some of whom we believe had borne her company from the beginning, and from her lips and their lips wrote down what she (or they) dictated, partly from memory, partly perhaps from memoranda which she and others had kept of that strange sweet time; and so these two chapters of the Third Gospel, of which the incarnation is the central narrative, were written down much in the original form in which Luke received it, the Greek simply translating the original Hebrew story. Around the words of the Gospel soon gathered a host of miraculous legends glorifying the blessed mother of the Lord. These are utterly unknown to Scripture, and should be quietly put aside. Strange speculations respecting her and the manner of the wondrous birth have been in all times, nay, still are favourite subjects of dispute among theologians. It is a pity to try and be wise beyond what is written. The believer will content himself with just receiving the quiet story of the holy maid as Mary the mother gave it to Luke or Paul, feeling assured that the same power of the Highest by which the crucified Jesus was raised from the tomb where he had lain for three days, was able to overshadow the virgin of Nazareth, was able to cause to be born of her that holy thing which was called the Son of God.

Ver. 26.—**And in the sixth month**; that is, after the vision of Zacharias in the temple. **Unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.** These explanatory notes make it clear that St. Luke was writing for those who were strangers to Palestine. Such details were no doubt added by St. Luke to the oral or written Hebrew narrative upon which this section is entirely based. Under the Roman domination the land of promise was divided into Judæa, Samaria, Peræa, and Galilee. Galilee was the northern department, and comprised the old territory of the tribes of Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher. From Josephus we learn that at this period the northern division was rich and populous, and covered with flourishing towns. Nazareth, which still exists as a large village of some three thousand inhabitants, under the name of *En-Nazirah*, is about twenty-four miles to the east of the Lake of Tiberias. It is well situate in a valley among the hills which rise to the north of the Esdraelon plain. From one of the grassy slopes which rise behind Nazareth, one of the noblest views is obtained. The snowy summits of Lebanon and Hermon close the prospect on the north; on the south the broad Esdraelon plain, with the mountains of Ephraim; Gilead and Tabor lie on the east; on the other side, the green uplands of Carmel are bathed by the blue waves of the Mediterranean Sea. The meaning of the name *Nazareth* has been the subject of much learned controversy. The more usually adopted derivation, however, refers the word to נצר, "a shoot or branch," which conveys, as Dean Plumptre remarks, something of the same meaning as our *hurst* or *holm* in English topography. Burckhardt, the traveller, believes the name was originally used on account of the numerous shrubs which cover the ground in this locality.

Ver. 27.—**To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David**; more accurately, *betrothed*. The formal ceremony of betrothal took place among the Jews in most cases a year prior to the marriage. The question has arisen whether the words, "of the house of David," refer to Joseph or to Mary. *Grammatically*, they would seem to belong to Joseph; but the fact of the Gospel being here so closely translated from a Hebrew (Aramaic) original, prevents us from laying down any strict linguistic rules which belong to the Greek language. "Who was Mary the virgin?" has been often asked. Vers. 32 and 69 would lose their point altogether unless we regard Luke as being persuaded that the young

Hebrew girl was a descendant of David. In respect to the virgin's family, we read that she was a cousin or kinswoman of Elisabeth. This would at least ally her closely to the priestly race. Dean Plumptre quotes one out of the many ancient apocryphal legends current respecting Mary of Nazareth, deeming it worthy of mention as having left its impress on Christian art. "The name of the virgin's mother was Anne. Mary surpassed the maidens of her own age in wisdom. There were many who early sought her in marriage. The suitors agreed to decide their claims by laying their rods before the holy place, and seeing which budded. It was thus that Joseph became betrothed to her." The same scholar adds, "The absence of any mention of her parents in the Gospels suggests the thought that she was an orphan, and the whole narrative of the nativity presupposes poverty! The name Mary is the same as *Miriam* or *Marah*." (On the question of the genealogy recorded by St. Luke, see note on ch. iii. 23.)

Ver. 28.—**Hail, thou that art highly favoured.** The *plena gratiâ* of the Vulgate, said and sung so often in the virgin's famous hymn, is an inaccurate rendering. Rather, "gratiâ *cumulata*," as it has been well rendered. "Having been much graced (by God)" is the literal translation of the Greek word. **Blessed art thou among women.** These words must be struck out; they do not exist in the older authorities.

Ver. 29.—**She was troubled**; more accurately, *she was greatly troubled*. Different to Zacharias, who evidently doubted in the mission of the angel, and who required some sign before he could believe, Mary simply wondered at the strangeness of what was about to happen. Her terror at the sudden appearance of the angel, who probably appeared to her as a young man clad in garments of a strange dazzling whiteness, is most natural.

Ver. 31.—**JESUS**; the ordinary Greek form, the well-known Hebrew *Jehoshua*, the shortened *Joshua*, "The Salvation of Jehovah."

Ver. 32.—**The Son of the Highest.** It is singular that this title, given by the angel to the yet unborn child, was the one given to the Redeemer by the evil spirit in the case of the poor possessed (see Mark v. 7). Is this the title, or one of the titles, by which our Master is known in that greater world beyond our knowledge? **The throne of his father David**; clearly indicating that Mary herself was of royal lineage, although this is nowhere definitely stated (see Ps. cxxxii. 11). These words of the angel are as yet unfulfilled. They clearly speak of a restoration of Israel, still, as far as we can see, very distant. Nearly nineteen centuries have passed since Gabriel spoke of a restored throne of David, of a kingdom in Jacob to which should come no end. The people, through all the changing fortune of empires, have been indeed strangely kept distinct and separate, ready for the mighty change; but the eventful hour still tarries. It has been well observed how St. Luke's report of the angel's words here could never have been a forgery—as one school of critics asserts—of the second century. Would any writer in the second century, after the failure of Jesus among the Jews was well known, when the fall of Jerusalem had already taken place, have made an angel prophesy what is expressed here?

Ver. 35.—**The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.** Again the angel makes use of the term "Highest" when alluding to the eternal Father. The expression of Gabriel, "the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee," reminds us of the openin words of Genesis, where the writer describes the dawn of life in creation in the words, "The Spirit of God moved [or, 'brooded'] over the face of the deep." "The Word was conceived in the womb of a woman, not after the manner of men, but by the singular, powerful, invisible, immediate operation of the Holy Ghost, whereby a virgin was, beyond the law of nature, enabled to conceive, and that which was conceived in her was originally and completely sanctified" (art. iii., Bishop Pearson on the Creed).

Ver. 38.—**Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.** "God's message," writes Godet, "by the mouth of the angel was not a command. The part Mary had to fulfil made no demands on her. It only remained, therefore, for Mary to consent to the consequences of the Divine offer. She gives this consent in a word at once simple and sublime, which involved the most extraordinary act of faith that a woman ever consented to accomplish. Mary accepts the sacrifice of that which is dearer to a young maiden than her very life, and thereby becomes pre-eminently the heroine of Israel, the ideal daughter of Zion." Nor was the *immediate* trouble and sorrow which she foresaw would soon compass her round by any means the whole burden which submission to the angel's message would bring upon the shrinking Nazareth maiden. The lot proposed to her would bring probably in its wake unknown sufferings as well as untold blessedness. We may with all reverence think Mary already feeling the first piercings in her heart of that sharp sword which was one day to wound so deeply the mother of sorrows; yet in spite of all this, in full view of the present woe, which submission to the Divine will would forthwith bring upon her, with an unknown future of sorrow

in the background, Mary submitted herself of her own free will to what she felt was the will and wish of her God.

Ver 39.—**Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste.** Between the annunciation and this journey of Mary to visit her cousin Elisabeth, we must interpose the events narrated in St. Matthew's Gospel, viz. the natural suspicion of her betrothed future husband, Joseph; his action in the matter; and then the dream of Joseph, in which her innocence was vindicated. As we believe that St. Luke's story here was derived from Mary's own narrative, we can understand well that these details, related by St. Matthew, were scarcely touched upon, and the mother would hurry on to the real points of interest in that eventful past of hers. The hill country here alluded to is the elevated district of Judah, Benjamin, and Mount Ephraim, in contradistinction to the low maritime plain on the east—the old Philistia. **Into a city of Juda.** There is no such city known as "Juda." Some have supposed that the text is corrupt here, and that for "Yuda" we should read "Jutta," which, according to Josh. xv. 55, was a priestly city in the hill country. There is a rabbinical tradition in the Talmud which places the residence of Zacharias at Hebron. It is very probable that Hebron, the great priestly city, is here signified.

Ver. 41.—**Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.** The Holy Spirit—that Spirit of prophecy, so often mentioned in the Old Testament—seizes her, and she salutes her young kinswoman, Mary, as the mother of the coming Messiah.

Ver. 42.—**And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women** (see Judg. v. 24). The words which clothed the thoughts in these ecstatic expressions of intense joy and thankfulness on the part of the two favoured women, Mary and Elisabeth, are in great measure drawn from hymn and song contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. The song of Hannah, the hymn of Deborah, many of the psalms, the songs of the Canticles, the more glorious of the prophetic utterances, had been ever familiar to both these true women of the people; and they could find no language so fitting as the words of these loved national songs to express the intense joy, the deep awe and gratitude of their hearts. Think what must have been the feeling of the two—the one finding herself the chosen out of all the thousands of Israel, after so many centuries of weary waiting, to be the mother of the Messiah; the other, long after any reasonable hope of any offspring at all had faded away, to be the mother of Messiah's chosen friend, his herald, and his preacher, the mighty forerunner of the King of whom the prophets had written!

Ver. 43.—**And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** But the Holy Ghost (ver. 41) raised Elisabeth's thoughts yet higher. Not only did she bless the mother of the coming Messiah, but the Spirit opened her eyes to see who that coming Messiah really was. Very vague indeed was the conception of the coming Messiah in Israel. The truth was, perhaps, revealed, and in rapt moments received by men like Isaiah and Ezekiel; and now and again men like David; Daniel wrote down visions and revelations respecting the Coming One, the true purport of which vision they scarcely grasped. Generally the Messianic idea among the people pictured a hero greater than Saul, a conqueror more successful than David, a sovereign more magnificent than Solomon. They pictured ever the glorious arm sustaining the coming Hero-King; but few, if any, dreamed of the "glorious arm" belonging to their future Deliverer. But here the Spirit in a moment revealed to the happy wife of the priest Zacharias that the Babe to be born of her young kinswoman was not only the promised Messiah, but was the awful Son of the Highest! Think, reader, what these simple words we are considering signify! Why am I so favoured "that the mother of my Lord should come to me"? "The contrast leaves no room for doubt," well argues Dean Plumptre, "that she used the word 'Lord' in its highest sense. 'Great' as her own son was to be (ver. 15) in the sight of the Lord, here was the mother of One yet greater, even of the Lord himself."

Vers. 46—56.—*The hymn of Mary, commonly called the Magnificat.*

Ver. 46*a*.—**And Mary said.** There is a great contrast between the behaviour of the two women when they met in Elisabeth's house. The elder was full of a new strange ecstatic joy. "She was filled with the Holy Ghost" (ver. 42), and spoke her words of lofty congratulation with "a loud voice" (ver. 42). *Mary*, on the other hand, was not conscious evidently, on this occasion, of any *special* presence of the Holy Spirit. Since the hour of the annunciation and her own meek faithful acceptance of the Lord's purpose, she had been dwelling, so to speak, under the immediate influence of the Spirit of the Lord. *Her cousin's* inspiration seems to have been *momentary and transitory*, while *hers*, during that strange blessed season which immediately preceded the Incarnation, was *enduring*. Hence the quiet introduction to her hymn, "And Mary said." It is, of course, *possible* that she had committed the beautiful thoughts to writing; but perhaps, in giving them to Luke or

Paul, she needed no parchment scroll, but softly repeated to the chronicler of the Divine story the old song in which she had first told her deep imaginings to Elisabeth, and afterwards often had murmured the same bright words of joy and faith over the holy Babe as he lay in his cradle at Bethlehem, in Egypt, or in Nazareth. The "Virgin's Hymn" for nearly fourteen centuries has been used in the public liturgies of Christendom. We find it first in the office of Lauds in the Rule of St. Cæsarius of Arles (A.D. 507)

Vers 46*b*—48.—**My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.** This is the first of the four divisions of the Magnificat. In it she speaks of *herself*, and her deep feelings of adoration and of holy joy, and of intense glad surprise. It is a prayer, but the highest kind of prayer, for it asks for nothing—it simply breathes adoration and thankfulness. We may imagine the angels praying thus. They have all that created beings however exalted, can desire in the beatific vision which they perpetually enjoy; and yet they pray continually, but only after *this* manner. The joy of her spirit, notice, is based on the fact of the revelation that he, *God*, was, too, *her* Saviour; and, of course, not *hers only:* her great joy was in the thought of the salvation of the suffering, sinning world around her. Then she passes into simple wonderment that she should have been chosen as the instrument of the boundless goodness of God. She had nothing to recommend her only her low estate. Though royally descended, she only occupied a position among the humblest Hebrew maidens, and yet, owing to God's favour, she will be deemed blessed by countless unborn generations.

Vers. 49, 50.—**For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his Name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.** In this strophe, the second division of the hymn of praise, she glorifies three of the principal Divine attributes—God's power, his holiness, and his mercy. His *power* or might, alluding to the words of the angel (ver. 35), "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." Surely in all the records of the Lord's works since the world's creation, his might had been never shown as it was now about to be manifest in her. His *holiness* had been displayed to her in the way in which the mighty acts of ineffable love had been carried out. His *mercy:* this attribute of God came home with intense power to the heart of the Jewish girl, into which God's protecting Spirit was shining with so clear a light. She saw something of the great redemption mystery which was then in so strange a way developing itself.

Vers. 51—53.—**He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.** From adoration, Mary's hymn proceeds to celebrate the mighty results effected by the Divine pity. As so often in these prophetic strains, the speaker or writer speaks or writes as though the future had become the past; so Mary here describes the Messianic reversal of man's conception of what is great and little, as though the unborn Babe had already lived and done his strange mighty work in the world. The "glorious arm" which, in old days, had wrought such mighty things for Israel, she recognized as belonging to the coming Deliverer (ver. 51). His chosen instruments would be those of whom the world thought little, like herself. The proud and mighty would be put down; the men of low degree, and poor and humble, would be exalted. The hungry would be filled; and they who were rich only in this world's goods would have no share in the new kingdom—they would be sent empty away. How strangely had the virgin of Nazareth caught the thought, almost the very words, of the famous sermon her Divine Son, some thirty years later, preached on the mountain-side near Gennesaret!

Vers. 54, 55.—**He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.** Her hymn dies down into a strain of gratitude for the eternal faithfulness to the cause of the chosen people. Had not God in very truth remembered his ancient promise? From one of their daughters, still speaking of the future as of the past, Messiah had been born—a greater Deliverer, too, than the most sanguine Hebrew patriot had ever dreamed of.

Vers. 57—80.—*John, afterwards called the Baptist, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, is born. The Benedictus.*

Ver. 58.—**How the Lord had showed great mercy upon her.** No doubt the vision of Zacharias in the temple, and his subsequent dumbness, had excited no little inquiry. That the reproach of Elisabeth should be taken away, no doubt few really believed. The birth of her son, however, set a seal upon the reality of the priest's vision. The rejoicings of her family were due to more than the birth of her boy. The story of the angel's message, coupled with the unusual birth, set men thinking and asking what

then would be the destiny of this child. Could it be that he was the promised Messiah?

Ver. 59.—**On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child.** This was always, among the Hebrew people, a solemn day of rejoicing: it resembled in some particulars our baptismal gatherings. Relatives were invited to be present, as witnesses that the child had been formally incorporated into the covenant. It was, too, the time when the name which the newly born was to bear through life was given him.

Ver. 60.—**Not so; but he shall be called John.** It is clear (from ver. 62) that the old priest was afflicted with deafness as well as with dumbness. At the naming ceremony, the stricken Zacharias, who was patiently awaiting the hour when his God should restore to him his lost powers, made no effort to express his will. He had already in the past months, no doubt, written down for Elisabeth the name of the boy that was to be born. She interrupts the ceremony with her wishes. The guests are surprised, and make signs to the father. He at once writes on his tablets, "His name is John." The name had been already given. The word "John" signifies "the grace of Jehovah."

Ver. 63.—**A writing-table**; better, *a writing-tablet*. The tablets in use generally at the time were usually made of wood, covered with a thin coating of wax; on the soft layer of wax the words were written with an iron stylus.

Ver. 64.—**And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue** loosed, **and he spake, and praised God.** This, the first hour of his recovered power, was without doubt the occasion of his giving utterance to the inspired hymn (the Benedictus) which is recorded at length a few verses further on (vers. 68—79). It was the outcome, no doubt, of his silent communing with the Spirit during the long months of his affliction.

Ver. 65.—**And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa.** The inspired utterance of the old priest, so long dumb, in his beautiful hymn of praise, completed as it were the strange cycle of strange events which had happened in the priestly family.

Ver. 66.—**And the hand of the Lord was with him.** This kind of pause in the history is one of the peculiarities of St. Luke's style. We meet with it several times in the gospel story and in the history of the Acts. They are vivid pictures in a few words of what happened to an individual, to a family, or to a cause, during often a long course of years. Here the story of the childhood of the great pioneer of Christ is briefly sketched out; in it all, and through it all, there was one guiding hand—the Lord's. The expression, "hand of the Lord," was peculiarly a Hebrew thought—one of the vivid anthropomorphic idioms which, as has been aptly remarked, they could use more boldly than other nations, because they had clearer thoughts of God as not made after the similitude of men (Deut. iv. 12). Maimonides, the great Jewish writer of the twelfth century, in his 'Yad Hachazakah,' says, "*And there was under his feet* (Exod. xxiv. 10); *written with the finger of God* (Exod. xxxi. 18); *the hand of the Lord* (Exod. ix. 3); *the eyes of the Lord* (Deut. xi. 12); *the ears of the Lord* (Numb. xi. 18). All these are used with reference to the intellectual capacity of the sons of men, who can comprehend only corporeal beings: so that the Law spoke in the language of the sons of men, and all these are expressions merely, just as, *If I whet my glittering sword* (Deut. xxxii. 41); for has he, then, a sword? or does he slay with a sword? Certainly not: this is only a figure; and thus all are figures" ('Yad,' ch. i. 8).

Ver. 67.—**His father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying.** The inspired hymn which follows—thought out, no doubt, with the Holy Spirit's help in the course of the long enforced seclusion which his first want of faith had brought upon him—holds a prominent place in all Western liturgies. Like the Magnificat, it is believed to have been first introduced into the public worship of the Church about the middle of the sixth century by St. Cæsarius of Arles. It may be briefly summarized as a thanksgiving for the arrival of the times of Messiah.

Vers. 68, 69.—**He hath visited and redeemed, . . . and hath raised up.** The tenses of the verbs used in these expressions show that in Zacharias's mind, when he uttered the words of his hymn, the Incarnation, and the glorious deliverance commenced in that stupendous act of mercy, belonged to the past. *He hath visited;* that is, after some four hundred years of silence and absence, the Holy One of Israel had again come to his people. About four centuries had passed since the voice of Malachi, the last of the prophets, had been heard. **An horn of salvation.** A metaphor not unknown in classical writings (see Ovid, 'Art. Am.,' i. 239; Hor., 'Od.,' iii. xxi. 18), and a much-used figure in Hebrew literature (see, among other passages, Ezek. xxix. 21; Lam. ii. 3; Ps. cxxxii. 17; 1 Sam. ii. 10). The reference is not to the horns of the altar, on which criminals seeking sanctuary used to lay hold; nor to the horns with which warriors used to adorn

their helmets: but to the horns of a bull—in which the chief power of this animal resides. This was a figure especially familiar among an agricultural folk like the Israelites. "A rabbinic writer says that there are ten horns—those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the horn of the Law, of the priesthood, of the temple, and of Israel, and some add of the Messiah. They were all placed on the heads of the Israelites till they sinned, and then they were cut off and given to the Gentiles" (Schöttgen, 'Hor. Hebr.' quoted by Dr. Farrar). **In the house of his servant David.** Clearly Zacharias looked on Mary, as the angel had done (ver 32), as belonging to the royal house of David.

Ver. 70.—**By the mouth of his holy prophets.** Zacharias looked on all that was then happening as clearly foretold in those sacred prophetic writings preserved in the nation with so much care and reverence. **Which have been since the world began.** He considered Messianic prophecy as dating from the first intimation after the fall in Eden (Gen. iii. 15), and continuing in an intermittent but yet unbroken line from Genesis to Malachi.

Ver. 71.—**That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.** When Zacharias spoke these words, his mind, no doubt, was on Rome and its creatures, Herod and his party, whom Rome had set up. The deliverance of Israel, in every Hebrew heart, was the first and great work of the coming Deliverer; but the inspired words had a far broader reference than to Rome, and the enemies of Israelitic prosperity. The expression includes those spiritual evil agencies which war their ceaseless warfare against the soul of man. It was from *these* that the coming Deliverer would free his people. It was only after the fall of Jerusalem, and the total extinction of the national existence of the people, that, to use Dean Plumptre's language, "what was transitory in the hymn vanished, and the words gained the brighter permanent sense which they have had for centuries in the worship of the Church of Christ."

Vers. 74, 75.—**Might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.** What Zacharias looked on to was a glorious theocracy based upon national holiness. Israel, freed from foreign oppression and internal dissensions, would serve God with a worship at once uninterrupted and undefiled.

Ver. 76.—**And thou, child**; literally, *little child.* Here the father breaks forth into an expression of gladness at the thought of the great part his baby-son was to bear in this great national deliverance. His son, too—oh, joy undreamed of!—is to be ranked among the glorious company of the prophets of the Highest.

Ver. 77.—**To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.** Zacharias goes on to celebrate the splendid part his son was to play in the great Messianic drama. He was to be Messiah's pioneer in order to give men the true information respecting the Deliverer's work. Israel was mistaken altogether in its conception of the salvation which they really needed. Godet puts it with great force. "Why," he asks, "was the ministry of the Messiah preceded by that of another Divine messenger? Because the very notion of salvation was falsified in Israel, and had to be corrected before salvation could be realized. A carnal and malignant patriotism had taken possession of the people and their rulers, and the idea of a political deliverance had been substituted for that of a moral salvation. There was need, then, of another person, divinely authorized, to remind the people that perdition consisted not in subjection to the Romans, but in Divine condemnation; and that salvation, therefore, was not temporal emancipation, but forgiveness of sins."

Ver. 78.—**Through the tender mercy of our God. And,** goes on Zacharias in his noble hymn, **all this tender care for Israel** (but really for mankind, though perhaps the speaker of the hymn scarcely guessed it) **is** owing to the deep love of God. **Whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us.** The beautiful imagery here is derived from the magnificence of an Eastern sunrise. In his temple service at Jerusalem the priest must have seen the ruddy dawn rise grandly over the dark chain of the distant mountains, and lighting up with a blaze of golden glory the everlasting hills as they stood round about Jerusalem. The thought which pictured the advent of Messiah as a sunrise was a favourite one with the prophets. We see it in such prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi as, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold . . . Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. lx. 1—3). "Unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. iv. 2).

Ver. 79.—**To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.** It would *seem* that for a moment the Hebrew priest saw beyond the narrow horizon of Israel, and that here, in the close of his glorious song, he caught sight of the distant far-reaching isles of the Gentiles, over which so deep a darkness brooded for ages.

Ver. 80.—**And the child grew, and waxed**

strong in spirit. We have here another of St. Luke's solemn pauses in his narrative —one of those little passages in which, in a few words, he sets before us a picture clear and vivid of the events of long years. "The description," writes Dr. Farrar, "resembles that of the childhood of Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 26) and of our Lord (ch. ii. 40—52). Nothing, however, is said of 'favour with men.' In the case of the Baptist, as of others, 'the boy was father to the man;' and he probably showed from the first that rugged sternness which is wholly unlike the winning grace of the child Christ. '*The Baptist was no lamb of God. He was a wrestler with life, one to whom peace does not come easily, but only after a long struggle. His restlessness had driven him into the desert, where he had contended for years with thoughts he could not master, and from whence he uttered his startling alarms to the nation. He was among the dogs rather than among the lambs of the Shepherd*' ('Ecce Homo')." And was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel. "The deserts" here alluded to were that desolate waste country south of Jericho and along the shores of the Dead Sea. We know nothing of the details of the life of the boy, the wonderful circumstances of whose birth are related so circumstantially in this opening chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. Mary, whose "memories," we believe, are recounted almost in her own words, was herself a witness of some of the circumstances narrated; from her friend and cousin Elisabeth she doubtless received the true history of the rest. But Zacharias and Elisabeth, we know, were aged persons when John was born. They probably lived only a short time after his birth. Hence his solitary desert life. Of it we know nothing. In those wild regions at that time dwelt many grave ascetics and hermit teachers, like the Pharisee Banus, the master of Josephus. From some of these the orphan boy probably received his training. It is clear, from such passages as John i. 31—33 and ch. iii. 2, that some direct communication from the Highest put an end to the ascetic desert life and study. Some theophany, perhaps, like the appearance of the burning bush which called Moses to his great post, summoned the pioneer of Christ to his dangerous and difficult work. But we possess no account of what took place on this occasion when God *spoke* to his servant John, the evangelist simply recording the fact, "The word of God came unto the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (ch. iii. 2).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Preface to the Gospel.* Observe—

I. THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY. How conspicuous in it are the elements of candour, simplicity, and earnestness! The first authorities as to the things related were "the eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word." He is careful to intimate that he is not one of them; not an apostle; not even one of the seventy, as some have supposed he was. The position which he assumes is simply this: Many had taken in hand to draw up "a narrative concerning those matters which had been fulfilled among them;" and he too felt constrained to place on record all the information which he possessed. And his claim to be heard is the painstaking which he has brought to the task, the desire to trace the course of the wonderful history with perfect accuracy. Can we fail to note the absence of all self-assertion? Pretentiousness of all kinds is abhorrent to the mind which is "of the truth." Especially when it contemplates the "holy glory" of Jesus, it is like the friend of the bridegroom, who rejoices greatly to hear, not his own, but the bridegroom's voice.

II. THE AUTHOR'S AIM. It is to give the sequence of events "accurately from the first." He had enjoyed exceptional advantages, on account of which he was able to relate the things connected with "the beginning" of the life of Christ. And his purpose is to unfold that life in the completeness and beauty of its development. Now, is not this the work of the Christian teacher still? Christianity is Christ. It is not a mere system of doctrines to be believed and of duties to be done; the root and strength of all doctrines and of all duties is the Person of Jesus. And the noblest function of the "minister of the Word" is to show the eternal life which was with the Father, and is manifested in the Son, who for us was incarnate.

III. THE DESIGNATION OF THE ONE WHOM THE AUTHOR ADDRESSES. "Most excellent Theophilus." Probably he had in view a man bearing this name—a man of high station or rank. The superlative employed is the same as that applied in the Book of the Acts to the Roman procurator, and once by Paul himself, when he replied, "I am not mad, most noble Felix." This Theophilus, therefore, may have been distinguished

by position. "Not many mighty, not many noble, are called," but some mighty and noble are; and he may have been drawn through the teaching of St. Paul, and may have wished a full account of those things in which he had been catechized. But be this as it may, note the meaning of the name. "To thee, O lover of God, O soul, teachable, humble, desirous to find in Jesus the Way to the Father; to thee, O hungerer and thirster after righteousness, seeking with pure heart God's gift of the living water; to thee, O man, O woman, who knowest thyself to be the sinner who needs salvation, and wouldst see the Saviour who receives sinners and eats with them; to thee, O Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile, this declaration of the gospel of the grace of God is sent! May he who opened the heart of Lydia open thine heart; and through the demonstration of the Spirit, making effectual the exposition of the message, mayest thou have that witness in thyself which is 'the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed'!"

Vers. 5—23.—*Zacharias and his vision.* Notice some features in the sketch that is given of the priest and of that which happened at the altar of incense.

I. IT IS A PICTURE OF THE SOUL WAITING FOR GOD. That waiting which is emphasized in the Old Testament Scriptures as one of the essentials of piety. How beautifully are the words—"More than they that watch for the morning, my soul waiteth for the Lord;" "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord"—illustrated in the life and attitude of Zacharias and Elisabeth! Year on year they had waited in their hillside home, asking the blessing of a son. Apparently the hope had set in heavens that were only brass. But one thing was ever bright and real—their faith in the living God; and they walked in all his commandments and ordinances blameless. "Our wills are ours to make them thine." It is easier to consent to God's will when the demand is to act, than to consent when the demand is simply to wait, to direct our prayer to the Eternal, and look up. One of the lessons which we are slow to learn is, "Walk *humbly* with thy God."

II. THE PASSAGE BEFORE US REVEALS THE HEARER OF PRAYER. (Ver. 13.) "Thy prayer is heard." Was this the prayer for the son? Or was it the priestly prayer, offered at the altar and through the incense, for the hope and salvation of Israel? Both, it may be, are included. For it is noteworthy that in the two scriptural instances of intense longing for a son—that of Hannah and that of Zacharias—the blessing to the individual is associated with blessing to the whole Church of God. The prayer of faith has interconnections with the purpose of God far beyond our power to estimate, and the doing is "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." "Thy prayer is heard;" the answer often looks a great way back. Matthew Henry quaintly says, "Prayers are filed in heaven, and are not forgotten though the thing prayed for is not presently given us. The time as well as the thing is in the answer; and God's gift always transcends the measure of the promise."

III. Again, LET THE FORM OF THE ANSWER RETURNED SPEAK TO US OF THE REALITY OF THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. (Ver. 19.) "The angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring thee these good tidings." The same presence as that we meet in the Book of Daniel. Gabriel is the angel for the greatly beloved, the angel with the glad tidings; he who afterwards bore the most wonderful of messages to the Hebrew maiden. Our ideas are very confused as to the holy angels. There can be no doubt that the tendency of thought in our day is to narrow the sphere of the supernatural. Formerly, it dominated over thought and action; the influence of spirits and occult spiritual forces was brought in to account for much that is referable to laws and powers in nature. Nowadays men are occupied in tracing "natural law in the spiritual world." But who can accept the truth of this first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel and doubt as to the reality of a spiritual universe encompassing the material? And if there be such a universe, why should it seem incredible that spiritual presences should, at sundry times, be declared to men—that Gabriels and Michaels should "at God's bidding speed and post o'er land and ocean without rest;" "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"? The spiritual mind can have no difficulty as to this. It will recognize in the vision of Zacharias a truth for all. Where there is the praying heart there is "the angel on the right side of the altar of incense."

IV. Finally, THE PUNISHMENT RECORDED IS ONE OF MANY WARNINGS IN SCRIPTURE AGAINST THE UNBELIEF WHICH WOULD LIMIT THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL. "How can these things be?" "Whereby I shall know this?" are questions ever rising in the heart. The good priest had waited long. When expectation failed, he bowed his head to God's will. No doubt, one to another, he and his wife, now "well stricken in years," had often recalled the word to Abraham concerning Sarah's laughter, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" But when the trial actually comes, the faith falters. Cannot we understand this? We limp when we should walk and not be weary. "Thou shalt be silent . . . because thou believedst not." Is not the constant result of unbelief spiritual silence? And the closed heart is followed by the closed lips—"silent . . . and not able to speak." "Lord, increase our faith."

Vers. 26—38.—*The announcement to the Virgin.* Gabriel, "the mighty one of God," or "the man of God," again sent with glad tidings. The work for the great-hearts, for the strongest and best, is the work of preaching the gospel of his grace. The God-sent preacher is he who, like Gabriel, "stands in the presence of God." "He that is now called a prophet was aforetime called a seer." But the true prophet is always a seer. "Sent to a virgin . . . and the virgin's name was Mary." It is significant that so little is said in Holy Scripture as to this one "blessed among women." Nothing is related as to her birth and parentage, as to her gifts of mind and person; it is not even directly asserted that she belonged to the royal stock of David—that is to be implied only from such a verse as the thirty-second. After the Lord, on the cross, solemnly gave her to the care of the beloved disciple, there is only one allusion to her—an allusion in Acts i. There is no reference to her in the Epistles of Paul; none in that of James, certainly nearly related to her; none in those of John, with whom she had lived. St. Luke, speaking of her in connection with the birth, says only, "A virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph." "Blessed," cried a woman one day to Jesus, "is she that bare thee!" He did not deny it; but that there might be no distraction of soul, he added, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it." This Mary, or Miriam, is blessed among women. The word of the Lord's angel we need not hesitate to utter, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured!" But what is the real beauty of Mary? Is it not that she is in the foremost rank of those on whom the Lord's "yea rather, blessed" rested—that she is pre-eminently the hearer and keeper of the Word of God? The few touches of character which are presented suggest the picture of a rarely lovely nature. (1) Observe the *manner of the faith* which is evoked by Gabriel's message. First, there is the "casting in the mind." The sight is marvellous; the salutation is strange. She is troubled; but instead of any display of excitement or of alarm, there is only the quiet self-possessed casting in the mind. "What could this be? Was it from above? Was it a voice of God or a snare of the devil?" (2) When the birth is announced, there is no such reply as that which fell from Zacharias—no word of scepticism, no demand for a sign. She does not doubt that it shall be; she only inquires how it shall be. (3) And, lastly, when the angel's answer is given, concluded by the assertion, "With God nothing shall be impossible," or "No word shall be void of power," how complete is the response of the heart! Difficulty, trial, sorrow, for herself was certain. "Wherefores" and "hows" were no doubt beating against the bars of their cage; but there comes forth the submissive and quiescent, "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy Word." The portrait bears the marks of Divine wisdom. The reticence of Scripture might suggest that the inspiring Spirit of God, foreseeing the danger which so soon appeared, of an admiration scarcely separated from and insensibly sliding into grave error, moved the evangelist to abstain from any magnifying of the Virgin. But the mistaken honour paid to Mary should not withdraw the mind from what is truly honourable and exemplary in her conduct. She is a type of the believer for all times, in that quietness and confidence which are the believer's strength, in that receptiveness of soul which is his life, in that entire self-yielding to God which is his reasonable service. "Blessed is she that believeth." What is the angel's message? Do not attempt to expound the words in vers. 30—35. Be content reverently to receive a mystery so deep and dread. But two things may be noted as to ver. 35. (1) The force of the "therefore" or "wherefore," at the

beginning of the last clause, bidding us see in the statement which precedes the reason of the assertion which follows. The statement is that the Holy Ghost should encloud the mother—therefore the holiness of the Lord. Mark, the difference between Christ's holiness and ours is not in kind; it is in this, that his generation was that which is denoted in our regeneration. Of course, in the human nature of Christ we must recognize an altogether exceptional work of Divine power. But the efficient cause in his birth is the efficient cause in all spiritual birth. Holiness, we see, is not a mere attainment, the result of adherence to a moral regimen, of obedience to a moral law; it is a new supernatural being—"born of the Spirit." What took place, in a marvellous way, even before the actual birth of the Son of Mary, takes place in the case of every one born from above. He is "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And *therefore* that which is born, being holy, is the Son of God. (2) The word, "that holy thing," or "that which is to be born," that sacred, separated entity, may suggest a hint as to the Person of Jesus. Body and soul are one thing, each having its own properties and qualities which cannot be transferred to the other, yet the two making one. It is not possible to tell where body ends and soul begins. Now, in the Son of Mary we have the humanity and the Divinity, each perfect and complete. Whatever can be said of man can be said of him; what can be said of God can also be said of him. Very man and very God. He is one Person. The one entity born of the Virgin is the Son of God. More than this let us not try to say.

> "Faith through the veil of flesh can see
> The face of thy Divinity,
> My Lord, my God, my Saviour."

"This is the doing of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Vers. 39—56.—*The two expectant mothers.* I. THE RETIREMENT. Elisabeth (ver. 24) had hidden herself when she knew that the promise of the angel would be fulfilled. Why she did so we are not told, but the language of ver. 26 suggests a religious motive. She was filled with gratitude, and she desired, perhaps, a season of holy rest and communion with God. "In silence and solitude," says Thomas à Kempis, "the soul advantageth herself, and learneth the mysteries of Holy Scripture." The same reason may partly have influenced Mary. But, besides this, there is no doubt that she wished to enjoy fellowship with her who alone could share her feeling, and with whom (ver. 36) her own prospect of motherhood was so intimately associated. Who can speak of the welcome, the salutations, the conferences, of the two cousins?

> "O days of heaven and nights of equal praise,
> Serene and peaceful as these heavenly days,
> When souls, drawn upward in communion sweet,
> Enjoy the stillness of some close retreat,
> Discourse, as if released and safe at home,
> Of evils past and danger yet to come,
> And spread the sacred treasure of the breast
> Upon the lap of covenanted rest!"

II. THE SONG OF MARY. Elisabeth, receiving Mary, speaks by the Holy Ghost. Mary had been told of her cousin's condition, but Elisabeth had received no intimation of Mary's. The arrival of the latter is the moment of special revelation. Elisabeth (ver. 42) lifts up her voice with a loud cry. The sound of Mary's voice (ver. 44) had occasioned the prophetic impulse. She declares the Virgin the mother of her Lord, and in beautiful humility asks, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" And, it may be, feeling the contrast between the faith of the Virgin and the unbelief of her husband, she pronounces a blessing on her who had believed. Then, in response from Mary, comes the song which the Christian Church has incorporated into its liturgies, which it has regarded as the opening of that fountain of praise, that wonderful hymnology, which has made glad the city of God. With regard to this hymn—"the Magnificat," as it is usually designated: 1. Compare it with the song of Hannah (1 Sam. ii.). In both there is the same blending of personal

gladness with the emotion and experience of the Church; the same losing of self in the sense of an unspeakable loving-kindness; the same boasting in the Lord as he who "fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich empty away." Mary was familiar with this song. Her thought would naturally take shape in utterance charged with its spirit and imagery, even as it represents the purest forms of Hebrew piety. Yet who can fail to see that her utterance is lifted to a higher plane, and is thrilled by a higher inspiration? 2. The song of Mary marks the transition from Old Testament to New Testament praise. The Old Testament is present, not only in the language employed throughout, but also (vers. 54, 55) in the earnest laying hold of the singular providence of God towards Israel, and the covenant made with Israel's fathers—"with Abraham and his seed for ever." But the germ of the New Testament is manifest in the special thanksgiving (vers. 48, 49). God the Saviour has appeared, and his might is to be declared in the Son because of whose birth all generations shall call her blessed. Thus the two covenants are united in all true Christian praise. The Old Testament is not a thing past; it is completed, and therefore more than ever one possession in Christ. "*All* the promises of God in him are yea."

> "Both theirs and ours thou art,
> As we and they are thine;
> Kings, prophets, patriarchs, all have part
> Along the sacred line."

3. Finally, the song of Mary illustrates Ps. xl. 1—8: whoso waits patiently for the Lord will, like Mary, know that he inclines to and hears the cry of the soul; and a new song will be given to the lips, even praise to our God. The new song of the redeemed soul has its prototype in that which arose from the hillside dwelling in the uplands of Judah.

Vers. 59—80.—*The name-giving, and what followed it.* There is a quiet, gentle beauty in the picture of the home life given in ver. 58. The touches of nature in it make us feel our kinship with all the ages. We are told of the flood of congratulations and kind messages which surges towards the happy mother; how the cousins of the priestly families in and around Hebron, and the neighbours scattered over that part of northern Judæa, hastened to express their gladness to Zacharias and Elisabeth. The birth of a son of the old age is the talk of the whole country-side. Our attention is more particularly drawn to the ceremonial connected with the circumcision. Observe—

I. THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO THE NAME IN THE BIBLE. Both in his word to Zacharias and his annunciation to the Virgin the angel is explicit as to the name. So, backwards in all the Hebrew records, the name is regarded as full of significance—*e.g.* Cain, Abel, Seth, Noah. Changes in character and destiny are marked by changes of name—*e.g.* Abram changed into Abraham; Jacob into Israel; Oshea into Jehoshua; Saul into Paul. The force of the names given to individuals should always be noticed—*e.g.* Isaac, Ishmael, Jehoshaphat. It is a sign of the deep religious feeling of the Hebrew nation that, in the name, there is so often a part of the ever-adorable name of God—*e.g.* Elijah, Elisha, Jehoshua. The name is the witness for personal responsibility and personal immortality, a reminder that each of us stands fully out, and alone, before God; that he deals with us separately. Moreover, as the Roman no less than the Hebrew understood, there is a capacity of acting on the imagination and, through the imagination, on the will, in the name. Note, with regard to the name, an interesting conjunction between Christian and Jewish habits. It was the Jewish custom to declare the name on the day of circumcision; it is a Christian custom to declare the name on the day of baptism. As the Hebrew word was the covenant name—that by which the child was to be recognized and individualized in midst of the covenant people—so, theoretically, the name which the parent bestows (not the surname) is that by which the child is individualized in the blood-bought Church of Christ.

II. THE DEPARTURE FROM "USE AND WONT" AT THE CIRCUMCISION OF ZACHARIAS'S BABE. A practice which had its root in a healthy instinct had come to be an accepted institution—the naming of the child after one of "the kindred." What should be the name of the babe? Surely that of the honoured father. "Not so," interposes the mother, who had been instructed by her husband, now dumb and deaf; "he shall be

called *John*." "John? No relative is called by this name! What shall the father decide?" Then, to the amazement of all, the writing on the slate, "His name is John." It was the angel name; it was the Divine name. Note: God the Father in heaven has his special name-giving (see Rev. ii. 17). Blessed—oh, how blessed!—to have this name—the name written in the Lamb's book of life, in which there is recorded "all that goes on in the depths of the heart between the inmost self and God"!

III. How the priest becomes the prophet. The word is no sooner written than the mouth which for months had been closed is opened, and the long pent-up tides of feeling burst forth. When God brings back the soul's captivity, the soul's lost capacities are found. The tongue is loosed which unbelief always ties—tongue and ear as well. "Mine ears hast thou opened; then said I, Lo, I come;" "When I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth;" "We believe, and therefore speak." It is a song of exalted praise, in some of its features resembling Mary's, which flows from the opened lips. See how, towards the end, borne along by the ever-rising inspirations of the Spirit, the song swells into a grand missionary hymn. The Dayspring from on high, that shall visit Israel, will pour a light into the darkness that enwraps the earth, giving light to all that sit in it and in the shadow of death, and guiding their feet into the way of peace. Thus the father prophesied that the child should go before the face of the Lord.

IV. What is said as to the child whose birth and mission have been thus celebrated. Is not the question discussed in the hill-country (ver. 66) one suggested by a birth, by looking at the tiny infant? How wonderful a birth is! What shall be the manner, type of mind, life-story, of the child? A being begun! A journey on and on for ever; but whither? O child!

> "God fill thee with his heavenly light
> To steer thy Christian course aright;
> Make thee a tree of blessed root,
> That ever bends with heavenly fruit."

"The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit." Blessed growth! High-spirited in the better sense of the word—the human guided by the Divine! The home far from the world, in the breezy uplands, where he could meditate in the Law of the Lord day and night, and realize the preparation for the work of the prophet of the Highest! Here we leave him for a little. For another Child has been born—he who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Certainties concerning Christ.* There are many things in connection with the gospel of Christ about which there is difference of view and some measure of uncertainty. But it is "those things which are most surely believed" that constitute the rock on which we rest, on which we build our hopes. We cannot live spiritually on uncertainties; they may serve the purpose of speculation or discussion, but they do not bring peace to the soul; they do not minister to life. We may thank God most heartily that there are some certainties concerning Jesus Christ, on which we can construct our life as it now is, and on which we can rely for that which is to come. There is no doubt at all respecting—

I. The circumstances of our Lord's career. We have the testimony of "eye-witnesses," of men who could not have been mistaken, and who gave the very strongest assurances that they were not deceiving and misleading; we therefore *know* what were the scenes through which Jesus passed, what were the particulars of his life. We know: 1. His character—how pure, how perfect, it was. 2. His thoughts—how profound, how practical, how original, they were. 3. His works—how mighty and how beneficent they were. 4. His sufferings and sorrows—with what sublime patience they were endured. 5. His death—under what awful solemnities it was undergone. 6. The great and supreme fact of his resurrection. Of all these things we are thoroughly assured.

II. The offer he makes of himself as our Divine Redeemer. It is perfectly

clear that Jesus Christ regarded himself as One that was here on the highest mission, as One that was very far removed above ordinary manhood. He felt that he stood in a relation to the human race that was not only unusual, but unique. Otherwise he could not have spoken of "giving his flesh for the life of the world," of being "the Light of the world," of "drawing all men unto him;" he could not have invited all heavy-laden souls to come to him that they might find rest in him. It is abundantly clear that Jesus Christ offered himself, and still offers himself: 1. As the Divine Teacher, at whose feet we may all sit and learn the living truth of God. 2. As the Divine Saviour, in whom we may all trust for the forgiveness of our sins and our reconcillation to God. 3. As the Divine Friend, to whom we may trust our heart, and in whom we may find a Refuge. 4. As the Divine Lord, who claims the obedience and service of our lives.

III. THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST FOR ALL THAT HE UNDERTAKES. Can he, of whom his critics spoke so slightingly as "the carpenter's Son," *do* all this? Is he equal to such offices as these? There is the experience of eighteen centuries to which this appeal may be made. And from the first to the last; from the experience of the little child and of the man in middle life and of extreme old age; from that of health and of sickness; from that of adversity and of prosperity; from that of ignorance and of culture; from that of human souls of every conceivable variety of constitution and of human lives of every imaginable variety of condition;—the answer is one strong, unhesitating, enthusiastic "Yes!" Many things are disputable, but this is certain; many things are to be discredited, but these are to be "most surely believed;" and on them we do well to build our present heritage and our eternal hope.—C.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Life in its completeness.* A very beautiful picture, though on a very small canvas, is here painted; it is a picture of domestic piety. As we think of Zacharias and Elisabeth spending their long life together in the service of Jehovah, attached to one another and held in honour by all their kindred and friends, we feel that we have before our eyes a view of human life which has in it all the elements of an excellent completeness.

I. THE DOMESTIC BOND. Here we have conjugal relationship in its true form; established in mutual respect; justified and beautified by mutual affection; made permanently happy by common affinities and common aims; elevated and consecrated by the presence of another and still nobler bond—that of a strong and immovable attachment to God. A human life is quite incomplete without such tender ties of God's own binding, and these ties are immeasurably short of what they were meant to be if they are not enlarged and ennobled by the sanctities of religion.

II. HUMAN AND DIVINE ESTIMATION. These two godly souls enjoyed the favour of their Divine Father and of their human friends and neighbours: "They were both righteous before God," and they were "blameless" in the sight of men. God accepted them, and man approved them. He to whom they were responsible for all they were and did saw in them, as he sees in all his children, the imperfections which belong to our erring and struggling humanity; but he accepted their reverence and their endeavour to please and to obey him, forgiving their shortcomings. And their kindred and their friends recognized in them those who were regulating their life by God's holy will, and they yielded to them their fullest measure of esteem. No human life is complete without the possession of these two things: (1) the favour of the living God; and (2) the esteem of those amongst whom we live. To walk in the shadow of conscious estrangement from God, to miss the sweet sunshine of his heavenly favour,—this is to darken our life with a continual curse, this is to bereave ourselves of our purest joy and most desirable heritage. And while some of the very noblest of our race, following thus in the footsteps of the Master himself, have borne, in calm and heroic patience, the obloquy of the ignorant and the malice of the evil-minded, yet it is our duty, and it should be our desire and aspiration, so to walk in rectitude and in kindness that men will bless us in their hearts, will esteem us for our integrity, will hold us in their affection. The man who "wears the white flower of a *blameless* life" is the man who will be a power for good in the circles in which he moves.

III. SACRED SERVICE. It may be questionable whether any distinction is intended between "ordinances" and "commandments;" but there can be no question at all that both together cover religious observances and moral obligations. The Law which

these two faithful souls obeyed enjoined the one as well as the other. And no human life is complete which does not include both these elements of piety. 1. *The worship of God*, in private prayer, in family devotion, in public exercises, is a serious and important part of a good man's experience. 2. And certainly not less so is the *regulating of conduct by the revealed will of God*; the walking, day by day, in uprightness and integrity, in sobriety and purity, in truth and in love. Beautifully complete, fashioned in spiritual symmetry, attractive and influential, is that human life which is spent in the home of hallowed love, which is bright with the favour of God and man, and which is crowned with the sovereign excellences of piety and virtue.—C.

Vers. 13—17.—*Parental ambition.* "What would we give to our beloved?" asks one of our poets. What would we ask for our children if we might have our hearts' desire? When the young father or mother looks down on the little child, and then looks on to the future, what is the parental hope concerning him? What is that which, if it could only be assured, would give "joy and gladness"? The history of our race, the chronicles of our own time, even the observation of our own eyes, give abundant proof that the child may rise to the highest distinction, may wield great power, may secure large wealth, may enjoy many and varied pleasures, and yet be a source of sorrow and disappointment. On the other hand, these same authorities abundantly prove that, if the parent is only true to his convictions and avails himself of the resources that are open to him, there is every reason to expect that his child will be such an one as to yield to him a pride that is not unholy, a joy that nothing can surpass. Not on the same scale, but after the same manner, every man's child may become what Gabriel told Zacharias his son should be—

I. ONE TAKING HIGH RANK WITH GOD. "Great in the sight of the Lord." By faith in Jesus Christ our child may become a "*son* of God" in a sense not only true but high (see John i. 12). "And if children, then *heirs*, heirs of God" (Rom. viii. 17). Obedience will ensure the *friendship* of God (see John xiv. 23; xv. 14). Earnestness will make him a *fellow-labourer* with God (1 Cor. ii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 1). The acceptance of all Christian privilege will make him a "*king and priest* unto God" (Rev. i. 6). Who can compute how much better it is to be thus "great in the sight of the Lord" than to be honoured and even idolized by men?

II. ONE IN WHOM GOD HIMSELF DWELLS. "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost." God desires to dwell with and in every one of his human children; and if there be purity of heart and prayerfulness of spirit, he will dwell in them continually (ch. xi. 13; John xiv. 17; 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19; Rev. iii. 20).

III. ONE THAT IS MASTER OF HIMSELF. "He shall drink neither wine," etc. By right example and wise discipline any man's child may be trained to control his own appetites, to regulate his tastes, to form temperate and pure habits, to wield the worthiest of all sceptres—mastery of himself.

IV. ONE IN WHOM THE BEST AND NOBLEST LIVES AGAIN. "He shall go in the spirit and power of Elijah." In John the Baptist there lived again the great Prophet Elijah—a man of self-denying habit; of dauntless courage, that feared the face of no man, and that rebuked kings without flinching; of strong and scathing utterance; of devoted and heroic life. In any one of our children there may live again that One who "in all things in which John was great and noble, was greater and nobler than he." In the little child who is trained in the truth and led into the love of Christ there may dwell the mind and spirit of the Son of God himself (Rom. viii. 9; Phil. ii. 5).

V. ONE THAT LIVES A LIFE OF HOLY USEFULNESS. What nobler ambition can we cherish for our children than that, in their sphere, they should do as John did in his—spend their life in the service of their kind? Like him, they may: 1. Make many a home holier and happier than it would have been. 2. Prepare the way for others to follow with their higher wisdom and larger influence. 3. Be instrumental in turning disobedient hearts from the way of folly to the path of wisdom. 4. Earn the benediction of "many" whom they have blessed (ver. 14).

To ensure all this, there must be: 1. Parental example in righteousness and wisdom. 2. Parental training as well as teaching. 3. Parental intercession.—C.

Vers. 31—33.—*The greatness of Jesus Christ.* To Mary, as to Elisabeth, it was fore-

told by the celestial messenger that her Son should be "great." There can be no doubt that, after all that was then said, Mary expected unusually great things of the Child that should be born of her. But how very far short of the fact her highest hopes have proved to be! For to whatever exalted point they reached, the Jewish maiden could not possibly have attached to the angel's words such meaning as we know them to have contained. The greatness of that promised Child was threefold; it related to—

I. HIS DIVINE ORIGIN. He was not only to be her offspring, but he should "be called the Son of the Most High." And there was to come upon her and overshadow her the Holy Ghost, the Power of the Most High. He was to be not only *a* son of God, but *the* Son of God, related to the Eternal Father as no other of the children of men had ever been or should ever be. He was to be One that would in the *fullest* sense partake of the Divine nature, be one in thought and in aim and in action with the Father (John v. 19, 23; viii. 28; x. 30; xiv. 10, 11). He was to be "God manifest in the flesh."

II. THE WORK HE SHOULD ACCOMPLISH. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus;" and he was to be so called because he would "save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 25). There have been "saviours of society" from whom this poor wounded world might well have prayed to be delivered, men who tried to cover their own hideous selfishness under a fair and striking name. What they have claimed to be, Jesus the Saviour was and is. He saves from sin. And to do that is to render us the very greatest conceivable service, both in its negative and positive aspects. 1. *Negatively* considered. To destroy sin is to take away evil by the root. For sin is not only, *in itself*, the worst and most shameful of all evils by which we can be afflicted, but it is the *one fruitful source* of all other evils—poverty, estrangement, strife, weariness and aching of heart, death. 2. *Positively* considered. Saving from sin means restoring to God; it includes reinstatement in the condition from which sin removed us. Jesus Christ, in the very act in which he redeems us from the penalty and power of sin, restores us to God—to his Divine favour, his likeness, his service. Accepting and abiding in the Saviour, we dwell in the sunshine of God's everlasting friendship; we grow up into his perfect image; we spend our days and our powers under his direction. It is not only that Jesus Christ delivers us from the darkest curse; it is that he raises us to the loftiest heritage, by the salvation which he offers to our hearts.

III. THE DIGNITY AND POWER HE SHOULD ATTAIN. He was to reign upon a throne, "over the house of Jacob for ever;" and "of his kingdom there should be no end." Great and large as Mary's expectations for her promised Child may have very justly been, they can have been nothing to the fulfilment of the angel's words. For the kingdom of Christ (as it is or as it shall be) is one that surpasses in every way that of the greatest Hebrew sovereign. It does so: 1. In its main characteristics. It is *spiritual*. The only homage which is acceptable to its King is the homage of the heart, the only tribute the tribute of affection, the only obedience the obedience of love. It is *beneficent*. Every subject in this realm is sacredly bound to seek his brother's well-being rather than his own. It is *righteous*. Every citizen, because he is such, is pledged to depart from all iniquity, to pursue and practise all righteousness. 2. In its extent. It has "no end" in its spacial dimensions. No river bounds it; no mountain, no sea; it reaches the whole world round. 3. In its duration. He shall reign "for ever;" his rule will go down to remotest times; it will touch and include the last generation that shall dwell upon the earth. Let us rejoice in his greatness; but let us see to it that (1) we have a part in the heritage of those whom he is blessing, and that (2) we take our share in the furtherance of his mission of mercy.—C.

Vers. 46—48.—*The voice of praise.* This "improvisation of a happy faith" is not more musical to the ear than it is beautiful to our spiritual discernment. It presents to us the mother of our Lord in a most pleasing light. We will look at these words of devout gratitude as—

I. MARY'S RESPONSE to God's distinguishing goodness to her. She received from God a kindness that was: 1. *Necessarily unique.* Only to one of the daughters of men could be granted the peculiar honour conferred on her. We are naturally and properly affected by mercies which speak of God's distinguishing goodness to us. 2. Fitted to fill her heart *with abounding joy.* She was to become a mother, and the mother of One

who should render to his people services of surpassing value; no wonder that her "spirit rejoiced" in such a prospect. 3. Calculated to call forth all that was *highest and worthiest in her nature.* She would have to cherish and to rear, to teach and to train, that illustrious Son who should call her "mother." 4. Certain to *confer upon her an honourable immortality.* All generations would call her blessed. 5. Rendered to one who *could not have expected it.* God had stooped low to bless, even to the low estate of "his bondmaiden." And, impressed with this wonderful and unanticipated goodness, she poured forth her gladness in a song of holy gratitude, of lofty praise. Such should be—

II. OUR APPRECIATION of God's abounding kindness to ourselves. 1. *The indebtedness* under which our heavenly Father has laid us. It is, indeed, as different as possible from that which inspired this sacred lyric. Yet may we most reverently and most becomingly take the words of Mary into our lips—both the utterance of felt obligation and the language of praise. For: (1) How *low* is the *condition* on which, in our case, God has mercifully looked! from what depth of error, of folly, of wrong, has he raised us!—a depth with which the lowly estate of Mary is not to be compared. (2) With what a *great salvation* has he delivered us!—a salvation with which even the national deliverance Mary would be expecting of her Son is of very small account. (3) And what a *lasting good* he confers upon us who have received God *our* Saviour! The blessing of an immortality of undying fame is very precious to these thirsting human spirits of ours: but is it comparable with that of an actual immortality of conscious, eternal life with God and with the good in the heavenly kingdom? Distant generations will not hear our name, but in remotest times we shall be dwelling and serving in unimaginable joy. 2. *The response* we should make to our Father. (1) Great gladness of heart. We should rejoice in God our Saviour; welcoming him, trusting and resting in him, finding our refuge and our strength in his faithfulness and his love. (2) Honouring him before all men. "Magnifying the Lord" with the utterance of the lip, with the obedience of the life, with active service in his vineyard.—C.

Vers. 49—55.—*God revealed in Jesus Christ.* We see much more in Mary's words than the thoughts which were present to her mind at the time of utterance; for we stand well within that kingdom of God of which she stood on the threshold. To the holy confidence she entertained in God's goodness to all Israel, and especially to herself up to that hour, there was added a reverent wonder as to this new manifestation of Divine mercy. So she sang of the power and the holiness, the mercy and the faithfulness, of Jehovah. Through bitterest experiences (ch. ii. 35) she passed into the light of truth and the rest of God, and now she sees how much greater occasion she had than she knew at the moment to sing in such strains of the character of God. We look at these Divine attributes as expressed in the coming of the Saviour.

I. HIS DIVINE POWER. "He that is mighty hath done . . . great things" (ver. 49); "He hath showed strength with his arm" (ver. 51). God's power is very gloriously manifested in the formation and furniture of this earthly home, in the creation of successive generations of mankind, in the providential government of the world, including the mastery of all physical forces and the control of all human energies; but by far the most wonderful exhibition of Divine power is in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. To exert a transforming power on one intelligent, free, disloyal spirit; to conquer a rebellious, to win an estranged, soul; to raise a fallen nature, and uplift it to a height of holy excellence; to make that which had lowered itself to the basest fit for the society of the holiest in heaven; to do this not in one individual case but in the case of "ten thousand times ten thousand;" to introduce a power which can elevate and ennoble families, communities, nations; which is changing the character and condition of the entire race;—this is "*the* power of God," this is the doing of him "that is mighty."

II. HIS DIVINE HOLINESS. "Holy is his Name" (ver. 49); "He hath scattered the proud," etc. (vers. 51, 52). God's holiness is shown in his providential interpositions, in his humbling the haughty, in his scattering the cruel and the profane, in his raising the lowly and the pure and the true. Thus he has been revealing his righteousness in every nation and in every age. But nowhere does his holiness appear as it is seen in (1) the *mission* of his Son, who came to put away sin; in (2) the *life and language*

of his Son, who illustrated all purity and condemned all iniquity; in (3) the *death* of his Son, who by the sacrifice of himself uttered God's thought and feeling about sin as nothing else could speak it, and struck it such a death-blow as nothing else could strike it.

III. His Divine mercy. (Ver. 50.) Many are the testimonies borne by Old Testament saints to the pity, the patience, the mercy, of the Lord. But in Jesus Christ—in his spirit, in his example, and more particularly in his redeeming death and work—is *the* manifestation of the grace of God. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In the gospel of Christ the pity, the patience, the magnanimity, of God rise to their fullest height, reach to their noblest breadth.

IV. His Divine faithfulness. (Vers. 53—55.) God, who made us for himself and for truth and righteousness, who has made our hearts to hunger for the highest good, does not leave us to pine and perish; he fills us with the "rich provision" of his truth and grace in Jesus Christ. "As he spake unto our fathers," so he has done, granting not only such a One as they hoped for, but One that has been to the whole race of man a glorious Redeemer, in whom all nations are blessed with a blessing immeasurably transcending the most sanguine hopes of his ancient people.

1. Let our souls be so filled with the greatness and the goodness of God as thus revealed, that we shall break forth into grateful song, magnifying his Name. 2. Let us return at once to him, if we yet remain at a distance from him; for we have no right to hope, and no reason to expect, that he will ever manifest himself to us in more attractive features than as we see him in the Son that was born of the lowly Virgin.—C.

Vers. 58, 66, 67.—*Joy and awe at a human birth.* When John was born his mother's heart was filled with great joy, and her neighbours rejoiced with her. And when the little child, a week old, was introduced into the Jewish commonwealth, a feeling of awe filled the hearts of those present, and there was much wonderment concerning him. "Fear came on them all," and every one was asking, "What manner of child shall this be?" No doubt the exceptional character of the circumstances attending his birth and his circumcision accounted for the joy and also for the fear; but apart from all that was unusual, there was reason enough for both sentiments to be felt and shown. At any ordinary human birth there is—

I. Occasion for hopefulness and gladness of heart. "The mother remembereth no more her anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world," said our Lord (John xvi. 21). And why rejoice on this occasion? Because of: 1. The love which the little child will cherish. Not, indeed, to be manifested in its very earliest days, but to be felt and shown before long—the beautiful, clinging, whole-hearted love of childhood; a love which it is fair to see and most precious to receive. 2. The love which the little child will call forth—the love which is parental, fraternal; the love of those who serve as well as that of kindred and friends,—this, too, is one of the most goodly sights on which the eye of purity and wisdom rests; it is one of the sweetest and most wholesome ingredients in the cup of earthly good. 3. The discipline which the coming of the child will involve. All parents have an invaluable privilege, from which they ought to derive the greatest benefit. They may be so slow to learn, so unimpressionable, so obdurate, that they are none the wiser or better for their parentage; and in that case they will be something or even much the worse. But if the "little child" does not "lead" us, it is our own fault and folly. The child's dependency on his parent, trustfulness in his parent, obedience to his parent,—do these not speak eloquently of our dependence upon, our trustfulness in, our obedience to our heavenly Father? The love we feel for our little child, the care we take of him, the profound regret we should feel if he went astray, the sacrifice we are ready to make for his recovery,—does not all this summon us, with touching and even thrilling voice, to realize the love God has for us his human children, the care he has taken of us day and night through all our years, the profound Divine regret with which he has seen us go astray from himself, the wonderful sacrifice he made for us when he spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, in order to restore us to himself and reinstate us in our heritage? And the labour we are necessitated to bestow, the patience to exercise, and the self-

denial and sacrifice to show,—these are essential factors in the forming of our character. We should not choose them, but we may well be most thankful for them. 4. The excellency to which he may attain; it may be that (1) of physical beauty, or (2) of intellectual ability, or (3) of spiritual worth, or (4) of valuable service. Who can tell what lies latent in that helpless infant? what sources of power and blessing are in that little cradle?

II. OCCASION FOR REVERENT AWE. It may well be that "fear" comes on all those who hold their own children in their arms. For they who are entrusted with a little child receive therewith a most grave responsibility. It is true that nothing can remove the accountableness of each soul to its Creator for what it has become; but it is also true that parents are very seriously responsible for the character and career of their children. Our children will believe what we teach them, will form the habits in which we train them, will follow the example we set them, will imbibe the spirit which we are breathing in their presence. *What* shall this child be? That depends on ourselves. If we are only true and wise and kind, our children will almost certainly become what we ourselves are—what we long and pray that they may be. Joy and awe are therefore the two appropriate sentiments at every human birth. When a child is born into the home, there enters that which may be the source of the greatest gladness to the heart; there also enters that which should make life a far more serious and solemn thing.—C.

Vers. 74, 75.—*The course of the Christian life.* These words of Zacharias will very well indicate the course through which a Christian life passes from its commencement to its close.

I. IT BEGINS IN SPIRITUAL EMANCIPATION. "We being delivered out of the hand of our enemies." In order to "walk in newness of life," we must be rescued from the thraldom of sin. And there is a twofold deliverance that we need. One is from the *condemnation of our guilt;* for we cannot rest and rejoice in the love of God while we are under a troubled sense of the Divine displeasure, while we feel and know that our "sin has separated between" ourselves and our heavenly Father. The other is from the *bondage of evil.* So long as we are "held in the cords of our sins," we are helplessly disobedient; it is only when we have learnt to hate sin, and, loathing it, to leave it behind us, that we are free to walk in the path of righteousness. This double emancipation is wrought for us by the Lord whose way the son of Zacharias was to prepare. By faith in him, the great Propitiation for our sins (1 John ii. 2), we have full and free forgiveness, so that all the guilty past may be removed from our sight; and in the presence of a crucified Redeemer "the flesh and its affections are crucified," we die to our old self and our old iniquities, the tolerance of sin is slain, we hate that which we loved and embraced before, we are "delivered out of the hand of our enemies."

II. IT PROCEEDS ALONG THE PATH OF FILIAL SERVICE. We "serve him without fear." Here are two elements—obedience and happiness. As soon as we unite ourselves to our Lord and Saviour, *we live to serve.* "None of us liveth to himself;" "We thus judge, . . . that we who live should not live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). And this is the only true life of man. The animal may live for itself, though even the higher animals live rather for others than for themselves. But all whom we should care to emulate live to serve. It is not the *sentence passed,* it is the *heritage conferred* upon us, that in Christ Jesus we live to serve God—to serve him by direct worship and obedience, and also, indirectly, by serving the children of his love and the creatures of his care. And we *serve in love;* and therefore without fear—without that fear which means *bondage;* for "perfect love casteth out fear." It is with no hesitating and reluctant step that we walk in the ways of God; it is our joy to do his bidding; we "delight to do his will: yea, his Law is within our heart" (Ps. xl. 8). "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;" our spirit is the spirit of happy childhood, which runs to fulfil its Father's word.

III. IT MOVES TOWARDS PERFECT EXCELLENCE OF CHARACTER. "In holiness and righteousness before him." Here are three elements of the Christian life. 1. *A holy hatred of evil;* leading us to condemn it in ourselves and in others, and prompting us to expel and extirpate it to the utmost of our power. 2. *The pursuit and practice of*

all that is equitable; endeavouring to do and to promote that which is just in all the relations in which we stand to others, or they to one another. 3. *Piety;* doing every right thing *as unto Christ* our Lord; living consciously "before him;" so that all our rectitude of heart and excellency of behaviour is something more than a habit of life; it is a sacrifice unto our Saviour.

IV. IT PERSEVERES EVEN TO THE END. "All our days." There is no break in our course. Our upward and onward path may be undulating, but it is continuous, and is ever making for the summit. We do not retire, or resign, or abdicate, in this noblest work, in this sacred office of being "servant of the Lord," "king and priest unto God." Having loved his own, our Master loved them unto the end (John xiii. 1); and loving him whom we have not seen, and rejoicing in him with unspeakable joy, we are faithful unto death, and we know that

"To him that overcometh
A crown of life shall be;
He with the King of glory
Shall reign eternally."

C.

Ver. 79.—*Christ our Light.* To whom and to what extent the Messiah should "give light" probably Zacharias did not know. He may have limited the blessing, in his mind, to the people of Israel; or, inspired and illumined of God, he may have had a larger and truer outlook. We, at any rate, are unable to confine our thoughts to Jewry; we see in the Sun of Righteousness, in the Dayspring from on high, a celestial luminary "whose going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is *nothing* hid from the heat thereof." To us it is "the Light which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every one."

I. THE DEGREES OF DARKNESS in which the world was shrouded when the Dayspring rose. It was a dark hour when Jesus Christ was born. "Darkness covered the earth." But the shadows were deeper in some lands than in others; some minds were more lost and buried in the thick darkness than others were. 1. *The dim twilight of Judaism*—a twilight, not of the morning, but of the evening. For Judaism had passed out of its manhood into its dotage, out of its strength and spirituality into a dreary and lifeless formalism. It had, indeed, escaped from idolatry, and it was free from the worst excesses of the pagan world; but of a pure piety, a spiritual and acceptable service, it knew but little. Compared, however, with surrounding peoples, the Jews may be said to have stood in the twilight of truth. 2. *The darkness of philosophy.* For philosophy was groping in the darkness; it had felt or was feeling its way out of the absurdities of polytheism and idolatry; it touched—but only here and there—the grand truth of monotheism; but it was peering in the direction of pantheism and atheism. "The world by wisdom knew not God." And even where it did reach the idea of one living God, it could not tell how he was to be worshipped, how his favour was to be won, what were the relations he desired to sustain to mankind. 3. *The thick darkness of paganism.* If the philosophers "sat in darkness," the idolaters of uncivilized communities were "in the shadow of death." What a death in life is the existence of those who are buried in the most blighting superstitions and the most debasing habits! There indeed "the light is as darkness;" it moves us to a profound pity as we think of it. We are not surprised to read in the text of—

II. THE COMPASSION OF THE FATHER OF MEN IN VIEW OF IT. "The tender mercy of our God" was called forth by the sad spectacle of a world in deep shadow, a race without the Light of life. At their *best*, men were far enough from truth, from righteousness, from the love of God; at their *worst*, they had utterly gone astray, "stumbling on the dark mountains" of error and of iniquity. Well might the God of all pity compassionate such a lost race as this.

III. THE VISIT OF THE HEAVENLY DAYSPRING. "The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light." Jesus Christ came to be the "Light of the world;" and such he is. He has illumined all the way from the blackness of darkness of sin to the light and glory of heaven. What precious rays of light has the Divine Teacher shed on (1) the nature and the disposition of God, our Father; on (2) the character and the consequences of sin; on (3) the way back to God and righteousness; on (4) the transcendent

value of the human soul; on (5) the beauty and blessedness of the life of consecration; on (6) the certainty of future glory to the good and faithful! Let us draw near to him who is the Light of the human world, let us walk in the light of his reviving truth, "that we may be the children of light," and dwell in immortal glory.—C.

Ver. 79.—*Christ our Peace.* "To guide our feet into the way of peace." And how far has the mission of the Dayspring succeeded? How far *has* he guided the feet of men into the way of peace? Judged by the outward appearance, the answer would be quite unsatisfactory. To-day, after eighteen centuries of Christianity, there are four millions of men under arms in Europe only; and if another great war does not break out, it is not from humane or Christian considerations that it is suppressed. How do we explain the fact? 1. Christianity has had no fair chance of showing what it is *in it to do.* It has been so wretchedly misrepresented through whole centuries of time. 2. It *has* done much to moderate and mitigate the severities of war; amongst other things, it has carried the "red cross" of succour right into the heart of the battle-field. 3. It is impregnating the minds of statesmen with the truth that an unnecessary war is a heinous crime against God and man. 4. It has been leading the souls of men into a profounder peace. For there is a spiritual sphere in which there is strife and unrest worse by far than any physical contests can be. It is there that peace has been most missed, and that its absence has wrought the saddest evil. This worst restlessness has resulted from two things—

I. FROM MAN SEEKING HIS SATISFACTION WHERE HE CANNOT FIND IT. 1. What a vain thing is it to seek satisfaction in a life of pleasure, in living to be amused, in hunting happiness over the field of enjoyment! 2. What an unsatisfying thing is life lived on any lower plane, whatever it may be! Alas for those millions to whom it is a dreary and monotonous round of toil! And to those who move in the higher social circles, is it so very much better? When the veil is lifted, as it is occasionally by some honest memoirs or frank autobiography, how often do we find it full of disappointment, of disillusion, of wretched rivalry, of hunger and heart-ache! There is no peace or rest there that is worthy of the name. Where, then, shall rest be found? We shall gain it from him and find it in him who "knew what was *in man*," and who alone knew what would satisfy the hunger of his soul; it was he who came to guide our feet into the way of peace. We shall find it in his *friendship*, in his *service*, in his *cause*. When we have come to ourselves, and have returned unto the Lord our God; when we have lost sight of ourselves, and have entered his holy and happy service; then have we left disquietude and unrest behind us, then have we entered into a true, deep, and enduring peace.

II. FROM OUR SENSE OF SIN AGAINST GOD. There is no peace for man without reconciliation to God. He has left the home of his Father, has become estranged from him, has come under his righteous condemnation, and he can find no peace until he has been forgiven and restored. Apathy, indifference, the unconcern of a stolid ignorance, there may be; but that is not peace. Peace is a *well-grounded assurance that all is well with us.* This we can only obtain by knowing the truth concerning ourselves, and by taking the path which leads us home to God. It is just this we have in Jesus Christ. He (1) makes plain to the understanding and makes grievous to the soul our own great unworthiness and guilt; and then he (2) offers himself to us as our all-sufficient Saviour. Then "being justified by faith [in him] we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And abiding in him, we continue in the path of peace—a path which leads on to holy joy and up to heavenly glory.—C.

Ver. 80.—*The service of solitude.* "And was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." John the Baptist had a long period of retirement before he began the active work of life; and we may be sure that the time spent in the wilderness was not lost. The communion he had there with God, and his prolonged reflection on the worth and purpose of human life, must have had much to do with the character he formed and the work he afterwards accomplished. Then good seed was sown which bore much fruit in later years. We should do well to "be in the desert" more than we are—to seek the solitary place where we are alone with God and with ourselves more than we do. "The world *is* too much with us." We cannot hear the stiller and

deeper voices that speak to us, for its perpetual sound is in our ear—the hum of its activity, the rattle of its pleasures, the wail of its distress. Solitude would render an essential service if we would but ensure it and employ it.

I. THE SERVICES SOLITUDE WOULD RENDER US. 1. It would bring God near to us. When man is quite removed from us, and his voice is completely hushed; when we are alone, whether it be in the folds of the hill, or in the depth of the valley, or in our own chamber;—we have a sense of God's nearness to us which we have not amid the crowd. And what an incstimable advantage it would be to us to let the consciousness of God's own presence often fill our soul, and then to hold sustained communion with him! 2. It would place our past in full view before our soul. It is not well to be *very often* looking back on that which has gone. There is deep wisdom in "forgetting those things which are behind," both past follies and past successes. Yet is it well sometimes to review the way we have been taking—to consider how much there is that should humble us, and how much that should teach us our weakness and cast us on the mercy and the help of God. 3. It would confront us with the future. It would make us ask whither we are going, what there remains for us to do before we die, how well we are prepared for death and the great day of account. 4. It would lead us to estimate our present spiritual condition—how good a use we have made of our privileges, whether we have been progressing or receding in our course, whether we are what our Divine Lord would have us be, how we stand in the sight of perfect truth and purity.

II. THE OCCASIONS WHEN IT IS MOST APPROPRIATE. 1. Between the night and the morning; when the soul has to address itself to new duties, new difficulties, new opportunities. 2. Between the evening and the night; before a man commits himself to the "great Guardian of his sleeping hours," his hours of utter helplessness and unconsciousness. 3. Before leaving the shelter of the home; when the young heart goes forth into deeper waters—who shall say how deep?—of temptation and trial; when all, and far more than all, its resources will be required for the stern struggle before it. 4. In the crises of our career; when in the innermost chamber of the soul it is determined whether the heart and life shall be yielded to the holy Saviour and rightful Sovereign, or shall be withheld from him. 5. At the time of religious avowal; when a human being takes upon himself the vows of God, and makes open declaration of attachment to the Lord his Redeemer. 6. Before special services which demand the full strength of the soul to meet them bravely and to render them worthily. At such times as these does it most become us to shut our doors upon ourselves and be long alone with God.—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*The absolute certainty of the Christian religion.* In this prologue by Luke we have an insight into the conditions and purposes of his publication. In an age without the art of printing, it was useful to obtain the patronage of the wealthy, and thus secure the production of such a number of "copies" as would save the volume from oblivion. Hence in the classic world dedications to rich men were the rule with authors rather than the exception. Luke's Gospel, which is the "classic" Gospel in the series, is thus written for Theophilus, presumably a rich convert, with whom the writer has had most intimate relations. It is to the same patron he dedicates the second volume of the life of Christ, which is commonly, though inaccurately, called "The Acts of the Apostles," but which is really a second volume of the acts of the Lord, accomplished in and through his apostles. The Gospel, as Luke tells us in the prologue to the Acts, was an account of all that Jesus *began* to do and teach (Acts i. 1). Our Lord's earthly life was thus, in Luke's view, only a first stage in an everlasting history. But while Luke, like other authors in the classical world, may have had the interests of his book in view in dedicating it to Theophilus, he had at the same time a nobler purpose, even to confirm Theophilus in the Christian faith. He proposes consequently to display the basis on which this convert has been building, and how absolutely certain the Christian faith is. It is well to revise the foundations. We ought to "walk about Zion, and go round about her;" we ought to "tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces; that we may tell it to the generation following" (Ps. xlviii. 12, 13). What, then, does Luke present to Theophilus as an account of the Christian faith?

I. THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS NOT A SPECULATIVE SYSTEM. Man, left to himself, evolves out of his consciousness a system more or less complete, and calls upon his fellows to accept of it as their religious faith. But such an evolution of *religion* has proved a failure. Into the interesting study of comparative religion we cannot here enter at any length, but two tendencies in speculation may be noticed in passing. The first is the *outward, or idealistic tendency*, which may be found developed in the Indian religions; the second is the *inward, or self-reliant tendency*, which may be seen carried to its issues in Hellenism and the speculations of the West. Thus the tendency of the Oriental mind was and is to contemplate Nature and to reverence her underlying forces; while the tendency of the Occidental mind was to contemplate man or human nature, and to find in his individuality, his freedom, and his power the true unit and substance of thought. The Oriental mind consequently lost itself in speculations on the *absolute*, which became to the dreamers of the East an abstraction without personality, intelligence, or limitation, just as he has become of late to certain of our dreamers in the West; and the climax of being is in the *Nirvâna*, the utter extinction of human personality through absorption into the universal Spirit. The Western, or Grecian mind, on the other hand, held to man and human nature, cultivated a boundless self-reliance, and a supreme confidence in human nature and its powers. His gods and goddesses were but deified men and women; Olympus only a Greece enjoying larger latitude and more abundant sunlight; and reason and self the ultimate objects of trust. The issue, as we might expect, was "intense worldliness of spirit, that dread of death, that doubt of immortality, that decay of the religious sentiment, which finally covered classical life with such deep gloom and despair."[1] The two tendencies, Oriental and Occidental—the one making man nothing, the other making man all in all—had, before Christ's time, ample opportunity to prove their insufficiency. They had in Buddhism and in Platonism checks, but they were unequal to the needful reformation. It remained for a better faith to furnish man with certainty. Hence we remark—

II. THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS FOUNDED ON THE HISTORY OF A PERSON. The gospel, as Luke here indicates, consists in the history of a Person whose advent is essential to the salvation of the world. Hence the substance of the Christian faith is historical, not speculative. Whatever certainty attaches to historical evidence as superior to speculation attaches, therefore, to the Christian faith. And here we have to notice: 1. *That the history rests on the testimony of eye-witnesses.* This is asserted by Luke in ver. 2. *Facts* consequently appealing to the senses of the apostles constitute the foundation of the faith. And if it be insinuated that they were "interested witnesses," we reply with Luke: 2. *That the witnesses gained nothing in the worldly sense by their testimony.* As ministers of the Word, they were persecuted, in many cases killed; in all cases life was much less comfortable in consequence of their testimony than if they had said nothing about the Saviour who died and rose again. 3. *Luke sifted the facts as carefully as he could.* It is significant that he makes no claim to inspiration in his prologue. And this is the rule with the sacred writers. Some have supposed that because the writers do not each and all put in a categorical claim to inspiration, it is superfluous to suppose that they are all inspired.[2] But we reply that it is far better for writers to *show* that they are inspired than to *say* they are. Inspiration, like all other good gifts of God, is to be "known by its fruits." This prologue shows that many tried their hands at writing lives of Jesus; but there has been a "survival of the fittest" in this case at all events, to the great advantage of mankind. Instead of asserting his inspiration, Luke used his best endeavours to sift the material and produce a careful and "classic" work. Instead of the Spirit of God despising *means*, he owns them and blesses them.

III. THE HISTORY OF CHRIST HAS A PERSONAL BEARING UPON EACH ONE OF US. Theophilus had been taught this, just as we require to be taught it. Now, we may see the application of Christ's life to our individual need by the two tendencies already referred to. The human mind is *idealizing* in its character. It can be shown that we owe even our scientific progress to the idealists, the Pythagoreans in Greece and the Platonists in Alexandria being the only men in the old world who really advanced

[1] 'The Secret of Christianity,' by S. S. Hebberd, pp. 54, 55.

[2] Cf. 'Die Stellung des Christlichen Glaubens zur heiligen Schrift,' zwei apologetische Vorträge, von Professor Dr. Hermann Schultz, in Heidelberg (1876).

science.[1] Now, Jesus supplies us, in his own perfect and sinless Person, with the "ideal" we individually need to satisfy the cravings and longings of the heart. He is, in fact, "altogether lovely." So that by his realized Personality we are saved from occupation with a pure abstraction, called the "absolute," and the self-effacement to which the Indian dreamers and others are led, as the hope and consequence of their speculation. The definiteness of the historic Person is thus placed in antagonism to the dreamy indefiniteness of speculation about the absolute. Again, the human mind is *introspective* and *self-reliant* in its tendencies. Jesus Christ again applies the requisite check and antagonism to the dangerous tendency. His perfect life shows us by contrast how imperfect our lives are; his mission as Saviour demonstrates our spiritual need; and so we end by taking up self-suspicion in place of self-confidence, and we delight ourselves in the Lord alone. Thus it may be seen that the life of Jesus, especially when we remember his Divinity and omnipotence, becomes a personal interest and a reforming power.[2]

IV. THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE RESULT OF THE PERSONAL CHRIST INFLUENCING AS THEY NEEDED IT THE WILLING SONS OF MEN. The Book of the Acts has to be taken as the development of the Gospel. In it we see *the Lord* adding to the Church of such as shall be saved, and accomplishing his sacred purposes through human instrumentalities. The people are made willing in the day of his Pentecostal power (Ps. cx. 3). The great Personality is thus seen to be moulding men. It has been said truly that Christianity has been a progress through *antagonism* (cf. Hebberd, *ut supra*). Paganism was a development; Christianity has been a history of restraint. It has curbed men's passions, and conducted them through antagonism to their goal. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 17). This policy of restraint or antagonism may be traced through Church history. Only an outline can be here suggested. Mohammedanism was a providential restraint upon the growing superstitions of the early centuries. Catholicism again was a restraint upon the vandalism of the Germanic tribes, and by the establishment of feudalism it changed nomadic nations into settled and sympathizing patriots. Protestantism followed, to restrain the "spiritual despotism" which accompanied Catholicism, and secure freedom and the rights of the individual. Even the scientific spirit, as can easily be shown, is due to Protestantism, and if it threatens us, as it does, with unspiritual developments, Christianity will take a new start and antagonize that spirit with a wholesome assertion of the spiritual nature and rights of man (cf. Hebberd, *ut supra*). A great restraining Saviour is thus seen to be moving among men and using their freedom to serve his glorious designs. The Christian faith is simple trust in this historic yet immortal Person, who can consider and consult at once the majestic cycles of human progress and the minutest needs of those who trust him. We have certainty at the foundation of our faith, and a living Lord continually at our side.—R. M. E.

Vers. 5—25.—*The inauguration of the dispensation of grace.* From the prologue about the historic certainty of the Christian faith, we now proceed to the first stage of the wonderful history in the annunciation of the birth of the Baptist. In this we have Luke mounting higher than either Matthew or Mark. We can understand this since he was writing for a Gentile audience, and the speculative turn of Grecian minds would certainly lead to inquiries as to the *origin* of the leaders in the dispensation of grace. Luke satisfies all just demands, and with that exquisite taste which should regulate thought upon such themes. Let us notice the facts as presented to us.

I. THE LORD UTILIZED EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS. Just as we believe the New Testament eldership was based upon the Old Testament office of elder, so here we have the great reformer taken from the Aaronic priesthood. Once more is honour put upon the line of Aaron. The parents of the forerunner both belonged to the priestly tribe. They are, moreover, godly people, being "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (ver. 6). By which could

[1] Cf. Hebberd's 'Secret of Christianity,' pp. 173—208.
[2] Cf. Isaac Taylor's 'Lectures on Spiritual Christianity,' pp. 10—43.

not be meant that they were sinlessly perfect, especially since in such a case the ritual through which they regularly passed would have been strangely unmeaning. They were a pious, God-fearing pair, walking before the Lord, and striving to be perfect. And here we may draw attention to the advantage John thus had in pious parents. It is, we believe, a *physical* advantage to be the offspring of those who have learned by God's grace to subdue their passions, and who may otherwise be healthy. Other things being equal, their physical development must be superior to that of those whose parents may be addicted to any forms of sinful indulgence.

II. NOTICE THE TRIAL OF THEIR FAITH. This consisted in their having no child. With the Jews there was, added to the natural desire of husband and wife for children, the stimulus arising from the Messianic promises. A Deliverer is expected: why not in my family? Thus Jewish mothers were kept in an expectant attitude, not knowing but that the Messiah was to be their Son. We see in such psalms as CXXVII., CXXVIII., etc., evidence how the Divine blessing was associated with fruitfulness. Zacharias and Elisabeth had hitherto been denied the blessing of any child, and, though they had continued to pray about it, they had ceased really to hope. Just like the people who prayed for the release of Peter, and then would not believe it was he when he came knocking at the door (Acts xii. 12—16), so the aged priest and his wife seem to have kept up the form of prayer for a son long after they had ceased to expect such a gift. God keeps us waiting till we are hopeless, and then he surprises us with his blessings.

III. NOTICE NEXT THE PRAYING MULTITUDE AND THE OFFICIATING PRIEST. Zacharias belonged to the eighth of the priestly courses, and had consequently to come up twice a year for eight days' attendance at the temple. Those belonging to the same course met and cast lots for the privilege of officiating at the golden altar. So soon as a priest secured the privilege once, he retired from the contest, as once during the sojourn at Jerusalem was deemed ample honour. Zacharias happened to be successful; the Lord's will was that he should officiate on a given day. The lot left the destiny of each absolutely in the hands of the Lord. It is quite a different matter when people make an appeal to him in games of chance and such like.[1] Into the sanctuary (*ναὸν*) of the Lord accordingly he went, to burn incense at the *morning* hour, as seems most probable. And while he burned the pure perfume within, the multitude of the people prayed without. It was an acknowledgment that their prayers required something to make them acceptable. They could not ascend alone. And was this not the idea of the arrangement? Man's prayers needed to be supplemented by a divinely arranged perfume, just as we now expect our prayers to be accepted only through the *merits of Jesus Christ*. Again, must we not suppose that the people were praying for deliverance and the advent of the Deliverer? Their prayers and the aged priest's were really one. There was unison and harmony, even though presented from different standpoints. The people without and the priest within were acting in "pre-established harmony."

IV. THE ANGEL OF JOY APPEARS IN THE SANCTUARY. It was upon the path of duty Zacharias met the angel, just as Jacob had done long before at Mahanaim (Gen. xxxii. 1). Gabriel's visit at first terrified the solitary priest. But as the angel of glad tidings and so, as he has been called, "of evangelization" (cf. Godet, *in loc.*), he soon reassures Zacharias. He tells him that his wife is to bear him a son, and his name is to be called "John." 1. This itself is significant. The word "John" is derived from יְהוָה and חָנַן, and means "Jehovah giveth grace." It thus signalized the dispensation. The Baptist was really the morning star of the gospel dispensation. 2. He was to *be morally great*. The gracious name would not belie his character. He would be "great in the sight of the Lord," who "looketh on the heart." 3. He was to be *separated from the world as a true Nazarite*. He was not to drink either wine or strong drink. 4. He was to be *inspired from the womb*. The inspiration from wine was needless, when he was to be borne upwards and constantly exhilarated by the Spirit of God (cf. Eph. v. 18). 5. He shall be *correspondingly successful*. "Many of the Jews shall he turn to the Lord their God." 6. His reformation is to *resemble that of Elias*. Elijah lived to turn the nation to the worship of the true God; his work was preparatory, like the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, before the still small voice. So was it to be with John. He was by stern and solitary moral grandeur to bring the people to a sense of

[1] Cf. Dr. J. M. Mason's 'Considerations on Lots,' Works, vol. iii. pp. 265—317.

sin, and thus prepare them for the advent of the Saviour. No father ever got a more magnificent future laid before his son. The angel sketched a destiny which was fitted to make the old priest glad.

V. UNBELIEF INSISTING ON A FURTHER SIGN. The appearance of Gabriel, the transparent honesty of his words, the holy place, the whole circumstance of the vision, ought to have assured Zacharias and rebuked his unbelief. Here, after four hundred years of silence, a message has come again from God; and surely it should have been believed. But no! Zacharias asks for a further sign. Has he forgotten Abraham and Sarah? Has he forgotten Isaac and Rebecca? Surely the priest, though aged and with an aged wife, had every reason to believe the angel-brought promise of his God? His unbelief was criminal. He deserves a chastisement. The demand for miracles at the present day is on the part of some just as unreasonable. Unless some additional sign is granted, then faith will be withheld. There is a scepticism which deserves chastisement instead of sympathy or encouragement. And Zacharias is struck dumb. He is doomed to speechlessness for the most of a year. His dumbness was to be a sign of his unbelief and a pure judgment from God. We may compare his case with that of the man born blind (John ix. 2, etc.). In this case the deprivation was to be the basis of Divine mercy; in the case of Zacharias it was a clear note of Divine displeasure. Yet with judgment there is mixed mercy. He is promised a release on the day of the birth of John. For God's "anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. xxx. 5).

VI. THE PATIENT WORSHIPPERS AND THE DUMB PRIEST. The burning of incense occupied usually a certain length of time. But Zacharias tarries long beyond this. The people wait, but marvel as they wait. They wish his benediction. But when he at length appears, he can only make signs to them, and dismiss them without a word. And yet a *sign* is there for them. They see that a vision has been vouchsafed in the temple. If the priest is silent, it is because God has spoken. Better that man should be dumb before God, than that Heaven should be silent for ever! Zacharias's judgment is to the people a merciful sign. The week of temple-work was no sooner over than he went home to his house in the hill-country of Judæa. His affliction must have been very painful and humiliating. He would be regarded by his friends as one "smitten of the Lord." But in due season the mercy and grace of God are realized in the Baptist's conception. If Zacharias mourned over his unbelief and its chastisement, Elisabeth was enabled to rejoice over her good fortune and the removal of her reproach.

We have thus gone over the announcement of a great man's advent. Are not the truly great the gracious gifts of God? They should be called "John," as indicating whence the true heroes come, and to whom we should ascribe the blessing of their lives. A recent writer says that society has progressed mainly through a succession of great men, and he adds, "Society makes only so much of the great man as goes to the composition of the average man, leaving an overplus which is not to be put to the credit of society or previous human acquisition, but which is a gift from nature—from the Unknown. It makes all of the great man except his special genius, which is afterwards to improve society."[1] If in this quotation we substitute for "nature," nature's *God*, we shall have the true idea. Great men are God's gifts, and though the world may, as in this case, misuse and murder them, they confer, through confession and martyrdom, incalculable blessing upon the race. It is only right for us to recognize in God the Source of great souls, and to use them for his glory.—R. M. E.

Vers. 26—38.—"*The Beginning of the creation of God.*" We now enter upon another announcement, more wonderful still than that about John. It is the announcement about the advent of him who is indeed "the Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii. 14). A deeper interest should gather round it than attaches to the beginning of the material universe. Both begin in mystery, but happily we see the mystery by the eye of faith safely lodged in the hand of God. *Genesis* gives to us the mysterious origin of the ordinary creation, and *Luke* gives to us the mysterious origin of the extraordinary creation of which Jesus is the real Head.

I. WE SHALL NOTICE THE SCENE OF THIS ANGEL-VISIT. We saw Gabriel last in the temple, holding intercourse beyond the first veil with Zacharias as he offered the

[1] Graham's 'Creed of Science,' pp. 66, 67.

incense. He was in "the holy place," on the threshold of "the holy of holies." But now, by way of contrast, he repairs to Nazareth, that city of Galilee so hidden in the hills that all who for various reasons needed a hiding-place resorted thither. It was a rendezvous for the worst of people, and became proverbial as the one place out of which no good thing need be expected (John i. 46). It was here the angel of mercy made his way to carry good tidings to one in whose veins was the blood of kings. The house of David had fallen indeed on evil days when its lineal representative was to be found in a virgin betrothed to the village carpenter. Meanwhile let us comfort ourselves with the thought that angel-visits, though reputedly few and far between, are not confined to temple-courts or palaces of earthly kings. The lowliest of situations and the lowliest hearts may be honoured by a messenger from heaven.[1]

II. THE MESSAGE GABRIEL BROUGHT. Having sought and found the virgin who was espoused to Joseph, he first addressed to her a remarkable salutation. He salutes her as one who is (1) "highly favoured" (κεχαριτωμένη), that is, the object of special favour from God; and (2) as one enjoying God's special presence—"The Lord is with thee." The other clause, "Blessed art thou among women," seems to be transferred from the subsequent salutation of Elisabeth (ver. 42; and cf. Revised Version). It was a very gracious assurance Gabriel brought to Mary. She needed all the support it gave her in her present trying position. The immediate effect upon her mind was *fear*. She is troubled at the unexpected apparition. But it led her to deep thoughtfulness. It has been well said that praise comes as a surprise to the meek, but as a right, or rather less than a right, to the proud.[2] Mary was thrown by her fear into anxious thought as to what particular good fortune could be hers. Her idea was that she deserved nothing, and so she could the more thoroughly appreciate whatever came. What a relish Divine favour would be if we had Mary's meekness! Gabriel now bids her no longer to fear, since she has found favour with God, and her good fortune is to consist in this—that she is to be the mother of an everlasting Monarch. But we must pause over Gabriel's message. 1. The *name of her Son is to be Jesus*. That is, he is to be a Saviour of men from sin (cf. Matt. i. 21). The world has had *Joshuas* in abundance, captains of invasion, but only one *Jesus* as a Saviour from the curse and power of sin. 2. *He is to be great*. And assuredly, if moral influence and genius constitute the highest greatness, Jesus has no equal among the sons of men. 3. He is to be called *the Son of the Highest*. God is to be his Father in a special sense. This does not refer to his "Eternal Sonship," but to his human sonship. He is to stand to God in the relation of son to father, so far as his human nature is concerned. Mary is thus to be the mother of God's Son. 4. He is to *succeed to the throne of his father David*. Now, are we to understand this of a succession to a world-kingdom, and a "personal reign" over the Jews? If this be the meaning, then this reign is still to come, for through the rejection of Messiah this kingship was prevented. And so some interpret this (cf. Godet, *in loc.*). But our Lord's own words about the unworldliness of his kingdom seem to set this idea at rest. He came to be King over a spiritual kingdom. Now, David, we should remember, was a great *ecclesiastical* reformer. He exercised commanding influence in the *Church* as well as *State* of his time; and he realized his vicegerency under God. Jesus succeeds David upon the spiritual lines which were the *chief* lines of David's influence as king. 5. *His reign and kingdom are to be everlasting*. His is to be no dying dynasty, but an everlasting rule. Emperors and kings have come and gone, and left their glory behind them; but this Son of Mary commands more influence every year, and knows no decline. The kingdoms of the world run a longer or shorter course; but Christ's kingdom outlasts them all. Such a message was fitted to overwhelm an ordinary mind. Mary is to be the mother of a new King, and he is never to be uncrowned—an everlasting Monarch! Surely an ordinary head would be turned by such tidings as these.

III. HOW MARY TAKES THE MESSAGE. She is so meek that her head is *not* turned. She is in amazement certainly, but there is calm dignity and purity in her reply. 1. *She asks how such a birth is to come about since she is a virgin?* This was not the inquiry of a doubter, but of a believer. She wanted direction. Was she to go on with

[1] Cf. Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' s. 301, etc.
[2] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' erster band, s. 18.

her proposed marriage with Joseph? or was she to break with him? or was she to do nothing but wait? Gabriel directs her to wait passively in God's hands, and all he has promised will come supernaturally about. Just as the Spirit overshadowed the old chaotic world, and brought the *cosmos* out of it, so would he overshadow Mary, and give her a holy Son. Mary was to sit still and see the salvation of God. And here we must notice that it was a "holy Child" which the world required as a Saviour, one in whom the law of sin affecting the rest of the race should be broken, who would be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." David may say, "In sin did my mother conceive me;" but no such language must be heard from the lips of Christ. This moral break, this exception to the general rule, is brought about by a supernatural conception and birth. Is there not here a lesson about leaving things sometimes in God's hands altogether? It is a great thing sometimes to sit still and do nothing; to cultivate passivity. Like the Virgin, let us simply wait. As a further direction, Gabriel suggests a visit to Elisabeth, that her faith in God's power may be confirmed. The intercourse with her aged relative will do her a world of good in present circumstances. There in the hill-country of Judæa she will find increasing reason for trusting in God. 2. *Mary accepts the situation with all its risks.* Her submission is an instance of the holiest courage. She cannot but become for a time an object of suspicion to Joseph, and to many more. Her reputation will be for a time at stake. It is a terrible ordeal to encounter. But she bows to the Divine will, and asks God to do with her as he pleases. Faith alone could sustain her in such circumstances. God would vindicate her character in due season. How much are we willing to risk for our Lord? Would we risk reputation, the most precious portion of our heritage, if God clearly asked us to do so? This was what Mary was ready to do. In other words, are we ready to put God before personal reputation? Is he worthy in our eyes even of such a sacrifice?[1]

IV. NOTICE THAT WE HAVE HERE AN INTIMATION HOW THE NEW CREATION MUST BEGIN WITHIN US. The angel-message comes to us, as to Mary, that "Christ" may be formed in us "the Hope of glory." What we have got to do is just to wait for the overshadowing as Mary did. It comes to the waiting and *expectant* souls. Not the waiting of indifference, but the waiting of expectancy, secures the great blessing. Let us cease from our own efforts, let us be still, and we shall indeed see the salvation of God![2]—R. M. E.

Vers. 39—56.—*Inspirations amid the hills of Judæa.* We already have seen the angel suggesting to Mary the propriety of visiting Elisabeth. We may reasonably believe that she had no mother at this time to whom she could communicate her mighty secret, and that Elisabeth is the most likely person from whom to get the sympathy she now required. For the four days' journey from Nazareth to the priest's city in the south she would need some preparation; but she made her arrangements promptly, going "with haste," and reached the home of the dumb priest without delay. If she had any fear and trembling on the way as to how she would be received, it was instantly dissipated through timely inspirations. And here let us notice—

I. THE INSPIRATION GRANTED TO ELISABETH. (Vers. 42—45.) And here we may mark the *directness* of the inspired address. There was no lengthened introduction, no conversation about health, or weather, or news, but an immediate mention of the all-important matter which concerned the Virgin.[3] 1. *Elisabeth assures Mary of her signal blessedness in being selected to be the mother of Messiah.* She was to be the blessed mother of a blessed Son. How delightful a balm this would be to Mary's anxious heart! Instead of suspicion, there is a salutation such as a princess might thankfully receive. 2. *Elisabeth beautifully depreciates herself.* It is the way the Spirit takes with those he indeed inspires. It is not boastfulness, but self-depreciation he implants within them. Elisabeth feels herself so unworthy, that she wonders the mother of Messiah deigns to visit her! A royal visit would not have been to the priest's wife such an honour. She is Mary's humble servant, because Mary is to be the mother of her Lord. In fact, had Mary been a queen, she could not have been more lovingly and reverentially treated. 3. *A holy joy thrills through her from Mary's advent.* It

[1] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' erster band, s. 24.
[2] Ibid., s. 36. [3] Ibid., erster band, s. 29.

was the "chief joy" of human hearts asserting his marvellous power. The Holy Ghost conducts the humble woman to the most entrancing joy. 4. *Mary's faith is recognized and encouraged.* The contrast between Mary's faith and Zacharias's doubt must have been very marked. The poor priest is stealing about the house dumb, while Mary is in the enjoyment of all her faculties and powers. Elisabeth would rejoice that Mary, through unhesitating faith, had escaped such a judgment as her husband was enduring. The *blessedness* of faith in God cannot be too emphatically asserted. It is the secret of real happiness just to take him at his word. As the "faithful Promiser" he never disappoints any who put their faith in his promised aid. Not only do we who believe enter into rest (Heb. iv. 3), but we also enter into blessedness (cf. μακαρία of ver. 45).

II. THE INSPIRATION OF MARY. (Vers. 46—55.) We have in the Magnificat of Mary the noblest of Christian hymns. There are traces of such earlier efforts as Hannah's prayer; but this only brings out the continuity of the revelation, and in no way affects the originality of Mary's inspiration. And here let us notice: 1. *How God is the Source of Mary's joy.* It is not in herself she rejoices, but in God as her Saviour. This is the great fact we have all got to realize—that our Saviour, not our state, is the fountain of joy. And when we consider his power, and his revealed purposes, and the course of his redeeming love, we must acknowledge that there is in him abundant reason for our joy. Mary felt in body, soul, and spirit the joy of her Lord. 2. *Mary recognizes in her own selection the condescending love of God.* It is not those the world would select as instruments whom God chooses. The world selects the rich. God chooses "the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him" (Jas. ii. 5); so here Mary signalizes her "low estate" as magnifying her Lord's condescending love. How beautiful a spirit to cultivate! Instead of the honour done her unduly exalting her, it only leads her to adore the Divine condescension in stooping to such as she was. 3. *She believes in her everlasting fame.* She knows that the Incarnation will prove such a stupendous fact that all generations will call her blessed. As the mother of Messiah, she cannot but have the homage of all coming generations. She ought consequently to be with all of us "the blessed mother of the Christ of God." 4. *She feels herself the subject of great mercy from the Holy One.* And is this not the acknowledgment which all God's people may make? Hath he not done great things for all his people, whereof they are glad (Ps. cxxvi. 1)? 5. *She takes the widest views of God's dealings with others.* Thus she recognizes: (1) That *those who fear God receive his mercy in every generation.* (Ver. 50.) This is the law of mercy—it is given to those who fear God. It was never meant to encourage men in recklessness or presumption. (2) The *proud experience his dispersive power.* (Ver. 51.) This is brought out in history.[1] The Jewish captivities, their present dispersion, "the decline and fall of the Roman Empire," and many a judgment since, have been illustrations of this line of procedure on the part of the Most High. (3) *The deposition of rulers and the exaltation of the humble.* (Ver. 52.) Mary is here speaking of the usurpers in Palestine, and the exaltation of those they despised. The law was marvellously illustrated in the case of Mary's Son, whose exaltation above all dynasties is the greatest fact in civilization (cf. δυνάστας of ver. 52). (4) *The satisfaction of the needy, and the disappointment of the rich.* (Ver. 53.) Here is another aspect of the law of the Divine dealings. Those who feel their need, and hunger after satisfaction, receive it from God. Mary experienced this, and so do all who really hunger after God and righteousness. They have a beatitude always in store for them (Matt. v. 6). On the other hand, those who are rich, that is, who feel independent and will not look to the Lord for help, who have, in short, "received their consolation," are sent empty away. Disappointment sooner or later becomes their portion. This was the experience of Pharisee and Sadducee and all the well-to-do and self-righteous classes in our Lord's time. And undoubtedly the arrangement is just. (5) *The fidelity of God to his covenant with Israel.* (Vers. 54, 55.) In the Incarnation God was sending real help to his people. It was the crowning act of mercy, and the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham and his seed. Mary thus began with God's *holiness*, and passed in review his *power*, his *mercy*, and finally his *faithfulness*. All these are illustrated pre-eminently in the Incarnation.

III. THESE INSPIRATIONS PRESENT TO US THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL. For

[1] Cf. Liddon's 'University Sermons,' vol. ii. pp. 205—210.

we have before us two lowly women, deep in their self-abasement. The self-righteous spirit has been annihilated within them, and they are thus fitted to be God's instruments. Secondly, we find them maintaining this beautiful spirit after they have become the special objects of the Divine favour. Grace does not spoil them, but provokes within them gratitude. They abound in praise, not in pride. Thirdly, they enter into hopes for their people and the world, as well as for themselves. It is so with real Christians. They become of necessity large-hearted. The inspirations received lead to outbursts of joyful anticipation for all the world. The assertion of Luke that Mary returned home (ver. 56) does not necessarily imply that she did not wait for John's birth and circumcision. The probabilities are in favour of supposing that she did so wait, and received the additional consolations which the song of Zacharias was so fitted to bring. Strengthened by her long visit to Elisabeth, she would be the better able to go back to Nazareth and brave all suspicion there. God, by a special communication, made Joseph's suspicion altogether to cease, and Mary was taken by him as wife, instead of being privately divorced. The Virgin's trust in God smoothing her way was thus gloriously fulfilled (Matt. i. 18—25), and she found herself passing onwards upon a path of peace towards that signal influence and power which she has exercised among men.—R. M. E.

Vers. 57—80.—*The birth and development of the Baptist.* We now pass from the inspirations of the holy women to the birth of the Baptist. We have before us what one has well denominated "a pious family in their good fortune."[1] As this preacher observes, we have here "the mother in her joy, the father with his song of praise, and the little child and his development." We cannot do better than allow our thoughts to group themselves round these three persons in this order.

I. CONTEMPLATE THE MOTHER IN HER JOY. (Vers. 57—63.) A mother with a firstborn son embodies as much joy as we can well imagine in a world like this. All pain and anguish over and forgotten in the mighty fruition (cf. John xvi. 21). Next there would be messages sent to friends, "neighbours and cousins," who would be expected to call with congratulations. And they gave their congratulations without stint—"They rejoiced with her." Next came the circumcision and the naming of the child, and the idea of the neighbours was that they could not do better than call him "Zacharias," *i.e.* "one whom Jehovah remembers," after his priestly father. But the joyful mother has a new name to give her son, and, though none of her ancestors have borne it, he must be called "John," which, as already noticed, signifies "Jehovah giveth grace." The new name is to herald the nature of the dispensation. The friends are not satisfied, however, until they consult the dumb father. They accordingly make signs to him how he would have him called, and he, with most serious deliberation, wrote on the tablet, "His name is John." It was a *revelation* to the neighbours, and they took it as such, and "marvelled all." The joyful mother had thus the satisfaction of seeing her firstborn son introduced to the Jewish Church by the rite of circumcision, and receiving a name which was itself a promise of great grace from God. What a joy it should be to parents to have their little children thus early introduced into the Church of God, and identified with its brightening prospects!

II. CONTEMPLATE THE FATHER PRAISING GOD. (Vers. 64, 67—79.) The dumb priest now regains his speech, and no sooner is his mouth opened than he bursts into praise. Doubtless he praised God for his *judgment* on himself and for his *mercy* in the gift of the goodly child. He was able then to sing of both (cf. Ps. ci. 1). Moreover, the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of prophecy filled him, so that his praise took the beautiful poetic form here given. And this song of Zacharias divides itself into two portions—first, the establishment of the theocracy under Messiah (vers. 67—75); and secondly, the apostrophe to the little child about his part in the work of reformation (vers. 75—79). To these let us devote a few thoughts. 1. *The establishment of the theocracy under Messiah.* As a priest, Zacharias naturally looked at the new movement from an ecclesiastical and patriotic point of view. Hence he praised God for the deliverance of his people through raising up a horn for them in the house of his servant David. This horn, the symbol of "might," is the Messiah who is to be born of Mary. But what salvation is it to be? In the usual Jewish spirit, he speaks of it as a salvation from

[1] Cf. Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' band i. s. 504.

enemies and all that hate the people of the Lord. In other words, the inspired priest looks and longs for a *national* deliverance. And the true patriot can long for nothing less. The blessing which he praises God for on his own account, he desires for all his race. At the same time, it is to be noticed that it is *pious parents* who are to realize the mercy—parents "who had hoped for the blessing of their seed, and had mourned over the misery of their posterity."[1] Such were hoping always on the covenant-promises, and now they were to have them fulfilled. But it is to be further noticed that the national deliverance expected is a means, not an end. It is only that the *theocratic idea* may be carried out by the emancipated people, and God served by them without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all their days. It is here that the great difference between worldly aspirations and spiritual ones is to be appreciated. If people hope for blessing that they may the better serve and please themselves, then they are simply worldly and selfish; but if they seek blessing to fit them to serve God, they are entering into the nobility of his kingdom. It is the reign of God within us and around us which we should always hope for and try to promote. 2. *The priest's apostrophe to his little child.* In the father's address to little John we see the spirituality which underlay his hope. His boy is to be a *prophet* of the Most High, something superadded to the priestly privileges which belonged to the family by right of birth. By word of mouth, therefore, is he to prepare his Lord's way. But his message is to be in the first instance about "remission of sins." In other words, the reformation hoped for is to be *moral*. Beginning in pardon and penitence, it will indeed be the dawn of a better day to many who have been sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, and the "guiding light" into the way of peace. John is thus to be the herald of the dawn. The Messiah is the "Sun of Righteousness," whose presence constitutes the day. He enables us to say, "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Ps. xxvii. 1). John is to be the voice in the desert to apprise the wandering and stumbling "caravan" of the approach of dawn and its guidance into peaceful paths. And, as we shall see, the moral reformation under John became *national*, so that before Messiah's baptism "all the people were baptized" (ch. iii. 21).

III. CONTEMPLATE THE LITTLE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT. (Vers. 66, 80.) The result of such prophecies connected with the circumcision of the child was the growth of a wholesome "fear" throughout all the hill-country of Judæa. The people began to hope for important changes. And their hopes were so far confirmed by the development of John. In the first place, "the hand of the Lord," *i.e.* Divine power and grace, "was with him." He grew up a spiritually minded boy. All who saw the priest's son concluded that God was with him in his grace and love. There are children who grow up with the stamp of heaven upon their whole lives. The Spirit of God is manifestly moving them along the true path. In the second place, he had *due physical development.* "He grew." A dedicated boy, a Nazarite from his youth, he grew up robustly on his plain fare, physically fit for the life of toil which was before him. In the third place, "*he waxed strong in spirit.*" His whole inward man more than kept pace with his outward growth. He was not only a good and growing lad, but also *heroic* in his mental progress. The inspired boy was getting strength to become one of God's heroes. In the last place, he *betook himself to the deserts* until such times as he was manifested to Israel. It was to be a development amid the solitude of the desert down towards the Dead Sea which John was to realize. God was his Teacher. Even the poor Essenes, who lived a life of asceticism in the neighbourhood, must have kept John at a distance, and so made his loneliness the more intense. And yet it may be safely said that no one has ever done much for God who has not been much *alone with him.* It is the communion of the lowly spirit with the Supreme which fits for high service. A desert, and not a garden of Eden, may often be the fittest environment for the consecrated soul, seeing that he is thereby thrown more completely upon God. Like Moses and Elijah, John has his long season of solitude with God, and then he comes forth radiant for the work he has to do in Israel. May such a development as John's be realized by many! —B. M. E.

[1] Cf. Weiss's 'Leben Jesu,' erster band, s. 233.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1—20.—*The Redeemer's birth.*

Ver. 1.—There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed; more accurately, *that there should be a registration*, etc.; that is, with a view to the assessment of a tax. On the historical note of St. Luke in this passage much discussion has arisen, not, however, of much real practical interest to the ordinary devout reader. We will glance very briefly at the main criticism of this and the following verse. Respecting this general registration it is alleged (1) no historian of the time mentions such a decree of Augustus. (2) Supposing Augustus had issued such an edict, Herod, in his kingdom of Judæa, would not have been included in it, for Judæa was not formally annexed to the Roman province of Syria before the death of Archelaus, Herod's son; for some years after this time Herod occupied the position of a rex socius. In answer to (1), we possess scarcely any minute records of this particular time; and there are besides distinct traces in contemporary histories of such a general registration. In answer to (2), in the event of such an imperial registration being made, it was most unlikely that Herod would have claimed exemption for his only *nominally* independent states. It must be remembered that Herod was an attached dependent of the emperor, and in such a matter would never have opposed the imperial will of his great patron.

Ver. 2.—(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) Hostile criticism makes a still more direct attack upon the historical statement made by St. Luke here. Quirinius, it is well known, was governor (legatus or præses) of Syria ten years *later*, and during his office a census or registration—with a view to taxation—which led to a popular disturbance, was made in his province. These critics say that St. Luke mentions, as taking place *before* the birth of Jesus, an event which really happened *ten years after*. Much historical investigation has been made with a view to explain this difficulty. It has been now satisfactorily demonstrated that, strangely enough, this Quirinius—who ten years later was certainly governor (legatus) of Syria—at the time of the birth of the Saviour held high office in Syria, either as præses (governor) or quæstor (imperial commissioner). The Greek word rendered by the English "governor" would have been used for either of these important offices. On the whole question of these alleged historical inaccuracies of St. Luke, it may be observed: (1) Strangely enough, *none* of the early opponents of Christianity, such as Celsus or Porphyry, impugn the accuracy of our evangelist here. Surely, if there had been so marked an error on the threshold of his Gospel, these distinguished adversaries of our faith, living comparatively soon after the events in question, would have been the first to hit so conspicuous a blot in the story they hated so well. And (2) nothing is more improbable than that St. Luke, a man of education, and writing, too, evidently for people of thought and culture, would have ventured on a definite historical statement of this kind, which would, if wrong, have been so easily exposed, had he not previously thoroughly satisfied himself as to its complete accuracy. *Generally*, the above conclusions are now adopted, lately, amongst others, by Godet, Farrar, Plumptre, and Bishop Ellicott (in his Hulsean Lectures). Godet has an especially long and exhaustive note on this subject. The conclusions are mainly drawn from the researches of such scholars as Zumpt and Mommsen. **Cyrenius**; Latin, *Quirinus*. He is mentioned by the historians Tacitus and Suetonius. He appears to have been originally of humble birth, and, like so many of the soldiers of fortune of the empire, rose through his own merits to his great position. He was a gallant and true soldier, but withal self-seeking and harsh. For his Cilician victories the senate decreed him a triumph. He received the distinguished honour of a public funeral, A.D. 21 (Tac., 'Ann.,' ii. 30; iii. 22, 48; Suet., 'Tib.,' 49).

Ver. 4.—The city of David, which is called Bethlehem. After all the long ages which had passed, still the chief title to honour of the little upland village was that there the greatly loved king had been born. Bethlehem ("house of bread") was built on the site of the old Ephrath—the Ephrath where Rachel died. **Of the house and lineage of David.** The position in life of Joseph the royally descended, simply a village carpenter, the equally humble state of Mary, also one of the great king's posterity, need excite no surprise when the vicissitudes of that royal house, and of the people over whom they ruled, are remembered. The old kingdom of David had been dismembered, conquered, and devastated. The people had been led away into a captivity from which few, comparatively speaking, ever returned. All that the house of David had preserved were its bare family records. Hillel, the famous scribe, who was once a hired porter, claimed to belong to the old princely house.

Ver. 5.—With Mary his espoused wife

The older authorities here omit "wife." Translate, *with Mary who was betrothed to him.*

Ver. 6.—**The days were accomplished that she should be delivered.** The universal tradition of the Christian Church places the nativity in winter. The date "December 25" was generally received by the Fathers of the Greek and Latin Churches from the fourth century downwards.

Ver. 7.—**Her firstborn Son.** This expression has no real bearing on the question respecting the relationship of the so-called brethren of Jesus to Mary. The writer of this commentary, without hesitation, accepts the general tradition of the Catholic Church as expressed by the great majority of her teachers in all ages. This tradition pronounces these brethren to have been (1) either his half-brethren, sons of Joseph by a former marriage; or (2) his cousins. In the passage in Hebrews (i. 6), "when he bringeth in the *First Begotten* into the world," "First Begotten" signifies "Only Begotten." (On the whole question, see Bishop Lightfoot's exhaustive essay on the "Brethren of the Lord" in his 'Commentary on the Galatians.') **There was no room for them in the inn.** "The inn of Bethlehem, what in modern Eastern travel is known as a *khan* or *caravanserai*, as distinct from a hostelry (the 'inn' of ch. x. 34). Such an inn or khan offered to the traveller simply the shelter of its walls and roofs. This khan of Bethlehem had a memorable history of its own, being named in Jer. xli. 17 as the 'inn of Chimham,' the place of rendezvous from which travellers started on their journey to Egypt. It was so called after the son of Barzillai, whom David seems to have treated as an adopted son (2 Sam. xix. 37, 38), and was probably built by him in his patron's city as a testimony of his gratitude" (Dean Plumptre). The stable was not unfrequently a limestone cave, and there is a very ancient tradition that there was a cave of this description attached to the "inn," or caravanserai, of Bethlehem. This "inn" would, no doubt, be a large one, owing to its being in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and would often be crowded with the poorer class of pilgrims who went up to the temple at the seasons of the greater feasts. Bethlehem is only six miles from Jerusalem.

Vers. 8—20.—*The Bethlehem shepherds see the angels.*

Ver. 8.—**In the same country**; that is, in the upland pastures immediately in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem. **Shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.** Why were *shepherds* chosen as the first on earth to hear the strange glorious news of the birth of the Saviour of the world? It seems as though this very humble order was selected as a practical illustration of that which in the future history of Christianity was to be so often exemplified—"the exaltation of the humble and meek." Mary would learn from this, the first visit of adorers to her Babe, that the words of her song (the Magnificat) would in very truth be realized. The subsequent visit of the learned and wealthy travellers from the East (Matt. ii. 1—12) would tell her that the words of the Isaiah prophecy were all literally, in their due order, to be fulfilled, some of them even in the unconscious childhood of her Son (see Isa. lx. 3, 6; Ps. lxxii. 10). Now, among the Jews at that period *shepherds* were held in low estimation among the people. In the Talmud (treatise 'Sanhedrin') we read they were not to be allowed in the courts as witnesses. In the treatise 'Avodah-Zarah' no help must be given to the heathen or to shepherds. The Mishna (Talmud) tells us that the sheep intended for the daily sacrifices in the temple were fed in the Bethlehem pastures. This semi-sacred occupation no doubt influenced these poor toilers, and specially fitted them to be the recipients of the glad tidings. They would hear much of the loved Law in the solemn ritual of the great temple. They would know, too, that there was a rumour widely current in those days that the long-looked-for Messiah was soon to appear, and that their own Bethlehem was to witness his appearing.

Ver. 9.—**The angel of the Lord came upon them**; better, *an angel.* The Greek word rendered "came upon them"—a very favourite word with St. Luke—suggests a sudden appearance. **The glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.** The white shining cloud of intolerable brightness, known among the Jews as the Shechinah, the visible token of the presence of the Eternal, in the bush, in the pillar of fire and cloud which guided the desert-wanderings, in the tabernacle and the temple. It shone round the Redeemer on the Mount of Transfiguration. It robed him when, risen, he appeared to the Pharisee Saul outside Damascus. The occasional presence of this visible glory was exceedingly precious to the chosen people. The terror felt by the shepherds was the natural awe ever felt by man when brought into visible communion with the dwellers in the so-called spirit-world.

Ver. 11.—**A Saviour.** Another favourite word with SS. Paul and Luke. The terms "Saviour" and "salvation" occur in their writings more than forty times. In the other New Testament books we seldom find either of these expressions.

Ver. 12.—Lying in a manger. This was to be the sign. On that night there would, perhaps, be no other children born in the Bethlehem village; certainly the shepherds would find no other newly born infant cradled in a manger.

Ver. 13.—With the angel a multitude of the heavenly host. "The troop of angels issues forth from the depths of that invisible world which surrounds us on every side" (Godet). One of the glorious titles by which the eternal King was known among the chosen people was "Lord of sabaoth," equivalent to "Lord of hosts." In several passages of the Scriptures is the enormous multitude of these heavenly beings noticed; for instance, Ps. lxviii. 17, where the Hebrew is much more expressive than the English rendering; Dan. vii. 10, "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (see, too, the Targum of Palestine on Deut. xxxiii., "And with him ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels;" and "The crown of the Law is his [Moses'], because he brought it from the heavens above, when there was revealed to him the glory of the Lord's Shechinah, with two thousand myriads of angels, and forty and two thousand chariots of fire," etc.).

Ver. 14.—On earth peace. At that juncture, strange to say, the Roman empire was at peace with all the world, and, as was ever the case in these brief rare moments of profound peace, the gates of the temple of Janus at Rome were closed, there being, as they supposed, no need for the presence of the god to guide and lead their conquering armies. Not a few have supposed that the angel choir in these words hymned this earthly peace. So Milton in his 'Ode to he Nativity'—

"No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung:
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye
As if they surely knew their souvran Lord was by."

But the angels sang of something more real and enduring than this temporary lull. The gates of Janus were only too quickly thrown open again. Some seventy years later, within sight of the spot where the shepherds beheld the multitude of the heavenly host, the awful conflagration which accompanied the sack of the holy city and temple could have been plainly seen, and the shrieks and cries of the countless victims of the closing scenes of one of the most terrible wars which disfigure the red pages of history could almost have been heard.

Good will toward men. A bare *majority* of the old authorities read here, "On earth peace among mon of good will;" in other words, among men who are the objects of God's good will and kindness. But the Greek text, from which our Authorized Version was made, has the support of so many of the older manuscripts and ancient versions, that it is among scholars an open question whether or not the text followed in the Authorized Version should not in this place be adhered to.

Ver. 17.—And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. Thus these men, at the bottom of the social scale in Israel, were chosen as the first preachers of the new-born King. Gradually the strange story got noised abroad in the city. The vision of Zacharias, the story of Mary, the two strange births, the marvellous experience of the shepherds. Following upon all this was the arrival of the Magi, and their inquiries after a new-born Messiah, whom they had been directed by no earthly voices to seek after in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. It was then that the jealous fears of Herod were in good earnest aroused, and the result was that he gave immediate directions for the massacre of the innocents in Bethlehem, of which St. Matthew writes.

Ver. 19.—But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. Such a note as this could only have been made by Mary herself. *She* knew her Child was in some mysterious sense the Son of God. A glorious being not of earth had told her that her Boy would be the Saviour of Israel. The visit of the rough shepherds to her in the crowded caravanserai, and their strange but quiet and circumstantial story of the angel's visit to them, was only another link in the wondrous chain of events which was day by day influencing her young pure life. She could not as yet grasp it all, perhaps she never did in its mighty gracious fulness; but, as at the first, when Gabriel the angel spoke to her, so at each new phase of her life, she bowed herself in quiet trustful faith, and waited and thought, writing down, we dare to believe, the record of all that was passing, and this record, we think, she showed to Luke or Paul.

Vers. 21—40.—*Circumcision and presentation of the Child Jesus.*

Ver. 21.—For the circumcising of the Child. These ancient rites—circumcision and purification—enjoined in the Mosaic Law were intended as perpetual witnesses to the deadly taint of imperfection and sin inherited by every child of man. In the cases of Mary and her Child these rites were not necessary; but the mother devoutly submitted herself and her Babe to the ancient

customs, willingly obedient to that Divine Law under which she was born and hitherto had lived.

Ver. 22.—**When the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished.** This period lasted forty days from the birth. The forty days, according to the date of the nativity accepted universally by the Catholic Church, would bring the Feast of the Purification to February 2.

Ver. 24.—**A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.** The proper offering was a lamb for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or dove for a sin offering; but for the poor an alternative was allowed—instead of the more costly present of a lamb, a second pigeon or dove might be brought. The deep poverty of Mary and Joseph is shown in this offering. They would never have put the sanctuary off with the humbler had the richer gift been in their power.

Vers. 25—35.—*The episode of Simeon and his inspired hymn.*

Ver. 25.—**And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.** Many expositors have believed that this Simeon was identical with Simeon (Shimeon) the son of the famous Hillel, and the father of Gamaliel. This Simeon became president of the Sanhedrin in A.D. 13. Strangely enough, the Mishna, which preserves a record of the sayings and works of the great rabbis, passes by this Simeon. The curious silence of the Mishna here was, perhaps, owing to the hatred which this famous teacher incurred because of his belief in Jesus of Nazareth. Such an identification, although interesting, is, however, very precarious, the name Simeon being so very common among the people. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel.* There was a general feeling among the more earnest Jews at this time that the advent of Messiah would not be long delayed. Joseph of Arimathæa is especially mentioned as one who "waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark xv. 43). Dr. Farrar refers to the common Jewish prayer-formula then in use: "May I see the consolation of Israel!" A prayer for the advent of Messiah was in daily use.

Ver. 26.—**That he should not see death.** The idea of the *aged* Simeon comes from a notice in the apocryphal 'Gospel of the Nativity,' which speaks of him as a hundred and thirteen years old. These legendary "Gospels" are totally devoid of all authority; here and there possibly a true "memory" not preserved in any of the "four" may exist, but in general they are extravagant and improbable. The Arabic 'Gospel of the Infancy' here speaks of Simeon seeing the Babe shining like a pillar of light in his mother's arms. There is an old and striking legend which speaks of this devout Jew being long puzzled and disturbed by the Messianic prophecy (Isa. vii. 14), "A virgin shall conceive;" at length he received a supernatural intimation that he should not see death until he had seen the fulfilment of the strange prophecy, the meaning of which he had so long failed to see.

Ver. 27.—**And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus.** This was evidently the usual expression which the Nazareth family adopted when they spoke of the Child Jesus (see, again, in ver. 48 of this chapter; and also in ver. 33, where the older authorities read "his father" instead of "and Joseph"). The true story, which they both knew so well, was not for the rough Galilæan peasant, still less for the hostile Herodian. The mother knew the truth, Joseph too, and the house of Zacharias the priest, and probably not a few besides among their devout friends and kinsfolk. The Nazareth family, resting quietly in their simple faith, left the rest to God, who, in his own season, would reveal the secret of the nativity.

Ver. 29.—**Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.** The beautiful little hymn of Simeon was no doubt preserved by the Virgin Mary and given to St. Luke. The *Nunc dimittis* has been used constantly in the liturgies of Christian Churches for fourteen centuries. The thought which runs through the hymn has been well put by Godet: "Simeon represents himself under the image of a sentinel, whom his master has placed in an elevated position, and charged to look for the appearance of a star, and then to announce it to the world. He sees this long-desired star; he proclaims its rising, and asks to be relieved of the post on the watch-tower he has occupied so long. In the same way, at the opening of Æschylus's 'Agamemnon,' when the sentinel, set to watch for the appearing of the fire that is to announce the taking of Troy, beholds at last the signal so impatiently expected, he sings at once both the victory of Greece and his own release."

Vers. 31, 32.—**Before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles;** more accurately rendered, *all peoples.* Men like Isaiah, who lived several centuries before the nativity, with their glorious far-reaching prophecies, such as Isa. lii. 10, were far in advance of the narrow, selfish Jewish schools of the age of Jesus Christ. It was, perhaps, the hardest lesson the apostles and first teachers of the faith had to master—this full, free admission of the vast Gentile world into the kingdom of their God. Simeon, in his song, however, dis-

tinctly repeats the broad, generous sayings of the older prophets.

Ver. 33.—**And Joseph and his mother marvelled.** It was not so much that Simeon foretold *new* things respecting the Child Jesus that they marvelled; their surprise was rather that a stranger, evidently of position and learning, should possess so deep an insight into the lofty destinies of an unknown Infant, brought by evidently poor parents into the temple court. Was their secret then known to others whom they suspected not?

Ver. 34.—**And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this** Child. It is noticeable that, while Simeon blesses Mary and Joseph, he refrains from blessing the Child, of whom, however, he pointedly speaks. It was not for one like Simeon to speak words of blessing over "the Son of the Highest." The words which follow are expressly stated to have been addressed *only to Mary*. Simeon knew that she was related—but not Joseph—to the Babe in his arms; he saw, too, that *her* heart, not Joseph's, would be pierced with the sword of many sorrows for that Child's sake. **Behold, this** Child **is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.** For nearly three centuries, of course with varying intensity, the name of Jesus of Nazareth and his followers was a name of shame, hateful and despised. Not only among the Roman idolaters was "the Name" spoken against with intense bitterness (see the expressions used by men like Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny), but also among his own nation, the Jews, was Jesus known as "the Deceiver," "*that* Man," "the Hung." These were common expressions used in the great rabbinical schools which flourished in the early days of Christianity.

Ver. 35.—**Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.** Christian art has well caught the spirit of *her* life who was, in spite of her untold suffering, "blessed among women," in depicting her so often and so touchingly as the mother of sorrows (*Mater Dolorosa*). The childhood in the Nazareth home, and the early manhood in the Nazareth carpentry, were no doubt her happiest days, though, in those quiet years, expectation, fears, dread, curiously interwoven, must have ever torn that mother's heart. The days of the public ministry for Mary must have been sad, and her heart full of anxious forebodings, as she watched the growing jealousies, the hatred, and the unbelief on the part of the leading men of her people. Then came the cross. We know she stood by it all the while. And, after the cross and the Resurrection, silence. Verily the words of Simeon were awfully fulfilled. Bleek, quoted by Godet, makes an interesting suggestion on the subject of the sword piercing Mary's heart: "Thou shalt feel in thine own heart their contradiction in regard to thy Son, when thou thyself shalt be seized with doubt in regard to his mission."

Vers. 36—38.—*Greeting of Anna the prophetess.*

Ver. 36.—**There was one Anna, a prophetess.** The name of this holy woman is the same as that of the mother of Samuel. It is not necessary to assume that this Anna had the gift of foretelling future events. She was, at all events, a preacher. These saintly, gifted women, though never numerous, were not unknown in the story of the chosen people. We read of the doings—in some cases the very words are preserved—of Miriam, Hannah, Deborah, Huldah, and others. **Of the tribe of Aser.** It is true that at this period the ten tribes had been long lost, the "Jews" being made up of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin; but yet certain families preserved their genealogies, tracing their descent to one or other of the lost divisions of the people. Thus Anna belonged to Asher.

Ver. 37.—**Which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.** Probably, in virtue of her reputation as a prophetess, some small chamber in the temple was assigned to her. This seems to have been the case with Huldah (2 Chron. xxxiv. 22). It has also been suggested that she lovingly performed some work in or about the sacred building. Farrar suggests such as trimming the lamps (as is the rabbinic notion about Deborah), derived from the word *lapidoth*, splendour. Such sacred functions were regarded among all nations as a high honour. The great city of Ephesus boasted her name of *νεωκόρος*, temple-sweeper, as her proudest title to honour.

Ver. 39.—**And when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord.** Another note, which tells us of the rigid obedience which Mary and Joseph paid to the Law of Israel, under which they lived. Marcion, the famous Gnostic heretic (second century), who adopted this Gospel of St. Luke, to the exclusion of the other three, as the authoritative Gospel for his sect (the Marcionites), omitted, however, all these passages of St. Luke's narrative in which the old Mosaic Law was spoken of with reverence. **They returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.** To complete the story of our Lord's early life, we must insert from St. Matthew, before this return to Nazareth, the visit of the Magi, and the flight to and return from Egypt. It is probable—even if the Gospel of St. Matthew,

as we have it, was not then written—that these details, the visit of the Magi and the flight into Egypt, were facts already well known to those whom this Gospel was especially designed to instruct.

Ver. 40.—**And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.** Another of this evangelist's solemn pauses in his narrative. In this short statement the story of twelve quiet years is told. From these few words St. Luke evidently understands the humanity of Jesus as a reality. The statement that "he waxed strong, filled with wisdom" (the words, "in spirit," do not occur in the older authorities), tells us that, in the teaching of SS. Paul and Luke, the Boy learnt as others learnt, subject to the ordinary growth and development of human knowledge; thus condemning, as it were, by anticipation, the strange heresy of Apollinarius, who taught that the Divine Word (the Logos) took, in our Lord's humanity, the place of the human mind or intellect. *And the grace of God was upon him.* The legendary apocryphal Gospels are rich in stories of the Child Jesus' doings during these many years. But the silence of the holy four, whose testimony has been received now since the last years of the first century by the whole Church, is our authority for assuming that no work of power was done, and probably that no word of teaching was spoken, until the public ministry commenced, when the Messiah had reached his thirtieth year. "Take notice here," wrote Bonaventura, quoted by Farrar, "that his doing nothing wonderful was itself a kind of wonder. . . . As there was power in his actions, so is there power in his silence, in his inactivity, in his retirement."

Vers. 41—52.—*The Child Jesus at Jerusalem.*

Ver. 41.—**Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.** The Law required the attendance of all men at the three great Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. xvi. 16). The dispersion and subsequent residence of so many Jews in distant lands had much broken up the regular observance of these directions. Still, many devout Jews were constantly present at these feasts. This Mosaic ordinance was only binding upon men, but R. Hillel recommended women always to be present at the Passover. The constant yearly presence of Joseph the carpenter and Mary at this feast is another indication of the rigid obedience of the holy family of Nazareth to the ritual of the Law of Moses.

Ver. 42.—**And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.** When a Jewish boy was three years old he was given the tasselled garment directed by the Law (Numb. xv. 38—41; Deut. xxii. 12). At five he usually began to learn portions of the Law, under his mother's direction; these were passages written on scrolls, such as the shema or creed of Deut. vi. 4, the Hallel Psalms (Ps. cxiv., cxviii., cxxxvi.). When the boy was thirteen years old he wore, for the first time, the phylacteries, which the Jew always put on at the recital of the daily prayer. In the well-known and most ancient 'Maxims of the Fathers' ('Pirke Avoth'), we read that, at the age of ten, a boy was to commence the study of the Mishna (the Mishna was a compilation of traditional interpretations of the Law); at eighteen he was to be instructed in the Gemara (the Gemara was a vast collection of interpretations of the Mishna. The Mishna and Gemara together make up the Talmud. The Mishna may roughly be termed the text, the Gemara the commentary, of the Talmud).

Ver. 43.—**And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem.** The feast lasted seven days. Now, a boy in the East, twelve years old, is usually far more advanced than is ever the case in our Northern nations, where development is much slower. We may well suppose that the Boy was left much to himself during these days of the feast. It requires no stress of imagination to picture him absorbed in the temple and all that was to be seen and learned there. It was, doubtless, *his* first visit since infancy to the glorious house. Slowly, surely, had he been growing up into the consciousness of *what* he was and *whence* he came: may we not in all reverence assume that his self-recognition first really burst forth from the depths of his childhood's unconsciousness in that solemn week spent in the storied temple courts? When Joseph and Mary and their friends, as was usual after the seven days, commenced their return journey, the Boy, instead of joining this homeward-bound company of pilgrims, went as usual to the temple and the great teachers there, wholly absorbed in the new light which was breaking in upon him. *There* they found him. Strange that they should have for so long searched in other places. Had they only called to mind the sacred secret of the Child, surely they would have gone at once to the temple; was it not, after all, his earthly home, that holy house of his Father in Jerusalem?

Ver. 46.—**And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple.** According to the common way of reckoning among the Hebrews, this expression, "after

three days," probably means "on the third day." One day was consumed in the usual short pilgrim-journey. His absence at first would excite no attention; on the second, as they missed him still, they sought him in the various pilgrim-companies; and on the day following they found him in the temple courts, with the doctors of the Law. **Sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.** In the temple enclosure, says the Talmud, there were three synagogues—one at the gate of the court of the Gentiles, another at the entrance of the court of the Israelites, a third in the south-east part of the inner court: it was in these that the rabbis expounded the Law. Among the famous doctors, or rabbis, then living and teaching in Jerusalem, were the famous Hillel, then very aged, verging, we are told, on his hundredth year; his almost equally illustrious rival, Shammai; Gamaliel, the master of Saul of Tarsus; Jonathan, the compiler of the Chaldee Paraphrase of the sacred books; Simeon, the son and successor of Hillel; Nicodemus, who, some years afterwards, came to Jesus by night, and, when the end was come, reverently assisted in laying the King's Son with all honour in his tomb in Joseph of Arimathæa's garden. We may, with great probability, assume that amongst those "doctors" whom the Boy questioned at that Passover Feast, some if not all of these well-known men were sitting. The apocryphal Gospels, as usual, profess to give us details where the true story is reverently silent. The 'Gospel of Thomas' (second century), for instance, tells us that Jesus, when on the road to Nazareth, returned of his own accord to Jerusalem, and amazed the rabbis of the temple by his solution of the hardest and most difficult questions of the Law and the prophets. In an Arabic Gospel of somewhat later date than that of Thomas, we find the Boy even teaching the astronomers the secrets of their own difficult study. Probably Stier's simple words approach the nearest to the truth here, when he suggests that his questions were "the pure questions of innocence and of truth, which keenly and deeply penetrated into the confused errors of the rabbinical teaching."

Ver. 48.—**Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.** Mary's words have in them something of reproach. Joseph, it is noticeable, stands evidently apart; but the mother, strangely as it would seem at first, associates him in "thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Had she, then, *forgotten* the past? Who but Mary could have repeated this sacred memory of her mistake, and of the Boy's far-reaching answer? What forger could have *imagined* such a verse?

Ver. 49.—**How is it that ye sought me?** To the gently veiled reproach of Mary, Jesus replies, apparently with wonderment, with another question. It had come upon him so quietly and yet with such irresistible force that the temple of God was his real earthly home, that he marvelled at his mother's slowness of comprehension. Why should she have been surprised at his still lingering in the sacred courts? Did she not know who he was, and whence he came? Then he added, **Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?** There was an expression of Mary's which evidently distressed the Child Jesus. Godet even thinks that he discerns a kind of shudder in his quick reply to Mary's "thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." "In my Father's house, where my Father's work is being done, there ought I to be busied. Didn't you know this?" But the twelve silent uneventful years of life at Nazareth, the poor home, the village carpentry, the natural development of the sacred Child, had gradually obscured for Mary and Joseph the memories of the infancy. They had not forgotten them, but time and circumstances had covered them with a veil. Now they were very gently reminded by the Boy's own quiet words of what had happened twelve years before. Scholars hesitate whether or not to adopt the rendering of the old Syriac Version, "in my Father's house," instead of the broader and vaguer "about my Father's business," as the Greek will allow either translation. It seems to us the best to retain the old rendering we love so well, "about my Father's business." The whole spirit of Jesus' after-teaching leads us irresistibly to this interpretation of the Master's *first recorded saying*.

Ver. 51.—**And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth.** The question of Mary, and the quiet grave answer of the Child Jesus, were all that seems to have taken place. It served, no doubt, to bring back to Mary's mind what had long passed, and the memory of which for her was beginning somewhat to fade. This was, no doubt, *one* of the uses of the temple scene, but it had other and deeper purposes to serve. It was then, perhaps, as we have already reverently surmised, in the gradual development and growth of the Redeemer, that consciousness who he really was first dawned upon "the *Child* Jesus." **And was subject unto them.** This recital of the temple scene, the meeting with the great rabbis there, the few words of surprise addressed by the Boy to Mary and Joseph when they sought him "sorrowing"—"as if it were possible," to use Stier's expression, for "him to be in

wrong or in danger"—this recital alone breaks the deep silence which shrouds the first thirty years of "the Life." For some eighteen years after that visit to Jerusalem Jesus appears to have lived and toiled as a carpenter at Nazareth, with Joseph and Mary while they both lived, with Mary and his half-sisters and brothers when Joseph was dead. Justin Martyr, living a century and a half later, speaks of the ploughs and yokes the Master's own hands had fashioned during that long quiet pause in his life. Why, it is often asked, were not those years spent in Jerusalem and in the temple neighbourhood, in the centre of busy life and active Jewish thought? Godet suggests an answer which, if not exhaustive, is at least satisfactory: "If the spiritual atmosphere of Nazareth was heavy, it was at least calm; and the labours of the workshop, in the retirement of this peaceful valley, under the eye of the Father, was a more favourable sphere for the development of Jesus than the ritualism of the temple and the rabbinical discussions of Jerusalem." Joseph is never again mentioned in the gospel story; the probability is that he died some time in that period of eighteen years. **But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.** As twelve years before, Mary—pondering in her heart—had treasured up the rough adoration of the shepherds and their strange story of what the angels said to them about her Child (ver. 19), as doubtless she had done too when the Magi laid their costly gifts before the Babe at Bethlehem, and when Simeon and Anna in the temple spoke their prophetic utterances over the Infant; so now the mother, in quiet humble faith, stored up again her Son's sayings in her heart, waiting with brave and constant patience for the hour when her God should grant her to see face to face the mysterious things she had hitherto seen only "in a glass darkly."

Ver. 52.—**And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.** Another of these little word-paintings of St. Luke in which the work and progress of long years is depicted. The purpose of this brief statement is clear. The evangelist would teach us that, with Jesus, *bodily* development proceeded in the same orderly fashion as it does with other men, while wisdom—deepening with the years—passed into his soul as it passes into the souls of other men, by the ordinary channels of instruction, study, and thought. On the last words, "in favour with God and man," Dean Plumptre very beautifully writes, "The Boy grew into youth, and the young Man into manhood, and his purity and lowliness and unselfish sympathy drew even then the hearts of all men. In that highest instance, as in all lower analogies, men admired holiness till it became aggressive, and then it roused them to an antagonism bitter in proportion to their previous admiration." The Greek word in this verse translated "increased" would be more literally rendered "kept advancing." The word is used for pioneers hewing down trees and brushwood which obstruct the path of an advancing army. The word in the original, Englished by "stature" some scholars translate by "age;" either rendering is permissible, but the word used in the English Version is better fitted for the context of the passage.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The birthplace and the birth.* Two travellers, coming up from Galilee, approach the city of David. The knowledge they possessed of the event in which the glories of David's house were to culminate must have invested every feature with a peculiar sacredness of interest. Note Dean Stanley's description of Bethlehem, on the crest of a ridge of black hills terraced with vineyards. As beheld by Joseph and Mary, what a stream of patriotic memories, mixed with the inspirations which spring from the sense of ancestry, must have flowed over their souls! There is the scene of the notable gleaning of the gentle Moabitess who had accompanied Naomi from those mighty hills which rear their pinnacles in the distance behind. There, Jesse with his seven stalwart sons had lived. In those fields and gorges the youngest of the seven had learned to sling his stones and sing his psalms—had been prepared for the future which lay before him. From that city had come the mightiest of David's warriors—Joab and Abishai and others. Lo! there, too, by the gate is the famous well of Bethlehem, of which David had longed to drink, but, faint as he was, would not, because the drawing of its water had been at the cost of life, strength, and blood. Manifold is the appeal to the heart of the pilgrims, who, lowly as their condition is, are scions of Israel's royal house. They are nearing the place of which prophecy had said (Micah v. 2), "Out of thee shall One come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." They know that the fulfilment is at hand. Whither shall they go? High time that one should be at rest. Shall they

go to the inn—the khan or caravanserai? (See Farrar's sketch of that strange shelter for man and beast.) But the inn is full. There is no place in it for such as they. The necessity is urgent. And their refuge—so a tradition mentioned by Justin Martyr says—is a grotto or cave in the limestone rock on which the village stands, used as a stable for horses and a pen for cattle. The horses' manger is the cradle for the King of kings. Born there and thus, the precise date of the birth is not apparently determinable.

Vers. 8—20.—*The shepherds and the herald angels.* From limestone cavern, we are taken by the evangelists to the long grassy slopes which stretch to the east of the Jewish city. Hidden in some nook of these slopes rest pious shepherds. Shepherds have always been a meditative class of men, accustomed to the sweet silences of nature, and, apart from the bustle and stir of cities, invited to quiet communion with their own hearts. It would seem that these shepherds were men of the spirit of Simeon. They quickly understand the message borne to them. Calmly and promptly, they respond at once, as if it were the intimation of that for which they had been waiting. "Let us go and see." There they lie, "nursed in devout and lonely thought," unaware of the myriad myriads of the shining that hover over them. It is the moment of a pause, of a hush through nature. Lo! the angel of the Lord comes on them; in an instant a presence, a glory, is around them; and first into their hearts is poured the gospel for all the ages. Of this gospel, note: (1) *Its substance.* (Ver. 11.) "Born *to you* this day"—God's gift to men, to sinners, especially to those who believe. "A Saviour, which is Christ"—the Anointed One—he of whom the prophets spoke, and whom David, the shepherd of Israel, prefigured; the Sent, not *by* but *from* God, from the depths of the Divine Personality; the Son from the bosom of the Father. "Christ, the Lord" —the Jehovah, to whom every knee shall bow; the Ruler who shall restore the lost, and unite the scattered, and fulfil the kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy. (2) *The character of this gospel.* (Ver. 10.) "Good tidings of great joy;" the most blessed message ever proclaimed—one of unspeakable blessedness; a joy to which no bound can be set, which no geographical limit can measure, which no thought of class, or race, or sect can embitter; joy to all the world's peoples. (3) *The sign of the gospel.* (Ver. 12.) "A Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger." The Babe is the sign of the kingdom, is the token of the King. "Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). And now suddenly as the sign is given, "a blaze of song spreads o'er the expanse of heaven," and

> "Like circles widening round
> Upon a clear blue river,
> Orb after orb, the wondrous sound
> Is echoed on for ever:
> 'Glory to God on high, on earth be peace,
> And love towards men of love—salvation and release.'"

The *announcement of the birth is made to shepherds.* Why were they selected for this great honour? Points of fitness may be traced. Was not the first blood of sacrifice (Abel's) that of a keeper of sheep? Was not the chosen type and earthly root of the Christ a shepherd taken from the sheepfolds? Is not one of the favourite symbols of the world's Saviour the good shepherd? Is not the Saviour's work that of him who leaves the ninety and nine and goes after the sheep which is lost? Of all earthly things, are not the pastoral life and spirit the nearest correspondents to the life and spirit of the incarnate Son of God? And as to the gospel that was preached, is there not a truth in the quaint language of an old writer, "It fell not out amiss that shepherds they were; the news fitted them well. It well agreed to tell shepherds of the yearning of a strange Lamb, such a Lamb as might take away the sin of the world. Such a Lamb as they might send to the Ruler of the world for a present." Any way, it is not to supercilious Pharisee, not to Sadducee cold and dry as dust, not to Essene ascetic and separatist, not to Herodian worldly and crafty, not to the mighty or the noble that the first tidings of the great joy are brought. The first preacher is the heavenly angel, and the first congregation some lowly, simple men, who are doing their duty in the place which God has appointed to them. Thence comes the lesson to us. Heaven is always near the dutiful. They who watch faithfully what has been

given to their charge, not seeking "some great thing to do," not hurried and restless in their work, but caring for the things, many or few, over which God has placed them, are close to that gate of the celestial kingdom through which there peals the music, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Two points in this portion of the narrative may be touched upon. (1) *The conduct of the shepherds* when the tidings of the birth are borne to them. On the withdrawal of the heavenly vision, they say (ver. 15), "Let us now go even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass." The flocks are somehow disposed of. This is a matter to be at once attended to. A word of God, a voice of the Holy Spirit in the heart, a command or duty pertaining to the heavenly life, claims precedence over all other claims. "Seek first the kingdom of God." Prompt obedience is the way of blessing. "They came with haste." Yes; "the King's business requireth haste." Never delay. St. Paul acted in the spirit of the shepherds when, God having been pleased to reveal his Son in him, "immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. i. 16). (2) *The conduct of Mary.* The shepherds eagerly told their wonderful tale. And all the people who heard, wondered. "But Mary (ver. 19) kept all these sayings and pondered them in her heart." The wonder of the people soon passed away; it was but "as the morning cloud and the early dew." Religious feelings are conserved and deepened through reflection and prayer. Blessed secret—the keeping and pondering in the heart!

Vers. 21—38.—*The circumcision and presentation in the temple.* I. THE CIRCUMCISION. With regard to the circumcision, observe: 1. The Son of God is not only "made of a woman," he is "*made under the Law.*" He is entered into all the requirements and circumstances of the covenant "with Abraham and his seed." The apostle tells us why—"to redeem them that were under the Law." Christ took the bond under which Israel was bound, and became Israel's Surety for it. Now it is ended. There is a new form of righteousness in which the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is removed. The apostle adds (Gal. iv. 6), "To redeem them that were under the Law, that we"—*i.e.* as many as have been baptized into Christ, Jew or Greek, bond or free—"might receive the adoption of sons." This adoption is now the standing through grace. 2. The circumcision has its *special place in the making of Jesus by God to us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Redemption.* It is an evidence that the Son of God was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Circumcision supposed its subject to be a sinner. It supposed that a condemnation rested on him as such. The Lord Jesus, God's beloved Son, therefore took the sinner's place, and in the drops of blood shed on the eighth day after birth served himself, as it were, the heir to the condemnation of sin. Of this condemnation he spoke when he bowed his head on the cross and said, "It is finished!" 3. The circumcision has *its special meaning with regard to the spiritual history of believers.* See in this connection Col. ii. 10, "You Christians"—thus we may paraphrase the sentence—"have, through your union with Christ, the reality of circumcision. When you gave yourselves to Christ, a work was done in you which was equal to the sharp and painful renunciation—the putting off—of the body of flesh, of that mind of the flesh with its affections and lusts which is enmity against God. It was through the repentance wrought in you that you became partakers of the remission of sins. When you were buried with Christ in baptism, your old, unbelieving self was circumcised to the Lord. You found the new position, the new life, that is complete in Christ. (For the manifold suggestiveness of the circumcision of the infant Jesus, read Keble's hymn in his 'Christian Year.')

II. THE PRESENTATION. The forty days of purification prescribed by the Law of Moses having been accomplished, Joseph and Mary bring the Babe to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord. As Mary's Firstborn, he must be formally separated. And in the narrative of this separation we are reminded of the lowly condition of the parents. Not the lamb and the pigeon, but the two young pigeons allowed in cases of poverty, constitute the sacrifice, so low had he stooped whose place is the bosom of the Father. Look at the welcome prepared for Christ as he is borne in Mary's loving arms into his Father's temple. 1. Think first of *the man by whom the welcome is expressed.* He is called simply "a man in Jerusalem." Not the priests. In connection with the infancy we trace three acts of adoration—that of the shepherds, that of Simeon and Anna, and that of the heathen Magi. In all there is no representation of the circles of authority;

at least, there is no dwelling on the importance of those through whom the homage is shown. The tribute of the human heart is sufficient for the Son of man. Of this man we know nothing more than is told us by St. Luke. His name is Simeon. He is (ver. 25) "righteous and devout, one of those who looked for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit is upon him." The character—all that is memorable—is summed up in the title he himself takes (ver. 29), "Thy servant." For years he has been looking—a sharer in the expectation which had become earnest and eager among the pious. But he thinks and prays and hopes in a light that is peculiar to himself. Somehow—we are not told how—the intimation has been borne into his soul (ver. 26) that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Is not the picture of this "watcher for the morning" a beautiful one? Do we not seem to see him, weary of the word-wranglings, the fightings over pin-points of ceremonial, which abounded, piercing through the hypocrisies with which the religious world was honeycombed; amid confusions becoming worse confounded, breathing the prayer, "O thou Hope of Israel, come quickly"? Is not this man an example to us? Is not this present time the watch-night to Christ's people? Are we watching as he watched—"not asleep in sin, but diligent in the Lord's service, and rejoicing in his praises"? 2. Regard next *the scene in which the welcome is given.* The watcher is in the temple—there in the spirit of David's psalm, "That I may dwell in the courts of the Lord, beholding the beauty of the Lord, and inquiring in his temple." He is there led by the Spirit. When "two unnoted worshippers" enter, his eye fixes on the two; faster beats the heart, "It is he; that child is he—the Lord's Christ." An incident that is indelibly photographed in the heart of Christendom is that in which the venerable seer takes the Babe in his arms, and lifts his eyes to heaven "in prayers that struggle with his tears." (1) Behold the sign of the Babe realized. To welcome the true child-nature, as Simeon welcomed Jesus; to see heaven in the Child, and open the soul to the impression, becoming child-like, and therefore Christ-like;—this is to receive the kingdom of heaven. (2) Note that in spiritual history there is a moment of discovery—the discerning of the hidden glory in Jesus. This moment is typified in the conjunction of the watcher and the watched for (ver. 27)—when the parents brought the Child Jesus, then he received him into his arms. We may not be able always to distinguish the very time and way; but there is the morning hour in the life, the awakenment to the claim of God on the soul, to the fact "I am a sinner, and I need the Lord's Christ," and the answering fact, "He is the Saviour, and he wants me." Would that Simeon's joy were realized in all who read, "Mine eyes have seen thy Salvation"! 3. Observe *the song*, the familiar "Nunc dimittis." What sweetness, what beauty in this, the "swan-song" of the Christian Church as it has been called! (1) How tenderly the heart asks the supreme release! What more can be desired! The servant has seen the Master. And yet it is no prayer of longing initiated by the heart itself. Had it not been revealed to him that the hour of departure would follow the vision of the Lord? The human will touches the Divine. "Let me depart . . . according to thy word." (2) How the song thrills with the sense of a love free and universal as the light of God (vers. 31, 32)! So it is when the Lord's Christ is really seen. The place of Christ is "a place of broad rivers and streams." Christian love is necessarily a missionary love. The word which it sows into the innermost desire is, "Let there be light." Christians may learn this, too, from Simeon—he, the Israelite, seeks the good of the Gentiles. The salvation in which he rejoices is one "for revelation to the Gentiles." Should not we Gentiles reciprocate by embracing in our prayer and effort God's people Israel?—seeking that the whole thought of the venerable watcher may be fulfilled—the Lord's Christ, the Light for the Gentiles and the Glory of Israel. (3) A soul thus filled out of the fulness of God's love is ready to depart. Death to it is only a departing, the dismissal of the servant from the scene of earthly toil, that he may enter more fully into the joy of the Lord. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." The aged servant has still another word. He has his blessing for the parents. 4. Mark *the prediction addressed to Mary.* (1) The more general announcement, which seems at variance with the exalted strain of the song; but in this variance it harmonizes with the words of prophecy (*e.g.* Isaiah's forecasts), and interprets the experience of the ages. For "Christ is both a Corner-stone and a Stumbling-stone, and perhaps, in some sense, he is both the one and the other to us all." (2) The

more special announcement. Ah! how often the love which is the source of the purest joy is the occasion of the most poignant sorrow! Many a mother can understand the word of the seer to the mother, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul." Well when the wound is that only of a holy sorrow! Thus (3) the prophetic word is attached to the blessing, that, through the Lord's Christ, "the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed." It is true: the attitude of every heart to Christ is the revelation of that heart in the roots and springs of its thinking. 5. *The sketch of Anna the prophetess is the concluding and consummating feature of the day.* She, too, is an interesting person. A widow, after seven years of married life, and now "advanced in many days" (ver. 36), at least four score and four. Devout, almost an inmate of the temple, and recognized as a prophetess. She, too, has her thanksgiving, as she comes in "at that very hour." But the notable circumstance in regard to her is that she is the first preacher of Christ in the city of the great King. "She speaks of him to all them that are looking for redemption." She is the pioneer of the great host of women that publish the tidings (Ps. lxviii. 11, Revised Version). In this host may many who read or hear be included!

Vers. 39—52.—*The childhood and the waiting-time.* Before the age of twelve, nothing is told. In modern biographies, all kinds of traits, incidents, forecasts of the man in the child, are mentioned. The Apocryphal Gospels fall in with this custom. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. The child-life of "the Lord's Christ" is thoroughly simple. A bright-eyed boy, learning to read the Scriptures at his mother's knee, running out and in to shop and cottage, and joining sometimes in the innocent pastimes of the hillside, taking at night his little quilt from the ledge surrounding the wall of the house, and laying himself down in peace and sleeping,—such, we may conceive, was the life of the holy Child. Thoughtful, wise, gentle, yet full of a nameless "grace and truth;" for (ver. 40) "he grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him." The incident which alone breaks the silence is connected with his twelfth year, the completion of which was an important hour in Jewish history—the hour of transference from pupilage to a certain measure of responsibility. At that age Jesus, "a son of the Law," is taken by Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem. The journey, the caravans of pilgrims, the incidents of the way, the three nights' halting, and then the sight of Jerusalem with its temple shining in the sun,—we can imagine what all this must have been to the exquisitely sensitive soul of the Child! And the week's stay in the capital—what bursting of thoughts! what tides of inspiration! Let us dwell on the first recorded word of Jesus—his reply to his mother (ver. 49), when she and Joseph found him among the doctors. Regard it as the word of sanctified boyhood—as the awakenment to the consciousness of (1) the supreme relation of the life; (2) the supreme interest of the life; (3) the supreme necessity of the life.

I. THE SUPREME RELATION. "My Father." We may infer, from the fiftieth verse, that now for the first time this word had passed from his lips. "*Thy* father and I," said Mary. Quietly but distinctly comes the intimation of the Fatherhood—an intimation in which we can trace the disengagement. "Nay, not he whom I have honoured, and honour, as earthly parent, but he to whom I am truly bound—he who is, who only is, *my* Father." And a great, solemn hour it is when the feeling of a personal, individual relation to the Eternal dawns on the consciousness. In earliest years the child-nature is enfolded in others. The first crisis of the life is when it begins to realize that it cannot merely be led; that it has a place and calling of its own; that it must think and will, instead of only reflecting the thought and volition of those who have shaped its path. Here there is a parting of the ways—one way being towards a self-will, which has "torment" in it for the youth as for others, and which, unless corrected and disciplined by sharp experience, will bear the soul into hurtful alliances, will prove "a hewing out of broken cisterns which hold no water;" the other way being that of Divine grace, the acceptance of a higher rule and guidance, the learning of the great name Duty in the greater, the supporting Name of God, the response of the heart to a love and righteousness which asks its yes, the witness of the eternal Spirit with the human that the Boy is the Son of God. Who will not anxiously endeavour so to direct the mind, in the period when it is most susceptible of

all right influences, as that the transition from childhood to youth shall be marked by a new glance upward, a loving and earnest "My Father"!

II. Further, NOTE THE SUPREME INTEREST OF THE LIFE. It matters not whether we read "about my Father's business" or "in my Father's house;" the idea is the same —that the irresistible attraction of the Son is the affairs which connect him with the Father. At twelve years of age the business was "hearing and asking questions." There is nothing forced or forward in the holy childhood. The "understanding and answers" are pronounced wonderful. But the Boy is only the "son of the Law;" he is not yet the Doctor. By-and-by he will be. Later on, he will be called to drink the bitter cup—to suffer and die. But everything in its right order. The life will evolve out of the principle that, in all, the Father's will is to rule, the Father's mind is to be read, the Father's kingdom is to be promoted. Here, surely, there is a suggestion as to the idea which should dominate in the education of the young. At home and at school, all culture, all training, should be associated with a higher reference; the boy, the girl, should feel that the life is among the heavenly Father's things. The sense of responsibility to him for the nature, and the opportunity of improving the nature, should be laid deep in the character. More than this, the generous instincts of youth should be supplied with a fitting aliment. Too often they run to seed because the intelligence was not enlisted in objects which formed a definite interest to the mind. Let young people be taken to their Father's house; let Church services recognize their place and part; let them be invited to a share in the hopes and the activities of Christ's cause. Plant them in the courts of the Lord, "in their Father's things."

III. Once more, OBSERVE THE SUPREME NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LIFE IN THE BOY JESUS. "Why hast thou thus dealt with us?" asks his mother reproachfully. "How is it that ye sought me?" is the rejoinder; "wist ye not that I must be where and as you find me?" We note the surprise in the answer. It is the flashing forth of a something, a secret, in the childhood which the mother had not noticed, so simple, so obedient, had the Child been. To the Boy, so full of the glories and solemnities of the Father's house, it seemed strange that they had not recognized whose he was—that they had not understood the obligation inlaid in the life itself. And when the constraint of God's love is acknowledged, when the soul awakes to the vision of the Father and the Father's business,—the spell of Christ's "I *must*" is irresistible. We come on it again and again in the course of the ministry. It was the *law* of the spirit of the life. And the same law operates in every one who is of the truth. In that sweet bondage stands the soul's perfect freedom: "I must work the works of him that sent me;" "I *must* be about my Father's business." Then, in perfect naturalness, yet with marvellous boldness, comes forth the first self-revelation of the Lord. Joseph and Mary understood it not. How often is the young heart, aroused and astir in consequence of a higher call, misunderstood, misjudged! Mary did not comprehend, but she sympathized; she loved and prayed. Type of the true mother, "whose eyes are homes of silent prayer." The sense of the higher sonship only enforces the obligations of the lower. In the higher love all other loves endure. "This is love," says St. John, "that we walk after his commandments"—after "the first commandment with promise, Honour thy father and mother." There is nothing lovelier in the human life of Christ than the renewed acceptance of the restraints of home. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them"—to them, with the narrow round of their daily care and concerns; and he with the great thoughts glowing in his breast, and the kingdom of his Father opening to his gaze. Mark: 1. *What self-repression belonged to the time in Nazareth!* We see the Son taking the place in the carpenter's house a few years later than the visit to the temple; Joseph apparently is removed by death from the headship of the house. Is it beyond the probabilities of the case that he performed the part—always a touching one—of the eldest son and brother supporting the mother to whom he is subject, and guiding the younger members of the family? Nothing is left undone, and he who thus learned obedience to duty leaves an example which serves as a beacon-light both to youth and age. 2. *How this time consecrates labour and poverty!* He wrought at the common things; in them he could see his Father's things, and do all as part of his Father's business. The truth receives a new radiance that "work is the girdle of manliness." Faber sings truly—

"Labour is sweet, for thou hast toiled;
And care is light, for thou hast cared.
Let not our works with self be soiled,
Nor in unsimple ways ensnared."

3. *How emphatic is the lesson on the fruitfulness of silence suggested by this time!* Between twelve years of age and thirty the Son of God was content to wait. The public life lasted for three years; he waited for thirty years. A great disproportion, we might say; but God's ways are not our ways. All the while he was growing in wisdom. As his bodily strength was compacted and matured, so was his mental; for in all things he was made like to his brethren. He studied his Father's Word and his Father's works. Nature disclosed to him her hidden meanings and beauties; he thought, he prayed, he lived, by the Father. The results of the long silence were evidenced in the exquisite parables of later years, in the wisdom which none could resist, in the authority which separated his doctrine from that of the scribes. The accumulated capital was great; when he went forth in the power of the Spirit he only drew the interest. Are we not, in these days, in too great haste both to be wise and to be rich? Do we not speak too soon as well as speak too much? Carlyle only apprehends the significance of Nazareth when he reminds us that in silence all great thought and work are done. We need more than "flashes of silence." Think, think of Jesus silent so long. Stier exclaims, "Oh what gracious words may have issued from his lips during those eighteen years which are not recorded! But the words which, by the Father's ordination, he was to testify to the world were sealed up till his hour was come. Then, one after another, bursts forth each as it were a deeper stream from the long pent-up fountains of eternal wisdom and truth!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 7.—*Christ excluded.* Little did the occupants of that inn at Bethlehem imagine who it was they were turning away when Joseph and Mary sought admission there. They did not realize, for they did not know, whom they were excluding. Practically they were declining to receive, not only the Messiah of their country, but the Saviour of the world. What they did in guiltless ignorance, men too often do in wilful and culpable rejection. Jesus Christ is sometimes excluded by men—

I. FROM THEIR THEORIES OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. They have constructed such a perfect theory of government out of the operation of physical law, that there is no room at all for an interposing Saviour. The whole space of their kingdom of truth is occupied.

II. FROM THEIR ESTIMATE OF THEIR INTELLECTUAL NECESSITIES. They believe that, by applying their knowledge, their reasoning faculty, their intuitive powers, to nature and to mankind, they can reach all the conclusions there is any necessity to attain. All that is over and above this is redundant; there is no room in their sense of need for a Divine Teacher. Well did the Master say that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must become as a little child. The self-sufficiency of a complacent maturity thinks it has nothing to learn; it bars its doors; it sends the light of the world elsewhere; its little "inn" of knowledge and aspiration is occupied from floor to roof.

III. FROM THEIR ESTIMATE OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL WANTS. Very many are they who are not unwilling to welcome a Guide, but who have no room for a Saviour; for they have no sense of sin. They want to know which of the commandments they have broken. It does not occur to them that they have been owing to their great Creator, to their heavenly Father, to their Divine Friend, ten thousand talents of reverence, obedience, gratitude; and that they have been only offering to him a few poor pence, or that they have had nothing at all to pay. They are not conscious of a deep and wide gulf between their indebtedness and their discharge, and they go on their way not knowing that "the God in whose hand their breath is, and whose are all their ways, they have not glorified;" that they have sinned against the Lord, and need his abounding mercy. They, therefore, have no room for Christ, the Divine Propitiation, the great Reconciler of man to God.

IV. FROM THE HABIT OF THEIR LIFE. Of all those who exclude Jesus Christ, the most numerous and perhaps the guiltiest are they who, recognizing his claims and his powers, refuse to welcome him to their hearts. Their lives are so crowded with *cares*, with the business of the market or of the household; or they are so filled up with the *pleasures* and the *prizes* of this world; or they are so occupied with *pursuits* which, if intellectual, are unspiritual, that there is no room for that Divine One who comes to speak of sin and of mercy and of the life which is spiritual and eternal, who claims to be trusted and loved and served as the Saviour of the human soul and the Sovereign of the human life. So, while admitting his right to enter, they do not open the door. Alas! of what enlightening truth, of what blessed restfulness of heart, of what nobility of life, of what eternity of glory, do men bereave themselves by crowding out the Lord who loves them, by excluding the Redeemer from the home of their hearts!—C.

Vers. 8—11.—*Welcome news from heaven.* It is surely not without significance that this most gracious manifestation and announcement was made to these humble Hebrew shepherds "keeping watch over their flock by night." It suggests two truths which are of frequent and perpetual illustration. 1. That God chooses for his instruments the humble rather than the high. Our human notions would have pointed to the most illustrious in the land for such a communication as this. But God chose the lowly shepherd, the man of no account in the estimate of the world. So did he act in the beginning of the gospel (see 1 Cor. i. 26—29). And so has he acted ever since, choosing often for the agents of his power and grace those whom man would have passed by as unworthy of his choice. 2. That God grants his Divine favour to those who are conscientiously serving him in their own proper sphere. Not to the idle dreamer, not to the man who will do nothing because he cannot do everything of which he thinks himself capable, but to him who does his best in the position in which God's providence has placed him, will God come in gracious manifestation; and it is he whom he will select to render important service in his cause. But the main thoughts of this passage are these—

I. WELCOME TIDINGS FROM THE SPIRITUAL WORLD. "They were sore afraid." "Fear not . . . I bring you good tidings." Why have men always been so sore afraid in the presence of the supernatural? Why have they feared to receive communications from heaven? Something much more than a popular belief (see Judg. xiii. 22) is required to account for so universal a sentiment. It is surely that sinful men are profoundly conscious of ill desert, and fear that any message that comes from God, the Holy One, will be a message of condemnation and punishment. What would be the expectation with which a camp of rebellious subjects, who had taken up arms against their sovereign, would receive a messenger from the court of the king? Had that guilty age known that God was about to announce "a new departure" in his government of the world, what ample, what overwhelming reason would it have had to apprehend a message of Divine wrath and retribution! How welcome, then, the words, "Fear not . . . I bring you *good* tidings"! Of what depth of Divine patience, of what boundless breadths of Divine compassion, do these simple words assure us!

II. TIDINGS OF SURPASSING VALUE. Tidings "of great joy." The birth of the Babe in Bethlehem "that day"—what did it mean? It meant: 1. Deliverance from a deadly evil. To these shepherds, if they were patriotic children of Abraham, the promise of a Saviour would mean deliverance from the national degradation into which Israel had sunk—a spiritual as well as a political demoralization. To them, if they were earnest religious inquirers, it meant deliverance from the bondage and penalty of sin. This is the significance which the word has to us: in that day was born into the world a Saviour, a Divine Redeemer, One who should save the souls of men from that which is the one curse of our humanity—*sin*. 2. The fulfilment of a great hope. To those who then learnt that "the Christ" was born, it meant that the long-cherished hope of their nation was fulfilled, and that whatever the Messiah was to bring about was at length to be accomplished. A great national expectation has passed, with us, into a glorious hope for the human race—the hope that under Christ this poor sin-stricken world will rise from its ignorance, its superstition, its godlessness, its vice, and its crime, and walk in newness of life, in the love and the likeness of its heavenly Father. 3. Restoration to our true position. That Saviour is "Christ *the Lord*." We who

have sought to rule ourselves and to be the masters of our own lives, and who have suffered so much in so many ways by this guilty dethronement and usurpation, are now to find our true rest and joy by submitting ourselves to him who is "the Lord" of all hearts and lives; in his service is abiding peace and "great joy."

III. TIDINGS OF GENERAL AND OF PARTICULAR APPLICATION. These glad tidings are for "all the people," and they were for those startled and wondering shepherds. "To you is born." As we hear the angel's words, we know that they are for all the wide world, and, whoever we may be, *for us*.—C.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The human and the heavenly world.* The strange and elevating experience through which the shepherds of Bethlehem were passing prepared them for a scene which was fitted to awaken still greater surprise and spiritual excitement. For suddenly, all of them appearing together, a multitude of the heavenly host began to make angelic music; strains of sweetest song filled the air, and the words of that celestial chant, so exquisitely sweet, so full of comfort and of hope to our human race, were fixed in the shepherds' mind; they found a place in the sacred record; they make melody in our ear to-day. The scene and the song suggest to us—

I. THE INTEREST WHICH THE ANGELIC TAKES IN THE HUMAN WORLD. It is a striking and significant fact that the advent of Jesus Christ to our world should be preluded and accompanied by the ministry of angels (ch. i. 11, 26; ii. 9). It confirms the truth elsewhere indicated that the history of mankind is the subject of deep interest to the holy intelligences of heaven. They inquire with a pure and heavenly curiosity into the relations of God with man (1 Pet. i. 12). They reverently admire the wisdom of God in his dealings with his human children (Eph. iii. 10). They rejoice over the smallest accession to the kingdom of God (ch. xv. 10). They expend their powers in the accomplishment of God's will concerning us (text, and Heb. i. 14). Our Saviour is One in whom they also have profound interest, though they need not his redemption, and their worship of him is a large element in their celestial joy (Eph. i. 10; Rev. v. 11—13).

II. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST AN EPOCH IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Well might a multitude of the heavenly host chant those words of the text, "Glory to God in the highest;" well might they join in the high praises of the King of heaven. For when Jesus Christ came as he thus came, in lowliness of perfect humiliation (ver. 7), that the world into which he thus entered as a helpless babe might be redeemed and restored (ver. 10), two things were done. 1. The exceeding greatness of the Divine grace received its most wonderful illustration. Possibly—may we not say probably?—even the records of the kingdom of God contained no event illustrative of a more magnanimous pity and a more sacrificial love than this expression of "good will to men." 2. The foundation was laid on which a Divine kingdom of truth and righteousness should be reared. On the rock of the Divine incarnation rests the whole grand edifice of the restoration of the human race to the love and the likeness of God. Then indeed, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the glory of God was most fittingly celebrated; for then was the glory of his grace manifested, and then was the glory that should be rendered him by our humanity assured.

III. THE COMING OF CHRIST TO OUR WORLD THE INCOMING OF ITS PEACE. "Peace on earth." It has taken long for the work of Jesus Christ to bring about this result, even as things are to-day. And how much remains to be done! To some eyes it may seem as if only the elementary lesson had been learned. But if we look long enough and deep enough we shall see: 1. That the gospel of Jesus Christ has been, and is, offering to every burdened human heart a peace which is immeasurably profound and inestimably precious. 2. That the teaching and the Spirit of Jesus Christ are perfectly fitted to inculcate and to inspire peace, and even love, between man and man. 3. That under his benign government, and just so far as his will is consulted, man is leaving strife and discord below and behind him, and is moving on an upward path toward the sphere where peace and purity dwell together.—C.

Ver. 19.—*The wisdom of devout meditation.* Mary "kept" all those things which she had heard, treasured them in the secret chamber of her mind, dwelt upon them in her heart. Much she must have wondered what it could all mean and what would be

the issue of it. Doubtless the hope that was in her purified her heart as so sacred a hope would do (1 John iii. 3), and made her life a life of reverence and prayer. It was good for her to think much of the purpose God was about to accomplish through her instrumentality; she would be the better fitted for that holy motherhood by which she was to be so highly honoured, and by which she was to render so inestimable a service to her nation and her race. The fact that she did keep and dwell upon these solemn and sacred mysteries may remind us of—

I. THE THINGS THAT ARE MOST WORTH KEEPING. These are not moneys that may be kept in the bank, nor jewels that may be treasured in the cabinet, nor parchments that may be guarded in the strong box; they are none other than *Divine thoughts which we can hold in our hearts.* And of these there are Divine *revelations.* They may be of his holy purpose, such as Mary's heart held; or they may be of his own character or disposition toward us his children, such as we may learn and hold; or they may be revelations of our own true selves, of our character and our necessities and our possibilities; or they may be of the way by which we can approach and resemble God. There are also Divine *invitations*—to return from our estrangement, to draw near to his throne, to accept his mercy, to walk by his side, to sit down at his table. There are Divine *exhortations* to duty, to service, to self-sacrifice. And there are Divine *promises*, of provision and protection and inspiration here, of blessedness and enlargement hereafter.

II. THAT WHICH CONSTITUTES THEIR SUPREME VALUE. 1. They pertain to God himself, and therefore connect us with the Highest. 2. They affect *us, ourselves*—our character, our inner life, our essential being. 3. They bring us into harmony with all things; for he that is right with God and true to himself is adjusted to all other beings, and is ready for all other things. 4. They render us fitted for life anywhere and in the distant future; so that death will be a mere incident in our history, not concluding our career, but only opening the gate into other and brighter spheres.

III. THE DANGER WE ARE IN OF LOSING THEM. There is a plausible philosophical theory that a thought once received into the mind cannot ever be wholly lost; once there it remains there, though it may be in the far background, unperceived, unemployed. But, as a matter of practical life, we know too well, both from testimony and experience, that the best and highest thoughts may escape our view; they may be only too easily lost sight of and disregarded. Neglect, or an engrossing interest in lower or in more exciting subjects, will make them invisible, ineffective, useless. It is a most pitiable thing that in every generation there are multitudes of souls that once welcomed and cherished the loftiest conceptions and the noblest aspirations, to whom these thoughts and hopes are now nothing whatsoever; they are gone from their mind; they have not been wisely "kept," but foolishly and culpably lost. Therefore—

IV. THE WISDOM OF A REVERENT MEDITATION. We do ourselves the truest service when, by pondering on them, we keep sound and whole within our hearts the great thoughts of God. The power of continuous meditation is one of the faculties of our human nature; but the rush and strain of modern life constitute a powerful temptation to let this faculty rust in disuse. But as we love ourselves truly and wisely we shall resist and overcome the temptation. All souls that would do their sacred duty to themselves must *think* well and much on the things they know. If they would truly and thoroughly understand that of which they speak, if they wish Divine truth to have its own purifying and transforming power over them, if they aspire to build up a strong and influential character, if they wish to be "no longer children," but men in Christ Jesus, they must *ponder in their hearts* the doctrines they count in their creed, the language they take into their lips. It is the truth we *dwell* upon that we *live* upon.—C.

Vers. 25—30.—*A satisfied human spirit.* There are few more exquisite pictures even in Holy Writ than the one which is here drawn for us. An aged and venerable man, who has lived a long life of piety and virtue, and who has been cherishing an ever-brightening hope that before he dies he should look upon the face of his country's Saviour, directed by the Spirit of God, recognizes in the infant Jesus that One for whose coming he has so long been hoping and praying. Taking him up into his arms, with the light of intense gratitude in his eyes, and the emotion of deepest happiness

in his voice, he exclaims, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, . . . for mine eyes have seen thy Salvation." Life has now no ungranted good for him to await. The last and dearest wish of his heart has been fulfilled; willingly would he now close his eyes in the sleep of death; gladly would he now lie down to rest in the quiet of the grave.

I. THOSE WHO MUST BE UNSATISFIED IN SPIRIT. There is a vast multitude of men who seek for satisfaction in the things which are seen and temporal—in taking pleasure, in making money, in wielding power, in gaining honour, etc. But they do not find what they seek. It is as true in London as it was in Jerusalem, eighteen centuries after Christ as ten centuries before, that "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." All the rivers of earthly good may run into the great sea of an immortal spirit, but that sea is not filled. Earthly good is the salt water that only makes more athirst the soul that drinks it. It is not the very wealthy, nor the very mighty, nor the very honoured man who is ready to say, "I am satisfied; let me depart in peace."

II. THOSE WHO MAY BE SATISFIED IN SPIRIT. Simeon knew by special communication from God—"it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost"—that he should reach a certain point in the coming of the kingdom of God, that his heart's deep desire for "the Consolation of Israel" should be granted him. And waiting for this, and attaining it, his soul was filled with joy and holy satisfaction. It is right for those who are taking a very earnest interest in the cause of Christ to long to be allowed to accomplish a certain work for him. Again and again has the parent thus striven and prayed and longed to see the conversion of all his (her) children, or the teacher of his (her) class; the minister of Christ to see the attainment of some pastoral design; the missionary to win some tribe from barbarism and idolatry; the translator to render the Word of God into the native tongue; the national reformer to pass his measure for emancipation, or temperance, or virtue, or education, or the protection of the lives and morals of women or children. And this deep desire of the heart has been a constraining power, which has nerved the hand and energized the life, which has brought forth the fruit of sacred zeal and unwearied toil. God has given to these souls the desire of their hearts, and they have gone to their grave filled with a holy, satisfying peace. So may it be with us. And yet *it may not be so.* We may be called upon to quit the field of active labour before the harvest is gathered in. Others may enter into our labours. But if it should be so, there is a way in which we may belong to—

III. THOSE WHO CANNOT FAIL TO BE SATISFIED IN SPIRIT. For we may be of those who realize that it is in God's hand to fix the bounds of our present labour, and to determine the measure of the work we shall do on earth. We may work on diligently and devotedly as those who have much to do for God and man, yet clearly recognizing that God has for us a sphere in the spirit-world, and that he may at any hour remove us there, though we would fain finish what we have in hand below. If we have the spirit of Christ in our service, if we go whither we believe he sends us, and work on in the way which we believe to be according to his will, we may rest in the calm assurance that the hour of our cessation from holy labour is the hour of God's appointment, and a peace as calm as that of Simeon may fill our soul as we leave a *not-unfinished work* on earth to enter a nobler sphere in heaven.—C.

Vers. 34, 35.—*The touchstone of truth.* We do not suppose that Simeon saw the future course of the Saviour and of his gospel in clear outline; but, taught of God, he foresaw that that little Child he had been holding in his arms would be One who would prove a most powerful factor in his country's history; and he saw that relationship to him would be a source of the greatest blessing, or of weightiest trouble, or of most serious condemnation. Thus guided by this venerable saint, we will regard the gospel of Christ as—

I. A TOUCHSTONE. Our Lord himself was a touchstone by which the men of his day were tried. He came not to judge the world, but to save the world, as he said (John xii. 47); and yet it was also true that "for judgment he came into the world," as he also said (John ix. 39). His mission was not to *try*, but to *redeem*; yet it was a necessary incidental consequence of his coming that the character of the men who came in contact with him would be severely tested. When the Truth itself appeared

and moved amongst men, then it became clear that those who were ignorantly supposed to be blind were the souls that were seeing God ("that they who see not might see"), and equally clear that those who claimed to know everything had eyes that were fastened against the light ("that they who see might be made blind"). As Jesus lived and wrought and spoke, the hearts of men were revealed—those who were children of wisdom heard his voice (John xviii. 37), while those who loved darkness rather than light turned away from the revealing Truth. And to-day the gospel is the touchstone of human character. They who are earnest seekers after God, after wisdom, after righteousness, gladly sit at the feet of the great Teacher to learn of him; but they who live for pleasure, for gain, for the honour that cometh from man only, for this passing world, pass him by, indifferent or hostile. They who are prepared to come as little children to learn of the heavenly Father, receive his Word and enter his kingdom (ch. xviii. 16); while they who consider themselves able to solve the great problems of life and destiny keep their minds closed against the truth.

II. A SWORD OF SORROW. It was not only Mary's heart that was pierced by reason of her affection for Jesus Christ. Loyalty to him proved to that generation, and has proved in every age since then, a sword that has wounded and slain. At many times and in many places it has meant violent persecution—stripes, imprisonment, death. In every land and in every age it has exposed men to hostility, to reproach, to temporal loss, to social disadvantage, to a lower station, to a struggling life, to a wounded spirit (ch. ix. 23; John xvii. 14; 2 Tim. iii. 12). Our Lord invites us to regard this inevitable accompaniment of spiritual integrity as an honour and a blessing rather than a stigma and a curse (Matt. v. 10—12).

III. A STUMBLING-STONE. That "Child was set for the fall . . . of many." The truth which Jesus spoke, the great work of salvation he wrought out, has proved to many, not only in Israel, but in every land where it has been made known, a rock of offence (see ch. xx. 18; 1 Cor. i. 23).

IV. A STEPPING-STONE. Not only for the fall, but for the "rising again," was that Infant "set." By planting their feet on that safe, strong rock, the humiliated and even the degraded rise to honour and esteem, the humble to hopefulness, the weak to strength, the blemished to beauty, the useless to helpfulness, the children of earth to spheres of blessedness and joy in the heavenly world.—C.

Vers. 36—38.—*The testimony of womanhood.* From this interesting episode, without which the beautiful story of the infant Saviour in the temple would hardly be complete, we learn—

I. THAT THERE IS ROOM IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST FOR THE SERVICE OF WOMANHOOD. It was well that the aged Simeon should bear his testimony to the birth of the Saviour; it was also well that this aged and honourable prophetess should "likewise give thanks." Woman as well as man was to utter reverent joy on this supreme occasion. Woman, in the person of Anna, might well rejoice; for in the kingdom of Christ there is "neither male nor female;" all distinction of sex is unknown. Woman is as free to enter that kingdom as man; she may reach as high a position, by personal excellency, in it; she is as welcome to render holy service and fruitful testimony; is as certain to reap the reward of fidelity in the kingdom of heaven to which it leads. Women were the most faithful attendants on our Lord during his earthly ministry; they have been, since then, the most regular worshippers and the most devoted workers in his Church (see homily on ch. viii. 2, 3).

II. THAT LONG LONELINESS MAY WELL BRING US INTO CLOSE COMMUNION WITH GOD. Anna had a very long widowhood (ver. 36), and in her loss of human fellowship she waited much on God. She "departed not from the temple, but served God . . . with prayers night and day." When denied one another's society, what can we do better than seek fellowship with our heavenly Father, with our Divine Friend? What, indeed, can we do so well? Communion with the Father of our spirits will bring healing to the wounded soul, will be companionship for the lonely hour, will promote sanctity and submissiveness of will, will remind us of those other children of his who need our sympathy and succour, and will send us forth blessing and blest on the errands of love.

III. THAT A VISION FROM GOD SHOULD RESULT IN PRAISE AND TESTIMONY. Anna

"gave thanks unto the Lord, and spake of him [the infant Christ] to all," etc. Inspired of God, she recognized the long looked-for Messiah, and immediately she broke into praise, and forthwith began to communicate the joyful fact to *all* whom she could reach. This is the true order and the right procedure. When God reveals himself or his truth to us, we must first go to him in gratitude and praise, and must lose no time in passing on to others what he has entrusted to us.

IV. THAT AGE HAS ITS OFFERING TO BRING, as well as youth and prime. It is pleasant to think of the aged Anna, some way past four score, bent and feeble with the weight of years, speaking to "all them that looked," etc., and telling them that he whom they had waited for so long had come at last. A fair sight it is in the eyes of man, and surely in his also who estimates our service according to our ability (ch. xxi. 3), when those whose strength is well-nigh gone and who have earned their rest by long and faithful labour will not be persuaded to retire from the field, but labour on until the darkness of death arrests them.

V. THAT HOLY EXPECTATION WILL MEET WITH ITS FULFILMENT. There were many looking ("*all* of them," etc.) for redemption (ver. 38); and as they waited for God and upon him, their hearts' desires were granted. God may delay his answer for a while, even for a long while, but in *due time* it will come. The seeker *will* find; the worker *will* reap.—C.

Ver. 49.—*The dawn of sacred duty: a sermon to the young.* "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" There comes a time in our history—usually in the days of later youth or early manhood—when all things begin to wear a more serious aspect to us; when "the powers of the world to come" arrest us; when we ask ourselves very grave questions; when we have to confront a new future. It is the dawn of sacred duty in the human soul.

I. AS IT PRESENTED ITSELF TO JESUS CHRIST. His parents thought that his absence from their company was due to thoughtlessness or to absent-mindedness; they supposed it was to be explained by the fact that their Son was still a boy. On the contrary, the one thing that accounted for it was that he was beginning to be a man; that the burden of manhood's responsibilities was already resting on his shoulders; that the gravest solicitudes were already stirring in his soul. And the form which this sacred anxiety took was a holy and filial concern to be "about his Father's business." It had dawned upon his mind that his heavenly Father had sent him into the world to accomplish a special work, and that the hour had struck when he must address himself to this high and noble task. Therefore it behoved him to learn all that he could possibly acquire, to understand the things he had been taught, to receive from parents and teachers every truth he could discover and preserve. And the deep earnestness of his own spirit made it a matter of surprise that others, especially his elders and superiors, should not have perceived the same thing. "Wist ye not," he said wonderingly, "that I must be about my Father's business?"

II. AS IT APPEARS TO OUR MINDS NOW. There are various ways in which sacred duty may dawn on the human mind; the special form which this holy earnestness will take is affected by peculiarities of mental constitution, of parental training, of personal experience. It may be a deep sense of: 1. The value of the human soul, with its possibilities of nobility on the one hand and of degradation on the other. 2. The nearness and the greatness of the invisible and eternal world. 3. The seriousness of human life in view of the glorious and true success to which it sometimes attains, and also of the pitiable failure into which it sometimes sinks. 4. The strength and weight of filial and fraternal obligations. How much is due to the earthly father, and how wise it is to be guided by his ripe experience! how serious a thing it is to be setting an example to those who are younger! 5. The attractiveness of Jesus Christ—his purity and lovableness, his worthiness of the full affection and devotion of the human heart. 6. The claims of the heavenly Father, of him from whom we came, in whom we live, and by whom we are momently sustained; of him who has loved us with so patient and so ceaseless an affection. Must we not listen when he speaks, respond to his call, be found in his service, become the object of his Divine approval? When this solemn and sacred hour dawns upon the mind of the young, it is a time (1) for profound and prolonged consideration; (2) for earnest prayer; (3) for unreserved

consecration; it will then prove to be a time for (4) true and lasting joy (Ps. cviii. 1).—C.

Vers. 51, 52.—*Growth, our Lord's and our own.* The growth of Jesus Christ and his subjection to his parents teach us some things respecting him, and they suggest some things for our own guidance.

I. THE GROWTH OF JESUS CHRIST. 1. The fulness of his condescension. We find this in his stooping so far as (1) to make it becoming that he should "be subject to" his parents, and (2) to make it possible that he should grow. How the Infinite One could so bereave himself of his infinitude as to be able to increase in wisdom, we cannot understand. But we cannot understand infinitude at all, and we act wisely when we do not draw hard-and-fast deductions from it. We stand on far firmer ground when we take the statement of the historian in its natural sense, and open our mind to the fact that Jesus Christ, "our Lord and our God," did stoop so far that it was possible for him to increase in knowledge and in favour with God and with man. We do not question the reality of his growth in body; why should we doubt, or receive with any reserve, the affirmation that he grew also in mind? 2. The harmoniousness of his growth. He grew (1) in bodily stature, and, of course, in all bodily strength and skill; (2) in mental equipment—in technical knowledge, or in the "education" of his time, in appreciation of nature, in knowledge of mankind, in apprehension of Divine truth, in general intellectual enlargement; (3) in spiritual beauty and nobility—"in favour with God and man." Not that he was at any time faulty or lacking in any excellency which it behoved him at that time to show, but that, as his faculties expanded and his opportunities of manifesting character were multiplied, he developed all that was admirable in the sight of man and of God. There is a far greater possibility of spiritual beauty and nobility in a young man with matured faculty and widening relationships than in the very little child, restricted, as he must be, in powers and in surroundings. So, as Jesus increased in years and grew in wisdom, there was in him an unfolding of moral and spiritual worth which attracted the eyes of men and which satisfied the Spirit of the Holy One himself.

II. OUR HUMAN GROWTH. 1. Unlike our Lord, there is no element of condescension implied in our growth. We did not *stoop* to infancy; our course had then its commencement; and in the youngest child, with all its helplessness, but with all its latent capacities, there is a great gift from the hand of God. Whatever it means, in its humiliations and in its practical illimitableness, it is so much more than we could claim. 2. As with our Lord, our growth should be harmonious. All the three elements in our compound nature should undergo simultaneous and proportionate development. This is at first a parental question, but subsequently it is one that affects every one capable of growth. (1) Training of the body; its nurture and culture, so that it shall be continually advancing in strength and skill and symmetry. (2) Discipline of the mind; its instruction and exercise, so that it will be ever increasing in knowledge and enlarging in faculty. (3) Culture of the character; its guidance and formation, so that there shall be (*a*) attractiveness in the sight of man, and (*b*) worthiness in the judgment of God. It is, indeed, true that we may not give pleasure to men in proportion as we grow in moral and spiritual worth, for, as with our Master, our purity and devotion may be an offence unto them. It is also to be remembered that we may gain God's distinct approval long before we have reached the point of irreproachableness; for that which he delights to see in his children is an earnest *effort after*, and a constant *growth towards*, that which is true and pure and generous.—C.

Vers. 1—20.—*The Saviour's birth and the angel's sermon.* We now pass from the person of the forerunner to that of his greater Successor. The priest's son was great, but the Virgin's Son was greater. John was a great gift to the world, as every true reformer must be; but a Saviour is God's supreme Gift to the children of men. Now, in this narrative before us we learn—

I. HOW THE WILL OF EVEN HEATHEN MONARCHS IS MADE TO FULFIL THE WILL OF GOD. The Divine will, expressed seven centuries before this time by Micah the prophet (v. 2), was that Jesus should be born in Bethlehem. But until a short time before his birth appearances seemed to show that he must be born in Nazareth.

When lo! Augustus, the heathen emperor at Rome, demands a census, and the Jewish families must enrol themselves at the tribal cities. This simple circumstance, whose purpose was the levy of men or the levy of money, brought Mary to Bethlehem in time to become, in the appointed place, the mother of the Lord. It surely shows the full command which God has over the wills even of those who are not his worshippers. He is the Sovereign of all men, whether they like it or know it or not. Cyrus was his shepherd, although he did not know God (Isa. xliv. 28; xlv. 4); and Augustus orders a census and "keeps books" in subservience to Divine purposes and fulfilment of Divine promises.

II. How little welcome did the world give its new-born Saviour. The birth in Bethlehem was the most important birth which ever took place in our planet. Had the world appreciated the advent, it would have heralded it on every shore; but so little wisdom was there in the world that the precious Child had, so to speak, to steal into the world in a stable and among the cattle. It was humiliating to be born, even had palace halls received him; but how humiliating to be born in the common cattle-pen, because there was no room for Mary in the inn! And yet, in thus making his advent, he identified himself not only with the poorest, but also made common cause with the beasts. They, too, have benefited through Christ being born—there is less cruelty to animals in Christian than in other lands; and the religion of love he came to embody and proclaim will yet do more to ameliorate the condition of the beasts. Meanwhile let us notice how sad it is if men have no hospitality to show to Jesus, but still exclude him from their hearts and homes!

III. The first gospel sermon was preached by an angel. The importance of the birth at Bethlehem, if unrecognized by man, is realized by angels. Heavenly hosts cannot be silent about it. They must begin the telling of the glad tidings. If we suppose that the shades of night threw their mantle over Mary when the Babe was born, then it would seem that interested angels looked for an immediate *audience* to hear the wondrous story. Where shall one be found? The inn is full of sleepers or revellers; they are not fit to hear the message of peace and joy. But outside Bethlehem in the fields are *shepherds*—humble men, doubtless, and despised as in all ages. Still, they are kind to the sheep—"saviours," in some sense, of the dumb animals they tend and feed—and now in the night watches they are awake and watchful. Here, then, is the angel's *audience*. Does it not instruct preachers to be content with very humble hearers, and it may be sometimes very *few* hearers? An audience may be most important, even though few and despised. But we must next notice the *message* of the angel. Coming with dazzling light, perhaps the Shechinah-glory encircling him, he first scared the poor shepherds. They were "sore afraid." It was needful, therefore, that he should first put to flight their fears, and then proclaim the glad tidings of a *Saviour's* birth, which gospel is intended for all people. The sign also which he gives is that the Babe shall be found in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger. It is a message about a Saviour in apparent weakness but in real power. Such is the gospel. It is a message about a personal Saviour, who, in spite of all appearances, is "the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, and the Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6). We must "preach Christ" unto men if we know what it is to preach the gospel. Again, we must notice the *angelic choir*. The angel has arranged for a "service of praise" along with his preaching. There is the angel's sermon and then the angels' song. The sermon is short, but its contents are of priceless value.[1] The same may be said of the angels' song. It speaks simply of "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Revised Version). It must have been a melodious service—such music as heavenly harmony secures; angelic choristers doing their best to interest and elevate a few poor shepherds. Another lesson, surely, to those who would "sing for Jesus." The preaching of the gospel should be backed up by the singing of the gospel. Praise has its part to play as well as preaching and prayer. It was at the praise part of the dedication service in Solomon's temple that the glory of the Lord appeared (2 Chron. v. 11—14).

IV. The audience put the preaching to an immediate test. The shepherds, as soon as the angels passed away, went at once to Bethlehem. They were resolved to see for themselves. There was a risk in this, for the sheep might be endangered in

[1] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' erster theil, s. 58.

their absence; but they resolve to run the risk if they can *see* the Saviour. "Never venture, never win." Hence they came with haste to Mary, and gaze with rapture on her Child. They see and believe. They are ready to accept this "little Child" as the Saviour of the world. A little Child was leading them! Next we find them becoming his *witnesses*. They tell all who will listen to them what the angel said, and what they consequently had been led to Bethlehem to see. Having found a personal Saviour, they cannot but proclaim him to others. One who listened to their story and profited by it was Mary She pondered their sayings in her heart. The shepherds have become important witnesses for the incarnate Saviour. So should all be who have really seen him by the eye of faith. But yet again, the shepherds, like the angels, burst into *praise*. "They returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them." This is the real end of gospel preaching when it leads the audience up to praise. Hence this is represented as the chief employment of the redeemed. Experience is only perfected when God is praised.

V. WE SEE HERE A HUMAN SUCCEEDING AN ANGELIC MINISTRY. It does seem strange that such a gospel should not be preached by angels. That they are anxious to do so appears from this narrative. We may be sure that they would esteem it highest honour to proclaim the message of salvation unto man. But after short visits and short sermons, the angels are withdrawn, and these poor shepherds spread the glad tidings, telling in a very humble way what they have seen and heard. It is God's plan, and must be best. It is those who need and have found a Saviour who are best adapted to proclaim him to others. A human ministry is more homely and sympathetic and effectual than perhaps any angelic ministry could be. Besides, a human ministry is less cavilled at and objected to than an angelic would be. We thus learn at Bethlehem important lessons about preaching to humble audiences, and out of them manufacturing preachers. The angels were doubtless satisfied as they looked down upon the shepherds who had listened so eagerly to their story, and saw them becoming preachers in their turn. To multiply Christ's witnesses is the great work of preachers whether angelic or human.—R. M. E.

Vers. 21—40.—*The circumcision and presentation of Jesus.* We pass now from the angel's sermon and the shepherds' faithful verification of it to the next notable events in the great life which embodies the gospel for mankind. And we have here—

I. THE CIRCUMCISION. (Ver. 21.) This was the admission of Jesus when only eight days old into the Old Testament Church. It was a painful, bloody process, and as such it was the beginning of that life of suffering upon which God's Son had determined to enter in the interests of men. There are not the same details about this circumcision that there were about John's. The outstanding fact was that he received the name *Jesus*, indicating that he was to be the Saviour of mankind. Into the Jewish covenant, consequently, there has entered by this circumcision a Saviour, One destined, like his namesake Joshua, to lead the Lord's people out of all bondage into glorious liberty. This was a practical identification of him with the people of God, before he could, at least humanly, decide for himself. And there is nothing better for little children than to be thus early associated with the cause of God.[1]

II. THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE. (Vers. 22—24.) The circumcision constituted Jesus a member of the old covenant, but his presentation in the temple was his formal dedication to the service of the Lord. The mother was directed, at the end of forty days from the child's birth, to appear before the Lord with two offerings—one for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering. In Mary's case, because of her poverty, the offerings consisted of two doves or two young pigeons. The one sacrifice expressed a sense of *sin*, the other a sense of *consecration*, both beautiful in the mother of our Lord. The first was entirely out of place if she was "immaculate," as some represent her. In addition there would be paid for Jesus the redemption price of five shekels, that he might be excused from temple service, and might dedicate himself to the Lord in another capacity. When we consider all his Messiahship meant, it was really a payment that he might have the privilege of serving the Father as the Fulfiller of the ritual, and thus as the Abolisher of the ritualism of the temple. It would have altogether confused matters

[1] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' erster theil, s. 81; also Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' s. 102; also Weiss's 'Leben Jesu,' erster band, s. 247.

if he had undertaken any service about the temple as the Levites and priests did. In a word, the Messiah could not well have come, like the Baptist, from the tribe of Levi; but it was better he should belong to one which was not bound to the altar. And here we must notice as a practical point that the claim made on the firstborn by the Lord as being his peculiar possession, is a claim which we should all recognize as just. We are not our own, but bought with a price, and so bound to glorify God with our bodies (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). This Jesus alone realized in fulness, but we ought to try to realize it in increasing measure.

III. THE TESTIMONY OF SIMEON. (Vers. 25—35.) While Jesus was being presented, an aged believer called Simeon comes, Spirit-impelled, into the temple. His character is clearly sketched for us. He was (1) just and devout; (2) waiting hopefully for the advent of him who was to be Israel's Consolation; (3) the subject of special revelation about seeing Messiah before death. And now he comes into the temple to recognize intuitively the Messiah in Mary's little Child. The result is his appropriation of the Child for an instant, that he might fondle him in his breast. Then does he pour forth his swan-song, the "Nunc Dimittis," which has been such a pathetic word in the experience of the Church. This prayer of Simeon suggests such thoughts as these: 1. *A peaceful departure is not only possible, but most desirable.* Manifestly Simeon could go to his last sleep as quietly as to his nightly rest. We may commit not only the folded hours of the night to God, but also the folded hours of eternity. 2. *The preliminary of such a departure is the sight of the Saviour.* The Child Jesus was the Divine Saviour provided for the aged Simeon, and in his tender care we may also rest. 3. *The peculiar joy of salvation is that it is intended for all people, Gentile as well as Jew.* After all the talk about selfishness, there is no system which embraces all the world as Christianity does.[1] But after thus speaking gratefully to God, Simeon speaks sympathetically to the wondering Joseph and Mary. He gives them an old man's benediction. They had a mighty charge and needed great grace to fulfil it. And then he speaks special words of warning as well as of encouragement to Mary about the Child. And here we notice: (1) That *the fate of multitudes often hangs on the destiny of an individual.* So was it with the Child Jesus. (2) His fate will be one of *determined opposition even unto death.* (3) It will *involve Mary in desperate distress;* but (4) by the tragedy *many hearts shall be revealed.* The crucifixion of Jesus is the touchstone by which our spiritual condition may be best determined. According as we are attached to or repelled by a crucified Saviour must be our spiritual or carnal state.[2]

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF ANNA. (Vers. 36—38.) Anna was another inspired person waiting for the advent of Messiah. An aged widow, she seems never to have left the temple, and to have risen as near the ideal of ceaseless service as one in this life could. She also gave thanks to God as with eager eye she gazed upon her Redeemer in the Person of the holy Child. And to all who, like herself, were looking for redemption, she spoke of Jesus as the Redeemer promised and now given. There is not the same melancholy tone about Anna as about Simeon. She speaks about redemption, and will wait for it, while Simeon seems inclined to reach it as speedily as possible by death (cf. Godet, *in loc.*).

V. THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF JESUS. (Vers. 39, 40.) Its sphere was Nazareth; not the place human wisdom would have selected for a holy development. A sinless life there was the greatest of all miracles. And here we are told of: 1. His development in *physical strength.* "The Child grew." If the Saviour had never been a child, but always full-grown like our first parent, he would not have commanded so much sympathy in the world. Little children take delight in the thought of him who was once like them a little child. 2. His development in *spirit and in wisdom.* The reference seems to be to energy of will and to intuitive insight, and the reflective form of the verbs seems to attribute the progress to his own effort. That is to say, his will grew in *force* while his soul grew in *insight.* As a Boy he lacked no decision of character, and his insight was remarkable for one of his years.[3] 3. He became, consequently, *the Object of Divine grace.* This favour of the Father was his by right. He won his

[1] Cf. Saurin's 'Sermons,' tome v. p. 42.

[2] Cf. Tholuck's 'Light from the Cross' pp. 9, 84; also his 'Werke,' v. ss. 223, 272.

[3] Cf. Godet's 'Études Bibliques,' deuxième serie, pp. 102—104; also Robertson's 'Sermons,' second series, no. XV.

way to it, and it could not have been justly denied him. The human race was no longer in the Father's sight utterly depraved. A redeeming feature had appeared in the person of the holy Child Jesus in Nazareth. God's attitude towards the world was thereby altered, and justly so. There are persons who give a halo of holy attraction to the sphere in which they live. Nazareth became redeemed from universal suspicion because of one little Child who was living there.[1] It is for us to rejoice in such a Saviour as we have in Jesus, One who passed through the stages which we individually experience, and was sinless in them all. Childhood attains new interest for us, and its innocency was once a perfect reality as the little feet of the Lord of life and glory trod the streets of Nazareth.—R. M. E.

Vers. 41—52.—*The visit of Jesus to Jerusalem when a Boy.* We now proceed to the solitary circumstance in the Child-life of Jesus which is given in the Gospels. He had been growing for twelve years in strength and in spirit, and the Lord loved him. The Child in Nazareth redeemed in God's eyes all the world. It was the one absorbing interest in the Divine outlook upon our race. And now he is taken by his pious parents to the Passover Feast in Jerusalem. It is his second visit to the temple; this time he comes himself; the first time, as we have seen, he was presented. The following points deserve attention in this narrative.

I. THE PARENTAL CARE EXERCISED OVER JESUS. The pious pair, Joseph and Mary, went, as we are told, every year to Jerusalem to the Passover. And they had given the holy Child committed to their charge such advantages as Nazareth afforded. The home school especially, not to speak of synagogue services, to which he was doubtless regularly taken, evidenced their interest in the welfare of the Child. No sooner, therefore, has he reached the age of twelve, at which time little ones were deemed able to become "children of the Law," than he is taken up by them to see the Passover at Jerusalem. Their pious, consistent life was an excellent preparation for the solemnities of the great feast. Jesus came face to face with the ceremonies after experiencing most tender home care. And the history before us affords ample evidence of the parental consideration. If it was not *perfect* parental care, this is only to allow that neither Joseph nor Mary was sinless. Indeed, one of the German preachers bases an admirable discourse on parental duty upon this history, finding in it six separate hints upon it.[2] But let us pause a moment over the care with which they must have explained to him all the ritual. Doubtless he saw more in it than they did, but he must have received gratefully their help in the circumstances. To them the Passover spoke of a great deliverance afforded to their fathers; to him it spoke of a great sacrifice yet to come. His insight must have been a deeper thing than they could then appreciate. And now let us pass to the *oversight* of which the parents were guilty. Their care was great, but it was not absolutely perfect. In the bustle of preparation for the home-going, the parents started with the caravan under the impression that he must be in the company of the boys who were in considerable numbers attached to the procession. They should have made sure, and not left such a Child to the chances of travelling. We have no right to impute the separation of Jesus from his parents to any lack of dutifulness on *his* part, but solely to an oversight on theirs. What were all their bits of baggage and their acquaintances in comparison with the safe custody of "the holy Child"? And in consistency with this view, it has been suggested that underneath Mary's apparent expostulation and reproof there is a latent confession of her fault, which she and Joseph tried to atone for in their diligent search for the missing Boy.

II. THE LONELY BOY TURNED INSTINCTIVELY TO THE TEMPLE. The seven days of the Passover Feast had been a rare feast to Jesus. The priests and ritual and all the varied life which thronged the temple court must have been a revelation to him. He brought the consciousness of a Jew instructed in the Law to bear upon the temple and its services. We must look into his mind through the Old Testament. We there find the idea of God's Fatherhood in relation to his people several times referred to (Deut. xiv. 1, 2; Hos. xi. 1; Jer. xxxi. 9, 20; Ps. ciii. 13, etc.). To the little thoughtful Boy, therefore, the temple was regarded as the home of him who was a Father to all

[1] Cf. Manning's 'Sermons,' vol. ii., on 'Holiness in Childhood.'

[2] Cf. Gerok's 'Pilgerbrod,' s. 196; see also his 'Aus Ernster Zeit,' s. 97, for another view of the same passage.

who trusted in him. And this general idea of fatherhood became specialized in his deep, reverential musings, and he could not but feel towards God as no Jew had ever felt before.[1] Whether he had as a Child the further revelation yet made to him of his peculiar relation to God as the Only Begotten, or reached this in the progress of the years, is what we cannot be certain of. At all events, the temple was the Father's house. To it the lonely Lad turned. He felt drawn to God irresistibly, now that his earthly guardians had gone away. "When father and mother forsake me," he could say, "the Lord will take me up." The orphan Child, so to speak, turned to the temple as to his real home.

III. HE BECAME A HOLY LEARNER THERE. Not only was the temple the scene of the sacrifices; it was also the place of learning for those interested in the Law. Schools were established within the sacred precincts where the scribes discoursed to such pupils as chose to sit at their feet. The method seems to have been by dialogue—the question and answer which once were so prized. Here the Boy believed he would get light about the will of the great Father who dwelt there, and who had given his people the Law. As a faithful Son, he wished to get all possible light about his Father's business, and so he frequented the schools. He was a "model catechumen," as a suggestive writer on this whole passage calls him.[2] Although he must have seen through the shallowness of some of his teachers, and had doubtless deeper insight than any, he was content to sit at their feet and get all the good from them he could. It was an instance, surely, of great diligence in embracing every opportunity of improvement which came his way. He wanted to learn all he could while he had the chance. And most naturally did his answers and questions astonish the doctors. They had never had such an apt scholar before. His insight led them along lines they never had travelled hitherto. And as for the Father's business, it at least embraces such elements as these: 1. The *understanding of the terms of access to his presence.* The significance of the ritual which was celebrated in the temple, the meaning of sacrifice, of bloodshedding, of incense, and of approach by the appointed priests into the Divine presence,—all this belonged to the Father's business. 2. The *understanding of the meaning of his commandments.* The Law as the expression of the Father's will, and read consequently in the light of love. 3. How *far the knowledge of the Father was to be extended.* The kingdom of God in its universal range, as distinct from a narrow nationality,—this was part of the Father's business. Hence the lingering of the holy Learner about the temple schools. His apt answers would procure him lodging and food during the season of separation from his parents. Having put God first, all these things were added unto him (Matt. vi. 33).

IV. HIS RECOVERY BY THE ANXIOUS MOTHER. Joseph and Mary, on discovering at the end of the first day's march the absence of the Child, set out for Jerusalem to find him. They doubtless inquire all the way back, and then they go hither and thither through the city, and at last think of the temple. There, in the midst of the doctors, he is found and recovered by Mary. Her words are apparent rebuke, but really confession upon her part of the oversight. She had never before had any reason for fault-finding; it comes all the more surprisingly upon her now. Jesus defends himself on the ground that he was looking after his Father's business. In other words, he insists on putting God first, before Mary or Joseph. We get an insight into what godliness is. It means making God's business supreme. God claims first place, and this is what the Boy Jesus gave him. The Revised Version translates the words, "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" This would simply refer to their folly in not first seeking him there. The Authorized Version is as near the Greek, and of wider import. But Mary and Joseph did not understand his meaning. These are the first recorded words of Jesus; and how they harmonize with the last, when on the cross he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"![3]

V. HIS OBEDIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT. He has got all the doctors can meanwhile give to him. It would not have been profitable for him to have remained longer in their schools, and to have merely witnessed their powers of disputation. He is to have collision with them soon enough. Besides, he will be safer out of their reach in the

[1] Cf. Weiss's 'Leben Jesu,' erster band, s. 263.
[2] See Glover's 'Finding of the Saviour in the Temple,' pp. 37—88.
[3] Cf. Gerok's 'Aus Ernster Zeit,' s. 104.

quiet of the northern home. And so he recognizes in his mother's call the voice of his Father in heaven, and in the privacy of Nazareth his Father's business. He has to wait as well as work. Hence without a murmur he goes away with them and is subject unto them. But this subjection and reverence did not hinder, but really helped, his development. "He increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man." As a person under parental authority, he found his reward in wisdom, and became beloved of all around him as well as of the Lord above. It was a beautiful example to set us of being subject under God to parents and superiors. His growth in wisdom was also so considerate. He would take wisdom as others have to get it, *gradually*, and pass from the known to the knowledge of the unknown.[1] And God's favour will rest as well as man's favour upon all who follow in the footsteps of his Divine Son in this beautiful subjection.[2] There is no truth more important at the present time than this of realizing our development in due subjection.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1—22.—THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

Ver. 1.—**Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar.** St. Luke's Gospel is framed after the model of approved histories. He commenced with an elaborate rhetorical preface, most carefully worded, stating, in a few well-chosen sentences, the reasons which had induced him to undertake the work. He then (ch. i. 5—ii. 52) skilfully wove into the text of his narrative one or more original documents; these he translated, preserving, with great art, as closely as possible, the spirit, and oftentimes the very words, of his original authority. Now, in this chapter he comes to a period more generally known. Here he has a vast number of sources for his story, written and oral; these he shapes into a regular history, beginning, as was the ordinary custom with works of this description, with the names of the chief rulers of the countries in which the events, which he proposed to relate, took place. He first speaks generally of the great Roman Empire under whose shadow the Holy Land at that time cowered. Then he proceeds to describe more fully the political divisions of Palestine; and, lastly, he writes of the great Jewish ecclesiastical governors of the day. Tiberius was the stepson of the Emperor Augustus, whom he succeeded. It was about this time that this monarch retired to the island of Capreæ, where his life was disfigured with the grossest crimes. The government of his ministers, who ruled absolutely in his name, has become a by-word for evil and tyrannical government. The influence of the Roman emperors at this time in Palestine appears from the attempts at adulation on the part of the local rulers, who, among many other localities, renamed the Lake of Galilee, where so many of the scenes narrated in our story took place, "the Sea of Tiberius." The city of Tiberius, on the shores of this inland sea, was named after the emperor. **Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa.** His proper title was *ἐπίτροπος*, procurator. In Judæa this civil functionary was also military commander. This double office gave the procurator of Judæa a higher rank and title; his official superior was the Roman Governor of Syria. Pilate became procurator in A.D. 26, and held the appointment for ten years. **Herod being tetrarch of Galilee.** This Herod is usually known as "Antipas" (properly, *Antipater*). He was a son of Herod the Great, and reigned for more than forty years; he was eventually deposed by the Roman authorities and banished to Gaul. Galilee at this period was the most flourishing and densely populated portion of the land of promise. Roughly speaking, it occupied all the centre of Palestine, the rich plain of Esdraelon (Jezreel) and the surrounding districts. **His brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis.** Herod Philip, another of the great Herod's sons, is well spoken of as a fair and judicious ruler. Cæsarea Philippi was built by him. His tetrarchate included the ancient Bashan and the Hauran, and the country lying round the base of Hermon. **Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene.** This district lay to the east of the mountain range of Anti-Libanus, the river Barada flowing through it.

Ver. 2.—**Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.** The older authorities read, "in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas." The mention of two high priests arises from the fact of the legitimate high

[1] Upon the growth in wisdom of our Lord, see Moorhouse's 'Hulsean Lectures,' *passim*.
[2] Cf. Woolsey's 'Religion of the Present and the Future,' Scribner's edit., pp. 9—23.

priest, Annas, having been deposed some fifteen years previously by the action of the then Roman procurator, Valerius Gratus. In spite of this official deposition, he still apparently continued to be regarded as the legitimate high priest by the great majority of his countrymen. His great position and claim to the pontifical office, as we shall see, was markedly recognized at the time of the state trial of our Lord. Since his deposition by the Roman government, four high priests had been promoted in succession to the office of chief pontiff. It appears that at this time and for a long series of years, this great and powerful man, although not daring publicly to defy the Roman authority by assuming the insignia of the high priest, filled the office of Nasi, or president of the Sanhedrin. **The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.** In the days of the above-mentioned rulers—pagan and Jewish, civil and ecclesiastical—came the summons to the son of Zacharias in his solitude in the wilderness. From childhood he had been designated for some great work, and he knew it; his whole early life had been a training for it; and at last the summons came. We are not told of its special form; it was doubtless a theophany, or a vision somewhat similar to that which revealed to Moses and Isaiah, to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, their special work, and the way in which that special work was to be done.

Ver. 3.—**And he came into all the country about Jordan.** The reputation of John probably preceded the Divine summons. His family—the son of a well-known priestly family—the marvellous circumstances attendant on his birth, his ascetic manner of life from the beginning,—all this had contributed to make him a marked personage; so, when he left his solitude, we read in the other evangelists how multitudes came forth to hear the strange burning words, the Divine eloquence of one long looked upon by the people as set apart for a great work. He seems to have principally preached and taught in the Jordan valley—no doubt for the convenience of his candidates for baptism. But he evidently did not confine his preaching to one spot or even to one neighbourhood. The district here alluded to was about a hundred and fifty miles in length. The expectation of Messiah for centuries had been the root of all true life in Israel; gradually, as the clouds of evil fortune gathered thick over the people, the figure of the coming Messiah assumed a different aspect. At first *a holier Monarch* than their loved David, *a grander Sovereign* and a mightier than the Solomon of whom they were so proud, *a King* whose dominions should be broader far than even the wide realm ruled over by the son of Jesse and his greater son, was the ideal dreamed of by the Hebrew. In the long period of misfortune which succeeded the golden days of the monarchy, the people at first longed for *a deliverer*, and then—as never a ray of sunlight pierced the clouds which surrounded them—*an avenger* took the place of a deliverer. The Messiah of the future must be One who should restore his people certainly, but in the restoration must exact a sharp and severe reckoning from those who had so long oppressed his Israel. They had no conception of their true state,—their hypocrisy, their formalism, their total ignorance of all true spiritual religion. Their higher and cultured classes were selfish, grasping, impure, untrue. The mass of the people were ignorant and degraded, cruel fanatics, excited and untutored zealots. From this mistaken notion of Messiah and his work it was necessary that a prophet, eminent and gifted like those mighty men who had wrought great things in times past among the people, should arise among them, and with strong, powerful, inspired words convince them of their fatal error—one who, in the language of the greatest of the order, should *prepare the way of the Lord.* How imperatively necessary, for the work of the Redeemer, this work of the pioneer was, is seen from the extreme difficulty which Jesus Christ himself found in persuading even his own little faithful band to realize anything of the nature of his work; in good truth they *never*, not even the noblest spirits among them, really grasped the secret of their Master's mission till the cross and the Passion belonged to history, and the Crucified had become the Risen, and the Risen the ascended God. **The baptism of repentance.** What, first, did John mean by *repentance*? The word translates the Greek *μετάνοια*, which signifies "change of mind." In the Gospel of St. Matthew, where John's work is told in slightly different language, he is represented as saying, "Repent ye" (*μετανοεῖτε*). There his words might be paraphrased, "Turn ye from your old thoughts, from your state of self-content, self-satisfaction; mend your ways; reform." Here, then, the baptism (what that signified we shall discuss presently) which he preached and summoned men to, must be accompanied with a change of mind; the baptized must be no longer content with their present state or conduct; they must change their ways and reform their lives. Let them, those who were convinced that he was indeed a man of God, that his words were right and true,—let them come to him, determined to change their conduct in life, and receive from his hands a baptism, a washing—*the symbol of the means of purifi-*

cation; for John's baptism was nothing more. Now, baptism, it is clear, was not at this time practised among the Jews. It was not, as far as we can trace, even used in the case of pagan proselytes to Judaism. This apparently only became a national custom *after* the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, forty years later. His very title, "the Baptist," in some way shows us that he practised an unusual, if not a novel, rite in the course of his preaching and teaching. John's baptism (to use Dr. Morrison's vivid expressions, Commentary on Matt. iii. 6) was just the embodiment, in significant *optical* symbolism, of the significant audible symbolism of the Old Testament prophets, when they cried aloud and said, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes" (Isa. i. 16); "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" (Zech. xiii. 1); "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26). This view of John's baptism, viz. that it was a symbol, and nothing more, was suggested by Josephus writing for the Jews. "John," he says, "enjoined upon the Jews first to cultivate virtue and to put in practice righteousness toward one another, and piety toward God, and then to come to his baptism, for thus only would the baptism be acceptable to God" ('Ant.,' xviii. 5. 2).

Ver. 4.—As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness. The prophet quoted (Isa. xl. 3) had been writing in his solitude, or more probably in some great popular assembly preaching to the people. There was doubtless at that time much national trouble threatening Israel; the future of the chosen race looked very dark and gloomy, within and without. We can hear the man of God speaking with intense earnestness, and looking on to brighter times. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned," etc.; and then a sudden burst when the prophet, bending forward and straining his ears to hear some sound none other caught but he, goes on in his rapt utterance—I hear a voice, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." **Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.** The image is a simple one, and in the East one well knows, where the roads are comparatively few, and where they do exist are often in a bad state, when a sovereign is about to visit any part of his dominions, or still more if the march of an army has to be arranged for, the roads require considerable preparation. Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' iii. 6) describes the advance of the Emperor Vespasian's army, and specially mentions how the pioneers and the vanguard had to make the road even and straight, and, if it were anywhere rough and hard to be passed over, *to plane it.* There was a Jewish legend that this special pioneering work in the desert was done by the pillar of cloud and fire, which brought low the mountains and filled the valleys before the Israelitic march. John's special work was to prepare the way for the advent of a Messiah very different to the one the people looked for—to prepare his way by a spiritual reformation in the heart, the mind, and the character.

Ver. 5.—**Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.** Godet and other commentators suggest, though they do not press, a particular application to each of the details of the picture. "For instance, the mountains that must be levelled may be referred to the pride of the Pharisees; the valleys to be filled up, to the moral and religious indifference of such as the Sadducees; the crooked places to be made straight, to the frauds and lying excuses of the publicans; and lastly, the rough places, to the sinful habits found in all, even the best."

Ver. 6.—**And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.** And when this preparation is complete, then shall Messiah publicly appear. And the Baptist faithfully performed his work as pioneer of the Christ. He awoke men's slumbering consciences; his note of alarm aroused through Palestine multitudes of men and women who afterwards, no doubt, formed the nucleus at least of the crowds who thronged round Jesus as he preached in the cities washed by the Lake of Galilee, or in the streets and temple courts of Jerusalem.

Ver. 7.—**Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him.** The following grave cutting rebukes, the burning reminders, must not be read as an extract from any one particular sermon of the Baptist, or even as a report of any of his discourses, but rather as a general sketch of the line of argument the great prophet adopted in his teaching. **O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** In St. Matthew's account of John's work such scathing words as these were addressed to members of the Pharisee and Sadducee sects, who evidently

flocked in great numbers to his baptism. They were alarmed and disturbed at his preaching; they feared that that drear time of awful suffering, generally known as the "woes of Messiah," a period which their great rabbis had told them would precede Messiah's advent, was at hand; they would provide themselves with some talisman against this time of sore calamity. The inspired predictor of these "woes"—men evidently looked on John as such—bade them come to *his baptism;* this baptism would be surely a safeguard, an easy bit of ritual, thought they, and one that readily approved itself to men trained in the rabbis' schools of that age, so they came to him in numbers. But John read their hearts; hence his stern fiery rebukes. "Let it be borne in mind that only teachers of transcendent holiness, and immediately inspired by God with fervency and insight, may dare to use such language" (Farrar).

Ver. 8.—**Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.** In other words, "Since you profess to have taken flight from the wrath to come, show at once, by your change of life, that your repentance is worth something, has some meaning in it." **Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.** These words show that John had the splendid courage to strike boldly at the very root of Jewish pride. Gradually Jewish belief in the especial favour of God, which they were to enjoy through all eternity, had grown up till it resulted in such extravagant expressions as these: "Abraham would sit at the gates of hell, and would not permit any circumcised Israelite of decent moral character to enter it;" "A single Israelite is worth more in God's sight than all the nations of the world;" "The world was made for their (Israel's) sake." This incredible arrogancy grew as their earthly fortunes became darker and darker. Only an eternity of bliss, of which they alone were to be partakers, could make up for the woes they were made to suffer here, while an eternity of anguish for the Gentile world outside Israel was a necessary vengeance for the indignities this Gentile world had inflicted upon the chosen people. Long ago the great Hebrew prophets had warned the deluded race that their election would profit them nothing if they failed in their duties to their God and their neighbour. **For I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham;** pointing, no doubt, to the rough shingle lying on the river Jordan's banks. John's thought was the same which Paul afterwards expressed to the Galatians in his own nervous language, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" "And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 7, 29).

Ver. 9.—**And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.** This intensifies the statement respecting the power of God to raise up, out of the very river shingle at their feet, children who should inherit the glorious promises made to Abraham. Nay, more, the Divine Woodman had already laid the axe at the root of the tree of Israel; its hours, as the peculiar people, were indeed numbered. Let *these,* who said they were willing to wash and be clean, be ready and bring forth fruit worthy of their high calling and the lofty prerogative of which they boasted. The last of the prophets, from his lonely watch-tower of unerring insight into the future, saw the awful coming doom of the loved city, the scattering and captivity of the remnant of the chosen people. Within forty years of that time would the fatal axe, now lying at the root of the tree, be lifted. In uttering this stern prophetic saying, we believe John was gazing at the storm gathering round Jerusalem, which in A.D. 70 swept away city and temple, and destroyed the existence of Israel as a nation. When he preached it was about A.D. 30—32.

Ver. 10.—**And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?** Dean Plumptre's note here is interesting and suggestive: "The questions that follow are peculiar to St. Luke. They are interesting as showing that the work of the Baptist was not that of a mere preacher of repentance. Confession of sins followed naturally on the part of the penitents; that was followed, as naturally, by guidance for the conscience. St. Luke, as a physician of the soul, may well have delighted to place on record this example of true spiritual therapeutics." The same train of thought is followed out by Godet in his remark on the question contained in this verse: "It is the confessional after preaching." This little section (vers. 10—14), containing an epitome of questions placed before John by different classes of hearers touched by his soul-stirring preaching, is peculiar to our evangelist. It is clear that here, in the story of the ministry of the Baptist, Luke derived his knowledge of the details from an independent authority not used either by Matthew or Mark.

Ver. 11.—**He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.** This advice is simple and practical. No difficult counsels of perfection are recommended, no useless penance. The great confessor simply presses home to his peni-

tents the duty of unselfishness, the beauty of quiet generosity in the sight of God. The whole teaching of this eminent man of God was thoroughly practical. His predecessor, Micah, centuries before had given the luxurious and selfish Israel of his time the same Divine lesson: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 8).

Ver. 12.—**Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?** This is the first time this class of men, who on several occasions come before us in the gospel story, is mentioned. The English rendering is most unhappy, for to many of our people it either suggests nothing, or else supplies a wrong chain of reasoning. The τελῶναι, the Latin *publicani* (whence our rendering), were men who collected the Roman taxes or imposts. These imperial taxes, the most painful and ever-present reminder to the Jew of his subject and dependent position, were in the first instance leased out to jobbers and speculators of the equestrian order; these were properly the publicani. Beneath them and in their employ were a numerous staff who performed for these farmers of the imperial revenue the various disagreeable duties connected with the collection of the taxes. Then, as now in the East, bribery, corruption, oppression, and unfair dealing, were too common among all ranks of officials. First, then, the duty itself, the being concerned in the collection of a tribute—for that is what these taxes really were—for Gentile Rome, and, secondly, the various iniquities connected with the gathering of this tribute, made the tax or tribute collectors of all ranks odious among the Jews dwelling in Palestine. Many of the posts, especially the subordinate ones, in this department of tribute and taxes, were held by Jews, in all ages singularly gifted in matters which have to do with finance. The Jew, however, in the days of John the Baptist, who could stoop to such an employment, lucrative though it might be, was looked upon by his stricter fellow-countrymen with feelings of intense scorn. Yet even *these* men are not bidden by this inspired prophet of the Highest to change their way of life, but only its manner. "Would you," he says to these men who belonged to the hated calling, "indeed wash and be clean in the eyes of the All-Seeing? then in that profession of yours, remember, be scrupulous, be honest."

Ver. 14.—**And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?** Commentators generally discuss here **who** these soldiers were. The question is of little moment whether they were legionaries of Rome, or mercenaries in the pay of one of the tetrarchs or neighbouring princes. The lesson is clear. As above to the publicans, so here to the soldiers, John says, "Remain in that profession of arms; you may, if you will, serve God in it, for it is never the *work* which ennobles, but the *way* in which the work is done."

Ver. 15.—**All men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not.** There was general expectation at that time among the Jews that Messiah's coming was at hand. This strange feeling that something momentous was about to happen to mankind was not confined to the Jews of Palestine, it strongly influenced the Jews who were dispersed in foreign countries—Egypt, Greece, Italy, etc., and through them it had even reached many of the Gentiles who were brought into contact with the chosen people. This idea among the Jews, that John was probably the looked-for deliverer, is only mentioned by St. Luke—another proof that the source of his information was quite distinct from that used by Matthew and Mark.

Ver. 16.—**I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh.** To refute this growing conviction that he was the Messiah, John tells the people plainly that Another far greater than he was coming. He, John, certainly washed (baptized) those who came to him, but his washing was merely symbolical—*it* could not purify them; his work had been to stir them up to repentance, to arouse them to change their lives. But the One who was coming, before whom he (John) was unworthy to stand and perform the humblest menial office, that great One should baptize too, but his baptism would be a very different thing. **He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.** There was, indeed, a difference between John's baptism and the baptism of the Messiah who was to come after him. John could do no more with his words and symbol baptism than rouse the people to struggle after repentance and a change of heart and life, while Messiah would furnish to men the influence from above, that was really needed in order to purity of heart and life. He would procure and pour out the influence of the Divine Spirit (see Dr. Morrison, on Mark i. 8). **And with fire.** Not with *punitive* fire, which interpretation would be quite alien from the context here. Those expositors who have adopted this meaning of the fire here have been most likely influenced by the mention of the unquenchable fire in the next sentence. The fire which was to enter into Messiah's baptism was rather *the flame of purification*. So we read of the coal of fire taken from off the

altar and laid on the mouth of Isaiah the prophet (Isa. vi. 6, 7). "With fire," writes Bishop Wordsworth, "to purify, illumine, transform, inflame with holy fervour and zeal, and carry upward, as Elijah was carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire."

Ver. 17.—**Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner.** But not only, taught John, was Messiah's work to consist in baptizing those who sought his face with the mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, there was another terrible aspect of his mission. The useless, the selfish, the oppressor, and the false-hearted, —these were to be separated and then destroyed. When will this separation and subsequent destruction take place? The separation will begin in this life. The effect of the revelation of a Saviour would be to intensify at once the antagonism between good and evil. Between the followers of Christ and the enemies of Christ would a sharp line of demarcation be speedily drawn even *here;* but the real separation would only take place on the great day when Messiah should judge the world; *then* would the two classes, the righteous and the unrighteous, be gathered into two bands; condemnation, sweeping, irresistible, would hurry the hapless evil-doers into destruction, while the righteous would be welcomed in his own blessed city. The imagery used is rough, but striking. It was taken, as is so much of Oriental teaching, from scenes from the everyday life of the working world around them. The *threshing-floor* is one of those rough Eastern threshing-floors on the top or side of a hill, so chosen for the purpose of having the benefit of the wind. The *fan*, a peasant employed in winnowing. "Not far from the site of ancient Corinth," writes a modern traveller in Greece, "where the peasants in many of their customs approach near to Oriental nations, I passed a heap of grain which some labourers were employed in winnowing: they used, for throwing up the mingled wheat and chaff, a three-pronged wooden fork, having a handle three or four feet long. Like this, no doubt, was the *fan*, or *winnowing-shovel*, which John the Baptist represents Christ as bearing" (Dr. Hackett, quoted by Dr. Morrison, on Matt. iii. 12). The fan thus described would throw up against the breeze the mingled wheat and chaff; the light particles would be wafted to the side, while the grain would fall and remain on the threshing-floor. **With fire unquenchable.** This image in itself is a terrible one; still, it must not be used in the question of eternity of punishment. The fire is here termed "unquenchable" because, when once the dry chaff was set on fire, nothing the peasants could do would arrest the swift work of the devouring flame. All that is here said of the condemned is that they will be destroyed from before the presence of the great Husbandman with a swift, certain destruction. If it points to anything, the imagery here would hint at the total annihilation of the wicked; for the flames, unquenchable while any chaff remained to be consumed, would, when the rubbish was burnt up, die quickly down, and a little heap of charred ashes would alone mark the place of its burning. But it is highly improbable that any deduction of this kind was intended to be drawn. The Baptist's lesson is severely simple.

Ver. 18.—**And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.** These words tell us that the above was merely a "specimen" of John the Baptist's preaching, trenchant, fearless, practical, piercing the hearts of all classes and orders of the people who thronged to hear the earnest, fiery appeals of the great desert preacher. In this and in the next two verses St. Luke once more gives us a little picture of the events which were spread over a considerable area of time. It is here introduced out of its proper place to explain the abrupt termination of the popular career of John the Baptist.

Ver. 20.—**He shut up John in prison.** It did not enter into St. Luke's plan to write any detailed account of the circumstances which led to the death of the Baptist. The story (related at length by St. Matthew) was, no doubt, well known in all the Gentile Churches. He simply mentions the act which consigned the dauntless preacher to the dungeons of Herod's palace-fortress, close to the Dead Sea; it was termed Macha, or Machærus. In closing his little sketch of the work of his Master's great pioneer, St. Luke wishes to show that the fearless Baptist was no respecter of persons. The despised collector of Roman tribute, the rough free lance or mercenary, the nameless legionary of Rome, was attacked for his evil life and his wanton excesses, with no greater hardihood than the prince who sat on the throne of the mighty Herods. True servant of his brave and patient Master, he paid the penalty of his splendid courage, and, "like so many of earth's great ones, he passed through pain and agony to his rest."

Vers. 21, 22.—*The baptism of Jesus.*

Vers. 21, 22.—**Now when all the people were baptized.** This is the shortest account of the first three Gospels of this event. Two circumstances related are, however, peculiar to St. Luke—the fact that he ascended "praying" from the water, and the opening words of this verse, which

probably signify that on this day Jesus waited till the crowds who were in the habit of coming to John had been baptized.

Jesus also being baptized. There is a curious addition to the Gospel narratives of the baptism of the Lord preserved by Jerome. He tells us he extracted it from the Hebrew Gospel used by the Nazarenes, a copy of which in his day was preserved at Cæsarea. "*Lo, the mother of the Lord and his brethren said to him, John the Baptist is baptizing for the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But he answered and said unto them, In what have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized by him? unless, indeed, it be in ignorance that I have said what I have just said.*" It is, no doubt, a very ancient traditional saying, and is *perhaps* founded on some well-authenticated oral tradition. If St. Luke knew of it, he did not consider it of sufficient importance to incorporate it in his narrative. In St. Matthew's account of the "baptism," John at first resists when asked to perform the rite on his kinsman Jesus. His knowledge of Jesus at this time was evidently considerable. He was acquainted, of course, with all that had already happened in his "cousin's" life, and probably it had been revealed to him, or told him by his mother (ch. i. 43), that in the Nazareth Carpenter, the Son of Mary, he was to look for the promised Messiah, with whose life-story his was so closely bound up. The answers to the question, *What was the reason of Jesus' baptism?* have been many. In this, as in many things connected with the earthly life of our Lord, there is much that is mysterious, and we can never hope *here* to solve these difficulties with any completeness. The mystic comments of the Fathers, though not perfectly satisfactory, are, however, after all the best of the many notes that have been made on this difficult question. Bishop Wordsworth sums them up well in his words: "He came to baptize water, by being baptized in it." Ignatius ('Ad. Eph.,' 18, beginning of the second century) writes, "He was baptized that, by his submission to the rite, he might purify the water." Jerome, in the same strain, says, "He did not so much get cleansing from baptism, as impart cleansing to it." It would seem that Jesus, in submitting to the rite himself, did it with the intention of sanctifying the blessed sacrament in the future.

And praying. Peculiar to St. Luke. This evangelist on eight other occasions mentions the praying of Jesus.

The heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended . . . upon him. While he was praying and gazing up into heaven, the deep blue vault was rent asunder, and the Sinless One gazed far into the realms of eternal light; and as he gazed he saw descend a ray of glory, which, dove-like, brooded above his head, and then lighted upon him. This strange bright vision was seen, not only by him, but by the Baptist (John i. 32, 33). That the form of a *dove* absolutely descended and lighted upon Jesus seems unlikely; a radiant glorious *Something* both Jesus and the Baptist saw descending. John compares it to a dove—this cloud of glory sailing through the clear heaven, then, bird-like, sinking, hovering, or brooding, over the head of the Sinless One, then lighting, as it were, upon him. In likening the radiant vision to a *dove*, probably John had heard of the rabbinical comment (it is in the Talmud) on Gen. i. 2, that the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters *like a dove*. Milton has reproduced the thought—

> "And with mighty wings outspread
> *Dove-like* sat'st brooding on the vast abyss."
> ('Paradise Lost,' i. 20.)

John, for want of a better simile, reproduced the image which he had doubtless heard from his teacher in the Law, when he desired to represent in earthly language the Divine Thing which in some bodily form he had seen. In the early Church there was a legend very commonly current—we find it in Justin Martyr ('Dialogue with Trypho,' 88), and also in the Apocryphal Gospels—that at the baptism of Jesus a fire was kindled in Jordan. This was doubtless another, though a more confused memory of the glory-appearance which John saw falling on the Messiah.

And a voice came from heaven; better rendered, *out of heaven*. We read in the Talmud that "on the death of the last prophets—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—the Holy Spirit departed from Israel; but they (*i.e.* Israel) were availing themselves of the daughter (echo) of a voice, Bath-Kol, for the reception of Divine communications" ('Treatise Yoma,' fol. 9, col. 2). In the Gospels there is a mention of the heavenly voice being again heard at the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5), and during the last week of the earthly ministry (John xii. 28—30). In the story of Israel the Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity were pleased to manifest themselves on various occasions to mortal eye and mortal ear. *Very frequently to the eye*, in the visible glory of the pillar of cloud and fire in the desert journeys; in the glorious light which shone in the holy of holies, first in the tabernacle of the wanderings, then in the temple; in the flame as in the burning bush, and in the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel; in appearances as in the meeting with Abraham and with Joshua. To *the ear* the word of the Lord spoke, amongst others, to Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and the

later prophets. So in this, the transition period of Messiah, the visible glory of God and the audible voice of God were again seen and heard by mortal man. Jerome calls attention here to the distinctness of each of the Persons of the blessed Trinity, as shown in this baptism of the Messiah. "The mystery of the Trinity is shown in the baptism of Christ. The *Lord* is baptized, the *Spirit* descends in the likeness of a dove, the voice of the *Father* is heard bearing witness to his Son, and the dove settles on the head of Jesus, lest any one should imagine that the voice was for John and not for Christ." We may with all reverence conclude that, after the bearing of the voice from heaven, "the Messianic self-consciousness would undoubtedly expand with rapidity, both intensively and extensively, into complete maturity. That self-consciousness, it must be borne in mind, would necessarily, so far as this human side of his Being was concerned, be subject, in its development, to the condition of time" (Dr. Morrison, on Matt. iii. 17).

Ver. 23*a*.—**And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age.** This was the age at which the Levites entered upon their work; the age, too, at which it was lawful for scribes to teach. Generally speaking, thirty among the Jews was looked upon as the time of life when manhood had reached its full development.

Vers. 23*b*—38.—THE EARTHLY GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST. Although in every Hebrew family the hope seems to have been cherished that the promised Messiah would be born among them, yet generally the prophetic utterances were understood to point to the Deliverer springing from the royal house of David. To demonstrate that this was actually true in the case of the reputed Son of Mary and Joseph, both the genealogies contained in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were compiled from private and public records. It is well known that these family trees were preserved with care in well-nigh every Jewish family. The sacred books compiled after the return from Babylon—1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah—with their long tables of descent, show us that these family records existed then. Josephus (second century) thus writes: "I relate my genealogy as I find it recorded in the public tables" ('Life,' ch. i.). In his work against Apion (i. 7) he says, "From all the countries in which our priests are scattered abroad, they send to Jerusalem [in order that their children may be placed on the official roll] papers with the names of their parents and their ancestors; these papers are formally witnessed."

It follows that, if such care were taken in the case of the numerous priestly houses, equal attention would be paid to their family records by the comparatively few families who boasted their descent from King David and the ancient royal house. R. Hillel, the renowned teacher, who lived in the days of Jesus Christ, belonged to the poor among the people, and yet he was able to prove, from existent records, that he was one of David's descendants. Some seventy years later, the grandchildren of Jude, the reputed brother of the Lord, a son of Joseph, were summoned to Rome, and appeared before the Emperor Domitian as *descendants of the old royal house of David*.

Now, no further comment would be necessary upon this elaborate "table" of St. Luke did there not exist in St. Matthew's Gospel another family tree, purporting to be the line of Messiah's ancestors. Between these two tables there are many important differences. How are these to be explained? On this subject in different times many works have been written. In the present Commentary the writer does not propose to examine the details of the two tables of SS. Matthew and Luke; the question of the existence of the two records will alone be dealt with. The various smaller points of discrepancy in the registers of SS. Matthew and Luke, although curious and striking, are utterly barren of interest to the great majority of students of the Divine Word. The reader who may wish to examine these is referred—among modern scholars' works on this subject—to Bishop Harvey's exhaustive work on the genealogy of the Lord; to Archdeacon Farrar's Excursus in his 'Commentary on St. Luke' in the 'Cambridge Bible for Schools;' and to Professor Godet's Commentary on this Gospel.

We will confine ourselves here to three points. (1) Why does St. Luke insert his table of Messiah's earthly descent in this place? (2) For what reason does he trace up the long ancestral line to Adam? (3) What is the broad outline of the explanation of St. Luke's divergency from the genealogical table of St. Matthew?

(1) and (2) can be shortly answered.

(1) St. Luke felt that this was the most suitable place in his narrative for such a table. His work was evidently most carefully and skilfully arranged upon the lines of formal history. Up to this point the story was mainly concerned with other personages—with the parents of the great forerunner John, with Mary the Virgin and Joseph, with the angels, with the shepherds, with Simeon and with Anna, and especially with the work of John the Baptist. But from henceforth all the minor persons of the Divine story pass into the background. There is now one central figure upon whom the whole interest of the Divine drama centres—Jesus. This, the moment of his real introduction on the world's stage, was, as St. Luke rightly judged it, the time to give the formal table of his earthly ancestry.

(2) Different from the Hebrew evangelist St. Matthew, whose thoughts were centred on the chosen race, and whose horizon was bounded by Palestine, or at least by those cities where his countrymen of the dispersion lived and worked, and who only cared to show that his Messiah had sprung from the great patriarch, the father of the tribes of Israel, St. Luke, feeling that the scene of the work of *his* Messiah was bounded by no Jewish horizon, traces up his Lord's reputed line of earthly ancestors to the first father of the human race. The Jesus of Luke was the Saviour, not only of the children of Abraham, but of the children of Adam. The noble Isaiah-prophecy, which we feel was one of the great mainsprings of Paul's life and work, was the real reason of Luke, the disciple of Paul, tracing up Messiah's family line to Adam. "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a Light to the Gentiles" (Isa. xlix. 6). Luke alone records the incident and the words of Simeon in the temple.

(3) The genealogy given by St. Luke differs from that presented by St. Matthew, because St. Luke has extricated from family records the line of *Mary*, while St. Matthew has elected to chronicle the family of *Joseph*. This solution of the differences between the two lists was apparently first suggested by Annius of Viterbo, at the close of the fifteenth century. Among the many eminent modern scholars who accept it, I would instance Professor Godet and Dean Plumptre. The arguments in favour of this view—viz. that the genealogy is Mary's, not Joseph's—are the following.

The table begins as follows: "And Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, which was the son of Matthat," etc. In the original Greek *all* the older authorities, before the name Joseph, omit the article τοῦ, of the. This article is found before all the names in the long list with this solitary exception. This absence of the article τοῦ certainly puts the name of Joseph in a special position in the series of names, and leads us to suppose that the genealogy is not that of Joseph, but of Heli. (Heli being the father of Mary, the omission of *her* name will be treated later on.) The twenty-third verse would then read thus: "And Jesus, . . . (being as was supposed the son of Joseph)," after which parenthesis the first link in the chain would be Jesus, the heir and grandson, and in that sense *the son of Heli*.

It is by no means unusual in the Old Testament to find the grandson termed the "son" of his grandfather (compare, for instance, 1 Chron. viii. 1 and 3 with Gen. xlvi. 21; Ezra v. 1 and vi. 14 with Zech. i. 1, 7). On the omission of Mary's name, Godet quotes from the Talmud ('Treatise Bava Bathra,' 110, *a*), and urges with great truth that not only among the Hebrews did ancient sentiment not accord with the mention of a mother as the genealogical link. The Talmud treatise most singularly comes to our help again by mentioning that *Mary the mother of Jesus was called the daughter of Heli*. We have before dwelt upon the fact that not only general ancient tradition, but the plain sense of the gospel-story, ascribed to Mary a royal Davidic descent. 'Bava Bathra' (quoted by Godet), with great force, asks (though with a different design), what sensible man, after declaring at the commencement of the list that the relationship of Joseph and Jesus was destitute of all reality (ὡς ἐνομίζετο), could take pleasure in drawing up such a list of ancestors? This most pertinent question can only be answered by showing that the list is a list, not of Joseph's ancestors, but of Mary's, who was in very truth the mother of Jesus.

In coming to any conclusion respecting the real history of the drawing up the two distinct genealogical tables, the one of Joseph, the other of Mary, it will be ever well to bear in mind that the early chapters of the two narratives of SS. Matthew and Luke, where the events of the birth and infancy of the Lord are told, were most probably based on memories written and oral, *proceeding from two distinct centres* or circles of believers, eye-witnesses many of them of the things they related or of which they preserved a faithful memory in writing. The one circle—to use Godet's words—of which Joseph was the centre, and which we suppose consisted of Cleopas, his brothers James and Jude the sons of Joseph, of whom one was the first bishop of the flock in Jerusalem, included, too, Simeon a son of Cleopas, the first successor of James. The narratives preserved amongst these persons might easily reach the ears of the author of the First Gospel, who doubtless lived in the midst of this flock. But a cycle of narratives must also have formed itself round Mary. These doubtless are those which Luke has preserved.

The genealogy, then, of St. Matthew, which has *Joseph* in view, must have proceeded from his family. That given, on the other hand, by St. Luke, no doubt issued from the circle of which Mary was the centre.

The other differences in the two genealogies are minor and of far less interest; they are exhaustively discussed in the various monographs which have been written on this subject, and to which reference has been made above.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*The forerunner, and his ministry.* Some thirty years have passed since the birth of a son of the old age had filled the house of the good priest Zacharias with the voice of rejoicing. The blameless priest and his blameless wife are dead. The son who, when an unconscious babe, was called "the prophet of the Highest," has lived the life of a recluse, receiving his inspirations wholly from the study of the Law of the Lord, from lonely communings with God and truth in the great temple of nature. There were many solitaries in that period. There were the Essenes, one of the sects of the Jewish nation. Eremites, too, dwelt in dens and caves, fleeing far from the world, with its strife and tumult. But this man was no mere Essene, no mere Eremite. There was a vocation before him; like the Master who was to come after him, he was being filled with the Holy Ghost for the work the striking of whose hour is related in the passage. A man sternly, austerely simple. No phylacteries and fringes about him; no soft clothing and signs of luxurious culture. For dress there is only the skin of a camel thrown around him and held together by a rough leather band. His sole nourishment is the honey which he gathers in the moorland, and locusts steeped in water and dried in the sun. He wants nothing which the world can give to him, and he fears nothing which the world can do to him. He can stand alone, for God is with him. To him, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, comes the Word of the Lord.

I. Observe, at the outset, THE TIME AND THE PROPHETIC DESIGNATION OF THE MINISTRY. The date bids us back to one of those times of confusion and uncertainty which mark the passing away of the old and the preparation for a new day or period. Note the names in ver. 1. Tiberius, a low, dull, sottish despot; Pontius Pilate, indolent, overbearing, greedy; Herod, disgracing his tetrarchate by open licentiousness; Caiaphas and Annas disputing for the priesthood, and neither of them worthy of respect. Typical of the world on which from his Judæan retreat the son of Zacharias looked forth. "The godly man ceased, for the faithful were failing from the children of men." Then—reminding us of Elijah the Tishbite, who abruptly confronts Ahab in his purple, protesting, "as the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand"—on a sudden the popular vision is arrested, the popular imagination is excited, by the figure and preaching of John. The evangelist sees in this preaching the fulfilment of the sublime prophecy of Isaiah (xl. 3—5). Looking at this prophecy, we are struck with the greatness of the announcement, and the apparent insignificance of the fulfilment. There is nothing incongruous in applying to John the description, "a voice crying in the

wilderness." But the results declared—the filling of every valley, the bringing low of every mountain and hill, etc.—seem too vast as a representation of the effect of John's cry. Reading Isaiah's sentences we imagine a work with inspiring circumstances, with grand, striking evidences of its accomplishment; turning to the Gospel pages we are introduced only to a rough preacher of the desert, uttering sharp sentences, and aiming at a spiritual repentance for the remission of sins. Yet in this preacher and in his work the prediction was fulfilled—in *God's way*. Let no one despise the poverty of the instrument. "The excellency of the power is of God." The chapter reminds us of a wonderful blaze of popularity. On the effete religiousness of Judæa it came as a new sensation to hear that a man, recalling the image of Elijah, was speaking in sentences which fell like thunderbolts; and forth from priestly Hebron, from Pharisee-worshipping Jerusalem, from city and village, there poured a mighty throng, all hastening to the desert-sanctuary of John. Again the long-silent Spirit of God was speaking; the chain of prophecy, which seemed to have ended with Malachi, had again been formed. They gather trembling and awe-struck around that strange, uncouth-looking saint; he bids them submit to his baptism; they do so; and sanctimonious religionist and haughty soldier and corrupt publican demand, "What shall we do?" It was a great religious revival, raising the question, "Can this be the dawn of Messiah's day? Is this indeed the Messiah promised to our fathers?"

II. Regard THE PREACHER AND HIS MESSAGE. What is the force of the man? What is the relation of his word to Christ? 1. *The preacher.* (1) There is the force of *earnestness.* He has looked through all the appearances and shams of his age, and has seen how hollow they are. He has been communing with the unseen realities; and to him heaven and hell are no distant futures, but are states actually encompassing men. He is possessed by the word which has come to him, and therefore he is beyond the region of fear. What are either smiles or frowns to him? Therefore, too, his is the eloquence of action. A man in earnest will not trifle among the flowers of rhetoric; he has no time to hunt for metaphors and tropes. Is not life very short? He must get by the most direct road possible to the human conscience. Ah! that is the power of the God-sent preacher. When men feel that there is no second-hand repeating, that there is no mere playing at dialectics, that there is no part-acting, that the utterance proceeds from conviction, that it is the expression of truth which is swaying the soul, they cannot but listen; so far they will yield. Earnestness is not noisy rant; but, calm and quiet as it is, like the kingdom of heaven, it breaks in with violence. It must work, fight, win. (2) There is the force, too, of *plain, downright, practical teaching.* To the anxious inquirers he returns answers which prove his tact in dealing with human nature. See how he hits each class at the point of its special temptation and besetting sin, and how at once he insists on the application of Isaiah's rule (i. 16): "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." It was a solemn peremptory summons to yield to the Eternal Righteousness. There were no honeyed phrases. The preacher laid the axe at the root of the tree; for it was no time for clippings and loppings here and there. No mercy was shown for the piety of outside appearances. Privilege! what mattered that if it was only a bed on which to sleep? He who conferred the privilege can take it away; nay, he is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Was it wonderful that the crowd listened with bated breath; that souls cowered beneath the eagle eye and the searching incisive teaching of the mighty prophet of the wilderness? (3) Add to this the *thorough honesty and humility of the teacher.* Every person knows that the ordinary ambitions of men have no charm for him; even the extraordinary ambitions—to be a leader of thought, to guide and direct spiritual movement, to stamp the impression of his own mind on others—have no power over him. He claims to be only the voice. "Art thou the Christ?" so deputations of the Pharisees ask; to this effect the people muse. "No" is the answer; "there is One behind me. I am only the witness, only the herald. Mine is only the poor baptism with water. His is the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Thoroughly honest, unselfish, noble, is this prophet of the desert. 2. Now consider *his message* as that is stated by St. Luke. (1) Its *great word*, "Repent!"—the word which in every time, and never more than in this nineteenth century, is apt to be softened. People applaud discourses about faith and love, and the search for truth, and so forth; but proclaim the need of repentance,

bring persons individually face to face with that need, and one of two things follow—either the resistance of the heart to condemnation, or the conviction of the soul to salvation. Have we not far too little of the preaching of "repentance for the *remission of sins*"? Mark this: There can be no real sending away of sin from between the soul and God without a change of mind, caused by the sight of sin as sin, as darkness, as death. God will never bless a man in his sins. "Repent" is the burden of all preaching on which the Holy Spirit sets his seal. (2) The *sacrament which accompanies the word*. There is the baptism of repentance. Sinners must take their stand with God as to their sins, joining him in his condemnation. They must confess their sins. They are commanded to do this in expressive act—to go down, soiled with dust and weary with their journey, into the river; standing there, with eye uplifted to heaven, to say, "I acknowledge my transgressions; against thee, thee only, have I sinned. God be merciful to me a sinner!" And then, as they sink beneath the water, they seem to have sunk in it their old sinful life; they arise, white and clean, pledged to walk henceforth in newness of life. A type yet to be fulfilled! John distinctly protested, "This baptism is only an instalment; the laver of regeneration is not with me." But it was a symbol rich with meaning; it was the act which expressed the word that rang through the wilderness, "Repent!" (3) The *hand which pointed forward*. This man, with the true second sight, sees the measure of iniquity all but filled up. He sees the tokens of rapidly hastening judgment. The nation is only the carcase of a nation, and the eagles are swooping down on it. "Flee, flee from the wrath to come." How? "Repent!" Whither? "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." He is there to prepare them for it, to lead them to it. Note: The preacher knows that a new order, that of the Coming One, is close on them. But he knows no more. While he is preaching, that new order is moving towards him in the person of the Cousin on whom his eyes, for long years, had never rested—perhaps, indeed, he had never even seen him. "I knew him not," he could afterwards say. All that he then knew, he knew through an inner teaching which was no lie, "One mightier than I cometh, and with him cometh the kingdom of heaven."

Vers. 21, 22.—*The baptism of Jesus, and the descent of the Holy Ghost.* The narrative of the meeting between Jesus and John is given at greater length, and with more completeness of detail, by St. Matthew (see homiletics on Matt. iii. 13—17). But the account of St. Luke suggests some points of interest.

I. THE IDENTIFICATION OF JESUS WITH THE PEOPLE. "When all the people were baptized, Jesus also having been baptized." In this, as in other things, "he is made like to his brethren." But, specially observe, he is still, and he is as yet only, "under the Law." His righteousness has been hitherto that indicated in the book of the Law. He has submitted to every requirement. He has completely done whatsoever was commanded. Sharing this position in common with all the people, he offered himself for the baptism unto repentance and the hope of the kingdom. This baptism was the fitting conclusion of a perfect legal righteousness. The man needs to be washed. The Law cannot make the conscience perfect. That which signified the inadequacy of the Law, Jesus of Nazareth must appropriate. A righteousness which is in and of the flesh cannot be the ground of acceptance with God. Jesus condemned sin *in the flesh* when, with the forerunner, he went down into the water of baptism.

II. THE PRAYER WHICH SOLEMNIZED THE BAPTISM. St. Luke alone makes mention of this prayer. With all the people, Jesus was baptized; but who of the people were with him in this—"baptized and *praying*"? To him there is no confession of personal transgression; he is yielding himself to his Father in perfectly loving resignation. The baptism was an act of communion. "I come to do thy will." "Here am I; send me." Not without purpose, surely, is notice taken of the prayer. Connect it with what follows—in praying, the heavens were opened. Behold the law of spiritual blessing, "Ask, and ye shall receive"! Behold that which makes all ordinances effectual, without which they are forms, not means of grace! Behold the evidence of the power of prayer! God is ready still to open his heaven to the obedient, desiring heart. "We enter heaven by prayer."

III. THE DESCENT IN A BODILY SHAPE LIKE A DOVE. The evangelist inserts "the bodily form" to signify that it was not a mere imagination, but a real descent assum-

ing this shape. What of the descent of the Holy Ghost? Observe it (1) as between Christ himself and the opened heavens, and (2) as a token of the grace and truth which have come by Christ. 1. What we have before us is not a coming of the Spirit for personal holiness, for in this sense the Holy Spirit had been with Christ during the preceding thirty years. It is *the coming of the Holy Spirit into a new form of administration.* The new thing is what St. John expresses. "The Spirit abode upon him." He dwelt henceforth in the Man Christ Jesus, not as a mere *limitless* abundance, but as an *undivided* abundance. All offices, gifts, graces, were realized in the Lord himself. He was Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher; he was all in all. The fountain was sealed in his own Person; after the Ascension the seal was broken, and the power in the glorified humanity was divided. Some he gave as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers. But that which is signified by the investiture of Jesus coming out of Jordan is that in him, consecrated the Messiah, is the fulness of grace and blessing; that his exclusively is the baptism with the Holy Ghost. "The same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." 2. And see *the token of this administration.* "Like a dove"—recalling the mission of the dove which Noah put forth from the ark, and which returned to him with the olive leaf in its mouth. "Like a dove"—suggesting love tender and brooding, noiseless and winning, the Spirit descends. Is not this the characteristic token of the new covenant? (See Keble's thirty-third hymn.) It is the dove-like Spirit that dwells in Jesus. There is a fire that goes before him. When he began the public ministry, he took a passage full of gracious words, yet one which concludes with the proclamation of a day of vengeance of our God. There are "woes" in Jesus' discourses very scathing and stern. There is "the wrath of the Lamb." But the characteristic action of Christ is that of the Dove. The Dove is visible even in his Divinity, even in the lambent tongues, the lightning flashes, the arrows of conviction. He is waiting to be gracious. O sinner, yield thyself to him. For thee are prepared dove-like blessings, influences

> "To nurse the soul to heavenly love,
> The struggling spark of good within
> Just smothered in the strife of sin
> To quicken to a timely glow,
> The pure flame spreading high and low."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Roman worldliness and Hebrew devotedness.* We have these historical personages brought into view in order to fix the year when John began his ministry. At the time when they lived they would have scorned the idea that their names were only to be valuable in proportion as they shed light on the life and the work of this rugged Jewish saint. But so it is. We only care to know about these Romans because their figures cross the stage of sacred history, and because they came into temporary relationship with John and with John's great Master. Their names, however, being brought into conjunction with his, let us notice the contrast which they present to us.

I. THEY WERE UNLIKE AS THEY COULD BE TO ONE ANOTHER IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND SURROUNDINGS OF THEIR LIFE. These Roman worldlings dwelt in palaces, lived in luxury, surrounded themselves with everything that could minister to comfort and enjoyment; they were gorgeously apparelled, and lived delicately in their kingly courts (ch. vii. 25). John was a man who despised delicacies, and deliberately chose that which was coarse in garment, unpalatable in food, rude in dwelling. His life was positively devoid of that which was refreshing, comforting, delightful, so far as the outward and the visible were concerned.

II. THEY WERE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED IN CHARACTER. If we except Philip, who left a reputation for justice and moderation, and Lysanias, of whom nothing or little is known, we may say of the others that they were men whose character was not only reprehensible, but even hideous. Of Tiberius Cæsar we read that, after he came to the throne, he entirely disappointed the promise of his earlier years, and that he "wallowed in the very kennel of the low and debasing." Of Pilate we know from the evange-

lists' story that he was a man, not indeed without some sense of justice and pity, not incapable of being moved at the sight of sublime patience and innocence, but yet sceptical, superstitious, entirely wanting in political principle, ready to sacrifice righteousness to save his own position. Of Herod Antipas we know from Scripture that he was cunning, licentious, superstitious. But of John, the Hebrew prophet, we know that he was utterly fearless and disregardful of his own interests when duty called him to speak freely (ver. 19); that he was a faithful preacher of Divine truth (vers. 7—14); that he was perfectly loyal to that One who was so much greater than himself (ver. 16); that he was capable of a most noble magnanimity (John iii. 29). He was a godly, upright, heroic soul.

III. THEY HAVE LEFT VERY DIFFERENT MEMORIES BEHIND THEM. Of one of these Romans (Tiberius) we read that he "deserved the scorn and abhorrence of mankind." Perhaps this language, only a very little weakened, might be used of two others of them. But concerning John, after our Lord's own eulogium (ch. vii. 28), we feel that we can be in little danger of thinking of him too highly and of honouring him too much.

IV. THEY RESEMBLED ONE ANOTHER ONLY IN THAT THEY BOTH RAN GREAT RISKS OF EARTHLY ILL. Devotedness in the person of John exposed itself to severe penalties, to the condemnation of man, to imprisonment and death. But worldliness in the person of these Roman dignitaries ran great risks also; it had to encounter human fickleness and human wrath. Tiberius is believed to have become insane. Pilate committed suicide. Herod died in exile. Worldly policy may succeed for a time, may stand in high places, may drink of very sweet cups, but it runs great risks, and very often it has to endure great calamities. Alas for it, that, when these come, it is wholly destitute of the more precious consolations!

V. AT DEATH THEY CONFRONTED A VERY DIFFERENT FUTURE. Well might the least guilty of them shrink from that judgment-seat at which all men must stand! how must the worst of them be covered with shame in that awful Presence! and how serious must be the penalty that will be attached to such flagitious abuse of position and opportunity! On the other hand, how high is the power, how bright and broad the sphere, how blessed the hope, into which the faithful forerunner has entered! He has "passed into that country where it matters little whether a man has been clothed in finest linen or in coarsest camel's hair, that still country where the struggle-storm of life is over, and such as John find their rest at last in the home of God, which is reserved for the true and brave."—C.

Vers. 3—6.—*John before Jesus; repentance before salvation.* We may view this subject—

I. HISTORICALLY. Jesus, as his name indicated, came to be a Saviour; but he came to bring a very different salvation from that which was expected of him. His contemporaries were not aware that *they themselves* were in any need of salvation. They supposed it was their political condition which needed to undergo a change. They were full of a fatal self-sufficiency so far as their own character was concerned; they esteemed themselves the prime favourites of Heaven, and thought that, when the great Deliverer appeared, it would be entirely on their behalf, in order that they might be restored to their rightful place and assume the government they believed themselves so worthy to conduct. If they were to receive, with any cordiality of welcome, a Saviour who came to *save them*, to deliver them from guilt, it was necessary that a voice should be heard speaking in plainest tones breaking through the hard crust of complacency and delusion, working conviction of guilt within the soul; it behoved that he should come "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Thus did John "prepare the way" for Jesus—the apostle of repentance for the Saviour of mankind.

II. EXPERIMENTALLY. That which was the historical order is also the order in our heart's experience. We repent of sin before we know the Saviour so as to possess his full salvation. It is indeed true that the words of Jesus Christ, the view of his holy life, the consideration of his dying love—that this is a power working, and working mightily, for repentance on the soul; yet must there be repentance, as an existing condition of mind, for a true and full appreciation of the great service Jesus Christ

offers to render to us. We cannot rejoice in him as in our Divine Saviour, redeeming us from the penalty and the curse of sin, until we have known and felt our own unworthiness and wrong-doing. 1. This is the *scriptural doctrine.* Our Lord, before he left his apostles, instructed them to preach "repentance and remission of sins in his Name among all nations" (ch. xxiv. 47). Peter said, "Repent . . . for the remission of sins" (Acts ii. 38). Paul testified to Jews and Greeks "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21). John wrote, as he doubtless preached, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves . . . if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 8, 9). 2. This is the *obvious spiritual order.* For how can we make our appeal to Christ, how can we put our trust in him as in our Divine Redeemer and the Propitiation for our sins, until we have recognized in ourselves the sinners that we are? For this there is necessary: (1) The *idea of* sin—in many hearts, in many places, found to be wholly wanting, and having to be planted there. (2) The *sense of* sin—absent from a great many more; absent, it may be, because it is forgotten that our guiltiness before God is not only nor chiefly found in doing what he has forbidden, but in withholding what he has desired and required of us, in the non-payment of the "ten thousand talents" of reverence and gratitude and service we owe him. (3) *Shame for* sin, and a strong and deep desire to be cleansed from its evil stain. This true penitence brings us in eagerness and hope to the feet and to the cross of the Divine Saviour.—C.

Ver. 7.—*The ministry of fear.* We read that "Noah, moved with fear," built the ark which, in saving him and his family, saved the human race. Fear, dread of impending danger, has its place in the heart of man, and its work in the service of mankind. God made his appeal to it when he dealt with Israel; there was much of it in the Law. It was not absent from the ministry of Jesus Christ; it was he who spoke to men of the "millstone about the neck," of the undying worm, of the doom less tolerable than that of Tyre and Sidon. John's teaching seems to have been composed very largely of this element; he spoke freely of the "wrath to come." We are bound to consider—

I. THE FUTURE WHICH WE HAVE TO FEAR. We are not to imagine that because those terrible pictures of physical suffering which arose from mistaking the meaning of our Lord's figurative words have long ceased to haunt the minds of men, *there is therefore nothing to apprehend* in the future. That would be a reaction from one extreme to another. If we take the authority of Scripture as decisive, it is certain that the impenitent have everything to fear. They have to face: 1. *Judgment* and, with judgment, *condemnation.* "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." "Every one shall give account of himself to God." What reason here for keen apprehension on the part of the impenitent sensualist, oppressor, defrauder, scorner! 2. *The penalty* which is due to guilt. This may be heavier or lighter, according as the light in which a man lived was clearer or less clear; but when we think how sin is branded and smitten *now*, what shame and suffering follow in its train in this world of probation, how seriously Divine wrath visits iniquity even in the day of grace, we may well shrink, with a fear that is not craven but simply wise, from enduring the penalty of unforgiven sin in the world of retribution (see Rom. ii. 5—9). It is not the brave, but the blind and the infatuated, who are indifferent to "the wrath to come."

II. OUR COMMON INTEREST IN THIS SOLEMN THEME. "Who hath warned *you*," said John, addressing himself (as we learn from Matthew) more particularly to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "to flee from the wrath to come? How comes it that you, who are so perfectly satisfied with yourselves and charge yourselves with no defects, are concerned about judgment? And how is it that you Sadducees, who profess not to believe in any future at all, are trembling in view of another world?" Why did the rigid formalist and the sceptic come to listen so attentively to his doctrine of repentance? The truth was and is that the supposed sufficiency of Pharisaical proprieties, and the barrier of sceptical denials, break down in the hour when the faithful and fearless prophet speaks, when the stern but friendly truth of God finds its way to the human conscience. Our carefully constructed defences may last for days, or even years, but they will not last for ever; the hour comes when some strong reality sweeps them away. There is

not one of us, into how many different classes or denominations we may be divided, who does not need to inquire earnestly of God's spokesman what is the way of escape from the penalty of sin. And we know what is—

III. THE SURE WAY OF ESCAPE. It is that of *penitence*, on which John so strongly insisted; and of *faith* in that "Lamb of God" whom he pointed out as "taking away the sins of the world."—C.

Vers. 8—14.—*The futile in religion, etc.* In these verses we have brought into view four aspects of religious truth.

I. THE FUTILE. The Pharisee, if he were charged with any evil course, consoled himself with the thought that he was a "son of Abraham;" to his mind it was everything with God that he was lineally descended from the father of the faithful, and had been admitted by the rite of circumcision into the "commonwealth of Israel." John, anticipating the doctrine of Jesus Christ, demolishes this delusion. *That*, he tells his audience on the banks of Jordan, is a matter of very small account with Heaven; that is not the criterion of character; that is not the passport to the kingdom of God. Let no man think to build on that poor foundation. Not genealogical connection with the best of men (see John i. 13), not admission by outward rite into any visible community, decides our state before God. If we appear before him, and have no better plea than this to offer, we must prepare for his dismissal. All that is fleshly, all that is circumstantial, all that is outward and unspiritual, falls short of the Divine requirement. It does not bring us *into* the kingdom of heaven.

II. THE DIFFICULT. "God is able of these stones," etc. Nothing could be easier than for Almighty power to raise up children unto Abraham—to bring into existence more children of privilege. He had but to "speak, and it would be done; to command, and it would come forth." But it was quite another thing to win the disobedient and the disloyal to filial love and holy service, to bring the hard of heart and the proud of spirit to penitence and confession of sin, to conduct the feet that had long been walking in paths of selfishness and guilt into the ways of wisdom and of worth. This is a work in the accomplishment of which even the Divine Spirit employs many means and expends great resources and exercises long patience. He teaches, he invites, he pleads, he warns, he chastens, he waits. And on this great, this most difficult work, this spiritual victory, on which the eternal Father spends so much of the Divine, we surely may be well content to put forth all our human, strength.

III. THE SEVERE. "Now also the axe is laid unto the root . . . is hewn down, and cast into the fire." John intimates that a new dispensation is arriving, and with its coming there will come also a more severe sentence against disobedience and unfruitfulness. The shining of the fuller light will necessarily throw far deeper shadows. They who will not learn of the great Teacher will fall under great condemnation. The useless trees in the garden of the Lord will now not only be disbranched, they will be cut down. It is a very solemn thing to live in the full daylight of revealed religion. With every added ray of privilege and opportunity comes increase of sacred responsibility and exposure to the Divine severity.

IV. THE PRACTICAL. (Vers. 10—14.) Real repentance will show itself in right behaviour, and every man, according to his vocation, will take his rightful part. The man of means will be pitiful and generous; the man in office will be just and upright; the soldier will be civil; the servant will be faithful and be satisfied with the receipt of what is due to him; the master and the mistress will be fair in their expectation of service; the father will be considerate of his children's weakness; the children will be regardful of their parents' will. And while the right thing will be done, it will be done reverently and religiously, not only as unto man, but as "unto Christ the Lord."—C.

Vers. 15—17.—*The wisdom of a true estimate.* Those who are far up the social heights are usually under a strong temptation to climb to the very summit. We do not know how strong the temptation may have been to John to assume or to attempt the part of the Messiah. Popularity is very exciting and ensnaring; it leads men to prefer claims and to adopt measures which, on lower ground and in calmer mood, they would not have entertained for a moment. But John's mind never lost its balance in the tumult of great professional success. Unlike most men, he seems to have

stood prosperity better than adversity (see Matt. xi. 2, 3). He does not appear to have wavered for a moment in his fidelity to the Lord whose way he came to prepare; he always retained a true estimate of himself, his work, and his Master. In this respect he was as wise as he was true, and we cannot do better than emulate his wisdom.

I. A TRUE ESTIMATE OF OURSELVES. John knew that in personal worth and dignity he was not for a moment to be compared with Jesus. That great Prophet whom he was preceding was "One mightier than himself," One for whom he was not worthy to discharge the meanest office which the slave renders his master. In cherishing this thought he was both right and wise. There is the truest wisdom in humility. To mistake ourselves, to think ourselves greater or worthier than we are, is to do ourselves the greatest injury and wrong. 1. It is to offend God and to draw down some sign of his serious displeasure (Jas. iv. 6). 2. It is to incur the disapproval and hostility of our fellow-men; for there is nothing that our neighbours more thoroughly dislike on our part than an exaggerated notion of our own importance. 3. It is in itself an evil and perilous condition, in which we are open to the worst attacks of our spiritual enemies. On the other hand, humility is acceptable to God, approved of man, and safe.

II. A TRUE ESTIMATE OF OUR POSITION and of the work we have to do in the world. John clearly recognized, and very distinctly declared, that his mission in the world was one altogether and immeasurably inferior to that of Christ; to those who would not have been surprised to learn that he claimed to be the Messiah he made it known that he was doing that which was slight and small in comparison with the work of Christ. It is indeed a good and a wise thing for us to aspire to do all that God gives us the capacity and the opportunity to do. But let us take great care that we do not, from pride or vain-glory, go beyond that boundary-line. If we do we shall make a serious and possibly even a calamitous mistake. Many that have done excellent service and have had great joy in the doing it *when they have worked within the range of their powers*, have done grievous mischief and have suffered sad trouble when they have attempted that which was beyond them. Nothing but injury to others, damage to the cause of God, and sorrow for ourselves can arise from an over-estimate of the position we are able to fill.

III. A TRUE ESTIMATE OF OUR LORD. That Mighty One who was coming should do the very greatest things. He would: 1. Act with direct Divine energy upon the souls of men—"baptize with the Holy Ghost." 2. Utter truth which should have a great testing and cleansing power; his fan would "throughly purge his floor" (see homily on ch. ii. 34). 3. Make a final distinction between the true and the false: "He will gather the wheat into his garner," etc. No man who cares for his own spiritual and eternal interests can afford to disregard the words or the work of this great Prophet that was to come, that has come, that "is now exalted a Prince and a Saviour," giving redemption and eternal life to all who seek his grace and live in his service.—C.

Vers. 21, 22.—*God's good pleasure in us.* There are some preliminary lessons we do well to learn before we approach the main one; *e.g.*: 1. That piety will sometimes prompt us to do that which we are under no constraint to do. Jesus was not under any obligation to be baptized with the baptism of repentance. Moreover, he could not be said to be enrolling himself as a disciple of John. But he felt that "it became him" to do what he did (Matt. iii. 15); probably his abstention would have been far more likely to be misunderstood than his compliance: hence his action. If we are earnestly desirous of doing everything we can in the cause of truth and righteousness, we shall not stop at the line of positive commandment or of necessity; we shall consider what *it becomes us* to do and how we shall *best* serve the purposes of God's love. 2. That God will not fail to manifest himself to us in the hour of need. Again and again he appeared in strengthening grace unto his Son; on this occasion, when "the heaven was opened," etc.; and when "his soul was troubled" (John x. 28); and in the garden (ch. xxii. 43). So did he appear to Paul in the time of his necessity (Acts xviii. 9; xxiii. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 17). So will he appear in all-sustaining power unto us in the crises of our life. 3. That in proportion to our true devoutness of spirit may we look for the manifestations of God's kindness "*Jesus . . . praying*, the heaven was opened."

The main lesson is that those who are God's true children may be assured of his good pleasure in them.

I. GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." The sentiment of Divine complacency and gladness in Jesus Christ probably had regard to: 1. Our Lord's past earthly life, to the innocency of his childhood, to the integrity of all his life at home, to the preparation he had been making in solitary study and devotion for his life-work. 2. To his then spiritual condition, especially to his attitude toward his Divine Father, his submission to his holy will, his readiness to undertake whatever that holy will should appoint him, and, therefore: 3. To his sacred and sublime purpose, his intention to enter on that great work which should issue in the redemption of mankind. It must have been no slight access of holy strength to the Saviour to be so strikingly assured of his Father's love and good pleasure as he entered on that most arduous and lofty enterprise.

II. GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE IN US. We cannot hope to have for ourselves the measure of Divine complacency which was possible in the Person of our Lord. Yet in our measure may we hope to have and to enjoy the good pleasure of our heavenly Father. For us there may be: 1. *Full forgiveness of the faulty past.* Grieved with all that is guilty, and resting on the abounding mercy of God in Jesus Christ, we are freely and frankly forgiven; so truly and thoroughly forgiven that our past transgressions and shortcomings are buried from the sight of the Supreme; they do not come between our souls and his favour; they are to him as if they were not; they do not make us less dear to his parental heart. 2. *Positive Divine delight in our filial loyalty and love.* As God, searching our hearts with pure and benign regard, sees in us a true filial spirit, a spirit of grateful love and of cheerful submission and of glad consecration to himself, he is glad in us with a Divine, parental joy. 3. *Divine satisfaction with our purpose for the future*—our intention to dedicate our life to the service of God and to spend our powers in the service of our kind.—C.

Vers. 1—20.—*The ministry of the Baptist.* We left Jesus, when last we studied Luke's narrative, in Nazareth, subject to his parents and realizing a gracious development in subjection. We have now to pass over about eighteen years, of which we know only that during them he had become a carpenter (cf. Mark vi. 3), that we may contemplate the preparatory movement under John the Baptist. In these verses we find Luke entering upon the description with the hand of a true artist. He summarizes for us a whole life in fewer verses a great deal than it had years. And yet they are so deftly written that, had John Baptist no other memorial, they would secure for him undying fame. Let us take the facts as they are put before us by Luke, noting such lessons as they are well fitted to suggest. And—

I. THE BAPTIST APPEARED WHEN DECAY HAD SET IN BOTH IN CHURCH AND STATE. (Vers. 1, 2.) The Jewish kingdom, which had a unity until the death of Herod the Great, has now been parcelled into tetrarchies, each governor reigning by grace of the Roman emperor. The sceptre is assuredly departing from Judah. The ancient glory of the Israelitish monarchy only makes the present decline the more impressive. The kingdom needs resuscitation or to be supplanted by a better kingdom. A national leader was never more needful than now. The fulness of time has surely come. Again, decay has seized upon the Jewish Church. The singular number used here (*ἀρχιερέως*), while two names are associated with the high priesthood, shows to what a condition the affairs of the Church had come. Annas is not allowed his lifetime of the office, according to the Law of Moses, but Caiaphas, his son-in-law happily, has been appointed by the civil power in his room. Reformation is, therefore, sadly needed; the hour has struck, and happily the man is here.

II. THE BAPTIST CAME AS THE PIONEER OF THE LORD. (Vers. 3—6.) Luke here borrows imagery from the prophecy of Isaiah (xl. 3—5), and a careful study of the passage endorses the application of it to the preparatory work in view of the advent of Messiah. John, like a pioneer, is to make a smooth path for the Prince of Peace; but the valleys to be raised, the mountains to be laid low, the crooked to be made straight, and the rough ways to be made smooth, are not outward and physical obstacles. It is not by *force* they are to be overcome, but by a voice, by a cry. They represent consequently the *characters* of men. The valleys represent the depressed and despairing;

the mountains, the exalted and proud; the crooked, the tortuous in sin; the rough ways, the rugged and uncouth in nature. All these classes, through John's preaching, are to be prepared for a sight of God's salvation in the Person of Messiah. How, then, did John try to prepare his generation for Jesus? By "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Now, this new rite introduced by John (cf. Godet, *in loc.*) was a tremendous indictment, so to speak, against human nature. It was as much as to say to every man, "You need to be washed, entirely washed; you are so defiled, you are sinners against God to such a degree that you must be not only washed and purified, but also pardoned, before you can take your places in the kingdom of Messiah." It was the proclamation to all his contemporaries that the one reformation needed in order to better times was *self-reformation*—reformation beginning at home in one's own bosom by the grace of God, as the most important preliminary to the reformation of the world. Repentance has been well defined as a taking of God's side against ourselves;[1] and this was the spirit of John's reformation. It was a call to arms, but to arms against self, not against one's neighbours. And it is here that every true reformer must begin. We must reform ourselves first by the grace of God, or we shall be quite unequal to any large reformation in the world.

III. THE BAPTIST'S PREACHING WAS EXCEEDINGLY PLAIN AND PRACTICAL. (Vers. 7—9.) Luke here gives a *résumé* of John's discourses. They were not certainly very conciliatory. They did not mince matters. The vast multitude which came to hear him was, he knew, largely of the Pharisaic class. They were proud to be children of Abraham according to the flesh. They fancied this was sufficient to secure their acceptance with God. But in spite of their good pedigree they were venomous at heart, would sting a neighbour like a viper, and do the most unbrotherly things. Hence, as a faithful messenger from God, John tells his hearers what they are—but "a generation of vipers." He asks them further who has warned them to flee from "the wrath to come," that is, the judgments of Messiah? He exhorts them in such circumstances to put away their fancied merit as children of Abraham, and to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, for in case they did not do so, they would be cut down and cast into the fire. The "fruits" demanded were not, of course, graces of the Spirit, which they could not of themselves produce; but acts of reparation, of justice, and such like, which were fitted to show the better view they were taking of their previous life, and the amends it demanded at their hands. If sorrow for sin is genuine with us, it will work a reformation immediately in our conduct; we shall not do the old hard-hearted things we once were guilty of. Now, John, in thus dealing with the question of *human nature* and its depravity, is an example to all our reformers. It is here that reformation is required,[2] and the philosophy that fails here has no pretensions to the leadership of the world. No wonder, therefore, that "pessimism" hangs like a nightmare on the boasted philosophy of the time, and men by philosophy alone cannot get rid of it.[3]

IV. THE PRACTICAL ADVICE GIVEN TO DIFFERENT CLASSES BY JOHN. (Vers. 10—14.) The real success of preaching is proved by inquirers. When people begin to ask what they must do, the message has begun to tell. Now, different classes became inquirers. They were from the lower ranks of the people. The Pharisees largely declined baptism, as ch. vii. 30 shows. And: 1. *The common people asked John's advice as to what they should do.* He tells them to be brotherly instead of grasping. He preached "fraternity." He that had a second coat, or some meat to spare, would do well to impart to a needy brother. Co-operation in the battle of life is our first duty. 2. *The tax-gatherers ask what they should do.* John tells them to avoid their easily besetting sin of extortion. In fact, here, as always, the gospel begins by antagonizing man's selfish impulses. 3. *The soldiers also ask his advice.* These are believed to have been soldiers on the march to a war in Arabia Petræa on behalf of Herod Antipas, and to have been caught at the fords of the Jordan by the wave of religious excitement which was surging there. The brave Baptist advises them to avoid (1) *violence*, (2) *perjury*, and (3) *grumbling* about better wages. He thus sets each class to fight against its easily besetting sins.

[1] Cf. Monsell's 'Religion of Redemption,' p. 44.
[2] Cf. Graham's 'Creed of Science,' pp. 227—293.
[3] Cf. the admissions in 'Natural Religion,' by the author of 'Ecce Homo;' also in Graham, *ut supra*.

V. THE BAPTIST'S MISSION WAS BUT A PROMISE OF A BETTER BAPTISM. (Vers. 15—18.) When John's preaching had proved so successful, the people began to wonder if he were not Messiah himself; and then it was that he declined leadership and spoke of a greater Leader and a far more important baptism. So great was his successor to be, that John was not worthy to unloose his shoe-latchet; and he was to have the grand prerogative of baptizing the people with the Holy Ghost and with fire, or, as it perhaps had better be, "*in* the Holy Ghost and fire (*ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί*)." The Spirit is an Agent, not a means, as water is; and his agency has all the purifying and sublimating effect of fire, rendering those on whom he descends pure and ardent in the service of the Lord. This baptism of the Spirit is what characterizes the dispensation of Messiah.[1] But Messiah will exercise authority and execute judgment, as well as baptize with fire. He will separate by his doctrine, which is his fan, the wheat from the chaff; and those who demonstrate their worthlessness by rejecting the gospel, will be consigned by him to fire unquenchable. If we will not accept of fire as purification, we shall receive it in another form as fire of judgment (cf. Godet, *in loc.*). Hence the solemn alternative which Jesus sets before us in his gospel.

VI. THE REWARD THE WORLD GIVES ITS SPIRITUAL HEROES. (Vers. 19, 20.) It has been supposed that John accepted a crafty invitation from Herod Antipas to come to his court. The last act in the tragedy of his life is when he appears before us as a courageous "court-preacher."[2] Here the Baptist would not take things easily, as courtiers do, but denounced the infamy of the monarch. His reward is a dungeon. The finale is his murder. So has the world rewarded its spiritual heroes. It has nothing better for the noblest than a castle-dungeon and a headsman's sword. This shadow is inserted in Luke's history by anticipation. But there is artistic power in so inserting it. It completes the picture of a great ministry. The forerunner of Messiah has not a much better fate than Messiah himself. The age of heroes is beginning in the person of John, the heroes who had heart to die for truth. Their blood is truth's most precious seed, and the gospel which can command "the noble army of martyrs" is destined to endure![3]—R. M. E.

Vers. 21—38.—*The baptism and genealogy of Jesus.* From the general features of the remarkable ministry of the Baptist, summed up as it is for us in the preceding verses, we now pass to the most notable instance of baptism performed by him. This was the baptism of Jesus. We are expressly told that it was when the movement under John had become *national*, when all the people (*ἅπαντα τὸν λαόν*) had submitted to the rite, with, of course, the Pharisaic exceptions already noticed (ch. vii. 30), that Jesus appeared at the Jordan to claim the rite too. We learn also from Matthew that John at first objected, feeling an incongruity in the case. Had he been allowed, he would have changed places with Jesus, and been the baptized rather than the baptizer. But Jesus never descended to the administration of water-baptism; he always maintained his high prerogative as the Baptizer of men with the Holy Ghost and fire. Hence, while he insisted on receiving water-baptism, he left it to others to administer it (cf. John iv. 2). Let us, then, proceed to the following inquiries:—

I. WHAT WERE CHRIST'S REASONS FOR SUBMITTING TO THIS BAPTISM UNTO REPENTANCE? We must reject at once the insinuation of Strauss and others, that it implied some sense of sin. Jesus never was conscious of sin, as his whole life and his express testimony show (cf. John viii. 46; see also Ullman's 'Sinlessness of Jesus,' *passim*). Why, then, should he come under even the suspicion through a baptism unto repentance? The national character of the movement will help to explain our Lord's act. The multitudes who submitted to baptism did so in hope of a place in Messiah's kingdom. But as a "kingdom of God" the impenitent and unpardoned could have no place in it. A way must be found for the pardon and purification and penitence of sinners. Christ's identification of himself, therefore, in baptism with the expectant people was his surrender of himself so far as needful for the accomplishment of this

[1] On this baptism of the Spirit, *die Geistestaufe*, cf. Weiss's 'Leben Jesu,' erster band, s. 307, etc.

[2] Cf. Bersier's noble sermon on 'Un Predicateur de Cour,' Sermons, tome ii. p. 3.

[3] Robertson's last volume has two sermons on 'The Character and Mission of the Baptist;' see also Gerok's 'Pilgerbrod,' s. 36.

great work.[1] It was not only a response to the Father's call to enter upon his peculiar Messianic work, as Weiss in his 'Leben Jesu' has very properly suggested, but also a deliberate assumption of the responsibilities of sinners. Hence it has been supposed that, as the ordinary candidates for baptism confessed their personal sins (Matt. iii. 6), so Jesus most probably confessed the sins of the nation and people who were looking hopefully for his advent. This dedication, moreover, implied self-sacrifice in due season. The Messiah hereby became voluntarily "the Lamb of God" to take away the sins of the world, and John seems to have realized this himself (John i. 29). It was consequently the most sublime dedication which history records. It was not a mere entrance of the "valley of death," like a soldier in a battle-charge, with a few moments' agony and then all is over; but it was a dedication of himself, three years and more before he suffered, to a policy which could end only in his crucifixion.

II. IN WHAT WAY DID THE FATHER RESPOND TO THIS SUBLIME DEDICATION OF THE SON? We are told that Jesus was "praying" during the administration of the rite. As Arndt observes, "Instead of John urging Jesus to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, as he had done with others, it is here simply said by Luke, 'And Jesus prayed.'" He prayed with uplifted eye, and for those gifts and graces which his great work needed. His prayer was for his *rights* in the emergency of his sacrificial life. *We* seek grace from God as a matter of free favour, and for the Saviour's sake. *He* sought grace and gift as a matter of simple justice, seeing he was undertaking to perform the Father's good pleasure in the salvation of sinners. And now we have to notice how the Father responded to his appeal. 1. The Father granted him *the gift of the opened heaven.* When it is said "the heaven was opened," we are not to understand by it merely that a rent took place among the clouds to allow the Divine Dove to come fluttering down, but rather that the right of Jesus to access to the heavenly light and secrets is recognized. As Godet puts it, it was the guarantee of a *perfect revelation* of the Father's will in this great work of saving men. Any clouds which sin may have interposed between man and God were in Christ's case cleared away; and, as a sinless Representative, he is enabled in unclouded light to realize his duty in the matter of man's redemption. It was a splendid assurance that Jesus, at all events, would not want light in the midst of duty. And if we follow the Lord fully, we too shall have such opening of the heavens, and such revelation of duty, as will enable us to see the proper path, and to tread it for the benefit of mankind. 2. The Father granted him *the Holy Spirit in the organic form of a descending dove.* This symbol is only used in Gen. i. 2, where the Spirit is represented as "brooding dove-like o'er the vast abyss," to use the Miltonic paraphrase; and here in connection with Christ's baptism. The soul of Christ, upon which the Holy Spirit on this second occasion descended, was the scene of a mightier work than the chaotic abyss at first. The new creation is greater than the old; and the sinless material upon which the Divine Dove had to brood guaranteed a more magnificent result than the sensible world affords. The "supernatural evolution" hereby secured has been mightier and more magnificent than the evolution in nature.[2] Now, regarding the significance of the symbol, we are taught that (1) the Holy Spirit came down in his *entirety* upon Jesus. Other men receive the Spirit in measure, and hence as oil, as fire, as water, as wind,—these minor symbols sufficing to represent our tiny inspirations; but Jesus receives the Spirit as a dove, an organic whole—the Spirit without measure (John iii. 34). We are also taught (2) that the *dove-like graces* were imparted in all fulness to Jesus. "As the dove is the symbol of innocence, of purity, of noble simplicity, of gentleness and meekness, of inoffensiveness and humility, so Jesus stood there in possession of the Holy Ghost, as the complete embodiment of all these perfections."[3] And it is out of his fulness we must all receive, and grace for grace. His is the perfect inspiration, ours is the mediated inspiration, so far as we can receive the Spirit. Let us look prayerfully for the descent of the Dove, and he will come to abide even with us! But yet again (3) the Father granted to Jesus *the assurance of Sonship.* From the account in Matthew we should suppose the words were spoken to John; from this in Luke we should infer that they were spoken only

[1] Godet, *in loc.*; also his 'Études Bibliques,' tome ii. p. 104; and his 'Explications en réponse aux quelques Remarques de M. Darby,' pp. 32—35.

[2] Cf. Dr. Newman Smyth's 'Old Faiths in New Light,' American edit., pp. 185—288.

[3] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' erster theil, ss. 181, 182.

and directly to Jesus. Both hearers were doubtless regarded in the paternal communication. Now, when we consider all that Jesus had undertaken in accepting baptism, he surely had a right to this assurance, that as a Son he was well-pleasing in all his consecrated life to the Father. It was upon this he fell back in the lonely crisis of his history (John xvi. 32). It was the only consolation left to him. And a similar assurance may be looked for by us if we are trying to follow in the footsteps of our Lord. It will in our case be a matter of free grace, and not of strict right; but it will in consequence be all the more precious. Most likely we shall have lonely hours when we shall be deserted by supposed friends, and be put upon our mettle as to our faith in the ever-present Father; but at such times the assurance that our conduct has been pleasing in some measure to the Father, and that he sympathizes with us in our work, will be the greatest earthly consolation. If, in studying to show ourselves approved unto God, we are denied every other approval, we can feel the Divine to be all-sufficient!

III. WHAT ARE WE TO LEARN FROM THE INTERPOSED GENEALOGY? Jesus had just been assured of his Sonship, according to St. Luke's history, and now the evangelist interposes between the baptism and the temptation the genealogy of his *human* nature, carrying it upwards, step by step, to God. The course taken is the reverse of Matthew's. Writing for Jews, Matthew simply starts with Abraham and descends to Joseph, the reputed father of Christ, and so fulfils all Jewish demands. But Luke, writing for a wider Greek-speaking audience, begins with Jesus, the all-important Person, passes to Heli, Mary's father, and then upwards, step by step, past Abraham to Adam, and from Adam to God. Is it not to make out, in the first place, a wider relation for Jesus than Jewish prejudice would afford; to show, in fact, that he is related by blood to the whole human family, and contemplates in the broadest spirit its salvation? In the second place, does the genealogy not clearly imply a direct relation between human nature and God? Man was made at first in the Divine image. This fact affords the basis and the key to the Incarnation. The Divine can unite with the human, since the human was originally the image of the Divine. This relation to God, this spark of Divinity within human nature, constitutes even still man's chief glory. "According to the gospel of the Spirit, Adam is the son of God; according to the gospel of the senses, man is the son of an atom. . . . If the former prove to be the true descent of man, then we are capable of religion, and we live in some personal relationship to a Being higher than ourselves, from whom we came."[1] We accept, with Luke, as truth the *Divine* "descent of man," whatever analogies may be made out between man and the beasts. It is surely evidence of our degradation that this Divine descent should be called in question, and its demonstrations disregarded. In the third place, we have to notice that some of Christ's ancestors were not very creditable—the "bar sinister" enters once or twice, as in the case of Thamar and of Rahab; yet this only shows that he owed nothing to his pedigree, but was willing to be related to all kinds of people that he might become their Saviour.[2] Let us, then, rejoice in the relation thus established between the eternal Son of God and the human race; and may that Divine image, implanted in the race at first, have its glorious renewal in our individual experience!—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1—13.—THE TEMPTATION.

The consecration of our Lord in his baptism was immediately followed by what is known as his temptation. It is, perhaps, the most mysterious and least understood of any of the scenes of the public ministry related by the evangelists.

It is related at some length by SS. Matthew and Luke, with very slight difference of detail, the principal one being the order in which the three great temptations occurred. In St. Mark the notice of this

[1] 'The Religious Feeling,' by Dr. Newman Smyth, p. 9.
[2] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' erster theil, ss. 9, 10.

strange episode in the life is very short, but harmonizes perfectly with the longer accounts of SS. Matthew and Luke. St. John omits it altogether; first, because, with the earlier written Gospels before him, he was aware that the Church of his Master already possessed ample details of the occurrence; and secondly, the story and lessons of the temptation did not enter into the plan which St. John had before him when he composed his history of his Lord's teaching.

What, now, was the temptation? Did the evil one appear to Jesus actually in a *bodily* form? Did his feet really press some elevation, such as the summit of snowy Hermon, or the still more inaccessible peak of Ararat? and did the far-reaching prospect of sea and land, mountain and valley, bathed in the noonday glory of an Eastern sun, represent to him the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them? Did he in very truth stand on the summit of the great temple-roof, and from that dizzy height gaze on the crowds below, crawling like ants across the sacred court, or toiling along the Jerusalem streets?

So *generally* thought the ancients, and so it would appear, on first thoughts, from St. Matthew's account, where we read (iv. 3), "The tempter *came* to him;" and the vivid realistic imagery of St. Mark (i. 12, 13) would rather help us to the same conclusion. Some expositors and students of the Word have imagined—for it comes to little more—that the devil manifested himself to Jesus under the guise of an angel of light; others have supposed the tempter came to him as a wayfaring man; others, as a priest, as one of the Sanhedrin council.

But on further consideration all this seems highly improbable. No appearance of the devil, or of any evil angel, is ever related in the Bible records. The mountain whence the view of the world's kingdoms was obtained after all is fanciful, and any realistic interpretation is thoroughly unsatisfactory and improbable. The greater of the modern scholars of different countries—the Germans Olshausen and Neander, the Dutch Van Oosterzee, the Frenchman Pressensé, the Swiss Godet, Farrar and Plumptre in our own land—reject altogether the idea of a presence of the tempter visible to the eye of sense. The whole transaction lay in the spiritual region of the life of Christ, but on that account it was not the less real and true.

Nor is it by any means a solitary experience, this living, beholding, listening, and even speaking in the Spirit, narrated by the evangelist in this place as a circumstance in the Lord's life. Centuries before, Ezekiel, when in his exile by the banks of Chebar in Chaldea, was lifted up and borne by the Spirit to far-distant Jerusalem, that he might see the secret sins done in the temple of the Lord (Ezek. viii. 3). Isaiah again, in the year that King Uzziah died, saw the Lord on his throne, surrounded by seraphim; in this vision the prophet *speaks*, and *hears* the Lord speak, and a burning coal from off the altar is laid on his mouth (Isa. vi. 1—11). To pass over the several visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others, in which the transactions lay altogether in the spiritual region of their lives, we would instance from the New Testament St. Paul's account of himself caught up into paradise, "whether in the body or out of the body" he could not tell (2 Cor. xii. 1—4). And still more to the point, St. John's words prefacing his Revelation, how he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," when he *heard* the voice behind him, and *saw* his glorified Master. On that day and in that hour he heard and saw what he relates in his twenty-two chapters of the Revelation.

In language very slightly different, the temptation of the blessed Son of God is related by the evangelists, when they preface the history of the event with the words, "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost . . . was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (see, too, Matt. iv. 1).

We conclude, then, with some confidence, that the devil did not appear to Jesus in a bodily form, but that, in a higher sphere than that of matter, the Redeemer met and encountered—with the result we know so well—that spiritual being of superhuman but yet of limited power, who tempts men to evil, and accuses them before the throne of God when they have yielded to the temptation. "We believe"—to use Godet's words here—"that had he been observed by any spectator whilst the temptation was going on, he would have appeared all through it motionless upon the soil of the desert. But though the conflict did not

pass out of the spiritual sphere, it was none the less real, and the value of the victory was none the less incalculable and decisive."

Ver. 1.—**And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness**; more accurately translated, *in the Spirit*. The question of the nature of the temptation has been discussed in the above note. The words, "full of the Holy Ghost," and "was led by the Spirit," lead us irresistibly to the conclusion that the Lord, during this strange solemn time—like Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, and, later, Paul and John the beloved apostle—was especially under the influence of the Holy Spirit; that his eyes were open to see visions and sights not usually visible to mortal eye; and that his ears were unlocked to hear voices not audible to ordinary mortal ears. Tradition has fixed upon a hill district bordering on the road which leads up from Jericho to Jerusalem, as the scene of the temptation. The hill itself, from being the supposed spot where the Lord spent these forty days, is named Quarantania. The rocks in this neighbourhood contain many caves.

Ver. 2.—**Being forty days tempted of the devil** For some reason unknown to us, the number forty seems to possess some mystic significance. Moses was forty days alone with the Divine Presence on Horeb. Elijah fasted forty days in the wilderness before the vision and the voice came to him. Forty years was the period, too, of the wanderings of the chosen people. The existence of an evil power has been a favourite subject of discussion in those schools of thought who more or less question the authoritative teaching of the canonical books of the two Testaments. Keim, quoted by Godet, well and fairly sums up the present state of opinion of the more moderate and thoughtful schools of free-thought: "We regard the question of an existence of an evil power as altogether an open question for science." Those, however, who recognize the Gospel narratives as the faithful expression of Jesus Christ's teaching, must accept the repeated declarations of the Master that an evil being of superhuman power does exist, and has a great, though a limited, influence over the thoughts and works of men. Whatever men may feel with regard to the famous clause in the Lord's Prayer, which the Revisers of the Authorized Version render, "deliver us from the evil one," they must agree at least with the conclusion of the Revisers, that, in the Christian Church, a large majority of the ancients understood the Master's words in his great prayer as asking deliverance, not from "evil" in the abstract, as the English Authorized Version seems to prefer, but deliverance from the power of some mighty evil being. **And in those days he did eat nothing.** In this state of ecstasy, when the body was completely subordinate to the Spirit, the ordinary bodily wants seem to have been suspended. There is no difficulty in accepting this supposition, if the signification of the words, "in the Spirit," above suggested, be adopted. The whole transaction belongs to the miraculous. We, who receive as God's Word these Gospel narratives, find no difficulty in recognizing God's power to suspend, when he pleases, what men regard as fixed natural laws. We believe, too, that on certain occasions in the world's history it has pleased him to put this power into operation. **He afterward hungered.** Although still in the Spirit, in order to provide a field for the exercise of the peculiar typical temptation about to be dwelt upon, some of the bodily functions, which during the trance or the ecstasy had been temporarily suspended, were allowed again to play their usual part in the life, as in the case of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Paul, and John.

Ver. 3.—**And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.** It has been quaintly said of the tempter "that he had sped so successfully to his own mind by a temptation about a matter of eating with the first Adam, that he practised the old manner of his trading with the second." These diabolical promptings have been spoken of already in this Commentary as "typical." They represent, indeed, some of the principal temptations to which different classes of men and women in all ages are subject; the hard task of bread-winning, after all, suggests very many of the evil thoughts and imaginings to which men are subject, though, perhaps, they suspect it not. Weakened and exhausted by long abstinence from food, the temptation to supply his wants by this easy means at once was great. Still, had he consented to the tempter's suggestion, Jesus was aware that he would have broken the conditions of that human existence to which, in his deep love for us fallen beings, he had voluntarily consented and submitted himself. Should he, then, use his miraculous power for his own advantage? Then, remembering his own late experience, the long fast from all human food, and yet life enduring through it all; calling to mind the miraculous supply of manna in the old desert days, the preservation of Elijah's life through a similar fast,—Jesus, all faint and weary, exclaims in reply, "Man shall not live by bread alone."

Ver. 5.—**And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all**

the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. This temptation was something more than "offering to One who had lived as a village carpenter the throne of the world." It appealed to his ambition certainly, but in Jesus' case it was a high, pure, sinless ambition. This much he certainly knew already, that he was destined to rule over men from pole to pole. It was for him a righteous longing, this desire to have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth as his possession. No false ambition was this in Jesus, this desire to realize the glorious Messianic hope. Again, how typical a temptation! All ranks and orders are often soon tempted here. A noble end as they think, and in the beauty of the goal they forget that the road leading to it is paved with evil and wrong.

Ver. 7.—**If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.** Dr. Morrison, on Matt. iv. 9, has well caught the thought here. The arch-tempter "as it were said to Jesus, 'I am indeed the prince and god of this world. Its kingdoms and their glory are at my disposal. I could at once open up thy way to the highest honours that a universal conqueror and a universal sovereign could desire. I could gather at once around thee a host of devoted Jewish troops; I could pave their way for victory after victory, until at no distant period the whole Roman empire, and indeed the whole world, should be subject to thy sway. Only abandon the wild chimera of putting down sin and making all men fanatical and holy; fall in with my way of things; let the morals of the world alone, more especially its morals in reference to God; work with me and under me, and all will go well. But if thou refuse this offer, look out for determined opposition, for incessant persecution, for the most miserable poverty, and for every species of woe.'"

Ver. 8.—**Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** Jesus repelled the offer with stern indignation. He would receive the splendid inheritance which he felt was his at no other hands than his Father's; he would win all and more than the tempter offered him, but it would be by a slow and painful process—by self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-surrender; the glorious consummation would only be attained at the end of a long vista of centuries. The words, "Get thee behind me, Satan," do not occur in the older manuscripts containing St. Luke's Gospel. These are evidently a later addition from the parallel passage in St. Matthew.

Ver. 9.—**And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple.** In St. Matthew Jerusalem is here called "the holy city," a name still preserved in the East, where it is still termed El-Khuds, *the holy*. *Pinnacle;* literally, "wing" of the temple. "Pinnacle" comes from the Vulgate translation, *pinnaculum*. The part of the great building evidently referred to here was that magnificent southern wing of the Lord's house constructed by Herod the Great, which was known as the royal portico. Josephus calls it *the most remarkable building under the sun* ('Ant.,' xv. 11. 5). One who stood on the roof of this portion of the temple would look from a dizzy height into the Valley of the Kidron. Such a spectator, writes Josephus ('Ant.,' ii. 5), "would be giddy while his sight could not reach to such an immense depth." To this spot, "whether in the body or out of the body" we cannot tell, Jesus was taken by the evil spirit. "Now," said his tempter, "if you really are what you seem to think, cast thyself down. You know what is written in the Divine writing, how the Eternal would give his angels charge concerning thee, they were to bear thee up, 'lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' If thou art he of whom all this is written, there will be no risk. *You* are *sure* that you are the Son of God: try this once, and see. If you triumphantly come out of this trial, all men will recognize you, and your reign as Messiah will commence forthwith." This temptation was of a more subtle nature than the other two. It appeals again to all ranks of men, and warns them of the sore danger of *selfishly* courting danger. The angels will ever watch over us with a tender care when, to accomplish a duty or to perform an act of self-denying love, we confront peril; not so when we presumptuously and for our own ends rush into danger.

Ver. 12.—**And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.** It is remarkable that in these crowning instances of temptation, which no doubt were originally recounted by the Lord himself to the inner circle of the disciples, and from them passed into the regular course of instruction adopted by the Christian teachers of the first days, the Redeemer, in each of his three answers to the devil, uses words taken from two chapters (the sixth and eighth) of Deuteronomy. It has been suggested that the thoughts and expressions of this book were fresh in the mind of the tempted Christ, as he had probably, specially during his sojourn in the wilderness, used for his own study and meditation a book which told the story of Israel's wanderings in the desert for forty years. It seems, however, more likely that the Lord simply chose to frame his answers from a book with which every Israelite from his earliest years had

been acquainted. The maxims and precepts of Deuteronomy were used in the education of every Hebrew child. Its devout and beautiful maxims were written on the phylacteries or frontlets which so many pious Jews were in the habit of wearing.

Ver. 13.—**And when the devil had ended all the temptation.**

"Thou Spirit, who ledd'st this glorious eremite
Into the desert, his victorious field,
Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence
By proof the undoubted Son of God."
(Milton.)

St. Matthew closes the story of the "victorious field" by telling us how, when every hellish suggestion had been made and repelled, the wearied and exhausted Jesus was visited and refreshed by the visible ministry of angels. The words of the Greek original translated "all the temptation" would be more accurately rendered by "every kind of temptation." The three great temptations, related by two of the evangelists in detail, are very varied and comprehensive in character, and appeal to most of the human passions and desires; but from the words with which St. Luke began his recital, "being forty days tempted of the devil," it is clear that Jesus was incessantly tempted the whole time by hellish whispers and suggestions, perhaps of the same kind, though with varied details, as the three we have recorded for us. Besides the uses of the temptation mystery in the development of the humanity of the blessed Son of God, the great scene has its deep lessons for all sorts and conditions of men in all times. Some eminent expositors would seem to wish to limit the area of the teaching of the temptation, and to regard it as mainly an experience preserved for the guidance of the disciples of the Master. They—so say these scholars—were, from this scene in the life of the great Teacher, to learn never to use their miraculous power for their personal advantage (first temptation); never to associate with wicked men for the attainment of good ends (second temptation); never to perform a miracle in an ostentatious spirit (third temptation). All this was doubtless contained in the Lord's story of his awful experience, and the lesson was never forgotten by the twelve and their own immediate followers. But the instruction was not meant to be confined to the little circle of his own; it was, like the whole of the gospel teaching, intended for all sorts and conditions of men. The common everyday lesson which every child may read in this story of his Master's trial, is that from the plain appointed path of duty, which very often too is the path of suffering, no persuasion however skilfully worded, no sophistry however plausible, must be sufficient to turn him. **He departed from him for a season**; more accurately, *till a convenient season*. It is evident that all through the two years and a half of the public ministry, which succeeded the events just recorded, Jesus was exposed to the various trials and temptations to which suffering mortal flesh is exposed. So Bonaventura, in his 'Life of Christ,' says, "Many other were the occasions on which he endured temptation." Still there is no doubt but that the "convenient season" here pointedly alluded to referred to that other great epoch of temptation just before the cross, when our Lord prayed in the agony of the garden at the close of his earthly work. There the tempter tried if great suffering was not able to conquer that Sinless One.

Vers. 14—30.—THE PREACHING OF JESUS AT NAZARETH, AND ITS RESULT.

Ver. 14.—**And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.** Between the events of the temptation and the preaching at Nazareth here related, some considerable time had intervened. St. John, in his Gospel, gives a somewhat detailed account of this period which St. Luke omits. Shortly after the temptation, took place the concluding incidents in the Baptist's career, which St. Luke summarized in his brief statement (ch. iii. 19, 20), when he tells us of the arrest and imprisonment of the fearless preacher by the Tetrarch Herod. St. John tells how the Sanhedrin sent some special envoys to the Baptist, asking him formally *who he really was*. After this questioning, John in his Gospel mentions the calling of Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael, and then records the first miracle of Jesus at Cana in Galilee, and how the Lord visited Capernaum. He then proceeds to relate some of the circumstances which took place at the Passover at Jerusalem, and how the Lord drove out the men who profaned his Father's house. He writes down, too, the particulars of Nicodemus the Pharisee's visit to Jesus by night. The Master then proceeded, as is here related by St. Luke, "in the power of the Spirit," who descended on him formally at his baptism, into Galilee, and on his journey thither tarried at Samaria, resting on the well there, and talking with the woman in those memorable words recorded by St. John at length in his fourth chapter (vers. 4—42). Rapidly the report of what he had done at Cana, the fame of his marvellous words at Jerusalem, Samaria, and other places, spread through all the central districts of the Holy Land.

Ver. 15.—**And he taught in their syna-**

gogues, being glorified of all. His miracles, his words touching and eloquent, perhaps too a dim memory of marvels which had happened years before at his birth, shed round the new Teacher a halo of glory. It was only when, instead of the Messianic hopes of conquest and power which they cherished, a life of brave self-denial and quiet generosity was preached, that the reaction against him set in. The men of Nazareth, with their violent antagonism, which we are about to consider, were only, after all, a few months in advance of the rest of the nation in their rejection of the Messiah.

Ver. 16.—**And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day.** This had been for years his practice in the little synagogue of the village where was his carpenter's shop. Children at the age of five years were admitted into the synagogue, and at thirteen attendance there was part of the legal life of the Jew. These synagogues were the regular places for religious gatherings every sabbath day, and also usually on Mondays and Tuesdays, besides on other special occasions. We hear of them after the return from the Captivity, and probably they existed long before. Some think that in Ps. lxxiv. 8 there is a reference to them. **And stood up for to read.** The holy books were always read standing. The ruler or elder presided over and directed the synagogue service. The priest and Levite had no recognized position in the synagogue. Their functions were confined to the temple and to the duties prescribed in the Law. It was not unusual for the synagogue officials, if any stranger was present who was known to be competent, to ask him to read and to expound a passage in the Law or Prophets. Our Lord was well known in Nazareth, and of late had evidently gained a great reputation as a preacher. It was, therefore, most natural that he should be asked to take a prominent part in the sabbath services.

Ver. 17.—**And there was delivered unto him the Book of the Prophet Esaias.** In the sabbath service there were two lessons read. The first was always taken from the Pentateuch (the Law). The five books of Moses were written on parchment, (usually) between two rollers, and the day's lesson was left unrolled for the reader's convenience. The Prophets were on single rollers, no special portion being left open. It has been suggested that the great and famous Messianic passage read by our Lord was the lesson for the day. This is quite uncertain; indeed, it is more probable that Jesus, when the roll of Isaiah was handed to him by the ruler of the synagogue, specially selected the section containing this passage.

Ver. 18.—**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.** St. Luke here quotes, with a few unimportant variations, from the LXX. of Isa. lxi. 1, 2. The clause, "to set at liberty them that are bruised," does not occur in the present text of Isaiah. The bright, comforting words of the great prophet the Lord chose as giving a general summary of what he designed to carry out in his ministry. It could be no undesigned coincidence that the opening words of the passage contain a singularly clear mention of the three Persons of the blessed Trinity—the Spirit, the Father, and the Anointed (Messiah). **Because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor,** etc. The common interpretation referred this passage to the state of the people on the return from the Captivity. Nothing, however, that the people had yet experienced in any way satisfied the brilliant picture painted in the great prophecy. A remnant certainly had returned several centuries back from their distant exile, but the large majority of the chosen people were scattered abroad; their own land was crushed under what seemed a hopeless servitude; poverty, ignorance, universal discontent, reigned alike in Jerusalem, garrisoned with Roman legionaries, and in the most distant of the poor upland villages of Galilee. Only could deliverance come and a golden age of prosperity return with the promised Messiah. This was the interpretation which the choicest spirits in Israel applied to the great Isaiah prophecy read that sabbath day in the little synagogue of Nazareth. This was the meaning which Jesus at once gave to it, only he startled his hearers by telling them that in him they saw the promised long-looked-for Deliverer. We only possess, it is evident, the very barest abstract of the words of the Teacher Jesus on this occasion. They must have been singularly eloquent, winning, and powerful to have extorted the wonder and admiration alluded to in the twenty-second verse.

Ver. 20.—**And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down.** This was the usual position adopted by a Jewish preacher. The chair of the preacher was placed near the spot where the lesson was read. These synagogues were built with the end pointed towards Jerusalem, in which direction the Jew ever loved to turn as he prayed (Dan. vi. 10). The men sat on one side of the building, the women on the other. There was always at the end of the chamber an ark of wood, a memory of the sacred ark of the covenant, which once, with its golden mercy-seat, hallowed now and again with the presence of the visible glory, was the chief treasure of the temple on Mount Zion. In the "ark" were kept

the Law (the five books of Moses) and the rolls of the prophets.

Ver. 22.—**And they said, Is not this Joseph's Son?** Quickly the preacher caught the mind and feeling of his audience. Surprise and admiration soon gave place to a spirit of unbelief. Is not this who speaks to us such words, bright and eloquent with hope, often with a ring of sure triumph and certain victory in them—is it not the young Carpenter we have known so long in our village?

Ver. 23.—**Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself.** "There is something interesting in our finding this proverb in the Gospel of the beloved physician. May we think of him as hearing the proverb casually, tracking out its application, and so coming on this history? It was, probably, so far as is known, a common Jewish proverb; but there is no trace of it in Greek writers, and it was therefore likely to attract his notice" (Dean Plumptre). **Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.** Now, up to this time in Jesus' public career no miracles are recorded as having been done in Capernaum. After the miracle at Cana we know that the Lord resided for some time in Capernaum (John ii. 12); the miracles to which these men of Nazareth alluded were no doubt worked then. The memory of these early miracles, as Godet well observes, would have been effaced by more remarkable later events, as that at Cana would have been had not John, who required it in the plan of his Gospel, rescued it from oblivion. The Jews of Nazareth, after the first moment of surprise and admiration at Jesus' words, evidently looked at him with scorn and unbelief. That poor Carpenter their glorious expected Messiah! As for the marvellous deeds reported to have been done in Capernaum, they did not believe in them; at least why did he not here, in the neighbourhood of his own home, something of the same kind? If they could see with their eyes marvels worked by him, then perhaps they might accept him as Messiah.

Ver. 24.—**And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.** But instead of gratifying their curiosity and supplying them with some more empty arguments why they should not listen to his words, the Lord quietly quotes a proverb well known to all people—Farrar calls it a curious psychological fact—the quoting prefaced by the solemn "verily." The Master was evidently looking far beyond the little prejudices of Nazareth. "His own country" meant far more than the narrow circuit bounded by the Nazareth hills. The Speaker was thinking of all the chosen people—of the Jews, who as a nation he knew too well would not accept him. But if Israel would have none of him, he would reign in the hearts of that unnumbered multitude who peopled the isles of the Gentiles.

Vers. 25—27.—**But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.** In support of these assertions, Jesus proceeds to quote two well-known incidents in the story of Israel. They must remember God's mercies in past times were not confined to Israel. There were many starving widows among the chosen people, not a few childless, desolate hearths; but their own great Elijah was sent to none of these, but to a despised Phœnician woman in Sarepta, hard by Sidon. Elisha, that loved man of God, who passed by the homes of the people continually, performed his famous miracle of healing on no child of Israel, though many a leper mourned his sad lot among the chosen people; but the one on whom Elisha worked his mighty miracle of mercy was the Syrian leper Naaman, the great foe of Israel.

Ver. 28.—**And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.** The Jews in the synagogue quickly caught the Master's meaning. Thoughts such as "Thou our Messiah, who talkest of Gentile, Syrian, and Zidonian in the same breath with us the chosen and elect of God, who hintest at the possibility of the accursed Gentile sharing in our promised blessings!" flashed through their minds, and as one man the congregation rose, and, seizing the Preacher, dragged him out of the synagogue, and hurried him through the little town to one of the rocky precipices close by.

Ver. 29.—**And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.** The place now shown as the scene of the act of violence of the fanatics of Nazareth, known as the Mount of Precipitation, is some two miles from the town. It must be remembered that this happened on a sabbath day; this would therefore be beyond the limits of a sabbath day's journey. There is, however, close to Nazareth a cliff about forty feet high.

Ver. 30.—**But he passing through the midst of them went his way.** Not neces-

sarily a miracle. There is nothing hinted here that our Lord rendered himself invisible, or that he smote his enemies with a temporary blindness. He probably quietly overawed these angry men with his calm self-possession, so that they forbore their cruel purpose, and thus he passed through their midst, and left Nazareth—as far as we know—for ever The foregoing is probably the same visit very briefly alluded to by St. Matthew (xiii. 54—58) and by St. Mark (vi. 1—6), in both Gospels related in unchronological order. Most likely they were aware of the incident, but ignorant of the exact place it held among the early events of the Master's life. St. Luke, who gives it with far greater detail, inserts it evidently in its right place. Is it not at least probable that St. Luke derived *his* accurate knowledge of this Nazareth incident from Mary, or from some of her intimate circle, from whom he procured the information which he embodied in the earlier chapters of his Gospel? She, and others of her friends, would be likely to have preserved some accurate memories of this painful visit of Jesus to his old home.

Vers. 31—44.—AT CAPERNAUM.

Ver. 31.—**And came down to Capernaum.** Capernaum was the real home of the Master during the two years and a half of his public ministry. He chose this flourishing lake-city partly because his kinsmen and first disciples lived in it or its immediate neighbourhood, but more especially on account of its situation. It has been termed the very centre of the manufacturing district of Palestine; it lay on the high-road which led from Damascus and the Syrian cities to Tyre, Sidon, and Jerusalem. "It was, in fact, on 'the way of the sea' (Isa. ix. 1), the great caravan-road which led (from the East) to the Mediterranean. It was hence peculiarly fitted to be the centre of a far-reaching ministry, of which even Gentiles would hear" (Farrar). The evangelist speaks of "coming down" to the shore of the lake, in contrast with Nazareth, which was placed in the hills. We do not meet with the name Capernaum in the Old Testament; it therefore appears not to have been a city belonging to remote antiquity. Its name is generally interpreted as being compounded of two words, signifying "town of consolation," כפר נחום—a beautiful and significant derivation. It may, however, originally have taken its name from the Prophet Nahum. Josephus, the historian, tells us the name originally belonged to a fountain. He dwells also on the mildness of the climate; it would therefore seem as though, in the first place, Capernaum was used as a health resort, and then its admirable situation favoured its adoption as a convenient centre. The extensive ruins of *Tel-Hûm*, on the lake-shore, are generally believed to be the remains of the once rich and populous Capernaum. **And taught them on the sabbath days.**

Ver. 32.—**And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.** We have here again a picture which gives a general summary of Jesus' life extending over a considerable period. This is the fifth of these pictures of St. Luke. It represents the Master dwelling quietly at Capernaum, in the midst of his disciples, teaching and preaching; on the sabbath days gathering a considerable concourse drawn from the people at large, and generally surprising the listeners with his earnestness, freshness, and ability, which carried conviction into many a heart, Gentile as well as Jew. Although this period of the life of Jesus was signalized by many miracles, it does not seem that his *ordinary* preaching and teaching needed any such supernatural testimony to enable it to win its way. St. Luke especially tells us it was with power, and that the crowds heard it amazed and astonished. St. Matthew gives us (vii. 29) *one* reason, which helps us to understand something of this success which attended his teaching. It was "not as the scribes." In the Talmud we have many a fair specimen of the sacred instruction of the "schools" in the time of our Lord. Frivolous minutiæ, hair-splitting of texts, weary repetition of the sayings of the men of old, questions connected with the exact keeping of the sabbath, with the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, a singular lack of all dealing with the weightier matters of the Law—justice, judgment, truth—were among the characteristics of the scribes' popular instruction. The practical heart-searching words of Jesus were in strong contrast with the curious but useless themes dwelt on by the official teachers of the day. It was with the thirty-first verse of this chapter that the great Gnostic heretic, Marcion (second century) began his Gospel, which, in the early days of Christianity, had a vast circulation. Marcion, while preferring St. Luke's Gospel, as emanating from St. Paul, before putting it out as the authoritative history to be used by his numerous followers, cut out the earlier chapters of our Gospel, which bore on the birth and infancy of the Lord, commencing here—prefixing, however, a note of time, thus: "In the fifteenth year of the government of Tiberius, Jesus went down" (Marcion probably intended it to be understood *from heaven*) "into the town of Galilee named Capernaum."

Ver. 33.—**And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil.** After the general picture of Jesus' life and work in Capernaum, St. Luke pro-

ceeds to give a detailed account of the way in which one sabbath day was spent, no doubt intending us to understand it as a specimen of the ordinary sabbath-day work of the Master. We meet with here, for the first time in our Gospel, one of those unhappy persons described as either "having a spirit of an unclean devil," or as "possessed with a devil" or "devils," or in similar terms, generally signifying "demoniacs," men or women—apparently a class by themselves, directly under the influence of some evil spirit. Who, now, were these unhappy beings with whom Jesus in his ministry of mercy seems often to have come in contact? Many of these "demoniacs" mentioned in the Gospels would nowadays certainly be classed under the ordinary category of the "sick." They seem to have been simply afflicted with disease of one kind or other; for instance, *the epileptic child* mentioned by St. Luke (ix. 39), or *dumbness* again (Matt. ix. 32), *blindness* (Matt. xii. 22), and *insanity*, among other instances, are ascribed to demoniac agency. Are we, then, simply to regard these cases, not as exceptional displays of diabolical power, but as instances of sickness and disease which still exist among us? and to suppose that our Lord, in speaking of devils possessing these sick ones, accommodated himself to the popular belief, and spoke of these afflicted persons in the way men were able to understand? for it is indisputable that Judaism in the days of Jesus of Nazareth ascribed to "demons," or "devils," much of the suffering and woe with which men are afflicted under the common name of disease. The Talmud, which well represents the Jewish teaching of that time, has endless allusions to evil spirits, or devils, who were permitted to work evil and mischief on the bodies and even on the souls of men. Josephus, the contemporary historian, narrates that a lamb grew at Machærus, the wool of which had the power of expelling devils; and he tells how he was the eye-witness of the cure of a man possessed of a devil by means of a ring containing a root which had similar properties; this, he says, took place in the presence of the Emperor Vespasian ('Ant.,' viii. 2. 5; 'Bell. Jud.,' vii. 6. 3). Many believed that these demons, or devils, were the souls of the wicked who returned to earth after death, and sought a new home for themselves in the bodies of the living. This popular belief in demoniacal agency is mentioned by Justin Martyr ('Apol.,' i.), and even seems to have lingered in some parts as late as Chrysostom. But such a theory—which represents Jesus in his miraculous cures accommodating himself to popular belief, and speaking of the sufferers as possessed by devils which really had no existence save in imagination—is not only quite foreign to the transparently truthful character of all the Master's words and works, but is perfectly incompatible with the narratives given us by the evangelists of the cures in question. In these, in several instances, the devils are not only spoken to, but they speak themselves—they answer questions, they even prefer requests. Jesus, too, gives his own power to cast out devils (ch. ix. 1), and to tread on all the power of the enemy (ch. x. 19). He even, in St. Mark (ix. 29), is represented as distinguishing a special class of devils over whom a mastery could be obtained alone through prayer and fasting. Evidently the Holy Spirit, who guided the writers of those memoirs of the apostles we call the Gospels, intended that a marked distinction should be impressed upon the readers of the apostolic memoirs as existing between ordinary maladies of the flesh and those terrible and various scourges which the presence of devils inflicted upon those hapless beings in whose bodies, for some mysterious reason, they had been permitted to take up their habitation. The whole question is fraught with difficulties. Dean Plumptre suggests that perhaps we possess not the data for an absolutely certain and exhaustive answer. It seems, on the whole—while not denying the possible presence of these evil spirits at different times of the world's history occupying the bodies and distracting the souls of men—best to assume that these devils possessed special and peculiar power over men at that period when Jesus walked among us. By this means, as Godet well says, Jesus could be proclaimed externally and visibly as the Conqueror of the enemy of men (and of his legions of evil messengers). That period, when the Lord taught among us, was a time when, it is generally conceded, moral and social evil had reached its highest point of development. Since that age the power of these unhappy spirits of evil has been, if not destroyed, at least restrained by the influence—greater, perhaps, than men choose to acknowledge—of the Master's religion or by the direct command of the Master himself.

Ver. 34.—**Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us?** This man, with his evil spirit, would have been looked on as unclean, and would not have been admitted within the synagogue walls; he had probably crept in unseen. Something in the nearness to the holy Teacher we know compelled the demon to cry aloud. It is strange, this presence of God causing pain. It is the impossibility of the wounded eye bearing light. The cry rendered, "Let us

alone," is scarcely the imperative of ἐάω, but an interjection, possibly the Greek reproduction of the Hebrew אֲהָהּ, ah! woe! There was evidently some deeper degree of misery possible for the unhappy spirit; hence its "Art thou come to destroy us?" The same dread appears in the case of the Gadarene demoniac (ch. viii. 31; Matt. viii. 29), where the spirits dreaded being driven into the deep, where such spirits await the judgment, that abyss, literally, "the bottomless place;" any doom seemed to these lost ones preferable to that. **I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.**

Ver. 35.—**And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace.** Jesus at once indignantly refuses this homage. He never allowed devils to proclaim they knew him. There is something very awful in the thought that to this whole class of created beings he is ever pitiless. In his dealings with these we never are allowed to catch sight of one ray of the Redeemer's tender pitiful love.

Ver. 37.—**And the fame of him went out;** more accurately rendered, *and there went out a rumour concerning him.*

Ver. 38.—**And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.** This abrupt mention of Peter (Simon) for the first time, without any explanatory notice, tells us that when St. Luke wrote his Gospel Peter was well known and honoured in all the Churches. The Lord's choice of one who was already married, the subsequent favour showed to him, the high position evidently accorded to him in the Church of the first days, is a perpetual protest against the exaggerated asceticism which later was so earnestly taught in ecclesiastical Christianity. The epithet "great," applied to the fever, was a well-known technical term; it was used by Galen of fevers. There are several expressions in this Gospel which remind us that the author was a trained physician.

Ver. 40.—**Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.** The healing of the "possessed" in the synagogue that morning, followed by the cure of the fever of Simon's wife's mother, we know was rapidly noised abroad, and in great measure accounted for the crowds who brought their sick to him in the evening. It was evidently in the life of Jesus a notable occasion, and many a sick tortured one had occasion to bless the Master's presence then. It was so memorable an occasion that all the three evangelists notice it; their reports are recorded in almost the same words. No doubt, in the early days of the preaching of the faith, this evening's work was constantly alluded to by the first teachers. The note of time, "when the sun was setting," indicates that the moment in question had been waited for, for sunset ended the sabbath, and then those outside Capernaum and in its outlying suburbs were enabled to bring their sick and afflicted without infringing the strict sabbath rules. "The twilight scene, of Jesus moving about with word and touch of healing among the sick and suffering, the raving and tortured crowd (Matt. iv. 24), is one of the most striking in the Gospels, and St. Matthew quotes it as a fulfilment of Isa. liii. 4" (Farrar).

Ver. 41.—**Thou art Christ the Son of God.** The older authorities omit "Christ," and read simply, "Thou art the Son of God." **For they knew that he was Christ;** better rendered, *that he was the Christ*, or Messiah. After the Crucifixion, but not till then, "Christ" became a proper name. It was before simply a title, signifying "the Messiah," "the Anointed One." These words of the evil spirits do not seem to have been prompted by any design, as some have supposed, to excite the people either for or against the fresh Teacher; they are simply a cry of involuntary adoration. They knew who that poor Carpenter-Rabbi was; *they had seen him in his Divine glory!*

Ver. 42.—**And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place.** For solitude, meditation, and prayer. The night, or at least most of it, must have been spent in these blessed works of mercy. It was very early in the deep, dark dawn that the Redeemer was up again seeking fresh strength from his Father. St. Mark tells us when he left the house "it was still very dark."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The temptation in the wilderness.* One of the most mysterious but most suggestive passages in the history of the Christ. Without attempting to indicate all the points presented for reflection (see homiletics on Matt. iv.), observe—

I. THE TEMPTATION IS NECESSARY TO THE PERFECTING OF JESUS AS THE SAVIOUR OF SINNERS. He is led by the Spirit into the wilderness—led for the purpose of being tried by the devil. In the solitudes and simplicities of the Nazareth life, he had not

known, he could not know, this kind of trial. Now is to come the first distinct experience of the devil's power. God—may we so say?—carried him away from the scene of the baptism and the opened heavens and the Divine voice, and presented him to Satan, the prince of the power of the air: "This is my beloved Son: put forth thine hand, and touch him." Is this strange? 1. It is a very real link of communion between the Lord and the life beset by sin and evil. "By thy fasting and temptation, good Lord, deliver me." 2. See in it a part, and an essential part, in the making of Jesus to us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption. Let us not overlook that "the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." Now begins the great pitched battle between the kingdoms of light and of darkness; the wilderness-time is the girding of the sword on the thigh of the most Mighty. Do not think of the temptation as an isolated experience. At the end of all the temptations the devil departed from him only for *a season*, or *until* a season. He had been conquered, but he was not done with the Conqueror; he only bided his opportunity. The whole earthly ministry was a conflict with that hell which had all but dominated over the world of man. And the conflict was concluded in victory only when the Head was bowed on the cross. "Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Ah! truly there is "an infinite more behind" all that is recorded.

II. TEMPTATION IS NECESSARY TO HUMAN PERFECTING. The hour of the leading into the wilderness is striking. St. Luke amplifies the account given by the earlier evangelist. The latter connects the event with the baptism and that which accompanied it; the former tells us of what is subjective—of the conscious plenitude of life and power. Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, is led. When the sense of the mighty force is strong within him, when the chords of the heart are vibrating in response to the voice from heaven, when the soul feels straitened until it enters on the great mission given it; when he is ready, lo! this summons to the wilderness, this forcible taking of the anointed man, with the anointing fresh and full, to the dreary desert place over whose surface the wild beasts roam. But is not this a way of God? Was not Saul of Tarsus, in the morning of his life in Jesus, sent for three years to Arabia? Is not strength gathered, is not character compacted, through contact, direct and personal, with the forces alike of good and evil? He who was "made in all things like to his brethren" must have that in his human history which corresponds to facts and necessities in ours. And the wilderness, with its struggle, its assaults on faith and obedience, its glimpse into the outer darkness, its resistance of the devil, is a necessity in the education of the man as the Son of God.

III. THE TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST RECORDED ARE A MIRROR OF THE TEMPTATIONS OF HIS BRETHREN. Mark the word "recorded." St. Luke tells us that Jesus was led during forty days, tempted of the devil. What the forty days meant remains untold. Probably it could not be expressed in language intelligible to us. It was only at the end that "the Divine event becomes human enough to be made to appear." Until then the lower wants were in a condition of suspense; the hunger is "the first sign of his coming back to us." Then the part of the temptation which we can understand begins. It will be remembered that we are dealing with a narrative of real transactions. It is not a poem, not a parable. Whether the acts were purely subjective, consisting only of suggestions to the inner spiritual sense, is a doubtful point; but that there was a veritable tempting in the manner described, that we are regarding "a chronicle of events," cannot be doubted. Nor is it a mere likeness of temptation that is set before us. The gospel story would be nothing to the heart if we conceived of it as a series of visions which in no distinct way touched the citadel of the Lord's heart, was not to him what temptation is to us—the contact of the soul with some hour and power of darkness. If it be asked—How can this be if Jesus was without sin? let it be recollected that sin does not consist in an impression of what is evil; it consists in yielding to the impression, in receiving it. The sacred writers are careful to note that all suggestions come, not from the soul, but to the soul from a lying spirit outside the personality. When we speak of sinlessness, we do not mean that enticements to sin can never present themselves or be felt as enticements; we mean that they are never yielded to or consented to—that there is a will so perfectly loyal to the Father that the wrong and the unchildlike are never in the purpose of Jesus. Note the three

points or regions of the temptation recorded. The order is slightly different in the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke. That which is third in the one is second in the other, reminding us that too much stress is not to be laid on the mere sequence of the story. The first trial had reference to the urgent need; it came in the form of the subtle insinuation, "Son of God, you are hungry: why not use your power to satisfy the wants of nature? You have not bread, you cannot buy bread: why not bid these stones become bread?" So plausible, that the lie can scarcely be discerned. It is addressed to the man on the most pressing side of his necessity. And Jesus meets it as man. "Man's only life is not that by bread, but that by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God's Word had made the stone a stone. He would not say the stone is a loaf. He must be throughout in harmony with the eternal word and will. Then how subtle is the second attack! Adhering to St. Matthew's order, "Thou art full of confidence in thy God. Thou dost trust him to the uttermost. Put thy faith to the proof. The Jews expect that their Messiah will descend from the clouds. Away to the top of yonder temple. Cast thyself down from thence. Do something striking; thou knowest it is written, 'He shall give his angels charge over thee.'" How plausible the appeal to the Son of God on the side of his faith! And, once more—repelled by the counter-thrust, the counter-Scripture, "Thou shalt not try to the uttermost the Lord thy God, claiming a miraculous help for what is born of human pride and rashness"—mark the tact and the audacity in the final assault which the enemy makes. The love of power—that which is at once the strength and the weakness of every noble mind—shall be the wedge. "Son of God, look down on the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Thou art seeking the sovereignty of man. I can give it thee. The force is thine; use it at my instigation. The dominion of love is one of toil and pain. Take what I offer. Think what blessings to the world will be at once secured. The sole condition is to fall down and worship me. Am I not the real king of the world?" It is the very climax of devilry. The temptation can go no further. "Then saith Jesus, Get thee behind me, Satan." It is the battle of man that is portrayed in man's Lord. "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one." Here is *the tempter* who is tempting us, adapting the form of his solicitations to our tempers, our endowments, our circumstances. Here are the *characteristics of his approaches*, his doubts, his "*ifs*" ("if" is a devil-word which more than any other loosens the holdfasts of faith), his *quotations from Scripture* when it suits his purpose to do so, his *three great heads of temptation*—that which seeks us through bodily need or fleshly appetite, that which seeks us through even our purer and higher instincts, that which would draw us into the net by stirring up the pride of life. Ah! there is no sleeping with this tempter. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

IV. THE VICTORY OF CHRIST IS OUR ENCOURAGEMENT. Blessed is the assurance contained in the words, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The devil is behind Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. What is our position towards our Captain? Apart from him? Ah, we may tremble! With him, in him? He is between us and Satan, and we can do all things through him strengthening. "Be of good cheer: I have overcome."

Vers. 14—30.—*The visit of Christ to Nazareth.* The Lord is in Galilee, slowly moving from place to place, always in the character of Teacher, and always winning the applause of those who throng the synagogues. It is the period of unbroken popularity, short but, so long as it lasts, complete. His face is towards his native place, foreseeing and, as we are reminded, foretelling that the tide will receive its first check there. The visit is in many ways significant.

I. IT REMINDS US OF A DUTY. "He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up." He had testified, when leaving Samaria, that a prophet is without honour in his own country. But he will not turn from it. He makes it the place for the first unfolding of the blessed Messiah-mission. And, although cast forth from the city, he seems again to have visited Nazareth. "He does not give it up for a first sin, though that sin may have been a grievous one." Is not this a lesson for all? The place of the upbringing, however far we may roam from it, has a claim on our special sympathy. Our own should never be neglected. It is easier sometimes to deal with strangers. We can speak more frankly and openly to them; they meet us often more frankly and

openly than do our kindred or those directly related to us. What is far-fetched is frequently more esteemed than what is home-bred. Nevertheless, the duty is to witness for God to the circle which encloses our tenderest associations. Yes, even to repeat and repeat our message, and thus deliver our own soul.

II. IT SPEAKS TO US OF A GOOD HABIT. "As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read." Here was one, remember, who knew more than the elders. Might he not have said, "Why go to the place of meeting? Can I not worship God, my Father, on mountain-side, or in my dwelling? The synagogue can give me nothing, no increase to my knowledge or to my devotion; nay, my meditation can be more free and sweet when my soul is alone with Heaven." But this he did not say. It was his rule to be where the two or three met in the name of God. The sabbath day was God's ordinance; therefore he kept it holy. Social worship has its authority, not only in the sanction which is implied in God's promises to those who assemble together for his praise, but in the instincts of our common nature. Therefore he kept rank with those who surrounded him, and when the call to the local sanctuary was sounded, he was always responsive. Surely in this he has left an example on which may well be based the rule, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." Keep two things in view: (1) the honouring of God; (2) our part as members one of another. And when these things are vivid, there will arise the sense, not merely of benefit to be received by ourselves, but of duty, both to him who made and redeemed us, and to those amongst whom we live and move. No light excuse will then be allowed to interfere with the custom. Each worshipper will feel, "I have my ministry, my place in the congregation; this place vacant, this ministry not rendered, there is a want for which I am responsible." It is the absence of a feeling of responsibility in regard to the services of the sanctuary, it is the presence of a mere self-pleasing spirit, which explains much of the laxity of attendance which prevails. Let Christians ponder the way of the Lord, whose custom was to enter the village sanctuary, and contribute to the instruction of the village folk on the sabbath day.

III. IT SETS BEFORE US A REMARKABLE SERMON. The first of the two lessons for the day has been read; the lesson which remains is from the prophets—it is from Isaiah. Jesus stands up to read it. It is the passage which forms the sixty-first chapter of the book. The opening words of this chapter are his text. He rolls up the parchment, returns it to the attendant, and, as was the manner of the teacher, he sits down. Every eye is fastened on him as slowly and emphatically he declares, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." And there follows the sermon, the substance of which Luke records. Concerning the sermon, note: 1. *Its thought and style.* The words are "gracious," literally, "words of grace." Divine grace is the theme, and the language befits the theme. It is not in the fashion of ordinary teachers; it shines, and it burns. It is beautiful, winning; "grace is poured into the lips." Such words become the pulpit; no other words become it. 2. *Its effect.* At first the wonder, the admiration, of the people is excited. If they had only yielded to the teaching, how mighty would have been the work of the day! But, alas! the small, petty feelings of the village prevent the work. The charm of the discourse is soon effaced by the murmurs, "Is not this Joseph's Son? Capernaum may shout in his praise, but he is one of ourselves. We know his parentage and early surroundings. No, no; Joseph's Son is not the Anointed of Jehovah." And soon the countenance changes from wonder into scorn, and from scorn into rage, as the Teacher, reading their thoughts, charges home their guilt, and reminds them that the blessing passes from those who account themselves unworthy of it. Are these Nazarenes sinners above all others because this is their treatment of the Holy One? Have not we prejudices and prepossessions sometimes quite as irrational as were theirs? Has not the oscillation of feeling which we trace in them its counterpart in our own experience? Have not words sometimes seemed gracious to us until some little pride was touched, some demand made on faith against which reason or inclination rebelled, and, in our secret soul, Jesus was cast out? May we not hear his love protesting, "How often would I have gathered you, . . . and ye would not"?

Vers. 31—43.—*A sabbath day's work.* "The despised and rejected" of Nazareth comes down to Capernaum, henceforth the centre of his labour of love. The evangelist

sets before us one of the sabbath days of this early Galilæan period, and bids us note the use made of the sabbath by the Son of man, who was also its Lord. He takes us to the synagogue, no doubt crowded by an expectant throng of fishermen, farmers, masters and workmen of busy Gennesareth. Jesus is the Teacher; and, as the discourse proceeds, we hear the sentence passing from one to another, "What a word!" or, "What is this word!"—so different from the speech to which they are accustomed, so strangely fascinating. Has not the exclamation of these simple folk been repeated, in circles ever widening? Is it not, more than ever, the voice of the day in which we live? Let us look to the incidents of the Capernaum sabbath for three illustrations of the abiding power of the Word of the Lord.

I. THERE IS THE POWER TO INSPIRE. We see this generally and specially. Generally, in the effect produced on the great body of the people. They had not yet been inflamed against Jesus by the emissaries of the Pharisees; and his preaching arrested the attention. It was not wild and startling, like that of John; it was calm, but intense. The pedantries of the scribes had no place in it; it spoke to the heart; it was the word of One in the light and love of God—the Son of God and the Son of man. "For a season" at least they rejoiced in it. There were responses in the conscience, deep answering "amens" in the soul. The word was with authority. Specially in the attitude of those by whom Jesus was accompanied. We are told by Mark that he is accompanied by Simon and Andrew, James and John. They are the elder sons of his special family. They have heard the word, "*Follow me*," and, obeying it, have left all to be his disciples. Oh, blessed power—the power of that Spirit who, in the beginning, moved on the face of the waters and said, "Let there be light!" the power to awake the slumbering desire, to interpret the needs and thoughts of the heart, to stir up the longing to be better and nobler, to be the citizens of the kingdom of heaven and the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty! Who of us has felt the life-giving force of this heavenly spring? Such a one will join in the cry, "*What a word!*"

II. THERE IS THE POWER TO EXORCISE. One of the audience on the first of the Capernaum sabbaths is a miserable demoniac, "a man with the spirit of an unclean demon." Whether, by such an expression, we are to understand only a violent type of mania, there is no need to discuss. The language of the thirty-third and thirty-fourth verses seems to imply more than this. "It is utterly impossible," says Dean Alford, "to understand such a testimony as that of the sick person, still less of the fever or disease." Be this as it may, the multitude, spell-bound, is receiving the word which is with power, when suddenly a great scream is heard. "Ἔα, ἔα! Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." Calmly, firmly, the Preacher rebukes the spirit; there is a paroxysm, a convulsion, and the man rises up, the wildness all gone, a right spirit renewed in him. "What a word! He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they obey him!" Let us believe that this word of command and rebuke is still with us. Unclean spirits, demons in men, alas! are legion, and sore havoc they make in human lives and homes. No demon is ever alone; it is always accompanied by evil powers, by manifold miseries. The only force adequate to the cleansing of the soul thus possessed is that of the Holy One of God. Welcoming all remedial legislation, all forms of philanthropic effort, with a view to raise the fallen, to cast out the devils which afflict society, let us remember that the innermost seat of the evil can be reached only by the gospel of the Holy One. With this gospel, let us never despair. "God is the God of hope; the devil is the spirit of despair."

III. THERE IS THE POWER TO HEAL. The mission of Jesus in Galilee was a great medical mission. The Preacher and the physician represent the two aspects of his ministry. Here is a thought which consecrates the art of the physician; he is a revelation of one side of the abiding power of Christ; it is for him to recognize the Master and acknowledge the supreme authority of the Word of the Lord. And turning to the physician and availing themselves of his skill, the sick and diseased may recall that it is Jesus Christ who maketh whole. This is the true faith-healing. See how the healing power of the words is illustrated. Read vers. 40, 41. What a hospital is before the eye of the Healer when the sun is setting! And not one of the impotent and afflicted is without the touch; not one baffles the skill. For a more particular illustration, read vers. 38, 39. It is "a great fever," and they beseech him for that

precious life. He stands over her and "rebukes the fever." Another account is still more touching: "He comes and takes her by the hand, and lifts her up." Is not this a passage which makes all the Christian world kin? How many understand what is meant by the beseeching for one laid low with "the great fever"! Ah! but some will say, "It was not with my beloved as with her in the gospel story. I wept and fasted; I cried, 'Oh, spare my dear one!' but there was no rebuke of the disease. The one for whom I entreated was taken, and I was left, sitting alone and keeping silence." Peace, thou bleeding heart! He allowed his beloved Lazarus to die; but in his own time and way he stood beside the grave and bade Lazarus come forth. He told the sisters that their faith was feeble; that the higher faith would not have been clamorous—it would have felt, "His hand is holding that life; it is lifting it up; whosoever lives and believes in him has been already lifted up, and never dies." So bethink thyself; not according to thy way, but according to his own, he did come; he did take by the hand; he did whisper, "Rise, my love, my fair one, and come; where I am thou shalt be also." In the case of Simon's mother-in-law the answer is visible. Observe, not only is the fever removed, but strength is infused—"immediately she rose up and ministered unto them." A beautiful suggestion, that ministry to Christ always follows the sense of healing by Christ. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2 (first part).—*Solitude and struggle.* We are not to suppose, even though we read this statement as given by Matthew (iv. 1), that our Lord was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for the express purpose of being tempted by the evil one: to take that view would be to mistake the force of the Hebrew idiom. All that is intended is that Jesus was constrained ("driven," Mark says) to retire into the solitude of the wilderness *where he would have to undergo* the temptation which did actually befall him. He was led, by Divine direction, into retirement, and there, by Divine permission, into spiritual struggle.

I. THE DIVINE DIRECTION. As Moses in Midian, as David around Bethlehem, as Elijah at Horeb, as John in the wilderness of Judæa, as (afterwards) Saul in Arabia, so Jesus prepared for his great work in the depth of "the solitary place." There we can well believe that he held much *communion with God;* that he looked down into the secret places of his own soul and communed carefully *with himself;* and that he pondered long on the great work—*the Father's business*—which lay before him. We may be sure that this period of solitude produced very rich fruit in after-days, not only in the truth which was spoken, but in the life which was lived and the sorrow which was endured. This period should find its counterpart in our history; if it does not find it by our consent, it may do so without any choice of our own. For: 1. *God commends* such retirement to us. He does so by the way in which he led the greatest and the wisest of his servants (see above); by the faculties of devotion, introspection, and forecast which he has given us; by the example of our Lord. But: 2. *God compels us* to such retirement. He does so by his holy providence, when he lays us aside, when he takes us away from the busy scenes of toil, from "the strife of tongues," from the excitements of society, and even from the distractions of the home circle; when he shuts the door upon us and draws round the curtain and leaves us alone with himself. Of that time, if we are wise, we shall make good use. It is a time for spiritual renovation; then we may learn lessons we should never gather even in the sanctuary; then we may enter on an upward path which otherwise we should never take, and so reach a goal we should otherwise never gain. It is a sacred opportunity, inciting to (1) review; (2) introspection or self-examination; (3) onlook; (4) prayer, including the solemn and determined rededication of our whole selves and our entire future to the service of our Saviour.

II. THE DIVINE PERMISSION. By the permission of God the evil one came to our Lord and tempted him (see following homilies). God allows the tempter to assail us even as he did his "beloved Son." There are some temptations which are more likely to beset us in the period of solitude than at any other time—temptations of the wilderness. They are: 1. *A morbid sensitiveness* as to (1) our own condition—a disposition

to look too much to our own feelings, and to dwell too little on the goodness and the love of God; also as to (2) our own reputation, and the estimation in which we are held among men. 2. *Excessive disappointment* and consequent disheartenment concerning (1) the life we are living before God; (2) the work we are doing for our fellow-men; (3) the progress of the kingdom of God. But though we may pass through these struggles we may come safely out of them. The remedies are these: (1) An appeal to God for his guidance and inspiration; (2) a resort to the promises of his Word; (3) a timely return to the activities of daily work, of public worship, of active usefulness.—C.

Vers. 2—4.—*The temptation of the flesh.* There can be no question as to the reality of the temptation. Without contending for the strictly literal sense of the passage, we do maintain that the temptation was a very real thing to our Lord. It constituted a serious struggle through which he went, out of which he came forth victorious, by passing through which he was our Exemplar. We cannot afford to lose this aspect of his life, this view of our Lord himself; but we must beware lest we do; for "if we shrink from believing that he really felt the force of temptation . . . we make that Divine life a mere mimic representation of griefs that were not real, and surprises that were feigned, and sorrows that were theatrical. But thus we lose the Saviour." It was a real conflict that is here depicted; and the first stage of it was that through which we have all, in our time, to pass—the stern contest with the temptation of the flesh.

I. THE SEVERITY OF THE TEMPTATION. "He hungered" after long fasting. Hunger, in its severer forms, is unknown to us. In a country like this we have no experience of it. We can only judge of it from the testimony of those who have endured it; and, thus judging, we are sure that it is a very urgent, imperious, almost irresistible craving. The extremities and inhumanities to which it has driven men who are not naturally inhuman tell their own tale with terrible force. Our Master was suffering, we may well believe, from the most severe pangs of want. There were stones of the size and colour of such a loaf as he would have given everything (it would be right to give) to obtain. By an easy exertion of his miraculous power he could turn the one into the other. Why not do so? Because to do that would be to take himself out of the hands of that heavenly Father to whose care he was committed, and manifest distrust in his providential goodness. Or because to do so would be to employ his Divine power first on his own behalf, instead of using it, as on the occasion of its first exercise it behoved him to employ it, on behalf of others. Or because to do that would be to give present and bodily cravings precedence of the great concerns of the kingdom of God. For some such reason our Lord thought that it would be wrong or, at any rate, undesirable for him to act on the suggestion, and he forbore. Temptation of the fleshly kind comes to us in the shape of hunger, or thirst, or sexual passion. 1. These trials of our moderation and self-government are more or less severe according to (1) our temperament and (2) our circumstances. 2. They may lead us into errors and evils which are (1) mistakes to be avoided; or (2) indiscretions to be condemned and regretted, and, of course, forsaken; or (3) vices and sins which are shameful and deadly, which stain the conscience, which ruin the reputation, which lead down to swift destruction.

II. THE WAY OF VICTORY. When the hour of conflict comes we must gird ourselves for the fight; and though the peril may be great because the enemy is strong, yet have we great resources, and there is no reason why we should not win the battle. We should call to our help our regard for: 1. The will of God as revealed in his Word; that "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," should be at hand with us as it was with our great Leader: "It is written." 2. The penalty of disobedience—a very heavy one in its ultimate issues. 3. The example of our Divine Master, calmly putting aside the false suggestion, preferring to suffer rather than to sin. 4. The consideration that sin excludes us from other and higher blessings. Better far, in the thought of Christ, to rest in bodily hunger, committing himself to the faithfulness of the holy Father. And how much better than any physical enjoyment is the satisfaction of spirit which attends purity and piety! Not the bread of bodily comfort, but the sense of God's abiding favour, the continuance of the friendship of Christ, the cherishing of a heavenly hope,—that is the good thing to prize and to pursue.—C.

Vers. 5—8.—*Temptation: outward and inward grandeur.* Of course, literal exactness is necessarily excluded here; we must look for, and shall have no difficulty in finding, the sense and spirit of the words. We will look at—

I. THE APPEAL THAT WAS MADE TO OUR LORD, and the corresponding attack that is made on ourselves. Christ was tempted to seize "power and glory" for himself by an act of unholy submission. These were the prize which the worldly minded Jews of his age imagined to be within reach of their Messiah. To one of his humble circumstances but limitless capacity, and also of rightful and honourable ambition, there might very easily be presented a most powerful temptation to aim at a great and glorious supremacy—a throne like that of the Cæsar himself, on which imperial power might be exercised and human glory at its topmost height be enjoyed. And the force of this temptation would be very greatly intensified by the fact that such a throne as this would be gained by very different measures from those Jesus had been contemplating in his solitude. The collecting of multitudes by appealing to their national passions, the leading of armies and gaining of victories, the command of great bodies of men, the excitements of political strife,—all this is full of enjoyment to the ambitious soul. A vastly different experience this (and to all that was human in the mind of Jesus Christ immensely more attractive) from that of speaking unappreciated truth, living a life too noble to be understood, suffering from keen and malignant persecution, dying in the pangs and shame of martyrdom! The price to be paid for surrendering the higher for the lower aim, and the distressing for the delightful means, was "worshipping" Satan; in other words, declining the course which he most disliked, and adopting the course which he most desired. The attack which is now made on us, corresponding to this, is the suggestion that we should turn aside from the higher aspiration (whatever it may be) to the lower ambition. It may come to the Christian minister in his study, to the statesman in his cabinet, to the doctor in his consulting-room, to the author or editor at his table; it is a suggestion to leave the straight line of duty, of faithfulness, of service, of truth, of loyalty to conviction, of moral and spiritual integrity, and take the lower path of popularity, of honour, of temporal success. To do this is to take a course which we may dignify by some fair name, but which, in Scripture language, is worshipping the devil.

II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT WAS REPELLED BY HIM, and in which it should be defeated by us. This was one of holy indignation: "Get thee behind me," etc. Our Lord indignantly refused to entertain a suggestion so utterly opposed to his spirit of consecration, so subversive of all his high purposes and lofty hopes. He met it by the quotation of a word which demanded entire obedience to the will of God and full devotedness to his service. In this spirit of holy indignation let us repel the first advances of a temptation to leave the higher and the heavenly road of truth and service for the lower and the earthly one of mere temporal success. To take that lower course would be to play into the hands of the evil one; to lose the commendation of our conscience and to live under the shadow of its rebuke; to lower ourselves and to degrade our life in the estimate of all the true and wise on earth and in heaven; to lose our true and high reward; to break the word and depart from the will of the Lord our God.—C.

Vers. 9—12.—*Temptation to guilty haste.* One more attempt is made by the evil one on the integrity of our Lord's faithfulness. We note—

I. THE EVIL SUGGESTION. The idea conveyed to the mind of Jesus, now on the point of commencing his ministry, was this (as I understand it): "Here is a glorious opportunity to make a most successful beginning; alighting from this height among the assembled worshippers below, who are all ready to welcome the Messiah, you will gain such a prestige from so brilliant a miracle that the battle of conviction will be almost won by a single blow. There need be no fear; the angels will sustain you," etc. But to act in this way would be to proceed along a line totally unsuited to the kind of work which Jesus came to do. It would be very gratifying, very stimulating, very agreeable to human feeling, but it would not be the *right* course to pursue. Christ came to build up a vast spiritual empire, and he was to lay its foundations carefully and steadily, and therefore deliberately and slowly, in the minds of men. This victory was not one to be snatched by a sudden impetuous charge; there must be a long and a hard campaign. Everything could not be done by a brilliant stroke, appealing to the imagination;

there must be a long, laborious process, by which the judgment and the conscience of mankind would be convinced. There would be fatal folly in an endeavour to force an issue. There would be Divine wisdom in "beginning at the beginning," in gradually working onwards, in toiling upwards amid fatigues and sorrows until the height was reached. Such are the victories before us now—triumphs over ignorance, over vice, over unbelief, over superstition, over indifference, over indecision, over spiritual languor. We should like to be working faster, to be winning the battle at a greater pace. Then cometh the evil one, and he says, "Leave these slow processes; mix a little error with the truth you preach; be more careful to produce an effect than to deliver the Divine message; sacrifice purity to power; introduce into the methods of the kingdom of Christ the principles and the weapons of the kingdom of the world; hasten to the goal and snatch the crown of success, instead of working so hard and waiting so long."

II. THE FIRM REFUSAL. Christ declined to adopt the suggestion; he said that to do so would be "tempting the Lord his God." It would be expecting God to work a miracle in order to gratify his unholy eagerness. We must not try to precipitate the cause of righteousness by an unholy impatience, which is a practical distrust of God's Word. To expect God to bless means which he has not sanctioned, to own and honour methods which are not in accord with the principles he has revealed,—this is to lose his favour and to draw down his condemnation; it is to invite discomfiture. "*He that believeth shall not make haste.*" Our wisdom as well as our duty, as "workmen together with God," is to (1) adopt God-given methods; (2) ask for the Divine help and inspiration; (3) confidently await the Divine blessing in God's own chosen time and way.—C.

Ver. 18.—*The poor and the gospel.* A most significant fact that the first work of the Messiah should be his "preaching the gospel to the poor." What is the significance of it?

I. BY THE POOR DIVINE TRUTH IS MOST NEEDED. Their life on earth is the hardest; it is often one of unremitting *toil;* often one of severe *privation*, almost destitute of comfort and enjoyment; often one of serious and hard *oppression*, in which the strong will of another robs of all liberty of action. The past is sad, the present gloomy, the future dark. There are no pleasures in recollection, and there is no relief in hope. How precious, how necessary, to these are the joys which earth cannot give and cannot steal—the treasures which enrich the heart, the hopes which reach beyond the grave!

II. BY THE POOR DIVINE TRUTH IS MOST APPRECIATED. "How hardly do they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven!" Their time is occupied, their minds are filled, with pursuits and pleasures which are on an earthly plane, and things higher and worthier are hidden from view. The poor, though they have indeed their own temptations and their own errors and failings, are yet more likely to see the Divine hand beckoning to them, and to hear the heavenly voice calling them to wisdom and service and eternal joy. And, as a fact, *they do.* The common people still hear Christ gladly, while the wealthy and the strong and the famous are sitting at the feet of "the world," to learn its wisdom and to seek its favour.

III. TO THE POOR DIVINE TRUTH IS CLEARLY AND MARKEDLY OFFERED. It was, in fact, a very great thing to say, "To the poor the gospel is preached." It was one of the "watermarks" of Christianity that our Master made his appeal, not, as philosophy and theology had done before him, and as science in our day is doing, to human learning and influence, but to the unlettered and the lowly, to the multitude and the millions among men, to the common human heart. Other systems had tried to reach the lower levels by affecting the heights of society first. The gospel of Jesus Christ "moves upward from below." It teaches, cleanses, raises *the people;* and so it purifies and exalts the nation. This is the Divine method, and must be ours. It is for the Church of Christ to follow its Divine Master, to see that the signs of truth are about its handiwork, and amongst them this leading sign, that "to the poor the gospel is preached." If this feature should be absent, it will be time for the Church to be considering where it stands—how near to or remote from its Master.—C.

Ver. 18.—*Healing the broken-hearted.* We have a supreme want, but we have a Divine remedy.

I. THE BROKEN HUMAN HEART. There are two things which break hearts: 1. One is *intolerable shame*; the shame which comes from a crushing sense of sin; it may be of *flagrant* sin, such as commands the deep indignation and strong censure of our fellow-men, and involves the loss of our own self-respect; or it may be a sense of that *common* sin of which all the souls of men are guilty in the sight of God—the keeping back from him of all that has been due to him, all the reverence and love of our hearts and all the service of our lives. Under a deep sense of sin, and therefore of condemnation, affected and afflicted with the consciousness of Divine disapproval and the fear of Divine punishment, the heart cries out for refuge. 2. The other is *overwhelming sorrow*; it may be some crushing disappointment, or it may be some wearing and trying sickness, or it may be some heavy and humiliating loss, or it may be some terrible bereavement and consequent loneliness of heart and life; under one or more of these overwhelming burdens the heart may be bowed down even to breaking.

II. THE ONE DIVINE REFUGE. There is but one availing "Refuge of our soul" to whom we can flee with perfect assurance that in him we shall find what we need. Christ came "to heal the broken-hearted," and he does so by: 1. Offering us the *most tender sympathy*. He is the High Priest who is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities, having been in all points tried even as we are," and therefore able to enter perfectly into our griefs, whether of mind, body, or estate. 2. Ministering to us *Divine comfort*. By his Holy Spirit's ministry he comes to us, and dwells within us, and acts powerfully though graciously upon our hearts; thus he lets the gentle dews of his comfort cool the heats of our fevered spirit, making himself known to us as the "God of all comfort," as that "One who comforteth them that are cast down." 3. Granting us *effectual help*; enlightening our minds, energizing our spirits, making us capable of doing that which has to be done, animating and reviving us, fitting us to take our part and do our work. In proportion as we are reverent and pure of heart in the time of our prosperity and joy, may we look for his indwelling and outworking in the "day of desperate grief" and of heart-brokenness.—C.

Ver. 18.—*Spiritual bondage and Christian freedom.* Who does not pity the captive? Saddening to the sympathetic heart is the thought of the man who is confined within his lonely and dreary cell, shut in from the beauties and melodies of nature, excluded from the haunts of men, debarred from all the activities of busy life, unable to enter his own home, compelled to unwilling solitude and separation from those he loves! There is no prayer that we breathe with a finer or fuller feeling than the petition, "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee." Yet is there a bondage that is worse than any ever inflicted by stone walls and iron chains. It is—

I. THE BONDAGE OF SIN. Sin is at first a transgression, but it soon becomes a tyranny. It grows into a power; and it becomes a power which holds the soul in its grasp, so that it is practically enslaved; it attempts to rise, to move, to do that which befits it and for which it was created, but it finds that it cannot; it is held down; its way is barred. This is true of sin in all its forms, and it is true in a number of degrees, varying from an objectionable constraint down to an almost hopeless despotism. It applies to: 1. *Error*, which becomes an inveterate prejudice through which no light will break. 2. *Folly*, such as that of procrastination, which in no length of time weaves itself round the soul. 3. *Vice*, such as intemperance, or profanity, or impurity (more especially in some of its forms). There is no bondage more thoroughly deserving the name than this. The victim of vice is, indeed, "holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. v. 22); they have him fast in the saddest and most degrading thraldom in which a human being can be held. 4. *Vanity*. How many a man is a wretched slave to the judgment of other men! The fear of their condemnation, or still oftener of their ridicule, impels him in a direction in which he knows he ought not to be going, ties him to a position from which he is longing to break away. 5. *Rebellion* against God; disloyalty, estrangement, the withholding of the heart and life from God's service, so long maintained, that, when the soul thinks of repentance and return, it finds itself held to its wrong and sinful state.

II. THE FREEDOM WHICH IS IN CHRIST. The gospel announces "deliverance to the captives." And how does it effect this blessed emancipation? 1. By giving to the sinner a deep sense of his sin, and filling his soul with shame of himself and loathing

of his iniquity. When men have come to hate sin they are well on the road toward its conquest. 2. By taking back the penitent to the favour and love of God. Through Christ sin is pardoned and the sinner is restored. As one that loves God, and seeks above all things to enjoy his favour, the man "cannot sin;" he has acquired a reason and motive for purity and integrity which gives him the victory over sin. How can he grieve his heavenly Father, his Divine Redeemer, the Holy Spirit of God? 3. By giving him access to a source of Divine power. God is ready to dwell effectually within, and to work mightily upon the soul that seeks his presence and asks his power. We can do "all things *in* Christ who strengtheneth us." He makes us to know "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe," in snapping the bonds that bound us, and investing us with "the glorious liberty of the children of God."—C.

Ver. 18.—*Spiritual blindness.* "The recovering of sight to the blind." We think of—

I. THE BADNESS OF BLINDNESS, and its degrees. "It must be very bad to be blind," we say; probably we but faintly realize what it means. 1. It is bad to be *physically* blind—to look on no scenery, to read no book, to behold no countenance, to recognize no love in a human face, to grope our way in the thick darkness. 2. It is worse to be *mentally* blind—to see, and not to see; to open the eyes on the beauty and wonder and glory of the universe and to recognize nothing beautiful, wonderful, glorious, there; to be as lonely in a library as in a cell! 3. It is worse still to be *morally* blind—blind of soul, so that a man can see nothing degraded in drunkenness, nothing shameful in vice, nothing revolting in obscenity and profanity, nothing repelling in selfishness; so that a man can see nothing noble in generosity, nothing beautiful in beneficence, nothing regal in righteousness and duty, nothing sacred in human love. 4. It is worst of all to be *spiritually* blind—worst, because that is the root and source of all the others; blindness of spirit, a darkness in which the soul fails to see the Highest of all beings, the loftiest of all truths, the greatest of all facts; a darkness in which the soul fails to recognize the essential truth that in God we "live, and move, and have our being," and that to him we are responsible for all we are and have; in which it is blind to our sorrowful state of guilt and condemnation in the sight of God.

II. THE WORST FEATURE OF SPIRITUAL PRIVATION. That which is the best feature in physical is the worst in spiritual blindness. Under the merciful principle of accommodation, the blind became not only submissive, but contented and even cheerful in the darkness in which they dwell. They are able not only to speak of it, but to feel about it that it is "the shadow of God's wing." That is a very happy thing; but that is the very worst feature of spiritual blindness. It is spiritual insensibility that is the most deplorable—the fact that men don't know that they don't see; that they suppose themselves to know everything when they know nothing; that they are not aware what a world of truth and blessedness is around them and is accessible to them. Who shall reveal this to them?

III. CHRIST THE GREAT RESTORER of our spiritual vision. And how does he make us see that to which, but for him, we should have remained blind? 1. *By making quite plain and certain* that which would have remained shadowy and uncertain. Many truths of vital importance men would, in his absence, have speculated upon and discussed, but they would not have *known* them. Coming to us from God, the great Teacher has turned these uncertainties into living and sustaining *truth*. He tells us authoritatively and decisively that God is the one Divine Spirit, the righteous Ruler of all, the Father of souls, condemning them in their sin, pitying them in their estrangement, inviting them to return; that God has determined that when we die we *shall* live again, shall come forth to a resurrection of condemnation or of life. 2. By bringing the truth *close home to the eye of the soul*. When our Lord lived on earth he did this himself in his own Person; *e.g.* in the cases of the woman of Samaria, the rich young ruler, Nicodemus, he brought the truth of the kingdom home to the heart and the conscience. Those lips are closed to us now; Christ speaks not now as he spoke then. But his Spirit is with us still, speaking through his Word and through his faithful servants, and through his providence. 3. By more fully *enlightening the minds* of those who go in faith to seek and to serve him. Unto all seeking and trusting souls he manifests his truth in ever-enlarging fulness; them he leads "into all the truth" they

need to know; and to them it becomes gloriously true that the Spirit of the Lord has anointed him, their Saviour, for "the recovering of sight to the blind."—C.

Ver. 18.—*The bruised.* "To set at liberty them that are bruised." And who may they be who are thus characterized? and in what way does Jesus Christ meet their especial need?

I. BRUISED SOULS. We find these in: 1. Those who are *chafed* with the *worries* of life; whose disposition is such, or whose circumstances are such, that they are harassed and fretted by a multitude of minor conflicts with men and things; who are in danger of losing or have lost their mental equilibrium as the result of the perpetual strife. 2. Those who are *perplexed* with the *problems* of life; who want to be mentally satisfied and to see that their theories agree with the existing facts, and who, finding these two things in frequent antagonism, are troubled thereby in soul;—such men are never fixed in their convictions, but always thinking that these require readjustment. 3. Those who are *smitten* by the *persecutions* of life; who are continually coming into collision with men. They may have a combative habit, or they may be placed in human surroundings unfavourable to peace; but, from whatever cause, they are always in conflict, and are perpetually finding themselves the object of attack, of the ribaldry and the scorn of men; they bear a bruised feeling about them. 4. Those that are *worn* with excessive *toil.* 5. Those that are *wounded* by the *heavier sorrows* of life; from whom health, or reputation, or position, or fortune, or the object of strong and deep affection has been suddenly taken away.

II. THE REFUGE THEY HAVE IN CHRIST. Jesus Christ does not "set at liberty" bruised souls as a deliverer releases bruised prisoners; but he does emancipate them by taking from them their suffering, and giving to them a large measure of spiritual freedom. He blesses these bruised souls, and proves to them a Divine Refuge. 1. By his *sympathy.* In each one of their distresses they can feel sure of the tender sympathy of their High Priest, "touched with the feeling of their infirmities." 2. By his *example.* In all points he has been tempted, or *tried*, even as we are. We bear no cross which he has not carried before us, and his was heavier than ours. 3. By his *aid.* He is ready, at our appeal, to strengthen us by his indwelling Spirit, and to grant us such strong sustaining grace that, instead of groaning under our blows, we may even glory in them (2 Cor. xii. 9). 4. By his *promises;* those "exceeding great and precious promises," which not only cover the whole path of life, however long that may prove, but reach on beyond the horizon-line of death into the blessed and eternal future.—C.

Ver. 22.—*The graciousness of the words of Christ.* "The gracious words [words of grace] which proceeded out of his mouth." The "words of the Lord Jesus" were "words of grace" indeed. They were so whether we consider—

I. THEIR SUBSTANCE. They were not, indeed, without seriousness, and at times not without severity. Christ did say, when the occasion required it, things which startled his hearers, things which are well fitted to make us pause and even tremble if we are obnoxious to their severity. He is, as a Divine Teacher and Revealer of God, as far as possible removed from the easy good-naturedness which would represent it as a matter of indifference what men hold and how they live,—the "good God" will make it all right in the end. No man can listen attentively and reverently to Christ and settle down into comfortable unbelief or self-complacent sin. Yet were his words predominantly and pre-eminently "words of grace." By the truths he preached he made known to mankind that: 1. God is accessible to all; the Approachable One, who is always willing to receive his children, and who welcomes back those who have wandered farthest away. 2. That a noble life is open to all; we may be in character and spirit, as well as in name and in position, the children of God (Matt. v. 45—48); we are to be "the light of the world," "the salt of the earth." 3. That a glorious future is within the reach of all; "in the Father's house are many mansions." 4. That salvation is very near to all; the Scripture is fulfilled; the Redeemer is come; the blind may see; the captives may be delivered; this is "the acceptable year," "the accepted time;" "to-day is the day of salvation." Or whether we consider—

II. THEIR FORM. There is about the gracious words of Christ: 1. *An accent of persuasiveness.* He does not angrily threaten, he cordially invites us; he says, winningly,

"Come unto me . . . I am meek and lowly;" "Abide in me, and I [will abide] in you;" "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," etc. 2. *A note of considerateness.* "Come into a desert place, and rest awhile;" "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 3. *A touch of tenderness.* "I will not leave you comfortless;" "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart."

1. It is perilous to abuse the grace of Christ. There is such a thing as "the wrath of the Lamb." 2. It is perfectly safe to trust in his grace. He means everything he says; the worst may obtain his mercy, the most diffident may confide in his redemption of his word.—C.

Vers. 32, 37.—*Fame and power.* "His word was with power;" "The fame of him went out." Fame and power are the objects of eager and arduous pursuit; they are supposed to be deserving of the expenditure of our strength, and to reward us for all our anxieties and toils. What is their worth, intrinsic and relative? What were they to our Lord? and what should they be to us?

I. THE WORTHLESSNESS OF FAME. 1. The fame of Jesus Christ, as a man, is remarkable indeed. Born in a little Judæan village, of humble parents, receiving a very scanty education, enjoying no patronage, teaching truths too deep to be understood by the multitude and too broad to be appreciated by the orthodox of his time, arousing the hatred of the powerful, and dying while yet a young man a death of utmost ignominy,—his name has become known, his doctrine has been received, he himself has been honoured and even worshipped by countless millions of mankind under every sky. This is fame of the first magnitude; there are very few names "under heaven given among men" that can aspire to stand in the same rank, on the ground of human fame. 2. Jesus Christ shunned rather than sought fame. "Jesus *straitly* charged them, saying, See that no man know it" (Matt. ix. 30; viii. 4; xii. 16; xvii. 9). "Great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed . . . and he withdrew himself into the wilderness" (ch. v. 15, 16; see also vers. 42, 43). 3. He appears to have been embarrassed by his fame rather than gratified, and his work seems to have been hindered rather than helped by it (see John vi. 15). And it is obvious that, as his great and high purpose was one which was far removed from the superficial and worldly hopes of the people, popularity or fame would not further but rather retard the work he had in hand. It is worth no man's while to be seriously concerned about his fame. To seek for and strive after an honourable reputation is what every man owes to himself, to his family, to his Church, to his Master. But no man need concern himself greatly about the acquisition of fame. (1) It is obvious that only a very small minority of mankind can attain it; therefore any extensive endeavour after it *must* end in disappointment. (2) It is of very slight intrinsic worth; for it is possessed and enjoyed by the bad as well as by the good, by the notorious as well as by the celebrated. (3) It does not usually crown its hero until he has gone where it will no longer affect him; useless to the martyred patriot himself, however valuable to his country, is the costly tomb, or the splendid monument, or the elaborate elegy contributed to his memory. (4) Its effect on living men is exceedingly doubtful; it may gladden and stimulate, but it may elate and injure.

II. THE EXCELLENCY OF POWER. "Power belongeth unto God" (Ps. lxii. 12). And power belonged to the Son of God. "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit" (ver. 14). 1. Christ *possessed and exerted* power—the power of the prophet, speaking truth; "his word was with power" (ver. 32; Matt. vii. 28, 29); the power of the Son of God, working miracles; the power of holiness and innocency (John vii. 30; xviii. 6); the power of love and sympathy, attaching disciples, men and women, to himself with bonds of affection that no dangers or sufferings could break. 2. He *aspired after* other and still higher power than any he exercised—the power which could only be gained by a sacrificial death. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." That pure and holy aspiration has been and shall be gloriously fulfilled. It is well worth our while to seek after a true, living, spiritual power. (1) It is attainable by us all; it is within the reach of those who seek it in the fellowship and the service of Christ, and who ask it of the Spirit of God. (2) It is of real intrinsic worth; it is a Divine, a Christ-like, an angelic thing; it is a source of benefit and

blessing to mankind. (3) It will enlarge our heritage both here and hereafter; for to every man God will give sacred and blessed opportunity of service "according to his several ability."—C.

Ver. 40.—*The healing Saviour.* This interesting picture had evidently been impressed upon the minds of the apostolic witnesses, for all the evangelists record the fact that the occurrence took place as the sun was setting, or in the evening of the day. It was, indeed, a sight to be long remembered. Who can imagine the gratitude and joy which filled the hearts of husbands and wives, parents and children, as they left that gracious presence and returned to their homes in health and strength?

I. THE SUPREME MALADY. The malady of maladies from which we suffer is *sin.* For sin is to the soul just what sickness is to the body. 1. *Its essential nature.* It is the radical disorder of the human spirit. The faculties of the soul, instead of doing that for which they were created, are helpless or are perverted, so that the man himself no longer walks with God, no longer speaks his praise, no longer works in his cause. The soul that was meant to find its life and its heritage in revering, honouring, rejoicing in, serving, glorifying God, is out of all happy relation with him, cannot do his will, may not even know who he is. Everything is in a state of disorder and helplessness. 2. *Its various forms.* As there are "divers diseases" of the flesh, as the sickness of the body takes a variety of forms—blindness, paralysis, fever, etc.—so does sin in the soul and in the life of man. It may appear as doubt, or disbelief, or even impious denial of God; or as the deliberate and determined rejection of his claims; or as a flagrant violation of his laws; or as a guilty inattention to his voice as he speaks to us in conscience, or in his Word, or in his Son; or as a prolonged and presumptuous procrastination, ever delaying to do what is recognized as the right and the wise thing.

II. THE ONLY CURE. As many of these sick ones knew not what else to do, to whom else they could apply; as they felt that the ordinary remedies and the human skill accessible to them must prove unavailing, and that, if this new and wonderful Healer did not help them, they must bear their burden of pain and helplessness through their future days; so may we feel respecting the supreme malady. Nothing merely human will prove to be a cure. Only a Divine hand can heal these deep wounds, these fatal ills. And how does Jesus Christ prove himself the one Healer of the heart? 1. By showing us our sin in its true light, as a grievous wrong done to our heavenly Father, and thus filling our souls with sorrow and shame concerning it. 2. By offering himself as that Divine One through whom it may be forgiven, and we be restored to the favour and friendship of God. 3. By leading us in every path of holiness and purity, and forming in us a righteous character and an obedient spirit.

III. AN EFFICACIOUS METHOD. "He laid his hands on every one of them." The touch of that Divine hand communicated health to the body, and at the same time hope and joy to the heart. It was not absolutely necessary that he should touch them; he could "speak the word only," and the patient would be healed. But he preferred to do so; it brought him, the Healer, into close and loving contact with those whom he was healing. We, too, in our way, are healers after Christ. We aspire to move through our life, dispensing health and happiness to them that are sick and sad of soul. If we fail in part to do this, may it not be because we do not get into close enough contact with those whom we are endeavouring to bless? We must learn to be like our Lord, and *lay our hands on every one of them,* and then shall we be most likely to heal them.—C.

Vers. 1—13.—*The temptation of Christ.* From the baptism of Jesus we now pass to his temptation. In the baptism he received, as we have seen, three gifts from the Father—the guarantee of a *perfect revelation* of the Father's will, of a *perfect inspiration* to do that revealed will, and of an *assurance of Sonship* during the trying ordeal. We are now to notice three temptations, corresponding very accurately to these three gifts, and so presenting in most artistic fashion the great drama of Messiah's life. But before taking them up as they are here presented by Luke, let us direct our attention to one or two preliminary matters. And first we must notice that Jesus was "led," or, as Mark puts it still more graphically, was "driven" of the Spirit into the wilderness (Mark i. 12). This clearly implies that our Lord did not "court tempta-

tion," nor rush with a light heart into it, nor shirk it, but accepted bravely what was *forced* upon him. It is only in such a spirit that we can hope successfully to resist it. There is no promise of Scripture to sustain any one who rushes madly into temptation. But, secondly, we observe that a great baptism of the Spirit is usually to prepare the recipient for some victoriously-to-be-met temptation. Jesus went to the wilderness filled with the Holy Ghost, and so was enabled to vanquish his tempter. Thirdly, the scene of the temptation is significant. While its exact location is not indicated, its general characteristics are. It was some *wilderness*, where nature affords no food or sustenance to man. What a contrast to the happy garden where the first Adam was tempted! Messiah meets the tempter in the most trying circumstances, and the tempter's defeat there is promise of his defeat everywhere. Moreover, Mark tells us he was "with the wild beasts" (Mark i. 13). It is a new Daniel braving the lions and subduing them. Fourthly, we must observe that he is here tempted in his *public* capacity, as Messiah. He had doubtless been tempted previously as a private individual; he had been urged by Satan most probably to leave the privacy of Nazareth for a more public position, and had put away all these temptations manfully. Now that he has dedicated himself as Messiah in the Jordan, he must undergo corresponding temptations.

I. NOTICE THE TEMPTATION THROUGH APPETITE. (Vers. 3, 4.) After forty days' fast, during which time he was suffering temptation from Satan, he finds himself famishing. The spectacle in the wilderness and among the wild beasts is, therefore, that of a *famishing Messiah*. Never was he nearer death than on this occasion, except when death actually came. It is at this juncture that Satan first tempts him through his hunger. He claims to be the Son of God; this assurance was given him in his baptism; and as the Son he believes he possesses, though as yet he has not exercised, miraculous power. Let him, then, use his power for self-preservation, which is the first law of nature, and transform the stones of the wilderness into bread. The fallacy which underlies this temptation is one to which men are now most prone, viz. that "men must live," and then this false principle passes through degrees of comparison, and men say to themselves they must, if possible, *live well*, and, lastly, they must, if possible, live *very* well. But is it necessary that any of us should live? Who has given us this revelation? May not God's revelation be that the best thing we could do would be to *die* for truth and righteousness? Hence our Lord, instead of listening to the voice of appetite, declares his resolve to listen to the voice of God, and upon that revelation he will live. "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." It is surely instructive in these times, when appetite is accepted by many as man's one certain revelation, to have our Lord directing our attention to a higher revelation and a more sustaining voice. Bread cannot sustain the whole man; it can only prop up the physical nature; but the spiritual needs other food and higher help, and finds it in God's Word alone! Amid the fierce struggle for bread, let us listen to him who speaks about the better bread which comes out of the mouth of God!

II. NOTICE THE TEMPTATION THROUGH AMBITION. (Vers. 5—8.) Matthew puts this temptation last, instead of here, and in this is probably chronologically more accurate than Luke. But we need not transpose it in order to profit by it. Messiah, then, though famishing, abides by the revelation of God rather than make a miraculous banquet in the wilderness. But of the revelation the Father gave him this was a chief part—that he was to become Conqueror and Ruler of the world! Universal empire was, therefore, his legitimate ambition. It is here that Satan tempts him. Taking him to some mountain-top, he shows him, in some miraculous fashion, all the kingdoms of the inhabited world in a moment of time. Next he claims to be the rightful ruler of these kingdoms, but is willing to make a bargain with the ambitious Messiah that, if he will only acknowledge his sovereignty and pay him the homage due to earthly kings, all the kingdoms shall be made over to him. The temptation here is to gratify ambition at the cheapest rate. No self-denial, no self-sacrifice, no consuming spirit, shall be needful, but simply a little homage paid to the world's prince. It was such a bargain as a worldly mind would have welcomed eagerly. But Jesus refused the terms. He would not acknowledge Satan to be the world's rightful ruler. He regarded him as a usurper whom he had come to depose. Hence, in impatience

with the arch-fiend, our Lord exclaimed, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The question in the first temptation was that of *revelation*, corresponding to the first of the baptismal gifts; the question in this temptation is that of *inspiration*, the spirit of service, and corresponding to the second of the baptismal gifts. Jesus will not render any homage to the world's betrayer, but will serve God alone! Once more may we see the grand spirit of self-sacrifice which this implies. Jesus will seek and obtain a universal empire, but by making no truce with the world; rather would he himself suffer unto death and be followed by myriads of martyrs, than gratify a poor ambition in Satan's suggested and worldly way.

III. NOTICE THE TEMPTATION TO PRESUMPTION AND OSTENTATION. (Vers. 9—12.) As Messiah Jesus must consider what plan would be best for beginning his public work. This must have been with him a distinct subject of thought. And now Satan suggests that if he precipitated himself from the pinnacle of the temple into the court, and did so with impunity as God's Son, the people could not but hail him as the promised Messiah. He should put his Sonship, the tempter suggests, to the test. He should test the promise about angels bearing up the believer and preventing him from dashing his foot against a stone. It was a temptation to carry faith into presumption, and becoming ostentatious in doing so. Our Lord, then, having resolved to live by faith, is as firmly resolved to avoid presumption. He will not tempt his Father by claiming support in ostentatious circumstances. And so he repels the insinuation, and resolves not to presume upon his Sonship. Hence we find that, instead of entering in any such spirit upon his work, he enters upon it publicly when he drives the traffickers from the temple. It was an amazing method of beginning Messianic work, and yet it was the best way.[1] These temptations have their little counterparts in our own experience. We are tempted through appetite, through ambition, and through presumption. We must resist the enemy in the Master's spirit. The apt quotations from the Divine Word show where the sword of the Lord lies, and it is for us not to let it rust in a napkin, like Goliath's at the tabernacle, but to have it in constant readiness for active service and faithful resistance.

And now, in conclusion, we have to notice the fact that angels came and ministered unto Jesus when the crisis was past. We know not what they brought to him—ambrosial food, the corn of heaven, perhaps; at all events the most delightful food of which he ever partook. Then, like Elijah, he went in the strength of the food received, not, indeed, *to* the mount of God and the wilderness, but *from* the wilderness to the busy haunts of men, and in the power of the Spirit. Satan, meanwhile, having "completed" the temptation, having done his worst to make him fall, leaves him for a season free. It must have been a heaven of happiness to be consciously free from his incessant wiles and snares, and to have *won* the freedom. So may we in our little measure win some respite from the enemy, if we faithfully follow our Lord in resisting temptation!—R. M. E.

Vers. 14—30.—*Christ's sermon in Nazareth.* The temptation of Christ strengthened all the graces within him, so that he felt himself prepared, on returning from the wilderness, for public work. Luke does not take us, as John does in his Gospel, back to the Jordan; nor does he take us to the marriage in Cana of Galilee, where the wonderful works began (John ii. 1—13). He prefers to sum up for us his early Galilæan ministry in two verses, before proceeding to a detailed account of his visit to Nazareth and his rejection by his countrymen. Let us consider—

I. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HIS PUBLIC REPUTATION BEFORE APPEARING IN NAZARETH. (Vers. 14, 15.) Had he gone to his own city first without a reputation, he would not have received the attention he did. Jesus knew that a prophet has no honour in his own country; he knew that he need not go among his old companions without having achieved something remarkable; hence he made a name for himself in other parts of Galilee before advancing to the difficult task at his old home. And the method he pursued was significant. He did not create rival institutions to the existing Churches. He went into the synagogues and availed himself of the opportunities they offered.

[1] Woolsey's 'Religion of the Present and the Future,' pp. 24—41; cf. also Ullmann's 'Sinlessness of Jesus,' pp. 123—144, 264—291, etc.

He read the Word, expounded it, and made a reputation for himself as a popular *Teacher*. Of course, along with his teaching, there was a measure of miracle. But his wonderful works were merely to secure increased attention to his still more wonderful words. His expositions of truth were really the important element to which all else was but subsidiary. It was, therefore, with an established reputation that he advanced to Nazareth to test his countrymen as to their cordiality towards him.

II. LET US NEXT CONSIDER HIS VISIT TO NAZARETH. (Vers. 16—21.) We are not informed on what day of the Jewish week he came to Nazareth; but we are told what happened on the first sabbath day after his arrival. We shall notice the significant facts as they are told us by Luke. 1. *He shared in the public worship.* If any one ever had a right to absent himself on the ground of knowing more than others could tell him, it was surely Jesus. Yet we find him subjecting himself to family training, and putting all honour he could upon social and public worship. Moreover, it was his "custom." The habit of waiting upon God at the sanctuary has thus the highest warrant. In this, as in all else, our Lord is the perfect Example. But: 2. *He took part in public worship.* The Jews in their synagogues seem to have encouraged greater freedom than Church forms now admit of. They welcomed the help of young men as readers, and took exhortation from strangers when they happened to be present. Our Lord, then, took the place of reader on this occasion, and, as Isaiah's prophecy was handed to him, he selected as his text the notable passage about the mission of Messiah. The Anointed One was sent to "preach the gospel to the poor," etc. And here it is instructive to notice (1) the *class* Messiah gathers round him. Not those whom the world would choose, but the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised, the imprisoned! What a policy to inaugurate! Again, (2) it is significant what *treatment* he gives them. He gives the gospel, not wealth, to the poor; healing, not freedom from trial, to the broken-hearted; freedom from sin to the captives; the recovering of sight to the blind; liberty to the bruised in spirit; and acceptance and jubilee joy to all imprisoned ones. In short, it is spiritual comfort over and above physical which he brings to them! It is here that the world's wisdom fails. It may do something to alleviate physical distress, but is as helpless as the doctor in *Macbeth* in "ministering to minds diseased." 3. *He embodied and illustrated his text.* When he had read the text he gave the book back to the minister and sat down before the congregation, and proceeded to expound the passage. He had to speak of himself. He was the Person referred to in it. No wonder the eyes of all were fastened on him. The Anointed One was in their midst, and he was ready to heal the broken-hearted and to work the wonders in the spiritual realm which were so important. The exposition was really the embodiment of blessing in his own Person. The Healer was there, the great Physician of souls.

III. LET US NEXT CONSIDER THE EFFECT OF HIS SERMON. (Vers. 22, 23.) The first effect was wonder and admiration. He had evidently interested them by his spiritual exposition. No such sermon had ever been heard before in Nazareth. It was a case of ministerial joy at the glad reception of a message.[1] But if these were the lights of joy in the picture, they were speedily followed by the shadows of ministerial disappointment. Their admiration gave way before familiarity. They began to say, "Is not this Joseph's Son?" They knew his antecedents, and so will put the worst construction possible upon his work. But the contempt of familiarity was not their only danger; they imagined that, as his countrymen, they were entitled to demand such miraculous credentials as he had given elsewhere. He had lived among them for the most of thirty years a sinless life, the greatest of all miracles in a sinful world; but they demand something more, and think that he will have but a sickly reputation if he does not accede to their request. The physician who cannot cure himself will not be in much demand to cure others; so if Jesus will not, by a miraculous display at Nazareth, establish his reputation which familiarity is undermining, they are prepared to say it is because he cannot. The mistake they make is in forgetting that Nazareth had no right to the treatment of Capernaum, since it had thirty years of the sinlessness of Jesus, which the seaside town had not.

IV. CONSIDER OUR LORD'S SOVEREIGN REFUSAL OF THEIR DEMAND. (Vers. 24—27.) The notion of the Nazarenes was that they had a *right* to a miraculous display from

[1] Cf. Gerok's 'Aus Ernster Zeit,' s. 147.

Christ. As Jews, and as his own townspeople, they fancied they had a claim which could not be got over. This self-righteous spirit must be put down. Hence our Lord declares, in the first place, that "no prophet is accepted in his own country." To this law of limited influence through familiarity Jesus himself has to bow. *It is the principle which secures a missionary enterprise.* Men are more influential away from home than they can ever be at home. Better leave the plain of Shinar than wait only to have one's tongue confounded and one's influence gone. But, besides, our Lord from history recalls two illustrations of God in his sovereignty passing all the Jews by and selecting Gentiles and outsiders for blessing. The first case was in Elijah's time, when many an Israelitish widow was famishing for want of bread; but none of them was visited by the prophet, or got her barrel of meal miraculously replenished, as did the heathen widow at Sarepta. Again, there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, but they were all passed over, and Naaman, the Syrian general, was cured. It was in both instances to show that Jews, as such, had no claim upon God's bounty, who could, if he pleased, pass them all by. This humiliation is one of the great lessons we must all learn if we are to profit by Christ's salvation. Divine sovereignty is to humiliate in order to exalt; but if sovereignty is denied to God, the curse comes instead.

V. CONSIDER THE SAD ISSUE OF THE VISIT. (Vers. 28—30.) The Nazarenes are filled with wrath. They will not accept the invitation, but will contend for their rights, so called. So indignant are they as to meditate his destruction. Hence they take him towards the brow of the hill, with the intention of casting him headlong over it. It was a diabolical attempt. It was frustrated, however, by the majestic bearing of the Redeemer. He went through them by simple majesty of bearing, and they dare not touch him. Over the hills he passed in judicial separation from the misguided city. And now we are surely taught by this history not to be surprised if we are apparently unsuccessful in our work. It was the same with the Master. All, in such circumstances, we can do is to lay the truth of God before men's minds, and show them at once their *unworthiness to receive it*, and their *responsibility in rejecting it.* Moreover, if old acquaintances do not receive our testimony with that eagerness and respect we imagine it deserves, let us remember that our Master was subject himself to the same law, and accepted the situation. Patience under disappointment is the great lesson of comfort from such a passage.—R. M. E.

Vers. 31—44.—*Our Lord's labours at Capernaum.* As Nazareth knew not the day of her visitation, and had done her best to make away with Jesus, he had no alternative but to make another place his centre. Capernaum, a city situated on the lake of Galilee, and through which the Eastern caravans were accustomed to pass, is selected by him as the most suitable head-quarters for his Galilæan ministry. Accordingly, he came down from the uplands, where Nazareth lay, to this seaport, and there began his missionary enterprise. And here we have—

I. THE CHARACTER OF HIS PREACHING. (Vers. 31, 32.) Entering on the sabbath days into the synagogue, he taught with authority and with success. His teaching was a great contrast to that of the scribes. They seem to have contented themselves with quoting authorities. Unless they could back up their views by some great name, they were not sure about their doctrines. It was a prodigious use of commentators which they indulged in. But Jesus came and preached what he himself knew as a matter of certainty. There was a directness and "dead certainty" about his utterances which struck all the hearers as something new. And surely it is on this line that preachers still will find the path of safety. What we preach ought to be experience, the verities of our own spiritual life. And this preaching of certainties had its due effect in spiritual power. The word went home to the hearers' hearts—they had never heard truth so clearly presented before; and so they were lost in wonder and astonishment. The secret of success lies here. It is not by radiating a series of uncertainties upon men; it is not by bolstering men up in "honest doubt" and leaving them in the haze, that men will be won to what is high and holy. It is by telling them what we have learned ourselves—the glorious certainties of spiritual experience. Like the psalmist, we must gather men around us to tell them what God has done for our souls. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and speaketh well!

II. OUR LORD DEMONSTRATED HIS POWER OVER DEVILS AS WELL AS OVER MEN. (Vers. 33—37.) In the synagogue there happened to be an unfortunate man possessed by what is called an "unclean devil;" his "inspirations" from this unhappy source being perhaps of a lustful and sensual character. The possession of men by demons was a struggle upon the diabolical spirit's part for a physical instrument to bring him into relations with the sensible and material world. The humanity of the man became the slave or hack of the demon. He used the man's voice to utter his unholy thoughts, and reduced the poor subject to utter wretchedness. The presence of the holy Saviour aroused the demon's fears. He saw that his hour of judgment had come; and so, as a last resort, he tried to injure the reputation of Jesus by bearing witness to his holy character. There are some people from whom it is not desirable to hold certificates or receive testimonials. And in this appeal to Jesus he speaks for the man as well as for himself, as if he had a commission to do so. "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?" etc. We have thus set before us: 1. The *separating power of sin.* The fellowship of the holy is not desired. 2. The *inherent dread of judgment.* The demon felt he deserved destruction. 3. The *overweening sense of success in sin.* The demon imagined that the poor possessed one would be involved in his own destruction. And now Jesus first *silences* the spirit, indicating that he desires no such witnesses; and, secondly, commands him to come out of the possessed one. In this way the demon is bidden back to that spiritual realm which he seemed so anxious to escape. There is nothing for it but to obey Christ. In doing so, however, he does his *worst* upon the poor possessed one; he throws him down, and to all appearance has once more the mastery over his prey. It is a last and unsuccessful effort. The man is found to have come unscathed through the ordeal. The restoration of human nature to freedom from demoniacal temptation is one great object of the Saviour's work. Clothing men in their right mind again, enabling them to think and act for themselves, and to resist the subtle temptations to impurity and sin,—this is a glorious function of the Holy One of God! The result of the miracle was the recognition of Jesus as the Sovereign of that spiritual world below man, from which he is liable to assault. His mighty word not only controlled human hearts, but extended to demons too. They had to obey his commands, no matter how loath they might be to do so. And this should comfort us in our temptations.

III. OUR LORD CARRIES ON IN PETER'S HOUSEHOLD THE HEALING WORK WHICH HE HAD EXERCISED IN THE PUBLIC CONGREGATION. (Vers. 38, 39.) Peter's mother-in-law was ill of a great fever; and when he was come in they besought him for her. We are thus taught that our Lord likes to be asked for the blessings he is so ready to afford. Prayer is the *natural* cry of need, or of intercession, to One who is able to meet man's difficulties and bless him. And so our Lord, being besought, goes to the patient, rebukes the fever, takes her by the hand, and lo! it leaves her; and she rose to the activities of health again. Her ministration showed the immediate and complete character of the cure, and also the gratitude which should characterize one who is saved by Jesus. And are we not thus taught that we should bring our fevered souls to Jesus as the great Physician? He can take away the fever instantaneously. There is nothing so wonderful as the way in which we regain spiritual health at the throne of grace. But let us see to it that it leads to ministration. He gives us back our health that we may use it for his glory and the benefit of those about us.

IV. OUR LORD IS NEXT SEEN TAKING DISEASES AND POSSESSED ONES BY WHOLESALE, AND HEALING THEM. (Vers. 40, 41.) At sunset, when the sabbath ended, and when under the friendly shades of night the poor sick and deformed ones could conveniently be brought to him, he finds an immense opportunity confronting him. Peter's house is turned into a consulting hospital, and, like famous physicians, he is well-nigh overwhelmed with work. Possessed ones are also brought to him; and the demons adopt the same plan as the one noticed already—they begin to testify to his Messiahship and Sonship. This mass of suffering humanity he takes in hand, and with infallible certainty heals them every one. He accomplishes the healing, too, in the most *sympathetic* fashion, laying his tender hand on each, and conveying through contact the needful blessing. It was truly "a night much to be remembered" by all these sons and daughters of affliction whom Jesus thus lovingly healed! As for the demons, on the other hand, they receive nothing from him but rebuke. He will not

have their testimony to his nature or his mission. At the same time, he shows his sovereignty over them in dooming them to silence and solitude, at least so far as possessing men was concerned.

V. OUR LORD SHOWS US HIS NEED OF RETIREMENT AFTER LABOUR, AND ALSO WHAT HIS GREAT COMMISSION WAS. (Vers. 42—44.) After these mighty works he feels the need of retirement to commune with God, and keep his soul in proper tune for further work. If Jesus felt the need of prayer, how presumptuous in minor minds to excuse themselves from it! They seem to have given him an invitation to settle in Capernaum. And if he had, he would have had a famous physician's practice, doors besieged from morning to night, and no time for any other work. Hence he resolved to itinerate rather than settle down. His wandering from place to place secured him from overwork of a purely *physical* character, and enabled him to be the *Missionary* he was meant to be. It is an interesting question why he did not make Palestine a healthful land from end to end. He might have organized deputations and sought out all the sick, and made the land free from all disease and suffering. But while he healed all who came or were brought to him, and sent disciples forth on similar errands, he did not undertake this wholesale cure. And two answers may be given in the way of valid reason about it. In the first place, the people did not deserve such a blessing, and would not likely have been the better for it. A world of sinful men would not be improved if they were all made and kept healthy men. Health of soul and perfect health of body are to synchronize in the great future which lies before us. But secondly, if he had undertaken this *physical* work, he would have lost his opportunities of *purely spiritual* work, the preaching of the gospel, for which more especially he had come. Hence we must admire his resolve to be an itinerant Missionary rather than a settled and famous Physician. Preaching is really the highest work of man, if it is done conscientiously. The sphere is spiritual, and the results are for evermore. It is well to magnify the office as magnified by the Master.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

When St. Luke compiled his Gospel, many of the circumstances connected with the early relations of the leaders of Christianity with their Founder were so well known, and had been so often repeated, that it seemed unnecessary to rehearse them afresh; hence to us the seeming abruptness of the introduction of Simon (Peter), James, and John in the scene now about to be related. In the preceding, the healing of Simon's wife's mother of a great fever is related without any explanation, as though Simon Peter's connection with the Lord was a fact too well known to require any comment or explanation.

The association of Jesus and these chosen men seems to have commenced as follows: Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew (sons of Jona), John and James (the sons of Zebedee and Salome), belonged to fisher families dwelling on the banks of the Lake of Gennesaret. They seemed to have been fast friends, at times even partners in their occupation. Sharers with many others of the youth of Israel of their time, in a passionate hope that the hour of the long-promised deliverance from the yoke of their foreign oppressors was at hand, the four became disciples of the Baptist, and by him they were referred to Jesus, who in mysterious but exalted terms was pointed out by the great desert preacher, John, as "the Lamb of God," the Glorious, the Expected One (John i. 35—43). They joined the Master at the bidding of John, and for a time were associated with him. Still at first they were only with him apparently at times, leaving him and returning to their homes and occupations, waiting for some definite and imperative summons to join his cause permanently. The summons in question is related in this chapter. The time was now come when the Lord deemed it fitting that he should surround himself with a company of disciples or pupils who should be constant witnesses of his works, hearers of his words, and thus be trained up for the great task of continuing his mission when he should have returned to his home in heaven.

We read these Gospels as the story of the Master's life often without thinking how much of that life is never told. After all, we only possess a few representative incidents—the events which the twelve and their first friends had selected as the themes of their sermons and discourses in Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, and the great centres of early Christian activity. Here, after the story of one sabbath day's blessed toil in Capernaum, follows a sentence which passes over, in a word or two, many days of quiet teaching in populous towns and villages of the once rich Galilee, and then the evangelist gives us with some detail the account of a morning by the lake, where he preached from a boat to the crowds on the shore, and then went out a-fishing, and, after the fishing, bade the fishermen leave all and come with him, and he would give them a new work.

Ver. 1.—**And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God.** His fame as a great Teacher was evidently now firmly established. If it were known that he intended speaking in public, a crowd of listeners would gather quickly round him, whether in the synagogues, or by the lake-shore, or in the market-place. **He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret.** On this occasion, as he taught by the quiet lake waters, the throng was so great that he borrowed the fishing-boat of one of his friends, and, just pushing out from the shore, spoke to the multitude from the little craft as it rocked on the wavelets of the lake. Dean Stanley calls it "the most sacred sheet of water which the earth contains." The rabbinical derivation is interesting: "*Gannesarim*, garden of princes;" but it is more probable that *Gennesaret* is but a reproduction of the old Hebrew name *Chinneroth* (Josh. xii. 3), so called from its harplike shape. It is a beautiful sheet of water, twelve or thirteen miles long and nearly seven broad at one portion of the lake. The Jordan flows through it. In our Lord's time it was surrounded by the richest and most populous district of the Holy Land; large and flourishing towns were built along its shores. Capernaum, as has been said, was the junction of the great roads leading from Syria and the far East to the Mediterranean on the west, and Jerusalem and Egypt on the south. The lake was famous for its fish, and was crowded with all descriptions of craft. The whole scene is now changed. Scarcely a rude boat is ever seen on the blue silent waters. Desolate ruins fringe the deserted shores, with here and there a crumbling mud village, inhabited by the poorest and least enterprising of peasants, so sadly changed is this beautiful and wealthy district, which the rabbis used to love to speak of as the one among the seven seas of Canaan which God had reserved for himself.

Ver. 3.—**And he sat down,** as in the synagogue of Capernaum—the usual attitude of the Jewish preachers.

Ver. 4.—**And let down your nets for a draught.** Not necessarily a miraculous draught; it was probably a supernatural knowledge which the Lord had of a shoal of fish to be found in the spot indicated by him to the fishermen. Tristram ('Natural History of the Bible') says, "The thickness of the shoals of fish is almost incredible to any one who has not witnessed them. They often cover an area of more than an acre, and when the fish move slowly forward in a mass, and are rising out of the water, they are packed so close together that it appears as if a heavy rain was beating down on the surface of the water."

Ver. 5.—**Master.** The word in the original so rendered is not *Rabbi*, as in the other Gospels, but ἐπιστατα, Teacher. The Jewish term would not have been understood by the Gentile reader for whom the story was especially intended.

Ver. 6.—**And their net brake.** Augustine beautifully compares the broken and torn net to *the Church that now is*, full of divisions and rents; the net unrent and untorn will be the *Church of the future*, which will know no schisms.

Ver. 10.—**Fear not.** A feeling of intense overpowering awe on a sudden came on Simon after listening to the words and seeing this last act of power which so closely affected him. The very fish of his native lake, then, were subject to this strange holy Man! This was no mortal, thought the fisherman, and he fell at the Master's feet. "Finding as it does its parallel in almost all manifestations of a Divine or even an angelic presence, it (this awful fear) must be owned to contain a mighty, because an instructive, witness for the sinfulness of man's nature, out of which it comes to pass that any near revelation from the heavenly world fills the children of men, even the holiest among them, with terror and amazement, yea, sometimes with the expectation of death itself" (Archbishop Trench, 'Introduction to the Epistles to the Seven Churches'). The same "Fear not" ("Be not afraid") was uttered on like occasions to Isaiah (vi. 7), to Daniel (x. 12), and several times during the earthly ministry was said to the disciples, and for the last time the reassuring words were spoken by the Redeemer after the Ascension to his own dear follower, John, who could

not bear the sight of the glorious majesty of his risen Lord. **Thou shalt catch men.** The imagery contained in those words of the Master to his fishermen-followers was, of course, drawn from the late scene. Their failure in catching fish, their Teacher's marvellous success, the net bursting with the great catch of silvery fish; the Lord's strange prophetic words which accompanied their call to his service,—all would in after-years often come up before the disciples in their hours of alternating failure and success in the mighty task he had set them to do. The great Fisherman, Christ; his imitators and servants, fishers; the world of men pictured as fish,—were ever favourite images for the pencil, the graving tool, and the pen of the Christian artist and writer of the first ages of the faith. One of the earliest extant hymns, for instance, of the Church, by Clement of Alexandria, dwells on the image. The words are addressed to Christ—

> "Fisher of men, the blest,
> Out of the world's unrest,
> Out of sin's troubled sea,
> Taking us, Lord, to thee;
> Out of the waves of strife
> With bait of blissful life;
> Drawing thy nets to shore,
> With choicest fish, good store."
> (*Hymn of Clement of Alexandria.*)

The favourite Christian monogram of the fish, carved on so many tombs in the Catacombs, belongs to the same imagery—the ιχθυς

ιησους χριστος θεου υιος σωτηρ
ι χ θ υ σ

Vers. 12—16.—*The leper is healed in a certain city.*

Ver. 12.—**When he was in a certain city.** From the scene in the boat on the lake with the fishermen, Luke abruptly passes to another memorable incident which took place probably soon after—memorable because it is the first recorded instance of Jesus' contact with that most terrible of earthly maladies, leprosy. The certain city was probably the town of *Hattim*, for we read in St. Matthew that the famous cure took place as the Lord was coming down from the mount of Beatitudes. (This will be spoken of in its place in ch. vi.) **Behold a man full of leprosy.** The expression "behold" reproduces exactly the scene as the eye-witness remembered it. There were many apparently with the Master on that occasion; but following him, suddenly, as he went on before the crowd, one of those ghastly victims of the frightful disease stood before him, apparently having eluded observation, for they were not allowed to appear in the ordinary haunts of men. The unhappy man fell down and knelt before the great Physician, of whom he may have heard so much, and asks him to exercise his mighty power on the dread malady which was eating away his life. The leper evidently had no doubt whatever of the *power* of Jesus; he was only anxious as to whether he had the *will* to cure him. The whole question respecting the exact nature of the disease is a vexed one. The word has been used with varying extent of meaning. As far as we can gather, the disease in its worst form seems to have been a progressive decay arising from the poisoning of the blood. The face and different members of the body were attacked and gradually destroyed, till the sufferer became a hideous spectacle, and literally fell to pieces. It is much disputed whether or not the malady in any of its varied developments and stages was contagious. The strict separation which in well-nigh all forms of the disease was rigidly insisted on would seem at all events to point to the conclusion that, in the popular estimation, it certainly was so; some phases of the malady, however, appear to have been considered as perfectly free from contagious effect—for instance, Naaman, the captain of the host of Syria, was a leper. It is not conceivable that one who was infected with so grave a malady, considered incurable, would, if contagious, have been permitted to have exercised a function which would have brought him into constant contact with masses of his fellow-countrymen. These cases, however, were apparently few in number, and those afflicted with what was usually called leprosy were rigidly separated from their fellows, not only to dwell apart, but positively forbidden to approach the dwellings of men. In the Egyptian legends of the Exodus, the Israelites were said to have been expelled *because they were lepers.*

Ver. 13.—**And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.** St. Mark adds here, "being touched with compassion." The Redeemer, at the sight of the man's awful wretchedness—wasting away, shunned by all men, dragging on a hopeless, aimless, weary life—in his Divine pity, with a sudden impulse tosses aside all considerations of ceremonial uncleanness or contagion, and lays his hand on the miserable sufferer from whom all shrank, and his word of power exclaimed, "I will: be thou clean." St. Ambrose writes here how "Jesus, because he is the Lord of the Law, does not obey the Law, but makes the Law." "Here Jesus obeys that Divine eternal law of compassion, in its sudden impulse, which is older and grander than the written Law" (Farrar). It is observable that in these sudden cases, in which the common brotherhood of man was involved, the nobler spirits of

Israel ever rose above all consideration of law and custom, and, putting aside all legal, orthodox restriction, obeyed at once the sovereign dictates of the heart. So Elijah and Elisha, those true saints of God, shrank not from touching the dead.

Ver. 14.—**And he charged him to tell no man.** We find this desire of Jesus to check publicity after he had worked one of his great works, especially in the earlier part of his ministry. Chrysostom attributes this to the Master's regard for the one who had been healed, desiring that his gratitude to God for the mercy vouchsafed to him should not be frittered away in words, in idle talk with curious persons. It is, however, more likely that the Master wished to stem rather than to fan the tide of popularity which such mighty works would be sure to excite among the people. What he determined to check was a false and mistaken desire among the people to make him king.

Ver. 15.—**But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.** It is evident that his wishes and commands were neglected, possibly out of a mistaken feeling of gratitude. The result was that his work of teaching was hindered by the crowds who resorted to him at once as a Physician of extraordinary power. But he had graver and much more important work before him than even the blessed task of relieving suffering. So he withdrew himself, says our evangelist, and again spent a short season in solitude and prayer.

Vers. 17—26.—*The healing of the paralyzed man.*

Ver. 17.—**And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem.** Again an interval of time. The fame of the new Teacher had spread rapidly. One day, some time after the events told in the last section, the Master was sitting in the house apparently of some one of consideration in Capernaum, and, as usual, was teaching. Grouped round him were a different audience to the traders and fishermen of the lake-city; prominent men of the leading religious party in the state, not only from Galilee, but from Jerusalem and other Judæan cities, such as Hebron, as well as learned doctors of the Law. These had been drawn from curiosity, some doubtless by higher motives, to hear for themselves the teaching of this now famous Nazarene Carpenter. These do not appear to have been actuated with the jealous malignity of some of those later deputations from the Jerusalem Sanhedrin and schools. The house was thronged within, and the crowd pressed round the doors. In the course of the quiet teaching, took place the incident which gave rise to one of the Lord's great sayings—an utterance so important that it evidently had been chosen by the apostles as a frequent theme or text in the preaching of the first days.

Vers. 18, 19.—**And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.** So far there was nothing very unusual in the incident. These healings must have been of common occurrence with our Lord. The poor sufferer and his friends, intensely anxious for an interview with One whom they justly regarded as the great Physician, were rightly confident that they had but to see the Master, to state their case, and to receive the blessing which they sought. On this occasion it seemed impossible to get at the merciful Healer. Now or never, they thought. He might, as he had done before, withdraw himself. The chance might never recur. So they accomplished their purpose in the way narrated by the evangelist. It was evidently nothing very extraordinary—an ingenious device, nothing more; only by it the friends of the sufferer showed that they were intensely in earnest, that they were confident that the Master had both the power and the will to do what they wanted. Much has been written on the device employed on this occasion by the friends of the paralytic. Delitzsch, in his 'A Day at Capernaum,' graphically describes what must have taken place. Two bearers ascend the roof by a ladder, and by means of cords they draw up by the same way the sick man after them, assisted by two other bearers. In the middle of the terrace was a square place, open in summer to give light and air to the house, but closed with tiles during the rainy season. Having opened this passage, the bearers let down the sick man into the large inner court immediately below, where Jesus was teaching, near the cistern fixed as usual in this court. The trap-stairs, which led down from the terrace into the court, would have been too narrow for their use, and would not have taken them into the court, but into the apartments which overlooked it from all sides.

Ver. 20.—**And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.** For a moment the great Physician gave place to the Heart-reader; and the Lord spoke those strange, grand words to

give comfort and peace to the suffering, silent, sick man. Jesus read what was in the heart of the poor paralytic; his sins distressed him more than his malady; very possibly the sad infirmity had been brought about by his old dissolute life. The soul, then, must be healed first. It was for *this*, we believe, that the story of the man taken with the palsy was told and retold by the first Christian preachers, and so found a place in the three Gospel narratives—this lofty claim of the Master to forgive sins; a claim so grandly supported by a miraculous act done in the open daylight in the presence of the people.

Ver. 21.—**And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?** It is very probable that some of those who stood by, had already, at Jerusalem, witnessed by the Bethesda Pool a wonder-work done by the same Jesus on the person of an impotent man lying there waiting for the troubling of the water (John v. 5, 9), and had taken part there in an angry expostulation with the Wonder-worker, who on that occasion, in his words, "made himself equal with God" (John v. 18). We know (see ver. 17) that some of the Jerusalem scribes were present that day in the Capernaum house. Again, thought these learned Jews, "this strange Man is uttering his dread blasphemies, but *now* in even more plain terms than *there*."

Ver. 23.—**Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?** The Heart-reader hears, perhaps, the murmur as it runs round the circle, and grasping in a moment all that was in the angry hearts of these men, said aloud, that all might hear, some such words as these, "See now what I am about to do. You, in your dim short-sighted wisdom, think my forgiving this poor repentant sinner his dark past, is but an empty, meaningless form of words. See now whether what I am about to do further for him is an empty meaningless boon."

Vers. 24, 25.—**That ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.** The lookers-on, the curious, the cavillers, the friendly, too, as the unfriendly, who crowded that Capernaum house, could not see with their eyes the Redeemer's remission of the palsied man's sins. The sufferer alone was conscious that the great burden which pressed on his soul was removed at the Master's word. But all could see the miracle which followed. Any one of those present, had he dared, might have uttered the solemn absolution. None but he could surely risk, as he risked, such words which followed, and which challenged an instant and visible fulfilment. It was a strange, great claim the Master made that day, and we may be sure it and the mighty sign which followed sank deep into many a heart. We see why the memory of this day's work was treasured up so faithfully. *He took up that whereon he lay.* This could easily have been done. The bed or pallet would be nothing but a light portable framework covered with a blanket.

Ver. 26.—**We have seen strange things to-day.** The strange things (*παράδοξα*) alluded especially to the miracle which, as it were, solemnly authenticated the sublime claim to forgiveness of sins on the part of Jesus.

Vers. 27—29.—*The call of Levi (Matthew the publican), and the feast that followed.*

Ver. 27.—**And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.** Capernaum, as has been already noticed, had become, owing to its situation, a commercial centre of no small importance. It was on the great highway from the interior of Asia, and from Damascus to the seaboard Mediterranean cities, to Jerusalem, and to Egypt. The custom-house of Capernaum and the office of inland revenue there would naturally be under the control of officials of some importance. The local trade on the lake, too, we know at that period was very large. It has been frequently asked—What specially induced our Lord to select as one of his inner circle a man whose life-work was so hateful and unpopular to the Jewish people generally? why did he include in the twelve one who, from the nature of his detested office, had lost religious caste among the Jews, and who was compelled to consort with sinners, Gentiles, and persons who were considered, either from their birth or life and associations, outside the pale of the chosen people? Various replies to this question have been suggested, such as—by this open act he threw down the gauntlet to all that powerful Pharisee class who were beginning to suspect and to mistake his teaching and liberalism. Or was his apparently strange choice dictated by a simple desire to have, in the inner circle of his devoted friends, a business man—one who could manage the affairs and regulate the economy of the little growing society? but this seems to have been done by Judas; or was it simply done in obedience to a sudden impulse from on High? None of these seems satisfactory. Surely another motive, and that a deeper

and a nobler one, suggested this enrolment of the despised publican in that glorious company of apostles. The Lord was determined to show, by this choice of his, that in his eyes all callings were equally honourable, all ways of life might lead to the city of the blessed. Never would the work ennoble the man, but only the way in which the work was done. The Baptist, as we have seen, first taught this Divine liberalism. The Baptist's Lord placed his seal of approval upon his servant's teaching by such acts as the calling of Matthew the publican, and feasting in his house with publicans and sinners.

Ver. 28.—**He left all, rose up, and followed him.** No doubt a hard and difficult bit of self-renunciation. He, at the bidding of the homeless, landless Teacher, gave up his lucrative employment, sacrificing all his life of promotion, of future wealth and position, exposing himself, doubtless, to sneers and calumny. With great truth could he re-echo his friend Peter's words, "Lo, *we* have left all, and followed thee."

Ver. 29.—**And Levi made him a great feast in his own house.** There is no doubt that this Levi was the same person as Matthew the publican (subsequently the evangelist), whose calling under precisely similar circumstances is related in the First Gospel (Matt. x.; and see Mark ii.). The name Matthew, "gift of God," was probably given to him, as that of Peter (or Cephas, "a rock") was bestowed on Simon, after his association with Jesus. The words used, "a great feast," a great company, plainly indicate that Levi (Matthew) was a person of consideration and position. **And there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.** The great company was owing to the fact that the publicans and their friends, moved by the kindness and friendship of the new Teacher, assembled at the feast in numbers out of respect to him; or, more likely, the assemblage was owing to the effort of Levi (Matthew) to bring into friendly relations his associates and friends and the new Master, for whose sake he had given up everything.

Ver. 30.—**But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples.** Many of the older authorities here omit "their" (*αὐτῶν*) before "scribes." The older authorities vary slightly in the position of the words here. The best reading and translation would give, "The Pharisees and the scribes among them"—"among them," that is, among the Capernaïtes; in other words, "They among them who were Pharisees and scribes." These scribes (Hebrew, *sopherim*), under this appellation, first appear after the Exile. Their occupation was to copy and to expound the Law. They were the recognized teachers of the Jews, and seem to have succeeded that great and influential class or order, the "sons of the prophets," originally founded by Samuel. These "sons of the prophets" are repeatedly mentioned in the books of the Old Testament which treat of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The scribes were succeeded, in the year 300 B.C., by the *tanaïm* (repeaters), under which name the scribes were officially, though apparently not popularly, known until A.D. 220, after which date these scribes were termed *amoraim*. The Talmud (Mishna and Gemara) may be said to have been the work of this great and enduring teacher order. The Talmud was finally closed in A.D. 490, by Rabbina Abina, the last of the amoraim. **Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?**

Vers. 31, 32.—**And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** This was one of those sayings of the Lord which sank very deep into the hearts of the hearers. All the three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, repeat it with very slight variations; it was evidently a favourite theme with the great first teachers who followed Christ. It has borne rich fruit in the Master's Church; for this vindication of Jesus of his conduct in going so often into the society of the moral waifs and strays of the population has been the real "foundation of all those philanthropic movements which enlist the upper classes of society in the blessed work of bending down to meet in love the lower classes, so that the snapped circle of humanity may be restored; it is the philosophy in a nutshell of all home and missionary operations" (Dr. Morrison, on Mark ii. 17).

Vers. 33—39.—*The teaching of the Lord concerning fasting.*

Ver. 33.—**And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise** the disciples of **the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?** We learn from the parallel passage in St. Mark that "they" who asked the Lord this question were the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees, who united on this occasion. These disciples of John do not seem at first to have regarded Jesus with altogether friendly feelings. Such a jealousy was only too natural, and the rigid, unbending truthfulness of the evangelists compelled them to tell the story of the way the early foundations of the truth were laid without concealment of error or mistake. The Baptist himself practised the sternest asceticism, and required doubtless of his nearest followers that they should imitate his example. The Lord's way of life, his

presence at feastings and merry-makings, his consorting with publicans, his choice of one of them as his disciple and friend, no doubt surprised and disturbed not a few of the followers of John; hence such a question as the one we are now considering, and such a querulous complaining as we hear of in the Fourth Gospel (iii. 25, 26). The practice of fasting among the Jews was as follows: In the Law of Moses only one appointed fast in the year was enjoined—that on the solemn Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 29; Numb. xxix. 7). After the Exile the *one* fast was increased to *four*. But the prophets gave no sanction to this added ritual (see Zech. vii. 1—12; viii. 19). In the time of our Lord, rigid Jews used to fast twice a week (ch. xviii. 12)—on Monday and Friday (the day on which, according to tradition, Moses went up Mount Sinai). It is evident that our Lord himself never observed or even approved of these fasts of the Pharisee sect. In the well-known and often-quoted passages, Matt. xvii. 21; Mark ix. 29; Acts x. 30; 1 Cor. vii. 5—in many of the older authorities, *the word "fasting" does not occur at all*. In the Revised Version in each of these instances "fasting" does not appear in the new text. While, then, we must unhesitatingly conclude that fasting is no rite commanded by the Blessed One, still the Church has practised it with signal advantage and profit on certain solemn occasions; but it must ever proceed from the impulse of the sorrow-stricken heart, it must be no penance or duty imposed by authority, least of all must it be regarded as pleasing in the eye of the Almighty, or in any sense a substitute for the practice of the higher virtues really loved of God—justice, mercy, and truth.

Vers. 34, 35.—**And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.** On this reply of the Lord Jesus Godet very beautifully writes, "In the midst of this feast of publicans, the heart of Jesus is overflowing with joy; it is one of the hours when his earthly life seems to his feeling like a marriage-day. But suddenly his countenance becomes overcast: the shadow of a painful vision passes across his brow: 'The days will come,' . . . said he, in a solemn tone. At the close of this nuptial week, the Bridegroom himself will be suddenly smitten and cut off; then will come the time of fasting for those who to-day are rejoicing; there will be no necessity to enjoin it. In this striking and poetic answer Jesus evidently announces his violent death." The imagery of the bridegroom is drawn from Hos. ii. 19, 20, and perhaps also from the more mystical Scripture, Ps. xlv. and the Song of Songs. Jesus here clearly regards himself as the Christ, as identical with the long looked-for Divine Deliverer; but at this comparatively early stage of his public career he was fully conscious that in his Person, with the triumphant would be joined the suffering Messiah. The word rendered "shall be taken away from (them)," ἀπαρθῇ, only occurs here in the New Testament; it points evidently to a death of violence. While the intimation given to Nicodemus (John iii. 14) was the first *private*, so this seems to have been the first *public* announcement of the last scene of the earth-life.

Ver. 36.—**And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.** Oriental teaching has ever delighted in using these vivid and picturesque metaphors and parables taken from the everyday life of the people; here the reference is, of course, to the question put by the Pharisees and John's disciples respecting fasting. This and the following little parable, and the curious simile which he added directly after, is part of the Lord's answer to his questioners. They charged him in their query with throwing (by the neglect of fasting) a slur on the time-honoured practices and observances of the most religious men of Israel. His reply acknowledged that, as far as he was concerned, they were right. He had quietly put aside the rigidly appointed fasts and other ceremonial rites by means of which the great Jewish teachers—to use their own expression—had put a hedge about the Law. They were right, too, in the conclusion they had come to, implied but not expressed, in their evidently hostile questioning. His *was* a totally new form of the old Hebrew religion—new altogether in the grandeur of its conception and in the breadth of its influence. His was a totally new garment that he was about to offer to the people; now to patch up the beautiful new work with the old one would be surely to mar both. In the older authorities the text is slightly longer and more vivid than the text from which our own more corrupt Authorized Version was translated. It would run thus: "No one rending a patch from a new garment putteth it upon an old garment."

Vers. 37, 38.—**And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.** In these two verses the Greek

words rendered "bottles" properly signify 'wine-skins.' These leathern bottles throughout Syria and Palestine are generally made of goat-skins. They are still of universal use; the simile of the "old bottles" refers to "wine-skins" old and frail, which had been long in use, and hence nearly worn out; such "skins," after long usage, are in the habit of getting seamed and cracked. (Farrar, in an elaborate excursus, urges that must, and not wine in the ordinary sense, *i.e.* the fermented juice of the grape, is signified in the parable here, grape-juice in the form of unfermented must being much used as a favourite drink in the East. This suggestion, although ingenious and interesting, does not seem necessary to explain the imagery used; it seems more natural to understand wine in its ordinary meaning.) The "new wine" here represents the teaching of Jesus in all its freshness, originality, and power, and the "wine-skins" the men who are to receive from the Master the great principle of his doctrine. Now, the recognized teachers in Israel, termed scribes and rabbis, or doctors of the Law, were wedded to the old interpretation of the Law—were hampered by traditions, sayings of the Fathers, elaborate ritual observances, prejudices, narrowness, bigotry. The vast collection of the Talmud, where wise words on the same page are crowded out with childish sayings, well represents the teaching of these scribes and rabbis. Never would Jesus entrust to these narrow and prejudiced representatives of a worn-out religious school his new, fresh, generous doctrines. It would indeed be pouring new wine into old, decayed, worn-out wine-vessels. The new wine must be deposited in new wine-skins. His doctrine must be entrusted to no rabbi of Israel, fettered by a thousand precedents, hampered by countless prejudices, but to simple unprejudiced men, who would just receive his teaching, and then pass it on pure and unadulterated to other simple, truthful souls—men earnest, loyal, devoted, like his fisher-friends of Gennesaret, or his publican-follower of Capernaum. He needs, as Godet well phrases it—changing, though, the imagery of Jesus—"fresh natures, new men ... fair tablets on which his hand may write the characters of Divine truth, without coming across the old traces of a false human wisdom. 'God, I thank thee because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'"

Ver. 39.—**No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.** St. Luke alone of the first three evangelists who related in detail this most important reply of Jesus when the disciples of John and the Pharisees came to question him, adds this curious simile. The meaning of the parable-pictures of the new patch being sewn on an old garment, and of new wine being poured into worn-out, decaying wine-skins, was very plain. Pitilessly severe it would ring in the ears of men brought up in the old rabbinic Jewish schools. The two first evangelists, conscious of the truth of their Master's words, were content to leave the stern teaching, which pronounced the old state of things among the religious Jews as utterly worn-out, in all its naked severity. But Paul, under whose guidance we believe Luke wrote his Gospel, with that tender and considerate love which so beautifies the earnest and impassioned nature of the apostle of the Gentiles, knew that Jesus had added a few words to the two seemingly harsh parables; these he bade Luke carefully insert in his narrative. They contain what may be termed an almost playful apology for the slowness and reluctance of the men trained in the rabbinic schools, or even of the pupils of John the Baptist, to accept the new, broad, generous view of truth which he (Jesus) was putting forth—it was an apology for a slowness and reluctance, shading too often into unveiled dislike and open hostility. (What experience Paul and Luke must have had of this hostility!) The Master, in his Divine wisdom, knew how hard it was to forsake long-cherished prejudices. Time must be given, allowance must be made, harsh judgment must be deprecated. These men, trained in the old system, are here compared to guests who, after the banquet, are suddenly asked to change the old wine, mellowed by age, of which they have been drinking, for new sweet wine. This new wine seems, in those days, generally to have been considered preferable, but to men who had been drinking the old, age-softened vintage, the new would seem fiery and even harsh. The Greek word rendered in the Authorized Version "better," in the older authorities is positive instead of comparative. The translation should therefore run, "the old is good." The argument would be the same: Why change what we have been drinking for something new? surely the old wine is good? Such passages as Neh. x. 35; Prov. iii. 10; Hos. iv. 11; Hag. i. 11, bear out the above statement, that in those days, among the Jews of Syria, Palestine, and the adjacent countries, new sweet wine was a favourite beverage among wine-drinkers.

HOMILETICS.

VERS. 1—11.—*The call to be fishers of men.* Each of the missionary circuits of Christ has its special features of interest. The first of these circuits is distinguished by three miracles significant of his work as the Christ of God. Look at the miracle of the draught of fishes, with the narrative to which it is related, as a record illustrative first of *personal conversion*, and secondly of the *ministry of the New Testament.*

I. AN ILLUSTRATION OF PERSONAL CONVERSION. 1. *There is already a faith.* The four men whom the Lord calls had heard his voice on the banks of Jordan (John i. 35—43), and had followed him. They had journeyed with him in Judæa, and even, it would seem, had baptized in his Name. But, after the return of Jesus to Galilee from the Passover-keeping noticed in John v., they had gone back to their homes and their usual callings. They believed in him, but they did not realize the constraint of a supreme influence. They did not hold themselves as solemnly engaged to him. It was this engagement to be his, going where he went, and dwelling where he dwelt, which was the work of the day by the Lake of Gennesaret. Now, see in this a reminder that there may be a belief, sincere and true so far as it goes, which prepares for, but which is not, the faith unto salvation. It establishes a certain intellectual relation to Christ, but nothing more. The effectual call is still wanting—the call, *i.e.*, to an entire self-surrender, leaving all and following him. 2. *There is a sovereignty of grace in this call.* Of this sovereignty there is much to remind us in the passage under review. The great crowd is before the Teacher as he stands by the lake. Of the many boats drawn up on the beach, he selects two; of the two he chooses Simon's. Another evangelist reminds us that out of the multitude he saw two brethren, and again he saw other two brethren. He saw and he spoke; there is the look and there is the word. "The Lord looked on Gideon, and said, Go in this thy might." All that is done is done so easily. Almost a chance, it might be said. There is he, and there are they; he at his work, and they at theirs. It was no chance. It was Christ's opportunity; it was their opportunity. "Follow me!" is the command of his royalty. Such was he then, such is he still. In the crowd he individualizes. The soul found by him asks, "Whence knowest thou me?" He knows his sheep, and is known of them. He calleth his own sheep by name. 3. *There is an instant response.* Christ's call is "Now;" "To-day if ye will hear his voice." The answer is "Now;" "To-day;" "Lord, here am I; send me"—an unreserved, uncalculating surrender, body, soul, and spirit, to Jesus. The net is left, and, mark, the net that has just been or is just being cast into the sea—the net on which so much had been spent. Net and father too. He will not come with them. "Farewell, then; not less do we love you; but he is nearer than father and mother, and his word is, 'Follow me!'" This is conversion—the turning of the face of the life to the eternal Lord; the acceptance of God's Beloved, in the consciousness of acceptance in the Beloved; the election, as the mark towards which to press, of the calling of God in Christ Jesus. "Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy power."

II. But, secondly, see in the miracle which follows A PICTURE OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. 1. *A conviction which gives intensity to it.* Simon Peter, in the light of Jesus' presence and power, falls down at his knees, crying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The cry in its matter was foolish, but the spirit which prompted it was true. For the first time he had realized his own unworthiness. Had he not all but given Jesus up? Had he not lived a poor, dull, earthly life? Who was he, that the Lord of glory should have sat in his boat, that he should have been in any way identified with him? It is not the "depart" of a will that refuses the Lord; it is the self-loathing heart-cry, "Lord, I am vile; what canst thou see in me?" The same heart-cry as that which burst from Isaiah when he saw the Lord and heard the antiphon of the seraphim, "Woe is me! . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." It is in such prostration that the lips are touched by the seraph, and the live coal is laid on them, and the "Fear not; thine iniquity is taken away" is spoken, and the hitherto unprophetic tongue is loosed. In the service which springs out of this humility there is always the sign of the baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. 2. *An incident which declares the secret of ministry.* (1) Its *inspiration.*

"Nevertheless at thy word." Is not the word sufficient? The improbabilities are all on the one side. The time for fishing has passed. All night, and nothing; what could there be in the morning? "Nevertheless at thy word." "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (2) Its *power*, not in the worker and not in the net. The worker had utterly failed; a charm might have been attributed to the net—the net *was broken*. No; the sufficiency is of God. The one human condition is an absolute self-resignation.

"There is a Stay—and we are strong;
Our Master is at hand."

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come on you." (3) Its *nature*. The fisher caught, and lying on the shore. This is the parable. The work is to catch men. The power is with the Spirit; but he calls for the hand to cast the net. This fishing for men is a holy art, in which the fishers must be trained. When the three thousand were added at Pentecost, Simon saw again the miracle of Gennesaret, heard anew the loving voice, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." (4) The *co-operation to which it summons*. When Simon's boat is full, he and Andrew beckon to James and John, *their partners* in the other ship, to come and help them. Is not this a hint as to the evangelical alliance which should distinguish all in the various boats that fish the sea? Why should they ply their task as rivals? Why should they envy the good estate, the success of any boat? Where Christ can be clearly seen, where the power is manifestly his, forbid that narrow jealousies hinder the recognition of the work. Verily there is need for all willing-hearted workmen, and there is enough and to spare for all the boats. If only the aim were simply to catch men, not for the boat, but through the boat for the Lord, how different would be the aspect of Churches and ministries! 3. Finally, an action *which manifests the eternal loving-kindness*. To obey the Master is no thankless service. Leave the net; yes; but we follow him to whom the spacious sea belongs. Could the brethren whom he called doubt that he was able to make all grace abound always in all things? Have not we the certainty that there is a love which sees us as

"We watch our nets alone
In drenching spray, and driving shower,
And hear the night-bird's moan"?

We toil; let us ask our hearts if they have been satisfied. How many confess, even in the midst of abundance, that the toil has been only "vanity, and a striving after wind"! Nay; but let Christ enter the life, let him be the Leader and Commander, let him indicate whether the net should be cast; then shall the emptiness be filled out of an infinite fulness.

Vers. 12—26.—*The power present to heal.* In the setting forth of facts, there is another principle of guidance than chronology. We may group them around some thoughts with the view of illustrating the meaning and scope of the thought. On this principle let us regard the events related from the twelfth verse to the twenty-sixth. What they evidence is the power of the Lord that was working in Jesus as a power of healing. Strange, blessed things we shall see to-day.

I. THE WORK OF SALVATION AS REALIZED IN THE LEPER. (Vers. 12—14.) He is "full of leprosy," a mass of corruption, dying bit by bit. Notice the cry of this miserable outcast. When the father of the epileptic child met the Lord on his descent from the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice of his agony was, "If thou canst do anything, have mercy on us and help us." Jesus replied, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." He had not yet got to the mountain of faith, and the father says with tears, "Lord, I believe; but oh, help me to that mountain-height, help thou mine unbelief." This wretched leper is already on the mountain height. It is not, "If thou canst," but "If thou wilt." The Jewish proverb was, "As God sends the leprosy, so God alone can heal it." God is in this Jesus; therefore he can. Such was the logic. How he had seen the secret of the Lord, we do not know; but the trust was his—it had been sown into his heart in the urgency of his need. Now, mark the response. Sometimes the Lord seems to tarry. But in this case the way is quite ready for the blessing. "We are never told," says Dr. Farrar, "that there was a

moment's pause when a leper cried to him." "If thou wilt." "I will." And *the touch.* To touch a leper was an infraction of law. He had to withdraw into the wilderness immediately afterwards. He did not wish to provoke any violent opposition. But he broke the ceremonial law at the demand of a higher law—the law whose source is the Divine compassion, and whose agent is the power present to heal. The foul body could not pollute the hand; but the hand of the Infinite Purity could cleanse the foul body. "Be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." How wonderfully this strange thing brings out what is characteristic of the Saviour in his thoughts and ways to the sinner! None is beyond the reach of the love that could bid away at once and for ever that leprosy. No cry can escape the ear of a love that has the answering "I will" ready for the praying "If thou wilt." We have a High Priest who has touched our sin in its exceeding sinfulness. For ever and ever there stands the pledge of the world's Healer "I will: be thou clean."

II. But see THE SAME WORK REALIZED IN "THE MAN THAT WAS PALSIED." The time is "one of those days that he was teaching." A crowd has gathered so great that "there is no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door." In this crowd there are Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by. Significantly it is added, "The power of the Lord was present to heal." A notable instance of this power is supplied; its occasion being the letting down of the pallet-bed, on which was laid the paralytic, through the tiles into the midst of the crowd before Jesus. There is no resisting of such faith. Seeing it, the Healer says—what? "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Now, as to this fulfilment of the imperial "I will," which proceeds from the compassion of the Lord, remark: 1. *The work which represents the supreme Saviour-blessing.* "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." He will listen to the appeal made in behalf of the palsied man; but there is a palsy hidden and spiritual with which first he must deal, for until it is dealt with there can be no effectual healing. Yes; the true healing begins within. "Create a clean heart." And the point at which the Redeemer lays hold of us is the need of forgiveness. This action of Christ is the first in which he makes himself fully known, the first in which his spiritual authority is declared. And from this moment the organized opposition of scribe and Pharisee dates. "His kingdom ruleth over all." All agencies of relief and kindness are his, and are to be used in his name; but his kingdom is the kingdom of heaven to all believers, because the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins. 2. *The condition on which the power of Christ is realized.* "When he saw their faith." Observe, not *his* faith. No one, it is true, can stand proxy for another as to salvation. There must be the personal touch of Christ; and the narrative, when attentively regarded, shows that Jesus secured this from the sufferer. He helped out the sick man's trustfulness; he established a relation with himself. And then and thus he did exceeding abundantly above all that could be asked. But he does attach value to faith in friends for another friend, in the loving for the loved, in those who have salvation for those who have not. Think of the four bearing the weak and wanting man, seeking the means to realize the blessing for him, their interest wholly unselfish, and unresting until the *doure man* is really brought to Jesus. Oh, is not this the miniature of the Church of Christ in its intercession and labour for heathendom, for the sick and perishing through lack of knowledge? Should it not indicate the truth to be exemplified in the anxiety of parents as to their children? Should it not remind us of the highest aim of all relatives of friendship or confidence? Jesus does "perceive" this faith. It is the security of blessing unspeakable; for

> "So the whole round earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Were there more of this faith, there would be more abundant sign of "the power of the Lord present to heal." 3. *The hindrance and limitation of the power of the Lord.* "Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by," and the power present. It is always present with the word of his grace. We never need to seek it as if it were sometimes here and sometimes there. But these Pharisees and doctors are not healed. The grace is present for them too, but they do not realize it. They *sit by* as spectators, critics, censors, watching for grounds of reproach and accusation. "The word of hearing did not profit them, because they were not united by faith with them that heard." Is not this the limitation still?

Are there not many in our assemblies who, like these Pharisees, "sit by"? They scarcely believe what is said. As old Matthew Henry writes, "It is to them a tale that is told them, not a message that is sent them. They are willing that we should preach before them, not that we should preach to them." It is this sitting by which checks the work of grace. More and more, as the ministry of Christ proceeds, does the shadow of the Pharisees sitting by fall on it. A withering, desolating shadow. Thou Pharisee of town and village, thou critic, sceptic, thy seat the seat of the scornful. Mighty power to heal may be present, but mighty work of healing cannot be done in thee until the story of the Pharisee of the Pharisees is repeated in thee, and thy self-sufficiency smitten down, thou art cast to the earth, to ask, trembling and astonished, "Who art thou, Lord?"

Vers. 30—39.—*The new and the old.* Two classes of persons are amazed and offended—those to whom old ways and recognized canons of respectability were of the very essence of the religious life; and those whose minds occupied a sort of intermediate position, who had so far broken from the old, but had not yet received the spirit of the new time which had begun in Galilee. Here is this Rabbi, whose fame has spread far and wide, who is undoubtedly possessed of marvellous powers, associating with persons whom every respectable Hebrew shunned, accepting a tax-gatherer's invitation, and freely mingling with the worthless folk found at a tax-gatherer's table. What an outrage on social and religious decency! The scribes and Pharisees—the one of these two classes—murmur (observe, against the disciples; they do not dare to the Lord himself), "Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" The disciples, simple, guileless souls, were probably unable to explain or account for their Master. He himself replies by quoting an Old Testament Scripture—one of those great prophetic words which express the spirit of all true religion, and prefacing and following this quotation by sentences of searching irony. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." How significant is every clause! "They that are whole." Will the murmurers take that description as appropriate to them? Then the Jesus whom they surround has nothing for them; his work is not for the self-righteous, but for the consciously sinful and needy. But "whoso" would be teachers of the people as they may be, let them go and learn the first lesson of Divine wisdom, viz. that it is the delight of God's love to find out fatherless souls; that he is satisfied, not by formal acts of worship, rendered in mere obedience to usage, but by the seeking of poor outcasts from ordinance and society, by such fellowship with them as reveals the purpose, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Now comes the moment at which, along with the Pharisees, the other of the two offended classes—those occupying an intermediate position between the old and the new—appears on the scene. Some disciples of the Baptist have been scanning the movements of the Prophet of Nazareth, and the feast just held gives increased force to their doubts and difficulties. The joyous life which Jesus and his followers are living contrasts with the sternly simple, ascetic life which they have been taught to regard as the best. Can the joyous life be right? Why the disregard of the outward signs of discipline? Why is he so lax with those whom he has called? The answer returned has an abiding interest for the Church in all times. First, observe Christ's word with regard to the special issue raised; and, secondly, observe his setting forth of the general truth as to his gospel and kingdom.

I. THE SPECIAL ISSUE IS FASTING. Jesus does not deny its utility. He fasted. Moreover, in his sermon from the mount, he recognized fasting as one of the elements of the religious life. What his saying bears on is its observance as a fixed habit or rule. The time, the rule, Christ teaches, must come from within. He goes to the root of the matter when he asks, "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn?" There is nothing if there *is* not mourning. Mere non-eating is nothing; mere austerities are nothing. Self-denial for the sake of self-denial is nothing. It is the relation to spiritual ends, the power of interpreting and helping spiritual life, that gives any service its value. "How can you make these children mourn while I am with them? Their fasting, at present, would be wholly artificial. It is the worship in spirit and truth that I want. When they can really mourn, they will. Until then,

let them rejoice." The days did come. The Bridegroom was taken from them. And they mourned. And still, as then, there are, as one has called them, "fast-days which God appoints souls." Christ's disciples should have their *retreats*, when the round of pleasure or of care is given up, and the blessing of entire solitude with God is realized. Only, let these be, not because of a law made for them, but because of the law which the Lord, by the dealing of his Holy Spirit, writes within their own hearts. And, supposing the space for such *retreats* cannot be secured, remember there is a fasting which all can practise. All can abstain from self-pleasing and indulgence. All may consider whether it be not a duty to abstain from things lawful when the use of such things is an occasion of stumbling to their brethren. And all should recollect the grand old words, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

II. THE WORD AS TO FASTING BRINGS INTO SIGHT THE WHOLE QUESTION AS TO THE REQUIREMENTS AND THE NATURE OF THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS. Glance at the outstanding features of the ever-memorable parable between the thirty-sixth and the thirty-ninth verses. 1. *The bearing of the sentence as to patching.* The disciples of John and the Pharisees virtually ask that Jesus sew the new cloth, which is woven out of his Person and sacrifice, into an old rotten garment. The answer is "No; what has decayed and is waxing old is ready to vanish; let it go. When it comes to this, patching and mending is worthless policy. It does not benefit the old, whilst it spoils the new. The new will not hold to the seam of the old, and, when it gives way, not only is the rent made worse, but in the end the new must be rejected also." What is particularly meant by the similitude of the garment is the manner of life, that which forms the envelopment of the soul. As to this, Christ will have no patching. Christianity is not Judaism with something sewn on to it. It is not a conglomerate of religions. It comprehends all that is good anywhere. It destroys nothing. But it is a new robe. All that is old is made new. And so must it be with the character. It is not a mere amending at this point or at that that will suffice. Merely to sew a piece of the new cloth, to have a fragment of Christ's religion patched to the old self, will that suffice? Verily no. Put off the old man. Put on the new. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." 2. *The bearing of the sentence as to wine.* By this, as it would seem, the Lord means the inward spiritual principle, the grace—"that best wine which goeth down smoothly, gliding through the lips of those that are asleep." This is not some compound of dregs of old wines; it has all the strength and flavour of the old, but it is new. It is the fruit of a grape which none but the Son of God could bruise; it is the product of a wine-press which none but he could tread; it has the power of a sustenance which none but he could infuse. And this new life must be put into new bottles. It demands forms of worship and action peculiar to itself—forms of worship adapted at once to the richness of the sentiments and the simplicity of its utterance, the natural and becoming vehicles of its own voice of prayer and praise; forms of action in harmony at once with its spirituality and its humanity. It is too living and strong for any receptacle of its influence except that which has been created for and by itself. New wine and new bottles. Let the hearer of the Word ponder this. Note the point of junction between liberty and discipline in the Christian life. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." But to realize this liberty, the will presented to the Lord must be so opened and ordered that the movements of his love shall flow in, and the power of his grace shall be fulfilled. It is all of grace, but the new bottle is needed for the new wine. The Lord is very decided as to this. The principle of an entire subjection to God must be asserted over every impeding tendency. In our present state pains must go with prayers, that the heart be kept "believing, true, and clean," a wine-skin fit for the new wine. Hereafter, in the eternal year of the Bridegroom-joy, it shall be otherwise. Then, they who wait upon the Lord shall "run, and not be weary; and walk, and not faint."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 4—6.—*Weary workers.* The passage is one of encouragement to those who have been labouring in the cause of truth and righteousness, and whose success has not been according to their hope. We have a picture of—

I. FRUITLESS TOIL. "We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing;" words that have not only been on the lips of the unsuccessful fisherman, but often enough on those of the weary Christian workman—the pastor, the evangelist, the teacher, the philanthropist, the missionary. Weeks, months, even years, may go by, and nothing or little may have resulted. Especially is this the case in missionary labour among savages, or where venerable systems of superstition prevail. The workman goes through all stages, of lessened hope, of surprise at non-success, of disappointment, of despondency, until he may get down very near to despair.

II. THE COMMAND TO CONTINUE. Under discouragement and apparent defeat there frequently enters the thought of abandonment. The worker says, "I will lay down my weapon; it is useless to proceed. *I* must have better soil, or *it* must have a more skilful hand." But when this thought is being entertained there comes a manifestation of the Master, who by some means and in some language, says, "Go, labour on: toil on and faint not." To the "fisher of men" he says, "Let down your nets for a draught." This command to continue may cause us to reflect upon: 1. Our Lord's own example; for he laboured on most diligently and patiently under heavy and sore discouragements. 2. The ample means placed at our disposal with which to work for Christ and men; the glorious fulness and fitness of the gospel of the grace of God. 3. The near presence and promised aid of the Holy Spirit. 4. The inestimable value of the souls we seek to save. But whencesoever suggested, the voice we hear is imperative, Divine, "*Go, labour on.*"

III. THE SPIRIT AND ACT OF OBEDIENCE. 1. We may be indisposed to resume; we may feel, as Peter evidently did on this occasion, that there is nothing to be taken by our toil; that for all practical purposes we might as well leave the field. 2. But Christ's will is decisive. Against that there is no appeal. "At thy word I will let down the net." This is the true spirit of obedience. To work for Christ under every possible *encouragement* is easy and simple enough; perhaps it may not take high rank in heaven so far as its spiritual greatness is concerned. To continue at our post under every *discouragement*, because we believe it is the will of our Lord that we should still strive and sow—that is the trying, the honourable, the acceptable thing. It may be remarked that: 3. Obedience to our Lord is not inconsistent with a wise change of method. Launch out "into the deep." They were to cast their net into the likeliest waters.

> "Cast after cast, by force or guile,
> All waters must be tried."
> (See Keble's hymn, "The livelong night we've toil'd in vain.")

If one method does not succeed, we must try another. We must not ascribe to God a failure which is due to our own inefficiency. We must not ask and expect his blessing unless we are doing our best in his Name and in his cause.

IV. THE LARGE REWARD. "When they had this done," etc. Patient, obedient work wrought for Jesus Christ will certainly meet with its recompense. "Refrain thine eyes from tears, and thy voice from weeping, for thy work *shall* be rewarded." We may "go forth weeping," but we shall doubtless "come again with rejoicing." The success may come: 1. After much labour and prayer and waiting. 2. In a way in which we did not expect it. 3. Only in part while we are here to rejoice in it; for often "one soweth and another reapeth." But sooner or later, in one form or another, here or hereafter, it will come; our net will "enclose a great multitude of fishes;" our hearts will be full, even to overflow, with joy and gratitude.—C.

Ver. 8.—*The soul shrinking from God.* It was the coming of God in the person of Jesus Christ that excited in the breast of the apostle such shrinking of soul. Peter perceived that he stood in the presence of One in whom was Divine power, of One who was in very close association with the Holy One of Israel; and, feeling his own

unworthiness, he exclaimed, with characteristic candour of impulsiveness, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

I. THE WAY IN WHICH GOD NOW MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO THE WORLD. That way is threefold. 1. *Nature* and *providence*. The heavens declare his glory, and so does this wonderful and beautiful and fruitful earth. Not less so do the souls and the lives of men, created with all their faculties, preserved and enriched with all their joys and blessings. "The invisible things of him . . . are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." But more than this was proved to be needed by the sad, dark history of mankind. Hence we have: 2. *Special revelation*. "At sundry times and in divers manners God spake unto our fathers" by Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, etc.; but at a later time he spake unto us by his Son—by his life, his truth, his sorrow, his death, his resurrection. But this did not suffice. Divine love appeared, and human hatred slew it. Divine truth spake, and human error determinately rejected it. So God gives us what we need. 3. *The direct influences of his Holy Spirit*, to arouse, to quicken, to enlighten, to renew us.

II. THE FIRST EFFECT UPON THE SOUL OF THIS VISION OF GOD. What usually happens is that the soul is smitten with a sense of its sinfulness, and desires to withdraw from the Divine presence. At this we need not wonder. If conscious ignorance shrinks from great learning, poverty from great wealth, obscurity from high rank, human guilt from human purity, well may the consciously sinful soul of man shrink from the near presence of the thrice-holy God. As Adam and Eve hid themselves when they "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden;" as Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe is me! I am a man of unclean lips," when he "saw the Lord" in the temple;—so do we shrink from the felt presence of the Lord in view of our own unworthiness and guilt. Remembering our spiritual estrangement, our great undischarged indebtedness to God, our impurity of heart in his sight, our manifold transgressions of his righteous law,—our souls tremble before him; and if we do not say, "Depart from me, O Lord!" as Peter did, yet our first thought is to escape from his felt presence, to put some distance, in thought and feeling, between ourselves and that Holy and Mighty One in whose power we stand so absolutely, and whose Spirit we have grieved so greatly.

III. THE INTERPOSITION OF OUR SAVIOUR. The sacred record does not state what immediately ensued, but our instructed imagination will very readily supply the remainder of the incident. We are quite sure that our gracious Master, instead of acting on Peter's word, and leaving him, drew nearer to him, and "took him by the hand," and so reassured him. Thus does he treat us now. Instead of withdrawing from us when we know and feel our guilt, he comes nearer to us. Instead of saying to us, "Depart from me!" he says, earnestly and emphatically, "Come unto me!" He says to us, "If, in my teaching and in my life and in my death, there is (as there is) the strongest possible condemnation of sin, so is there also in all these things, in my words and my actions and my cross, the greatest possible hope for the sinner. Come unto me; see in me the Propitiation for your sin, the Way back unto the Father, the Divine Friend and Helper of the sorrowing and struggling human soul. Do not leave me; come to me, and abide in me!"—C.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The cleansed leper.* Three points suggest themselves to our thoughts.

I. THE WAVERING OF A STRONG HUMAN HOPE. Outside the outer circumference of that congregation was a man to whom pity would have drawn us, but from whom an instinctive repugnance would have repelled us. He was one in whom were not only signs and spots of that dire plague of leprosy, but in whom it was seen in its most virulent form—he was "full of leprosy." Suffering in body, and afflicted far worse in mind by the terrible isolation which that disease imposed, there suddenly enters his heart a new and bounding hope; in the dense darkness of his night there rises that morning star. A new Prophet has come to the people of God. He hears of his Name and fame (ch. iv. 37); he comes to see; he witnesses the wonderful works which are wrought (ch. iv. 40). Will not this great Healer have mercy upon him? Will not he who casts out the devil cure the leper? If the poor paralytic, at his bidding, could rise and walk away with his friends, why should not he, at the command of that strong Voice, be healed of his foul disease, and go home to his family again? So he comes where Jesus is, and listens as he speaks, and when he hears him say, "Ask, and it shall

be given you," he resolves that *he will* ask that a new life may be given *him;* he will seek: what if *he* should find? We have never made to man any request on which so much has hung as that which was now hanging on the answer he should receive at the lips of Jesus Christ. To him it was not success or failure merely; it was life or death that was at stake. How must the most eager expectation have wrestled in his heart with tremulous and agonizing fear! with what faltering voice must he have uttered those prayerful words, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"!

II. THE TOUCH OF THE DIVINE HAND. "Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him." All three evangelists record this significant fact. There were three reasons why he should not do this. 1. Strong instinctive human aversion. 2. The risk he ran in so doing. 3. The prohibition of the Law combined with social usage disallowing it. But our Lord set aside all these objections. Why? Was it not to show by instant action the kindness and compassion of his heart, to place himself practically by his side as One who felt deeply for and with him, and to teach us that, if we wish to heal the worst disorders, we must do that, not standing afar off, but, coming into close personal contact with the men we are seeking to save, by "laying our hand upon them"? We, too, must be ready, like our Lord, to do that which is distasteful, to run some risks, to disregard conventional proprieties, if we would remove from the land the leprosies which still afflict it.

III. THE RESPONSE OF DIVINE LOVE. That leper must have known, when Jesus laid his hand kindly upon him, that he meant to heal him; yet sweeter to his ear than are the most melting strains of music to the lover of melody and song were these words of the Lord when he said, "I will: be thou clean;" and then he who "speaks, and it is done," spoke the unheard word, and forces of nature came into play, and the life-blood leapt in the leper's veins, "and immediately his leprosy departed." Sin is the leprosy of the soul. 1. It is loathsome. 2. It is diffusive, spreading from faculty to faculty over the whole nature. 3. It exiles; it separates man from God, and man from man also. 4. It is deathful; it is death in life. When the sinful soul, though he be far gone in sin, "full of leprosy," makes his application to the great Physician, he has nothing to fear as to the result of his appeal. (1) Be not troubled, far less hindered, because hope is streaked with fear; there may be an "if" in the heart, as there was in that of this leper; the very intensity of the hope arising out of the magnitude of the issue at stake will perfectly account for that—such fear is only the shadow of a prevailing hope. (2) Be assured that you have no need to fear. Christ's readiness to save is beyond the shadow of a doubt; if we are only in real earnest to be saved from the leprosy of sin, it is certain that the hand of Divine love will be laid upon us, and that the voice of Divine mercy will address us, saying, "I will: be thou clean."—C.

Ver. 16.—*Christ at prayer.* The fact that our Lord did withdraw into the wilderness to pray, and that this was not at all a solitary instance of his devotion, may suggest—

I. THAT PRAYER BECOMES THE STRONG AND THE HOLY AS WELL AS THE WEAK AND THE GUILTY. Jesus prayed; the One who was holy, harmless, undefiled, he in whom was no sin. He had no guilt to confess, no mercy to implore, no cleansing of heart to seek of the Holy Spirit. *Yet he prayed;* and prayer was becoming in him because he could: 1. Render adoration to the God whom he reverenced and whom he revealed. 2. Offer gratitude to the Father who ministered unto him even as unto us. 3. Utter his love and his devotedness to him in whom he rejoiced and on whose great errand of mercy he had come. 4. Ask for the guidance and support he needed at the Divine hand for the future that was before him. For such purposes as these prayer will become us as much in the heavenly kingdom as it befits us now. When *we* have no sins to acknowledge and no forgiveness to obtain, we shall still need to approach the Divine Spirit to express our adoration, our gratitude, and our love; also to ask for the maintenance and the guidance of that strong hand on which, in every age and in every sphere, we shall be dependent as we are to-day.

II. THAT PRAYER IS PECULIARLY APPROPRIATE BEFORE AND AFTER ALL SPECIAL SERVICES. We have good reason to think that these were the circumstances under which our Lord spent much time in prayer. It is probable that he, under the limitations to which he stooped, found it highly desirable if not needful then. Certainly it

is so for us. 1. Before special services we are in *greatest need*—need of strength and inspiration for the work immediately confronting us. 2. After special services we are in *greatest danger;* for the human spirit is never so exposed to its spiritual adversaries as in that hour when it relaxes after great spiritual excitement.

III. THAT IT IS NEEDFUL TO SEEK AND TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRAYER. Jesus Christ could not have poured out his heart to his Father as he did, and gained the refreshment and strength he gained in prayer, if he had remained in the midst of the curious and exacting throngs who waited upon him. He withdrew himself into the wilderness. We have intimation that he had to make a very strenuous effort to escape from the multitudes and to secure the seclusion he desired. *But he made it.* And we shall be wise if we do the same. If we only draw near to God and have fellowship with him when we happen to be left alone, and when occasions offer themselves to us, we shall be very lacking in our devotion; the flame of our piety will languish on the altar of our heart. We must *make* occasion; we must *seize* opportunity; we must compel our life to yield the still hour, when, withdrawing ourselves into solitude, we are alone with God.

IV. THAT IF NEEDFUL TO OUR LORD, HOW MUCH MORE NECESSARY MUST SUSTAINED DEVOTION BE TO OURSELVES! If purity needed to pray, how much more need has guilt! if strength, how much more weakness! if wisdom, how much more ignorance and folly! If our Master did not go forth to great trials or temptations without first attuning his spirit and renewing his strength in the near presence of his Father, how much less shall we venture into the arduous and perilous future without first equipping ourselves at the sacred armoury, without first casting ourselves on God and drawing sustaining and overcoming vigour from his infinite resources!—C.

Ver. 17.—*Present power.* One of the noblest of the psalms commences with that verse which it would have been well worth while to have lived a long and stormy life to have written, "God is our Refuge and Strength, a *very present* Help in trouble." Who can estimate the thousands of thousands of tempest-tossed human souls to whom these words have brought help and comfort! The latter part of this passage is in very close relation to our text. It brings before our minds—

I. THE COMPARATIVE NEARNESS OF GOD TO US. It may indeed be objected that the Omnipresent One, being everywhere, cannot be more truly in one place than in another. Doubtless that is so. But God may be more *manifestly* present, and therefore more present *to our consciousness*, in one place than in another. So the old Hebrew worshipper felt as he drew near Jerusalem, as he entered the precincts of the temple, as he went into the court of the Jews, as he saw the priests enter the sanctuary itself. And once in the history of mankind God did so visit us that he was "manifest in the flesh;" he was "Emmanuel, God with us"—with us in a sense in which he was not before and has not been again. There is a sense in which God is nearer to us in the sanctuary and at the table of the Lord than elsewhere. He has promised to meet us there; we go there on purpose to be in his presence; therefore to our consciousness he is in a peculiar sense *present* with us—our *very present* Saviour.

II. THE PRESENCE OF HIS POWER. "The power of the Lord was present." Any Israelite of ancient time would have told you that God's power was present in the sky, in the sea, in the corn, in the rain. But he was more impressed with the power of God as manifested in the storm in harvest-time, or in the overthrow of Sennacherib's mighty host. Yet this was only in his imagination; the power of God was as truly and as graciously present in the ordinary and the regular as in the miraculous. We are inclined to think that Divine power is most manifest in the shaking thunder or in the flashing lightning, or in the upheaving earthquake; but the wiser we are, the more we "observe these things, and (consequently) understand the loving-kindness of the Lord," the more we perceive that God's power is as present in the common and the continuous as in the startling and the exceptional, is "very present" in the unfolding morning and the descending night, in the growing of the grass and the ripening of the corn and the blooming of the flowers. God's power is present with us always and everywhere, if we have but eyes to see it and hearts to feel it.

III. THE PRESENCE OF HIS HEALING POWER. 1. A very beneficent power is that of healing; perhaps we never praise God quite so feelingly as when we bless him that

"he has healed our sicknesses." God has always been healing men. He has supplied us with the substances which are fitted to restore, and he has given us a bodily system of such a nature that it has great recuperative powers. There are but few among those who have reached manhood and womanhood who have not had occasion to know that the power of the Lord is present to heal us now. In the hour of convalescence they gave him the glory and offered their renewed life to him. What are they doing now that health has been restored and confirmed? 2. And this healing of the body is but the *picture* and the *promise* of the healing of the heart. When Jesus Christ went from village to village, healing all manner of diseases, it was partly, if not principally, to say to all men everywhere of every age, "Understand, ye blind souls that walk in darkness, I am the Light of the world; come to me, that you may see indeed! Ye strengthless and sick ones in need of spiritual healing, I am the Divine Restorer; come unto me, that ye may be strong indeed! Ye dying ones, I am the Resurrection and the Life; come unto me, that you may live indeed!"—C.

Vers. 18—25.—*Superabounding kindness.* We learn from these words—

I. CHRIST'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS OWN GREATNESS. He *assumes* the right to forgive men their sins (ver. 20), and, when this right is challenged by those present, he *asserts* it (ver. 24). And he does not dispute that this is a Divine prerogative. When it is claimed that only God can forgive sins (ver. 21), his reply is one that confirms rather than questions that doctrine. To a very large extent our Lord's Divinity was in abeyance. He was voluntarily accepting limitations which caused him to be numbered among the human and the finite. But his authority and power were *in him*, potentially; they were under a commanding restraint. Here and there, now and again, as on this occasion, it seemed fitting that they should be put forth. And it magnifies "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," that all the while that he was stooping to such lowliness, such poverty, such endurance, he was conscious of the fact that Divine right and Divine power were within him, to be exercised when he would. The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins.

II. HIS AUTHENTICATION OF IT. His greatness was often questioned, sometimes denied; and often our Master allowed men to think of him as the Teacher or the Prophet whom they were to judge by his life or by his doctrine. But sometimes he vindicated his claims in a way that completely silenced, if it did not convince, his critics. He authenticated himself by some deed of mighty power. He did so now. Not that the exercise of healing power was one whit more Divine an act than the forgiveness of sin; not that an act of pity for bodily incapacity was greater or worthier than one of mercy and succour to the soul. That could not be. But that the working of the miracle was a more *obvious* and *signal* indication of the Divine than an act of forgiveness. And by this gracious and mighty work our Lord proved himself to be the One who had a right to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." We may say that the gospel of Jesus Christ is now authenticated *by its power*. We are sure that the message of grace and mercy which we preach does come from God because (among other reasons for our assurance) we witness the mighty power of Christian truth. We find it doing what nothing else ever tried to do—enlightening multitudes of dark minds, redeeming and restoring foul hearts, transforming evil lives, lifting men up from the dust and the mire of sin and shame and bidding them walk in the ways of righteousness.

III. OUR APPROACH TO THE SAVIOUR. It was the approach of this man to the Lord that led to Christ's words of mercy and then to his deed of power. The man could not and would not keep away from his presence; he was resolved to make his appeal to the great Healer, cost what it might to reach his ear. This is the approach that is successful—seeking the Lord with the whole heart, with a fixed intent to seek until he is found. Not a languid interest in Christ, not a pursuit of righteousness which may be turned aside by the first curiosity or indulgence that offers itself; but a holy earnestness which will not be denied, which, if one entrance is blocked, will find another, which knocks till the door is opened,—this is the search that succeeds. Not, indeed, that Christ is hard to find or reluctant to bestow; but that, for our sake, he does often cause us to continue in our seeking that our blessedness may be the fuller and our faith the firmer and our new life the deeper for our patience and our persistency.

IV. THE SUPERABUNDANCE WHICH IS IN CHRIST. This poor paralytic sought much of the Lord, but he found a great deal more than he sought; seeking healing for his body, he found that, and with that mercy for his soul. Christ has more to give us than we count upon receiving. Many a man has gone to him asking only for present relief from a burden of conscious guilt, and he has found that salvation by faith in Jesus Christ means vastly more than that. He finds that the forgiveness of sin is the initial step of a bright and blessed future, that it is the earnest of a noble inheritance. In Christ our Lord are "unsearchable riches;" and they who have received the most have only begun to find what a world of excellency and blessedness they have gained by hearkening to his voice and hastening to his side and entering his holy service.—C.

Vers. 27, 28.—*Following Christ.* Who can fail to be struck with—

I. THE COMMANDING AUTHORITY OF CHRIST. It will be observed that he speaks in the imperative; not "Wouldest thou," but "Do thou follow me!" He speaks, also, unconditionally, absolutely, not "Follow me if or when," but simply and without reserve, "Follow me!" Consider what large consequences would result from Matthew's choice—the complete breaking up of his old life, the forsaking of his old pursuits and of his old friends, the entering an entirely new sphere of thought and action. Yet Matthew appears to have recognized the right of Jesus Christ to make this demand of him. Must he not have acted under Divine illumination and guidance to decide so promptly and so wisely? So authoritatively and unconditionally the Saviour comes to us and summons us to his service. His claim rests on incontestable facts which prove him to be the Son of God who has a sovereign right thus to address us, to be the Son of man whose life of love and whose death of shame entitle him to ask the most and the best of us.

II. THE MEANING OF OUR SAVIOUR'S CALL. The form of service our Master desires of us when he bids us follow him is obviously different from that he asked of Matthew. What does he want of us? What is the precise thing he requires us to do? Taking, as we should take, one passage with another, we answer that he desires us to come into the closest possible union which a human spirit can sustain to the Divine; or, more specifically, he wants us *cordially to accept him for all that he offers to be to our soul*—to accept him as our Teacher from whom we learn all needful truth, as our Saviour in whose redeeming work we trust for God's abounding mercy, as our Lord to whom we dedicate our powers and our days, as our Divine Friend and Refuge in whom we hide.

III. THE EXCELLENCY OF AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE. Matthew did well that he "left all, rose up, and followed him." Had he waited for another occasion, he would have been more entangled in human relationships and worldly interests; he might never have had so direct and personal an appeal made to him. As it was, by forsaking all to follow Christ, he lost a profitable calling and a company of friends; but what did he find instead? 1. The protection and friendship of Jesus Christ. 2. A new and nobler manhood, an exalted life. 3. The esteem and the gratitude of the Church of Christ for all time to come. 4. Eternal blessedness in the future. And so with us; when the Master comes and calls us, as he may do in one of a number of ways, we act most wisely when we *immediately* respond. (1) We lose the least that can be lost. (2) We *make sure* of the heritage which the truly wise are determined to gain. Jesus of Nazareth is "passing by;" we must avail ourselves of his offer while opportunity allows. (3) We gain immeasurable good—peace of mind, blessed consciousness of the favour and friendship of God, spiritual rectitude, a life that is worthy of our origin and our capacities, a hope that maketh not ashamed. That was a supreme hour to Matthew, the crisis of his life: who shall say how soon we may reach the supreme and critical hour of our career? Blessed are they who recognize it when it comes, and who come forth from it having "laid hold on eternal life."—C.

Vers. 29—32.—*Christian association.* On what principle shall we regulate our intercourse with men? How shall we follow Christ in the matter of associating with our fellow-men? Our answer, suggested by this incident, is—

I. THAT ASSOCIATION WITH BAD MEN ON THE GROUND OF FRIENDSHIP IS AN UNCHRISTIAN THING. The Pharisees would have been right enough if Jesus Christ had mingled with the mercenary and the vicious only to enjoy their company. His time

might certainly have been much better spent than in partaking of so doubtful a source of satisfaction, and he would have left an example that would have been better shunned than followed. For to mingle with the irreverent and the covetous, and, still more, to associate with the positively vicious, simply for the sake of passing gratification, is: 1. To spend time and strength where they are very ill applied. 2. To lend a sanction to those who need rather to be discouraged than sustained in their course of life. 3. To incur the serious danger of being lowered to their level. Some intercourse with the frivolous and the guilty we must have, and there is every reason why our conduct toward them should be as courteous and gracious as possible. But no wise man will establish an intimate friendship with another whose spirit is the spirit of worldliness, whose conduct is that from which purity and sobriety must shrink. Let the young especially remember that lifelong association with the unholy and the unworthy, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, means gradual moral degeneracy, continual spiritual decline.

II. THAT ASSOCIATION WITH THE GOOD IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS A WISE AND WORTHY THING. "The assembling of ourselves together," as those who are agreed on the same fundamental articles of faith, and who are animated by the same spirit and are promoting the same objects, is admirable for three reasons. 1. We gain spiritual strength ourselves. 2. We impart it to those with whom we unite. 3. We commend the common principles we hold to those who are without by the manifestation of our unity. Those who try to live a life of spiritual isolation not only make a *great mistake* by robbing themselves of a source of hallowed influence, but they neglect a *plain duty*, for they leave unemployed a weapon of usefulness by which truth and worth are materially advanced. But the main lesson of the passage is—

III. THAT ASSOCIATION WITH THE BAD FOR THEIR ELEVATION IS A DISTINCTLY CHRISTIAN THING. Those critics of Jesus Christ failed to see that the presence of a noble, unselfish motive made all the difference in the character of the act. It completely transformed it. It changed it from the unwise and the condemnable into the wise and meritorious. Our Lord mingled with publicans and sinners, not as a Companion to share their revelries, but as a Guide to lead them into other and better ways, as a Helper whose strong hand should raise them from the mire and place them upon the rock. And as he was here to seek and to save, where should he be found but among those who were lost? Where would you have the teacher? In the company of the mature and the literate, or in the schoolroom among the young and the ignorant? Where would you have the physician? In the homes of the healthy, or in the hospital and in the homes of the sick? And where should *they* be found who have truth to teach and restoration to impart such as no teacher of any human science can make known, no healer of bodily diseases can confer? We are never quite so Christian, we never reach a height so near the level on which our Lord was daily walking, as when we voluntarily and cheerfully forego the pleasanter security to which our character entitles us, and mingle freely and frequently with those whose spirit and whose tone is offensive to our taste and our judgment, in order that we may lift them up to a nobler life. And this is the one and only way in which to work out this great and beneficent reform. What legislation will not do, what literature will not effect, what art and science will leave unaccomplished if not untouched, that a holy and loving association on the ground of Christian kindness will secure. The actual and near presence of the pure and kind, the touch and the pressure of the hand of human love, the voice of invitation and of entreaty proceeding from those whose eyes are dim with the tears of a sorrowful sympathy,—this is the power which, coming, as it does, from Jesus Christ, and emanating from his Holy Spirit, will lead sinful souls, covetous men and erring women, into paths of penitence, and raise them to heights of holiness.—C.

Vers. 33—38.—*Christian naturalness.* We have here—

I. AN HONEST DIFFICULTY FAIRLY AND EFFECTUALLY MET. It was in no carping spirit that the disciples of John came to Jesus. We do not detect a trace of ill will in their question. It was a spirit of surprise and perplexity that dictated it. They had always thought that fasting was an essential feature of true piety. Their master John had encouraged them in this idea; but they looked in vain for this feature in

the doctrine of Christ. What could it mean? Our Lord met this inquiry in a very different way from that in which he might have done so. He might have said, "Where, in the books of Moses, is fasting enjoined on the people of God? On what day in all the year, excepting the Day of Atonement, is this practice prescribed? Is it not a tradition of men rather than a commandment of God?" But Jesus did not meet them thus. He said that his disciples did not fast because fasting on their part would be untimely, unsuitable, and therefore unacceptable. "Can the children of the bridechamber," etc.? "You would not have men fast when they have every reason for feasting? you would not have men show themselves miserable when there is every ground for gladness? you would not have my disciples do such violence to their spiritual nature? You do not act," Christ goes on to say, "with such unnaturalness and incongruity in other departments of life; you do not bring together things that do not agree with one another; you do not put unwrought cloth on an old garment; you do not put new unfermented wine in old skins that will not stretch; if you did, you would pay the penalty in spoiled clothes and spilled wine. Why should you do anything that is unfitting and incongruous in the realm of religion? If you do, you will have a serious penalty to pay. No; let my disciples rejoice while they have occasion to be glad; the days will come soon enough when they will have a heart for grieving: then will they fast in those days."

II. AN INDICATION OF THE TRUE TONE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. The disciples were glad of heart because their Master was "with them." To be the close companions of Jesus Christ is reason enough for a prevailing spiritual joy. As his disciples, indeed, there are certain special sources of sorrow—grief at the sin and misery of mankind, regret at our own slowness of growth and slackness of zeal, etc. But for us as his followers is (1) the joy of faith; (2) the joy of fellowship; (3) the joy of service, the delight of doing good, the blessedness of giving health and peace and hope to those in spiritual weakness and trouble; (4) the joy of hope, of immortal blessedness. Is it for us, with such a heritage in possession, and with such a prospect as this, to comport ourselves as if we were fatherless, friendless, portionless? Is it for us to go on our way homewards and heavenwards as if we were being conveyed to prison or were going into exile? Not gloom but gladness, not dreariness but delight, should be the prevailing note of our Christian life.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FITTING IN THE SPHERE OF THE SACRED. We learn this, in the text, from the unwisdom of the unfitting in the sphere of the secular. "No man putteth," etc.; if he does, he spoils his garment, and he spills his wine. So in the sphere of the spiritual: if we force the sorrowful spirit to assume the tone of the happy; or if we reverse this unnatural process, and compel the happy to affect to be sorrowful; or if we require the young to manifest piety in the forms that are suitable to the mature; or if we insist on those who have been trained in godly and virtuous habits showing the same form of repentance which we demand of the vicious and the gross;—we may secure a result which gives us momentary satisfaction, but we shall have a penalty to pay further on. The unnatural is always a mistake. God does not desire to be served in ways which are not fitted to the spirit which he has made, or are not appropriate to the circumstances in which his providence has placed us. Let there be no forcing in the sphere of the sacred. Do the fitting, the congruous thing, and you will do the right and the acceptable thing. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any afflicted? let him pray." Is any filled with a sense of the value of this life? let him give himself heartily to holy usefulness. Is any weary and worn with the strife and burden of life? let him find cheer and comfort in anticipating the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Do not try to regulate your spiritual life by any calendar; let it flow on in joy or sorrow, in active service or patient waiting as the hand of God is laid on the springs of your human spirit, and is directing the course of your earthly life. Not the hard, cast-iron service of constraint, but the free, spontaneous service of the full and overflowing heart, is that for which our Lord is looking, and with which he is well pleased.—C.

Vers. 1—11.—*Fishers of men.* We left Jesus itinerating through Galilee and preaching in the synagogues. But his centre seems to have been the Lake of Gennesaret, and especially Capernaum. The synagogues have become too small for his

audiences, and so he has to take to the seashore, and there meet popularity as best he can. The pressure of the people is great, and it is to hear the Word of God they have come. A great Prophet, they feel, has risen up among them, and so they are eager to know what are the latest tidings from the Most High. There are two ships floating near; they are empty, for the fishermen have returned after a fruitless night, and are washing their nets on shore. Into one of the ships he enters, which happens to be Simon's, and he sits down to teach the mighty multitude which rises tier upon tier above him on the land. We have thus presented to us—

I. THE GREAT FISHER OF MEN. (Vers. 1—3.) For out of this boat he is really casting his net to catch men. His word spoken is to draw souls into sympathy and service. The art of preaching as thus exercised by Jesus Christ was the fishing for men. The miracle of subsequent success was to throw light really upon this primary attitude of Jesus. Now, let us consider here: 1. *The substance of Christ's preaching.* It was doubtless about the kingdom of God, about membership in it, and about its prospects in the world. But we must remember besides that he could not, in the very nature of the case, *preach the cross.* Hence his preaching was *the purest morality* backed up by a perfect life. So that once, at all events, the preaching of morality got a chance of being most favourably tested. The success thereof we shall mention presently. But Jesus could preach *himself* as the Saviour of sinners. And this, indeed, is the sum and substance of all preaching. The people, however, did not understand the full meaning of his message at the time. 2. *The success of Christ's preaching.* There was interest and excitement. But the result of that day's preaching seems to have been very like the night's fishing on the part of the disciples. Ah! this is what illustrates the wonderful consideration of the Saviour. Some one must prepare the way, some one must do the pioneer work. The Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, and Jesus prepared the way for the disciples. It is at Pentecost, after the Crucifixion, when the full gospel can be proclaimed, that the real success begins. The miracle of the fishes subsequent to the preaching of the Master was the type of the order which the good Lord has ordained. The "greater works" done by believing disciples are the spiritual miracles which began in such numbers at Pentecost, and which have been happening ever since (John xiv. 12).

II. THE MIRACLE OF SUCCESS. (Vers. 4—7.) Our Lord, having been accommodated in Simon's boat, proceeds to show his gratitude for the obligation. He tells the fishermen to "launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Simon honestly owns that they have toiled all the night, and taken nothing; still, though appearances are against it, he will at Christ's word let down the net. No sooner has he done so than success comes so overpowering in character that the net breaks. The result is that they have to beckon for the second boat, and both boats are filled, so that they begin to sink. Here, then, is success "exceeding abundantly above all they can ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20). This is to show them that success waits upon the word of Jesus. It is, of course, mere *temporal* success—success which in a few moments they are enabled to despise; yet it is success obeying Christ's word. We need not inquire into the nature of the miracle. It was most likely a miracle of *knowledge.* There are great shoals of fish manifesting themselves in inland lakes just in the way demanded by the narrative.[1] But Jesus, in giving the direction at the proper moment and securing the draught at the time that the fish were within reach, showed his command of all the circumstances. So that, as Robertson thought, this miracle, more perhaps than all others, shows the personality of God in Christ Jesus.[2] The laws of nature hold on their way, but the Author of them can calculate to a nicety their working, and accommodate himself or his people through their operation. He is King among his own arrangements, at home among his own laws. The "hierarchy of laws," as they have been called, acknowledge him as High Priest. But we should further notice how he arranges for the disciples' success rather than for his own. As already intimated, his spiritual success was not great, considering the splendid powers he exercised. As Bersier somewhere remarks, no one ever had so little proportional success as he. No wonder that such a passage as Isa. xlix. 4, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength

[1] Cf. Tristram's 'Natural History of the Bible,' p. 285; also Godet, *in loc.*
[2] 'The Human Race, and other Sermons,' p. 127, by Rev. F. W. Robertson.

for nought and in vain," may have been often on his lips.[1] But he handed on the elements of success to his successors. They reaped the harvest of which his *apparent* failure and early death were the seed. The whole arrangement reflects glory on the consideration of the Master.

III. THE EFFECT OF THE SUCCESS UPON THE FISHERMEN. (Vers. 8—10.) They were all filled with *astonishment*. This is the prime effect of a miracle. It astonishes people. It brings them suddenly face to face with superhuman power. They stare. But after the astonishment comes, and it may be very swiftly, sober thought. It was so here. Peter is broken down at the sight. Goodness has led him to *repentance*. His sin is now uppermost, and he cries, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Did Peter wish to be separated from the Master? Nay; but he felt he *deserved* to be. And here we may notice how prayer is answered. Peter cries to be separated from his Saviour; but in heart he hopes to remain beside Jesus still. Hence Jesus answers the *heart*, and heeds not the literal meaning of his prayer.[2] The Lord does not depart from him, but abides with him; nay, more, arranges for Peter being always with him. Goodness is meant to break sinners' hearts (Rom. ii. 4). Success of all kinds should have this effect. It is sad when "Jeshurun waxes fat and kicks" (Deut. xxxii. 15). It is blessed when, like Peter, in presence of unexpected good fortune, we humble ourselves before him who has sent it, acknowledging that we do not in any wise deserve it.[3]

IV. THE CALL OF THE FISHERMEN TO THE MINISTRY. (Ver. 10.) Peter was not the only penitent on board the sinking ships, we may be sure. He was first and chief; but the sons of Zebedee and Andrew were, we may be quite sure, penitent too. Fear predominates; their notion is that they might justly be cast from Christ's presence for ever. This is just the spirit in which special work for God begins. And now let us see how Jesus deals with them. He says to Peter first, but the result shows that the others were included in his call, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." They are to be promoted from being fishermen to be "fishers of men." It is a call, not to the apostolic office which comes later, but to the ministry. 1. It is a call away *from a worldly occupation*. For the ministry is an order of men set apart from temporal concerns for spiritual work. Worldly occupations are incompatible with it. A minister cannot do his work well if compelled to dabble in business. 2. It is a call to *catch men*. Now, the fisherman uses every art and artifice to get the fish into his net. He toils during the night, that the fish may not see the net nor evade his wiles. In the same way the minister is to use every art, and even guile itself, as Paul confesses, to get souls into Christ's net. We may object to the methods some people employ to promote the gospel. They may be worldly arts—advertising, music, paraphernalia of all kinds. But, before condemning enthusiastic men, we should ask ourselves the question—Have *we* left "no stone unturned" to bring men, even by moral *compulsion*, under the power of Christ and his truth (cf. ch. xiv. 23)? But: 3. The instruction is *to catch men alive* (ζωγρῶν). It is here the fishing fails us as a figure. Fish are caught and, as a rule, in the catching are killed. They lose their lives in the process. But when souls are taken in the gospel net, they are taken alive—are taken to enjoy life abundantly. In truth, the greatest kindness we can confer on souls is to get them into the net. We never live in earnest till we have been brought to him who is the Life of men. Such, in brief terms, is the meaning of the ministry.

V. THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINISTERIAL CALL. (Ver. 11.) We would say, at first sight, that the success was singularly out of place. Why grant a shoal of fish, if the fishermen are to leave them without a moment's hesitation or delay? The purpose was to assure them that temporal success was Christ's gift; and secondly, that spiritual success must be preferred to the temporal, even when the latter is at its height. It was a greater surrender when they had been so successful at their fishing. But the noble men did not hesitate. They brought their ships to land, and then forsook all their "stock in trade" that they might follow Jesus. The fellowship with Jesus during his ministry was more precious than the world's wealth could ever be. He

[1] Cf. Bersier's 'Sermons,' tome ii. p. 351.

[2] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' zweiter theil, s. 88.

[3] Cf. Robertson, *ut supra*; also Martineau's 'Endeavours after the Christian Life,' 11th edit., p. 147.

was the great "Fisher of men," and it was from fellowship with him they were to learn their profession. The training of the twelve was a most real and blessed thing.[1] It was more than any theological learning could ever afford. It was learning of Christ himself, who is the embodied Truth. And yet to this same test every soul is sooner or later brought. At death, if not before, we are all asked if we can forsake all to follow Christ into undiscovered lands. May we all stand that test!—R. M. E.

Vers. 12—26.—*The healing of the leper and the paralytic.* We noticed how Jesus called the fishermen to be fishers of men, and how they nobly responded to his call, and forsook the fish and boats and friends that they might follow him. We have now before us two instructive miracles performed during his evangelistic work, and resulting in an extension of his influence. Between them there is interposed a significant remark about our Lord's private prayer, so that the order of our thought is miracle, prayer, and more miracle. It is thus that Divine work goes on. We must, consequently, give ourselves unto prayer as well as the ministry of the Word if we would follow Jesus or his apostles.

I. CONSIDER THE CURE OF THE LEPROSY. (Vers. 12—15.) It was manifestly a very serious case—the man was "full of leprosy." It was the disease in its worst stage. Humanly speaking, it was incurable. So far as man was concerned, the case was hopeless. Now, in this respect, the leprosy is a type of *sin*. Sin is leprosy in the soul. It is so far incurable by man. But further, the leper was isolated from his kind, not because the disease was infectious through contact, which seems to be quite disproved,[2] but because in this way God would show his abhorrence of sin and its essentially *separating* power. The poor lepers, as they went up and down the land with rent garments, and crying, "unclean!" were virtually dead men mourning over their lost and hopeless condition. But this poor leper had heard of Jesus, had come to him, convinced that he was able to save him. He throws himself down consequently at Christ's feet, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He was convinced of the Saviour's power, and he threw himself upon his sovereign mercy in the matter of the willingness to save. And it is just to this that every sinner must come. Persuaded of Christ's ability to save, he must throw himself upon his sovereign clemency. For the Saviour might *justly* refuse to save any, though, as a matter of fact, he is anxious to save all. And now let us notice Christ's *method* in saving him. He might have saved him by a word, but to show his sympathy and freedom from all fear of defilement, he heals him by a touch, saying, "I will: be thou clean." And immediately the leprosy departed from him. In the very same way can the Saviour heal the leprosy of sin. If we only ask him, he will tenderly touch us, and instantaneously the soul's disease will depart. But, when healed, the man has certain duties to discharge at the instigation of Jesus. He is directed first to tell no man; for Jesus wants to be something more than a physician of the body, and he might, through the patient's report, be so overwhelmed with physical cases as not to have sufficient time for the preaching and spiritual work which with him was paramount. Secondly, he is directed to repair to the priest, and fulfil all that the Law of Moses required, "for a testimony unto them." In this way our Lord desired to demonstrate that he had not come, as they basely insinuated, to destroy the Law and the prophets, but to fulfil them and to get them fulfilled. Notwithstanding these precautions, his fame so spread that multitudes came flocking together to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. We have thus presented to us the way of salvation and its results. It is by coming to Jesus that we are saved from sin; it is by doing what Jesus requires that we are made useful among men. Let us test Jesus as the appointed Saviour, and live as our Lord directs.

II. CONSIDER OUR LORD'S RETIREMENT TO THE WILDERNESS FOR PRAYER. (Ver. 16.) There is a certain measure of exhaustion in such work as was performed by Jesus. He bowed to the necessity of private communion with God. Even Jesus could not be always in public; solitude was as needful for his soul's health as society for his opportunity of usefulness. Vinet, in a fine sermon on this passage, says, "We do not believe

[1] Cf. 'The Training of the Twelve,' by Dr. A. B. Bruce, *passim*.

[2] Cf. Archbishop Trench on 'The Miracles,' 7th edit., p. 214; Godet, *in loc.*, adheres to the old view of its contagious character.

that we exaggerate when we say that those who do not love solitude do not love truth."[1] It is in the secret place with God that we renew our spiritual strength and are fit for further service. And what perfect prayers our Lord's must have been. No personal sin to confess, but simply to confer with the Father about the salvation of the world and how best he could promote the welfare of men. The time of solitude with God is the most fruitful time. Without it how barren all else proves!

III. CONSIDER THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC. (Vers. 17—26.) It was in Capernaum, it is believed, and in the house of Peter, that the miracle happened. The audience was a *critical* one with whom Jesus was dealing, composed of Pharisees and doctors of the Law, out of every town of Galilee and Judæa and Jerusalem. They had come to pass judgment on the new movement under Jesus. And the Spirit was waiting there as the Agent to apply the healing Word of the Messiah to those not unwilling to be healed. But alas! these hard-hearted lawyers gave him no opportunity. But four friends bring along the street a paralytic neighbour, in the hope that he may be healed by Jesus. They cannot at first get near, and so they repair to the house-top, and proceed to tear up the tiles in sufficient numbers to allow of their lowering their helpless friend to the feet of Jesus.[2] Here was the Spirit's opportunity. And here let us notice the twofold paralysis under which the poor man laboured—the one was the *paralysis of the soul*, the other the *paralysis of the body*. Both appealed to the sympathy of Jesus. Besides, he is pleased to notice the faith of the bearers. We are not told that the paralytic at this time had faith in Jesus, but his friends had for him. They believed that if they could only get their friend before Jesus, they would not have to carry him home again. And disinterested faith for a blessing upon others Jesus respects and rewards. But which of the two paralyses will Jesus cure first? The more serious—the paralysis of soul through sin. Hence, in endearing accents he says, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." It was a case of *absolution*, as Robertson boldly puts it in his sermon upon this passage.[3] And to absolution by one whom they regarded as a mere man the scribes and Pharisees secretly objected. They rightly said that none but God alone could forgive sins as against God; they wrongly concluded that Jesus was not Divine. There was no blasphemy, for this was God incarnate. Their objection was not publicly taken. It was a mental note they took of the matter. Jesus soon shows them that he can read their *thoughts*, by laying bare their objection, and putting his prerogative to the proof. The demonstration he proposes is this: he has pronounced the absolution. It may be deemed easy to do this, since no one can tell that it has not taken place. But he is willing to rest his claim to absolving power by saying the harder word, "Rise up and walk." According as this takes place or fails is he willing to be judged. And so, before his enemies and to the palsied patient, he says, "Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house." Here was a *demonstration* of his ability to forgive sins as against God, for the paralysis departs and the powerless patient starts to his feet and reaches home with his bed as Jesus commands him. In doing so, moreover, he glorifies God, doubtless, for the double blessing. Now, these miracles are signs and symbols of spiritual things. This healing of the body is a sign of what Jesus is willing and waiting to do for our souls. Paralysis is what has seized on many. What a living death it is! It is only Jesus who can free our spirits from it. If we look to him he will give us his Spirit to strengthen us with all might in the inner man, and to help us to earnestness and action. And first we shall show to all about us that we are able to help ourselves, and will no longer be burdens upon others. The four burden-bearers here were spared their hard work ever after. This is the first manifestation of spiritual strength in the carrying honestly our own share of life's responsibilities! Secondly, we shall glorify God through our spiritual powers. We shall praise him for his loving-kindness and tender mercy towards us. And lastly, we shall lead others to fear and to glorify God too. Hence the great importance of getting rid of spiritual paralysis and of rising into the exercise of spiritual power. We should also learn distinctly from this miracle what possibilities lie await-

[1] 'Nouvelles Études Evangeliques,' p. 228.

[2] Cf. Delitzsch's 'Ein Tag in Capernaum,' ss. 40—46; Geikie's 'Life and Words of Christ,' vol. ii. p. 23.

[3] 'Sermons,' vol. iii. p. 69.

ing intercessory prayer and disinterested faith. We may do much in bringing helpless souls to Jesus, that they may be healed by him. He is able to do much for our friends as well as for ourselves, and the joy of bringing others to Christ is only exceeded by the joy of coming ourselves. Let us keep coming to Jesus for ourselves and with others, and strange and blessed experiences shall still be ours.—R. M. E.

Vers. 27—39.—*The call of Levi, and the subsequent banquet.* We noticed how, at the healing of the paralytic, there was a critical assemblage. Secretly did they impugn the absolution pronounced by the Master, and publicly were they refuted. Immediately after, it would seem from all the accounts, Jesus takes the bold step of calling a publican to become his disciple. It was a throwing down of the gauntlet to his enemies. It was taking up a man whom they had excommunicated and despised, and so bringing the kingdom of God into collision with the Jewish authorities. Let us, then, consider—

I. THE CALL OF LEVI, AND ITS ACCEPTANCE. (Vers. 27, 28.) Levi was a leading "custom-house officer," as we should now call him, situated at Capernaum, where the caravans from Damascus to the Mediterranean regularly passed. His office was, we have reason to believe, a lucrative one, so that he had every *worldly* reason for remaining in it. Doubtless he had no position in the Jewish Church, but, considering the Sadducean scepticism which flourished *within* the Church pale, the worldly advantages of the tax-gathering would reconcile Levi to excommunication. When Jesus found him he was busy at his tax-gathering. The piles of money were possibly before him. He was never more prosperously occupied before. But lo! this itinerant Preacher, who has no settled home, has not where to lay his head, comes along, and calls Levi from his business to become his follower. "Follow me," says Christ; and for Levi it meant the surrender of his worldly calling, and becoming an itinerant preacher of the kingdom of God. The step for Levi was most serious. And here notice what Jesus demanded. It may be expressed in three words: it was *faith in himself.* In no way could he better test Levi's confidence than by asking him to surrender the comfort and certainty of his worldly calling for the uncertainty of the Christian ministry as carried on by the Master himself. It is the one demand which Jesus always makes, that men should *trust him.* And Levi surrenders at once. He leaves all, rises up, and literally follows him. It is a farewell to tax-gathering, that he may take service in the retinue of the Prince of peace. Such a surrender without reserve is what Christianity means. Jesus is put before every one and everything, and his command is our *law.* The following of Christ, moreover, includes the whole Christian morality. If we take his way and carry out his will, and do, day by day, what we believe he would in our circumstances, then we shall find ourselves holy and useful in increasing measure.

II. CONSIDER LEVI'S FIRST MISSIONARY EFFORT. (Ver. 29.) This was in the making of the great feast. Hospitality may be missionary in character. If its design is to bring friends into contact with Jesus, as was literally the case here, then it is distinctly a missionary enterprise. Levi felt that the best thing he could now do would be to get all his acquaintances together and to introduce them to Jesus. And ought not this to be the aim of hospitality still, apart from all cant and hypocrisy? Should not hosts inquire what their motives are in making feasts? Are banquets for display, for the advancement of worldly ends, or for the Master's sake? Moreover, this banquet of Levi shows us the *limits* of our work. All we can ever do for men is to introduce them to Jesus. We cannot do more for their salvation. It is the personal acquaintanceship with Jesus into which they must enter if eternal life is to be theirs. "This is life eternal, to know [*i.e.* to be acquainted with] thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). The missionary enterprise through hospitality is only beginning to be realized. Hospitality needs to be redeemed, like many another good thing, from worldly uses. A loving heart will enable a faithful Christian to accomplish this.

III. PHARISAIC OBJECTIONS TO CHRIST'S NEW ASSOCIATIONS. (Vers. 30—32.) Eating and drinking in the East are the universal tokens of mutual confidence. After this, the parties will be true to each other until death. Hence the Pharisees with their scribes (so in Revised Version and best authorities)—the legal experts they had brought with them—object to Jesus and his disciples going in "hand and glove" with excommunicated men. From their standpoint it argued great laxity on the part of our

Lord. Really it only meant his freedom from Pharisaic pretence. And his defence was complete. He took the Pharisees on their own ground. He assumed that they were spiritually whole, as they supposed themselves to be. Of course, he knew how seriously they were in this matter deceiving themselves. But assuming they were whole, he would, as a Physician, have been losing his time and missing his opportunity had he associated only with them. It is the sick, these publicans and sinners, who need the Physician's care. Hence he hesitated not to enter into Levi's house and mix with Levi's guests. Now, association with others may, like hospitality, be a form of missionary enterprise. This should be our motive in associating with others. Why not be propagandists in all our contact with men? It is not necessary we should be "puritanical;" for that was exactly what Jesus in this case and in every case declined to be. But we may in all our hearty fellowship with others keep their spiritual good clear as a star in view. Our Lord's principle, too, as here stated, is impressive. He did not come to summon to his side the men of reputation, the men of good public character, the pharisaically righteous, but to call "sinners," those who despaired of themselves and needed help. In this he states his grand policy. It is for us to realize its meaning and to imitate him. As self-despairing ones, let us rally round the Saviour, as he calls us to him, and then let us vigorously publish the call to other sinners, that they too may be saved.[1]

IV. THE PHARISEES FURTHER OBJECTED TO CHRIST'S PRACTICE. (Vers. 33—35.) Having defended his association with publicans and sinners, he is next assailed because he did not teach the disciples to fast. The Baptist, in the spirit of the old *régime*, directed his disciples to fast, but Jesus took a different course altogether. And here we must remember that the Law of Moses prescribed fasting only on the great Day of Atonement, when sin was brought so powerfully to remembrance. The fasting twice a week, in which the Pharisees indulged, arose out of those "traditions of the elders" which in many respects overlaid the precepts of the Law. Against these traditions our Lord set himself firmly. Notice that: 1. *Fasting is a comparatively easy form of self-denial.* As Robertson has said in a sermon on ver. 33, "All can understand the self-denial of fasting, because hunger is a low want, known to all. But all cannot understand the self-denial of hard mental work, or that of associating with uncongenial minds, or that of honestly pursuing a disagreeable occupation or profession."[2] The coarse minds which proposed to criticize Jesus, therefore, took up fasting as the form of self-denial which they found themselves equal to, and sought to condemn Jesus for neglect of it. 2. *There is no good in fasting for its own sake.* The person who abstains from food merely to be able to say he has fasted and so fulfilled a human tradition, is not living a noble life. Asceticism had, therefore, no countenance from Jesus. 3. *The Divine life is essentially social.* The Trinity of Persons in unity declares this fact. God has been social from everlasting, and when he appeared incarnate it was as an eminently social Saviour. Hence he represents himself on this very occasion as a Bridegroom, and life with him as a bridal feast. Mourning would be as impertinent at a marriage-party as fasting would be when Jesus was present with his people. The sociality of the Christian faith endorses the propriety of the policy of Jesus. 4. *Fasting becomes appropriate when fellowship is interrupted.* Our Lord refers to his own departure as a being taken away from them, a violent operation—a prophetic note about the cross! In such days will the disciples fast. The felt *absence* of the Lord should so impress us that fasting would be only natural with us. Through fasting the soul regains its sovereignty over the body, and the gracious presence of the Master as an experience is regained.

V. OUR LORD'S SPIRIT OF INNOVATION. (Vers. 36—39.) The Pharisees expected he would conform to old customs, as unoriginal minds are wont to do. But they utterly mistook him. He came, as these twin parables tell us, with new cloth and new wine. This can only mean the *Christian spirit*, social and missionary in its very essence. Robertson is quite wrong, we believe, in making the new wine and new cloth "austere duties and doctrines," and the old bottles and old cloth as the weak novices in the shape of the new disciples (*ut supra*, p. 196). In what respect these "austere duties

[1] Cf. Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' s. 669.
[2] 'The Human Race, and other Sermons,' p. 192.

and doctrines," were *new* no one, we imagine, could tell us. They were the old wine and the old garments, easy and palatable to the self-righteous mind, like *old* wine; but the Christian spirit of sociality and missionary enterprise was the new wine which the self-righteous do not particularly care for. Hence our Lord resolved to initiate no such foolish policy as this, to tack on the free spirit of Christianity to the old pharisaic spirit of fasting frequently and being generally morose. The two would not work, and so he courageously resolved to be an innovator, cost what it would, and to conduct his disciples to a better position than Pharisaism realized.[1] The disciples are the new bottles, and the Christian spirit is the new wine. The free, social spirit, which Christianity fosters, may not be palatable to the proud minds of men, but the humble appreciate and preserve it as the disciples have done down to this day. We ought to have the courage of our convictions, even when it leads us to take new courses for men's sake.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1—11.—*The Lord's teaching on the question of the observance of the sabbath.*

Ver. 1.—**And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first.** The expression accompanying this note of time of St. Luke, "the second sabbath after the first," more literally, "the second-first sabbath," has always been a difficulty with expositors of this Gospel. The word is absolutely unique, and is found in no other Greek author. Recent investigations in the text of the New Testament have proved that this word is not found in the majority of the more ancient authorities. Of the modern critical editors, Alford and Lachmann enclose the disputed word in brackets; Tregelles and Meyer omit it altogether; but the Revisers of the English Version relegate it to the margin in its literal form, "second-first;" Tischendorf alone admits it in his text. The question is of interest to the antiquarian, but scarcely of any to the theologian. It was, perhaps, introduced at an early date into many of the manuscripts of St. Luke, owing to some copyist writing in the margin of his parchment in this place "first" to distinguish *this* sabbath and its scene from the *other* sabbath alluded to four verses further on; "second" was not unlikely to have been written in correction of "first" by some other copyist using the manuscript, thinking it better thus to distinguish this from the sabbath alluded to in ch. iv. 31; and thus the two corrections may have got confused in many of the primitive copies. It can scarcely be imagined, if it really formed part of the original work of St. Luke, that so remarkable a word could ever have dropped out of the text of the most ancient and trustworthy authorities. Supposing it to have been a part of the original writing, scholars have suggested many explanations. Of these the simplest and most satisfactory are: (1) The first sabbath of each of the seven years which made a sabbatic cycle was called first, second, third, etc., sabbath. Thus the "second-first" sabbath would signify the first sabbath of the second year of the seven-years' cycle. This is Wieseler's theory. (2) The civil year of the Jews began in autumn about mid-September to mid-October (month Tisri), and the ecclesiastical year in spring, about mid-March to mid-April (month Nisan). Thus there were every year two first sabbaths—one at the commencement of the civil year, which would be called "*first-first;*" the other at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, which would be called "*second-first.*" The period here alluded to by St. Luke would perfectly agree with either of these explanations. The latter theory was suggested by Louis Cappel, and is quoted with approval by Godet. **And his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.** St. Matthew adds here that they "were an hungred." This they might well have been in following the Master in his teaching in different places, even though some of their homes were nigh at hand. We have no need to introduce the question of their poverty—which, in the case of several of them at least, we know did not exist—here leading them to this method of satisfying their hunger. They had probably been out for some hours with Jesus without breaking their fast, and, finding themselves in a field of ripe corn, took this easy, present means of gratifying a natural want. The Law expressly permitted them to do this: "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand" (Deut. xxiii. 25).

Ver. 2.—**And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is**

[1] Cf. Gess's 'Christi-Selbstzeugniss,' s. 19.

not lawful to do on the sabbath days? It would seem that these Pharisees came from Jerusalem, and were no doubt privately commissioned to watch narrowly the acts of the new Teacher who was beginning to attract such general attention, and who already was openly setting at nought the numberless additions which the Jewish schools had added to the Law. Round the original "sabbath law" of Moses thirty-nine prohibitions had been laid down in the oral law; round these "thirty-nine" a vast number of smaller rules had grouped themselves. Amongst these greater and lesser sabbath restrictions were prohibitions against "reaping and threshing." Now, *plucking ears of corn* was defined to be a kind of "reaping," and *rubbing the ears in the hands* a kind of "threshing." "See," cried some of these spying Pharisees, "do thy disciples publicly break the sabbath, and dost thou not rebuke them?" The Lord's reply does not attempt to discuss what was and what was not lawful on the sabbath, but in broad terms he expounds the great doctrine respecting the significance, limits, and purpose of every law relating to outward acts, even in the event of that law having been given by God, which was not the case in the present alleged transgression. How rigidly the stricter Jews some fourteen or fifteen centuries later still kept these strained and exaggerated traditional sabbath-day restrictions, is shown in a curious anecdote of the famous Abarbanel, "when, in 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain, and were forbidden to enter the city of Fez, lest they should cause a famine, they lived on grass; yet even in this state '*religiously avoided the violation of their sabbath by plucking the grass with their hands.*' To avoid this they took the much more laborious method of grovelling on their knees, and cropping it with their teeth!"

Vers. 3, 4.—**And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?** Their own loved David, said the new Teacher to his jealous accusers, scrupled not, when he "was an hungred," to set at nought the twofold ordinance of sacrilege and of sabbath-breaking. (The reference is to 1 Sam. xxi. 5. David's visit to the sanctuary at Nob took place evidently on the sabbath, as the fresh supply of shewbread had been apparently just laid out; he must, too, have violated another rule by his journey on that day. See Stier, 'Words of the Lord Jesus,' on Matt xii. 3, 4.) The lesson which Jesus intended to draw from the example of the great hero-king and the high priest was that no ceremonial law was to override the general principle of providing for the necessities of the body. St. Matthew adds here a very forcible saying of the Lord's spoken on this occasion, which goes to the root of the whole matter, "But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." These laws, as God originally gave them, were never intended to be a burden, rather they were meant to be a blessing for man. After ver. 5, Codex D—a very ancient authority, written in the fifth century, now in the University Library at Cambridge, but one which contains many passages not found in any other trustworthy manuscript or version—adds the following strange narrative: "The same day, Jesus seeing a man who was working on the sabbath, saith to him, O man, if thou knowest what thou art doing, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed, and a transgressor of the Law." As no other ancient authority of weight contains this remarkable addition to the recital of our Lord's teaching respecting the observance of the sabbath, it must be pronounced an interpolation. It belongs most likely to the very early days of the Christian story, and was probably founded on some tradition current in the primitive Church. The framework of the anecdote in its present form, too, shows a state of things simply impossible at this time. Any Jew who, in the days of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, openly, like the man of the story, broke the sabbath in the daring way related, would have been liable to be arrested and condemned to death by stoning.

Ver. 5.—**And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.** The Master closed his reply to the Pharisee inquirers with one of those short assertions of his awful greatness which puzzled and alarmed his jealous foes. Who, then, was he, this poor unknown Carpenter of despised and ignorant Nazareth? He was either a blasphemer too wicked to be allowed to live, or——. The alternative must have been a very awful thought to some of the nobler spirits among those Jerusalem learned men. Across their minds must have flitted not once or twice in that eventful period some anxious questionings as to *who* and *what* was the strange and powerful Being who had appeared in their midst.

Ver. 6.—**And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.** This was the second part of his sabbath teaching. The first had taken place in the open

country, in one of the corn-fields near the Lake of Gennesaret. The second was given in a synagogue possibly in the city of Capernaum. St. Luke inserts this scene, which may have taken place several weeks after the one above related, because it completes in a way the teaching of the Lord on this important point of the ceremonial law.

Ver. 7.—**And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.** The Pharisee emissaries from the capital were carefully watching him. The Master was perfectly aware of their presence, and well knew the spirit in which they listened to his words and marked his acts, and on this sabbath day he was evidently determined to let them see clearly what was in his mind respecting the present state of Jewish religious training.

Ver. 8.—**But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.** When he perceived or was informed of the presence of the afflicted sufferer in the synagogue, who no doubt had come there with a view of seeing Jesus and asking his help as a physician, Jesus publicly bade the sufferer to stand out in a prominent place in the assembly, and then in the hush that followed proceeded with his public instruction, the poor man with the withered hand standing before him. The Gospel which Jerome found among the Nazarenes gives at length the prayer of this man with the withered hand. "I was a mason earning my livelihood with my own hands; I pray thee, Jesus, restore me to health, in order that I may not with shame beg my bread." This Nazarene Gospel was only used among a sect of early Jewish Christians, and has not been preserved. It possibly was one of those alluded to by the compiler of the Third Gospel in his preface (ch. i. 1).

Ver. 9.—**Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?** The sum and substance of the Master's teaching here is—works of love done for the bodies and souls of men never mar or in any way interfere with the holiness of a day of rest. St. Matthew, in his account of the plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day (xii. 5), tells us, on that occasion Jesus asked how it was that the priests on the sabbath days profaned the sabbath and were blameless? The Jews in later days used to declare, perhaps in answer to Jesus Christ's famous question here, "that in the temple was there no sabbatism." Now, the Lord pressed home to those who listened to his voice the great truth that in all labours of love, of pity, and of kindness, done anywhere, there was no sabbatism.

Ver. 10.—**Stretch forth thy hand!** It must have sounded a strange command to the people in the synagogue. How could he stretch out that withered, powerless limb? But with the command went forth the power. In other words, "Stretch forth that poor hand of thine; thou canst now, for, lo! the disease is gone." And we read that he did so, and as he stretched out the limb, so long powerless, the man discovered and the people saw that the cure was already performed.

Ver. 11.—**And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.** The storm was already gathering. From this time we gather from the words of SS. Matthew and Mark, that in the minds of others as well as in the mind of Jesus, the thought of his death was ever present. The thought-leaders of the Jews—the men whose position was secured as long as the rabbinic teaching held sway in the hearts of the people, but no longer—from this hour resolved upon the death of that strange mighty Reformer. He was, said they, an impostor, a fanatic; one who led men's minds astray. Had they no doubts, we ask; no qualms of conscience, no deep searchings of heart? Were these great ones of earth *really* persuaded that he was a deceiver?

Vers. 12—19.—*The choice of the twelve.*

Ver. 12.—**And it came to pass in those days.** That is to say, in the course of his ministry in Galilee, especially in the thickly populated district lying round the Lake of Genessaret, and after the events related in ch. v. and the first eleven verses of ch. vi., Jesus proceeded to choose, out of the company of those who had especially attached themselves to him, twelve who should henceforth be always with him. These he purposed to train up as the authorized exponents of his doctrine, and as the future leaders of his Church. Things had assumed a new aspect during the last few months. Jerusalem and the hierarchy, supported by the great teachers of that form of Judaism which for so long a period had swayed the hearts of the people, had, although not yet openly, declared against the views and teaching of Jesus. His acts—but far more his words—had gathered round him, especially in Galilee, in the north and central districts of Palestine, a large and rapidly increasing following. It was necessary that some steps should be taken at once to introduce among the people who had received his words gladly, some kind of organization; hence the formal choice of the twelve, who from henceforth stood nearest to him. We possess the following four lists of these twelve men:—

Matt. x. 2—4.	Mark iii. 16—19.	Luke vi. 14—16.	Acts i. 13.
Simon	Simon	Simon	Peter
Andrew	James	Andrew	James
James	John	James	John
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James of Alphæus	James of Alphæus	James of Alphæus	James of Alphæus
Lebbæus	Thaddæus	Simon Zelotes	Simon Zelotes
Simon the Kananite	Simon the Kananite	Judas of James	Judas of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Ver. 13.—**And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve.** St. Luke frequently alludes to Jesus spending periods of time in prayer. He would have the readers of his Gospel never lose sight of the perfect humanity of the Saviour, and, while ever keeping in view the higher objects of his earthly mission, still is careful always to present him as the Example of a true life. This is why he mentions so often the prayers of Jesus. This time the Master continued in prayer all night. It was a momentous task which lay before him on the following morning—the choice of a few men, the measureless influence of whose life and work we, though we live eighteen centuries after the choice was made, and see already how the twelve have moved the world, are utterly unable to apprehend. In these solemn hours of communion with the Eternal, we may in all reverence suppose that the Blessed One took counsel with his Father, presenting, as Godet phrases it, one by one to the All-seeing, while God's finger pointed out those to whom he was to entrust the salvation of the world. **Whom also he named apostles.** The literal meaning of this term is "one who is sent," but in classical Greek it had acquired a distinct meaning as "envoy or ambassador" of a sovereign or of a state. These favoured men, then, received this as the official designation by which they were ever to be known. Unknown, unhonoured, and for the most part unlearned men, they with all their love and devotion for their Master who had called them, little recked that morning on the mountain-side to what they were called, and of whom they were the chosen envoys! The four lists of the apostles copied above vary very slightly. There was evidently in the matter of the holy twelve an unerring tradition at the time when Luke wrote these chronicles at Rome or Alexandria, at Ephesus or at Antioch,—all knew every detail connected with the great first leaders of the faith. The bare list of names was enough. The Church of the first days knew a hundred facts connected with these famous men. The Church of the future needed no details of private history. These apostles, great though they were, were only instruments in the Master's hand; what they did and suffered was, after all, of little moment to those who should come after. In the four bare skeleton lists, though, certain points are noticeable. (1) Each catalogue falls into three divisions containing four names. In each of these divisions the same name always stands first, as though some precedence or authority was deputed to this one over the other three forming the division. This, in the absence of any further notice, must not be pressed. It is, however, a very probable inference. The names of these three are Peter, Philip, James. (2) The twelve were thus divided into three distinct companies, of which the first (this is clearly borne out by the gospel story) stood in the closest relation to Jesus. Of the twelve, the first five came from Bethsaida on the lake, and they all apparently—with the exception of Judas the traitor, who came from a town in Judæa—were Galilæans. The names are all Hebrew (Aramaic) with the exception of Philip and Andrew, which are Greek. It was, however, at that time by no means uncommon for Jews to possess Greek names, so widely did Hellenic influence extend over Egypt, Syria, and the Mediterranean-washed countries of Asia.

Ver. 14.—**Simon, (whom he also named Peter).** The Master had already, reading as he did the future, bestowed upon this often erring, but noble and devoted servant, the surname, *Cephas*, literally, a "mass of rock." **And Andrew.** One of the first believers, and reckoned among the four whose office placed them in closest relation to their Master, and yet for some—to us—unexplained reason, Andrew did not occupy that position of intimacy shared by Peter,

James, and John. He was apparently the intimate friend and associate of Philip, the first of the second "four." James and John. Well-known and honoured names in the records of the first days. Mark adds a vivid detail which throws much light on the character and fortunes of the brothers; he calls them Boanerges, "sons of thunder." The burning enthusiasm of James no doubt led to his receiving the first martyr-crown allotted to "the glorious company of the apostles," while the same fiery zeal in the loved apostle colours the Apocalypse. Philip. John vi. 5 may be quoted to show that the Lord was on terms of peculiar friendship with this first of the second four. Bartholomew; *Bar-Tolmai:* son of Tolmai, He therefore must have been known also by some other name. In St. John's Gospel Bartholomew is never mentioned, but Nathanael, whose name appears in the Fourth Gospel among the apostles, and who is not alluded to in the memoirs of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, evidently represents the same person. The real name of the son of Tolmai, then, would appear to have been Nathanael.

Ver. 15.—Matthew. In the list contained in the Gospel which unanimous Church traditions ascribe to this apostle, "the publican" (tax-gatherer) is significantly added. His brother evangelists, Mark and Luke, in their catalogues, omit the hated profession to which he once belonged. Simon called Zelotes. In SS. Matthew and Mark this apostle is called "Simon the Kananite." This epithet does not mean that Simon was a native or dweller in Cana of Galilee, but the epithet "Kananite" had the same signification as "Zelotes," the surname given by St. Luke, which is best rendered as "the Zealot." *Kananite* is derived from the Hebrew word קנא, zeal. "He had once, therefore, belonged to the sect of terrible fanatics who thought any deed of violence justifiable for the recovery of national freedom, and had probably been one of the wild followers of Judas the Gaulonite (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' iv. 3. 9). Their name was derived from 1 Macc. ii. 50, where the dying Mattathias, father of Judas Maccabæus, says to the Assidæans (Chasidim, *i.e.* 'all such as were voluntarily devoted to the Law'), 'Be ye *zealous* for the Law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers'" (Archdeacon Farrar).

Ver. 16.—Judas the brother of James; more accurately, *Judas,* or *Jude, son of James,* or simply *James's Jude.* So this disciple is termed in both the writings ascribed to St. Luke (the Gospel and Acts). In St. Matthew's list we find a "Lebbæus," and in St. Mark's a "Thaddæus" occupying a position in the third division which in St. Luke's list is filled by "James's Jude." There is no doubt that Lebbæus and Thaddæus were surnames by which James's Jude, or Judas, was known generally in the Church. The necessity of some surname to distinguish this apostle was obvious. Already in the company of apostles there was a Judas, or Jude, who was afterwards known as "the betrayer." One, too, of the Lord's so-called brothers, a figure well known in the society of the Church of the first days, was also named Jude. The meaning of the two epithets is somewhat similar; they both were probably derived from the apostle's character —*Lebbæus* from the Hebrew לב (*lev*), the heart. Jude was probably so styled on account of his loving earnestness. *Thaddæus,* from *thad,* a word which in later Hebrew meant the female breast, was suggested possibly by his even feminine devotedness and tenderness of disposition. The addition in St. Matthew's catalogue to "Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus," which we read in our Authorized Version, does not occur in any of the older authorities, "Thaddæus" being only found in St. Mark's list. And Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. Some scholars have derived "Iscariot" from *as-cara,* strangulation; or from *sheker,* a lie, *ish sheker,* the man of a lie; these derivations are, however, most improbable. The surname is evidently derived from the place whence this Judas came. Kerioth, possibly the modern town or village of *Kuryetein,* not far from Hebron in Judah. Kerioth is mentioned in Josh. xv. 25, *ish-Kerioth,* a man of Kerioth.

Ver. 17.—And he came down with them, and stood in the plain. Leaving the uppermost slopes of the hill—the modern *Kurn Hattin,* or "Horns of Hattin"—where he had spent the night alone in prayer—Jesus probably descended a little and rejoined the band of disciples. Out of these he called the twelve above mentioned; and then, with the whole body of disciples—the twelve, no doubt, closest to his Person—he continued the descent for some way. On a level spot situate on the hillside, very likely a flat space between the two peaks of Hattin, the Master and his followers came upon a crowd of inquirers, who had ascended thus far to meet him. These were composed, as we shall see, of various nationalities. Some came with their sick friends, seeking a cure; some were urged by curiosity; others by a real longing to hear more of the words of life from his Divine lips. It was to this crowd that, surrounded by the newly elected twelve, as well as by the larger company of disciples, that Jesus spoke the

famous discourse known as the sermon on the mount. **A great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him.** To the places here enumerated, St. Matthew adds Galilee, Decapolis, and the region beyond Jordan. St. Mark (iii. 8)—where the same period of our Lord's ministry is treated of—alludes to people from Idumæa forming part of the multitude which just then used to crowd round the Master as he taught. Thus the great sermon was addressed to men of various nationalities—to rigid and careless Jews, to Romans and Greeks, to Phœnicians from Tyre and Sidon, and to nomad Arabs from Idumæa.

Ver. 19.—**And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.** The words here used are few, and we pass them over often without pausing to think of what they involve. It was, perhaps, the hour in the ministry of Jesus when his miraculous power was most abundantly displayed.

Vers. 20—49.—*St. Luke's report of the discourse of our Lord commonly termed the sermon on the mount.* We consider that the discourse contained in the following thirty verses (20—49) is identical with that longer "sermon on the mount" reported by St. Matthew (v.). Certain differences are alleged to exist in the framework of the two discourses.

In St. Matthew the Lord is stated to have spoken it on the mountain; in St. Luke, in the plain. This apparent discrepancy has been already discussed (see above, on ver. 17). The "plain" of St. Luke was, no doubt, simply a level spot on the hillside, on the flat space between the two peaks of the hill.

The more important differences in the Master's utterances—of which, perhaps, one of the weightiest is the addition of St. Matthew to that first beatitude which explains *what* poor were blessed—the "poor in spirit"—probably arose from some questions put to the Master as he was teaching. In his reply he probably amplified or paraphrased the first utterance, which gave rise to the question; hence the occasional discrepancies in the two accounts. It is, too, most likely that many of the weightier utterances of the great sermon were several times reproduced in a longer or shorter form in the course of his teaching. Such repetitions would be likely to produce the differences we find in the two reports of the great sermon.

The plan or scheme of the two Gospels was not the same. St. Luke, doubtless, had before him, when he compiled his work, copious notes or memoranda of the famous discourse. He evidently selected such small portions of it as fell in with his design. The two discourses reported by SS. Matthew and Luke have besides many striking resemblances—both beginning with the beatitudes, both concluding with the same simile or parable of the two buildings, both immediately succeeded by the same miracle, the healing of the centurion's servant. It is scarcely possible—when these points are taken into consideration—to suppose that the reports are of two distinct discourses. The theory held by some scholars, that the great sermon was delivered twice on the same day, on the hillside to a smaller and more selected auditory, then on the plain below to the multitude in a shorter form, is in the highest degree improbable.

No portion of the public teaching of the Lord seems to have made so deep an impression as the mount-sermon. St. James, the so-called brother of Jesus, the first president of the Jerusalem Church, repeatedly quotes it in his Epistle. It was evidently the groundwork of his teaching in the first days. Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp, the nameless author of the recently found 'Teaching of the Apostles,' whose writings represent to us most of the Christian literature which we possess of the first century after the death of St. Paul, quote it often. It may be taken, indeed, as the pattern discourse which mirrors better and more fully than any other portion of the Gospels the Lord's teaching concerning the life he would have his followers lead.

It is not easy to give a *précis* of such a report as that of St. Luke, necessarily brief, and yet containing, we feel, many of the words, and even sentences, in the very form in which the Lord spoke them. What we possess here is, perhaps, little more itself than a summary of the great original discourse to which the disciples and the people listened. Godet has attempted, and not unsuccessfully, to give a *résumé* of the contents of St. Luke's memoir here. Still,

it must be felt that any such work must necessarily be unsatisfactory.

There appear to be three main divisions in the sermon: (1) A description of the persons to whom Jesus chiefly addressed himself (vers. 20—26). (2) The proclamation of the fundamental principles of the new society (vers. 27—45). (3) An announcement of the judgment to which the members of the new kingdom of God will have to submit (vers. 46—49).

Ver. 20.—**Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God**; better rendered, *blessed are ye poor*, etc. It is the exact equivalent of the well-known Hebrew expression with which the Psalms begin: אַשְׁרֵי הָאִישׁ, which should be rendered, "Oh the blessedness of the man," etc.! This was probably the exact form in which Jesus began the sermon: "Blessed are the poor." He was gazing on a vast congregation mostly made of the *literally* poor. Those standing nearest to him belonged to the masses—the fishermen, the carpenters, and the like. The crowd was mainly composed of the trading and artisan class, and they, at least *then*, were friendly to him, heard him gladly, came out to him from their villages, their poor industries, their little farms, their boats. The comparatively few rich and powerful who were present that day in the listening multitude were for the most part enemies, jealous, angry men, spying emissaries of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, men who hated rather than loved the words and works of the Galilæan Teacher. The literally poor, then, represented the friends of Jesus; the rich, his enemies. But we may conceive of some like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa, Gamaliel, or the wealthy patrician centurion, in that listening crowd, gently asking the Teacher as he taught, "Are only the poor, then, to be reckoned among thy blessed ones?" Some such question, we think, elicited the qualifying words of Matthew, "Blessed are the poor *in spirit*," with some such underlying thought as, "Alas! this is not very often the character of the rich." It certainly was not while the Lord worked among men. While, then, the blessedness he spoke of belonged not to the poor *because* they were poor, yet it seemed to belong to them especially as a class, because they welcomed the Master and tried to share his life, while the rich and powerful as a class did not. It runs indisputably all through the teaching of Paul and Luke, this tender love for the poor and despised of this world; full of warnings are their writings against the perils and dangers of riches. The awful parable of the rich man and Lazarus gathers up, in the story form best understood by Oriental peoples, that truth of which these great servants of the Redeemer were so intensely conscious, *that the poor stand better than the rich for the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God.* Not here, not now. Just a few drops from the river of joy which flows through that kingdom will sprinkle the life of his blessed ones while they live and struggle to do his will on earth; but the kingdom of God, in its full glorious signification, will be only enjoyed hereafter. It is an expression which includes citizenship in his city, a home among the mansions of the blessed, a place in the society of heaven, the enjoyment of the sight of God—the beatific vision.

Ver. 21.—**Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.** A similar question probably to the one suggested above, brought out the addition reported in St. Matthew's account—"after righteousness." **Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.** There is a mourning which, as Augustine says, has no blessing from heaven attached to it, at best only a sorrow of this world and for the things of this world. What Jesus speaks of is a nobler grief, a weeping for our sins and the sins of others, for our weary exile here. This is "the only instance," writes Dean Plumptre, "in the New Testament of the use of 'laughter' as the symbol of spiritual joy. . . . The *Greek* word was too much associated with the lower forms of mirth. . . . It is probable that the Aramaic word which our Lord doubtless used here had a somewhat higher meaning. Hebrew laughter was a somewhat graver thing than that of Greek or Roman. Comedy was unknown among the Hebrew people." It is observable that we read of our Lord weeping. His joy is mentioned, and his sorrow. He sympathized with all classes and orders, talked with them, even ate and drank with them; but we never read that he laughed. There was a tradition in the early Church that Lazarus, after he rose from the dead, was never seen again to smile.

Ver. 22.—**Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.** An onlook into the yet distant future. These words would be repeated by many a brave confessor in the days when persecution, at the hands of a far stronger and more far-reaching government than that of Jerusalem, should be the general lot of his followers. We find from pagan writers of the next age that Christians were charged with plotting every vile and detestable crime that could be conceived against mankind (see, for instance, the historian Ta-

citus, 'Annal.,' xv. 44; Suetonius, 'Nero.,' 16).

Ver. 23.—**Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy:** for, **behold, your reward is great in heaven:** for **in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.** Well and faithfully did his followers in after-days fulfil their Master's prophetic charge. Not only did men like Paul and his brother apostles welcome persecution "for the Name" with joy, but long after Paul and his fellows had "fallen asleep," Christians in well-nigh every populous centre of the empire followed the same glorious lead. Indeed, we find the great teachers of the faith positively condemning the fiery zeal of men and women who even too literally obeyed this and other like charges of their adored Master, who positively courted a painful martyrdom, too willingly throwing away their lives, so deeply had words like these burned into their souls. The terrible persecutions which many of the old Hebrew prophets underwent were well known. These men of God endured this treatment during several generations, while evil princes sat on the thrones of Judah and Israel. Thus Elijah mourned the wholesale massacre of his brother prophets when Ahab and Jezebel reigned (1 Kings xix. 10). Urijah was slain by Jehoiakim (Jer. xxvi. 23). Jeremiah himself underwent long and painful persecution. Amos was accused and banished, and, according to tradition, beaten to death. Isaiah, so the Jews said, was sawn asunder by order of King Manasseh. These are only a few instances of the treatment which faithful prophets of the Lord had undergone.

Ver. 24.—**But woe unto you that are rich!** for **ye have received your consolation.** These "rich" referred to here signify men of good social position. These, as a class, opposed Jesus with a bitter and unreasoning opposition. Again the same warning cry to the so-called fortunate ones of this world is re-echoed with greater force in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. "Thou in thy lifetime," said Abraham, speaking from Paradise to the poor lost Dives, "receivedst thy good things;" and yet the very characters represented in that most awful of the parable-stories of the pitiful Lord correct any false notion which, from words like these, men may entertain respecting the condemnation of the rich and great because they are rich and great. Abraham, who speaks the grave stern words, was himself a sheik of great power and consideration, and at the same time very rich. Prophets and apostles, as well as the Son of God, never ceased to warn men of the danger of misusing wealth and power; but at the same time they always represented these dangerous gifts as gifts from God, capable of a noble use, and, if nobly used, these teachers sent by God pointed out, these gifts would bring to the men who so used them a proportional reward.

Ver. 25.—**Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.** This saying points to men who used their wealth for self-indulgence, for the mere gratification of the senses. "The fulness," writes Dean Plumptre, "is the satiety of over-indulgence." **Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.** These are they who, proudly self-satisfied, dreamed that they needed nothing, neither repentance in themselves nor forgiveness from God—a character too faithfully represented in the self-satisfied, haughty Pharisee of the time of our Lord, a character, alas! not extinct even when the hapless men to whom the Lord specially referred had paid the awful penalty of extinction of name and race, loss of home and wealth. The hunger, the mourning, and the weeping were terribly realized in the case of the men and their proud houses in the national war with Rome which quickly followed the public teaching of Jesus. When the Master spoke the words of this sermon the date was about A.D. 30-31. In A.D 70—that is, within forty years—Jerusalem, its temple, and its beautiful houses, were a mass of shapeless ruins. Its people, rich and poor, were ruined. Its very name, as a city and nation, blotted out. But from parables, and still more from direct words, we gather, too, that the hunger, the mourning, and the weeping point to the cheerless state of things in which those poor souls who have lived alone for this world will find themselves after death.

Ver. 26.—**Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!** Dean Plumptre, with great force, remarks that these words "open a wide question as to the worth of praise as a test of human conduct, and tend to a conclusion quite the reverse of that implied in the maxim, *Vox populi, vox Dei.*" **So did their fathers to the false prophets.** A good instance of this is found in 1 Kings xviii. 19, where Queen Jezebel honours the false prophets. See, too, King Ahab's conduct to such men (1 Kings xxii.), and Jeremiah's bitter plaint respecting the popularity of these false men (Jer. v. 31). At this point, according to St. Luke's report, the Master paused. It would seem as though he was fearful lest the awful woes foretold as the doom of the rich, the powerful, and the persecutor, should impart a too sombre hue to the thoughts which his followers would in coming days entertain of the world of men about them. He would have his own think of the circle outside the little world of believers with no bitter and

revengeful thoughts, but rather with that Divine pity which he felt and showed to all poor fallen creatures. "See now," the Master went on to say, "notwithstanding the woe which will one day fall on the selfish rich and great ones of earth, and to whom you, my people, will surely be objects of dislike and hate, while you and they are on earth together, the part you have to play with regard to these is steadily to return love for hate."

Ver. 28.—**Pray for them which despitefully use you.** Jesus himself, on his cross, when he prayed that his murderers might be forgiven, for they knew not what they were doing, and his true servant Stephen, who copied faithfully his Lord in his own dying moments, are beautiful though extreme examples of what is meant here. It is St. Luke alone who mentions this act of Jesus on the cross; it is St. Luke, again, who has preserved St. Stephen's words, uttered while they were stoning him to death. He would show how the Lord's command could be carried out.

Ver. 29.—**And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other.** This and the following direction is clothed in language of Eastern picturesqueness, to drive home to the listening crowds the great and novel truths he was urging upon them. No reasonable, thoughtful man would feel himself bound to the letter of these commandments. Our Lord, for instance, himself did not offer himself to be stricken again (John xviii. 22, 23), but firmly, though with exquisite courtesy, rebuked the one who struck him. St. Paul, too (Acts xxiii. 3), never dreamed of obeying the letter of this charge. It is but an assertion of a great principle, and so, with the exception of a very few mistaken fanatics, all the great teachers of Christianity have understood it.

Ver. 30.—**Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.** Here, again, it is clear that faithfully to cling to the literal interpretation would be utterly to ignore the true spirit of the Lord's words here, where he sets forth his sublime ideal of a charity which ignores its own rights and knows no limits to its self-sacrifice. Augustine quaintly suggests that in the words themselves will be found the limitation required. "'Give to every man,' but not *everything*," suggesting that in many cases a medicine for the hurt of the soul would better carry out the words of the Lord than the gift of material help for the needs of the body ('Serm.' ccclix.). But such ingenious exposition, after all, is needless. What the Lord inculcated here was that broad, unselfish generosity which acts as though it really believed those other beautiful words of Jesus, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Vers. 32, 33.—**For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.** There are three manners of return, as Augustine—quoted by Archbishop Trench in his 'Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount'—observes, which men may make one to another: the returning good for good and evil for evil,—this is the ordinary rule of man; then beneath this there is the returning of evil for good, which is devilish; while above it there is the returning of good for evil, which is Divine,—and this is what is commanded for the followers of Jesus here. On the words, "sinners also love those that love them," Augustine's words are singularly terse and quaint: "Amas amantes te filios et parentes. Amat et latro, amat et draco, amant et lupi, amant et ursi" (quoted by Archbishop Trench, 'Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount,' p. 234, note).

Ver. 35.—**And your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.** It has been objected by the enemies of Christianity that, after all, Jesus offered his followers a reward by way of payment to them for their self-sacrificing lives on earth. What, however, is this reward? Is it not a share in that Divine and glorious life of God, who is all love; a hope of participation in that eternal work of his which will go from blessing to blessing, from glory to glory; a certain expectation of dying only to wake up in his likeness, satisfied? The Eternal had already made a similar promise to his faithful servant Abraham, when he bade him fear not, because here on earth God was his Shield, and after death would be his exceeding great Reward.

Ver. 36.—**Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.** "Yes," goes on the Master, "be ye kind, tender-hearted, merciful; stop not short at the easier love, but go on to the harder; and do this because God does it even to the unthankful and evil" (ver. 35). On this attribute of the mercy of the Most High, James, who had evidently drunk deep of the wisdom contained in this great discourse of his so-called brother, speaks of the Lord as "very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (Jas. v. 11).

Ver. 37.—**Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.** Jesus would have his followers avoid one great error which was too common in the religious Jewish life of his time—the habit of censoriously judging others. This uncharitable and often untrue censorship of the motives which led to the acts of others, was one of the practices of the day which

stunted and marred all true healthy religious life. **Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.** That pitiless condemnation which, regardless of circumstances, condemned as sinners beyond the pale of mercy, whole classes of their fellow-countrymen, publicans, Samaritans, and the like. This haughty judgment of others in the case of the dominant sects of the Jews, resulted in an undue estimate of themselves. His disciples must be very careful how they judged and condemned others; their rule must be, not condemnation, but forgiveness of others.

Ver. 38.—**Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.** The grand characteristic feature of the society of his followers must be generosity. They must be known among men as givers rather than judges. Boundless generosity, limitless kindness to all, saint and sinner—that is what he, the Master, would press home to those who would follow his lead (see 3 John 5, 6). Men would find out in time what generous friends they were, and would in their turn freely give to them. **Shall men give into your bosom.** The image is an Eastern one. In the dress then worn, a large bag-shaped fold in the robe above the cincture or girdle was used instead of a pocket.

Ver. 39.—**And he spake a parable unto them.** St. Luke closes his report of the great sermon with four little parables taken from everyday life. With these pictures drawn from common life, the Master purposed to bring home to the hearts of the men and women listening to him the solemn warnings he had just been enunciating. They—if they would be his followers—must indeed refrain from ever setting up themselves as judges of others. "See," he went on to say, "I will show you what ruin this wicked, ungenerous practice will result in: listen to me." **Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?** It is not improbable that some of the links in the Master's argument here have been omitted by St. Luke; still, the connection of this saying and what follows, with the preceding grave warning against the bitter censorious spirit which had exercised so fatal an influence on religious teaching in Israel, is clear. The figure of *the blind man* setting himself up as a guide was evidently in the Lord's mind as a fair representation of the present thought-leaders of the people (the Pharisees). This is evident from the imagery of the beam and mote which follows (vers. 41, 42). Can these blind guides lead others more ignorant and blind too? What is the natural result? he asks; will not destruction naturally overtake the blind leader and the blind led? Both will, of course, end by falling into the ditch.

Ver. 40.—**The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.** "Both," he went on to say, "will be lost hopelessly. You cannot expect the disciples of these mistaken men, surely, to be wiser than their teachers; for you know the oft-repeated saying, 'Every one that is perfect [better rendered, *that has been perfected*] shall be as his master;' in other words, the pupils of these censorious, evil-judging, narrow-minded, bitter men will grow up—as they become perfected in this teaching—in their turn equally narrow-minded and bitter as their masters." The conclusion, felt though not expressed, of course, is, "But *my* followers must be something different to these; another and nobler spirit, nobler because more generous, must rule in their hearts."

Ver. 41.—**And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?** The thought-leaders of the day were in good truth hypocrites, proud, avaricious, in many cases self-indulgent, bigoted, and selfish; they were utterly unfit to be the moral teachers of the people—a position they had arrogated to themselves. The homely but well-known Jewish proverb of the mote and the beam picturesquely put before his listeners the position as it appeared to the Lord. The very defects among the people which the religious teachers professed to lecture upon and to discuss, disfigured and marred their own lives. They were—these priests and scribes and Pharisees—worse than self-deceivers; they were religious hypocrites. The now famous illustration of the mote and the beam is, as has been said, purely Jewish, and was no doubt a familiar one to the people. It is found in the Talmud (treatise 'Bava Bathra,' fol. 15. 2). Farrar quotes from Chaucer—

"He can wel in myn eye see a stalke,
But in his owne he can nought see a balke."

The word "mote" translates the Greek κάρφος, a chip. In Dutch *mot* is the dust of wood. In Spanish *mota* is the flue on cloth.

Vers. 43, 44.—**For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit.** For a religious teacher ever to work any real work of good, the first requirement is that he should be known as a faithful doer of the thing he advocates. He must be intensely in earnest, and to be in earnest he must be real. This is emphatically what the religious scribes of Israel were not. This portion of the report of the great sermon, at

one period of the Church's history possessed a special importance. It was used as one of the foundations of the system of dualism taught in the once widespread Manichæan heresy, which apparently reached its culminating period of popularity in the fifth century. This heretical school taught that there were two original principles —one *good*, from which good proceeded; one *evil*, from which evil came; that there were two races of men, having severally their descent from the one and from the other. The Manichæan teachers, while rejecting many of the Christian doctrines, made much of the sermon on the mount, calling it the "Divine discourse," mainly on account of the statement we are here discussing. Yet here, when the words of Jesus are carefully considered, there is no assertion of Manichæan dualism, neither does the Master hint that there is anything irrevocably fixed in men's natures, so that some can never become good, and others never evil, but only that *so long as a man is as an evil tree*, he cannot bring forth good fruit; that if he would *do* good he must first *be* good (see here Augustine, 'Contra Faust.,' xxxii. 7; and 'De Serm. Dom. in Mon.,' 11. 24; 'Contra Adimant.,' 26, etc., in Archbishop Trench's 'Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount,' pp. 309, 310). **For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.** This imagery is taken from what is a common sight in Palestine; behind rough hedges of thorn and of the prickly pear, fig-trees are often seen completely covered with the twining tendrils of vine branches.

Ver. 46.—**And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?** It is evident from this heart-stirring appeal of Jesus that he had already obtained a large measure of recognition from the people. We should hardly be prepared to aver that any large number of the Palestinian inhabitants looked on him as Messiah, though probably some did; but that generally at this period he was looked on by the common folk, at all events, and by a few perhaps of their rulers, as a Being of no ordinary power, as a Prophet, and probably as One greater than a prophet. It is scarcely likely that even they who regarded him with the deepest reverence when he spoke the mount-sermon would have been able to define their own feelings towards him. But underneath the Lord's words lies this thought: "Those blind guides of whom I have been telling you, they with their lips profess to adore the eternal God of Israel, and yet live their lives of sin. You, my followers, do not the same thing."

Vers. 47–49.—**Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.** "The surrounding scenery may, in this as in other instances, have suggested the illustration. As in all hilly countries, the streams of Galilee rush down the torrent-beds during the winter and early spring, sweep all before them, overflow their banks, and leave beds of alluvial deposit on either side. When summer comes their waters fail (comp. Jer. xv. 18; Job vi. 15), and what had seemed a goodly river is then a tract covered with *débris* of stones and sand. A stranger coming to build might be attracted by the ready-prepared level surface of the sand. It would be easier to build there instead of working upon the hard and rugged rock. But the people of the land would know and mock the folly of such a builder, and he would pass (our Lord's words may possibly refer to something that had actually occurred) into a byword of reproach. On such a house the winter torrent had swept down in its fury, and the storms had raged, and then the fair fabric, on which time and money had been expended, had given way and fallen into a heap of ruins" (Dean Plumptre). Augustine has some weighty and practical comments on this simile of the Master's, with which, as a picture of what they had no doubt seen with their own eyes, the listening multitude would be singularly impressed. The great Latin Father calls special attention to the fact that in this picture of our Lord's the declared rejecters of the truth do not appear mirrored. In *both* the cases here instanced there is a readiness to *hear* the truth. Both the men of the parable-story built their house, but in one case the building ends in terrible disaster. "Would it have been better," asks Augustine ('Serm.' clxxix. 9), "not to have built at all if the building is thus to perish?" He answers, "Scarcely so; that were not to hear at all—to have built nothing. The fate of such will be to be swept away naked, exposed to wind and rain and torrents. The doom is similar in both cases; the lesson of the Lord is one easy to grasp. The wise man will hear, and, when he hears, will do, that is, will translate his impressions into actions. This will be to build a house upon a rock" (see Archbishop Trench, 'Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount,' drawn from Augustine on Matt. vii. 24–27).

There is something very striking in the words with which our Master concluded his great sermon, "and the ruin of that house was great." "After all," men would say, "it was only the destruction of *one* human being." But our Lord's saying reminds us that in his eyes the ruin of *one* immortal soul is a thought full of unspeakable sorrow. "Jesus, in closing his discourse, leaves his hearers under the impression of this solemn thought. Each of them, while listening to this last word, might think that he heard the crash of the falling edifice, and say within himself, 'This disaster will be mine, if I prove hypocritical or inconsistent'" (Godet). In ver. 48 some, though not all, of the ancient authorities, instead of the words, "for it was founded upon a rock," read, "because it had been well built." This text is adopted in the Revised Version, the old reading, as less probably correct, being relegated to the margin.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*Christ and the sabbath day.* No feature of Christ's ministry is more striking than his attitude towards the sabbath of Israel. His first conflict with the Jewish authorities was associated with the sabbath. St. John tells us the story of this conflict in the fifth chapter of his Gospel. A man, paralyzed for thirty-eight years, had heard the voice, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk;" and, made instantly whole, he had gathered up the pallet which for so long had been stretched by the Pool of Bethesda, and had walked. "It is the sabbath day!" cried the narrow pedants who sat in Moses' chair; "it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." From that hour one of the things which spies and emissaries were instructed specially to watch was the conduct of Jesus on the sabbath. Behold the opportunity of accusation that is supplied in the incidents here related—two incidents, if not on the same sabbath, at least on sabbaths separated by a very short interval from each other. In these incidents—the plucking and rubbing of the ears of corn, and the healing of the man with the withered hand—there are presented lessons of permanent value. Two points in particular may be noticed.

I. The question—IS THE SABBATH OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT CONTINUED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR? In the light of Christ's teaching we can distinguish between what was dispensational and temporary and what is abiding because rooted in the fitness of things. The Christian sabbath is not merely the Jewish sabbath continued. It is a new day, reminding us of a new state of things, conjoining with the remembrance of the creation in the beginning the witness for the new creation, the new making of things in heaven and earth, through the resurrection of the Lord, calling us to acts of worship and praise and to offerings of love as the Israelitish sabbath did not. Ours is not the seventh, but the first day, and this first day is the Lord's day. To surround it with vexing and irksome restrictions is to take us back from the substance into the dim land of shadows. But, this said, the balancing and completing truth must not be omitted. It is urged by some that the fourth commandment is no longer our authority. But why is that commandment one of the ten great words? Is it not because it is the expression of something essentially and therefore permanently right? because behind it there is the original commandment of the Creator—that which is written in our human nature? The sabbath—this is the testimony of Jesus—was no mere dispensational ordinance, no mere local or tribal arrangement. Grand and solemn is the word, "The sabbath was made for man." It is not by doing away with it, but by bringing into view its right proportions and its highest benefits, that he proves himself the Lord of the sabbath. What is the truth of the supremacy thus claimed? Some persons take the sentence of the fifth verse, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath," as implying that any one born of woman has authority to subordinate to the sense of his own need the sabbath which was made for man. Even supposing that this use of the word "Son of man" were allowable, is the conclusion drawn permissible? Would the idea for an instant be tolerated that, because laws are imposed by the ruler for the benefit of his subjects, each subject might change them or dispense with them at his own convenience? But there can be no doubt that the "Son of man" spoken of is Christ himself, the second Adam, the representative Man. He—realizing, on the one hand, the true purpose of the sabbath, and discriminating, on the other, between such a use as shall

keep the institution subordinate to the end, the good of man, and such an abuse as practically inverts this order, making man a mere creature of the institution—gives the true note of the blessed sabbath-keeping.

II. WHAT IS THIS BLESSED SABBATH-KEEPING? Observe: 1. There is no disturbance of the primary conception—rest. That is implied in the very word "sabbath." Rest, undoubtedly, is the need to which the ordinance immediately refers. "Six days shalt thou labour" is part of the Divine injunction. "But on the seventh day thou shalt not do any work." What a blessing is the weekly cessation from weary toil! The experiment of a tenth-day rest has been tried, and has failed. The septennial period seems to be the proportion adapted to the human system. In our complex social life individuals must suffer for the general good; some must work that the greater number may rest. But can we too jealously guard the rights of the poorest, ay, of beast as well as man? Can we too earnestly demand that there shall be no causeless multiplication of labour on the day of the Lord? Yes; God's sabbath is for repose of body, brain, mind, spirit. What promotes a healthy rest is in harmony with it; what hinders is alien to it. A day of pleasure-seeking and excitement is not a help. Take two men—one spending his Sunday in search of mere enjoyment; the other spending it quietly in the midst of his family, at church, taking the quiet walk, doing some little service for Christ: which of the two is the more rested, soothed, fitted for the labour of the Monday morning? Rest but not torpor, repose but not inaction, is a want for which the sabbath was made. 2. But with this comes into view what is distinctive in Christ's theory of sabbath-keeping. Negatively, in the reply about the rubbing of the ears of corn. He reminds us that no dull uniformity must overbear pressing human necessities. These are not to be met by a categorical "It is not lawful." The consideration of human well-being must allow for a certain flexibility in all enactments. But, positively, remark what is shown in the case of the man with a withered hand. This—that a beneficent activity is the highest fulfilment of the sabbath. Therefore the activity of worship and instruction; therefore also the activity of kindness-doing, of seeking the good of our fellows, of having a part with God the Healer. The ideal of the rest-day is a day in which a due proportion of these two forms of well-doing is maintained—the assembly for the service of God in prayer and praise and mutual edification, and room for doing good in the home and in the world. Do we realize, or even attempt to realize, this ideal as we should? How listless, how wanting in brightness and usefulness, is the observance of Sunday by even religiously minded persons! Ah! the most lawful of lawful things is to do well on the sabbath day, and the holier and more refreshing will the day be the more that in it the opportunity is realized of doing good and saving life, and thus proving ourselves his brethren who, being the Son of man, is Lord also of the sabbath.

Vers. 12—49.—*The foundation of the kingdom.* The work set before us in this portion is great and solemn. It is the beginning of a new epoch of the earthly ministry. Hitherto Christ had been the Rabbi, the Prophet, the Healer. Now he is to "gird his sword on his thigh," to take to himself the power of the King. And for this work observe the preparation mentioned by the evangelist (vers. 12, 13), "All night in prayer to God." The hush breathed over nature; the silence unbroken except by the cry of the wild beast seeking, in its own way, its meat from God; the glories of the firmament above, united with the sabbath-quiet of the earth around,—these were the features which invited, not slumber to the eyelids, but prayer, meditation, conference with the Father in heaven. We cannot avoid the conclusion that the retreat and the "all-night prayer" were specially in view of the action of the morrow. Oh, what a rebuke on our listless, quickly dismissed intercessions! How impressive the reminder that, for the appointment of men to minister in the house of the Lord, to render any spiritual service, the right beginning is effectual fervent prayer! Would there not be more fruits of work, more blessing for workmen, if there were more diligent following of Christ's example? Compare this passage with Acts xiii. 3. Note the two points in the foundation-laying of the kingdom of heaven—the *personal agency*, and *the Law*.

I. "HE CALLED THE DISCIPLES"—the larger company, including those who had attached themselves to his Person, many, no doubt, of the healed, of those who had been delivered from demons and brought to their right mind; and "of them he chose

twelve." Let us assume that the number is part of the ordering (see ch. xxii. 29, 30). And recollect also the significance attached to twelve—as the complete number of the Church—in the Book of Revelation. Do not exaggerate, but do not underrate, the significance of the numbers found in Scripture. The naturalist who would learn the differences, truths, and natures of things must take into account the curious parallels, the typical forms, the numbers which he discovers running through genera and species. It is the perception of these minute evidences of method, of purpose in details, which is part of the scientific man's paradise. And it is the same kind of perception, the "searching rapturous glance" into the hidden truth of Scripture, which carries the devout mind through the mere outer boundaries of the garden into the enjoyment of its delicacies and delights. Observe the *statement* as to the twelve. 1. *The Lord chose them.* "He called," it is said in St. Mark, "whom he would." This is the foundation of the apostolate for each and all. The choice is in his own hands, determined, not by any plan or rule of mere prudential wisdom, but because of that which, the night before, he had seen and heard of his Father. And to this same royalty all selection for spiritual office is evermore the witness. The action of the Church, through its officers, is only a supplementary or declarative action. The originating and efficient action is what we style the call of the Holy Ghost—an inward aptitude or anointing of Divine love and grace in the character so manifest that we can read the sentence, "Called because the Lord has willed." 2. *The Lord ordained.* This is expressly stated by St. Mark. It is included in St. Luke's "he named." Probably there was an outward act or symbol—that laying on of hands, which carried out well-known Hebrew associations, and, for designation to office, has been appropriated by the Christian Church from the earliest period of its history. Be this as it may, the ordination was also a disjunction; it was the final severance from the former calling; they were henceforth to give themselves wholly to the Word of God, the Master's meat their meat, the Master himself their all in all. Immediately before he suffered, Christ reminded the eleven of that transaction on the mountain-side, "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." And, again, on the Resurrection morning, the fuller truth of the ordination symbol was realized when he said, "As the Father sent me, so have I sent you," and having so said, he breathed on them, and added, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." 3. *What were the functions of the twelve?* Following the guidance of St. Mark, we reply: First, to be with Christ, his associates, sharing his temptations, eye-witnesses of his glory and majesty, depositaries of his words and of his inmost confidences. Second, to preach, to go forth declaring him and his gospel and his kingdom. Third, to exercise among men his own power of healing sickness and casting out devils. Keep hold of this sequence—this first, second, third. The first requirement is always life with Christ, communion with the personal Saviour: there is no real preaching, no real power, without that. A man must be taught before he can teach. And where and by whom shall he be taught? The university is well. Never more to be desired than now is a body of Christian instructors learned as well as godly. Experience of men is well: thence comes tact, the skill by which souls are attracted and won for higher things. But there is a graduation better still—one which is necessary to spiritual force—graduation in the school of Christ; the learning of Christ. And this can be realized only through day-by-day fellowship with him, beholding his beauty, and inquiring in his temple. Then the second demand is, preach him, speak out what he speaks in. And so also there is the third function, to work for him, to be in this world presences of healing and blessing, in Jesus' name "casting out devils, speaking with new tongues, taking up serpents, laying hands on the sick that they may recover." Thus were the twelve named apostles—the sent of the Lord. And, having been named, they were made ready by Christ himself for the day when they should do greater works than any which they had witnessed, because he had gone to the Father, and shed forth the promise of the Holy Ghost. A strange kingdom, indeed! The King, that lowly Man seated on one of the horns of Mount Hattin, and his princes and companions these poor, uncouth-looking, unlearned men! Never, it might be thought, was such a burlesque of royalty seen. But that was, that is, the monarchy whose sceptre shall stretch from pole to pole, that at the name of Jesus every knee may bow.

¶ HE CAME DOWN WITH THE TWELVE, it is added, and stood on the plain—the

King and the kingdom meeting the parliament of man. Yes, the King meek and lowly, but "the mighty God, the Lord, is about to speak, and call the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof." He would not speak until he had constituted his Church. For the Man is before the Law, the Voice before the Scripture, the order before the ordering. This has been done, and he comes down to the great world with its fevers and diseases and spirits of uncleanness surging before him, and seeking to touch him from whom, as a great stream of healing, the power goes forth. The law, the manifesto of the kingdom, is published. What this law is admits of being more fully expounded in connection with the Gospel of St. Matthew. The differences between the reports in the two Gospels deserve to be studied. It is sufficient here to indicate the sum and substance of the legislation of Christ the King on the holy hill of Zion. Clearly the old Law, that delivered from Sinai, is fully in the mind of Jesus. It is quoted again and again. But how striking the contrast between that past and this present! That past, when

> "Around the trembling mountain-base
> The prostrate people lay;
> A day of wrath and not of grace;
> A dim and dreadful day;"

this present, the soft grassy slope, the bright sky overhead, the rejoicing world around, the many sitting before him who had received the healing virtue; himself, in tones full of the music of love, declaring the truth for which the soul of man is made as the eye is made for the light. Not that the past is ruthlessly swept away. All is preserved—preserved because fulfilled. But his law-giving is a new law-making, because it penetrates to the innermost region of the life; it searches the spirit as with the candle of the Lord; its dealing is not so much with the mere outer conduct as with the inner motive power. The man is right when the heart is right—this is the cardinal principle. And the sermon passes onward, from the beatitudes with which it begins, through the exposition of true soul-rectitude, to the sublime conclusion which may God help all to ponder. "Every one that cometh unto me, and heareth my words, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like . . . But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like," etc. From the great ruin foretold may the good Lord deliver us!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 6—11.—*Sin disabling, Christ restoring.* Being in the right place, our Lord found an opportunity of doing that for which he came, and much more besides. The doing of duty often leads to the finding of privilege and the exercise of power for good. We learn—

I. THAT SIN DISABLES US. This man came into the synagogue *with a withered hand.* That which was the natural instrument of power—his right hand—was powerless. Gradually its strength had been disappearing until it had completely gone; and that with which God meant him to do his work, to greet his fellows, to make his mark in the world around him, had become an inefficient and useless member. The disease from which he was suffering, whatever it may have been, had by slow degrees wasted and worn away its vital power, and it could do nothing of all that it was created to do. Just such is the action of sin. It is a disabling spiritual disease. Its effect is to reduce and finally to remove those spiritual powers with which our Creator endowed us, and in the exercise of which our true life is found. Our human power, as we came forth from God, was that of worship, of contemplation, of recognizing and rejoicing in the truth, of delighting in God, of obedience to his commandments, of acquiescence in his will, of living in our sphere the life he lives in his, of reflecting his own likeness in our character and our deeds. But sin has been taking this away from us; away from our race, away from the individual who allows it to reign over his soul. More and more it disables us from taking the part we were intended to take, and doing the work we were intended to do. It is the great and sad disabling force in the spiritual sphere.

II. THAT CHRIST COMES TO RESTORE US. He comes to say to us, "Stretch forth thy hand;" resume thy power; have again and use again those precious spiritual faculties

which, under the grievous injury of sin, have lain dormant within thee. And even as he wrought a cure in this afflicted man which was radical and thorough, making the life-blood to course through all his veins and nourish every nerve and muscle which had shrunk and withered, so does he heal our hearts by a process which is not superficial, which does not merely affect the extremities, but which goes to and proceeds from the heart. *He shows us our true selves*—whence we came; what we were created to be; how far we have fallen from our right heritage and condition; what is our unworthiness and guilt; what we may yet become. And *he reveals himself to us*—the Divine Mediator, Saviour, Lord, through whom we have access to God, in whom we are restored to God's favour, unto whom we dedicate, joyfully and unreservedly, all the faculties of our nature. In Christ Jesus we enter on a new life; all the springs of our soul are touched and renewed; we regain our lost possession; we stretch forth the right hand of our spiritual power; we do our work in his world.

III. THAT CHRIST DEMANDS OF US AN IMMEDIATE, PRACTICAL RESPONSE. That he may heal us, he summons us to act. He said, "Stretch forth thy hand!" and in the act of obedience the cure was wrought. To us he says, "Come unto me!" "Abide in me!" and as we endeavour to comply we begin to be restored.

IV. THAT PRACTICAL KINDNESS IS A PRINCIPAL MANIFESTATION OF RENEWED POWER. The great Restorer was at the same time the great Teacher. By the whole incident, and especially by his healing act, our Lord was making known to us for all time that, whatever may be the worth of religious observances—and they have their own great value—they are distinctly second in his sight to those acts of human pity and beneficence by which we lift a load from a brother's heart, and brighten the rest of his life on earth.—C.

Vers. 13—16.—*The designation of the twelve.* Our Lord appears to have formally designated the twelve, on this occasion, to be his apostles. He had called them singly before; now he appoints them to their post in a more formal manner. This act of his suggests to us some thoughts upon—

I. THEIR LIKENESS TO ONE ANOTHER, and the consequent bond of union between one another. This consisted in: 1. A common nationality, with all that meant to an intensely patriotic people. 2. A common faith, including a common hope that a new prophet would arise and accomplish all that was looked for from the expected Messiah. 3. Similar circumstances, education and social position; not the same, indeed, but of the same class. 4. A common attachment to Jesus Christ; in the case of most of them a trust and an affection that were to deepen every day, in the case of one of them a faith that was to slacken and to depart.

II. THEIR DIVERGENCES FROM ONE ANOTHER. 1. In the habits of mind and life formed by different occupations. 2. In mental constitution and moral disposition. How different Peter from John, and both from Thomas, and all three from James, etc.! 3. In reputation. Of some of them we know nothing but their names; we do not know where they laboured or what was the kind or measure of their service. Tradition has been busy with their names, but history tells us nothing. Of others we have a considerable knowledge, and their reputation is great indeed and will be ever growing. 4. In their career: one ending in shame and gloom; the others in honour and in glory.

III. THEIR FUNCTIONS. These, according to Mark (iii. 14, 15), were threefold. 1. Being with Christ, and witnessing his life; thus qualifying themselves to attest his purity, his power, his love. 2. Preaching the gospel; making known to their countrymen that the Promised One for whom they had so long been looking had come at last, and had come with the most gracious words on his lips that man had ever spoken. 3. Verifying the truth by acts of beneficent power—they were to exercise "power to heal." And it is in no small or mean sense that our Lord summons us all to do these same things. (1) To be with him; sitting at his feet and learning of him his heavenly truth; following him along his course, and becoming filled with a deep sense of his stainless purity and surpassing love; kneeling at his cross, and receiving all the benefit and blessing of his great salvation. (2) Declaring to others all that we have thus learned of Christ, our Lord and Saviour; making known to the sad, the suffering, the sinful, what a Friend and Refuge they will find in him. (3) Verifying the truth of our attestations by comforting stricken hearts, by enlightening darkened

minds, by transforming evil lives, by lifting men up, God helping us, from the depths of wrong and of despair to the noble and blessed heights of holiness and joy and hope.—C.

Ver. 20.—*The blessedness of humility.* Acting on the established and valid principle that we must interpret the less by the more complete, we determine the meaning of this passage by the words as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*," etc.; and thus taking it, we conclude—

I. THAT NARROWNESS OF MEANS IS NOT A DESIRABLE THING. Our Lord could not have intended to teach that the poor (in outward circumstances) were necessarily blessed, for poverty itself means privation, inability to command the various bounties and treasures our Creator has provided for our enjoyment and enrichment. Moreover, it by no means constantly or certainly leads to anything which can be called "the kingdom of God;" on the contrary, it frequently conducts to dishonesty, servility, demoralization (see Prov. xxx. 8, 9). Neither, therefore, in the present nor in the future can such poverty be pronounced blessed (see, however, homily on ch. iv. 18, "to preach the gospel to the poor").

II. THAT POOR-SPIRITEDNESS IS A DECIDEDLY UNWORTHY THING. A "poor-spirited" man, according to the common usage of the term, is a man no one can esteem, and he is a man who cannot respect himself. Christ could not have intended to commend *him* as the heir of the kingdom of God. He did indeed say much in praise of the meek, the enduring, the merciful, the forgiving; he did say much in deprecation of violence and retaliation. But meekness is a vastly different thing from meanness or cowardice; and a man may be nobly superior to mere violence who fights bravest battles for truth and righteousness. All struggle is not soldiership; and he who has most of what Christ meant when he blessed the poor in spirit may be very valiant and very aggressive at his post as the champion of all that is true and pure.

III. THAT HUMILITY OF HEART IS THE DESIRABLE THING FOR SINFUL MEN. Blessed are the men who have in their hearts a deep sense of their own unworthiness. And they are so because this is: 1. *The true and therefore the right thing.* Truth is always and under all circumstances to be preferred to error. It would make a man much more comfortable in his mind to persuade him that he is everything that is good, and that he had done everything that was required of him. But what a hollow and rotten thing such a satisfaction would be, if the man were wrong and guilty! How much better for him to know that he was guilty, in need of cleansing and of mercy! How pitiable (not enviable) the Church or the nation that supposes itself to be rich and strong when it is utterly poor and weak! How enviable (not pitiable) the man who has come to understand that he is in urgent need of those resources which he may have if he will seek them, and which—now that he knows his necessity—he will not fail to seek! To have a deep sense of our unworthiness before God is to *know ourselves as we are;* it is to *recognize our lives as they have been.* It is to perceive how far we have failed to be that which we should have been to our Divine Father; it is to realize how much there has been in our lives which God's Law condemns, how much there has been absent from them which his Word demands. It is to hold the truth in our hearts; it is, so far, to be in the right. It is a blessed estate as compared with its opposite—that of error and delusion. But it is also: 2. *The receptive and therefore the hopeful thing.* When a man imagines himself to be safe he admits no Saviour to his heart; when he knows and feels himself to be in danger and in difficulty he opens his door wide to one that will befriend him. The man in whose heart is a true humility, who finds himself to be wrong with God, who sees how far he is from perfect rectitude, is the very man who will welcome Jesus Christ in all his gracious offices. (1) Conscience ignorance will welcome the Divine Teacher. (2) Conscious guilt will rejoice in an all-sufficient Saviour. (3) Conscious weakness will lean on Almighty Power, and be ever seeking the upholding grace of a mighty Spirit. (4) Conscious error and insufficiency will yield itself to the guidance and direction of a Divine Lord and Leader. And surrendering ourselves to Christ, we enter the kingdom of God.—C.

Ver. 21.—*The blessedness of spiritual hunger.* On the same principle of interpretation as that which applies to the preceding verse (see preceding homily), we conclude that

our Master is referring to those who hunger *after righteousness*, who are affected by a keen spiritual appetite. These are in a state of earnest religious inquiry; they are like the young man who ran eagerly and anxiously to "know what he must do to inherit eternal life" (ch. xviii. 18). In other words, they are earnestly desirous of gaining the *favour* and also the *likeness* of God; of being such that God will not condemn them as guilty, but count them as righteous; such also that they will in a very serious sense *be* righteous even as he is righteous, be "partakers of his holiness." Now, wherein consists the blessedness of this spiritual condition?

I. SEEKING GOD IS THE ONLY HONEST AND RIGHT THING TO DO. Those who believe of God what most men do believe—that he is the Author of their being and the Source of all their blessings, that he is more nearly and importantly related to them than any human being can be, that they owe everything they are and have to him—are most strongly and sacredly bound to seek his favour. To be blind when he is beckoning, deaf when he is calling, insensible when he lays his hand upon them,—this is to be wholly, sadly, shamefully in the wrong.

II. SEEKING GOD IS THE LOFTY AND NOBLE THING. To seek God, to hunger and thirst after him and his righteousness, is the true heritage of our manhood; it is that which, incalculably more than anything else, lifts us up to a high and noble level. Not to be a-hungred and athirst after the living God is to be forfeiting the very best portion for which our Creator called us into existence.

III. SEEKING GOD IS THE ONE SATISFYING THING. "Blessed are ye that hunger: for *ye shall be filled*;" and those who hunger after that which is lesser and lower are *not* filled. No earthly joy fills the soul; it leaves it still craving. 1. Not even the purer joys of earth fill the soul; not even beholding the beauties and glories of creation; "the eye is not satisfied with seeing" these. Not even listening to the sweetest melodies that can be heard; "the ear is not satisfied with hearing" them. 2. Much less with the grosser delights—making money, wielding power, receiving homage, indulging in bodily gratifications; certainly the tongue is not satisfied with tasting, and "he that loveth silver is not satisfied with silver" (Eccles. v. 10). But: 3. The love of God, the possession of the friendship of Jesus Christ, the spending of our days and our powers in the holy, elevating service of a Divine Redeemer,—this is that which fills the heart with a restful and abiding joy, and which brightens the life with a light that does not fade.

"These are the joys which satisfy
And sanctify the mind."

These are the joys which last; which live when the passions of youth have been burnt out, when the ambitions of manhood are dead, when life is lived through and death is waiting for its own; the joys which, as all else grows dim and worthless, become more and more precious still. "Blessed are they that hunger thus: for they shall be *filled*."—C.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The blessedness of martyrdom.* Using the word "martyrdom" in its broader sense, we have to consider the Lord's saying respecting it. It certainly is paradoxical enough. Yet his meaning is to be found for the looking. It is, indeed, true—

I. THAT THE ENMITY OF OTHERS IS A SORE TRIAL TO OUR SPIRIT. Other things bruise us beside bludgeons, and other things cut us beside whipcord. The manifest hatred of other hearts, the cruel reproaches of unsparing lips, banishment from the society of our fellow-men as being unworthy to remain, blighting a fair fame with unjust aspersions,—these things cut deep into the human soul, they bruise almost to breaking tender and sensitive spirits. Some, indeed, are so constituted that the roughest treatment on the part of others will not hurt them; they can throw it off, can cast it aside with indifference; it is to them "as the idle wind which they regard not." But these are the exception, and not the rule among men. God meant us to be affected by the judgment of our brethren and sisters, to be encouraged and sustained by their approval, to be discouraged and checked by their censure. It is a part of our humanity that, upon the whole, works for righteousness. But only too often its effect is evil; only too often the pure are pelted with reproaches, the faithful are condemned for their

fidelity, the holy are exposed to the hatred and ribaldry of the profane. Then there is suffering which God never intended his children to endure,—that of the faithful witness to the truth, that of the brave, unyielding martyr to the cause of Jesus Christ. And many are they who would more readily welcome and more easily endure blows or imprisonment than bitter malignity of heart and cold severity of speech. But then it is also true—

II. THAT CHRISTIAN CONSIDERATIONS TRIUMPH OVER ALL. Our Master and Teacher would have our hearts to be so filled with the other and opposite aspect of the case, that our natural inclination to be saddened and stricken in spirit will be completely overborne, and that, instead of sorrow, there will be joy. "Our reward is great in heaven;" so great that we who are reproached for Christ's sake are "blessed;" we are, indeed, to "leap for joy." What, then, are these balancing, these overbalancing considerations? 1. That we are taking rank with the very noblest men: "In like manner . . . unto the prophets." We stand, then, on the same level with Moses, with Samuel, with Elijah, with Isaiah, with Jeremiah; with a noble company of men and women who, long since their day and their dispensation, have "gone without the camp, bearing his reproach;" men and women were these "of whom the world was not worthy," to be classed with whom is the highest honour we can enjoy. 2. That we take rank with One who was nobler than all; for did not he, our Lord himself, bear shame and obloquy? was not he crowned with the crown of thorns, because he was here "bearing witness unto the truth" (John xviii. 37)? 3. That we are serving our self-sacrificing Saviour. A modern missionary relates that when he and another were assaulted by a Chinese crowd, and when, putting his hand to his head where he had been hit, he found it moist with his blood, he felt a strange thrill of exceeding joy as he realized that he had been permitted to shed his blood for that Divine Saviour who had poured out his life for him. 4. That we are truly serving our race; for the truth to which we bear a rejected testimony to-day will, and partly as the result of our suffering witness, be accepted further on, and become the nourishment of the people. 5. That we are on our way to the highest heavenly honour. They who suffer shame "for the Son of man's sake" now shall one day be exalted in the presence of the holy angels. Great will be their reward in the heavenly kingdom.—C.

Vers. 27, 28, 32—35.—*Seeking the highest good from the highest motive.* In these words our Lord commends to us—

I. THE HIGHEST CONCEIVABLE MORAL EXCELLENCE. There are four gradations by which we may ascend from the devilish to the Divine, in spirit and in character. 1. We may hate those who love us. There are bad men bad enough, like enough to the evil one himself, to positively hate those who are trying to redeem them, who repay the devoted efforts of their truest friends with sneers and revilings. 2. We may hate those who hate us. Not only *may* we do this, *we do it.* As sin has perverted it, it is in the human heart to return hatred for hatred, blow for blow. 3. We may love those who love us. Most men are equal to that: "Sinners also love those that love them." 4. We may love those who hate us. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you," etc. Let us understand *whom Christ would have us consider our enemies*, and whom, as such, he would have us love. These are not only our *national* enemies; but they are certainly included. To allow ourselves to be carried into the current of bitter animosity against those with whom our country is at strife, so as to rejoice in their suffering and their death,—this is here rebuked by our Master. But our "enemies" are more often found at home. They include all those *whose relation to ourselves is likely to provoke ill feeling; e.g.* those effectively opposing us in counsel or debate; those successfully contending with us in business; those engaged in vindicating their "rights" (as they seem to them) against us; those whose material interests clash with ours; those who have spoken against us or have taken any active steps to injure us. We must also understand *what Christ meant by our loving these.* Clearly he could not have intended that we should cherish toward them that full and complete friendship which is the very precious fruit of gratitude and esteem, and which can only be felt toward those to whom we owe great things, or for whom we have a real veneration. That is impossible in the nature of things. But it is not impossible, it is quite open to us, to extract from our heart every root of bitterness

toward our enemies, to exclude all desire for their ill fortune; and, going much further than that, to nourish in our souls a positively kind feeling toward them, a readiness to serve them; nay, more, to form the habit of praying for them, and of looking out for an opportunity to show them kindness. Surely this is the supreme thing in human morality. No teacher has summoned us to climb higher than this; no learner has reached a loftier summit. And Christ asks us to do this—

II. FROM THE HIGHEST CONCEIVABLE MOTIVE. We might endeavour after this true nobility because: 1. God positively requires it of us (Mark xi. 26; Matt. xviii. 35) 2. It is the noblest victory over ourself. "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." 3. It is the greatest victory over others. "In so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." But there is an incentive higher than these—the highest of all; it is that which our Lord gives us in the text; because: 4. By so doing *we resemble God himself*. "Ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." Here is the loftiest aspiration cherished for the loftiest reason. Think kindly of those who are judging harshly of you; feel friendly toward those who are feeling bitterly about you; speak generously of those who are talking disparagingly of you; do deeds of kindness to those who are acting unhandsomely toward you; bend the knee in prayer on behalf of those who are persecuting you;—do this because then you will be breathing the very atmosphere of magnanimity which God breathes in heaven, because you will then be animated by the very spirit by which he is prompted in all he is doing there, because you will then be ruling your humble life by the very principles on which he is ruling his broad and boundless empire. "Love ye your enemies . . . and your reward shall be great;" indeed, you shall be "the children of the Highest;" the mind that is in him shall be in you, you shall then be perfected (Matt. v. 48), crowning every other virtue and grace of your character, even as God crowns all his other attributes, with the glorious, regal, transcendent excellency of an unquenchable, victorious love.—C.

Ver. 31.—*The golden rule.* We call this precept of Christ "the golden rule;" probably we intend thereby to pay it the highest honour we can offer it. But it is the "precious metal," rather than the admirable precept, to which the compliment is paid by the association of the two. For if this rule of our Lord were only illustrated in the daily life of men, they would be enriched as no imaginable quantity of gold could enrich them. Then would such a revolution be effected as no statesman has ever dreamed of working; then would all social evils for ever disappear; then would human life wear another aspect from that which now saddens and shames us; for the golden rule, enacted in the lives of men, would soon inaugurate the "golden year." We look at—

I. ITS SURPASSING EXCELLENCY. 1. *It is within all men's apprehension.* It is no learned, erudite definition, requiring much culture to comprehend. The most simple-minded can understand it. 2. *It commends itself to all men's conscience.* It is not one of those commandments which require much thought and much practice to appreciate. It is obviously just and fair. It hardly admits of dispute. Every one can see, every one must feel—if "the light that is in him be not darkness"—that it is the *right* thing for him to do. 3. *It excludes all evasions.* No man can shield himself under any misrepresentation of the rule. He must know whether or not he is trying to act toward his neighbour as he would that his neighbour should act toward him. 4. *It covers the entire range of human life,* so far as our relations to one another are concerned. It covers: (1) Action, and also inaction; including in its sweep not only those things we do, but those we leave undone—the attention, the kindness, the consideration, the return we should render but may be withholding. (2) The judgment we form of others; the right they have to our patient, impartial, intelligent, charitable judgment; the claim they may fairly make that we should attribute the worthy rather than the unworthy, the pure rather than the impure, the generous rather than the mean motive. (3) Our speech; the utterance of the kind and true word *of* our neighbour, and also *to* him. (4) Conduct—all our dealings and doings, of all kinds whatsoever, in all the varied relations in which we stand to our fellow-men. This one rule of Christ is a powerful test and solvent of all other prescriptions. If they can be carried out and yet leave us short, in our practice, of doing to others as they would like us to

act toward them, these rules are imperfect. They leave something to be desired and to be attained.

II. THE INSPIRATION WE NEED TO FULFIL IT. This great precept of Christ is not to be translated into action like any ordinary military or municipal regulation. We must gain some inspiration from our Lord himself if we are to keep this great commandment. And we must be prompted by three things. 1. An earnest desire to follow Christ's own example. 2. A strong purpose of heart to do his holy will, that we may please and honour him. 3. A kind and Christian interest in our neighbours; a gracious pity for those whom he pitied, and for whom he suffered and died; a warm interest in their welfare; a firm faith that they can be raised and renewed and refined; a holy love for all those who love him.—C.

Ver. 37.—*Human judgment.* These words must be taken with discrimination; they must be applied in the exercise of our natural intelligence, distinguishing between things that differ. We must observe—

I. THE TRUTH WHICH LIES OUTSIDE THE THOUGHT OF CHRIST. Our Lord could not possibly have meant to condemn the exercise of the individual judgment on men or things. By so doing, indeed, he would have condemned himself; for did he not say, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right"? And almost in the same breath he intimates that men are to be judged by their actions as is a tree by its fruit (ver. 44). We are commanded by the Apostle Paul to "*prove* all things, and to hold fast that which is good;" and John exhorts us to "*try* the spirits whether they are of God." *Things* must be judged by us; new doctrines, new institutions, new methods of worship and of work, come up for our support or our condemnation, and we must judge them, by reason, by conscience, by Scripture, that we may know what course we are to pursue. *Men* must be judged by us also. We have to decide whether we will give them our confidence, our friendship; whether we will admit them into the family circle, into the society, into the Church. To decline to judge men is to neglect one of the most serious duties and most weighty obligations of our life. And knowing all that we do know from Jesus Christ what men and things should be, having learned of him the essential value of reverence, of purity, of rectitude, of charity, we are in a position to "judge righteous judgment," as he has desired us to do.

II. THE SINFUL ERROR WHICH CHRIST CONDEMNS. The judging and the condemning which our Lord here forbids are those of a wrong and guilty order. They are, at least, threefold. 1. *Hasty judgment;* coming to unfavourable conclusions on slight and insufficient evidence; not giving to the inculpated neighbour any fair opportunity of explaining the occurrence; not waiting to think or to learn what has to be taken into account on the other side. 2. *Uncharitable judgment*, and therefore unjust judgment; for we are never so unjust as when we are uncharitable—as when we ascribe the lower motive, the ignobler purpose, the impure desire, to our neighbour. All uncharitableness is sin in the sight of Jesus Christ; and when the want of a kindly charity leads us to misjudge and so to wrong our brother, we fall under the condemnation of this his word, and under his own personal displeasure. 3. *Harsh condemnation;* taking a tone and using a language which are unnecessarily severe, which tend to crush rather than to reform, which daunt the spirit instead of inciting it to better things; condemnation which is not after the manner of him who "hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," who "will not always chide, neither doth he keep his anger for ever;" condemnation which would be disallowed by him who rebuked his disciples when they rebuked those mothers who were bringing their children to his feet, and who forbade these disciples to forbid any one doing good in his name, even though he "followed not" with them.

III. THE PENALTY WE PAY FOR OUR TRANSGRESSION. If we wrongly judge and wrongly condemn, we shall suffer for our mistake, for our sin. 1. God will condemn us for our injustice, or our undue and inconsiderate severity. 2. We shall have, some day, to reproach ourselves. But the most marked penalty will be found elsewhere. 3. Our fellow-men will treat us with the severity we impose on them. It is the universal habit among men to take up the attitude toward any neighbour which he assumes toward them. Toward the merciful *we* are merciful, even as our Father is; toward the severe we are severe. Again and again does the fact present itself to our

observation that the men who have been relentless in their punishment of others have been held fast to the letter of the bond in the day of their own shortcoming; they who show no mercy will find none when they need it for their own soul. But if we judge leniently and condemn sparingly, we shall find for ourselves that men are just unto the just and generous unto the generous.—C.

Ver. 38.—*Human responsiveness.* This word of Christ may be taken with that other on the same subject, which none of the evangelists recorded, but which we could ill have spared, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We may consider—

I. WHAT WE HAVE TO GIVE. We have much that we can draw from if we desire to benefit and to bless our fellow-men. 1. *Our possessions*—our money, our time, our books, our clothes, etc. 2. *Ourselves*—our thought, our affection, our sympathy.

II. WHO SHOULD BE OUR RECIPIENTS. These should be: 1. Our kindred according to the flesh. 2. Our kindred according to the spirit—our fellow-Christians, our fellow-members. 3. Our neighbours, those who, as the nearest and most within reach, should receive our kind thoughtfulness. 4. The children of want, of sorrow, of spiritual destitution, both at home and abroad. There is a sense, and that a truly Christian one, in which those who are in the saddest need and in the darkest error, aye, and even in the most deplorable iniquity, have the greatest claim on our pity and our help.

III. WHAT MAY BE OUR INCENTIVES. 1. That giving is that act which is most emphatically *Divine*. God lives to give—to bestow life, and health, and beauty, and joy on his creatures. Christ Jesus came to give himself for man. 2. That it is truly *angelic*. 3. That it is the *heroic* thing to do. Men have been true heroes in proportion as they have spent themselves and their powers on behalf of their kind. 4. That it is most *elevating* in its influence on ourselves and, when wisely directed, on those for whom it is expended.

IV. WHAT WILL BE OUR RECOMPENSE. 1. The Divine approval. "For God loveth a cheerful giver." 2. The unconscious and uncalculated reaction that will be received by ourselves, enlarging our heart and lifting us toward the level of the supreme Giver. 3. The response we shall receive from those we serve. This is the recompense which is promised in the text. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure . . . shall men give into your bosom." There is far too much ingratitude in this world; more, perhaps, than we are willing to believe, until sad experience has convinced us. Nevertheless, there is also a very large measure of human responsiveness on which we may safely reckon. If we give to others, men will give to us; if we love them, they will love us. Do not even the publicans so? (Matt. v. 46). Even those whose hearts have been unchanged by the truth and grace of Christ will respond to genuine kindness. Patronage they will recognize and resent; officialism they will distinguish and may endure. But the help which comes straight from the heart they will appreciate, and to him who gives it they will give a free and gladdening response. To the really generous man, as distinguished from the formal "benefactor" or the professional philanthropist, there will flow a stream of warm-hearted gratitude and affection which will far more than repay all the time and treasure, and even all the sympathy and service, that have been expended. The generous giver will be the recipient of (1) the *regard*, (2) the *gratitude*, (3) the *affection*, and, (4) when it may be needed, the *substantial kindness* of those whom he has tried to serve, and of many others outside that circle. And to these may be added that which, if its worth be less calculable, yet may be even more valuable and more acceptable than any or all of these—the *prayers of the good*. Selfishness often misses its own poor mark, and it always fails to bless its author with an inward blessing; but beneficence is always blessed. God rains down his large benedictions from above, and below men offer their glad and free contribution. "Give, and it shall be given unto you . . . for with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."—C.

Vers. 39, 40.—*Christian teaching.* We may learn from this parable some truths of the greatest consequence to all those who are teachers of religion; and this will include not only all Christian pastors and evangelists, but all those who are training the young, whether at school or at home.

I. THAT THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD DEPENDS VERY LARGELY ON THAT OF ITS RELIGIOUS TEACHERS. The multitude have never yet been able to think great theological questions through; they have not attempted the settlement of them by their own examination. They have left that very largely indeed to their religious leaders. It is so in other departments of human knowledge, and so it has been and will be in the realm of religion. What our teachers teach the people will believe concerning the great and supreme questions affecting our relation to God, to our neighbours, to the future.

II. THAT BLINDNESS ON THE PART OF THE TEACHER MEANS DISASTROUS ERROR TO THE PEOPLE. "Both will fall into the ditch." Religious truth is the most elevating of all knowledge; but error in religion is the most injurious of all errors. Men can make mistakes in the realms of literature, of physical science, of philosophy, and even of political economy, without fatal consequences. But serious errors in religion are nothing short of calamities. Teacher and taught fall into a deep ditch, from which they do not escape without much injury, both done and suffered. These evil consequences include: 1. Departure and distance of the mind from the thought of God, from truth and wisdom. 2. Superstitions which degrade and demoralize; or, on the other hand, unbelief which robs the soul of its true heritage, and leaves life without nobility and death without hope. 3. Morbid fancies which prey upon the mind, or shocking cruelties practised on the victim of error himself or on others. 4. Spiritual death.

III. THAT THE TEACHER OF TRUTH IS LIMITED IN HIS INFLUENCE BY HIS OWN ATTAINMENTS. "The disciple is not above his master." It is indeed true that a teacher may bring a disciple into connection with Jesus Christ; and from him and from his followers and his institutions he may gain help which his first teacher could not have imparted; but this is not derived from the *teacher himself*. This man, *as teacher*, can only render to his disciples the good which he has in himself—the *knowledge* he has in his own mind, the *worth* he has in his own character, the *wisdom* contained in the principles on which he is fashioning his own life. Let every teacher be impressed with the serious truth of this limitation. He cannot give what he has not gained. He has to say, "Follow me so far as I am following Christ,"—not a step further. If he ceases to acquire, if his path of progress in the knowledge or the likeness of God is arrested, there is stopped at the same hour his power of leading his disciples on and up those sacred and glorious heights. Therefore let him be always acquiring, always attaining.

IV. THAT THE FAITHFUL TEACHER HAS A VERY NOBLE OPPORTUNITY. Every one that has been fully instructed "shall be as his master." If he is a "true philanthropist who makes two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before," what shall we not think of him who plants in the hearts of men true thoughts of God, of the human soul, of human life, of the future? This is the teacher's lofty function. And he can go beyond this. By the power of language, especially when that is illuminated by deep conviction and intense earnestness of spirit, he can pass on to his disciples so much of Divine truth, and he can communicate so much of heavenly wisdom, that they who "have been fully instructed," who are his mature or "perfect" disciples, will have in them the mind and temper which are in him. So that they will be "as he is," will think as he thinks, will feel what he feels, will live for the same objects for which he is living. Surely there is no nobler work that any man can do than this; it is well worth while the teacher's (1) most careful preparation, (2) most energetic effort, (3) most earnest prayer.—C.

Vers. 41, 42.—*Keenness and dulness of spiritual vision.* Of all the surprising things in this world there is nothing more wonderful than the way in which men mistake one another and misconceive themselves. Their vision is so seriously, so thoroughly distorted.

I. THE KEENNESS OF SPIRITUAL VISION some men exhibit. They have the nicest discernment of faults and failings in their brethren. There is nothing too minute to escape their notice and their condemnation. Censoriousness is a very great mistake in every light. Those who are guilty of "beholding the mote in their brother's eye" are wrong in four respects. 1. They do substantial injustice in their judgment and by

their action; for they lay stress on the one small infirmity while they leave unregarded and unacknowledged many honourable acquisitions, many valuable virtues. 2. They are inconsiderate of the difficulties which the victims of their severity have had to contend with, and in doing battle with which they may have put forth the most commendable exertion. 3. They forget that every one of us is and will be subject to the judgment and (where it is due) the condemnation of God (see Rom. xiv. 4, 10). 4. They show a perverted ingenuity. It would be a most excellent quality to cultivate if they would only exert the same subtlety and patient observation in descrying the virtues and the beauties of those in whom they detect so many failures. This keenness of spiritual vision is a mistake in two other ways. (1) It is usually unprofitable; for it is more irritating than advantageous to those on whom it is expended. (2) It is odious to man, and it is unpleasing in the sight of God. Both in the human and in the Divine estimate, severity is the unattractive and charity is the becoming thing.

II. THE DULNESS OF SPIRITUAL VISION other men manifest. They do "not perceive the beam that is in their own eye." This fact in human experience is only too palpable. We see men whose souls are painfully charged with selfishness, or pride, or frivolity, or cruelty, or irreverence, or impurity, who have no conception that they are in grave spiritual delinquency and danger. There is not a mote but a beam in their eye, and they are blind to it altogether. They are not entitled to offer a judgment on the defects or transgressions of others, so far are they themselves from the straight line of truth. And any note of censure from their lips is utterly and even ludicrously misplaced.

III. OUR WISDOM IN VIEW OF THESE MISTAKES. It is to be far more concerned to be right and pure in our own hearts than to be keen in the detection and exposure of other people's shortcoming. Since men do so seriously and so fatally mistake their own spirit and condition, it behoves us to do these three things: 1. To examine our own hearts with impartial and anxious eye. 2. To welcome any friendly counsel or warning that may be offered us; and "it is lawful to learn *even from an enemy*." 3. To be often and earnestly asking God to show us what is wrong within, that we may see ourselves as he sees us. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults!" (Ps. xix. 12, 13; and see Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).—C.

Vers. 43—45.—*Being and doing.* The great Teacher here puts into figurative language the truth which was afterwards so tersely and forcibly expressed by his most appreciative disciple, "He that *doeth* righteousness *is* righteous." We have here—

I. THE FOUNDATION-TRUTH on which our Lord's word is built, viz. that life is the outcome of character; that as men *are* so they will *live*. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good," etc. Granted that a man is sound at heart, it is certain that he will spend a good life, that he will shrink from the evil and pursue and practise the holy thing. Granted that a man is radically corrupt, it is certain that his life will be unworthy and sinful. Character must come forth into conduct; behaviour is the manifestation of the secret spring which is within the soul. "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit," etc.

II. THE APPARENT EXCEPTIONS, which are only apparent, and not real. If this be true, we want to know how it is, on the one hand, (1) that men we feel sure are bad at heart are found living lives that are blameless and even devout; and how it is, on the other hand, (2) that men we feel sure are sound at heart deviate so often from the straight line of propriety. The answer to this question is manifold. 1. It must be remembered that much of that which seems goodness of life, and which seems as if it must have come from a true heart, is not *real* goodness—it is only pretence. Hypocrisy, the affectation of piety and virtue, is not a good fruit, though it may look very much like it; it is no more "good fruit" in the garden of the Lord than poisonous berries are good fruit on the trees or shrubs of our visible garden. 2. And it must also be taken into account that much of that which seems like departure from moral excellence, and which seems as if it cannot have proceeded from the good heart, is not really "evil;" it is either mannerism that is only skin-deep, to be regretted indeed, but not to be confounded with essential moral evil; or it is undeveloped, struggling righteousness, the crude and imperfect attempt of a soul that is moving upwards from

below; there is many a slip and many a false step, but then there is much honourable effort and much spiritual earnestness recognized and owned by the patient Father of spirits.

III. THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSION for which we must be prepared. "Every tree is known by his own fruit." "By their fruits ye shall know them." Men must form their judgment about us; and they must judge us by the lives they witness. If, therefore, we do not manifest a Christian temper and a loving spirit, if righteous principles are not visible in our daily dealings, if we do not give evidence of caring more for truth and for God and for the establishment of his holy kingdom on the earth than we care for our own temporal prosperity or present enjoyment,—we must not complain if men count us among the ungodly. Our godliness, our spirituality, our rectitude, ought to shine forth clearly and unmistakably from our daily life.

IV. THE PRACTICAL TRUTH which we must apply to ourselves—that, if we would live a life of uprightness in the sight of God, we must be *right at heart* in his esteem. It must be out of the fulness of our soul that we do right actions; it must be out of "the abundance of the heart that our mouth must speak" his praise and his truth; or our proprieties of behaviour and our suitableness of language will weigh nothing whatever in his balances. The first thing for every man to do is to become right in his own heart with God; to return in spirit unto him; to go to him in humility and in faith; to find mercy of him in Jesus Christ, and, having thus entered into sonship, to live the life of filial obedience to his Word; then and thus will the good tree bring forth good fruit.—C.

Vers. 46—49.—*Good and bad building.* In the moral and spiritual as well as in the material world there is good and bad, sound and unsound, safe and unsafe *building* We are all builders; we are all planning, preparing, laying our foundation, erecting our walls, putting on our topstone.

I. THE FABRIC OF ENJOYMENT OR OF SUCCESS. That of *enjoyment*, of the gratification of indulgence, is indeed hardly worthy of the name of building; yet are there those who spend upon it a very large amount of thought and labour. To pursue this as the object of life is unworthy of our manhood, is to dishonour ourselves, is to degrade our lives; it is to expend our strength on putting up a miserable hovel when we might use it in the erection of a noble mansion; it is, also, to be laboriously constructing a heap of sand which the first strong wave will wash away. Worthier than this, though quite unsatisfying and unsatisfactory, is the pursuit of *temporal prosperity*, the building up of a fortune, or of a great name, or of personal authority and command. Not that such aims and efforts are wrong in themselves. On the other hand, they are necessary, honourable, and even creditable. But they are *not sufficient*; they are wholly inadequate as the aspiration of a human soul and the achievement of a human life. They do not fill the heart of man; they do not give it rest; they leave a large void unfilled, a craving and a yearning unsatisfied. Moreover, they do not stand the test of time; they are *buildings that will soon be washed away.* The tide of time will soon advance and sweep away the strongest of such edifices as those. Do not be content with building for twenty, or forty, or sixty years; build for eternity. "The world passeth away . . . but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

II. THE FORTRESS OF CHARACTER. It is of this that our Lord is speaking in the text; and he says concerning it—Dig deep, build on the rock, erect that which the most violent storm cannot shake to its fall. What is that character which answers to this counsel? 1. Not that which is founded on *ceremony and rite.* Reason, Scripture, and experience all prove that this is a character built upon the sand. 2. Not that which is founded upon *sentiment or occasional emotion.* Many are they who like and who demand to be acted upon by powerful influences, and to be thus excited to strong feelings. In these moments of aroused sensibility they cry, "Lord! Lord!" with apparent earnestness. But if piety ends in sensibility "it is nothing;" it is worthless; it will be washed away by the first storm that breaks. 3. It is that which is established in *sacred conviction and fixed determination.* This is the rock to which we must dig down—sacred conviction passing into *real consecration*; the conviction that we owe everything to our God and Saviour, and the determination, in the sight and by the grace of God, to yield our hearts and lives to him. A character thus built,

sustained by Christian services and ceremonies, will be strong against all assault. The subtlest influences will not undermine it, the mightiest earthly forces will not overturn it; let the storms come, and it will stand.

III. THE EDIFICE OF CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS. Paul, in his first letter to the Church at Corinth, speaks of the wood, hay, and stubble, and also of gold, silver, and precious stones, *i.e.* of the combustible and the inflammable materials with which men construct their building in the field of holy service. And he says the fire will try every man's work; so that we have apostolic warning also to take heed how we build. Let the Christian workman see to it that he too builds on the rock, that he effects that which will stand the waters and the fires that will try his work. Let him depend little on ceremonialism, little on excitement; let him strive to produce deep, sacred convictions in the soul; let him endeavour to lead men on to a whole-hearted dedication of themselves to Jesus Christ; let him persuade men to the formation of wise habits of devotion and self-government; so shall he be building that which the waters of time will not remove, and which the last fires will purify but not destroy.—C.

Ver. 49.—*The greatest ruin.* "The ruin of that house was great." Occasionally there occurs a panic in the commercial world. As the cause or, often enough, as the consequence of this, some great house is "broken;" its liabilities are too great for its resources; it cannot meet the claims that are falling due. And some morning it is found that when all other houses are open, its doors are closed—it has suspended payment; it has fallen; and it may be said, seriously enough, that "the ruin of that house is great." Great is the fall and sad is the ruin of (1) a great human *reputation*; or of (2) a great human *hope*. With the fall of either of these there is bitter sorrow, keen humiliation, a dark shadow cast, not on one heart and home only, but on many. For we stand, in human society, not like detached houses in large grounds, but like houses that are close together, and when one falls it brings harm and injury to many that are connected with it. But *the* ruin, which is great indeed, compared with which all others are but small, is the ruin of a *human soul*.

I. THE SOUL IS ITSELF A BUILDING; it is the main, the chief building which we are rearing. Whatever else we may be erecting—material, social, political—the one thing we do with which other things will not compare in seriousness and in consequence is to "*build up ourselves*" (see Jude 20). It is a daily, an hourly process; it proceeds with every thought we admit into our mind, with every feeling we cherish in our heart, with every purpose we form in our soul. That which we are to-day in the sight of God is the whole result of all that we have been doing, of all our visible and invisible acts, up to the present hour.

II. IT IS A BUILDING WHICH MAY BE OVERTHROWN. We all know the man who is the wreck and ruin of himself. What he once was he is no more. Instead of devotion is impiety; instead of purity is laxity; instead of the beauty of holiness is the unsightliness of sin; instead of honour is shame. The fair house of moral and spiritual integrity is down; there is nothing left but the foundations; and the ruin of *that* house is great indeed.

III. THIS OVERTHROW IS SAD BEYOND EXPRESSION. For consider: 1. *What it cost to build.* We do not mind if a hut or shanty is blown down; that represents no great loss. But if a mansion or cathedral is destroyed, we grieve; for the result of incalculable skill and toil is laid waste. And when a human soul is lost, what labour is thrown away, what experiences, what patience, what suffering, what discipline, what prayers and tears, both on the part of the man himself and of those who have loved him and watched over him and striven for him! 2. *How intrinsically precious a thing it is.* We do not know the absolute value of a human spirit; our language will not utter it; our minds cannot estimate it. God alone knows that, and the Son of God has told us that it is worth more than all the material world (Mark viii. 36). 3. *How it drags down others with it.* As one large "house" in a great city drags down others in its fall, so does the house of a human spirit. What is it to the family when the father or the mother is morally lost? for the neighbourhood when the minister or the magistrate sinks and perishes? We do not fall alone; we draw others down with us, and often those whom we are most sacredly bound to uplift or to sustain.

IV. THERE IS A WAY OF RECOVERY. "It is not the will of our heavenly Father

that one . . . should perish." "God so loved the world . . . that whosoever believeth . . . should *not* perish." The fallen house may be down beyond recovery; not so the human soul. In the gospel of Jesus Christ the way of restoration is revealed. By the power of the Holy Spirit the soul that has fallen the furthest may be raised up again, and be restored to the favour and the likeness and the service of God. By true penitence and genuine faith we may lay hold on eternal life; and when the heart heeds the voice of its merciful Father summoning it to return, and when it hastens to the feet of Jesus Christ and seeks in him a Refuge and a Saviour, and when it lives a new life of faith and love and hope in him, it is restored to all that it once was; and the *restoration* of that soul is great.—C.

Vers. 1—19.—*The Lord of the sabbath, and his work.* We have just seen how Jesus treated with deserved dishonour the tradition of the elders about *fasting*. He showed his disciples a more excellent way. Fasting is not an end, but only a means to an end, and this is the restoration of the soul to fellowship with its Saviour. In this way should Christians use fasting. And now we pass on to notice how on sabbath-keeping tradition again intruded itself and made cumbrous additions to the Mosaic commandment. Our Lord once more, as we shall see, set at nought the tradition, while he held firmly by the Mosaic Law. The evangelist groups two sabbath-scenes for us in the history here—the first in the corn-fields, the second in the synagogue, but both illustrating our Lord's sabbatic principle and practice. As the most interesting method of considering the subject, let us notice—

I. THE PHARISAIC PRINCIPLE ABOUT SABBATH-KEEPING WAS THAT MAN WAS MADE FOR THE DAY, NOT THE DAY FOR THE MAN. (Vers. 2, 7.) These reputedly religious men had a certain idea about the day. They must have a holy day, and so it must be so sacred that all work shall be deemed unlawful, lest it should be secularized. What they objected to in the first case was not the plucking of the ears of corn, but the rubbing of them in the hands. This was a violation of their tradition. In the second case they objected to work on the sabbath day, even though it took the form of healing. Their ideal was, therefore, a day of such physical inactivity as would refuse to minister to man's hunger or to man's healing. The fallacy underlying this idea was that work is in its essence a secular thing, and that idleness is somehow sacred. To declare this emphatically, they were ready to rebuke hungry men for satisfying themselves in the corn-fields, and to deny healing to the man with the withered arm because he presented himself for it on the sabbath day. The day above the man, then, was the Pharisees' notion. Hunger and helplessness must be endured in order that a day of pretentious idleness may be presented to mankind. Healthy desire must be stifled, longing for power and self-help must be denied, that a sufficiently idle sabbath may be secured. The apotheosis of idleness, the vindication of indifference,—all this and more is involved in the Pharisaic criticism of Christ and of his disciples. Now, it is important to bring out clearly how contrary to God's idea all this is. Work is not secularizing in itself. The infinite Father never ceases working, but his work is sacred all through the year. Of course, men may secularize themselves by the selfishness of their work, but they may secularize themselves as really by the selfishness of their idleness. An idle day is not likely to be a holy one; a busy day may be most holy if the glory of God and the good of souls be kept steadily in view.

II. CHRIST'S BETTER PRINCIPLE OF SABBATH-KEEPING IS THAT THE DAY IS MADE FOR MAN. (Vers. 3—5, 9.) Hence necessity must be recognized as a law for the sabbath. Even the ceremonial rite should give way before the needs of human nature, as the case of David's hungry men being saved from famishing by a meal of shewbread indicates. Hence the hungry disciples, in rubbing the corn in their hands, were vindicated by that sublime *necessity* which recognizes no higher law. Again, in the case of the helpless fellow-man whose right hand was withered, our Lord is clear that the sabbath should be a day for saving life, and not for allowing it to perish. In other words, Christ would devote the day to man's salvation, while the Pharisees were prepared to sacrifice the man to the peculiar sacredness which they thought belonged to an idle day. But if the day is thus a means towards man's good, is he to employ it as he pleases? Is every man to be lord of the sabbath by doing as he likes upon it? This would be a dangerous prerogative to give to men. Not every one is fit to exercise it. The Phari-

sees, in fact, had taken the sabbath under their control and spoiled it altogether. Hence the sovereignty of the sabbath must be left in the hands of him who is called the Son of man. Christ is the Lord who can so order the sabbath that it shall be truly sanctified. It is, consequently, from Christ's sabbath-keeping that we learn what it ought to be. And we see from his life that he made the sabbaths his special opportunities for philanthropic effort. Most of his miracles were sabbath-day performances. He seems to have been busier on the sabbath than on any day of the week. We are safe in following along the lines of his most intelligent philanthropy. The sabbath is made for man. If Christ would have the hungry fed and the helpless healed, he would also have the souls fed with the bread of life and all spiritual helplessness removed. This is the purpose, therefore, of those means of grace which are presented with special earnestness on the Lord's day!

III. CHRIST DEMONSTRATED THE TRUTH OF HIS PRINCIPLE BY THE MIRACLE. (Ver. 10.) Now, this miracle, like the healing of the paralytic, was the test of a principle. In the former case Christ claimed the prerogative of absolution, and he demonstrated that he possessed the prerogative by telling the paralytic to rise and walk, and healing him. In the present case he has taken issue with the Pharisees as to the sabbath being a day for philanthropy. Healing is to be performed on it, if it is required. And now he singles out the patient with the withered hand, and by a word cures him. Thus he put their ideas on sabbath-observance to confusion. Instead, however, of rejoicing in the poor man's cure, they are filled with madness at their own discomfiture. Misanthropy in them is the contrast to the philanthropy of Jesus. But is not the miracle a sign of those miracles which are performed from sabbath to sabbath? Man comes in his weakness, his hand is withered, he can do nothing; but through the power of God he is enabled to stretch forth his hand, and enter into the sphere of spiritual power.

IV. THE SELECTION OF THE TWELVE WAS MADE BY CHRIST A MATTER OF VERY SPECIAL PRAYER. (Vers. 12—16.) We are told that he spent a whole night in prayer to God. This showed how important in his view the selection of the disciples was, and the establishment of his kingdom among men. He chose them in the morning after the prayerful view of the whole case before the Father. If Jesus realized the need of long-continued prayer before selecting them, how prayerfully should we go about our work for him! It is no easy matter to act wisely in our dealings with men and in our use of them. The persons selected were such as only Divine wisdom, as distinguished from worldly prudence, would have chosen. There was not an "influential" person among them; and it was not till after the Pentecost that any of them became what we should now call reliable. Into the analysis of the persons selected we do not enter. They have been divided into three groups: the first, containing the names of Peter and Andrew, James and John, gives us the chiefs of the apostolic band, the men of *insight*; the second, containing the names of Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew, are *reflective*, and, at first, *sceptical*, men; and the third and last contains the names of James the son of Alphæus, Jude, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, all *practical* men.[1] Our Lord has thus use in his Church for all grades of men, and can even make use of traitors to serve his purpose.

V. THE HEALER IN THE MIDST OF THE MULTITUDE. (Vers. 17—19.) From the mountain-top of prayer he descends to the valley of opportunity, and there finds a vast multitude from the heathen parts of Tyre and Sidon, as well as from the Jewish districts of Judæa and Jerusalem, who have come to hear and to be healed of their diseases. Here were the two spheres—the sphere of mind, to which the ear is the great entrance; and the sphere of body, where disease may be checked and healing given. The mission of Jesus was to save men. Miracles were part of his message to mankind. The healing of the diseases of men was to tell how he can heal their souls and save them everlastingly. Moreover, they connected the cure with his Person. From him virtue or healing power radiated. His Person is the centre of healing influence. And for salvation this also holds good. It is to the Person of the Saviour we must come if we are to get really healed. It is surely well to have the source of all healing defined—it is the Person of our Saviour. To him, therefore, let us all come!—R. M. E.

[1] Cf. *Expositor*, vol. i. pp. 29–43.

Vers. 20—49.—*The Legislator on the mount.* We have seen how, after a whole night spent in prayer, our Lord proceeded to the important work of selecting his apostles. In this way he *organized* his kingdom. And now, having healed all who needed healing, and had been brought or had come to him, he has the ground cleared for legislative work. From this mountain-top in Galilee he publishes the laws of the kingdom, and thus gives to the world such a high-toned morality as has not been surpassed or superseded by any ethical speculations since. It may be safely said that all the Christless ethics which have been offered to the world in lieu of the Christian, contain nothing valuable which Christ's system has not in better form, and that they err by defect in many places. Christ is still, in the department of ethics, "the Light of the world."[1] The audience to whom the sermon on the mount was delivered was almost entirely Jewish, and they doubtless entertained the usual ideas about the kingdom of Messiah. This kingdom was, they hoped, to be one where they would enjoy immunity from trouble, and be in flourishing worldly circumstances. Theirs was a worldly dream. They wanted a golden age of wealth and worldly power. It was needful for our Lord, consequently, to correct these superficial notions, and to create a kingdom which could flourish in spite of the world's opposition and of all possible disadvantages. Accordingly, we find the Divine Legislator first quietly describing the members of his kingdom and distinguishing them from the worldly minded outside; secondly, laying down the policy his people should pursue; thirdly, pointing out the secret of true leadership among men; and lastly, the stability of the obedient. To these points let us devote ourselves for a little in their order.

I. CHRIST DIFFERENTIATES HIS SUBJECTS FROM THE WORLDLY MINDED OUTSIDE. (Vers. 20—26.) For the simple statement of the Beatitudes, and of the woes that constitute their contrast, really draws the line between his kingdom and the world. Matthew, in his fuller version of this sermon on the mount, gives eight Beatitudes and no woes; Luke balances the four Beatitudes by four contrasted woes. The teaching in both versions is, however, practically identical. And when we look into our Lord's declarations, we find, in the first place, that, in his kingdom, the poor, the hungry, the tearful, and the persecuted are enabled to realize blessedness. This is the paradox of Christian experience, that, in spite of poverty, and of hunger, and of sorrow, and of opposition, Christ enables his people to maintain a *blessed* spirit. The poor are "rich in faith;" the hungry, especially those whose appetite is keen for righteousness (cf. Matt. v. 6), are certain to be filled; the tearful have the assurance that God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, if not on earth, at all events in heaven (cf. Rev. vii. 17); and the persecuted for Christ's sake are enabled to rejoice in view of that great reward in heaven which awaits all Christ's faithful martyrs. This blessedness is maintained in all these cases in spite of everything which militates against it. On the other hand, our Lord shows the rich, and the satiated, and the laughter-indulging, and the popularity-hunting people that, having received their consolation in this life, there is nothing in the next life for them but disappointment, lamentation, and woe. This may easily be verified. Those who "trust in uncertain riches"—and it is to these our Lord refers, as parallel passages show—must be woefully disappointed when they have to cross the Stygian river without their gold. All that they trusted in shall then have failed them for evermore. Those, again, who are satiated with this world's pleasures, and who have contracted no higher appetite, will be terribly empty when this world and all its pleasures shall have passed away like a dream. Those, again, who lived for laughter—the sportsmen of the world—shall find no provision made in another life for such profitless people, and shall mourn and weep over the lost opportunities of life. And, lastly, the popularity-hunters, who made the good opinion of the populace their great ambition, and were satisfied when all men spoke well of them, will find, like the popular false prophets of the past, that the other life is constructed upon such lines as will assign to each his due, and to popularity-hunting the doom of those who love applause rather than principle. Upon the worldly minded and successful, so far as this life is concerned, there is cast, by the great Lawgiver, the shadow of doom. For such people there is no reserve fund in a future life; they have eaten up both capital and interest.

II. CHRIST LAYS DOWN THE POLICY HIS PEOPLE SHOULD PURSUE. (Vers. 27—38.) Now, one of the cardinal principles of worldly policy is to "give nothing for nothing."

[1] Cf. 'The Light of the World,' by A. S. Wilkins, M.A., *passim*.

The world insists on a *quid pro quo*. Hence the worldly minded will always ask the question about the course a person pursues, "What does he expect to gain by it?" To act without hope of recompense is what the world cannot understand. And in strict conformity with this, the world is prompted to "give as much as it gets" in the way of injury. Curse for curse, hatred for hatred, a blow for a blow, a counterplot for a plot. This is the gamut of the world's revenge. The great Legislator, on the other hand, sets his face against all this worldly policy. He ridicules doing good for the sake of getting good. Such speculative philanthropy is pure worldliness. He must have a better system within his kingdom. He can dispense with revenge and the *quid pro quo*, and work his kingdom upon purely philanthropic lines. God the Father is the great Philanthropist, and men, by entertaining love for its own sake, may become "children of the Highest" and the elements of a new kingdom. Hence our Lord directs his people to love their enemies, to do good to those that hate them, to bless those that curse them, to pray for their persecutors, to give a kiss for a blow, to suffer violence a second time rather than practise it revengefully; to give to the utmost of their power to all who ask. In short, they are to love and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again; they are to be merciful, like their Father in heaven; they are to be free from censoriousness, and forgiving; and they may rest assured that in another life they shall get a great reward. What Christ proposes, therefore, is a policy of patient philanthropy—a policy of consideration, doing always to others what we would like to receive were we in their circumstances. And it is this new policy of love which is sure to overcome the world.

III. CHRIST SHOWS THE SECRET OF TRUE LEADERSHIP AMONG MEN. (Vers. 39—45.) But if love is to regulate all our conduct, may not others suffer through the proverbial "blindness" of love? There is little danger from the blindness of real love, only from the blindness induced by selfishness. Our danger, as the Lord here shows, is always from exaggerated self-love; we are blind to our own faults; we see motes in a brother's eye, and forget the beam in our own. Hence he recommends here severe self-criticism, such self-criticism as will prevent all hypocrisy, and secure that our eyes be truly purged. When this is the case, then we can see the little faults in others, and deal with them after we have dealt honestly with the great ones of our own. And so heart-purity is the great secret of successful leadership among men. If our hearts are set right with God, if we are washed and cleansed from secret faults, if we are purged from an evil conscience and dead works,—then are we in a fit state to deal tenderly with erring brothers and lead them to a better way. And so our Saviour shows, by this part of his legislation, that only the purified in heart can become successful leaders of their fellows. It is he who knows his own heart's plagues that can tenderly and skilfully deal with the plagues of others, and put them, by God's blessing, on a better way.

IV. CHRIST FINALLY BRINGS OUT THE STABILITY OF THE OBEDIENT. (Vers. 46—49.) Now, it is important to recognize the position taken up here by the great Lawgiver. He claims *absolute sovereignty*. His word is to be law. Once we know his will, we have only got to do it. But the claim is not unreasonable, nor is it excessive. He understands the strain and stress of human temptations thoroughly. He not only understand these speculatively, but experimentally; for he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). He can consequently give to us the best advice, advice infallible. If we would stand like a rock amid the temptations of life, then we have got simply and cordially to obey Christ. He is the Rock of ages; nothing can shake him; and nothing can disturb those who have learned to trust him. But those who hear his advice and do it not, shall be swept away by the torrent of temptation and involved in a ruin that is great. Obedience is the secret, therefore, of stability. May it be our experience continually!—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1—10.—*The servant (or slave) of the centurion of Capernaum is healed.*

Ver. 1.—**Now when he had ended all his sayings.** This clearly refers to the sermon on the mount. That great discourse evidently occupied a position of its own in the public ministry of the Lord. Its great length, its definite announcement of the kind of reign

he was inaugurating over the hearts of men, its stern rebuke of the dominant religious teaching of the day, its grave prophetic onlooks,—all marked it out as the great manifesto of the new Master, and as such it seems to have been generally received. **He entered into Capernaum.** The residence of Jesus, as we have before pointed out, during the greater part of his public life. It was, as it were, his head-quarters. After each missionary tour he returned to the populous, favoured lake-city which he had chosen as his temporary home.

Ver. 2.—**And a certain centurion's servant**; literally, *slave*. The difference is important, as we shall see in the picture presented to us of the centurion's character. A centurion was an officer in the Roman army: the grade answers to the modern European captain—German, *hauptmann*; the command included a hundred soldiers. Scholars are not agreed respecting the special service of this particular officer. Some consider he was a Greek or Syrian holding a commission under the prince of the country, the tetrach Herod Antipas; others, that he was in the service of the empire, with a small detachment of the garrison of Cæsarea, doing duty at the important lake-city, probably in connection with the revenue. It is clear that Roman garrisons at this period were dotted about the various centres of population in these semi-dependent states. At Jerusalem we know a considerable Roman force was stationed, professedly to keep order in the turbulent capital, but really, no doubt, to overawe the national party. **Was sick, and ready to die.** St. Matthew calls the disease paralysis, and adds that the sufferer was in extreme pain. The disorder was probably some dangerous form of rheumatic fever, which not unfrequently attacks the region of the heart, and is accompanied with severe pain, and proves in many instances fatal. The ordinary paralysis would scarcely be accompanied with the acute pain mentioned by St. Matthew.

Ver. 3.—**And when he heard of Jesus**; better rendered, *having heard about Jesus*. His fame as a good Physician, such as never had arisen before, coupled with his reputation as a Teacher, had now travelled far and wide. The devout centurion probably had watched with extreme interest the career of the strange and remarkable Teacher-Prophet who had risen up among the people, and had apparently (see note on ver. 7) made up his mind that this Jesus was no mortal man. **He sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant**; better rendered *elders* without the article; that is, some of the official elders connected with his own synagogue. These would be able, with more grace than himself, to plead his cause with the Master, telling him how well the centurion had deserved any assistance which a Jewish physician could afford him.

Vers. 4, 5.—**He was worthy for whom he should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.** There are several mentions of these Roman military officers in the Gospels and Acts, and in every instance the mention is a favourable one. Still more notable instances occur in the case of Cornelius—to whom Peter was specially sent (Acts x., xi.)—of the centurion who was on guard at the execution on Calvary, and of the centurion who conveyed Paul to Rome (Acts xxvii. 1—3). On these Gentile soldiers "the faith and life of Judaism (seen, we may well believe, to more advantage in the village life of Galilee than amid the factions of Jerusalem) had made a deep impression: he found a purity, reverence, simplicity, and nobleness of life which he had not found elsewhere, and so he loved the nation, and built a new one of the synagogues of the town" (Dean Plumptre). The centurion was apparently one of those foreigners who—without submitting to circumcision and other burdensome ceremonial rites which were incompatible with the exercise of his profession—had accepted the faith of Israel, and worshipped with the people in the position of one who, in another age, would have been termed a "proselyte of the gate." He was evidently one of those true-hearted men who translated a beautiful *creed* into *acts*, for it was specially urged by the elders, in their petition to Jesus, that he loved the people, no doubt emphasizing his generous almsgivings, and, as a crowning act of his kindness, had built a synagogue at Capernaum. Modern travellers tell us that among the ruins of this city of Jesus are the remains of a white marble synagogue of the time of the Herods. This may have been the Roman soldier's noble gift to Israel. The whole character of this nameless officer seems to have been singularly noble. In those selfish days of undreamed-of luxury, cruelty, and heartlessness, for *a master* to care for, much less to love, *a slave* was, comparatively speaking, rare. From his message to Jesus (ver. 7) it would seem as though he had a clearer conception who the poor Galilæan Teacher was than any one else at that period of the public ministry, not excluding the inner circle of disciples.

Ver. 6.—**Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.** Augustine's comment on these remarkable words is good: "By saying that he was unworthy, he showed himself worthy of Christ's entering, not within his walls, but within his heart."

Ver. 7.—**But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.** The Gentile soldier's faith was really great. He had risen above the need of an outward sign, such as a touch or even the sound of a living voice. He needed no contact with the fringe of the Master's garment, asked for no handkerchief or apron that had touched his person (Acts xix. 12). The word the Master would speak would be enough; the result he willed would assuredly follow. "Do not come hither where my servant is, but only *speak here* where thou art." The centurion had a just notion of Christ's power. And our Lord greatly commended him, whereas Martha, who said, "I know whatsoever thou shalt ask of God he will *give it* thee" (John xi. 22) was reproved as having spoken amiss; and Christ thus teaches that he is the Source of blessings, which he could not be unless he were God (compare Bishop Wordsworth, in part quoting from St. Chrysostom).

Ver. 8.—**For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.** What the soldier really thought of Jesus is evident when we read *between the lines* of this saying of his: "If I, who am under many a superior—the chiliarch of my thousand, the tribunes of my legion, my emperor who commands at Rome—yet receive a ready and willing obedience from my soldiers, and have but to say to one, 'Go,' and he goeth, to another, 'Come,' and he cometh; how much more thou, who hast no one above thee, no superior, when *thou* commandest disease, one of thy ministers, will it not at once obey?" The same thought was in Archdeacon Farrar's mind when he wrote how the centurion inferred that Jesus, who had the power of healing at a distance, had at his command thousands of the "heavenly army" (ch. ii. 13; Matt. xxvi. 53), who would

> "At his bidding speed
> "And post o'er land and ocean without rest."
> (Milton.)

Ver. 9.—**When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him.** Augustine strikingly comments here on the expression ἐθαύμασε, he marvelled: "Who had inspired that faith but he who now admires it?" In marvelling at it he intimated that we ought to admire. He admires for our good, that we may imitate the centurion's faith; such movements in Christ are not signs of perturbation of mind, but are exemplary and hortatory *to us* (St. Augustine, quoted by Bishop Wordsworth, on Matt. viii. 10). **I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.** St. Augustine remarks here that "the Lord had found in the oleaster what he had not found in the olive."

Ver. 10.—**Returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.** Farrar suggests "convalescent" as a more accurate rendering than "whole." The Greek equivalent is one of the medical words we find in this Gospel of St. Luke. The words, "that had been sick," do not occur in the other authorities. They are omitted in the Revised Version.

Vers. 11—17.—*The Master raises from the dead the only son of the widow of Nain.*

Ver. 11.—**And it came to pass the day after.** The Greek expression here, in the majority of the more ancient authorities, is vague as a note of time. The Revised Version renders it "soon afterwards." The incident that follows the raising from the dead of the widow's son is only mentioned by St. Luke. It is generally assumed that our Lord only raised three persons from the dead—this young man of Nain, the little daughter of Jairus the ruler, and Lazarus of Bethany. But such an assumption is purely arbitrary. We have before called attention to the vast number of miracles worked by Jesus during the two years and a half of the public ministry not reported by the evangelists at all, or only glanced at in passing. There were, most probably, among these unreported miracles several instances of men, women, and children raised from the dead. St. Augustine, in one of his sermons (xcviii.), specially calls attention to this in his words, "of the numerous persons raised to life by Christ, three only are mentioned as specimens in the Gospels." Each evangelist specially chooses one of the various examples, no doubt known to him—that peculiar instance or instances best suited to the especial teaching of his Gospel. St. John alone recounts the raising of Lazarus. St. Luke is the solitary reporter of the miracle performed on the dead son of the widow of Nain. We may reasonably infer, says Dean Plumptre, that this miracle, from its circumstances, had specially fixed itself in the memories of the "devout women" of ch. viii. 1, and that it was from them that St. Luke obtained his accurate and detailed knowledge of this, as well as of many other of the incidents which he alone relates in his Gospel. **He went into a city called Nain.** From the Hebrew נעים, *naim fair*, probably so called from its striking situation on a steep hill. It is on the slope of Little Hermon, near Endor, some twenty or more miles from Capernaum. The name *Nein* is still given to a small poor village on the same site. It is approached by a narrow, steep ascent, and on either side of the road are sepulchral caves. It was in one of these

that the dead man was about to have been laid when the Master met the little mourning procession winding down the steep road as he and his crowd of followers were toiling up the ascent nearing the gate of the city.

Ver. 13.—**And when the Lord saw her.** It is rare in the Gospels to find the expression, "the Lord," used by itself, "Jesus" being the usual term. It agrees with the unanimous tradition in the Church respecting the authorship of this Gospel—neither Luke nor Paul had been with Jesus. These had always looked on Jesus, thought of him, as *the Lord* risen from the dead, enthroned in heaven. At the period when St. Luke wrote, not earlier than A.D. 60, this title had probably become the usual term by which the Redeemer was known among his own. **He had compassion on her.** In this instance, as in so many others, our Lord's miracles were worked, not from a distinct purpose to offer credentials of his mission, but proceeded rather from his intense compassion with and his Divine pity for human sufferings.

Ver. 14.—**And he came and touched the bier.** The young man was about to be buried in the Jewish manner, which differed from the Egyptian custom. The corpse was not laid in a coffin or mummy-case, but simply on an open bier, on which the dead lay wrapped in folds of linen; so Lazarus was buried at Bethany, and our Lord in his rock-tomb in Joseph of Arimathæa's garden. A napkin, or sudarium, was lightly laid over the face. It was pollution for the living to touch the bier on which a corpse was lying. The bearers, in their amazement that one so generally respected and admired as was Jesus, the Teacher of Nazareth, at this period of his career, should commit so strange an act, would naturally at once stand still to see what next would happen. **Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.** The Lord of life performed his miracle over death in a very different fashion to those great ones who, in some respects, had anticipated or followed him in these strange deeds of wonder. Before they recalled the dead to life, Elijah mourned long over the son of the widow of Sarepta, Elisha repeatedly stretched himself as he agonized in prayer upon the lifeless corpse of the Shunammite boy, Peter prayed very earnestly over the body of Dorcas at Lydda. The Master, with one solitary word, brings the spirit from its mysterious habitation back to its old earthly tenement—"*Kûm!*" "Arise!" St. Augustine has a beautiful comment on the three miracles of raising the dead related in the Gospels. He has been saying that all our Lord's works of mercy to the body have a spiritual reference to the soul; he then proceeds to consider them "as illustrations of Christ's Divine power and love in raising the *soul*, dead in trespasses and sins, from every kind of spiritual death, whether the soul be dead, but not yet carried out, like the daughter of Jairus; or dead and carried out, but not buried, like the widow's son; or dead, carried, and buried, like Lazarus. He who raised himself from the dead can raise all from the death of sin. Therefore let no one despair" (St. Augustine, 'Sermon' xcviii., quoted by Bishop Wordsworth). Godet has a curious and interesting note on what he calls a difficulty peculiar to the miracle, owing to the absence of all moral receptivity in the subject of it. "Lazarus was a believer. In the case of the daughter of Jairus, the faith of the parents to a certain extent supplied the place of her personal faith. But here there is nothing of the kind. The only receptive element that can be imagined is the ardent desire of life with which this young man, the only son of a widowed mother, had doubtless yielded his last breath; and this indeed is sufficient, for it follows from this that Jesus did not dispose of him arbitrarily."

Ver. 16.—**And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.** With the exception of two or three like the centurion, whose sick servant was healed, this was the general conception which the people had of Jesus—a fear is mentioned in this place—the natural result of the marvellous works, especially those worked in the case of the already dead, but nothing more. The sublime humility of the great Wonder-worker failed to persuade the bulk of men and women with whom he came in contact. They could not look on this quiet Rabbi-Physician, who gently put all state and pomp and glory aside, as the Divine Messiah; but that in Jesus Israel possessed a great Prophet the people were persuaded—they recognized that at last, after four long centuries of absence, God again had visited his people. There had arisen in the coasts of Israel no prophet of the Highest since the far-back days of Malachi, some four hundred years before the days of the Lord and his forerunner John.

Vers. 18—35.—*John the Baptist sends messengers to ask a question of Jesus. The reply of the Master.*

Ver. 18.—**And the disciples of John showed him of all these things.** St. Luke, unlike St. Matthew, in the corresponding passage in his Gospel, does not specially mention that John was in prison; he evidently took it for granted that this would be known to his readers from the account of the Baptist's arrest and imprisonment by

Herod Antipas given in ch. iii. 19, 20. In the course of John's imprisonment, it is probable that very many of his disciples became hearers of Jesus. During the early period, at all events, of the Baptist's captivity it is clear that his friends and disciples had free access to his prison. There is no doubt but that, in reply to the anxious inquiries of John, his disciples told him of all the miracles they had witnessed, and the words they had heard, especially, no doubt, recounting to him much of the sermon on the mount which Jesus had lately delivered as the exposition of his doctrine. We can well imagine these faithful but impatient disciples, after detailing these marvels which they had seen, and the strange new words of winning power which they had heard, saying to *their* imprisoned master, "We have seen and heard these wondrous things, but the great Teacher gets no further; we hear nothing of the standard of King Messiah being raised, nothing of the high hope of the people being encouraged; he seems to pay no attention to the imperious rule of the foreigner, or the degrading tyranny of men like Antipas, the Herod who has wrongfully shut *you* up. He rather withdraws himself, and when the people, fired by his winning words and mighty acts, begin to grow enthusiastic, then this strange Man hides himself away. Can he be Messiah, as you once said?"

Ver. 19.—**And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?** What, now, was in John the Baptist's mind, when from his prison he sent his disciples to ask Jesus this anxious question? Disappointed in the career of Jesus, possibly himself partly forgotten, accustomed to the wild freedom of a desert-life, suffering from the hopeless imprisonment,—had his faith begun to waver? or was the question put with a view of reassuring his own disciples, with the intention of giving these faithful followers of his an opportunity of convincing themselves of the power and real glory of Jesus? In other words, was it for *his own* sake or for *his disciples' sakes* that he sent to ask the question? Generally speaking, the second of these two conclusions—that which ascribed the question to a desire on the part of John to help his disciples (which we will call B)—was adopted by the expositors of the early Church. A good example of this school of interpretation is the following quotation from St. Jerome: "John does not put this question from ignorance, for he himself had proclaimed Christ to be 'the Lamb of God.' But as our Lord asked concerning the body of Lazarus, 'Where have ye laid him?' (John xi. 34), in order that they who answered the question might, by their own answer, be led to faith, so John, now about to be slain by Herod, sends his disciples to Jesus, in order that, by this occasion, they who were jealous of the fame of Jesus (ch. ix. 14; John iii. 26) might see his mighty works and believe in him, and that, while their master asked the question by them, they might hear the truth for themselves" (St. Jerome, quoted by Wordsworth). To the same effect wrote SS. Ambrose, Hilary, Chrysostom, Theophylact. Among the Reformers, Calvin, Beza, and Melancthon contended for this opinion respecting the Baptist's message to Christ, and in our days Stier and Bishop Wordsworth. On the other hand, Tertullian among the Fathers, and nearly all the modern expositors, believe that the question of John was prompted by his own wavering faith—a faltering no doubt shared in by his own disciples. This conclusion (which we will term A) is adopted, with slightly varying modifications, by Meyer, Ewald, Neander, Godet, Plumptre, Farrar, and Morrison. This way—(A) generally adopted by the modern school of expositors—of understanding the Baptist's question to Jesus, is evidently the conclusion which would suggest itself to all minds who went to the story without any preconceived desire to purge the character of a great saint from what they imagine to be a blot; and we shall presently see that our Lord, in his answer to the question, where a rebuke is exquisitely veiled in a beatitude, evidently understood the forerunner's question in this sense. It is thus ever the practice of Holy Scripture; while it tenderly and lovingly handles the characters of its heroes, it never flinches from the truth. We see God's noblest saints, such as Moses and Elijah (John's own prototype) in the Old Testament, Peter and Paul in the New Testament, depicted in this book of truth with all their faults; nothing is hid. Only *one* flawless character appears in its storied pages—it is only the Master of Peter and Paul who never turns aside from the path of right.

Ver. 21.—**And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.** "He knew as God what John's design was in sending to him, and he put it into his heart to send at that very time when he himself was working many miracles which were the true answer to the question" (Cyril, quoted by Wordsworth).

Ver. 22.—**Tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised.** These miracles

which the messengers witnessed that day, striking though they were, were no novel ones in the work of our Lord. They were, too, precisely similar to those which had already been reported to him in his prison (ver. 18). But Jesus, pointing to these signs, bade the friends of the Baptist return and tell *their* master what they had seen in *these* words. The great Messianic prophet, whose writings were so well known to John, had said that Messiah's advent would be heralded by these very acts. John would in a moment catch the meaning of the reply. The passages in question are Isa. xxix. 18 and xxxv. 4, 6. Wordsworth, on these works wrought by the great Physician, very beautifully writes, "One of the most consolatory reflections produced by these mighty and merciful works of Christ on earth is the assurance they give that at the great day of resurrection he will remove all infirmities and blemishes from the bodies of his servants, and clothe them in immortal health, beauty, and glory, so as to be like his own glorious body, once marred on the cross, but raised by himself from the dead, and now reigning for ever in glory" (Bishop Wordsworth). **To the poor the gospel is preached.** John would be able to draw his inference, too, from this feature in Jesus' work. His messengers would have heard the Teacher's words, and would have marked from what class especially his hearers were drawn. It was a new experience in the world's story, this tender care for the poor. No heathen teacher of Rome or Athens, of Alexandria or the far East, had ever cared to make this vast class of unprofitable hearers the objects of their teaching. The rabbis of Israel cared nothing for them. In the Talmud we often find them spoken of with contempt. But John knew that this speaking to and consorting with the poor would be one of the marked characteristics of Messiah when he came.

Ver. 23.—**And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.** Our Lord here shows that he understood that this question came from the Baptist himself. Dean Plumptre calls attention to the tender way in which our Lord dealt with the impatience which John's question implied. "A warning was needed, but it was given in the form of a beatitude, which it was still open to him to claim and make his own. Not to find a stumbling-block in the manner in which Christ had actually come, there was this condition of entering fully into the blessedness of his kingdom."

Ver. 24.—**And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John.** When the messengers of John were departed the Lord, fearful lest the people who had been standing by and listening to the question which the Baptist had put, and his answer, should entertain any disparaging thought of a great and sorely tried saint of God, spoke the following noble testimony concerning that true, faithful witness. It has been termed the funeral oration of John; for not long after it had been spoken he was put to death by Herod Antipas. **What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?** The imagery was taken from the scenery in the midst of which John the Baptist had principally exercised his ministry—the reedy banks of Jordan. It was surely to see an everyday sight—a weak vacillating man blown to and fro with every wind. John, though his faith failed him for a moment perhaps, was no wavering reed.

Ver. 25.—**But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.** Was it, again, to see one of earth's so-called great ones—a favourite of the reigning monarch, a courtier of the magnificent Herod? John was no court favourite, no powerful or princely noble. Dean Plumptre thinks that here a reference is made to the fact that, in the early days of Herod the Great, a section of the scribes had attached themselves to his policy and party, and in doing so had laid aside the sombre raiment of their order, and had appeared in the gorgeous raiment worn by Herod's other courtiers. "We may trace," adds the dean, "with very little hesitation, a vindictive retaliation for these very words in the 'gorgeous robe' with which Herod arrayed him in mockery, when the tetrarch and Christ stood for one brief hour face to face with each other" (ch. xxiii. 4).

Ver. 26.—**But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.** The great Teacher proceeds in his discourse. From the scene and the surroundings—the reeds of the banks of Jordan—he went on to speak of the great Jordan preacher, so unlike, in spite of this one weak wavering hour, the reeds in the midst of which he preached. Jesus thus painted the grave, austere man, first in his stern enmity to the seductive magnificence of a court-life, then in his severe austerity as regards himself. Who, then, was he—this preacher to whom the people had resorted in such crowds to see and hear? Was he a prophet? was he one more of those men who in past ages had been the salt which preserved Israel from decay? Yes; that is what he was, that true great one—a prophet in the

deepest, truest sense of the word. Ah! higher still, went on the Teacher, John was much more than a prophet. What then? and the by-standers marvelled; what *more* could he be? Was he, peradventure, the Messiah?

Ver. 27.—**This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.** He quietly answers the question surging up in the listeners' hearts. No; not Messiah, but his forerunner. Centuries ago the mission of this John was foretold, and exactly described by one of the well-known and honoured prophet line. They who were listening, many of them, knew the words well, as the Teacher quoted from the great Malachi. The old ring of the famous prediction was unchanged; perhaps few of the by-standers noticed the slight alteration which was made by Jesus as he quoted. But in after-days the deep significance of the seemingly trifling change, we may well imagine, was the subject of many a deep solemn hour of meditation among the twelve and the early leaders of the faith. The words in Mal. iii. 1 stand thus: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before *me*." Our Lord so changes the text that, instead of "before me," it reads with this slight difference, "Behold, I send *my* messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." The *Lord* who speaks by the prophets in Malachi announces *himself* as the coming angel of the covenant: "*my* messenger shall prepare the way before *me*;" but *this*, the Lord who is come as the Son of man, may not as yet openly declare; it is enough that by the thrice-repeated σοῦ ("*thy* face," "thy way," "before thee"), he signifies that he is marked out and referred to by the Father. See how, without directly uttering it, he nevertheless announces his ἐγω εἰμι ("I am he") in his sublime humility (so Stier, 'Words of the Lord Jesus'). Godet presents the same thought from another point of view: "In the prophet's eyes he who was sending, and he before whom the way was to be prepared, were one and the same Person, Jehovah. Hence the 'before me' of Malachi. But for Jesus, who is speaking of himself, and never confounds himself with the Father, a distinction became necessary. It is not Jehovah speaking of himself, but Jehovah speaking to Jesus; hence the form 'before thee.'"

Ver. 28.—**For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.** These striking words close the Master's splendid testimony to the great pioneer. The usual explanation adopted by most if not all modern theologians of the last clause of the verse is, that, great as John was, yet he that is least among Christians who have been *born of God* and have accepted as an article of their faith the crucifixion and ascension of the Son of God, is greater than that great prophet; or, in other words, the humblest child of the new kingdom is superior to the greatest prophet of the old. But many of the wisest and best of the Fathers of the Church—amongst others Chrysostom, Augustine, Hilary, and Theophylact—find grave difficulty in accepting this too sweeping and facile explanation of a hard saying. They suggest what seems to the writer of this Exposition a more reverential meaning to the Lord's words here. By "the least" we prefer, then, with Chrysostom and other ancient Fathers, to understand *Jesus himself*. The literal meaning of the Greek μικρότερος is "the lesser," not "least" (in the Revised Version, in the text we find "he that is but little," but in the margin "lesser"). By "lesser" or "little" Chrysostom supposes that the Saviour refers to himself as *less than John in age and according to the opinions of many*. "Thus, then, among the sons of men no prophet greater than John the Baptist has arisen; yet there is one among you lesser in age and perhaps in public estimation,—in the kingdom of God, though, greater than he." Wordsworth strengthens the above interpretation by his comment on the words, "among those that are born of women." "No one among those born of human parents had appeared greater than this John the Baptist; but do not suppose that he is greater than I. I am not γεννητὸς γυναικῶν, but Θεοῦ, and though after him in the gospel because he is my precursor, yet I am greater than he." This great expositor, while on the whole preferring the usual interpretation, yet considers that the explanation which refers "he that is least" to Christ, is not lightly to be set aside. If this interpretation be adopted, the usual punctuation of the passage must be slightly altered thus: "He that is lesser, in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Ver. 29.—**And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God.** This is not, as many expositors have assumed, a statement of St. Luke's own as to the effect of John's preaching on varied classes of his hearers, but the words are still the words of Jesus; it is a continuation of his eulogy of the Baptist. He says here that the people, "the folk," listened gladly to him; they were persuaded in great numbers of the necessity of a changed life, and were in consequence baptized by him. The meaning of the term, "justified God," is that

these, the common folk, by their actions and ready acceptance of the great reformer-preacher, thus publicly declared that they acknowledged the wisdom and goodness of God in this his work through the Baptist; *but*, as is stated in the next verse—

Ver. 30.—**But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.** The ruling classes and the highly cultured in Israel, turned a deaf ear to the fervent preaching of the gospel; as a class, they came not to his baptism. The result of the refusal of these powerful and learned men to hear the reformer's voice was that John's mission failed to bring about a national reformation. *Rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.* The English Version here is not happy, and might lead to a false conception of the words of the original. The Greek would be better and more accurately rendered, "rejected for themselves the counsel of God."

Ver. 31.—**And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?** The Master evidently paused a moment here. He sought for some homely, popular simile which would drive home to the listeners' hearts his sad and solemn judgment of the conduct of the ruling Jews of this time. The generation he was then addressing had been singularly blessed with two great Divine messages—the one delivered by that eminent servant of God, John, about whom he had been speaking in such glowing, earnest terms; the other message was his own. He chose for his purpose one of those everyday scenes from the people's life, a scene which they had witnessed often, and in which, no doubt, in past days many of the by-standers themselves had taken a part—one of those child-games which the little ones in his day were wont to play in the summer evenings, and in which, likely enough, *he* in his boyish years had often shared in, as he played in the little market-place of Nazareth. He likened the wayward men of that generation to a group of children of the people in some open space of the city, now *playing at rejoicings*, such as take place at wedding festivities, now *at wailings*, which in Eastern countries accompany funerals; that is to say, the little group would divide itself into two companies, and one would say to the other, "Come, now we will play at a wedding; here are the pipers and the singers, do you come and dance and make merry;" but the others would not. Then the little company of would-be merry-makers would beat their breasts and cry with pretended sorrow; but the others still declined to join in the game of mourning—would not play "at a funeral," just as they refused to join in the game of "rejoicing at a wedding." To such a band of imperious little ones, who were angry if the others did not at once comply with their demands, Jesus compared the wayward and evil generation in which he and John lived. Had they not found bitter fault with John because he had declined to have anything to do with their wicked self-indulgent feasting and luxury? How often had Pharisee and scribe railed with bitter railings against Jesus because he would have nothing to do with their false and hypocritical fastings, with their pretended shrinking from what they deemed unclean and unworthy of them! Dr. Morrison puts it rightly, and forcibly: "They were dissatisfied with John, and would have nothing to do with him. 'If we are to have reformers, commend us to such as come near us, and visit our houses, and sit at our tables, and are sociable like ourselves.' They pretended, on the other hand, to scorn Jesus, who, while making so lofty a profession, yet went about eating and drinking in people's houses, and even in the homes of publicans and sinners. 'He should have gone into the desert and lived an abstemious life. . . . Commend us to ascetic men for our reformers.'" The line of interpretation which seems to us simpler and fitted to the framework of the little parable is in the main thus adopted by Meyer, Dr. W. Bleek, Bishop Wordsworth, and Dean Plumptre. "You men of this generation," writes Bishop Wordsworth, "are like a troop of wayward children, who go on with their own game, at one time gay, at another grave, and give heed to no one else, and expect that every one should conform to them. You were angry with John because he would not dance to your piping, and with me because I will not weep to your dirge; John censured your licentiousness, I rebuke your hypocrisy; you vilify both, and reject the good counsel of God, who has devised a variety of means for your salvation."

Ver. 33.—**For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine.** Referring to his austere life spent in the desert, apart from the ordinary joys and pleasures of men, not even sharing in what are usually termed the necessities of life. He was, in addition, a perpetual Nazarite, and as such no wine or fermented drink ever passed his lips. **And ye say, He hath a devil.** Another way for expressing their conviction that the great desert-preacher was insane, and assigning a demoniacal possession as the cause of madness. Not very long after this incident the curtain of death fell on the *earthly* scene of John's life. "We fools accounted his life madness, and

his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" (Wisd. v. 4, 5). We may be quite sure that "in the fiery furnace God walked with his servant, so that his spirit was not harmed, and having thus annealed his nature to the utmost that this earth can do, he took him hastily away and placed him among the glorified in heaven" (Irving, quoted by Farrar).

Ver. 34.—**The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a glutonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!** The reproach belonged to the general way of our Lord's way of living, consorting as he did with men and women in the common everyday life of man, sharing in their joys as in their sorrows, in their festivity as in their mourning. But the words specially refer to his taking part in such scenes as the feast in the house of Matthew the publican.

Ver. 35.—**But wisdom is justified of all her children.** One of those bright, wise sayings of the Son of man which belong not to the society of Capernaum and Jerusalem, but which are the heritage of all ages. The words find their fulfilment in all those holy and humble men of heart—rich as well as poor—who rejoice in goodness and purity, in self-denying love and bright faith, whether it be preached or advocated by a Fénélon or a Wesley.

Vers. 36—50.—*The nameless woman who was a sinner, and Simon the Pharisee.* As regards the incident about to be told, some commentators have believed that the anointing was identical with that related by St. John as having taken place at Bethany very shortly before the Crucifixion. Without detailing the several points of difference in the two recitals, it will be sufficient surely to call attention to the character of the Bethany family, Lazarus and his sisters, the intimate friends of Jesus, to show how monstrous it would be to attempt to connect the poor soul who followed the Master to Simon's house with the sweet Mary of Bethany. A widely spread and, in the Western Church, a very generally received tradition identifies this woman with Mary of Magdala—the Mary Magdalene mentioned in ch. ix. 2, and again after the Crucifixion, in company with the band of holy women (ch. xxiv. 10). Out of Mary Magdalene, we learn, had been cast seven devils. This, however, gives us no clue to identify the two; rather the contrary. It is scarcely likely that the apparently well-known courtesan of the touching story was a demoniac.

The earliest writers say nothing respecting the identity of the two. Gregory the Great, however, stamped the theory with his direct assertion, and that the Western Church generally accepted the identification of the two is clear from the selection of this narrative of St. Luke as the portion of Scripture appointed for the Gospel for the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (this was one of the feasts omitted by the English Reformers from the calendar of the Prayer-book of 1552).

It is impossible to decide the question positively. One modern commentator of distinction quaintly pleads for Gregory the Great's rather arbitrary theory, by suggesting that there is no sufficient reason to disturb the ancient Christian belief which has been consecrated in so many glorious works of art; but, in spite of this, the opinion which considers "the woman which was a sinner" the same person as "the Magdalene," is really based on little else than on a mediæval tradition.

St. Luke alone relates this touching story. We can conceive the joy of Paul when this "memory of the Master" came across him. It so admirably illustrates what this great teacher felt was his Master's mind on the all-important subject—*the freeness and universality of salvation.*

It seems likely enough that Dean Plumptre's interesting conjecture respecting this scene in the Pharisee Simon's house is correct. "Occurring, as the narrative does, in St. Luke only, it is probable enough that the 'woman which was a sinner' became known to the company of devout women named in the following chapter (viii. 1—3), and that the evangelist derived his knowledge of the fact from them. His reticence—probably their reticence—as to the name was, under the circumstances, at once natural and considerate." No special note of time or of the locality is appended. If this *sinner* was one and the same with the *Magdalene*, then the city implied is certainly Magdala, the modern mud village of *El-Mejdel*, but at that time a populous wealthy town on the Lake of Galilee. If, as we believe, the two were not identical, the city is most

probably Capernaum, the usual residence of our Lord.

Ver. 36.—**And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house.** Up to this period the relations between our Lord and the dominant parties in the capital had not reached a state of positive hostility. The Pharisees, as the chief among these parties in the state, had taken the initiative, and were sharply watching One whose influence among the people they more than suspected was hostile to them. But they had not as yet declared him a public enemy and blasphemer. This wealthy Pharisee, Simon, was evidently, like others of his sect at this time, wavering in his estimate of Jesus. On the one hand, he was naturally influenced by the hostile views entertained at head-quarters concerning the Galilæan Teacher; on the other, personal intercourse with the Master, the acts he had witnessed, and the words he had heard, disposed him to a reverential admiration. Simon evidently (ver. 39) had not made up his mind whether or not Jesus was a Prophet. His soul, too—this we gather from ver. 42—had received some great spiritual good from his intercourse with the Master. But though he invited him to be a guest at his house, and evidently loved him (ver. 47) a little, still he received his Divine Guest with but a chilling and coldly courteous reception. Not unlikely Simon the Pharisee knew he was watched that day, and that among his guests were men who would report every action of his on that occasion to the leaders of his party in Jerusalem. His cold courtesy, almost lack of courtesy, towards the Master was thus probably the result of his fear of man and of man's judgment. **And sat down to meat;** literally, *reclined*. The Jews at that time followed in their repasts the Greek (or Roman) custom of reclining on couches; the guest lay with his elbows on the table, and his feet, unsandalled, stretched out on the couch.

Ver. 37.—**And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house.** The text in the older authorities is more forcible: "a woman which was a sinner in that city." Her miserable way of life would thus be well known to Simon and other of the guests. This sad detail would serve to bring out the contrast in more vivid colours. In these Oriental feasts the houses were often left open, and uninvited strangers frequently passed in through the open court-yard into the guest-chamber, and looked on. *She* had heard Jesus already, perhaps often, and had drunk in his pleading words, begging sinners to turn and to come to him for peace. Perhaps what had decided her to take this step of boldly seeking out the Master were words apparently spoken about this time (in St. Matthew's Gospel they follow directly after the discourse respecting the Baptist just related), "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," etc. (Matt. xi. 28—30). It was a bold step for one like her to press uninvited, in broad daylight, into the house of a rigid purist like Simon; but the knowledge that Jesus (though personally, as she *thought*, she was unknown to him) was there, gave her courage; she felt no one would dare to thrust her out of the presence of the strange loving Master, who so earnestly had bidden the sin-weary come to him, and he would give them rest! **Brought an alabaster box of ointment.** Pliny mentions alabaster as the best material for pots or vessels intended for these precious ointments. It was softer than marble, and easily scooped into pots or bottles. These costly unguents and cosmetics were much used by the wealthy Roman ladies. The precious ointment poured over the Redeemer's feet had probably been originally procured for a very different purpose. The word μύρον, translated "ointment," was used for any kind of sweet-smelling vegetable essence, especially that of the myrtle.

Ver. 38.—**And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.** It had been, no doubt, with her a settled purpose for days, this presenting herself to the pitiful Master. She had been one of his listeners, without doubt, for some time previously, and that morning probably she made up her mind to approach him. He was a great public Teacher, and his movements would be well known in the city. She heard he was to be present at a feast in the house of the rich Pharisee Simon. It would be easier, she thought, to get close to him there than in the crowd in the market-place or in the synagogue; so taking with her a flask of perfumed ointment, she passed into the courtyard with others, and so made her way unnoticed into the guest-chamber. As she stood behind him, and the sweet words of forgiveness and reconciliation, the pleading invitation to all heavy-laden, sin-burdened ones to come to him for peace, which she in the past days had listened to so eagerly, came into her mind, unbidden tears rose into her eyes and fell on the Master's feet as he lay on his couch; and, after the manner of slaves with their masters, she wiped the tear-wet feet with her long hair, which she evidently loosed for this loving purpose, and then quietly poured the

fragrant ointment on the feet where her tears had fallen. It was the perfume of the ointment which called the host's attention to this scene of sorrow and heartfelt penitence.

Ver. 39.—**Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This Man, if he were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him.** It is clear that it was no mere curiosity which prompted his asking the Master to be his Guest. Respect and love for the Galilæan Teacher alternated with dread of what the Pharisee order to which he belonged would think of his conduct. As we have said, he compromised the matter with his heart, by inviting Jesus publicly, but then only receiving him with the coldest formality. He seems half-glad of this incident, for it seemed in some measure to excuse his haughty unfriendly reception of One from whom he had undoubtedly received rich spiritual benefit, as we shall see further on. "Hardly a *great* Prophet, then, after all, else he would have known all about her." This was what at once occurred to Simon. **For she is a sinner.** Yes, in Simon's mind, and in the world's estimation, but before the throne of God she was differently viewed. She had heard the Master's loving call to repentance, and a new life and a change had taken place in her whole being since she had listened to his voice.

Ver. 40.—**And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.** How accurately did the Master read Simon's heart. *Not* a real Prophet because he was in ignorance of the character and life of the woman whom he suffered without rebuke to pour the fragrant ointment over him! We almost *see* the half-sad smile flickering on the Teacher's lips as he turned and spoke to his host. Such a parable-story as Jesus was about to give utterance to was no uncommon form of teaching on such an occasion when a well-known Rabbi like Jesus was Guest at a festal gathering.

Vers. 41, 42.—**There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.** The illustration was from the everyday life of the people. This lending and borrowing was ever a prominent feature in the common life of the Jews. Pointed warnings against greed and covetousness, and the habit of usury, and the love of perpetual trafficking, we find in all the Old Testament books, notably in Deuteronomy, and then centuries later in the Proverbs, besides repeated instances in the prophetic writings and historical books. The character of the Jews in this respect has never changed from the days of their nomad life—from the times of their slavery under the Pharaohs to our own day. In this particular instance the two debtors were of the common folk, the sums in question being comparatively small; but in both cases the debtors could never hope to pay their creditors. They were alike hopelessly insolvent, both helplessly bankrupt. The larger sum, considering the relative value of money, has been computed only to have represented about £50 of our currency. And the two received from their creditor a free, generous acquittance of the debt which would have hopelessly ruined them. In the mind of Jesus the larger debt pictured the terrible catalogue of sins which the penitent woman acknowledged she had committed; the smaller, the few transgressions which even the Pharisee confessed to having been guilty of. They were both sinners before God, both equally insolvent in his eyes; whether the debt was much or little was to the almighty Creditor a matter of comparative indifference—he frankly forgave them both (better, "freely," the Greek word *ἐχαρίσατο* signifies "forgave of his generous bounty"). The Revisers simply translate "he forgave," but something more is needed to reproduce the beautiful word in the original. "Frankly," in the sense of "freely," is used by Shakespeare—

> "I do beseech your grace . . .
> . . . now to forgive me frankly."
> ('Henry VIII.,' act ii. sc. 1.)

Ver. 43.—**Thou hast rightly judged.** "Come, now, I will show thee what I meant by my little story, in thine answer. Thou hast judged thyself. *Thou* art the man with the little debt of sin, as thou thinkest, and the little love given in return for the cancelled debt; for see how *thou* hast treated me thy Guest, and how *she* has made up for thy lack of friendship and courtesy." The following contrasts are adduced by the Master: "Thou didst not provide me with that which is so usual to offer guests—I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet" (in those hot dusty countries, after walking, water to wash the feet was scarcely a luxury, it was rather a necessity); "in thy house the only water which has touched my feet was the warm rain of this sad woman's tears."

Ver. 45.—**Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.** "Thou gavest me no kiss of respect on entering, to which as a Rabbi I was surely entitled; she hath repeatedly kissed my feet."

Ver. 46.—**My head with oil thou didst not**

anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. "It never entered thy thoughts to pay me the homage—and yet I had helped thee, too, a little—of pouring oil on my head" (this was by no means an unusual mark of respect in the case of an honoured guest; to one who, under the burning sun of Palestine, had walked, perhaps, some distance, this pouring oil over the head was a great comfort and refreshment); "but *she* hath anointed, not my head, she shrank, poor soul! from doing this; but my feet. And, too, it was no common oil which she used, but precious, fragrant ointment. A cold, loveless welcome, indeed, my Pharisee friend, was thine! Thou thinkest it honour enough the mere admitting the carpenter's Son to thy table: no need of these special tokens of friendship for thy Guest—the water for the feet, the kiss for the face, the oil for the head. It were a pity, surely, for the great world at Jerusalem to look on thee as the friend of the Nazareth Teacher, as on the one Pharisee who loved to honour the Galilæan Reformer."

Ver. 47.—**Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven.** Again, as in the synagogue, and no doubt on many other occasions, when these words were uttered, a thrill would run through the company present. Who was this, then, one would ask the other, who with this voice and mien dared to utter such things? Only *One* could forgive sins! Was, then, the Nazareth Rabbi, the great Physician, the Worker of awful miracles—was he the One whose Name was lost, but the echo of whose voice still lingered, they hoped, in that desecrated Holy Land? **For she loved much.** Are we, then, to understand by this that her love for Jesus was the cause of forgiveness? Many Roman and some Protestant expositors have believed this is the meaning of the Lord's words. But at once a contradiction is given to this interpretation by a reference to ver. 42, where, after the remission of the two debts—the great and the little—Jesus asks, "Which of these will love him most?" But had love been the cause of a forgiveness of either or both of the debts, the question should have run, "Which of the two loved him most?" not "will love him most." In addition to which the Master guards against any view of this kind being entertained, by his concluding words (ver. 50), "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The principle on which forgiveness was granted to the woman was *faith*, not *love*. Stier, in his comment here, writes that the expression of the Lord, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much," is an *argumentum, non a causâ, sed ab effectu;* in other words, "I say unto thee, Her *many* sins are forgiven, *and thou must infer from this* that she loved much, or, she loves much, for (that is, *because*) her sins are forgiven." Stier gives another example of the meaning of "for" (ὅτι) in this place: "The sun is risen [it must have risen], for it is day" (Stier, 'Words of the Lord Jesus:' Luke vii. 47). Some may ask—What great amount of sin is necessary in order to *loving much?* Godet well answers, "We need add nothing to what each of us already has, for the sum of the whole matter is—to the noblest and purest of us, what is wanting in order to love much is not *sin*, but the *knowledge of it*. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. This saying refers to Simon the Pharisee; the first saying (in the former part of the verse) which we have been considering refers to the woman. The same principle exactly is presented as in the first instance, and viewed from the other side—*the less forgiveness, the less love results.* Our Lord is very tender in all this to Simon and men like Simon. This Pharisee had evidently tried to live up to his light, though his life was disfigured with censoriousness, narrowness, harshness, and pride—the many faults of his class. He too had heard Jesus, and had been moved and struck by his words, and, after a fashion, loved him; only the world—*his world*—came between him and his love, so that it was only a poor, pale reflection of the real feeling after all. But our Lord gives him full credit for that little love. He even excuses its poverty by saying that he, Simon, had only received a little forgiveness, and therefore only a little love was the result. Though the Lord implies in his sad irony that the *little* forgiveness which he had received was Simon's own fault, for he did not think, in his self-righteousness, that he had any need to be forgiven. "O Pharisæe, parum diligis, quia parum tibi dimitti suspicaris; non quia parum dimittitur, sed quia parum putas quod dimittitur" (St. Augustine, 'Serm.' xcix.). Godet has a deep reflection on this state of Simon's. He asks, "May forgiveness be only partial? Then there would be men half-saved, half-lost. . . . The real forgiveness of the least sin certainly contains in germ a complete salvation, but only in germ. If faith is maintained and grows, this forgiveness will gradually extend to all the sins of a man's life, just as they will then become more thoroughly known and acknowledged. The first forgiveness is the pledge of all the rest. In the contrary case, the forgiveness already granted will be withdrawn, just as represented in the parable of the wicked debtor (Matt. xviii.); and the work of grace, instead of becoming complete, will prove abortive."

Ver. 48.—**And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.** Then, turning again to the woman, in her deep penitence, and at the same time in her deep joy—joy springing from her newly found peace—he formally renews to her the assurance of that pardon which she already was conscious of; but in renewing it the Lord mentioned no more "her many sins," as in the first place (ver. 47), but simply, "thy sins," thus reducing, as Stier remarks, at last both her and Simon to a common level.

Ver. 50.—**And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.** Then, with just one solemn word reminding the people assembled in that guest-chamber of faith, that firm trust in the goodness and mercy of God upon which her forgiveness rested, he dismissed the woman, rousing her at once from her dreamy ecstasy, sending her from his presence back again into the ordinary life of the busy world, but bearing along with her now his mighty priceless gift of a peace which passeth understanding.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The centurion.* He is a Roman, whose inclinations were naturally opposed to all that seemed Jewish. He is a heathen by birth, whose early education was wholly removed from the worship of the Father. He is a soldier with a charge in the garrison of Capernaum, tempted, therefore, to indulgence in a domineering spirit, and to the following of that voice which whispers, "Take thy fill ere death; indulge thee and rejoice." What is the portrait presented? A man deeply in earnest about religious things, seeking a fuller satisfaction for his need than heathenism can furnish; and on an occasion when human feelings are stirred, showing such kindliness, such gentleness, such deference along with his trust in Jesus, that, having regard to these qualities, the testimony is given, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Notice some of the features of this great faith.

I. ITS HUMILITY. He does not himself go to Jesus. He is only a Gentile. He will not so far presume as personally to make a request. He sends the elders of the Jews. Nay, further still, as the time of Jesus' approach draws near, another feeling arises. Is it not too great an honour that the Son of the Highest should come to his house? Other messengers are despatched, begging the Master not to trouble himself; it is too much to ask him to come under the roof of one who is not worthy to come to him. "Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." Great faith sees the greatness of its object. This heathen soldier has seen the hidden glory of Jesus. The disciples saw power; he saw, felt, holiness; and herein he is our teacher. On the very day of the preaching of the sermon, he is the illustration of its first Beatitude. What is the response of Christ? He entered under the roof of the Pharisee and sat at his table, but this to the Pharisee was condemnation. We do not know whether he entered the house of the centurion, but he came into his soul. As St. Augustine says, "In counting himself unworthy that Christ should enter into his door, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter into his heart." "To this man will I look . . . even to him that is humble and contrite in spirit."

II. ITS SIMPLICITY. "Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." Observe how far he is in advance of the faith even of those who knew Christ best. The sisters of Bethany, *e.g.*, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." His soldier experience and habits have come to his aid. Is not Christ the true King of Israel? Are not legions of angels at his bidding? Reasoning from himself, with soldiers under him, he argues—A sentence will suffice. The faith lies in his discernment of Jesus' real character, and his ready, implicit trust. Note two features in his word. *Law:* "I am under authority." *Will:* "I have under me soldiers, and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh." These features are transferred to the conception of Jesus. Grand for its simplicity is this inner apprehension of Jesus' Person. The value of faith is that it opens the mind to the Lord. It is a poor, empty hand, but it lays hold of the law and the will. It is the "Amen" in which the soul appropriates the health of God's countenance.

III. ITS INFLUENCE. See the directions along which it wrought. 1. *Zeal for the worship of God.* "He loveth our nation." This of itself is sufficiently strange. But "he hath built us a synagogue." There was a spiritual want in his neighbourhood. What excuses he might have offered! "Help these Jews? I don't belong to their

nation. I am here only for a time," etc. But he loved the God of the Jews; and the grace of God had educated the conviction that wherever the opportunity of usefulness opens there is the door of service. Faith is always evidenced by a similar zeal, by a desire to give as we have received, to witness for him to whom we owe ourselves. Andrew finds Simon. The woman of Samaria hastens to the city to preach Christ. The centurion builds the synagogue. "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart: I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." 2. *An affectionate interest in the slave.* "Dear to him." Cicero apologized in one of his noblest orations for being concerned about a slave. This soldier's heart is bound up in the menial who waits on him. May not this menial have been the instrument of the centurion's enlightenment? In the first Christian centuries the slaves were often thus blessed. If so, no wonder that he was grateful. Be this as it may, a true faith is a new bond of union with men. It gives a higher grace and character to every relation, because it invests the human life with a new sacredness, and reminds us of the equality of all in the love of God. In receiving God we receive one another. How does St. Paul write of the slave Onesimus? "A servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." The sketch in the gospel is interesting, as a picture of both the good master and the good servant. "Dear to him," remarks Bengel, pointing to ver. 8, "because of his obedience." The master's interests are the servant's care. And to the master the dependent is more than "a hand." A nobler tenderness elevates the connection, and secures a place in the sympathies of the heart. Is there no homily in this touch of sanctified nature for our time?

Vers. 11—16.—*The widow's son.* We are indebted to St. Luke for the touching incidents recorded in these verses. Observe—

I. THE SPRING OF THE ACTION. "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion." Some of Christ's most notable words and works were associated with, grew out of, circumstances which presented themselves in the course of his journeyings. There was no attempt at miracle. There was neither show nor effort. What was done was so spontaneous that it seemed as if he could not help doing it. Here a sad procession meets his eye. There are specialities in it which touch the fountains alike of Divine power and of brotherly sympathy. He is "moved with compassion." A beautiful phrase, which bids us not merely into but behind the humanity—into the light of such a sentence as "God so loved the world." What is redemption but the activity of Divine emotion? At Nain the compassion of Christ fulfilled itself by sparing an only son. The great love wherewith God has loved us has fulfilled itself by not sparing the only begotten Son. The compassion of Christ, as he approached the gate of the city, gave one son back to a mother. God's great love has, through the sacrifice of the cross, brought back many sons to the outstretched arms of a waiting Father. It is our faith in this infinite compassion that is the source of all our hopes for men. It cannot be a matter of indifference to the Father that one of even his little ones perish. There are problems, as bearing on this, which the facts we observe and some intimations of the meekest and lowliest himself suggest—problems so painful and awful that, in respect of them, we must hold our peace. But, against them, trust in a living God makes it almost a necessity to cling to this—that, in all possible states, God's compassion has a way towards the souls he has made. As regards this particular instance, the appeal to the compassion is threefold: a *mother* weeps behind the bier of an only son; a *widow* bewails the loss of her only comforter, the support and solace of her desolate heart; it is a son, a *young man*, with all the possibilities of use in this world cut off, who is being carried out. In response to this appeal, he is moved; and has he not, in thus yielding to a pure human impulse, left us an example? It is right to hold all impulses in obedience to reason. We must hold compassion with a firm rein; yet it is not to be restrained by irksome bit and bridle. The best teacher in all benevolences is the heart, like that of Jesus,

> "... at leisure from itself
> To soothe and sympathize."

II. THE MANNER OF THE ACTION. Interesting, with regard, first, to the event related.

Note: 1. The whisper straight from the heart of the God-Man to the heart of the sufferer: "Weep not!" 2. The touch of the open coffin, causing ceremonial defilement, but expressive of the attitude of him who is the "Resurrection and the Life:" "He came and touched the bier." 3. Then, as the pall-bearers stand still, the word with power: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" What a change is wrought in that moment, and by that word! "Death is swallowed up in victory." Suggestive and eloquent when accepted as a symbol of Saviour love and work. Behold in the action a *picture* and a *prophecy*. 1. Hearken to the voice of God, "Weep not!" "Cure sin," it has been said, "and you cure sorrow." He who was made sin for us, of whom the forerunner had testified, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" could alone effectually wipe away the tear. The comfort of others plays on the surface; his comfort reaches into the hidden place, the hidden cause of all trouble—it is the cure of sin. Are there now only faint echoes—echoes becoming fainter and fainter as the ages roll on—of the sentence uttered at Nain? Nay; this sentence, now that he has ascended and is the Prince and Saviour, giving repentance and forgiveness of sins, is fuller in its volume and mightier in its force. All that can give strength, that can inspire with hope, is confirmed and sealed for evermore. "Weep not!" O bruised, broken heart, there is in the "strong Son of God, immortal love," an oil of joy for all your mourning, a garment of praise for every spirit of heaviness. 2. But the dead is there, with Christ; and the word for the dead is, "Arise!" Let us not think only of the physical death. The spiritual and the physical are always associated in the thought of Christ; and the work at Nain is a symbol of both. As special Christ-words conjoin "Weep not!" and "Arise!" "He saith," writes St. Paul, quoting no particular saying of God, but the substance of all God's sayings, "awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"

III. A SPECIAL APPLICATION OF THE SCENE AND ACTION. "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" This is the key-note of sermons and addresses to young men. Brother, too often asleep to the higher meanings of thine own existence—asleep and unconscious of the presence of him who loves thee, self-indulgent, dead in the death of the self-seeking worldly mind, the Lord is touching thy bier; the Lord is calling, "Arise!" start from thy sad indifference. Give those who love thee the joy of the morning without clouds, the new, better life in God. Hear the voice of the Son of God, and thou too shalt live.

Vers. 18—35.—*The message of John Baptist, and the discourse occasioned by it.* Various answers, not now to be discussed, have been given to the question—Why did John send the two followers with the message recorded? The message does seem to imply that the confidence of the Baptist had become overcast by the sorrow of the passing hour. Would it have been strange if, hearing of Jesus in the flood-tide of popular enthusiasm, working and speaking in the power of the Lord, a moment's feeling of weariness stole over the ardent spirit? "He there, and I here, within the dismal walls of the prison! He, thinking of all else, and no thought apparently of me! He increasing more and more, like the sun advancing to the perfect day; I decreasing more and more, my sun setting in the thick darkness! Can it be all a reality? Has my witness been wholly true? What if—? what if—? Jesus of Nazareth, say, 'Art thou really he? Tell me, so soon to pass from this earthly scene, that I have followed no illusion—that verily there is none else to be looked for.'" Other thoughts may have filled the mind, other motives for the mission may have influenced; but it brings the passage very near to us when we trace in it the faltering of faith. For there are moments of faltering in the history of faith. The sky of our spiritual life is not always cloudless. All the while the soul may be thirsting for the living God, but it cannot see him; from within there come voices demanding, "Where is thy God?" If a tormenting scepticism visited the honest heart of John, we can understand it, and feel the more our kinship with him. The wonderful thing would have been if misgiving had never ruffled the face of his heart; if no such film had gathered over his eye as that signified in the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

I. THE QUESTION HAS NOT YET RUN ITS COURSE. It expresses the attitude of the piety of the people, in the roll of whose greatest stands the Baptist's name. It is

sad that so much of the culture of Israel has separated from Israel's hope, has declared its contentment with a mere barren pantheism; that so much of its piety is busied with the effort to explain away the obvious meaning of the old prophecies, or to deny their reference to the Anointed One. But the Jew still lives, and the land of the Jew still waits. Pray for the conversion and restoration of Israel, when the people that sit in darkness shall see the problem solved which has for so long been the stumbling-stone and rock of offence, "Jesus of Nazareth, art thou he who was promised to come, or must we continue to look for another?"

II. NOW, OBSERVE THE LORD'S ANSWER. It is: 1. *A word to John.* The reply to the inquiry is given "in that hour." The messengers are charged to return and tell (vers. 22, 23) what things they saw and heard. The works of Christ are the credentials of his mission, not because they are miraculous, but because they are the kind of works appropriate to the Sent of God. Recognizing the supernatural efficacy of Christ's kingdom, the witness for him is chiefly what he does, what Christianity effects wherever it is truly received. We see it breathing a new life, inspiring with a new hope, awaking new powers, putting to flight the armies of the aliens—a power of God to salvation. *E.g.* Lady Barker, in her charming letters from South Africa, says, "I feel it incumbent on me to bear testimony, not only in this instance and in this colony, to the enormous amount of real, tangible, common-sense good accomplished among the black races all over the world by Wesleyan, Methodist, and Baptist missionaries." So, universally, it is the kind of life which Christ's teaching produces; it is the wondrous changes in man himself, and therefore in man's world, which the spirit of his life accomplishes, which, to all earnest inquirers, settles the issue, "Art thou he that should come?" "Blessed"—with gentle authority the Master adds—"blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me." 2. *A word concerning John after the messengers have departed.* "A word," says Farrar, "of rhythmic and perfect loveliness" (vers. 24—28). Mark the conclusion, however—Greater prophet than he now immured in Herod's gloomy prison never was born of woman. Yet this must be added, he who is really within the kingdom, who has really received the kingdom in receiving Jesus as the King, however inferior to him in gifts and force, is a partaker of fuller blessing and privilege than he. "With all my imperfections," said Bunsen, on his dying bed, "I have ever striven after the best. But the best and noblest is to have known Jesus Christ." 3. *A word to the unsympathetic and opposing Pharisees and lawyers.* The people endorse the eulogy passed on John; but the Pharisees and lawyers frown. It is with reference to their unreasonable petulance that the sentences vers. 31—35 are spoken. What could satisfy such carpers? Verily, their successors are to be found in our day. The mind that is enmity against God will make faults, will twist any evidence, will imitate the children who will not be pleased, no matter what is done to evoke their response. Poor pedants! "they must stay in the dark until they are tired of it." Very different from such are the children of the true wisdom. They recognize and honour her under different types and forms. Wherever they see the prints of her shoes, there they love to put their feet also. "Wisdom is justified of all her children."

Vers. 36—50.—*The woman who was a sinner.* It is a truly lovely story which the evangelist tells—one of those passages in the life of Christ which we are never tired of reading, and as full of meaning as it is full of beauty. We may regard it from many points, and present its didactic force in many ways. Perhaps we shall best ensure the reception of its various lights by studying the portraiture of character which it gives.

I. THERE IS SIMON THE PHARISEE—Jesus' host on the afternoon of the day whose earlier part had been signalized by the mighty work at Nain. The notable thing about this Simon is that he meets our view as the type of that anonymous, yet most powerful, influence which we call society. He is one of the priests of that goddess which society, everywhere and in every time, worships—Respectability. A Pharisee! that is as it should be. The Herodians were a base, courtly party, fawning on the Herodian dynasty, and therefore outside religious society. The Sadducees were latitudinarians. Some of them were clever, and had much to do with the intellectual life of the nation; but, on the whole, they were a cold-blooded sect which could not command the vote of society. The correct course was to be the Pharisee. That secured the social

place, put one right with the Church and the world, for this life and the next. The odour of sanctity clung to the profession; it intimated a certain aristocratic position —a position among the elect of the heavenly kingdom. Simon the Pharisee is in society. And the desire that Jesus should eat with him, the entertainment which he offered Jesus, is in behalf of society. That must have its lion. It takes up one to-day and dismisses him to-morrow, but a lion it must have. Sometimes the lion is a religious person; a great preacher or a great author becomes, for the time, the fashion. Jesus of Nazareth was the hero of the hour. Everybody spoke of him, of what he did, said, was. This priest of society must give him a dinner. We need not suppose secret hostility. Simon seems to have been willing to know more of Jesus than he did know, to study him as a phenomenon with at least a measure of interest. But he is the patron. The courtesies which would have been extended to the privileged few are omitted. Is not this Jesus only a Peasant-Preacher? Further still, the conduct of the Pharisee is representative of the separatist side of society, not only toward Jesus, but toward the sinner. It is without generosity of feeling; it is narrow, bitter when its canons are broken. That horrid creature to come to his table and touch his guest!—is it not monstrous? He a Prophet? That he should let her go near him, that she should bestow her caresses on him—this is sufficient to dispose of the claim. He could not imagine any purpose of the visit except an evil one; and such a visit was a disgrace to his house. For Respectability, hard in its judgment, is always selfish, always thinking how a thing will look, what is becoming or proper, how it can be protected and preserved. Holiness seeks the sinner; it will give itself for him. Respectability bids the sinner away. Ah! this Simon is a figure most conspicuous in our life! Respectability is the Juggernaut-car which rolls through our midst; and, as it rolls, multitudes rush forward and lay themselves prostrate before it. It has a place for Jesus; it will patronize him. Jesus has a word for it, a terribly scathing word. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee."

II. THERE IS THE WOMAN. Who she was we know not. There is really nothing to confirm the old tradition which identifies her with that Mary called Magdalene, referred to in the following chapter, out of whom seven devils were cast. Whoever she was, she is known by only one feature—she was a sinner, an abandoned woman of the city. Perhaps she had heard some word of the gentle Prophet as he passed through the street. In some way "the Dayspring from on high" had visited her. And—not so difficult a matter in an Eastern house—she forced her way to his presence. Poor, weary one, for whom, for many and many a day there had been no sunshine—a mere plaything of coarse and wicked men! Observe her action as recorded in vers. 37, 38. It is to her that the Lord turns; he has glances and words for her which he has not for the priests of Respectability. From her heart proceed the welcomes which the Pharisee had denied him (vers. 44—46). Yes, in the social outcast there is often a preparation for Christ, a power of self-abandoning, simple trust, which is wanting in the Pharisees of society, with their forms and phylacteries, the pomp and pride and circumstance of the be-worshipped Respectability.

III. THE DEALING OF JESUS is "a precious history, the sweet kernel of which poor sinners will never exhaust." Consider his words about the woman, and his words to the woman. 1. The word in the forty-seventh verse—let us see that we rightly apprehend it. The meaning is not, as might hastily be gathered, "forgiven because of her much love," as if the love were the reason of the forgiveness. That would be equal to putting the rill before the spring. There are two kinds of "for"—the "for" *causal*, and the "for" *inferential*. It is the "for" *inferential* which we find in Jesus' saying. "From the love which moved this sinner to me, which constrained her to lavish on me the signs of respect which thou, Simon, didst omit, thou canst infer that her sins, which are many, are forgiven. Even as the tree is known by its fruit, so her forgiveness is proved by the presence of its appropriate fruit—love." This is the view borne out by the short parable which was the something that Jesus had to say to Simon (vers. 41—43). Suppose that we insist on an interpretation of this parable which the terms employed in it might warrant, we are met by serious difficulties. For instance, it might seem to teach that the more, in amount, the debt remitted, the more will be the love realized; that the more of a sinner one has been, the more of a saint, after conversion, one will be. But we know that this could not be the mean-

ing of Christ; and it was not. It is not the quantity of sins, but the conscience of sin, the sense of its sinfulness and bitterness and tyranny, which determines the question of the larger or smaller debtor. In the case before us, one steeped in iniquity represents the larger, the Pharisee the smaller. But, to prove that the consciousness of owing a great debt—the being, in one's own judgment, the five-hundred-pence debtor, yea, the chief of sinners—does not involve a wicked course of life, recollect the Apostle Paul, who had been zealous towards God above his equals. When he thinks of his "exceeding madness" against Jesus, he confesses, "I have nothing to pay. No debt could have been greater than mine, wretched man that I am." The much love is measured by the sense of there having been much forgiven. The love is *as* the knowledge of sin. If you think there is little to forgive, you will love only little. 2. There are two words to the woman herself (ver. 50). "He said to her, Thy sins are forgiven." An absolution, accepted by all who heard it, as full and authoritative. They are amazed: "Who is this that even forgives the sins?" Oh! who is he? Hartley Coleridge finely says—

"All the blame
And the poor malice of the worldly shame
To her were past, extinct, and out of date;
Only the sin remained, the leprous state."

It was to this leprous state that the word went down. With the voice of a declared pardon, there was felt the power of a new purity. "Daughter, thy sins are sent away from between thy God and thee. They are blotted out, no more to be remembered. And lo! as thou art justified, thou art washed throughly from thine iniquity, and cleansed from thy sin. Thy faith hath saved thee" (ver. 50). The Lord gave no heed to the murmurs of those reclining at table. He answers these murmurs by not answering, or rather, by this additional word to the woman. The salvation was the entrance of forgiving love; and it was the trust in him that drew her to the Pharisee's house, which had opened her soul to his healing power. The power is only, is wholly, in him, but the faith is the condition and the means of the deliverance. "Saved, rejoicing sinner, go in peace." Wondrous, glorious gospel! his, hers, who wills to have it as the poor woman willed! Sinners of modern Christendom, you must be stripped of all the soft complacencies of Pharisaic righteousness; consciously poor and needy—sinners, and nothing else, you must get to the Christ of God. Until thus you have reached him, there is only a "something to say to you." The frank forgiveness, the fulness of the eternal life, is when he looks into the clinging soul, when he says, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Faith in its fulness.* The greatness of the centurion's faith is attested by our Lord himself; he declared that it was superior to anything he had "found in Israel." We see evidence of its fulness in that—

I. IT TRIUMPHED OVER NATIONAL PREJUDICE. Here is a Roman exercising the most perfect confidence in a Jew—putting one in whom he was closely and deeply interested into the hands of an Israelite. We must remember all the pride of the Romans as such, and all their hatred as well as contempt of the Jews, to realize the fulness of this triumph.

II. IT WAS BASED ON COMPARATIVELY SLENDER EVIDENCE. "When he *heard of* Jesus, he sent." Clearly, then, he had not seen him, had not witnessed his works, had not listened to his wisdom; he was without the larger part of the evidence which was before the people of that neighbourhood. He had but "heard of" him, and yet he believed in him.

III. IT WAS CHERISHED IN SPITE OF CONSCIOUS UNWORTHINESS. He took a very humble view of himself. This we gather from his *action* in sending the elders of the Jews to intercede on his behalf (ver. 3), and from his *language* in stating that he was not worthy that Christ should "enter under his roof" (ver. 6). Yet had he such an assurance of our Lord's kindness of heart that he was persuaded he would pity and help him, notwithstanding this undeservedness on his part.

IV. IT ASSUMED THAT CHRIST WOULD RESPOND TO A RESPECTFUL AND EARNEST PLEA.

V. IT SHOWED A WONDERFUL CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO HEAL. The sending of the deputation, in the first instance, showed the confidence of the centurion in the power of Christ. But the fulness of his faith in this direction was manifested in the sending of the second deputation—in charging them with that most striking message (vers. 6—8). It is interesting to notice how the soldierly profession, which might well seem to be most unlikely to help a man to discipleship to the Prince of peace, did, in fact, serve him in good stead. It enabled him to grasp fully the idea of Divine *authority*. He was, he said, a man who knew well what was meant by command and obedience. He was accustomed to obey implicitly those who were over him in position, and he was also in the habit of receiving the full and immediate obedience of those who were under him. To them he said, "Come," and they came; "Go," and they went. Whatever forces of nature this Divine Healer might wish to employ, he had only to do the like; he had but to command, and they would instantly obey. Thus his military training helped him to a faith in the authority and power of Christ which distinguished him above others, and which brought down the blessing he sought (ver. 10). We learn: 1. That unbelief in Jesus Christ is wholly inexcusable in us Consider how, in contrast with this centurion, we have no prejudice to overcome, but have been baptized into (or brought up in) the faith of Jesus Christ. Consider also how, in contrast with this man, we have had constant access to the Saviour, and are the children of privilege in the fullest sense of the word. And consider also what evidence we have had before us of Christ's willingness and power to save in all that we have heard, read, and seen. 2. The validity of any sincere belief, weak or strong. It may be that something in our spiritual constitution or in our religious training may make us incapable, at the beginning, of exercising so strong a faith as that here illustrated. This need not, and must not, keep us from making an appeal to the Saviour. Not all that sought his aid had faith like this; yet he healed them also. We must come as we are and as we can. He is One that "does not break the bruised reed." A faith that is feeble, but sincere, will not go home unblessed.—C.

Ver. 5.—*Patriotism and piety.* The mutual respect shown here by Jew and Roman is very pleasing, and the more so that it was so rare. Disdain rather than regard, hatred rather than affection, characterized both peoples; and it is a very agreeable change to find so different a state of mind. Here the Roman loves the Jewish nation, and the elders of the Jews come out to serve the Roman. The plea which they present to Christ, that out of attachment to their nation he had built them a synagogue, was very forcible, and it did not fail. The conjunction of the two clauses of the text suggests the close connection between piety and patriotism.

I. OUR INDEBTEDNESS TO THE RELIGION OF OUR NATIVE LAND. The centurion loved the nation, and why? The Jew had one thing to give the Roman, and that was a very great thing. Civilization, military science, and law, were of the Roman; but "salvation was of the Jews" (John iv. 22). This Roman, who probably saw many things in Galilee that he pitied, found something that first surprised, then convinced, then satisfied and ennobled him—he found a true theology and a pure morality. With this he found rest of soul, domestic purity, health and sweetness of life; he became another man, and lived another life. He was indebted to the religion of this country of his adoption. What do we owe to the religion of the land in which we were born? How much more do we owe to the Christianity we have learned in England than the centurion (of the text) owed to the Judaism he learned in Galilee! Our holy faith, taught us in childhood and impressed upon us through all our days, has brought into our view a heavenly Father, a Divine Saviour and Friend, a Holy Spirit and Comforter, a blessed service, a godly brotherhood, a noble life, a glorious hope of immortal blessedness. What shall we render to the country of our birth which has trained us in such truths as these?

II. OUR BEST ACKNOWLEDGMENT. This man "loved the nation and built them a synagogue." What better thing could he do than this? What kindlier or truer service could he render them? Those synagogues had been the homes of devotion and the sources of sacred instruction for four hundred years, and they had rendered

inestimable service to the nation. The influences which radiated from them had kept the people loyal to their faith, and had preserved in them all the better qualities they possessed. And what can *we* do to serve the country which has nourished us in the faith of Christ? We can do all that lies in our power to promote its material prosperity, to secure its freedom, to extend its knowledge and intelligence. But, these not being left undone, there is one thing more which is greater than these—we can *promote its piety*. By so doing we shall serve it in the highest sphere; we shall be doing that which will gain for it the favour of Almighty God; we shall be indirectly serving it in all other ways, for the children of God will be the best citizens of their country in any and every department of human action. And how shall we best promote the piety of our land? 1. By living a devout and upright life in our own humble sphere. 2. By making known, in all open ways, the distinctive truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. 3. By supporting the institutions which are closely connected with it—its edifices, its societies, its homes.—C.

Vers. 13—16.—*Christ visiting and abiding.* We cannot wonder that the people exclaimed as they did, "God hath visited his people," when they witnessed such a miracle as this. It was clear enough that One from the heavenly world was with them, manifesting Divine power and pity. We have here—

I. A TOUCHING PICTURE OF THE EXTREMES OF HUMAN JOY AND SORROW. The great darkness of *death* had overshadowed a human home; death had come to a *young man*, one who had passed through the perils of early life, and had qualified himself for the larger duties and weightier obligations of manhood; one, therefore, to whom life was peculiarly dear and precious. This young man was an *only son*, in whom all his mother's love had centred, on whom she leaned as her one support; and she was a *widow*, most needing the solace of affection, least able to dispense with the prop that was left her. A supreme sorrow was hers. Then came a sudden revulsion of feeling. Just at the very hour when grief was at its very depth, as the young man was being carried to his grave, he is restored to her. The inanimate form is quickened to a new life; there is "a light upon the brows" which is *not* "the daylight only," but the light of consciousness; the stilled tongue speaks again; the pallor of death gives place to the hue of health. Her son is hers again; her home is home again; she takes back her life with his. A more complete rebound from uttermost sorrow to intensest peace and joy can never have been known.

II. CHRIST'S CROWNING ACT OF AUTHENTICATION. When our Lord sent back his reply to John we are not surprised that he mentions, as the crowning instance of his power, that "the dead are raised" (ver. 22). Much as it was to give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and activity to the lame, much as it was to cleanse the lepers of their foul and terrible disease, it was very much more to restore the dead to life. That was the supreme and sovereign act, proving that Jesus did come forth from God, and was what he claimed to be. That was a power beyond all the skill of human science, beyond all the arts of necromancy; it bespoke the near presence of the Divine. Surely God *was* visiting his people.

III. A PROPHECY OF THE PRESENT AND THE LASTING MISSION OF THE DIVINE RESTORER. What Jesus Christ *visited* this world to do for the bodies of men he now *lives and reigns* to do for their souls—to restore them to newness of life. He is with us always, here on earth, "not to sojourn, but to abide" with us, exercising a far more glorious power than that he put forth at the gates of the city of Nain. That young man had another lease of life; to the days that he had spent on earth there were added a certain number more. Then he sickened again, and died; and death and the grave claimed their own. But when Jesus Christ, our Divine Saviour, now confers spiritual life, he awakens us to an existence (1) which is far higher than the mortal life we are living here, and (2) which is not limited by a few years. The great work of restoration which the risen Saviour is now accomplishing is that of which his work below was but the preparation and the promise. 1. The death to which this man succumbed was the type of the spiritual death which is the sad consequence of sin. 2. To those thus lost to God and man he speaks with sovereign voice, "Arise!" he bids them realize their guilt and danger; he summons them to repentance; he invites them to a whole-hearted trust in himself, the Almighty Saviour; he bids them walk

thenceforth in the way of his commandments. 3. He restores them to their friends as those who, under his gracious hand, will be henceforth what they have never been before. 4. He calls forth deepest gratitude and reverence from all that witness the exercise of his power and grace.—C.

Vers. 19—22.—*Human goodness and the permanency of the gospel.* We have here—

I. A CONSTANT CHARACTERISTIC OF HUMAN GOODNESS. How came John to send this message? Was he really doubtful—he who had prepared the way of the Lord, who had baptized him, who had recognized in him the Lamb of God? Even so. Many ingenious theories account for it in some other way, but they do not satisfy. After all, was it surprising that John should begin to doubt? He had been lying in that lonely fortress by the Red Sea for some months; constitutionally active and energetic, he had been doomed to enforced idleness, and had had nothing to do but to form judgments of other people—a very perilous position; what he heard about Jesus may very well have seemed strange and unsatisfactory to him. Our Lord's method was very different from his own. He was living, as John had not done, in the very midst of the people; he was not drawing great crowds whom he excited to tempestuous feeling, but acting, with calm and deep wisdom, on smaller numbers; he was not living an ascetic life; he was not making any very great way according to ordinary human measurement; and John, writhing in captivity, and longing to be out and about in active work, allowed his mind to be affected, his belief to be disturbed, by what he heard and by what he did not hear. Nothing could be more natural, more human. This is human goodness all the world over. Nobility of spirit, self-sacrifice, devoutness, zeal, and infirmity, the partial subsidence of his faith. Who that knows the history of human goodness can be surprised at this? We must take this into the account in our estimate of good men. *Infirmity* is a *constant element* of human character. Perfection among the angels of God; perfection for ourselves further on among the glorified; meantime we may bestow our heartiest affection and our unstinted admiration upon those who are aspiring and endeavouring after the highest, but who sometimes fail to be all that they and we could wish that they were.

II. THE BEST PROOFS OF THE DIVINE POWER AND VIRTUE. Christ adduced two powerful proofs that he was indeed the "One that should come." 1. *The exercise of benignant power.* In that same hour he healed many that came to be cured, and he said to John's disciples, "Go and show your master what benignant power I am exercising; not smiting my enemies with blindness, but making the blind to see; not punishing the liar with leprosy, but pitying the poor leper and making him clean; not raining down fire from heaven on the obdurate, but calling back to life those who had entered the dark region of the dead; visiting the homes of men with health and life and joy." 2. *Love for the lowly.* "Go and tell John that I am caring much for those for whom men have not cared at all, instructing in heavenly wisdom those whom other teachers have left untaught, lifting up those whom other reformers have been content to leave upon the ground, making heirs of the outcast, making rich for ever the penniless and hopeless—say that 'the blind receive their sight, and the deaf hear,' etc., and forget not to add that 'to the poor the gospel is preached.'"

As these disciples came to our Master, so do some approach us now: they come with serious, earnest questioning. "Is the Christian system which we preach *the* system for our age? is it still the word we want? Or is not the world awaiting another doctrine, another method, another kingdom? Is Jesus Christ the Teacher for us, or do we look for another?" What is our reply? 1. Look at *the benignant power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.* Follow the broad, deep river of beneficence which took its rise at Bethlehem; see what it has been effecting through all these ages; consider what it has done, not only for the physical sufferer—for the blind, for the lame, for the leper, for the lunatic—but what it has done for the poor, for the slave, for the prisoner, for the savage, for the ignorant, for the little child, for woman; consider what it has done for the sorrowful, and for those laden and crushed with a sense of guilt; what it has done for the dying; consider how it has been enlightening and uplifting and transforming the minds and the lives of men; what a blessed beneficent power it has been exerting and is as capable as ever of exerting. 2. Look at *the care*

which the gospel takes of the lowly. Consider the fact that wherever the truth of Christ has been preached in its purity and its integrity, man as man has been approached; all human souls have been treated as of equal and incalculable worth, the poor as well as the rich, the slave as well as his master, the illiterate as well as the learned, the unknown and untitled as well as the illustrious. The gospel has gone among the people, it has made its appeal to the multitude; it is "the common salvation;" it does not content itself with imposing a faith and a cultus upon the nation; it does not rest until it has permeated the entire people with the knowledge and the love of God, and wrought in them the practice of its own pure and lofty principles. Surely this is not a system for Galilee or Syria; this is not a doctrine for one age of the world; it is the ever-living truth of God. Christ is *our* Teacher, our Saviour, our Lord; we do *not* look for another.—C.

Ver. 22.—*The leprosy of sin.* Why specify the fact that the lepers were cleansed? Why single out this disease from others that might have been named? Because it was peculiarly desirable that, when the Messiah came and gave credentials of his heavenly origin, he should exercise his power in this direction. For leprosy was *the chosen type of sin.* All disease is pictorial of sin; it is to our bodily frame what sin is to the soul—it is *inward disorder showing itself in outward manifestation.* But leprosy was that peculiar form of sickness which the Divine Lawgiver selected as *the* type of sin. And surely it was perfectly fitted to be so regarded. We look at—

I. ITS LOATHSOMENESS. Why was the leper so rigidly excluded from society? We have no convincing evidence that this was a dangerous, contagious disorder. But the extreme loathsomeness of the leper's appearance fully accounted for the decree. It was not fitting that anything so terribly repulsive and shocking should be seen in the homes and in the streets. Sin is the most odious of all things; it is "that abominable thing which God hates." God "cannot look" upon it. In its fouler forms it is infinitely offensive to the pure of heart.

II. ITS DIFFUSIVENESS. Leprosy was eminently diffusive. It was communicated from parent to child; it spread from limb to limb, from organ to organ, until it covered the entire body. Sin is *a thing which spreads.* It, too, is communicable *by heredity*, and it also spreads *from faculty to faculty.* Sin leads to sin. "There's not a crime but takes its change out still in crime." Theft leads to violence, drunkenness to falsehood, impurity to deceit. Sin also spreads *from man to man*, from child to child, from friend to friend. You cannot circumscribe it; it passes all bounds that may be set up.

III. ITS PITIFULNESS. Who could regard the leper, doomed to a long, perhaps a lifelong separation from his family and his business and all favourite pursuits, without heartfelt pity? Life was worth nothing to him. Sin is condemnable enough; but it is pitiable also. Blame the erring, reproach the faulty, remonstrate with the foolish, but do not fail to pity those whom sin is shutting out from all that is best below, and from all that is bright above. Pity these with a profound compassion, and help them with an uplifting hand.

IV. ITS SEPARATING INFLUENCE. As the leper was exiled from mankind and banished to a severe isolation, so does sin come in as a separating power. 1. It separates a man from God, opening the wide, deep gulf of conscious guilt. 2. It separates man from man. It is not high walls, or broad acres, or unmeasured seas, that divide man from man; it is folly, hatred, malice, jealousy, *sin.*

V. ITS DEATHFULNESS. In the leper the springs of health were poisoned, there was a process of dissolution going on; it was death in life. *Sin is death.* "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," wrote Paul. And our Lord's words imply the same: "Whoso believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." A man living apart from God and in rebellion against him is so far from answering the end of human life that he may be rightly regarded as dead while he lives.

VI. ITS INCURABLENESS BY MAN. The Jews did not bring the leper to the physician; they regarded him as incurable by the art of man. Sin is incurable by human methods. Regulations for conduct, vows of abstinence, parliamentary statutes, legal penalties, do not cure. They may be very valuable as accessories, but they will not heal. Only the Divine hand can accomplish that for the human heart. One there is

who offers himself as the Divine Physician; he who sent back to John in prison the convincing message, "The lepers are cleansed." In him is all-forgiving grace and all-cleansing power. A living faith in him will lead to pardon and to purity. Instead of loathsomeness, there will be spiritual beauty; instead of isolation, communion; instead of a living death, eternal life.—C.

Ver. 23.—*Christ as an offence.* "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." It was simply inevitable that our Lord, if he laid himself out to do the very best and greatest that could be done, should be an offence to many. "Not to send peace, but a sword," was a purely incidental, but it was a necessary result of such faithfulness as he showed.

I. THE OFFENCE TO BE FOUND IN CHRIST. 1. *The offence of the Messiahship.* Our Lord offended John the Baptist (see preceding homily) by the quietness of his method and the slowness of his results. He offended Peter by foretelling the sorrows and the shame to which he was moving on (Matt. xvi. 22). He offended Nicodemus by the profundity of his teaching (John iii.). He offended the leaders of religion of his time by denouncing their formality and insincerity. He offended the people by preaching a doctrine too *broad* for their narrow-mindedness (ch. iv. 28), too *deep* for their shallow-mindedness (John vi. 52—66), too elevated for their earthly mindedness. 2. *The offence of the cross.* (1) The memory of a crucified Nazarene was a stumbling-block to the Jew, who expected something very different from this dishonour (1 Cor. i. 23). (2) The story of a crucified Jew was foolishness to the Greek. With his venerable mythology, his honoured philosophy, his pride of patriotism, he was not prepared to put his trust in a malefactor executed in Judæa. 3. *The offence of the kingdom.* In one sense, "the offence of the cross" has ceased. It has become the symbol of all that is beautiful in art, refined in culture, strong in civilization. Yet is there everywhere, yet will there always be, something in Christ that will offend the human soul. For he requires of us that (1) we empty our minds of preconceived ideas, and approach him with the docility of children (Matt. xviii. 3); (2) we surrender every evil habit, however dear or valuable it may seem to us (Matt. v. 29); (3) we give the first place in our thought and our affections to himself, making even our nearest and dearest human kindred occupy the second place (ch. xiv. 26); (4) we find our recompense for faithful service in the spiritual and the eternal, rather than in the material and the temporal; (5) we accept his Divine favour and enter his service as those who claim nothing and accept everything at his hand. Many are they who live in our land, who read our Christian literature, who sit in our sanctuaries, and who, for one of these reasons, are offended in Christ.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT FIND IT; who come to learn of him in all docility of spirit; who cheerfully part with all that he condemns that they may follow him; who offer to him their undivided heart; who accept his service that they may receive a spiritual and a heavenly recompense. Blessed, indeed, are they; for: 1. Their hearts will be the home of a heavenly peace, and a joy which no man taketh from them. 2. Their life will rise to a noble height of sanctity, of beauty, of usefulness. 3. On their checkered course will fall the sunshine of their Master's blessing—his consecration of their joy, his overruling of their sorrow. 4. Their life will end in a calm and peaceful hope, which will pass into glorious fruition. Blessed, indeed, is he whosoever is not offended in Christ, but cordially accepts him as the Saviour of his spirit and the rightful Lord of his life.—C.

Vers. 24—28.—*Christ's estimate of John; character and privilege.* It is pleasant to think that, immediately after John had intimated his doubt respecting the Christ, our Lord spoke in terms of unmeasured confidence concerning John. His language is strong and somewhat paradoxical, but it admits of a simple explanation. His first reference to John affirms—

I. HIS SUPERIORITY IN RESPECT OF CHARACTER. The nobility of John's character has already been illustrated (see ch. iii.). Its most marked features were: 1. His cheerful acceptance of privation; living on in the wilderness with nothing to gratify taste, and barely sufficient to sustain life, though his popularity as a teacher and prophet would have enabled him to make a very different provision for himself,

2. His incorruptible fidelity to the work committed to his charge (ch. iii. 15, 16) 3. His fearless, holy courage—a courage which was based on a sense of God's nearness to him and his Divine faithfulness toward him; a courage manifested in public (ch. iii. 7—9), and, what is more and what is worthier, shown in private also in an interview with one strong man who held his earthly destiny in his hand (ch. iii. 19). 4. His rare magnanimity. Not merely accepting without resentment the fact that he was to be supplanted by another, but going beyond that point in spiritual excellence, and positively rejoicing in the elevation of that other Teacher; stepping down and giving place gladly to one younger but greater than himself (John iii. 29). We are not surprised that he "who knew what was in man," who knew the strength and the weakness of our human nature, said concerning John, "Among those that are born of women," etc. (ver. 28).

II. HIS INFERIORITY IN RESPECT OF PRIVILEGE. "But he that is least *in* the kingdom of God is greater than he." We must take the word "greater" as signifying *more privileged*: it will not bear any other meaning. Most assuredly Jesus did not mean to say that the man who, being within his kingdom, was lowest in moral worth, stood higher in the favour of God than John. Such a sentiment is quite inconceivable, perfectly incredible. But our Lord may very well have meant that any one, however humble his position in the kingdom of grace, who yet stands *within* that kingdom, of which John stood *outside*, has a distinct advantage over the great prophet. To know what we, with all our obscurity and incapacity, do know; to understand and enter into, as we may do, the glorious purpose of God in Jesus Christ; to comprehend that, by that death of shame upon the cross, the Redeemer of the world is drawing all men unto him; and not only to understand all this, but to enter into it by a personal, living sympathy and co-operation;—this is to stand on a height to which even John, though he came in sight of it (John i. 36), did not attain. 1. We are the children of privilege; we are "the heirs of all the ages" of thought, of revealed truth. If we will read reverently, and inquire diligently and devoutly, we may know the mind of God concerning us as the greatest of all the prophets did not know it. 2. Let us take care that we are the children of God; returned from the far country of estrangement and indifference; dwelling in the home of the Father's favour; walking with God daily; finding a filial joy in doing and bearing his holy will; entering by sympathy and effort into his holy purpose.—C.

Vers. 31—34.—*Christian abstinence and participation.* These "children sitting in the market-place" very well illustrate the perverse and contradictory of all generations. Many are they, here and everywhere, who will neither dance at the wedding nor mourn at the funeral, who will work neither along one line nor yet along its opposite, to whom all ways are objectionable because their own spirit is out of tune with everything. But the special folly which these children are brought forward to condemn is that of objecting to John because he was abstemious, and to Jesus because he participated in the good gifts of God. The right course to take is not that of objecting to both, but rather that of accepting and honouring both. We shall find, if we care to look for it—

I. CHRISTIAN ABSTEMIOUSNESS. John came "neither eating nor drinking." He acted, no doubt, under Divine direction in so doing. But John was not our exemplar. We are not called to follow John, but Christ; and Christ came eating and drinking. Is abstinence, then, a *Christian* course? It is so; it is justified by the language of our Lord and by that of his apostles. He said that there were some celibates "for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matt. xix. 12). And he urged upon men that they should pluck out their right eye, or cut off their right hand, rather than perish in iniquity (Matt. v. 29, 30). His apostle wrote that men should neither eat meat nor drink wine, if by so doing they put a stumbling-block in the way of another (Rom. xiv. 21). And it is certain that we are acting in a strictly and, indeed, an emphatically Christian spirit when we: 1. Abstain because indulgence would be perilous to ourselves. This may relate to food or drink, or to any kind of amusement or occupation, to anything of any kind in which we find ourselves under a strong temptation to excess if we once begin. 2. Abstain because our abstinence will make the path of virtue or piety more accessible to others. Anything we can do, any privation we may accept, any habit

we may form, by which we help men upwards and Godwards, must be an essentially and radically Christian thing.

II. CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION. "The Son of man came eating and drinking." He was no ascetic; he was present at the festivity; he accepted the invitation to the rich man's board; he did not choose the coarser garment because it was coarser, or the severer lodging because it was severer; he did not habitually and conscientiously decline the gifts of God in nature. He knew how to decline them when occasion called for it (see ch. vi. 12; ix. 58), but he did not do so regularly and as a sacred duty. Surely it was well for the world that he acted thus; for, had he sanctioned asceticism, we should have been continually oscillating, or everywhere divided, between an unamiable severity on the one hand and a degrading self-indulgence on the other hand. The wise and the true course is that of a Christian participation; this is a partaking of the gifts of God and of the sweets and enjoyments of earth, which is: 1. Sanctified by devout gratitude; by a continual and wholesome mindfulness that every good gift is from above, and calls for a grateful and reverent spirit. 2. Controlled by a wise moderation; so that nothing is indulged in which is in the smallest degree excessive; so that no injury of any kind is done to the spiritual nature. 3. Beautified by benevolence; the participation by ourselves being very closely and constantly accompanied by the remembrance of the wants of others. "Eat the fat and drink the sweet," but be careful to "send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared."—C.

Ver. 35.—*Our treatment of wisdom.* Whatever might have been expected to be the case, the fact is that wisdom has received but poor and sad treatment from the children of men. We perceive, without any search for it—

I. ITS REJECTION BY THE WORLD. 1. Up to the time of the coming of our Lord. The Eternal Wisdom uttered its voice by the constitution and course of nature, by the human reason and conscience, by occasional revelation. But that voice was unheard or unheeded. Few, indeed, in every age and land recognized and obeyed it in comparison with the vast multitudes that remained in ignorance and folly. The heavens declared the glory of God, but men knew not the hand Divine that moved the stars in their course. "The candle of the Lord" was kindled, and it shone within the soul, but men hid it under the bushel of their unholy habits and their perverting prejudices. Through those long, dark ages Wisdom spake, and (it might be almost said that) "no man regarded." 2. The coming of Christ. He who *was* the very "Wisdom of God" himself, he who *was* "the Truth," dwelt amongst us; and "he was despised and rejected of men." Those who should have been the first to appreciate and to welcome him were the first to dislike and to denounce him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." 3. From that time to our own day. Divine Wisdom, speaking in the gospel of Christ, has been summoning men to reconciliation with God, to peace, to virtue, to sacred joy, to immortal blessedness; and the world, upon the whole, has turned to it a deaf ear, has gone on its own way of folly, has refused to walk in its light, and to receive its benediction.

II. ITS RECOGNITION BY ITS OWN SONS. 1. There were some in the dark days before Christ who heard and heeded the voice of God. These may have been more numerous than we have supposed. "In every nation he that feared God and wrought righteousness was accepted of him." There may have been—we may rightly hope that there were—great numbers of the "children of wisdom" who recognized its voice and obeyed its teaching. 2. When our Saviour came there were those who recognized his voice and responded to it. Many of these were women, many of them "little ones," despised by the authorities of their day. *They* did not think him "possessed," nor charge him with self-indulgence (vers. 33, 34); they perceived in him a Divine Teacher, a true Friend, a gracious Saviour, and they "rose and followed him;" then, indeed, was "Wisdom justified of all her children." 3. Throughout these Christian ages the same truth has held. The psalmist prays, "Do good unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts" (Ps. cxxv. 4). And while it is true that men of the most perverse and froward spirit may be so mightily affected by Divine power and grace that the truth of God breaks through the thickest armour of opposition, yet is it generally true that it is only they who have the spirit of wisdom in them—"the children of wisdom"—who enter the kingdom of truth and righteousness. "Only the

good discern the good," writes one of our truest poets and deepest thinkers. It is only they who are sincere seekers after the truth who reach the goal. It is "to the upright that there ariseth light in the darkness;" it is to the pure and the upright and the merciful that God shows himself to be such, and by them is seen to be such (Ps. cxii. 4; xviii. 25, 26). We cannot see the wisdom, the faithfulness, the kindness, the mercy of God, while our hearts are wrong with him. But when we ourselves are right with God, and we have so much of the spirit of goodness in us that we may be called the children of wisdom, then God's dealings with our race, with our Church, with our family, with ourselves, are recognized as the just and kind and faithful things they are, and in our experience "Wisdom is justified of all her children." (1) We need not be surprised if God's manifestations of himself in his Son or in his providence are misinterpreted. That is to be expected in the case of the children of error. (2) If we are pining and complaining under the hand of God, and are supposing ourselves ill treated, we may be sure that what is needed by us is not something done for us, but a change wrought within us. For that we must seek in humility and in prayer.—C.

Vers. 36—50.—*Loving and forgiving.* The peculiarity of Oriental customs, together with the earnestness and eagerness of this penitent, will account for her effecting an entrance into the house of this Pharisee, and gaining access to the feet of our Lord. The lessons we gain from this most touching incident are—

I. THAT THERE IS FREE AND FULL FORGIVENESS FOR THE WORST. It is somewhat striking that, although Old Testament Scripture abounds in passages which attest the greatness of God's mercy to the repentant, the Jews of our Lord's time had no place for such in their system or their practice. This could not be from unfamiliarity with the sacred record; it rather arose from ignorance of themselves. They did not acknowledge any sin in their own souls, any shortcoming in their own lives. Simon probably thought that Jesus was putting the debt which represented his obligation (fifty pence) at a high figure. And, thus mistaking themselves, it is not to be wondered at that they took a false view of their neighbours; that they looked upon those who were outwardly bad as hopelessly irrecoverable. But not so the Saviour. By action as much as by language he made it clear that the guiltiest of men and the worst of women might come in penitence and be restored. That is the valuable and lasting significance of his attitude on this occasion. His treatment of this woman, together with his gracious words to her (ver. 48), are to us, as they ever will be, the strong assurance that those whom we most unsparingly condemn and most scrupulously exclude may find mercy at his feet.

II. THAT NOT HER LOVE BUT HER PENITENCE WAS THE GROUND OF HER FORGIVENESS. When Christ said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much," he did not, could not, mean that her love was the *ground*, but that it was the *consequence* of her forgiveness. He meant to say, "You can see that she has been forgiven, for you see how she loves, and it is only they who have been forgiven what she has been forgiven that love as she loves. The fulness of her love is therefore the *proof* (not the ground) of her forgiveness." What led to her forgiveness was her penitence. Those bitter tears she shed (ver. 38) were the tears of a true contrition; they meant a holy hatred of her past sin, and a sincere determination to lead another life; and not being repelled, but accepted, by this Holy and Merciful One, deep and strong gratitude arose in her; and penitence, love, and a new and blessed hope surged and strove together in uncontrollable emotion within her heart. When God shows us our fault, we go at once to the merciful Saviour; trusting in him, we are received and restored; then a pure, deep, lasting love arises in our souls; it is the simple, natural, beautiful outgrowth of penitence and faith.

III. THAT THE SENSE OF GOD'S GRACE TO US WILL DETERMINE THE FULNESS OF OUR AFFECTION TOWARD HIM. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." If we have a very imperfect sense of our guilt, and therefore of God's mercy to us, our response in gratitude and love will be far below what it should be. It is, therefore, of the gravest importance that we should know and feel our own faultiness in the sight of God. For clearly it is not the magnitude of our past sin, but the *fulness of our sense of guilt*, which determines the measure of our feeling in the matter of gratitude and love. 1. It is for this that we must look. We shall find it as we dwell on the

greatness of God's goodness toward us in his providence and his grace; in the poverty and feebleness of our filial return to him for all his love and care and kindness toward us; in the fact that he has been requiring purity of thought and rectitude of soul and sincerity of motive, as well as propriety of word and integrity of deed. 2. For this also we must pray; asking for that enlightening Spirit who will show us our true selves, and fill us with a due sense of our great unworthiness and our manifold transgressions.—C.

Ver. 40.—*Christ and Simon: the correcting word.* There were some good points about Simon. 1. He was an eminently respectable man; he was so in the true sense of the word, for as a virtuous man he could respect himself, and his neighbours could rightly respect him; he conformed his conduct to a high standard of morality. 2. He was an open-handed, hospitable man. 3. He was an open-minded man. It was not every Pharisee that would have invited Jesus Christ to supper, or would have given him such freedom to speak his mind without resentment. But he was a much-mistaken man. He was quite wrong in three important points.

I. HIS ESTIMATE OF JESUS CHRIST. When he found that Jesus did not resent the attention of "this woman," he came to the conclusion that he could not be a prophet, or he would have known that she was a sinner, and, knowing that, he would have repelled her. Here he was wrong in his conclusion; and he was also wrong in his reasoning. His argument was this: a man as holy as a prophet would be certain to repel such guilt as is present here; when *the* Holy Prophet comes, the Messiah, he will be more scrupulously separate from sin and from sinners than any other has been. Here he was completely mistaken. The Holy One came to be the Merciful One; to say to guilty men and women, "Your fellows may despair of you and abandon you. I despair of none, I abandon nobody. I see in all the possibilities of recovery; I summon you all to repentance and to life. Touch me, if you will, with the hand of your faith; I will lay my hand of help and healing upon you."

II. HIS VIEW OF THAT WOMAN. A sinner she had been; but she was more, and indeed other than a sinner now. That word did not faithfully describe her state before God. She was a *penitent*. And what is a penitent? A penitent soul is one who hates the sin that had been cherished, who has cast out the evil spirit from him, in whom is the living germ of righteousness, who is on the upward line that leads to heavenly wisdom and Divine worth, on whom God is looking down with tender grace and deep satisfaction, in whom Jesus Christ beholds a servant, a friend, an heir of his holy kingdom. This is not one to turn away from in scorn, but to draw nigh unto in kindness and encouragement.

III. HIS ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF. 1. He thought himself a very long way on in the kingdom of God as compared with that poor woman; he did not know that, she being poor in spirit and he being proud in spirit, she was much nearer to its entrance-gates than he. 2. He thought himself in a position to patronize Jesus Christ, and consequently withheld some of the usual courtesies from his Guest; he did not know that it was on himself the distinction was conferred. 3. He supposed himself to be possessed of all the cardinal virtues: he did not know that he lacked that which is the crowning excellence of all—love, the love that can pity, that can stoop to save.

We draw two main lessons. 1. *That Christ makes much of love.* Dwelling on the various manifestations of this woman's feeling, he declares they are the signs of her love, and he then traces her love to her deep sense of forgiven sin. God wants our love, as we want the love of our children and of our friends, and cannot accept anything, however valuable, in its stead: so Christ wants the pure, deep, lasting affection of our souls. No ceremonies, or services, or even sacrifices, will compensate for *its* absence (see 1 Cor. xiii.). And the measure of our love will depend on the depth of our sense of God's forgiving love toward us. Hence it is of the first importance that we (1) should understand how much God has forgiven us, how great and serious our guilt has been (see preceding homily); (2) should recognize how great and full is the Divine forgiveness, how much it includes—how much in the sense of overlooking the past, and in the way of granting us present favour and of promising us future blessedness. Our wisdom and our duty, therefore, is to dwell on the greatness of God's mercy to us in Jesus Christ, to rejoice much in it, to let our souls bathe in the thought

of it, be filled continually with a sense of it. For they who are (consciously) forgiven much will love much; and they who love much will be much beloved of God (John xiv. 23). 2. *That we should be ready to receive Christ's correcting word.* Simon was wholly wrong in his estimate of men and of things; but he was not unwilling to hear Christ's correcting word. "Master, say on," he replied, when the great Teacher said, "I have somewhat to say unto thee." Let us see to it that this is our attitude. Our Lord may have something very serious to say to us, as he had to those seven Churches in Asia Minor, which he addressed from his heavenly throne (Rev. ii., iii.). When, through his Word, his ministry, his providence, he does thus correct us, calling us to a renewed humility, faith, love, zeal, consecration, are we ready to receive his message, to bow our head, to open our heart, and say, "Speak, Lord; thy servants hear! Master, say on"?—C.

Vers. 1—17.—*The Saviour of sick and dead.* On returning to Capernaum after the sermon on the mount, the Saviour is confronted with a deputation from a centurion about his sick servant. To the miracle of *healing* in vers. 2—10 we turn first; and then we shall consider the miracle of *resurrection* (vers. 11—17), by which it is followed.

I. THE SAVIOUR OF THE SICK. (Vers. 1—10.) 1. *Let us observe the self-abasement of the centurion.* And in this connection we must notice the devotedness he had shown to the Jewish religion. As a proselyte, he had not only espoused Judaism, but built a synagogue to accommodate his fellow-worshippers. Hence he had an excellent reputation with the ecclesiastical authorities. But all this did not lead to any boasting on his part or exaltation of spirit. He remains the humble man before God after all his liberality. Hence he organizes no less than *two* deputations to Jesus Christ rather than obtrude himself upon him. And (1) he sends a deputation of *Jewish elders*, to ask from Jesus the cure of his sick servant. He esteems these ecclesiastical rulers as better than himself; he values them as highly almost as they do themselves! In reality he was spiritually far ahead of them; but he was unconscious of this, and conscious only of his great personal unworthiness. The elders come, and in their self-righteous spirit speak of his worthiness to Jesus. He was worthy, they declared, and had proved his worthiness by building the synagogue. They thought more of the centurion, and more of themselves, than the centurion did. Yet Jesus recognizes the humility which dictated the sending of the deputation, and responds to their entreaty by going with them towards the centurion's house. (2) He sends a second deputation of *friends* to entreat Jesus not to give himself so much trouble in the matter, seeing he was utterly unworthy of a visit from Jesus. His idea was that, as Christ could heal his servant without the trouble of coming to see him, could heal at any distance, then he *ought* to take things as easy as he could. So strong is his conviction on this subject, that he gives a military illustration in proof of it. "Evidently," says Robertson, "he looked upon this universe with a soldier's eye; he could not look otherwise. To him this world was a mighty camp of living forces, in which authority was paramount. Trained in obedience to military law, accustomed to render prompt submission to those above him, and to exact it from those below him, he read law everywhere; and law to him meant nothing unless it meant the expression of a personal will. It was this training through which faith took its *form*."[1] Christ was, therefore, to the soldier's eye, the centurion of all diseases, and they obeyed him, so that he might have sent the disease of the servant away by a simple word of command, and so have saved himself all the trouble. Now, it is important to remember that our Lord did *not* take the easiest way always. He preferred to show his sympathy and thorough devotedness by taking sometimes the most irksome way. His idea was *not* to save himself trouble; "he spared not himself." He will not use his power to save himself trouble. 2. *Let us notice Christ's admiration of the centurion's faith.* We have seen how great humility is accompanied by great faith. The graces grow proportionally. There are no monstrosities in the spiritual world. And we have to notice what an eye Jesus has for faith. It is the most lovely product in this vale of tears. Hence he is wrapt in admiration of it. He recognizes it as greater in this Gentile than it has yet been in any Jew. The house of Israel had given him as yet no such believer as he had now

[1] 'Sermons,' second series, p. 132.

found in the simple soldier. Clearly faith is not always in proportion to opportunity and advantages. How weak the faith of many who have been all their lives long in the enjoyment of the means of grace! 3. *Christ responds to strong faith by a word of power.* Had he continued to press himself upon the centurion's attention and household, it might have led the humble believer to suspect the power of Jesus to save at a distance. In other words, if Jesus had advanced, it might have hurt the centurion's faith, instead of ministering to him any additional sense of sympathy. Hence he spoke, and the disease of the servant departed instantly. Now, this miracle is designed to show the beauty of Christian sympathy, the power of intercession, and the tender grace of the Saviour as he responds to the appeals of his servants. Let us take a similar interest in those who serve us, or are in anywise related to us; let us bring their case before the Lord, and he will help them for our sake, and for his own Name's sake too![1]

II. THE SAVIOUR OF THE DEAD. (Vers. 11—17.) We next turn to the *raising of the widow's son at Nain* (vers. 11—17). And here let us notice: 1. *The terrible sorrow which presented itself to Jesus.* (Ver. 12.) It was the death of a widow's only son. She stood before Jesus in all her loneliness—more lonely through the proximity of the crowd. Now, it is to a social Saviour she has come, One who lay in the bosom of the Father, a member of the "social Trinity," who enjoyed fellowship from all eternity. Hence her case did not appeal to him in vain. He does not need any intercession. His sympathetic heart takes up the case. Hence we have: 2. *The consolatory word our Saviour spoke.* "Weep not!" Sometimes, as Gerok has remarked, this word is spoken in a well-meant, yet unchristian sense, by many children of the world, as if weeping and mourning ought to be put away as out of place; in other cases, the word is spoken with a good Christian intention, but without much human tenderness; but Jesus shows us here when it ought to be spoken.[2] He wants the widow not to weep, for he can put all her sorrow away. Truly it is he who can wipe away the tears from off all faces (Rev. vii. 17). If we have such consolation to offer, well may we say, "Weep not." But if we only repeat the words, without offering any consolation, they are not likely to be of much avail. It is a striking contrast, our Lord's conduct on this occasion, and on the occasion of Lazarus's resurrection, where he wept himself, instead of commanding others not to weep (John xi. 35). 3. *The mighty word which backed up his consolation.* (Ver. 14.) This was, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" He does so as the Prince of life. The result is that he that was dead first sat up, and then began to speak. Life was thus restored to him, and intercourse with others followed. Jesus thus demonstrated that he was "the Resurrection and the Life." 4. *The restoration of the young man to his mother.* (Ver. 15.) The purpose of the resurrection was the restoration of those relationships which death had so rudely severed. The bereaved mother is enabled to rejoice in her son again, and to see her home-circle restored. The great truth of recognition and restoration through resurrection is thus set before us.[3] 5. *The effect of the miracle upon the people.* (Vers. 16, 17.) They feared, because the miracle demonstrated that God was awfully near. Yet the fear inspired them to glorify God for the advent of such a Prophet, and the gracious visitation which he brought. They felt that the miracle was eminently worthy of God. An eminent scientific man, who doubts revealed religion, yet accepts spiritualism, has said, "Few, if any, reputed miracles are at all worthy of a God."[4] But in face of such a tender and touching work of grace as this at Nain, no such declaration could be made by an impartial mind. It was worthy of God, and tended to his glory. 6. *Consider, lastly, the type and promise it affords of what Christ will do in the world at last.* For, as a poet has suggested, this earth is the "bier whereon our race is laid," and to it will Christ at last come, and, arresting the long procession of the dead, will say, "Arise!" when lo! a race shall wake from clay, "young, deathless, freed from every stain." And the "Weep not!" shall also be heard then, for

[1] Cf. Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' s. 793, *seq.*
[2] Cf. Gerok's 'Aus Ernster Zeit,' s. 564.
[3] Cf. Dr. Macmillan's 'Our Lord's Three Raisings from the Dead,' pp. 75—129; Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' s. 710.
[4] A. R. Wallace, 'On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism,' p. 44.

from his people's faces every tear shall be wiped away.[1] The miracle thus throws a clear and steady light upon those last things which perplex so many people now.—R. M. E.

Vers. 18—35.—*The deputation from John.* Jesus pursued a policy of mercy and of salvation. He healed all who asked for healing or were brought to him; he raised the dead; he was a Philanthropist rather than a Judge. The fame of his miracles was spread abroad, and made its way to the castle and its keep, where John the Baptist was now Herod's prisoner. The result is a deputation of two disciples sent by the illustrious prisoner to Jesus. We are to study the interview and the subsequent panegyric on John.

I. CONSIDER JOHN'S DIFFICULTY. John had preached about a coming One, according to such prophecies as that of Malachi. He had preached that Jesus was coming to judgment. His fan was to be in his hand; he was throughly to purge his floor; he was to gather the wheat into his garner; and he was to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (ch. iii. 17). And in the spirit of the Old Testament, which was largely a dispensation of judgment, John looked for Messiah to be mainly a Messiah of judgment. The kingdom of Messiah was to be set up, John thought, like all world-kingdoms, by "the thunder of the captains and the shouting," by some remarkable series of judgments; but now that Jesus is devoting himself to philanthropy pure and simple, John thinks that perhaps another messenger is to be looked for, who will make judgment his *rôle*. John's difficulty is what we all experience when we imagine that a more impressive and decisive method of advancing God's cause might be adopted. Human nature has great faith in *blows!*

II. OUR LORD'S RESPONSE. (Vers. 21—23.) This consisted of: 1. *Miracles of mercy.* All that needed healing in the crowd received it in presence of John's disciples. He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and many blind ones received their sight. The Healer was there; philanthropy was in full swing. 2. He *preached the gospel* to the poor. He backed up the miracles by a message; he made his mercies to the body the texts from which he preached deliverance to the souls of men. 3. He directed the disciples to *report to John what they had seen and heard*, with the additional warning, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." His policy was one of love, of disinterestedness; and John was to study it more thoroughly and come to a better conclusion. We thus learn that the *best defence of a suspected work is the patient performance of it.* It will vindicate itself in due season, if it be good and genuine. Christ came not to wade through seas of blood to a temporal throne, but by persevering love to win men's hearts and rule over their lives from within!

III. HIS PANEGYRIC UPON JOHN. (Vers. 24—28.) It was after the deputation had departed that Jesus pronounced John's panegyric. Most people would have pronounced it in their hearing, that they might carry it to John; but Jesus says the good and noble things behind John's back, having given all the warning he needed before, so to speak, his face. It partakes, as Godet remarks, of the nature of a funeral oration. Like Jesus himself, John is anointed with considerate praise before his burial. And here we have to notice the order of the panegyric. 1. Christ describes John *negatively.* Borrowing his simile from the desert, where the reeds bow before the breeze and do not break, he insists that John was not like one of these. In other words, he was a man of unflinching integrity, who would break rather than bend before the breeze of opposition. He preferred to be Herod's prisoner in the dungeon rather than his fawning sycophant in the palace. Nor, again, was John a courtier gaily and silkenly clad. The camel's hair garment was a perpetual protest in the castle, before he was thrust down into the dungeon, against the effeminacy of the court. If he had come to be "court preacher" to Herod, he had come to be one in earnest. 2. He describes John *positively.* He was a "prophet." Great honour was it to be recipients and communicators of revelations. John was charged, like other Old Testament prophets, with messages from God. But he was more—he was the *forerunner of Messiah.* In applying to John the prophecy in Malachi, Jesus was asserting his own Messiahship and Divinity.[2] This was a great honour for John to be the immediate predecessor of the Lord. Still

[1] 'The Changed Cross, and other Poems:' "The Widow of Nain."

[2] Cf. Gess's 'Christi-Selbstzeugniss,' s. 40.

further, our Lord asserts that of woman-born there has not been a greater prophet than the Baptist. This is unstinted praise. And it is just. When we consider all John attempted and the means he had at hand, when we consider that he attempted the regeneration of his country and asked no miraculous power to accomplish it,—then he comes before us in moral grandeur exceeding that of the first Elias. 3. He describes him *candidly*. The panegyric is judicious. Our Lord declares that, great though John undoubtedly is, he is surpassed by "the least in the kingdom of God." This may mean that the least Christian has greater insight into the nature of the kingdom than John. Or it may, perhaps, rather mean that he who is *consciously* the least in the kingdom of God, by whom we must understand the most advanced spiritually, is greater than John. The insight of a Paul, for instance, who felt himself to be less than the least of all saints, was greater than that of John, climax though he was of Old Testament prophecy. Or, finally, may it not mean Jesus himself, who was the meekest and lowliest in the Kingdom of God.

IV. THE CHARACTER OF JOHN'S SUCCESS WAS LIKE THAT OF JESUS. (Vers. 29, 30.) The evangelist seems to add the significant words that it was among the common people, the publicans and the poor, not among the Pharisees and lawyers, that he secured his penitents. So that John's revival was really among the humbler classes, where the work of Jesus was being now wisely prosecuted. The self-righteous rejected John's appeal for repentance; the common people and the publicans embraced it, and "justified God" by repenting before him. For we must acknowledge God's perfect justice in condemning us for our sins, before we can appreciate his justice and mercy in forgiving us for his Son's sake. Luke's observation, then, makes Christ's panegyric a perfect picture.

V. THE TWO ASPECTS OF TRUTH, AND THE GENERAL REJECTION OF BOTH. (Vers. 31—35.) Jesus, in these verses, contrasts John's ministry with his own. Little children at play sometimes find their fellows utterly intractable. Tried by a funeral, they will not join in the mournful procession; tried by a marriage, they will not join in the bridal party. They are too ill-natured to take part in either. Nothing pleases them. So was it with the Pharisees in their attitude to the preaching of John and to the preaching of Jesus. John presented the truth in its severe and mournful aspects. He was unsocial, to lead men to a sense of sin and to repent of it. But the Pharisees would not believe the self-denying preacher from the desert. Jesus presented the truth in all its winsomeness and attractiveness; but they found as much fault with Jesus as they did with John. John had a devil, and Jesus was a glutton and a wine-bibber. Neither could please these prim, self-satisfied ones. But the vindication of wisdom was on its way. The penitents of John and the joyful disciples of Jesus would yet justify the truth which John and Jesus preached.[1] The Pharisees might reject both missions, but the common people who received them justified the truth in both by lives and conversations becoming the gospel. We may in the same way leave our work with confidence to the verdict of the future, if we feel that it is true. Opposition from a self-righteous party is itself a vindication of the truth which we have embodied or declared.—R. M. E.

Vers. 36—50.—*Love the proof of pardon.* The generation to which Jesus had come with his social gospel thought him too "free and easy" with sinners. The Pharisees thought he had no right to associate with publicans and sinners, although he did so to save them. But the wisdom of his policy would be justified by the conduct of his converts, and here we have a justification ready to hand. One of the Pharisees invited him to eat with him. He accepts the invitation, and is reclining at his table, when, lo! a poor woman "off the streets" comes in behind him, and in her penitence and gratitude prepares to anoint with spikenard his blessed feet. She had heard him preach, she had received pardon for all her sins, she could not resist this exhibition of gratitude for it. But as she is about to anoint his feet, her pent-up grief refuses further restraint, and bathes them with copious tears, and, having no towel with her or offered to her, she unties her flowing hair, content to wipe with it the beautiful feet of him who had brought her glad tidings. Having thus washed and wiped them clean, she proceeds to anoint them with the ointment. To this conduct the Pharisee secretly objects, and

[1] Cf. Robertson's 'Human Race and other Sermons,' p. 182.

takes it as proof positive that Jesus is not the discerning Prophet he professes to be Our Lord's parable soon corrects the error and reveals the truth, and the poor sinner, so penitent and so grateful, is dismissed in peace.

I. GREAT SIN SHOULD NOT HINDER ANY OF US FROM COMING TO JESUS FOR PARDON. This is one of the difficulties which men make for themselves—they fancy that great sin may keep sinners from pardon. Now Jesus made it very plain that great sinners might receive pardon just as well as little sinners. The psalmist once prayed, "Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great" (Ps. xxv. 7), and some of the most notorious sinners ever seen have become monuments of mercy and joyful through pardon. This case before us is one in point. Jesus had so presented his message of salvation that this woman from the town embraced it and rejoiced in the thought of forgiveness. While, therefore, no one would recommend a sinner to sin in order to intensify his sense of guilt and qualify himself for receiving Christ's salvation, we would recommend every sinner to believe that the very enormity of his sins will move Christ's pity, and, when purged and pardoned, illustrate his saving power. Suppose a patient is brought to a hospital a mass of disease or of wounds and bruises: will not the very magnitude of his distress constitute such an appeal to pity as will secure his immediate admission? In the same way, great sin is an argument with the Saviour in favour of mercy, rather than any obstacle to it. Besides, we should always remember that our sense of sin is always vastly below the reality, and that we in most penitent mood have really a better opinion of ourselves than the circumstances warrant.

II. WE OUGHT COURAGEOUSLY TO PROFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN. This poor woman needed courage to profess Christ in Simon's house. Simon and his guests belonging to the Pharisaic party loathed her. It was a place where she was certain to be scorned and perhaps expelled. But her sense of obligation to Jesus and her love for his Person were so great that she could not forego her desire to make her way to his feet. And so she steals in and gets behind her Master, and proceeds to lavish her attention on his feet. So courageous is she, that she leisurely and most carefully washes his feet and wipes them with her hair and anoints them with the ointment; so that she actually, as Godet remarks, did the honours of the house, which Simon had neglected.[1] We need similarly to add to our faith courage (2 Pet. i. 4). We ought to give our hearts free play in their loyalty to Jesus. We must profess him before men, at whatever cost.

III. JESUS WILL ALWAYS TAKE OUR PART AGAINST THOSE WHO MISTAKE OUR MOTIVES OR DESPISE US. Jesus will acknowledge our profession of him in the next world, and even in this. In the case before us we see him taking the Pharisee to task for his mistake about the woman. Simon made several mistakes. 1. About the woman being unpardonable and unpardoned: she was neither. 2. About Jesus as being undiscerning and so ignorant of the woman's state: he was more thoroughly acquainted with her than she or Simon could be. 3. About himself, as nearer God's kingdom than she was: he was really further from Christ than she.[2] And Jesus consequently takes up the woman's cause and vindicates her character as a changed woman now and pardoned. This he does in parabolic language. The two debtors who are both forgiven have not the same sense of gratitude. Their gratitude is in proportion to their forgiveness. Hence the poor woman, feeling how much she has been forgiven, is proportionately grateful. The defence was triumphant. And in the same way will Jesus defend us if we are courageous in following him.

IV. LOVE IS THE PROOF OF PARDON. We are not pardoned because we love our Saviour, but we love him because he has pardoned us. Hence the stronger the love, the stronger must be our sense of the amount of sin we have been forgiven. Our love will grow just in proportion to our appreciation of our pardon.[3] Hence the man who comes to believe, with Paul, that he is "the chief of sinners," will love the Lord accordingly. He will feel constrained through his sense of obligation to love God with all his being.

[1] Cf. Saurin's 'Sermons,' tome iii. sermon ii.
[2] Cf. Ker's 'Sermons,' pp. 16—28.
[3] Cf. Maclaren's 'Sermons,' i. p. 28; Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' s. 751; Saphir's 'Conversion,' p. 253.

V. CHRIST'S ASSURANCE OF PARDON SECURES PEACE. The poor sinner's peace was threatened through the contempt of the Pharisees. But Jesus gives her special assurance, and sends her off in peace. So will it be in our own experience if we sincerely trust him.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1—3.—*St. Luke's brief notice of the women who formed part of the company of Jesus.*

Ver. 1.—**And it came to pass afterward.** St. Luke here notices an alteration in the Master's way of life. From this time forward Jesus ceased to make Capernaum "his city," his usual residence; he now journeys with his little band of followers from place to place. From this time there was also a distinct change in the tone of his teaching. The Greek word rendered "afterward" is the same as that translated "in order" in ch. i. 3. **Showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.** The public work of Jesus may be well arranged under three heads: his work as *Master*, as *Evangelist*, and as *Prophet*. The first had especial relation to his own immediate followers, women as well as men. In the second, as the Preacher of the grace, mercy, and the love of God, he peculiarly addressed himself to the general population;—this was the special side of the Lord's work which St. Luke loved to dwell on; this is what he alludes to here. In the third, as Prophet, the Master spoke generally to an evil generation, and especially to the political and religious leaders of the Jewish society of his day.

Ver. 2.—**And certain women.** It has before been noticed that St. Luke, in several places, especially notices the love and devotion of women to the Master. The present position of women is owing to the teaching of the Lord and his disciples. Fellow-heirs with men of the kingdom of heaven, it was obvious that they could no longer occupy on earth their old inferior and subordinate position. The sex, as a sex, has made a noble return to the Master. Much of the untold misery and suffering which tormented the old world has been at least alleviated in great measure by the labours of the women of Christianity. Several of these kindly grateful souls here alluded to evidently belonged to the wealthy class; some even occupied a high position in the society of that time. It was by their gifts, no doubt, that Jesus and his company were enabled to live during the thirty or more months of the public ministry. He had given up, as had also his companions, his earthly occupation, and we know that he deliberately refrained from ever using his miraculous power to supply his daily wants. The presence and loving interest of these and such like kindly generous friends answers the question—How did the Master and his disciples, poor men among poor men, live during the years of public teaching? **Mary called Magdalene.** The name Mary (Miriam) was a very favourite name among the Hebrew women; we meet with several in the gospel story. This one was called "Magdalene," or "of Magdala," to distinguish her from others bearing the same name. Magdala was a little town near Tiberias. There is nothing *definite* to connect her with the "sinner" of ch. vii. The early tradition which identified these two women was probably derived from Talmudic sources. There are many wild stories in these writings connected with one called Mary of Magdala, a grievous sinner. The "seven devils" probably allude to some aggravated form of demoniacal possession. Two sets of ecclesiastical legends busy themselves with the after-life of Mary of Magdala. The one represents her as coming with Lazarus and Martha to Marseilles; the other, as accompanying the Virgin and John to Ephesus.

Ver. 3.—**Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward.** She must have been a person of wealth and high rank at the court of Herod Antipas. There were evidently not a few believers in that wicked and dissolute centre. Some years later we read of Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod, as a notable Christian (Acts xiii. 1). Even Herod himself, we know, at first heard John the Baptist gladly; and, after the terrible judicial murder, we find that unhappy prince fancying that his victim had risen from the dead. It has been suggested that this Chuza was the nobleman of Capernaum whose dying son was healed by Jesus (John iv. 46). If this be the case, there would be a special reason for the loving devotion of this Joanna to the Master. She reappears among the faithful women in the history of the Resurrection (ch. xxiv. 10). **Susanna.** The name signifies "lily." The Jews were fond of giving the names of flowers and trees to their girls; thus *Rhoda*, a rose (Acts xii. 13), *Tamar*, a palm (2 Sam. xiii. 2), among many instances. Of this Susanna nothing further is known.

Vers. 4—15.—*The parable of the sower, and the Lord's interpretation of it.*

Ver. 4.—**And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him**

out of every city, he spake by a parable. A great change, it is clear, took place in our Lord's way of working at this period. We have already (in the note on ver. 1) remarked that from henceforth he dwelt no longer in one centre, his own city Capernaum, but moved about from place to place. A new way of teaching was now adopted—that of the "parable." It was from this time onward that, when he taught, he seems generally to have spoken in those famous parables, or stories, in which so much of his recorded teaching is shrined. Hitherto in his preaching he had occasionally made use of similes or comparisons, as in ch. v. 6 and vi. 29, 48; but he only began the formal use of the parable at this period, and the parable of the sower seems to have been the earliest spoken. Perhaps because it was the first, perhaps on account of the far-reaching nature of its contents, the story of "the sower" evidently impressed itself with singular force upon the minds of the disciples. It evidently formed a favourite "memory" among the first heralds of the new faith. It is the only one, with the exception of the vine-dressers, one of the latest spoken, which has been preserved by the three—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is identical in structure and in teaching in all the three, which shows that they were relating the same story. It differs, however, in detail; we thus gather that the three did not copy from one primitive document, but that these "memories" were derived either from their own recollections or at least from different sources. Now, what induced the Master thus deliberately to change the manner of his teaching? In other words, why, from this time forward, does he veil so much of his deep Divine thought in parables? Let us consider the attitude of the crowds who till now had been listening to him. What may be termed the Galilæan revival had well-nigh come to an end. The enthusiasm he had evoked by his burning words, his true wisdom, his novel exposition of what belonged to human life and duty, was, when he left Capernaum and began his preaching in every little village (ver. 1), at its height. But the great Heart-reader knew well that the hour of reaction was at hand. *Then* the pressure of the crowds which thronged him was so great that, to speak this first parable, he had to get into a boat and address the multitude standing on the shore (Matt. xiii. 2); but the moment was at hand which St. John (vi. 66) refers to in his sad words, "From *that time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." It was in view of that moment that Jesus commenced his parable-teaching with "the sower." As regards the *great mass* of the people who had crowded to hear his words and look on his miracles, the Lord knew that his work had practically failed. At the first he spoke to the people plainly. The sermon on the mount, for instance, contains little, if anything, of the parable form; but they understood him not, forming altogether false views of the kingdom he described to them. He now changes his method of teaching, veiling his thoughts in parables, in order that *his own*, to whom privately he gave the key to the right understanding of the parables, should see more clearly, and that those who deliberately misunderstood him—the hostile Pharisee and Sadducee, for instance—should be simply mystified and perplexed as to the Teacher's meaning; while the merely thoughtless might possibly be fascinated and attracted by this new manner of teaching, which evidently veiled some hidden meaning. These last would probably be induced to inquire further as to the meaning of these strange parable-stories. Professor Bruce, who has very ably discussed the reasons which induced Christ at this period of his ministry to speak in parables, says there is a mood which leads a man to present his thoughts in this form. "It is the mood of one whose heart is chilled, and whose spirit is saddened by a sense of loneliness, and who, retiring within himself by a process of reflection, frames for his thoughts forms which half conceal, half reveal them—reveal them more perfectly to those who understand, hide them from those who do not (and will not)—forms beautiful, but also melancholy, as the hues of forest in late autumn. If this view be correct, we should expect the teaching in parables would not form a feature of the *initial* stage of Christ's ministry. And such accordingly was the fact." As regarded the men of his own generation, did he use the parable way of teaching almost as a fan to separate the wheat from the chaff? "That he had to speak in parables was one of the burdens of the Son of man, to be placed side by side with the fact that he had not where to lay his head" (Professor Bruce, 'Parabolic Teaching of Christ,' book i. ch. i.). *And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city.* The impression of the witness who told the story to Luke and Paul evidently was that at this period of the Lord's ministry vast crowds flocked to listen or to see. St. Matthew expresses the same conviction in a different but in an equally forcible manner. Only the Lord knew how hollow all this seeming popularity was, and how soon the crowds would melt away. *He spake by a parable.* Roughly to distinguish between the parable and the fable: The fable would tell its moral truth, but its imagery might be purely fanciful; for instance, *animals* or

even *trees*, might be represented as reasoning and speaking. The parable, on the contrary, never violated probability, but told its solemn lesson, often certainly in a dramatic form, but its imagery was never fanciful or impossible.

Ver. 5.—**A sower went out to sow his seed.** The Master's words, in after-days, must often have come home to the disciples. They would feel that in each of them, if they were faithful to their work, the "sower" of the parable was reproduced; they would remember what they had heard from his lips; how he had warned them of the reception which their words would surely meet with; how by far the greater proportion of the seed they would sow, would perish. But though the disciples and all true Christian men in a greater or less degree reproduce the sower of the parable, still the great Sower, it must be remembered, is the Holy Spirit. Every true teacher or sower of the Word does but repeat what they have learned from him. **And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside.** Dean Stanley, on the scenery of the parable, thus writes: "Is there anything on the spot to suggest the images thus conveyed? So I asked as I rode along the tract under the hillside, by which the Plain of Gennesaret is approached. So I asked at the moment, seeing nothing but the steep sides of the hill, alternately of rock and grass. And when I thought of the parable of the sower, I answered that here at least was nothing on which the Divine teaching could fasten; it must have been the distant corn-fields of Samaria or Esdraelon on which his mind was dwelling. The thought had hardly occurred to me when a slight recess in the hillside, close upon the plain, disclosed at once, in detail, and with a conjunction which I remember nowhere else in Palestine, every feature of the great parable. There was the undulating corn-field descending to the water's edge; there was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here and there on either side of it, or upon it; itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human foot" ('Sinai and Palestine,' ch. xiii.).

Ver. 6.—**And some fell upon a rock.** The picture here is not of a soil full of stones, but of a rocky portion of the corn-land where the rock is only covered with a thin layer of earth.

Ver. 7.—**And some fell among thorns.** "Every one who has been in Palestine must have been struck with the number of thorny shrubs and plants that abound there. The traveller finds them in his path, go where he may. Many of them are small, but some grow as high as a man's head. The rabbinical writers say that there are no less than twenty-two words in the Hebrew Bible denoting thorny and prickly plants" (Professor Hacket).

Ver. 8.—**And bare fruit an hundredfold.** This is by no means an unheard-of increase even in the West, where vegetation is less luxuriant. Herodotus, quoted by Trench ('Parables'), mentions that two hundredfold was a common return in the Plain of Babylon, and sometimes three hundredfold; and Niebuhr mentions a species of maize that returns four hundredfold. On the marvellous fruit-bearing which would take place in the days of the Lord's future kingdom on earth, Irenæus gives a quotation from Papias, who gave it on the authority of those who had heard St. John speak of the teaching of the Lord to that effect. Professor Westcott ('Introduction to the Study of the Gospels,' Appendix C, 21) thinks that the tradition was based on the real discourses of the Lord. It is, of course, allegorical, for is it not a memory of a conversation between Jesus and his disciples arising out of this parable of the sower? "The Lord taught of those days (of his future kingdom on earth) and said, *The days will come in which vines shall spring up, each having ten thousand stocks, and on each stock ten thousand branches, and on each branch ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand bunches, and on each bunch ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed shall give five and twenty measures of wine. And when any saint shall have seized one bunch, another shall cry, I am a better bunch; take me; through me bless the Lord.* Likewise also (he said) that *a grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand ears of corn, and each grain ten pounds of fine pure flour; and so all other fruits, and seeds, and each herb according to its proper nature.* . . . And he (Papias) added, saying, Now, these things are credible to them that believe. And when Judas the traitor believed not, and asked—How, then, shall such productions proceed from the Lord? the Lord said, *They shall see who come to those times*" (Papias; see Irenæus, v. 33. 3).

Ver. 9.—**And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be?** This is the only parable St. Luke gives as spoken by our Lord in this place. St. Matthew—who gives the additional detail that on account of the pressure of the crowd on the lake-shore it was spoken from a boat moored close to the bank—relates seven parables here in sequence. It is probable that the Master spoke some of these at least on this occasion, but St. Luke, possibly on account of its extreme solemnity, possibly because he wished to mark *this* parable as the first of this new kind of teaching, relates it and its interpretation only, saying nothing

further respecting that day's parable-teaching. It is most probable that all these reported discourses, parables, expositions, or sermons, are simply a *résumé* of the original words. The disciples evidently by their question—which St. Mark tells us was put to Jesus when they were alone with him—were surprised and puzzled, first at the strange change which that eventful day inaugurated in the method of their Master's teaching, and secondly, at the peculiar character of this his first great parable-lesson. It was, indeed, a sombre and depressing announcement whatever way it was looked at—sombre as a picture of the results of his own past ministry, depressing if regarded as a prophecy of their future success as teachers.

Ver. 10.—**And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.** In St. Matthew we have the Lord's reply given at greater length; the same prophecy of Isaiah which here forms the basis of St. Luke's account of Jesus' reply is given in full. St. Mark weaves the Isaiah-words into the Master's answer. The thought, however, in each of the three accounts is exactly the same. The parable mode of teaching was adopted by Jesus who, as Heart-reader, was aware now by sad experience and still sadder foreknowledge, that his glorious news rather repelled than attracted the ordinary hearer. They did not *want* to be disturbed from their earthly hopes and loves and fears. They preferred *not* to be healed as God would heal them. The Master then spoke his parables with the intention of veiling his Divine story from the careless and indifferent. These, he knew, would for the most part be repelled by such teaching, while it would specially attract the earnest inquirer. "The veil which it (the parable) throws over the truth becomes transparent to the attentive mind, while it remains impenetrable to the careless" (Godet). It was therefore his deliberate wish that such hearers might neither see nor understand. Dr. Morrison ('Commentary on St. Mark') well and clearly puts the Lord's thought here: "It is the sinner's *deeply rooted wish* that he should *not* see and understand, and the sad explanation of this wish is given by St. Mark—the sinner is afraid lest he should be prevailed to turn. *Lest at any time they should be converted* (Mark iv. 12)."

Vers. 11—15.—*The Lord's interpretation of the parable of the sower.*

Ver. 11.—**The seed is the Word of God.** It was his own sad experience the Master was relating. The picture was of things, too, which had already happened in the case of many of his own true servants, the prophets. It mirrored, too, the many *future* failures and the few *future* successes of the listening disciples; it warned them not to be deluded by appearances, not to be discouraged by apparent failure. The Word, of course, in the first instance is his own teaching; it comprehends, however, any preaching or teaching, whether of prophet of the past or minister of the future, which tries faithfully to copy his own.

Ver. 12.—**Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.** The wayside hearers represent the great outer circle of men and women who more or less respect religion. It must be carefully borne in mind that in none of the four classes pictured in the parable are despisers of God, declared enemies of religion, portrayed. To these the gospel, with its warnings and its promises, rarely if ever speaks. These of "the wayside" are they whose hearts resemble a footpath, beaten hard and flat by the constant passing to and fro of wishes of the flesh, of thoughts concerning earthly things, mere sordid hopes and fears. Into these hearts the Word can never really penetrate. Momentary influence now and again seems to have been gained, but the many watchful agents of the evil one, with swift wings, like birds of the air, swoop down and snatch away the scattered seed which for a moment seemed as though it would take root. Judas Iscariot the Jew, and Pontius Pilate the Roman, might be instanced as types of this class. These—before their awful fate—both *appeared* to have been moved. The one for long months followed the Lord and was trusted by him; the other pitied, and for a moment in his—Pilate's case—pity seemed passing into love and admiration, and tried to find a way of escape for the innocent Prisoner. But the one betrayed, and the other delivered to death, the sinless Son of God!

Ver. 13.—**They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.** These represent natures at once impressionable and excitable; impulsive men and women who, charmed with the beauty, perhaps (to them) the novelty, of the gospel message, receive the Word, take up the Master's yoke with joy, but without thought. These hastily make a religious profession, but they forget altogether to count what the real cost of such a profession amounts to. Upon these superficial but kindly natures come trouble, perplexity, discouragement, perhaps persecution; then quickly the once-loved religion withers

away like corn growing on rocky places beneath the burning summer sun. John Mark, the would-be missionary companion of Paul and Barnabas, was one of this impulsive but little-enduring class; and Demas, once the friend of Paul, but who loved too well the present world. Another instance would be the man who offered to follow Jesus "whithersoever thou goest," as he phrased it, till he found, by the Lord's grave answer, that the Master he offered to follow had neither home nor resting-place; then he seems quickly to have turned back.

Ver. 14.—**And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.** There is something very sad in this, the thorn-choked class of believers. Each of them represents the *vie manquée;* the beautiful flower just spoiled as it was bursting into full bloom. These hear the Word, and, hearing it, grasp its deep solemn meaning, and for a *part* of each day honestly try to live the life which that Divine Word pressed home to them. But with these there is another life; side by side with the golden grain has grown up a crop of thorns, which, unless destroyed in time, will choke and utterly mar, as, alas, it often does, the true corn. Such men and women, the double-minded ones of St. James, try to serve two masters—God and the world. Dr. Morrison has a good note on the parallel passage in St. Mark, where, after suggesting that the cares, the riches, and the pleasures of this life in our time are such things as houses, land, works of art and *virtu*, posts of honour, gaiety of garments, grandeur of entertainments, and in general the myriad appliances of luxury, he goes on to say, "These come more or less in upon all men, but some men lay themselves peculiarly open to their influence, and allow them to twine and twist themselves like the serpents of Laocoon around every energy and susceptibility of their being." The rich young ruler whom Jesus loved is a fair instance of this not uncommon character, which perhaps is more often met with among the more cultured of society than among the poor and the artisan class. There must have been much that was really beautiful and true in that young man, or Jesus never had singled him out as one whom he especially loved, and yet in his case the thorns of riches and luxury had so twined themselves among the real corn that, as far as we know, it never brought fruit to perfection. Ananias and Sapphira may, too, be instanced. They had given up much for the Name's sake, associated themselves with a hated and persecuted sect, sacrificed a large portion of their property to help the poor of the flock, and yet these apparently devoted ones were living a double life; the thorns had so grown up and twined about the corn that in their field nothing ever ripened.

Ver. 15.—**But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.** In this portraiture of the fourth class of our Lord's great life-picture of hearers of and inquirers concerning religion, the Greek words rendered in the Authorized Version "honest" and "good" ("in an honest and good heart") were words well known and in familiar use among the widely spread Greek-speaking peoples for whom especially St. Luke's Gospel was compiled. Professor Bruce ('Parabolic Teaching of Christ,' ch. i.) remarks that "the man who united the two qualities expressed by the term 'honest' (better rendered 'noble') and 'good,' represented the beau-ideal of manhood. He was one whose aim was noble, and who was generously devoted to his aim. The expression rendered 'honest' (better translated 'noble,' καλός) has reference to aims or chief ends, and describes one whose mind is raised above moral vulgarity, and is bent, not on money-making and such low pursuits, but on the attainment of wisdom, holiness, and righteousness. The epithet rendered 'good' (ἀγαθός) denotes generous self-abandonment in the prosecution of lofty ends; large-heartedness, magnanimous, overflowing devotion." Mary of Bethany, with her devoted love and her generous friendship; the centurion Cornelius, with his fervent piety and his noble generosity towards a despised and hated race; Barnabas, with his splendid liberality, his utter absence of care for self, his bright, loving trust in human nature, his true charity, "bearing all things, hoping all things;"—are good examples, drawn from different sexes and from varied races, and out of diverse paths of life, of these true inquirers, who not only hear the Word, but keep it.

Vers. 16—18.—*A solemn conclusion of the Lord's to his exposition of his first great parable.*

Ver. 16.—**No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.** The meaning of the Lord's saying here is—the disciples must not look on this parable-method of teaching, which from henceforth he purposed frequently to adopt, as mysterious, or as containing anything beyond ordinary human comprehension. The explanation of "the sower," which he

had just given them, showed them how really simple and adapted to everyday life his teaching was. "No man," said the Lord, "when he hath lighted the candle of the true knowledge, really wishes to hide it—he rather displays it that men may see the light; and that is what I have been doing for you in my careful explanation of my story."

Ver. 17.—**For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.** "All will gradually become clear to them. Whilst the night thickens over Israel on account of its unbelief, the disciples will advance into even fuller light, until there is nothing left in the plan of God which is obscure or hidden. The heart of Jesus is lifted up at this prospect. This accounts for the poetical rhythm which always appears at such moments" (Godet). This is very good, but Godet scarcely goes far enough. The Master's words surely promise that, as the ages advance, more and ever more light on the subject of God's dealings with men will be vouchsafed to the humble, patient searcher after the Divine wisdom. This apophthegm seems to have been a very favourite one of our Lord; he evidently used it on several occasions (see, for instance, Matt. x. 26, where the same words are reported to have been spoken in a different connection).

Ver. 18.—**Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.** A grave warning to his disciples primarily, and then to all who take upon themselves any work, even the humblest, connected with teaching Divine truth. The real student, patient, humble, and restlessly industrious, he shall be endowed with ever-increasing powers; while the make-believe, lazy, and self-sufficient one shall be punished by the gradual waning of the little light which once shone in his soul.

Vers. 19—21.—*Interference of Christ's mother and his brethren.*

Ver. 19.—**Then came to him his mother and his brethren.** St. Mark, in his third chapter, gives us the reasons which led to this scene. It had been bruited abroad that a species of frenzy had seized upon that strange Man who had been brought up in their midst, and who had lately aroused such enthusiasm in all the crowded lake-district of Galilee. It is difficult to estimate aright the feelings of his own family towards him; admiration and love seem to have struggled in their hearts with prejudice and jealousy—not in the case of Mary, but in the case of the so-called brothers. They seem ever to have been close to him during his public ministry, not among his "own," but still near him, watching him, and listening to him with a half-wondering, half-grudging admiration. But John tells us (vii. 5) that they did not believe in him. It needed the Resurrection to convert them. The crowd round the Master at this juncture was so great that they—his kinsmen—could not press through it to speak to him. They conveyed to him, however, a message. The Heart-reader knew well what were the motives which induced them to come to him just then; the brothers were so distrustful that they had suffered themselves to be carried away by the Pharisees' evil surmises, that Jesus was possessed by a devil. The mother, influenced by her earthly fears for her Son, was induced to accompany the brothers, no doubt hoping to induce him to withdraw himself from the scene of excitement, at all events for a season.

Ver. 21.—**And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God, and do it.** The Master used the opportunity to send home into the hearts of the many listeners the stern, grave lesson that there was something more solemn even than family ties, and that these, holy and binding though they were, must not be allowed to stand in the way of plain, unmistakable duty.

Vers. 22—25.—*The lake-storm is stilled.*

Ver. 23.—**But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.** In the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, this and the three following incidents are closely united—the lake-storm; the devils sent into the herd of swine; the raising of the little daughter of Jairus; the healing of the woman afflicted with the issue of blood. Although this cycle of acts is always united by the three, yet they do not occupy the same position chronologically in the three Gospels. The explanation of this probably is that in the primitive apostolic teaching it was usual to relate these four incidents of the Master's work together. In St. Matthew, between the recital of the healing of the demoniac and the raising of the daughter of Jairus, are intercalated the healing of the paralytic, and the call of Matthew, and the feast which followed. These incidents, in a more extended primitive discourse, were no doubt joined to the other four recitals. Had they used a common document, the three would surely have placed them in the same connection with other events. They most likely were worked, with many other signs, somewhere in this period of public work, and were chosen by the first preachers of "the Name" as specially illustrative acts,

showing the Lord's power over the elements, over the unseen spirits of evil, over death, over wearying chronic sickness. On the sudden storm, travellers remark how, without warning, winds from the snowy summits of the neighbouring Hermon rush down the mountain gorges into the warm tropical air of the lake-basin, and in a short space of time the calm Galilee sea is lashed into storm and foam. The graphic description of Mark is, as usual, the most vivid, and gives us, in a few master-touches, the aspect of the scene. The weary Master sleeping in the stern of the fishing-boat; the pillow beneath his head; the disciples, terrified by the sudden uproar of the waves surging round their frail bark, as the wild winds rushed down on the lake, hastily awaking their tired Master. The danger must have been very real to have alarmed these Gennesaret fishermen; the storm must have been something more than the usual lake-tempests. The very words the Lord used when he lifted up his head and saw the danger, St. Mark preserves for us. With his "Hush!" he silenced the wild roar of the winds and waters; with his "Be still!" he quieted the heaving waves. Some commentators, reasoning from the Master's personal address to the elements—the winds and the waters—suppose that, in the midst of the storm, was some evil presence, who, taking advantage of our Lord's helpless condition—asleep in that frail fisher's boat—raised up the wild storm, hoping, perhaps, to cut short his life. The idea of spirits thus blending with the elements is one by no means unknown to Scripture. "Who maketh his angels winds [rather than the usual, better-known translation, 'spirits'], his ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. civ. 4; Heb. i. 7; Job i. 12).

Vers. 26—39.—*The evil spirit in the Gergesene demoniac is dismissed into the herd of swine.*

Ver. 26.—**And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes.** There is a perplexing difference in the reading of the older manuscripts here, but it is simply a question of the precise name of the locality where the great miracle was worked. In the three narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke the older manuscripts vary between "Gergesenes," "Gerasenes," and "Gadarenes." *Gadara* was a city of some importance, about three hours' journey distant from the southern end of the Lake of Gennesaret. Its ruins are well known, and are distinguished by the remains of two amphitheatres. *Gerasa* was also a place of mark, and was situate about fifty miles from the lake. These cities might in the days of our Lord have either given its name to a great district stretching to the borders of the lake. *Gergesa* was a small and very obscure town nearly opposite Capernaum. There are some ruins now on this spot still known by the very slight corruption of *Kerzha*. There is scarcely any doubt that the scene of the miracle on the poor demoniac, and of the subsequent possession of the swine, must be looked for on this spot. But it was an obscure, little-known spot, and in very early days the preachers who told the story of the great miracle may have often spoken of the country as the district of the *well-known* Gerasa or Gadara, rather than of the *unknown* village of Gergesa. Hence probably the variations in the name in the older manuscripts here.

Ver. 27.—**There met him out of the city a certain man**; better rendered, *there met him a man of the city.* He had been a dweller in Gergesa in old days before the terrible possession began. St. Matthew, in his account, tells us of two demoniacs. SS. Mark and Luke, however, both only mention one, the other for some reason or other had passed out of their thoughts—possibly the malady was much less severe, and the strange dialogue and its results had not taken place in his case. **Which had devils long time**; better, *dæmons* (*daimonia*). One of the current Jewish traditions was that these evil spirits were not fallen angels, but the spirits of wicked men who were dead (see Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' vii. 6. 3). The plural form "devils"—bitterly referred to later by the sufferer, when he was asked his name—seems in his case to speak of a very aggravated form of the awful malady. **And ware no clothes, neither abode in any house.** These were no uncommon features of the soul-malady—the horror at any bodily restraint, either connected with clothes or dwellings; a similar shrinking is not unusual even in the comparatively modified modern phases of madness. **But in the tombs.** Until the teaching and spirit of Jesus had suggested, even among men who had no faith in his Name, some thought and consideration for the helpless sufferers of humanity, neither hospital, nor home, nor asylum existed where these unhappy ones could find a refuge. In these gloomy tombs hollowed out of the rock on the mountain-side—polluted spots for the living, according to the Jewish ritual—these maniacs found the utter solitude they craved for.

Ver. 28.—**When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus?** "The sight of Jesus appears to have produced an extraordinary impression upon him. The holy, calm, gentle majesty, the tender compassion, and the conscious sovereignty which were expressed in the aspect of our Lord, awakened in him, by force of contrast, the humbling conscious-

ness of his own state of moral disorder" (Godet). Thou Son of God most high. There seems some probability that this expression was frequently used in cases of exorcism of evil spirits; for again in Acts xvi. 17 the poor slave-girl, who we read had a Pythoness-spirit, which brought in no small gain to her masters, speaks of Paul and his friends, just before the apostle in his Master's Name cast the spirit out, as servants of the most high God. I beseech thee, torment me not. In this form of possession one remarkable and very terrible feature seems to have been the divided consciousness; the sufferer identifies himself with the demons, and now one speaks, now the other. St. Matthew adds a dread detail to this petition to the Lord, "*before the time:*" the evil spirits thus recognizing a period when certain torment would be their hapless destiny. The expression "torment" meets us in the parable of Lazarus; the dwelling-place of the rich man after death is *a place of torment*. In Matt. xviii. 34 the ministers of judgment are the *tormentors*. One very solemn reason why this special case of exorcism on the part of our Lord is related with so much detail and repeated by the three evangelists, SS. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, seems to be the glimpse which the dialogue between the evil spirits and the Master opens to us of the dread realities hidden in the future for those who sin *deliberately* against the will of God. The existence of the place or state of torment is affirmed very pointedly by our Lord and his disciples; but having done this they dwell but little on it. There is a striking and solemn quotation in Dr. Morrison's 'Commentary on St. Mark' on this clear but guarded reference to the final sufferings of those who will not be submissive to the moral will of God, "Further curiosity as to the *when*, the *where*, and the *how*, does not become beings whose main business and greatest wisdom is to fly from, not to pry too close into, these terrible secrets of the dark kingdom."

Ver. 30.—**And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him** The Master vouchsafed no reply to the demons' prayer, but puts a quiet suggestive question to their unhappy victim. The Lord's words, as Dean Plumptre suggests, would serve "to recall to the man's mind that he had once a human name, with all its memories of human fellowship. It was a stage, even in spite of the paroxysm that followed, in the process of recovery, in so far as it helped to disentangle him from the confusion between himself and the demons which caused his misery. But, at first, the question seems only to increase the evil. 'My name is Legion, for we are many.' The irresistible might, the full array of the Roman legion, with its six thousand soldiers, seemed to the demoniac the one adequate symbol of the wild, uncontrollable impulses of passion and of dread that were sweeping through his soul."

Ver. 31.—**And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.** This time the voice and the request apparently proceed from the terrible presence which had made the soul of the unhappy man their temporary habitation. The direful confusion in the state of the poor demoniac is shown by this request. By whom was it made? The bystanders could discern no difference between the possessed and the spirits dwelling in the afflicted human being. So St. Mark, in his relation, puts these words into the demoniac's mouth, "And *he* besought him much that he would not send *them* away out of the country;" apparently here partly conscious of his own personal being, and partly identifying himself with the demoniac forces which were afflicting him. The request is a strange one, and suggests much anxious thought. What is the abyss these rebel-spirits dreaded with so great a dread? It would seem as though, to use Godet's thought, that for beings alienated from God, the power of acting on the world is a temporary solace to their unrest, and that to be deprived of this power is for them just what a return to prison is for the captive. St. Mark's expression here is a curious one. He represents the spirits requesting Jesus "not to send them away out of the country." The two accounts put together tell us that these spirits were aware, if they were driven out of the country—whatever that expression signified, this earth possibly—they must go out into the deep, the abyss, what is called "the bottomless pit" in Rev. ix. 1, 2, 11. Any doom seemed to these lost ones preferable to *that*. The whole train of thought suggested by the incident and the words of the Lord is very terrible. We see at least one reason *why* the first preachers of the Word have selected *this* exorcism. It indeed lifts a bit of the curtain which hangs between us and the night of endless woe!

Ver. 32.—**And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.** For what end was this request? Was it simply the way they chose to enter the abyss by? We know that the lives of the creatures, after the permission was given, lasted but a few minutes at most. Was it a desire to do more mischief during their brief sojourn on earth? Theophylact (eighth century) suggests that the purpose of the

evil spirits, in their request, was to injure Jesus in that part of the country by arousing fears among the covetous inhabitants lest they too might lose, in a similar way, their herds. But to the writer of this note it seems best to confess that no satisfactory answer can ever be given here. We know so little of these dread spirits of evil. The reason of the Lord's permission is more obvious. Some such visible proof as the sight of the evil and unclean forces that had mastered him so long, transferred to the bodies of other creatures and working their wild will upon them, was probably a necessary element in his perfect cure. It is likely also that Jesus wished to show his indignation at the flagrant disregard of the Mosaic Law, at the open disobedience to the Divine injunctions respecting swine, which was shown by the presence of so vast a herd of these animals pronounced unclean by the Mosaic Law under which these people were professedly living (St. Mark gives the number as two thousand). In this district the large majority of the inhabitants were Jews. The keeping or the rearing of swine was strictly forbidden by the Jewish canon law. Other Oriental peoples also held these animals as unclean. Herodotus (ii. 47) tells us that in Egypt there was a special class of swineherds, who alone among the inhabitants of the country were forbidden to enter a temple. This degraded caste were only allowed to marry among themselves. The eating of swine's flesh is referred to by Isaiah (lxv. 3, 4) as among the acts of the people which continually provoked the Lord to anger.

Ver. 33.—**And the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.** Some exception has been taken at our Lord's action here in connection with the swine, but it has been well said "that the antedating of the death of a herd of unclean animals was as nothing compared with the deliverance of a human soul." But it seems better to see, in the permitted destruction of the herd, the Lord's grave rebuke to the open disregarders of the holy ritual law of Israel, for the sake of selfish lucre.

Ver. 34.—**When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.** The men who kept the swine had witnessed the whole transaction; and as the Master uttered the word "Go," they saw a change in a moment pass through the vast herd. A wild panic seemed to seize the creatures, *something* had filled them with a great fear,—they would hurry from the *unseen* but *felt* presence; the cool blue waters of the lake, clearly seen from the upland down where they were feeding, seemed to promise the best refuge; they rushed from the plateau down a steep incline, which travellers since think they have identified, and the deep waters of Gennesaret put a quick end to the creatures' torments.

Vers. 35, 36.—**Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.** The swineherds told their story, quickly the news spread; a great concourse from all the country-side soon gathered round the scene of the catastrophe. It was quiet then; the waters of the lake had closed over the tormented creatures. The demoniac, so long the terror of the neighbourhood, now sane, clothed, too, like one of them, was sitting peacefully full of deep, awe-ful gratitude at the Master's feet; the disciples were standing round; Jesus was no doubt teaching them the deep import of the scene they had lately witnessed.

Ver. 37.—**Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.** The recital had no effect upon the headmen of the neighbouring towns and villages. They were probably for the most part owners of similar herds of swine, perhaps sharers in nameless sins, all specially hateful to the Rabbi Jesus, whom they no doubt knew well by repute. But he was, they saw, something more than a poor wandering moral Teacher; he possessed strange and awful powers: had they not had terrible experience of them? Which of them in that law-breaking, dissolute neighbourhood might not be the next victim whose unclean possessions were to be swept away? So they would have none of him: let him as quickly as possible depart from their coasts. They felt they could not keep both the Saviour and their swine, and of the two they preferred their swine! *And returned back again.* The chance, as far as the Gadarene district was concerned, was gone for ever. Jesus probably returned thither no more. Within forty years this district was the scene of one of the terrible calamities of the great Roman war. The sack of Gadara, and the desolation and ruin which was the hapless lot of this once wealthy but evil-living district, is one of the many melancholy chapters of the hopeless Jewish revolt (see Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' iii. 7. 1; iv. 7. 4). A modern traveller, Dr. Thomson, remarks, singularly enough, that the old district of Gadara at the present day is infested with wild, fierce hogs: "Everywhere," he writes,

"the land is ploughed up by wild hogs in search of roots on which they live" ('The Land and the Book,' ii. ch. 25).

Ver. 38.—**Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying.** The restored man longed to remain with his Deliverer, but this was not permitted—the great Teacher bade him stay behind in his own country. Perhaps, thought the Redeemer, "*some* of these hard-hearted Gadarenes will be won by his testimony—one of themselves, too, and so notorious a sufferer." His work, the Master told him, was *there* among his own people; so he stayed, and the next verse (39) tells us how he worked as a diligent evangelist. It is noteworthy how the Master referred the great act of deliverance to *God*. But to the restored, Jesus was at once his Deliverer and his God. The text of his preaching was "how great things Jesus had done unto him."

Vers. 40—56.—*The healing of the woman with the issue of blood, and the raising of the daughter of Jairus.*

Ver. 40.—**When Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.** Allusion has already been made, in the notes which preceded the parable of the sower, to the enthusiasm for Jesus in the Galilee lake-cities and their neighbourhood. This, as the Master well knew, was only a temporary religious revival, but still while it lasted it gathered great crowds in every place where he visited. He had not been long in the Gadarene district, but his return was eagerly looked for in Galilee. This verse describes his reception on his return by the people, and introduces the recital of two famous miracles which he worked in this period of his ministry after his brief visit to the other shore of the lake. St. Matthew, before speaking of the request of Jairus that the Master would visit his dying child, relates the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum, and the calling of Matthew the apostle. It is scarcely possible now to arrange the events related, in their proper chronological order. The Gospel histories pretty faithfully represent the teaching of the first days, in which it was evidently the practice of apostles and apostolic men to group their accounts of particular incidents in the Lord's life with a view to teaching certain lessons connected with doctrine or with daily living, often disregarding the order in which these incidents really happened. Hence so many of the differences in detail in our Gospels.

Ver. 41.—**And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue.** The public request, made too with intense earnestness, of one holding such a position, is a clear proof that the Galilee enthusiasm for Jesus was by no means confined to the poorer part of the population, or even to the more careless and thoughtless; such a man as Jairus is a fair representative of the well-to-do, perhaps wealthy, orthodox Jew; strict and rigid in his ritual observances, and held in high honour by his fellow Jewish citizens. The name is only a form of the Hebrew *Jair* (Judg. x. 3).

Ver. 42.—**One only daughter.** This is not the only place where the same touching detail is recorded by this evangelist. Compare the story of the widow's son at Nain (ch. vii. 12), and the healing of the lunatic boy (ch. ix. 38). St. Luke's Gospel owes these and many similar touches of deep true sympathy to the great loving heart of the real author of the third Gospel, Paul.

Vers. 43, 44.—**And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment.** It may be assumed that the disease from which she suffered made her, according to the Levitical Law, ceremonially unclean; this had separated her in a great measure for a very long period from all contact with the outer world. This would well account for her shrinking from any public appeal to the great Physician. The border of the Lord's garment which the woman touched was one of the four tassels which formed part of the Jewish tallith, or mantle; one of these was always arranged so as to hang down over the shoulder at the back; it was this one which the sufferer's fingers grasped. There was a certain sacredness about these tassels, as being part of the memorial dress enjoined by the Levitical Law, which, no doubt, induced the woman to touch this particular portion of the Saviour's dress. **And immediately her issue of blood stanched.** This is not the only instance of this kind of strange faith mingled with superstition being signally rewarded. The case of the miraculous efficacy of the handkerchiefs and aprons which had had contact with Paul's body (Acts xix. 12) is an interesting example. A still more startling one exists in the healing influence of the *shadow* of Peter falling on the sick as he passed along the street (Acts v. 15). The lesson evidently intended to be left on the Church of Christ by this and similar incidents is a very instructive one. Faith in Christ is a broad inclusive term: it is accepted and blest by the Master, as we see from the gospel story, in all its many degrees of development, from the elementary shape which it assumed in the case of

this poor loving superstitious soul, to the splendid proportions which it reached in the lives of a Stephen and a Paul. Faith in him, from its rudest form to its grandest development, the Master knew would ever purify and elevate the character. It would, as it grew, be the best teacher and the truest monitor of the noble, generous life he loved. Therefore he watched for it, encouraged it, helped it; and his Church, if it would imitate its Master, would do well to follow his wise and loving example by fostering in every form, however crude, faith in Jesus Christ; for this incident in the Divine and perfect life which we have just dwelt on, teaches us with striking clearness that he can and will bless the dimmest, most imperfect faith, the faith of the little child, and of the poorest untaught one.

Ver. 45.—**Who touched me?** The Master's words here and the statement of ver. 46, "For I perceive that virtue is gone out of me," tell us something of the earnestness and faith of the suppliant. Many, as Peter said, in that crowd were touching Jesus as they pressed round him to look on his face or to listen to his words, but of them all none save this poor sufferer "touched" him in the true deep sense of touching, with the fixed idea that contact with his blessed Person would benefit or heal them.

Ver. 48.—**Daughter, be of good comfort.** This is the only place in the Gospels where our Lord is reported to have used this loving word to any woman. Eusebius preserves a curious legend in connection with this act of healing. In his time (fourth century) the house of this happy one who met Jesus in her sad life-journey, was shown at Paneas, a town in the north of Palestine. At the entrance of the house, on a stone pedestal, stood two brazen statues—one represented a woman kneeling; the other, a man with his cloak over his shoulder and his hand stretched out toward the kneeling woman. Eusebius relates how he had seen the house and statues and heard the legend ('Hist. Eccl.,' vii. 18). In the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, a very early writing, though not one possessing much critical value, the name of the woman is stated to be Veronica. It was she, goes on the story to relate, who, on the Via Dolorosa, when the Lord, on his way to Calvary, stumbled and fell, gave the handkerchief to wipe the blessed face.

Ver. 49.—**While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.** This interruption, which must have occupied some time, was, no doubt, a sore trial to the ruler's faith. His little daughter was, he knew well, dying; and though he trusted that the famous Rabbi had power to arrest the progress of disease, he never seems for a moment to have contemplated his wrestling with *death*; indeed, the bare thought of recalling the spirit to the deserted clay tenement evidently never occurred to any of that sad household, while the *hired* mourners (vers. 52, 53, and Mark v. 38), too accustomed to the sight of death in all its forms to dream of any man, however great a physician, recalling the dead to life, transgressing all courtesy, positively laughed him to scorn. It seems to us strange now that this supreme miracle should have seemed so much harder a thing to accomplish than the healing of blindness or deafness, or the creation of wine and bread and fish, or the instantaneous quieting of the elements, the waves, and the wind. While sufferers and their friends and the Lord's disciples, in countless instances, asked him to put forth his power in cases of disease and sickness, neither friend nor disciple ever asked him to raise the dead to life. To the last, in spite of what they had seen, none, till after the Resurrection, could persuade themselves that he was, indeed, the Lord of death as well as of life.

Ver. 50.—**But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.** No shadow of hesitation crossed the Redeemer's mind; with unruffled calmness he whispered his words of cheer to the grief-stricken father, and bade him fear nothing, for that all would yet be well with the child. Then follows the well-known, often-read story told in such few words, yet are they so vivid, so dramatic, that we seem to be looking on the scene. The grief-stricken household, the hired mourners, the still death-room, the white motionless form of the dead girl—the ruler's only child—lying on her little bed, the group of the six with tear-dimmed eyes standing round; the loving Master bending over the little dead, his smile as for a moment he took back the all-power he had laid aside a little season *for our sakes;* the far-off look in his eyes as for a moment his vision ranged over his old home of peace and grandeur; and then the two words spoken in the familiar Aramaic (Hebrew), which Mark, or rather Mark's master, Peter, remembered so well, "Talitha, kumi!" and the dead child rose up again, the spirit had returned to its frail tenement.

Ver. 53.—**They laughed him to scorn.** These were, no doubt, the hired mourners. Familiar as they were with death, they ridiculed the idea of one whom they knew had passed away, awaking again as from a sleep. These public mourners were customary figures in all Jewish homes, even in the poorest where a death had occurred. They are still usual throughout the Levant. The

expression, "laughed him to scorn," is found in Shakespeare—

"Our castle's strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn."
('Macbeth,' act v. sc. 5.)

The Aramaic words, *Talitha, kumi!* "Maid, arise!" were just homely words, spoken in the language which the little girl was in the habit of hearing and using. The Master's tender care for the child was shown not merely in the choice of the language and the words, but in his loving thought after her resurrection, for we read how—

Ver. 55.—He commanded to give her meat. She had been grievously ill, sick, we know, even to death; and now that the old strength and health had come back again, the Master felt she would at once, after her long abstinence, need food. Even the child's mother was not so motherly as Jesus.

Ver. 56.—He charged them that they should tell no man what was done. The enthusiasm in Galilee just then needed no extra spur. The crowds which followed him were increasing. The excitement, the Master felt, was unreal and evanescent; he wished rather to calm it than to increase it.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—21.—*The evangelistic circuit.* Observe—

I. THE PLAN OF CIRCUIT. (Ver. 1.) "He went," or "went about," or "kept journeying." Hitherto Capernaum had been the centre from which short excursions were taken, the Lord always returning to it. Now he moves steadily on from place to place, "passing in patience until his work is done." "Through cities and villages." He will not omit any abode of man. If social influence and power had been the aim, this Prophet would have limited his operations to the chief centres of life; but his meat is to do the Father's will, and where there is even one soul waiting for the message, there is he. To the Father, to him, there is the same value in the soul of the peasant as in that of the prince. "Preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God." The distinction between the words, "preaching and showing the good tidings"—or, to give the exact English rendering, "evangelizing"—is not to be pressed too far; but the latter word seems to mark an advance of thought on the former. The "preaching" was the more general proclamation, and the "evangelizing" was the presentation of the gospel thus proclaimed to the diversities of experience and need, the opening up of its several aspects of blessing, so that men from their different standpoints might realize the great love of God and behold the glories of his kingdom. Kings grant pardons, but they only send them; this King comes himself with the pardon, and deals personally with the sinner. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him thus bringing good tidings, and publishing peace; bringing good tidings of good, publishing salvation, saying unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

II. A NEW STYLE OF DISCOURSE. One which thenceforth becomes a marked feature of the teaching. He had frequently used comparisons, traced likenesses between the natural and the spiritual. But what had been an occasional trait now became a characteristic mode of conveying truth, and for the reason given by himself (ver. 10). To us, familiar with the sound and meaning of the parable, nothing can seem more apposite and happy as a means of communicating thought. By it the highest and deepest mysteries of the kingdom are most gently infused into the apprehension of the mind, whilst there is always a reserve of meaning on which we can draw. But the parable was not all this to those who heard it. It stimulated inquiry rather than imparted knowledge. It brought the disciples to Jesus, saying, "Expound to us;" "What might this story be?" Those who did not wish to learn were sent away with the feeling, "A dark saying has been uttered: who can hear it?" Jesus says that this defined his purpose in adopting it. He meant it to be a test of the spirit of the mind. Thus he laid his hearers in the balances. May we be of those "to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"!

III. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. This is the only one of the famous seven given in Matt. xiii. which St. Luke places in our view. It falls more naturally to be considered at length in connection with the former of the accounts. Observe here—on this St. Luke is explicit—the point to which the discourse of Jesus looks (ver. 18), "Take heed therefore how ye hear." In this connection recall the four kinds of place

in which the seed is sown: the *wayside*, where the seed is trodden down and devoured by the fowls; the *rock*, or *stony places*, where the seed springs up, but soon withers through want of moisture; the *thorny ground*, where the seed and the thorns grow together, and the thorns choke the seed; and the *good ground*, where the seed springs up and bears a hundredfold. These places are identified (vers. 12—15) with classes of hearers. There are the *wayside hearers*—those in whom there is no mental exercise on that which they hear, whose minds are thoroughfares for all sorts of thought. And what follows? As soon as they hear, the devil comes—some impish fancy or distracting influence, and takes away the word. "I never heard a sermon," said a man, who for years attended church, "I attended, but, whilst you were speaking, I reviewed the last week's task and arranged for the next." There are the *rocky-place hearers*—those who hear with interest, with emotion; you can see the response to the word in the animation of the countenance, in the tokens of lively feeling. But the message does not grasp the character, the centres of the life remain unchanged, and thus "in time of temptation they fall away." There are the *thorny-ground hearers*—those who have heard and yielded to the truth, but the busy, care-crowded, or pleasure-seeking world is waiting for them; the seed is not altogether lost, but the mind is choked with alien interests or pursuits. The poet Robert Burns compares himself to a lonely man walking where fragments of marble columns lie on the ground, overgrown by rank, tall weeds. There are the *good-soil hearers*—those in whom the earnest longing to know, to do, God's truth is a preparation for the word; who, having heard, hide the word in the heart, and patiently and habitually submit to it, and, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, bring forth fruit abundantly. To which of these types of hearers does each of us belong? Oh the responsibility of hearing! Note the distinction, in ver. 18, between those who have and those who seem to have, or think they have. What is the warning? Whoso only thinks that he has, or is content with the appearance of having, is losing his possession. The life is really moving on other lines than those laid down in the word. The power of reception is diminishing: "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he thinketh he hath." "Take heed therefore *how* ye hear." It is the *manner* of hearing that is the main thing—the motive, the desire, the extent to which the heart and the soul are engaged whilst hearing. Persons are apt to blame the speaker, to lay the want of effect at his door. It may be so; no doubt it often is so. But what of these persons themselves? Let each examine himself. Eloquence, it has been said, is in the audience; and, undoubtedly, the sympathy of the audience has much to do with the power of the utterance. Christ reminds us that, where there is failure, the hearer at least divides the blame. He reminds us, too, that the life declares the quality of the hearing. Vers. 16, 17, "For nothing is hid, that shall not be made manifest; nor anything secret, that shall not be known and come to light."

IV. THE HELPERS AND THE HINDERERS IN THE MINISTRY. The twelve are with him. It is their university curriculum. Would to God that all who pass through universities and seminaries realized this curriculum also—"Eye-witnesses first, and then ministers of the Word"! But he has other companions than the apostles; and the noteworthy thing as to these other companions is that they ministered to him of their substance. "The Son of God," says Godet, "lived by the love of those whom his love had made to live." Who are they? *Women.* Three names are singled out. Mary of Magdala, "from whom seven devils had gone out" (*vide* previous section), once passionate, perhaps depraved, in her life; but henceforth the most loving and devoted; the one to whom the risen Saviour first appeared (John xx.). And with her are named the wife of Herod's steward, and Susanna, of whom nothing is known. "Many others," we are told. But we do not find, as Farrar has pointed out, the wives of Peter or of the married apostles; nor yet the mother of our Lord. The ministry of woman to Jesus! There is a deep sympathy between the true woman-heart and the Lord; the self-sacrificing love so pure and strong in the true woman-heart being the special attraction. Christianity has exalted woman, has raised her position, and purified her influence. But woman has more than paid back all that she owes to Christianity in respect of this. Who, indeed, that has been blessed by Christian mother, wife, sister, friend, does not know that God has created the ministry of his Word male and female?—giving to the female an even more winning beauty and a more spiritually

educative service than the male. The apostles are with Jesus; but certain women minister to him of their substance. These are the helpers: who are the *hinderers? His mother and his brethren* (ver. 19). The Lord is compelled to say that, whilst the relation according to the flesh is respected, they are not at that moment connected with him by the affinities which alone are permanent. See how this bears on the idolatrous honour paid by the Roman Church to Mary. She has been prevailed on by her children, not to intercede with Jesus, but to join them in the effort—probably meant in kindness, but showing deficiency of insight—to prevent him from continuance in toils and prayers. And note, he distinctly declines to recognize any rights grounded on the motherhood with regard to his work; only spiritual relationships will he recognize. Even when he looks down from the cross and sees her standing, he says to the beloved disciple only, "Behold *thy* mother." But, apart from this, is it not suggestive, mournfully suggestive, that the hinderers are the nearest of relations—mother and brethren? So it has been often since. An unsympathetic home and circle of friends sometimes constitute the sorest trial which one must face who wills to have fellowship with the Son of God. "He goeth forth weeping, bearing the precious seed."

Vers. 22—25.—*Storm and calm.* "He entered into a boat, himself and his disciples." The association of Christ with the boat, with which we are so familiar in the gospel history, has been preserved in much of the poetry, the literature, and the art of the Church. A very old seal-ring represents the Church as a ship struggling against the winds, supported by a great fish in the sea beneath, and with two doves sitting on its mast and prow. The shape often given to Christian places of worship in the early ages was that of a boat. And the idea has entered into all Christian song and thought. Keble catches up the tone of centuries when he inserts the verse in the evening hymn—

> "Thou Framer of the light and dark,
> Steer through the tempest thine own ark:
> Amid the howling wintry sea
> We are in port if we have thee."

The key-note to all this symbolism is given in the incident reported in these verses.

I. IT IS A PICTURE OF LIFE. The sea was at rest when the disciples took Jesus as he was. As they sailed on the smooth waters the weary Prophet fell asleep. On a sudden down comes the squall—one of those furious hurricanes which sweep across a lake six hundred feet lower than the ocean, with gigantic funnels supplied by deep ravines cut by the action of wild watercourses. All is changed; there is heard now only the despairing cry, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Such is life: changeful, now the smiling sunshine with the clear blue sky, again the driving cloud and rain, with angry waves breaking over the craft. Job was at rest; his sons and daughters feasting together; he himself, with abundance and peace, fearing God and eschewing evil, when the one terrible day came on which messenger chased messenger, completing a tale of destruction and bereavement. How often does destruction fall as in a moment! The fitful weather of the inland lake is a type of the fitful climate, followed by the rapidly dissolving scenery, of the present time. How foolish to set the affection on things below! How sad when there is no Christ in the ship! when there is no fixture, among the sundry and manifold changes of this world, where the only true joys are to be found!

II. IT IS A SIGN OF CHRIST. The stilling of the tempest is a miracle. We seem to see the sleeping Master quietly raising himself, looking around, meeting the gaze of the all but frantic men, standing erect in the boat, sending forth the majestic, "Peace; be still!" "What manner of man is this, for he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him?" Yes; what manner of man! He is himself the miracle, the One "made of God to us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." The work is the sign of himself in that deeper work in which he is manifest as the Saviour of sinners. What is that work but the rebuking of the storm of passion, and all the influences which are adverse to peace of mind and holiness of life? "Be still," is the Christ-word; "Peace to you," is the Christ-breath. In the world of man, "he maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then

are they glad because they are quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Is not this the experience of every truly converted life? Miss Havergal's verse expresses it.

"There were strange soul-depths, restless, vast and broad,
Unfathomed as the sea;
An infinite longing for an infinite stilling.
But now thy love is perfect filling:
Lord Jesus Christ, my Lord, my God,
Thou, thou art enough for me!"

And so for all the days. "Let Christ be awakened," writes Augustine, "Though the tempest beat into, yet it will not fill, thy ship; thy faith will now command the winds and the waves, and thy danger will be over." Oh, see to it, that thou take Christ into thy heart, even as he is. Blessed for thee, O needy sinner, when the Master is really the occupant of thy life, thy "present Help in trouble."

III. IT IS A REPROOF OF LITTLE FAITH. "*Why* are ye so fearful?" is the part of Jesus' word reported by Matthew. Why, when you know who is with you; when you know that he is there, that it is not some enemy, some devil, that has the control of elements, of circumstances? Why are ye so easily cast down? Why do ye give way so readily? Why do ye fall into such despondencies, such paroxysms of grief? May we not, in many an hour of shrinking, if not of terror, hear this "why" sounding in our hearts? "Where is your faith?" is the part of the word reported by Luke. Assume that you have it, that you are really trusting in Christ as your Master: whither does the faith vanish when you are so fearful? Is it not the moment of trial that proves the readiness and serviceableness of the faith? Do we not often need to seek it when we have occasion for it? Verily a question most pertinent to us in the varying circumstances and demands of our life. Think, think over the adverb, so suggestive, "*Where* is your faith?"

Vers. 26—39.—*The demoniac whose name was Legion.* Two miserable creatures are mentioned in Matthew. No sooner has Jesus come forth on the land than they rush towards him. Human, yet without the mental attributes of humanity, shunned by all, left in the lonely place, to rend the air with fearful cries, to dash themselves against stones, wretched beyond all names of wretchedness. One of the two is singled out by St. Luke, and described (vers. 27, 29). Observe the effect of Jesus' presence. Instantly some long-silent chord was touched, some new sense of the awful misery into which the man had been plunged was awakened, some conflict between a mind made suddenly active, and the nameless power of darkness was originated. The maniac falls down, and with a loud voice cries, as if some other one were crying through him, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I beseech thee, torment me not." Marvellous confession! which, however, had been preceded by a word of authority (ver. 29), and which is followed by a kind of confused perception. "What is thy name?" What name had he? What personality? The only word which seemed to describe the situation was the Roman name for a host, "My name is Legion; for we are many." Poor Legion! there is in thee a groaning which cannot be uttered; and that groaning, unawares to thyself, has the form of the old prayer, "Unite my heart to fear thy Name!" Lo! he who knows the mind of the Spirit has heard thee, and he has given a new song to thy mouth. Henceforth thou shalt say, "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy Name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." Thus far, all, though wonderful, is beautiful and Christ-like. But now comes the strange portion of the narrative. Jesus is described as giving the demons which had laid waste the son of Abraham leave to possess the herd of swine feeding on the mountain-side; the consequence being that the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and were choked. Against this destruction many objections have been brought; it is a stone of stumbling and offence even to believers. Even to faith it seems at variance with the mercifulness of the Lord, and the transference of the evil power from the man to the herd of swine bristles with things hard to be understood. Explanations offered, some of them ingenious, all unsatisfactory, are not here to be dwelt on. It is assumed that we take the evangelist

to be a trustworthy guide as to events which are out of the plane of ordinary life. Somewhere, somehow, the work done is reconcilable with the true nature of things, with the mercy and the truth which are around all God's paths. Observe two points by way of practical improvement.

I. TO THE DEMONIAC HIMSELF THERE WAS GIVEN A TESTIMONY NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN OF THE SIN AND MISERY FROM WHICH THE STRONGER THAN THE STRONG ONE HAD DELIVERED HIM. The effect on character, the influence which some action or course of conduct would have in the establishment of trust in himself or in the education of the disciple, was always before the mind of Christ. Now, what an evidence—in a form which one whose shattered intellect was not yet fully restored could understand—was given of the awful waste of spiritual life, the awful force of an untrained, unsanctified nature, by the sight of that precipitate rush down the steep place into the sea! Recollect, too, that, according to the correspondences of Scripture, these swine represent the more bestial and corrupt propensities of our nature. Pascal, in one of his most cynical sayings, speaks of man as "half-beast, half-devil." There is something of the beast in men; and what happened that day is the token of what does happen when the lower animal is acted on by spirits of malignity or darkness—when, from some cause operating from without, that which is animal is acted on by that which is devilish. Is not that same violent rushing down steep places of poor animalized beings, their true life checked and destroyed, witnessed every day? Do we not constantly see infatuations similar to that portrayed in the herd of swine? In England more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons die every year directly in consequence of indulgence in strong drink. If, as has been asked, there was such a destruction of cattle or swine in the country, what attention would be called to it! what a host of remedies and measures with a view to its prevention would be propounded! But the matter passes with little notice. Undoubtedly, the event at Gergesa is a sign of what mere carnal appetite, when fed by some exciting cause, brings about; and, being so, it is a standing witness for the blessings of his salvation, whose gospel is a new order as well as a new life, who controls what is lawless by the law of liberty, and at whose feet the man from whom devils are departed sits clothed and in his right mind.

II. TO ALL OF US THERE IS A SAD SIGNIFICANCE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE GADARENES. The two facts before them were—the swine lost, and the man gained. Which of the two was the greater? The *swine lost.* That spoke to them of a fearful power in the Man who had landed on their shore. Perhaps their consciences were uneasy. If they were Jews, and some of them must have been, they knew that, for the purpose of gain, they had broken Moses' Law. Why should he continue in their midst whose glance burnt like an oven? Anyhow, instead of remembering what attracted and spoke of healing in the cure of the man, they remember only what had caused them loss in the destruction of the swine. "Away!" they cry, "thou holy and terrible One! We don't wish to be disturbed in our way. Trouble us no longer!" Fearful prayer! But do not more than the Gadarenes pray it? Are there not many whose secret heart protests, "Let us alone, Lord God! Let us make money as best we can; eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves. Away with the spiritual—with Church, with God! Give us our swine, and let heaven go!" Fearful prayer, and fearful answer! "God answers sharp and sudden on some prayers, and flings the thing we have asked for in our face—a gauntlet with a gift in it." "He entered into a boat, and returned." There is only one of another spirit in the multitude. He who a few minutes before had cried, "What have I to do with thee?" now beseeches, like Ruth of old, "Entreat me not to leave thee: where thou goest I will go, and where thou dwellest I will dwell." Nay, he must remain—Christ's missionary and witness to his unbelieving countrymen. Not to luxuriate in him, but to live and work for him, is the call to the redeemed. "And he went his way, publishing throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done for him."

Vers. 41—56.—*Jairus, and what happened on the way to his house.* A beautiful Scripture, whose beauty we feel all the more that, in this Gospel, it follows the rejection of Christ by the "witless Gadarenes." Its exact place in the history cannot with certainty be fixed; for the accounts of the three synoptists vary as to the time

of the works. But whatever the precise period in the biography to which it belongs, the tale told is one which appeals to the more domestic affections of the heart; one too which gives a graciously full manifestation of Jesus the Resurrection and the Life. The transaction realized as he went illustrates chiefly Christ the Life; that which was done in answer to the ruler's pleading illustrates chiefly Christ the Resurrection—the two aspects of the incarnate I Am.

With regard to the former of these events, consider the touch of the Lord by the woman who had found her way to his presence, and what came of the touch.

I. The touch represents THE ONLY HOPE. She had nothing else to which to cling. For twelve long years she had been a sick and weary woman. There is something interesting in the circumstance which Luke the physician records, that all her means had been spent on physicians, but that she could not be healed of any. Mark adds that she rather grew worse. The physician-evangelist has no such addition; but "he knew what human skill could do, and, still better, what it could not do, and he bowed himself humbly in the presence of Christ." Well, all the living has been spent. A little before the moment of Jesus passing, she might not have been so ready. A portion of her income would still have been left. The temptation would have been to try another doctor. But now there is only this chance. It is the energy of despair. "Thou must save, and thou alone." Ah! sinner, if thou wouldst know the virtue that there is in the Son of God for thee, thou must come to an end with self, with all strivings after a righteousness of thine own. Thy living, all that is thine, must be wholly removed from thy sight. Jesus wholly! Jesus only!

II. The touch represents AN IMMEDIATE ACT OF WILL. "When she had heard," says Mark, "the things concerning Jesus, she came." There is no delay over questions such as, "How can I reach his presence? How can I get through this multitude? Will he care for me?" All such self-inquiry is at once dismissed. The true faith is busied only with its Object. The mind is too much in earnest to stop over problems concerning the act or the manner of faith. "If thou wert sick for want of God, how swiftly wouldst thou move!" Two things are seen—the need, and Christ the only answer to the need; and, these things seen, the will is supreme over all that savours of intellectual doubt and difficulty. "If I may but get to him, I shall be whole."

III. The touch represents A PERSONAL CONTACT. "Only to put my hand on the clothes, or even the fringe of the garment." So she says to herself. Not, perhaps, a very lofty faith. A good deal in it, possibly, of the superstition to which she had been accustomed; of an idea of magical charm, and so forth. But the real thing in it was the conviction that he was able to save to the uttermost; that the cure was certain if she could get to him. The touch meant herself in her want laying hold of Christ himself, the Saviour and his salvation. And this is the vital force of faith. Notions may be confused, may be very poor and deficient; the Lord will rectify that. The saving grace is such a confidence as will bring into direct relation to the love of God in Christ. And this touch is at once distinguished. Every one who has to do with multitudes understands, so far, the secret of the quick "Who touched me?" He knows by intuition the souls that are really sympathetic with him. These touch; the others only press around. In the crowd surging about Jesus there is only one who touches. The people have welcomed him, and are following him; but their handling of him and her touch are quite different. Blessed among women! type of the souls blessed eternally: "I perceived that power had gone forth from me."

IV. The touch is the way to THE CURE BOTH OF BODY AND SOUL. "Immediately she was healed." "Straightway," says Mark, "she felt in her body that she was healed." What a sensation that instant bound of health! Observe that "immediately" or "straightway" in the reports of Jesus' works of healing in the Gospels. The health does not come as the end of a laborious discipline or regimen; it is not the end, but the beginning of a new life. We do not work to salvation; we work from it. The moment a life is really surrendered to God and the affiance of the soul with the Redeemer is fulfilled, that moment it is healed, it is cleansed. There is a new life introduced—a life which is henceforth the power of God to salvation. It is not perfect, but it is there. This Divine life is the health of the soul. It is then in a healthy condition before God. And henceforth, according to his power that worketh in us, he completes and perfects the life which himself has imparted. Was it

not so with the woman? After she was healed he brought her into the spiritual knowledge of himself and his will. She had stolen to Jesus, but she must not steal from him. He searches her out. She sees that she is not hid; and trembling, fearing, she falls down and tells him all the truth. Precisely what he desired. And what he desires evermore is frankness, openness to him. There must be no guile and no concealment; there must be perfect truthfulness between the Lord and the soul. When any shadow comes in there, the cleansing of the conscience, the working out of the salvation, is hindered. Notice the word "daughter," the only woman who received this title from the Lord, and she the woman who was brought to tell all the truth. "For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee."

This interview, with its great work, is by the way. He who desires the opportunity of usefulness meets the opportunity even in travelling to the duty more immediately contemplated. All the while another work has been waiting. What parent does not enter into the feeling of the ruler of the synagogue? His only daughter, the darling, the desire of his eyes, is dying. And he must stand and listen to the talk which involves some delay. And then the message, "Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the Master!" We do not hear of any complaint or impatience, of any word of reproach like that which fell from the sisters of Bethany. Jesus meets a confidence such as this with loving frankness: "Fear not: only believe, and she shall be made whole." Look at the sign that is given of *Christ the Resurrection.*

I. IT HAS ITS SPECIALTY OF MEANING. Of the three acts of raising from the dead related by the evangelists, it is, adhering to the chronology of Luke, the second. The son of the widow of Nain was not only dead, but the body was being carried out to burial. Lazarus had been four days dead. The girl of twelve had only expired. The attendants *knew* that she was dead; Luke the physician is careful to add this. It was no trance; she was undoubtedly dead, but Death had only a short time before put his stamp on the countenance. Trench, writing on the miracle, beautifully speaks of "the fresh-trodden way between the body and the soul which has just forsaken it, and which lingers for a season near the tabernacle where it has dwelt so long. Even science itself," he adds, "has arrived at the conclusion that the last echoes of life ring in the body much longer than is commonly supposed; that, for a while, it is full of the reminiscences of life." Observe, when Christ says, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," the unbelieving mourners laugh; they have only *scorn* for such a saying. The sorrow is hard, cheerless sorrow, when there is no conception of death—as a sleep! "Asleep in Jesus;" "He fell on sleep;"—such words the Church has substituted for the cold, forbidding word "death." Look, O mourner in Zion, on the lifeless form of thy dear one, and as thou thinkest of "the fresh-trodden way between the body and the soul which has just forsaken it," remember the saying of him who is the Resurrection: "Not *dead, but sleepeth.*" Believest thou this?

II. NOTE THE WITNESSES OF THE WORK. It is the first occasion on which the three of the apostolic band are singled out—Peter and James and John. None except they and the parents are allowed to enter. There is a sacredness in great grief which demands protection from the rude gaze of mere curiosity. The hired mourners, with their shouts and cries, their ostentation and display, are abhorrent to the Lord. Simplicity and genuineness of emotion befit the house of the dead, and all connected with death and burial.

III. SEE THE GENTLE THOUGHTFULNESS OF CHRIST. When the maid arises, he commands that meat be given her. The life restored must be supported. He is sparing of the supernatural and extraordinary. Where the ordinary and natural come into play, there the call is to use them. The Church, in her spiritual work, must learn of her Lord. "Keep life living," said Bunsen. When the Divine life is bestowed, it must be nourished by the appropriate means of grace; it must be fed by food convenient to it, nourished through the Word, sacraments, and prayer, unto everlasting life.

IV. CONTEMPLATE THE WHOLE ACTION. How simple! how quiet! The touch of the hand, the head bent over the child; the voice soft yet clear in the familiar Aramaic, "Talitha cumi!"—these are the features of the action. Thus simple and quiet was the way of the Lord when, in the beginning, he "said, Let there be light! And there was light." Thus simple and quiet is his way when he comes to the human soul "as the rain, as the former and latter rain on the earth." The wind bloweth, indeed, where it

listeth, sometimes with the fury of the hurricane tearing up the old refuges and joys of the life. But the hurricane prepares for the Lord. The Lord is in the still small voice which comes after. Wherefore he saith, in tones of imperial authority, but of thriling tenderness, to thee, little maid, to thee, young man rejoicing in thy youth, to thee on whom the weight of years is resting, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The gospel of the kingdom.* In a parallel passage in Matthew (iv. 23) we read that Jesus went about all Galilee, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom;" here we read of the same thing in a very slightly different form—"showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." It will clear away all possible confusion of thought respecting "the gospel" and "the kingdom," if we dwell upon the gospel (or the glad tidings) of the kingdom.

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD. This kingdom of God, or of heaven, or of Christ (for our Lord sometimes spoke of it as his own), is something transcendently nobler than anything which the most pious or the most sanguine Jew ever hoped for in his heart or pictured in his imagination (see homily on ch. i. 31—33). As Jesus Christ conceived it, and as it will be when it has been fully and finally established, this glorious kingdom is or is to be: 1. A kingdom *of God;* one in which God himself will be the one Sovereign, all men everywhere being his subjects, owning his sway and loyal to his will. 2. An essentially *spiritual* kingdom; all the obedience and submission rendered being that of the heart and the will, as well as of the tongue and the hand. 3. A *righteous* kingdom; in which every citizen will act in accordance with "the golden rule" (ch. vi. 31). 4. A *beneficent* kingdom; the spirit of kindness, of practical helpfulness, animating every subject. 5. A *universal* kingdom; coextensive with the human race. 6. An *everlasting* kingdom; going down to the remotest generation. Such, in its purity, its nobility, its inherent greatness, its absolute uniqueness, is the "kingdom of God."

II. THE GOSPEL (THE GLAD TIDINGS) OF THE KINGDOM. The features of this kingdom which so much commend it to the hearts of erring, sinful, dying men, constituting "the glad tidings of the kingdom," are: 1. *That entrance into it is open to every child of man.* This is now so familiar to us as to be quite commonplace. But look at it in the light of the doctrine of Divine favouritism once prevalent; in the light of the incident recorded in the fourth chapter of this Gospel (vers. 23—29);—then we cannot be too thankful that the gates of this blessed kingdom are open, stand *wide* open, to every comer—to the poor, to the despised, to the neglected, to the barbarous, to those whom men may consider irrecoverable or not worth redeeming. 2. *That its Divine Sovereign is actively seeking all souls,* that they may enter. It is not only that no one is excluded; the good news, the glad tidings, is more and better than that—it is that every one is being individually, lovingly invited, nay, pressed and urged to enter; it is that out into the "far country" of forgetfulness and dislike the heavenly Father goes in parental yearning, and bids each wandering child "Return;" it is that away over hill and mountain of estrangement and guilt the good Shepherd goes, seeking and finding and bringing back the sheep which was lost; it is that long and lovingly, at the door of each human soul, the patient Saviour stands and knocks, and cries, "If any man will open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him." 3. *That admission is open to every humble and trustful soul at once.* If we have grieved some human friend and become estranged from him, and if there be a proposal to seek reconciliation, our decision will probably be determined by the consideration whether we shall be at once fully restored or whether there will be a long interval before full reconciliation is effected. It is the gospel (the glad tidings) of the kingdom of God that every penitent and believing soul is *immediately* and without any delay whatever taken into the favour of God. As soon as the submissive spirit of the man says, "Father, I have sinned," so soon is grace bestowed, so soon is the name entered on the roll of the heavenly citizenship. 4. *That citizenship now means citizenship for ever.* It is a large part of the gospel of Jesus Christ that this earth is only an antechamber of the Father's house, or only a small outlying province of his boundless empire. To be a faithful citizen here

and now means being a happy citizen somewhere for evermore. Life under the benign sway of this heavenly King is not counted by years or decades; it is without a bound; it is continued, perpetuated, in other regions of his glorious domain. This is the "glorious gospel" of the kingdom. Is it well to wait for a better? Dare we hope that, if we reject these glad tidings, we shall ever hear any that we shall accept? "Behold, now is the accepted time."—C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Christianity and woman.* We have seen (ch. ii. 36—38) that woman, in the person of Anna, welcomed the infant Saviour to the world; it was most fitting that she should do so, for Christianity and womanhood have had a very close relationship, and undoubtedly will have even to the end.

I. WHAT CHRISTIANITY OWES TO WOMAN. 1. Its Divine Author and the Object of its worship was, "as concerning the flesh," born of a woman (Gal. iv. 4). The Son of God was, in a true and important sense, the "Son of Mary." 2. He owed the care and the training of his childhood to a human mother. 3. He received, during his active life, the generous provision of ministering women (see text); these, out of "their substance," supplied his necessities. 4. He found some of his best disciples and of his most faithful attendants in women (Matt. xxvii. 65). 5. He had the comfort of the near presence of three devoted women in his last agonies (John xix. 25). Closer to him in that awful hour than the ruthless soldier and the taunting enemy, rendering him a silent and sorrowful but not unvalued sympathy, stood three women who loved him for all that he was in himself and for all he had been to them. 6. Last at the cross, women were first at the sepulchre (ch. xxiii. 55, 56; xxiv. 1). 7. Women were united with the apostles in the upper room, waiting and praying for the further manifestation of the Lord after his ascension (Acts i. 14). 8. The apostle of the Gentiles owed much to women in his abundant and fruitful labours (Phil. iv. 3). 9. From that time to this, women have been rendering valuable service to the cause of Jesus Christ: the mother of Augustine, the mother of the Wesleys, and many hundreds more have, by their holy and faithful motherhood, done signal service to the gospel. In these later days, moved by the Spirit of God, women have, by their writings and by their "prophesyings," effected great things for the furtherance of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. And it is right that it should be so; for we have to consider—

II. WHAT WOMAN OWES TO CHRISTIANITY. 1. We know what barbarism does, and fails to do, for woman. 2. We know also what Greek and Roman civilization did, and failed to do, for her; in how unsatisfactory a condition it left her; how completely it failed to raise her to her true spiritual dignity. We know what Christianity has done and is doing for her. (1) Jesus Christ taught and enforced the transcendent value of every human soul. (2) He admitted women into his kingdom on the same terms on which he received men: "In him is neither male nor female." (3) He gave to women a sphere of honourable service in his kingdom; not only (as above) accepting their loving ministry for himself, but for his disciples also. (4) Influenced increasingly by these ideas, the Church of Christ has been giving to woman a place of growing honour and usefulness; it has made her the full helpmeet and equal companion of man; it has opened for her the gateway of knowledge and influence; it has placed her on the highest seat to receive its respect, its affection, its service. We may look at—

III. THE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH WOMAN MAY RENDER. 1. When not bound by domestic ties, she can offer, as these women did, of her worldly substance. 2. She can minister, as man cannot, to the sick and suffering; she has a gentle touch of hand and a tenderness and patience of spirit for which we look to man in vain. 3. She can train the child in the home, and, by giving to him or her the earliest and deepest impressions concerning Divine love, prepare for noblest work in after-years in various fields of holy service.—C.

Vers. 4—8.—*Failure and success in hearing.* The produce of our spiritual fields does not always answer to our hopes or reward our labours; there is much sowing, but little reaping. How do we account for it?

I. THE ACCOUNT OF THE FAILURE. 1. *Inattention* on the part of the hearer. The truth is spoken faithfully, but so little heed is given to it that it is no sooner uttered and heard than it has disappeared from view. Sown on the hard wayside (ver. 5), it does

not enter into the soil, and is readily borne away. They who do not know *how to listen* when God speaks to them, need not be surprised if they are of those who are "ever learning, and never coming to a knowledge of the truth." "Give earnest heed" as the Word is being spoken. 2. *Want of reflection.* (Ver. 6.) Many listen with delight, and consider themselves the better for their present gladness. But they do not reflect on what they have heard; there is nothing to nourish the feeble life—no "moisture," no "earth," no thoughtfulness and prayer; and the end is that the emotion that was aroused as the hearer listened withers away. 3. *Incapacity to stand tests.* (Ver. 7.) There may be earnest attention, and this may be followed by some consideration and even prayer; but the root of conviction does not go down far enough to become resolute consecration, and the result is that the "thorns" choke the corn as it is growing. There are two kinds of thorn which are of a deadly influence in the spiritual field—one is that of *worldly cares*, and the other that of *unspiritual pleasure*. These are not evil things in themselves, but, just as the weeds in the field draw up and into themselves the nourishment which should be given to the useful plant, so do these lower anxieties and gratifications absorb the time, the thought, the energy, which should go to the maintenance of the new spiritual life, and, being unfed and unsustained, it languishes and perishes.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS. What is the good ground? What is the honest and good heart (vers. 8—15)? It is that of: 1. *Sincere inquiry.* The hearer goes to learn what is the will of God concerning him—to "inquire in his temple." The question of his heart is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Hence he listens eagerly and continuously. 2. *Devout meditation.* He ponders, he dwells upon, he prays over, the truth he has been receiving. 3. *Intelligent, deliberate dedication.* The man takes all things into his mind that must be taken; he counts the cost; he considers what the service of Christ means, and how much it involves in the way of surrender and of activity, and he solemnly devotes himself to the service, or, as the case may be, to the work of the Lord.

Jesus *cried*, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He spoke that word in a striking, impressive, emphatic voice. He would say to us: 1. Your privilege in having access to the gospel is very great, and as is your privilege so also is your responsibility. 2. Many are the children of opportunity who are not heirs of the kingdom of God; many go into the "house of God" who remain outside the Church of Christ; who hear but do not heed, or who listen but do not ponder and pray, or who pray but do not determine and devote; who at some point or other fall short of the kingdom. It is a sad thing to be "in the way of salvation," and yet to be unsaved. 3. Very blessed are the children of wisdom. When the Word of God takes deep root and brings forth fruit, its fertility is great indeed; the increase may be "an hundredfold" (ver. 8). In the *heart itself* in which it is sown, it may produce all the graces of the Spirit of God; and in the *better life* thus called forth there may shine all the excellences which are in Christ Jesus our Lord and Exemplar; and *from that life* there may flow forth influences for good, of which the number and the nature and the duration only God can tell.—C.

Ver. 16.—*Covered character.* If we have a large object immediately before us in the daytime, and yet are unable to see it, we are driven to the conclusion that, if we are not blind, there must be something opaque between the object and our eye. Now: 1. *There is much of solid goodness in Christian men.* All who name the name of Christ are under bond to depart from all iniquity; their life is a life of holy endeavour after the character of their Lord; they are seeking daily the aid and inspiration of the Divine Spirit; they must be wiser and worthier than those who are living for themselves. 2. This light of Christian character is shining straight before the eyes of unholy men. In the great field of the human world the wheat and the tares grow together. Here we meet together, good and bad, the irreverent and the profane, under the same roof, at the same table and hearth, in the same shop and warehouse. We witness one another's lives. Christian character is near enough to be seen by all 3. We are sometimes asked to be shown the light of Christian worth. Men say, "Where is this excellency, this supposed superiority of spirit and conduct, these fruits? we should like to see them." What shall we say to this challenge? That they who thus complain do not see what they look for because there is something the matter

with their vision, because it is distorted by prejudice? Or shall we say that where no goodness is seen it is because there is none to see; that piety, being popular, is simulated, and they are looking at those who are only pretending to be Christian men, and that godliness is no more accountable for hypocrisy than the good coin is answerable for the counterfeit? We might often make one of these two replies, with right and reason on our side. But that would not meet the case; it would leave the question partially unanswered. The fact is that goodness is often unseen in consequence of *the intervening of some surface faults which hide it from view.* There is—

I. THE COVERING OF RETICENCE. Many a man is right at heart, sound in faith, well fitted by his knowledge and intelligence to render essential service; but he is so reserved, so self-contained, so inaccessible, lives so much in the inner circle of his own familiar friends, that he is far less forcible and influential than he is capable of being;—he is hiding the light of his character under the covering of reserve, instead of setting it on the candlestick of open-heartedness and expressiveness.

II. THE COVERING OF RESENTFULNESS. Other men are warm-hearted, good-natured, diligent, and devoted in every good work, capable of rendering admirable service; but they are quick-tempered, irascible, ready to take offence; so hasty and resentful that they are shunned when they would otherwise be approached;—they hide the light of their character under the vessel of ill temper.

III. THE COVERING OF SELF-ASSERTION. Some men are upright, honourable, zealous, resolute, forcible, well fitted to effect great things, but they hide their light under the bushel of self-assertion; they insist on everything being done in the way they prefer; they make co-operation impossible; they cut their influence in twain by their want of conciliation and concession.

IV. THE COVERING OF DISCOURTESY. There are those who are honest, and even earnest and hardworking Christian men, acting along the lines of holy usefulness; but they cover their character with the vessel of bluntness, or ignorance, or positive rudeness, instead of putting the light of piety and zeal on the candlestick of courtesy.

Now, it has to be remembered that our children and our neighbours, all with whom we have to do, judge of our character not only by its solid and essential elements, but also (and rather) by its superficial features; they will be affected and influenced, not more by that in us which is deep and decisive than by those outside qualities which are visible to them just because they *are outside.* Hence, if we care, as we are bound to do, that our character should be telling on those with whom we are connected, and for whom we are responsible, we shall strive and pray to be not only pure and just and true, but also frank and amiable and courteous. If we would not go through our life with our Christian character covered over and lost by some superficial failing, if we would have it fixed on the candlestick on which it will "give light to all that are in the house,"—we must not only think on the things which are true, honest, just, and pure, but also on those things which are "lovely and of good report."—C.

Ver. 17.—*Revelation—a duty, a fact, a certainty.* These words of our Lord may have been a familiar aphorism of his time, or they may have been a sententious saying of his own, having many applications. Certainly they are significant of many things. They may be regarded as expressing for us—

I. A SACRED DUTY WE ARE CALLED UPON TO DISCHARGE. It is in this sense our Lord used them on the occasion reported by Matthew (x. 25—27). What was then hidden in the minds of the disciples they were to reveal to the world in due time; the truth which the Master was making known to them "in the darkness" they were to "speak in the light." And this duty is of universal obligation. What God reveals to us and what is, at first, hidden in our own soul we are bound to bring forth into the light of day. It may be any kind of truth—medical, agricultural, commercial, economical, moral, or directly and positively religious; whatever we have learned that is of value to the world we have no right to retain for our own private benefit. Truth is common property; it should be open to all men, like the air and the sunshine. When God, in any way, says to us, "Know," he also says, "Teach; pass on to your brethren what I have revealed to you; 'there is nothing secret that shall not be made manifest, nor hid that shall not be known.'"

II. A SERIOUS FACT WE DO WELL TO CONSIDER. Guilt loves secrecy. "Every one

that doeth evil hateth the light . . . lest his deeds should be reproved." Men that sin against God and their own conscience would be only too glad to know that their deeds were finally buried and would never reappear. But no man may take this consolation to his soul. Secret things are disclosed; there is an instinctive feeling expressed in the common belief that "murder will out," that flagrant wrong will sooner or later be exposed. We may not say that no crimes have ever been successfully concealed; but we may safely say that no man, however careful and ingenious he may be in the art of concealing, can be at all sure that his iniquity will not be laid bare. And this will apply to lesser as well as larger evils. Habits of secret drinking, of impurity, of dishonesty, of vindictive passion, will sooner or later betray themselves and bring shame on their victim. Indeed, so closely allied are the body and the spirit, so constantly does the former receive impressions from the latter, that there is no emotion, however deep it may be within the soul, which will not, after a time, reveal itself in the countenance, or write its signature in some way on "the flesh." If illegible to the many, it is still *there*, to be read by those who have eyes to see, and to be seen of God. There is a very true sense in which "*nothing* is secret that shall not be made manifest" even here. But this is more perfectly and strikingly true of the future.

III. A CERTAINTY IN THE FUTURE WE SHALL WISELY ANTICIPATE. There is a "day when God shall judge the secrets of men" (Rom. ii. 16), when he "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 5). Then shall these words be indeed fulfilled. Then may we know how: 1. This language will prove a terrible prediction; our buried and forgotten iniquities being brought back to us, God "reproving us, and setting them [our sins] before our face" (Ps. l. 21). 2. This warning may be met and modified; our sins, having been repented of and forgiven, will be buried in those depths of Divine mercy whence they will never be brought back (Ps. ciii. 11, 12; Micah vii. 18, 19). 3. These words may constitute a blessed promise—all acts of pity, of patience, of kindness, of mercy, of magnanimity, of self-sacrifice, reappearing for Divine approval and award. "Then shall every man have praise of God."—C.

Vers. 19—21.—*Christ's one relationship.* How is Christ related to us? And is he related to us in a way other than that in which he was related to men and women during his life on earth? The answer to this question is that there is only one way in which he has been or will be permanently related to mankind. We look at—

I. THE VERY TEMPORARY CHARACTER OF HIS FLESHLY RELATIONSHIP. He was, of course, most intimately associated, in purely human bonds, with "his mother and his brethren." But he gave the clearest intimation that this was only to last during his sojourn on the earth, and that it was not to be relied upon as a source of life even then. 1. He checked his mother in her eagerness at the very first miracle he wrought (John ii. 4). 2. He intimated in the text that his human connections were already merging in those of a higher, a spiritual kind. 3. He disengaged himself, tenderly but decidedly, from his human, filial obligations as he was about to consummate his redemptive work (John xix. 26). 4. He declined the demonstrativeness of his warm-hearted disciple as partaking too much of the fleshly, and intimated that all approach thenceforward must be of a heavenly and spiritual character (John xx. 16, 17). 5. He instructed his apostle to declare that all further knowledge of Jesus Christ must not be "after the flesh," but spiritual (2 Cor. v. 16). 6. He gave no position in his Church to his mother or his brethren because they had been such. They did not derive anything, in their after-relation to him, from the fact of their motherhood or brotherhood; they stood related to him just as all other souls did, by their reverence, their trust, their love, their service, and by these alone.

II. THE PERMANENT AND INTIMATE CHARACTER OF HIS SPIRITUAL RELATIONS WITH US. "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God and do it," "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 50). From these words of truth and grace we gather: 1. That what unites us to Christ is *practical godliness.* It is reverent attention followed by obedient life; hearing and doing the will of God. It is well to place ourselves where the will of God is made known; better to listen attentively when it is revealed; better still to be excited to solemn and earnest feeling concerning it; but

we do not become Christ's, we are not numbered amongst *his own*, until we so hear and heed and feel that we resolve to be and strive to do what we know is his holy will concerning us. We may fail frequently to realize our own intention; we may strive upwards and Godwards with many a stumble on our way; but if there be an honest and earnest effort towards the good and the true, animated and inspired by the fear and the love of God, then Christ acknowledges us as his, we are citizens of his kingdom. We are something more than that; for we learn from the text: 2. That those who are truly united to Christ are in very close affinity with him. So much are they to him that the nearest and dearest human relationships are called in to express it. Dear as the mother is to her child, as the sister to her brother, so dear are all true and earnest souls to their Divine Lord. With filial, with brotherly love will he watch and guard them, will he provide for their necessities, will he sympathize with them in their sorrows, will he attend their steps, will he secure their lasting interest in the Father's home.—C.

Vers. 22—25.—*Christ the Lord of nature.* We shall find two things concerning the miracles of Jesus Christ—that he never *refused* to put forth his power if by its exercise he could do an act of pure pity and kindness; and that he never *consented* to do so for the mere purpose of display. Hence there is a most marked difference between his "works" and the pretences of the impostor. The perfect suitableness of the occasion and the moral character of the action are the signature of Divinity. Yet it was fitting that the strong desire on the part of the Jews to see a miracle wrought "in the heavens" should, if occasion offered, have at least one fulfilment. And such it certainly had in this stilling of the storm. And in this incident we have—

I. AN IMPRESSIVE ILLUSTRATION OF CHRIST'S DIVINE COMMAND. It would only be right, we may argue, that our Lord should give to his disciples one illustration of his Divine power that would be *exceedingly impressive*, and therefore convincing and permanently effective. There was no more virtue or force in the stilling of the storm on the lake than in the expulsion of the demon on the other side of the water; to control the elements of nature did not require more Divine power than to control the will of an evil spirit; *perhaps less.* But the moral effect upon the observer's mind was much greater in the former instance than in the latter. It appealed most influentially to the imagination as well as to the reason. And considering all that these disciples would be called upon to pass through in his cause, remembering the severity of the trial of their faith, it was surely well that, in addition to many other proofs of their Lord's Divinity, they should be able to recall this scene upon the lake, and be assured that he whom the winds and the waves obeyed was the Christ of God indeed.

II. AN ASSURANCE THAT HE IS LORD OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LIFE. As we ply our little bark across the lake of our life, we shall find storm as well as calm, rough adverse winds as well as favourable breezes. It will help us to think that the Divine will which subdued that tempest is the will that is ruling wind and wave beneath every sky; that Christ is Lord of the circumstances of our life; and that if only we have him on board as our chief Passenger, we may count on his controlling power in the time of danger or of trouble. But we must be sure that Christ *is* with us; for the promises of gracious guidance and merciful interposition can only be pleaded by those who are loyal to him and to his cause.

III. A PICTURE OF THE PRESENT CHRIST IN THE TRIAL-HOUR OF HIS CHURCH. In that little boat was the Christian Church: if that vessel had sunk, the Church would have perished with it. But the Church that has Christ with it cannot sink. The question of questions, therefore, is this—*Is Christ with us or not?* And the answer to that question will be found, *not in the shape of the vessel*, but in the *character of the crew*; not in the peculiarity of the ecclesiastical structure, but in the spirit and character of those who compose and who direct the Church. Is his truth, is he himself, preached and taught in our sanctuaries and our schools? Are his principles inculcated in our homes and illustrated in our lives? Is his spirit breathed by us in our intercourse with one another, and with "them that are without"? These are the questions we must answer satisfactorily if we would reply in the affirmative to that one vital question—Is Christ with us or not?

IV A REMINDER OF THE DIVINE PEACE-BRINGER TO THE HUMAN SOUL. There is

something unspeakably grand in a storm in nature; we are affected, awed, subdued, by it. But in the estimate of Divine wisdom there is something of profounder interest in the unrest and perturbation of a human soul. Jesus Christ cares more to speak peace to one troubled human heart than to produce the most striking change in the whole face of nature. There are many sources of spiritual disquietude; but the most constant and the worst of all is *guilt*, the sin with which we have sinned against the Lord and the sense of his condemnation we carry in our hearts. It is that which takes the light out of our skies, the joy out of our homes, the beauty and the brightness out of our lives. The deepest question that wells from the human soul is this—

"Oh! where shall rest be found—
Rest for the weary soul?"

And in reply—

"The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea;"

a voice which has brought and will ever bring peace to the aching, burdened, stricken heart; "Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—C.

Ver. 23.—*The sleep of Christ.* "As they sailed he fell asleep." Christ asleep! Christ asleep in the daytime! Christ asleep in the storm! Christ asleep with his disciples in danger and distress! What have we here?

I. THE SON OF MAN ASLEEP IN THE HOUR OF HIS OWN BODILY WEARINESS. A hard and long day's work had the Master had that day. He had thought much, taught much, wrought much; and each one of these had been laborious and exhausting to One who was what he was and felt as he felt. He was completely spent with his strenuous and sustained exertion. And as they sailed he fell asleep; so fast asleep that, though the winds raged round him and the spray fell upon him, he did not awake. The incident points to: 1. *The devoted diligence of his life.* Other things might have accounted for this simple fact of being overcome, but *that* was *the true account of it.* How laboriously he *must* have worked to do all that he did in the few months at his command! we might well argue; how devotedly he *did* labour the memoirs of the evangelists assure us. 2. *The generous impulse which he allowed himself* in the conduct of his life. That life was not without plan, arrangement. But our Lord permitted himself to be guided by the conduct and attitude of others; he went back when repelled (ver. 37), he went on when invited (ver. 41). On this occasion he allowed the importunity of the people to hold him longer in teaching and healing than he would otherwise have remained; thus he left room in his life for the play of generous impulse. By all means let us be methodical, laying out our time intelligently and wisely; but let us leave room also for an unselfish responsiveness in the structure of our life, even as our Lord did. 3. *The thoroughness of his humanity.* Who but the Son of God could, of his own will and in his own name, command the mighty elements of nature? Who but a veritable Son of man could be overcome by weariness, and sleep in the midst of the raging of the storm? He was one of ourselves—walking wearied him, teaching tired him, healing exhausted him; he expended himself as he wrought day by day; his manhood was real and true.

II. THE MASTER ASLEEP IN THE HOUR OF THE DISCIPLES' DANGER AND DISTRESS. Christ sleeping when the boat was sinking! It looked like negligence! "Carest thou not that we perish?" That negligence was only apparent; there was no real danger. As it was right for him to sleep under such exhaustion, he could with perfect safety commit himself and his cause to the care of the unsleeping Father. As it was, the greatness of the apparent peril brought about an illustration of Divine power which otherwise they would have missed. That was not the last time that the Master *seemed* negligent of his own. To his Church in its storm of terrible persecution, to his people (in their individual lives) in the tempests of temptation or adversity through which they have passed, Christ may often, indeed has often, seemed to be heedless and indifferent. But he has always been at hand, always ready for action at the right moment. We have but to make our earnest appeal to him, and if the right time has come for the manifestation of his power—though on this point we may be mistaken (see John ii. 4; Acts i. 6, 7)—he will most effectually respond; he will say to the

mightiest forces with which we are in conflict, "Peace, be still!" and there will be "a great calm."—C.

Vers. 38, 39.—*Our return for God's greater kindnesses.* The outcasting of a demon from a man was certainly one of the greater miracles Christ wrought, and the greater benefits he bestowed. It required special power, and it conferred a boon of the highest order. We look at—

I. THE GREATER KINDNESSES WE RECEIVE FROM GOD. It might be argued that all God's mercies are great, inasmuch as (1) coming from his heart, all his kindnesses are loving-kindnesses; and (2) they are all so thoroughly undeserved. God sends us a gift when he might send us a blow, a blessing when we deserve a rebuke (Gen. xxxii. 10). Yet some of God's gifts to us are greater than others, and we may ask which they are that might fairly draw such words as these from Christ concerning them, "how great things God hath done for thee." And it is worthy of remark: 1. *That some of them are little marked by us.* Among these are: (1) Our *being* itself, our intelligent, immortal nature, with all its illimitable capacities. We so gradually awaken to the realization of this, that the boundless value of the gift does not impress us as it should. (2) Our *health.* We accept this as a matter of course, little affected by it until we lose it. (3) Our *kindred.* So does the mantle of parental, filial, fraternal love wrap us round from our infancy, that its beauty and its blessedness do not strike us as they might well do, and we live on for years, failing to appreciate all the mercies which are associated with the one word "home." (4) Our *education;* all those educational influences and privileges which build and shape our mind and character. But it is clear: 2. *That there are special kindnesses we cannot fail to note.* Of these are (1) deliverance from sudden peril, from the railway accident, from death by drowning, etc.; (2) recovery from dangerous sickness; (3) rescue from the grasp of some fell temptation; (4) special Divine influences, those which make the truth of God clear to our understanding, and bring it home to our heart and conscience, thus placing eternal life within our reach.

II. THE RETURN WHICH WE MAKE TO GOD for these greater kindnesses. Jesus Christ bade this man to whom he rendered such signal service return and show his friends what great things he had received; and he did so freely and fully. What is our response to our heavenly Father, our Divine Saviour? 1. What are we *being* to him? What is the measure of our *thought* concerning him who never for one moment forgets us, and who, in so full and deep a sense, "remembered us in our low estate"? of our *feeling* toward him who has spent on us such generous, such self-sacrificing love? of our *service* of him whose we are and to whom we owe everything we are and have? 2. What *testimony* are we bearing to him—what testimony concerning the goodness, the patience, the faithfulness of God are we bearing in *the home* in which we live? Are parents impressing on their children by their whole bearing and demeanour that, in their deliberate judgment, the service of Christ and likeness to Christ are things of immeasurably greater concern to them than the making of money or the gaining of position? Are elder brothers and sisters doing their best to commend the truth they have come to appreciate to the understanding and the affection of those who are younger, and who are taking their cue from them? What testimony are we bearing in the *shop* and the *factory*, to our fellow-workers, to those whom we are employing? What testimony in the *Church?* Are we avowing our faith, our love, our hope, our joy? Are we, who have received greater kindness by far than even this poor demoniac, so acting that as much is ascribed to us in God's book of account as is here recorded of him, that "he published throughout the whole city how great things," etc.?—C.

Vers. 37, 40.—*Jesus Christ: rejection and welcome.* We have in these two passages a very striking contrast; we have in the one a very deliberate and consentaneous dismissal, and in the other a very cordial and unanimous reception of our Lord,—it is illustrative of the treatment he is now receiving at the hands of men.

I. THE REJECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. 1. It may be *deliberate and determined.* In the case of the Gadarenes it was emphatically so. They all came together to seek him and to entreat of him that he would leave their neighbourhood. Their request was unqualified with any condition; it was decisive, absolute. It is not often that men suddenly arrive at the conclusion that they will not have the Son of man to reign over

them; but the long postponement of his claims leads on and down to a decisive rejection; at length the mind is fully made up, the soul resolved that it will seek its good elsewhere, that the patient Saviour may knock but he will wait in vain. 2. It may *proceed from motives that are distinctly unworthy.* It was a procedure on the part of these Gadarenes that was simply shameful; they preferred their swine to a Divine Restorer; they would rather keep their property than entertain One who would bring health to their homes and wisdom to their hearts. When men reject Christ, they seldom put before their minds the alternative as it really is in the sight of God; but traced far enough, seen in the light of truth, viewed as it will have to be one day regarded, it is an unholy and an unworthy preference of the human to the Divine, or of the present to the future, or of the fleshly to the spiritual; it is a preference which God condemns, and for making which the soul will one day reproach itself. 3. It may be *only too successful.* It was so here. Jesus did not contest the point; he did not assert his right to go where he pleased and labour where he liked. He yielded to their urgency; "He went up into the ship, and returned back again." Man has a power which may well make him tremble, of resisting and rejecting the Divine; of sending away the messenger and the message which come from God himself; of silencing the voice which speaks from heaven. "How often would I! . . . but ye would not;" "Ye shall not see me until," etc. (ch. xiii.). This is the record of many a soul's history in its relation to Christ. We send away from our hearts and homes the Lord that would heal and save and enrich us.

II. THE WELCOME OF CHRIST. "The people gladly received him" (ver. 40); they welcomed him, "for they were all waiting for him"—were in expectation of his coming. 1. The *spirit in which* it is offered. We cannot suppose that every one then present had the same feeling about our Lord's return. Probably there were those who were influenced by a legitimate but unspiritual curiosity; others by a desire to be healed, or to secure his services as Healer of sickness for their friends; others by a wish to learn more of his wondrous wisdom; others by a reverent thankfulness and a desire to manifest their gratitude to him. Many motives take men into the presence of Christ. Some are low and very near the ground, that may or may not go unblessed. Others are higher and more hopeful. And yet others are certain to be recompensed. They who receive Christ's word in the love of it, who go to him to learn of him and to be healed by him, or who want to be employed by him in his cause, may make sure of a full-handed welcome by him. 2. *Its reception* by our Lord. We know that this is cordial and full of blessing. "If any man . . . open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." If, when Jesus Christ offers himself to us as our Teacher and Saviour, we heartily welcome him as such, there will be for us an enrichment of soul surpassing all that we can imagine—reconciliation to the living God; his own blessed and unfailing friendship; a life of sacred service, holy usefulness, and abiding joy; a death of peace and hope; an immortality of glory.—C.

Vers. 45, 46.—*Christ's discriminating notice.* Who can help being interested in the woman who is the subject of this sacred story? She has suffered long; she has wasted her substance in vain endeavours to be healed. Now a new hope springs up in her heart; though excited by this hope she shrinks from the publicity which she fears is necessary for its fulfilment. At last faith and hope triumph over timidity, and she comes into the presence of Christ. We are sympathetically present in that crowd; we see her stealing into it, pushing her way nearer and nearer to the Master, at length timidly stretching out her hand and touching the sacred fringe of his garment. We almost pity this trembling woman, albeit we know that she is healed, as Jesus turns and says, "Who touched me?" We know that it is only by a great spiritual effort that she tells her story to the Master in the presence of the people, and our hearts draw yet nearer in trust and love to that Divine Healer, to our Divine Lord, as we hear him say, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." The incident may speak to us of—

I. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BODILY AND REAL SPIRITUAL CONTACT. "There are times when hands touch ours, but only send an icy chill of unsympathizing indifference to the heart; when eyes gaze into ours, but with a glazed look that cannot read our souls; when the multitude throng and press us, but we cannot say, 'Somebody hath

touched me,' for the contact has not been between soul and soul, but only between form and form." We are very much thronged in this modern life we live, but we are not very often touched to newness of thought and feeling; and except we live a life of prayer and genuine human sympathy, we must not expect to "touch" other souls so as to quicken and inspire them.

II. THE USELESSNESS OF ANY REMEDY BUT THE GOSPEL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL NEED. This woman in her helplessness is a picture of humanity. It is sick with the worst of all maladies—sin. It is suffering all the wretched consequences of guilt—weariness, restlessness, misery, remorse. It often spends its resources on things which have no healing virtue, and which leave it ill as ever. At length it repairs unto him in whom is no disappointment, in the shelter of whose cross, and in the shadow of whose love, and in the sunshine of whose service is pardon for every sin, comfort for every sorrow, rest for every soul.

III. THE DUTY OF DECLARING WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US. That sensitive heart, trying to screen herself from the observation of the crowd, and wishing to come and go unnoticed, was not rejected. Nevertheless, the Lord, by his repeated questioning, constrained her to come forward and acknowledge the blessing she had received. Christ does not wish for an ostentatious piety; he hates all pretence; but he approves and desires a suitable and grateful avowal of our indebtedness to him. Though we come with a trembling heart, yet we are to come and tell our friends what great things the Lord has done for us.

IV. THE DISTINGUISHING NOTICE CHRIST TAKES OF US. "Who touched me?" asked the Lord. "Master, the multitude throng thee; is it wonderful that somebody should touch thee? Anybody might chance to touch thee in such a crowd; can it matter who it was?" urges Peter. "Ah! but that is not enough. Somebody, *some one*, hath touched me; there is one individual, whom I distinguish from the others, that has laid an appealing hand upon me. You see nothing in that touch but an accidental encounter. I see much more than that—the approach of a human mind, the appeal of a human heart, the contact of a human soul with mine." This is the spirit of our Lord's reply. And it conveys to us the important truth that *we are not lost in the crowd*. It is not so true to say, "God loves man," as to say, "God loves *men*." "He tasted death for *every man*;" "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." There are no limitations in the Infinite One. The fact that he controls the universe is no reason why he should not watch the workings of each humblest human soul. The vastness of the range of his observation does not diminish the fulness of his knowledge of every member of his family. Disciples see only a pressing, pushing throng; but the Master singles out the woman who has come to see whether her last chance will fail her. The crowd may hide us from one another, but not from our Lord. God sees us, every one; follows us; pursues us with his watchful and redeeming love; guides us with his hand; leads us into his kingdom. But we must see that our touch is one that will call forth such a response as this. Christ discriminates between the touch of this woman and that of the unmannerly crowd. It is not necessary for us to have a full and perfect understanding of his nature, or even a perfect, unwavering assurance of the success of our appeal. This woman had neither of these. It *is* necessary that we should have what she had—*earnestness of spirit*, and a measure of *genuine faith* in him. Then will he say to us, as to her, "Be of good comfort . . . go in peace."—C.

Ver. 49.—*A needless anxiety concerning Christ.* "Trouble not the Master." This ruler of the synagogue showed a commendable desire not to give useless trouble to the Prophet of Nazareth; he could not expect that his power would extend so far as to raise the dead, and he wished to save him fruitless trouble. Equally creditable was the behaviour of the centurion whose action is recorded in a previous chapter (vii. 6). He felt that the Lord could accomplish in the distance the object of his perhaps toilsome journey, and he sent to say, "Trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof." It was right that, by considerate kindness, the Son of man should be saved all that those who loved and honoured him could save him from. And the same is true enough to-day of the Son of God. There are—

I. WISE AND RIGHT SOLICITUDES CONCERNING HIM. We are bound to refrain most carefully and conscientiously from troubling the Master by: 1. Doing in his name that

which he would disown; *e.g.* carrying on a cruel, though it may be a refined, persecution of those who "follow not with us" in the mode of our worship, or the method of our Christian work. 2. Asking his blessing on that which he disapproves; *e.g.* on the war which is an unrighteous one, on the cause which is an unsound one, on the business which is not conducted on principles he can acknowledge as his own. 3. Misrepresenting him by the spirit which we manifest; instead of breathing the spirit of graciousness and self-sacrifice toward those who are weaker or younger or less cultured or less privileged than ourselves, adopting a tone of haughty superiority, or doing that which "causes them to offend." 4. Failing to approach him in prayer, to seek his aid and his influence, to apply for his redeeming touch. Christ may be much troubled by our distance and neglect; he is not likely to be burdened by our earnest approaches and appeals.

II. NEEDLESS ANXIETIES CONCERNING HIM. 1. *Inviting him to stay too long with us.* The centurion, modestly and properly enough, felt that he was not worthy that Christ should come under his roof. We may feel that also, and especially that we are not worthy that he should make our hearts his home, as he has promised us. But we must not refrain from inviting him to come and to stay with us. We must ask him earnestly to "abide with us from morn till eve," not "to sojourn, but *abide* with us." He will not count that a trouble; he will honour our faith and appreciate our welcome. "Abide in me, and I [will abide] in you." 2. *Going to him too often.* He places no limit on our spiritual approach to him. He says ever to us, "Come unto me;" "Draw nigh unto me;" "Seek ye my face." We shall not burden him by our fellowship; we may grieve him by our absence and by our preference of the society of those who are his enemies. 3. *Asking too much of him*—either for ourselves or for others. There is no magnitude or multitude of sins we may not ask him to forgive; no depth of evil we may not ask him to eradicate; no severity of disease we may not ask him to undertake. The maiden may be dead (text), the cause may be very low, the heart may be very cold, the character may be very corrupt, the life may be very base, the case may seem very hopeless; but do not shrink from "troubling the Master;" his touch "has still its ancient power;" to the lifeless form he can say, "Arise!" and into the cause that seems wholly gone, and the soul that seems utterly lost, he can infuse newness of life. 4. *Doing too much in his cause for him to watch and bless.* The more often we ask him to crown our holy labours with his energizing touch, the better we shall please his yearning and loving spirit.—C.

Vers. 1—21.—*Incidents in evangelistic work.* We have now to contemplate Jesus as fairly loosed from Capernaum as the centre of his mission work, and as making systematically the tour of the province of Galilee. The "beloved physician" gives to us here just such an insight into the material conditions of Christ's evangelistic work as we naturally desire. Let us, then, notice—

I. THE SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL SIDES OF OUR LORD'S EVANGELISTIC WORK. (Vers. 1—3.) Twelve men and a number of holy women form Christ's band—a choir, so to speak, of joyful evangelists. The substance of the message was "the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." Christ himself was Preacher. None of the others could enter into the nature of this coming kingdom. But it was to be a kingdom of peace and of joy to all who became members of it. Hence the preaching was "glad tidings." The *spiritual* side of the work was, therefore, joy-inspiring. The temporal conditions of the work are here revealed. Our Lord lived on charity, or, as we should put it, on *love*. Hospitality, especially to every one who professed to be a rabbi, would supply Christ with much; but it could not cover the whole case; consequently, certain women, who had been delivered from demoniacal possessions, and who were correspondingly grateful to their Deliverer, were proud to follow him and minister to him of their substance. Joanna, whose husband seems to have looked after Herod's housekeeping, transfers her attentions to a greater King, and becomes chief minister, we may believe, to her Master's wants. The twelve disciples were candidates for the ministry under training; the holy women were the caterers for the college; and so our Lord, as President, received the help of men and women in their respective spheres.

II. THE ELEMENT OF JUDGMENT IN PARABOLIC TEACHING. Before noticing briefly the parable of the sower, we must ask attention to the change in our Lord's method

of ministration. It would seem that up to this time he had preached less figuratively, but as the Pharisees had taken up their position of hostility, it was absolutely necessary for him to exercise what may be called intermediate judgment (cf. Godet, *in loc.*). This was by taking to parabolic teaching. While to a docile and childlike spirit a parable sets truth in its most attractive aspect, to a proud, self-sufficient spirit it veils and hides the truth. It is light or darkness according to our spiritual attitude. Hence the change in the Preacher's method heralded a new stage in his work. The common people would still hear him gladly, but the proud would be kept at a convenient distance through the veiled character of the truth presented in parables.

III. THE PARABLE OF WARNING. (Vers. 4—8, 11—15.) This, according to all the evangelists, was the first parable. It was breaking ground in the delivery of parables. Hence its character as a warning. Its subject is the hearing of the Word. Its warning is that there are three bad ways of hearing as against one good way. These are: 1. *Careless hearing*—represented by wayside seed devoured by the birds before it can fall into the earth and bear any fruit. The devil visits careless hearers, and takes the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 2. *Rapturous hearing*—represented by seed falling into rocky soil and springing up suddenly, only to wither away. Hence the danger of hearing with rapture and resting in the rapture. It is the religion of feeling, of happy times, and such superficialities. Something deeper is needed than this. 3. *Careworn and preoccupied hearing*—represented by seed falling into soil that is not cleansed of roots and thorns, and where the seed is choked. We cannot hear to advantage if we put anything before the Word. Unless it is put before worldly concerns, there will not be much fruit. 4. *Honest and good-hearted hearing*—represented by the seed falling into good and cleansed ground. In this case there is fruit-bearing, in some cases up to an hundredfold. Hence the warning voice, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Unless the multitude hearing Jesus, unless in particular the disciples, took the Word of God ministered by Jesus patiently and honestly into their consideration, they could not bring forth fruit unto perfection.

IV. THE APPLICATION TO THE TWELVE. (Vers. 16—18.) The disciples had received Jesus' explanation of the first parable. And now he further applies it to their case. They are intended, he tells them, to be lights in the world; and he has no intention of putting them under a bushel or bed, where the light would be lost and useless, but on a candlestick to illuminate all who enter the house. In this beautiful and figurative way our Lord indicates the position he means to give them in his Church. Consequently, they must remember that every secret thing is on its way to manifestation (ver. 17), and so their lives, no matter how secret and apparently insignificant, are *public* lives. By this thought all hearing will be intensified with a new sense of responsibility. Besides, he tells them that the law of *capital* obtains in hearing as well as in everything else. This is the law by which the person, who has something to start with, gets something more. For example, if we bring to the contemplation of the truth a "good and honest heart," then its goodness and honesty will be intensified and increased by the truth; whereas, if we bring a vacant heart, an inattentive mind, then our heart will be still more vacant, and our mind still more inattentive. We lose power by indifferent hearing, just as we gain power by attentive and honest hearing. This was a most important lesson for the candidates about him. Doubtless they profited by it.

V. BLOOD-RELATIONSHIP VERSUS SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP. (Vers. 19—21.) We learn from the parallel passages that this incident occurred in consequence of our Lord's enthusiasm. His relatives thought him mad, and that he ought to be put under restraint. His reply to their message is most significant. As Gess says, "He draws his true disciples the more closely around him as the hostility of his own relatives increases, and calls *them* his family."[1] We have thus, as Saurin puts it, the family of Jesus Christ according to the flesh contrasted with the family of Jesus Christ according to the Spirit. The spiritual relationship is put before the blood-relationship, other things being equal.[2] It is not that Jesus loved his brothers and mother less, but that he regarded the Father's will and those who obeyed it as more to him than they can be. His conduct on this occasion most likely conduced to the conversion of his kindred to believe upon him. It enabled them to see exactly the principle of his work.

[1] 'Christi Selbstzeugniss,' s. 48.

[2] Cf. Saurin's 'Sermons,' tome vi. pp. 227—264.

And in this loyalty to members of God's family we must follow our Lord. We must not allow others to usurp their rights under any pretence of relationship or authority. —R. M. E.

Vers. 22—56.—*A group of miracles.* The mother and brethren of Jesus had tried in vain to interfere with the important work in which he was engaged; he clung to his disciples as the real members of his Father's family. And so we find his career as a merciful Miracle-worker continuing. We have here a group of notable miracles; it was, as Godet suggests, the culmination of his miraculous work. Nature, human nature, and death yield to his authority in their order.

I. SAFETY IN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS. (Vers. 22—25.) The disciples and Jesus had embarked to visit the country of the Gadarenes. His object in doing so, as we shall presently see, was to rescue from diabolical possession a single soul. But to rescue this soul they had all to pass through storms in crossing. It was surely worth all the risk they ran! The weary Saviour fell asleep soon after embarking, and it was while he was sleeping the storm arose in nature, and the storm of fear in the souls of the disciples. It argued little faith on their part to suppose that they were in danger when beside them is the sleeping Christ. Yet so it was. Jesus may lead his people into danger, but he always shares it with them, and leads them in due time out of it. No sooner do they appeal to him to save them from perishing, than he arises, rebukes the wind and the wave, so that, contrary to custom, there is an immediate calm; and then proceeds to rebuke the storm within their souls, and make all these also to be peace. In this way our Lord showed his sovereignty over nature, and his sovereignty over man. He can rebuke "the noise of their seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people" (Ps. lxv. 7). No wonder that the strangers who were in the boat with the disciples were astonished at One who could command wind and wave, and they obeyed him!

II. JESUS THE MINISTER TO MINDS DISEASED. (Vers. 26—40.) In the greatest peace the disciples and their Master approached the shore. But here a more terrible storm confronted him—the mania of the poor possessed one. "The beloved physician," who writes this Gospel, brings out the characteristics of the mania as a physician would.[1] No sooner does the case present itself to Jesus, than he commands the devil to depart from him. No protest on the part of the unclean tenant avails; the spirit and his companions are compelled to prepare for departure. They bargain hard not to be sent "into the abyss" (*εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον*), where their final doom awaits them, and, as an alternative, ask to be permitted to enter into an adjoining herd of swine. This association of evil spirits with animals is illustrated in the Edenic temptation, and it may account for the reign of terror in the geologic times.[2] The possession of the animals may be different from that of a moral being like man, as Godet suggests; yet it shows surely the sensualism into which evil spirits can descend. The prodigal son only *desired* to satisfy himself with the swinish life; but these demons actually made the experiment (cf. ch. xv. 16). But now the swine, reinforced by the devils, rush madly onwards to the sea, and perish in the waters. The result is that one human being is delivered from his mania, while a herd of swine are sacrificed. If such an alternative is presented, there can be no doubt as to the decision. Better that all the swine in the world should perish, if as the result a single human soul is delivered from his mental disease. Hence the wretched souls, who came from the city and lamented the loss of the swine instead of rejoicing in the cure of the demoniac, show thereby that they deserved the judgment which had overtaken them. Jesus can "minister to minds diseased;" he can bring the maniac to his right mind again; and he can cure us of the insanity of sin and have us sitting clothed at his feet and anxious to be with him evermore. When, besides, the Gadarenes desire his departure, he can make arrangements for witness-bearing, so that when he returns after a time, the unwilling people shall be found to have renounced their unwillingness and to gladly welcome him. So may we all witness among our friends to the power of our Lord.

III. THE TOUCH OF FAITH. (Vers. 43—48.) We have next to notice the healing of the

[1] Cf. Hobart's 'Medical Language of St. Luke,' pp. 13, 14; also Trench on 'The Miracles,' p. 171, etc.

[2] Cf. Bersier's 'La Solidarité,' p. 119.

woman with the issue of blood. This was the solitary miracle where faith anticipates our Lord's consent, and finds healing through the touch of his garment. Having presented herself so often to the physicians, she in this case refuses to obtrude upon his notice, but thinks she will escape in the crowd. But our Lord, perceiving that from his sacred Person healing power had flowed, inquires for the patient, who in due season comes and confesses all. But she has been brought before him that he might convey to her the lesson that it was her faith, and not a mere physical touch, which had saved her. That is to say, the process was moral, and not merely physical. And surely this case of the issue of blood is to represent certain aspects of sin. It is a drain upon the moral system which man cannot staunch. But once we look to Jesus by faith and touch the hem of his garment, we are instantly healed, and power begins again to rise within us. We ought not to let our vital power be undermined when such a Saviour is at hand to heal us!

IV. THE AWAKENING OF THE DEAD. (Vers. 41, 42, 49—56.) This case of resurrection-power presents Jesus in the culmination of his miraculous work. The command of nature and of human nature is important, but still more magnificent is the command of death, the power to enter into the gloomy realm, and there assert one's authority. This is what Jesus does. He is humbly asked by Jairus to come to his dying daughter. He finds that he has to face the little daughter already dead. The father, ready to despair, is told to "believe only, and she shall be made whole." He believed, and lo! he found in Jesus One who could awake the dead! The resurrection is witnessed by the parents and three disciples—chosen witnesses. And after she is raised, he gives directions that she should be fed, and then that they should be silent about the miracle. He did not desire to be overwhelmed by the miraculous part of his work, but that he might be able to give a due proportion of his attention to teaching.[1] Similarly may each of us experience Christ's resurrection-power in our souls now, and in our bodies afterwards.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

Vers. 1—6.—*The Master sends out the twelve on a mission.*

Ver. 1.—**Then he called his twelve disciples together.** The Galilee ministry was just over; *outwardly* it had been a triumphant success; vast crowds had been gathered together. The Master was generally welcomed with a positive enthusiasm; the people heard him gladly. Here and there were visible, as in the cases of the woman who touched him and the synagogue ruler who prayed him to heal his little daughter, just related (ch. viii.), conspicuous examples of a strange or mighty faith; but the success, the Master knew too well, was only on the surface. The crowds who to-day shouted "Hosanna!" and greeted his appearance among them with joy, on the morrow would fall away from him, and on the day following would reappear with the shout "Crucify him!" It was especially to warn his Church in coming ages of this sure result of all earnest devoted preaching and teaching, that he spoke that saddest of parables, "the sower" (ch. viii.). But before he finally brought this Galilæan ministry to a close, he would gather in some few wavering souls, whose hearts he knew were trembling in the balance between the choice of life and good, and death and evil. To help these he sent out this last mission. The word rendered "called together" indicates a solemn gathering. **And gave them power,** etc. This and the further detail of the next verse (2) roughly describe the work he intended them to do, and the means bestowed on them for its accomplishment. Very extraordinary powers were conferred on them—powers evidently intended to terminate with the short mission on which he now despatched them.

Ver. 2.—**And to heal the sick.** St. Mark (vi. 13), in his brief notice of this mission of the twelve, mentions the special instrument of their power over sickness—*the twelve anointed the sick with oil, and healed them.* It is probable that the early Christian custom alluded to by St. James (v. 14), of anointing the sick with oil, arose from our Lord's direction to his apostles on the occasion of this mission. The practice was continued, or possibly was revived, long after the original power connected with it had ceased to exist. It still survives in the Roman Catholic Church in the sacrament of extreme unction, which, singularly enough,

[1] Cf. Macmillan's 'Our Lord's Three Raisings from the Dead,' pp. 3—72.

is administered when all hope of the patient's recovery from the sickness is over Anointing the sick with oil was a favourite practice among the ancient Jews (see Isa. i. 6 and ch. x. 34). It was to be used by the twelve as an ordinary medicine, possessing, however, in their hands an extraordinary effect, and was to be, during this mission, the visible medium through which the Divine influence and power to heal took effect. We never read of Jesus in *his* miracles using oil; his usual practice seems to have been simply to have used words. At times he touched the sufferer; on one occasion only we read how he mixed some clay with which he anointed the sightless eyes.

Ver. 3.—**Take nothing for** your journey. Dr. Farrar well sums up the various directions of the Master to these his first missionaries: "The general spirit of the instructions merely is, 'Go forth in the simplest, humblest manner, with no hindrances to your movements, and in perfect faith;' and this, as history shows, has always been the method of the most successful missions. At the same time, we must remember that the *wants* of the twelve were very small, and were secured by the free open hospitality of the East."

Ver. 4.—**And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.** On entering any new place they were to select, after due and careful inquiry (Matt. x. 11), a family likely and able to assist them in their evangelistic work. This "house" they were to endeavour to make the centre of their efforts in that locality. This rule we find continued in the early years of Christianity. In the history of the first Churches, certain "houses" in the different cities were evidently the centres of the mission work there. We gather this from such expressions in St. Paul's letters as "*the Church which is in his house*" (comp., too, Acts xvi. 40, where the house of Lydia was evidently the head-quarters of all missionary work in Philippi and its neighbourhood).

Ver. 5.—**And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.** It was the custom of the Jews when they returned from foreign (Gentile) lands, as they crossed the frontiers of the Holy Land, to shake the dust from off their feet. This was an act symbolizing that they had broken, now on their return to their own land, all communion with Gentile peoples which a residence among them had necessitated for a season. The bitter hatred and loathing of the Jews, after their return from the Captivity, for all Gentile races can only be understood by the student of the Talmud. So comprehensive and perfect a hatred, enduring, too, for centuries, has never been witnessed in the case of any other peoples. This accounts in great measure for the retaliative persecution which more or less has been carried on all through the Christian era against this marvellous race. In our day—the day of a liberalism possibly exaggerated and unreal—in many parts of Europe the untrained sense of the *masses* strangely revolts against this spirit of toleration; and wild excesses, massacres, and bitter persecution—the *Judenhetz*, hatred of the Jews in Germany and in Russia—are among the curious results of the liberality and universal toleration of the time.

Vers. 7—9.—*Herod's terror.*

Ver. 7.—**Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him.** This was Herod Antipas; he was a son of Herod the Great; his mother's name was Malthace. After his father's death he became tetrarch or prince-ruler of Galilee, Peræa, and of a fourth part of the Roman province of Syria. His first wife was daughter of Aretas, a famous Arabian sheik spoken of by St. Paul as "king of the Damascenes" (2 Cor. xi. 32). This princess he divorced, and contracted a marriage at once incestuous and adulterous with his niece Herodias, the beautiful wife of his half-brother Philip. Philip was not a sovereign prince, and it was probably from motives of ambition that she deserted Philip for the powerful tetrarch Herod Antipas. It was owing to his fearless remonstrances against this wicked marriage that John the Baptist incurred the enmity of Herodias, who was only satisfied with the head of the daring preacher who presumed to attack her brilliant wicked life. What Herod now heard was the report of the widespread interest suddenly aroused by the mission of the twelve—a mission, we know, supported by miraculous powers, following close upon the Galilæan ministry of the Lord, which, as far as regarded the numbers who thronged his meetings, and the outward interest his words and works excited, had been so successful. Rumours of all this at last reached the court circle, wrapped up in its own selfish and often wanton pleasures and false excitement. **Because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead.** Herod Antipas was probably inclined to the Sadducee creed, which believed in neither angel nor spirit. But Sadduceeism and the easy doctrines of Epicurus, which no doubt found favour in the luxurious palace of Herod, are but a flimsy protection at best against the ghastly reminiscences and the weird forebodings of a guilty conscience. The murder of John had been, Herod knew, strongly condemned by the public voice.

He would not believe it was his old monitor risen, but yet the prince was anxious and perturbed in his mind. The murmur that the great prophet was Elias (Elijah) disquieted him, too. Herod could not help recalling to his mind the lifelong combat of that great and austere servant of God against another wicked sovereign and his queen, Ahab and Jezebel, whose great crime was that *they*, too, had slain the Lord's prophets. That history, Herod felt, had to some extent been reproduced by himself and Herodias. There was a rooted expectation among the Jews that Elijah would reappear again on earth, and that his appearance would herald the advent of the Messiah. There are numberless references in the Talmud to this looked-for return of the famous Elijah.

Ver. 8.—**One of the old prophets.** Jeremiah and also Isaiah, though to a lesser degree than Elijah, were looked for as heralds of the coming Messiah (see 2 Esdr. ii. 10, 18, and 2 Macc. ii. 4—8; xv. 13—16). It was expected that Jeremiah would reveal the hiding-place of the long-lost ark and of the Urim.

Ver. 9.—**And he desired to see him**; that is, Jesus. The desire of Herod was gratified, but not then. He saw him the day of the Crucifixion, when Pilate sent him to Herod for judgment; but the tetrarch, weak and wicked though he was, declined the responsibility of shedding *that blood*, so he sent him back to the Roman governor. Here, in SS. Matthew and Mark, follows the dramatic and vivid account of the death of John the Baptist. St. Luke probably omits it, as his Gospel, or rather Paul's, was derived from what they heard from eye-witnesses and hearers of the Lord. As regards SS. Matthew and Mark, the latter of whom was probably simply the amanuensis of St. Peter, the awful event was woven into their life's story. It was most natural that, in their public preaching and teaching, they should make constant mention of the tragedy which so personally affected Jesus and his little company. St. Luke and his master, Paul, on the other hand, who were not *personally* present with the Lord when these events took place, would be likely to confine their memoirs as closely as possible to those circumstances in which Jesus alone occupied the prominent place.

Vers. 10—17.—*The Lord feeds the five thousand.*

Ver. 10.—**And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.** This, perhaps the most famous and oftenest told of the Lord's miracles, was worked directly after the return of the twelve from their mission. He and they were no doubt very weary of the crowds which continually now thronged them. The excitement of the multitude about Jesus was now at its height. Directly after the discourse at Capernaum (John vi.), which immediately followed the great miracle we are about to discuss, the popular enthusiasm began to wane. Intensely weary, dispirited too at the story of the murder of John the Baptist, which was told the Master by the disciples and the friends of John on their return from their mission, Jesus determined for a brief space to withdraw himself from the public gaze. He crossed the Lake of Gennesaret in one of his friends' fishing-boats to a town lately identified by modern research as Bethsaïda Julias, a small city recently beautified by Herod Philip, and named Bethsaïda Julias, after the daughter of Augustus. Bethsaïda, "house of fish," was a name attached evidently to several of these fishing centres on the shores of the lake. Many of the multitude of whom we read subsequently in the account of the miracle, had watched his departure in the boat for the neighbourhood of Bethsaïda Julias, and had gone on foot round the head of the lake to join the popular Teacher again. The distance round the north end of the lake from the point of embarkation, most likely Capernaum, to Bethsaïda Julias is not very considerable. The crowd which soon joined him in retirement would be considerably swelled by many of the Passover pilgrims just arrived at Capernaum on their way to Jerusalem to keep the feast. These would be anxious, too, to see and to hear the great Galilæan Prophet, whose name just then was in every mouth. Not very far from Bethsaïda Julias there is a secluded plain, *El Batihah*; thither Jesus no doubt went after leaving his fishing-boat, purposing to spend some time in perfect rest. Soon, however, the usually quiet plain becomes populous with the crowds following after the Galilæan Master. Though longing intensely for repose so necessary for himself and his disciples, he at once, moved by the eagerness of the multitude to hear and see him again, gives them his usual loving welcome, and begins in his old fashion to teach them many things, and to heal their sick.

Ver. 12.—**And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.** Simple consideration for the crowds, among whom we know were women and children, probably dictated this remark of the twelve, though it has been with some ingenuity

suggested that the advice of the disciples was owing to their fear that, as darkness would soon creep over the scene, some calamity might happen which would give a fresh handle against Jesus to his many enemies.

Ver. 13.—**But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat.** Godet here beautifully observes that this reply, and the great miracle that followed, was the result of a loving thought of the Redeemer. "John has disclosed it to us (vi. 4). It was the time of the Passover. He could not visit Jerusalem with his disciples, owing to the virulent hatred of which he had become the object. In this unexpected gathering, resembling that of the nation at Jerusalem, he discerns a signal from on high, and determines to celebrate a feast in the desert as a compensation for the Passover Feast." **We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.** The main lines of this story are the same in each of the four accounts which we possess of this miracle; but each of the four evangelists supplies some little detail wanting in the others. It is clear that there was no original written tradition from which they all copied. St. John tells us it was a little boy who had this small, rough provision. The boy probably was in attendance on the apostles, and this was no doubt the little stock of food they had provided for their own frugal meal. The barley loaves were the ordinary food of the poorest in Palestine, and the two fish were dried, as was the common custom of the country; and such dried fish was usually eaten with the bread.

Ver. 14.—**They were about five thousand men.** St. Matthew adds, "besides women and children." The multitude generally had come from a considerable distance, we know; there would not be, comparatively speaking, many women and children among them. These were grouped together apart, and, of course, fed, but were not counted among the five thousand. **And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.** "Jesus has no sooner ascertained that there are five loaves and two fishes, than he is satisfied. He commands them to make the multitude sit down. Just as though he had said, 'I have what I want; the meal is ready; let them be seated!' But he takes care that his banquet shall be conducted with an order worthy of the God who gives it. Everything must be calm and solemn; it is a kind of Passover meal. By the help of the apostles, he seats his guests in rows of fifty each (St. Matthew), or in double rows of fifty, by hundreds (Mark). This orderly arrangement allowed of the guests being easily counted. St. Mark describes in a dramatic manner the striking spectacle presented by these regularly formed companies, each consisting of two equal ranks, and all arranged upon the slope of the hill. The pastures at that time were in all their spring glory. SS. John and Mark both bring forward the beauty of this natural carpet. 'Much grass' (St. John); 'on the green grass' (St. Mark)" (Godet). St. Mark's vivid picturesque details show the observant eye-witness. The words rendered "in ranks" ("they sat down in ranks") literally mean they were like flower-beds set in the green grass. The bright-coloured Eastern robes of these men, as they sat in long rows, suggested the happy comparison.

Ver. 16.—**Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.** The blessing was the usual introduction of a pious Jewish family to a meal. It was pronounced by the head of the household. An ordinary formula was, "May God, the Ever-blessed One, bless what he has given us!" The Jewish barley loaves were broad, thin cakes; these were usually *broken*, not cut—hence the expression, "and brake." In SS. Mark and Luke the tense of the verb rendered "gave," in the original Greek, is an imperfect, and signifies, "he gave, and kept on giving." This supplies a hint as to the way of working the miracle. Each disciple kept coming to him for a fresh supply of bread. It was, however, as it has been well said, a miracle of the highest order, one of creative power, and is to us inconceivable. The evangelists make no attempt to explain it. They evidently did not care to ask. They beheld it, and related it to us just as they saw it in its simple grandeur. Neither disciples nor crowds seem at first to have grasped the stupendous nature of the act. St. John tells us of its effect on the crowds, who, when they came to see what had been done, wished to take him by force and make him king. For a brief space they were convinced that in the poor Galilee Rabbi they had found King Messiah—none but he could have done this great thing. They were right.

Ver. 17.—**And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them, twelve baskets.** A very impressive lesson from the Creator himself against waste or extravagance. St. John expressly tells us that this order to gather up the fragments of their meal emanated from Jesus himself. Carefulness, thrift, and economy in small things as in great, form part of the teaching of the loving Master. From such passages as Mark vi. 37 and John xiii. 29, it seems probable that the disciples, acting under their Master's direc-

tion, were in the habit of distributing, out of their comparative abundance, food to those persons in the villages who were poorer than themselves. It was, no doubt, for some such hallowed object as this that the careful collection of the fragments which filled twelve baskets was made. The "baskets" (*cophinus*) were usually carried by travelling Jews to keep their food from contracting Levitical pollution in Gentile places. Juvenal, in a well-known passage ('Sat.,' iii. 14), writes of the Jews travelling about Italy with no baggage save a little bundle of hay to serve as a pillow, and this cophinus, or basket, for their food. So abundant had been the provision created by Jesus, that the fragments collected far exceeded the original stock of food which the disciples gave to Jesus to bless, to break, and to distribute among the five thousand and upward who were fed that memorable afternoon. This miracle is the only one in the entire Galilæan ministry which is told by all the four evangelists. It evidently had a very prominent place in the teaching of the first days. Rationalizing interpretation in the case of this miracle is singularly at fault. After eighteen centuries of unremitting hostility to the teaching of Jesus Christ, not even a plausible explanation of this miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes has been found by adverse critics. In our own days, Renan, following the ancient interpretation of Paulus, simply suggests that the multitudes were fed by materials provided by themselves. "Every one took his little store of provision from his wallet; they lived on very little"—an explanation, as it has been happily termed, "ludicrously inadequate."

After the relation of the great miracle of feeding the five thousand, St. Luke omits in his Gospel a variety of incidents and several discourses told at greater or lesser length by the other evangelists. For instance, the reverential amazement of the people when the nature of the stupendous miracle in connection with the creation of the loaves and fishes flashed upon them, —they wished to recognize him as King Messiah; the walking on the sea; the long and important discourse on the true Bread at Capernaum, the text of which was the late great miracle of the loaves; the journey among the heathen as far as Tyre and Sidon; the meeting with the Syrophœnician woman; the feeding of the four thousand, etc. These incidents are related in Matt. xiv.—xvi. 12; Mark vi. 45—viii. 30; John vi. No commentator has satisfactorily explained the reason of this omission of important portions of our Lord's public ministry. The reason for St. Luke's action here probably will never be guessed. We must, however, in all theories which we may form of the composition of these Gospels, never lose sight of this fact, that while SS. Matthew and Peter (Mark) were eye-witnesses of the events of the life, St. Luke, and his master, Paul, simply reproduced what they had heard or read. We may, therefore, suppose that St. Luke exercised larger discretionary powers in dealing with materials derived from others than the other two, who desired, no doubt, to reproduce a fairly general summary of their Divine Master's acts. On such a theory of composition, a gap in the story like the one we are now alluding to, in the more eclectic Gospel of St. Luke, would seem scarcely possible in the first two Gospels. We, of course, make no allusion here to the Fourth Gospel; the whole plan and design of St. John was different to that upon which the first three were modelled.

Vers. 18—27.—*Jesus' question to his own: Who did they think he was? He tells them of a suffering Messiah, and describes the lot of his own true followers.*

Ver. 18.—**And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?** With these abrupt words, St. Luke changes for his readers the time and scene. Since the miracle of feeding the five thousand at Bethsaida Julias, Jesus had preached at Capernaum the famous sermon on the "Bread of life" (reported in John vi.); he had wandered to the north-east as far as the maritime cities of Tyre and Sidon; had returned again to the Decapolis region for a brief sojourn; and then once more had turned his footsteps north; and it was in the extreme confines of the Holy Land, in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and close to the great fountain, the source of the sacred Jordan, at the foot of the southern ridge of Hermon, where he put the momentous question here chronicled, to his listening disciples. Much had happened since the five thousand were fed. The defection which the Master had foreseen when he commenced his parable-teaching with the sad story of the "sower." had begun. After the great Capernaum sermon (John vi.), many had fallen away from him; the enthusiasm for his words was rapidly waning; the end was already in sight. "Well," he asks his own, "what

are men saying about *me*? Whom do they think that I am?"

Ver. 19.—**They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.** It was a strange answer, this report of the popular belief concerning Jesus. There had been for a long period among the people expectations more or less defined, that certain of the great national heroes were to reappear again to take up their incomplete work, and to play the part in Israel, of heralds of the looked-for glorious King Messiah. The popular belief respecting Jesus was that he was one of these. Some thought of Elijah. The two miracles of creating the loaves and fishes for a great famishing crowd especially suggested this idea. There was a shadowy, but not an unreal resemblance here to the well-remembered miracle of Elijah, worked for the Sarepta widow and her son, with the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal which failed not (1 Kings xvii. 14). The words of Malachi (iv. 5) pointed in the same direction. The image of the recently murdered Baptist was present with some. Herod's words, already commented on, point to this, perhaps, widespread belief. Jeremiah would be a likely instance of "one of the old prophets." Tradition had already asserted that the spirit of that great one had passed into Zechariah; surely another similar transmigration was possible. Jeremiah, popular tradition said, had safely hidden the ark and the tabernacle and the altar of incense somewhere in the mountain where Moses died by the "kiss of God." Already had he appeared to the brave and patriotic Judas Maccabæus in a vision as a man grey-haired and exceeding glorious, as one praying for the people as their guardian-prophet, and had given the gallant Maccabæan hero a golden sword from God. It was one of these old heroic forms, so loved of Israel, once more in the flesh, that the people believed Jesus to be.

Ver. 20.—**But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.** And the Master listened, apparently without comment, to this reply, which told him what the people said of him, and then went on, "But you, my disciples, who have been ever with *me*, what say, what think *you* about *me*?" Peter, as the representative of the others in that little chosen company, answers, "*We* believe that thou art more than any prophet or national hero or forerunner of the Messiah; *we* think that thou art the Messiah himself." Dr. Morrison very beautifully pictures the disciples' state of mind at this juncture. "No doubt the true light on the subject had often gleamed through the darkness of their minds (see John i. 29, 33, 34, 41, 45, 49, etc.). But, though gleam succeeded gleam, in flashes that revealed the Illimitable, the darkness would ever, more or less, close in again. They could not altogether help it. They were witnesses of a 'humiliation' which they could not reconcile with the notions they had inherited in reference to the power and pomp of the Messiah. And yet it was evident that he was entirely unlike all other rabbis. He was the Master of masters, and a mystery over and above. An inner lustre was continually breaking through. It was glorious; it was unique. His character was transcendently noble and pure. He had not, moreover, obtruded self-assertions on them. He had left them, in a great measure, to observe for themselves; and they *had been* observing." It was, indeed, on the part of these feeble disciples a pure and lofty expression of the effect produced on their hearts by Jesus Christ's teaching. But though these men, afterwards so great, had attained to this grand conception of their adored Master, though they alone, among the crowds, through the sad coloured veil of his low estate, could see shining the glory of Divinity, yet *they* could not grasp yet the conception of a suffering Messiah, and in spite of all the teaching of the Master, the cross and the Passion made them unbelievers again. It needed the Resurrection to complete the education of faith.

Ver. 21.—**And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing.** It would have been no hard task for the disciples to have gone about with an expression of their earnest conviction that the great Prophet was indeed the long looked-for King Messiah, and thus to have raised the excitable crowds to any wild pitch of enthusiasm. It was only a very short time back that, moved by the miracle of the loaves, the multitudes wished to crown him King by force. *That* was not the kind of homage Jesus sought; besides which, any such enthusiasm thus evoked would quickly have died away, and a hostile reaction would have set in when the high hopes excited by the idea of King Messiah were contradicted by the life of suffering and self-denial which Jesus sternly set himself to live through to its bitter end. This life he sketched out for them in the severe language of the next verse.

Ver. 22.—**Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.** "See how," as Riggenbach, quoted by Godet, says ('Vie de Jésus,' p. 318), "Jesus was obliged, in the very moment of self-revelation, to veil himself, when he had lighted the fire to cover it again." This dark and terrible

prediction came upon the disciples evidently as something new. It was their Master's reply to their confession of faith in him. It said in other words, "You are right in your conception of me and my work. I am the promised King Messiah; but this part of my reign will be made up of affliction and mourning and woe. The great council of the people will reject me, and I shall only enter into my grand Messianic kingdom through the gate of suffering and of death. But do you, my own, be of good cheer. Three days after that death I shall rise again." The enumeration of "elders, chief priests, and scribes" is simply a popular way of describing the great council of the Jewish nation, the Sanhedrin, which was composed of these three important and influential sections of the people.

Ver. 23.—**And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.** Before sketching out the life which the true disciples of a suffering King Messiah must lead on earth, our Lord seems to have given notice of one of his public discourses. Even though his great popularity was now on the wane, to the last he was evidently listened to by crowds, if not with enthusiasm, certainly with eager and impatient curiosity. The sermon, of which we have the outline in the next five verses, and the subject-matter of which was, "No cross, no crown," was preached evidently to the masses. This is plain from the opening words of ver. 23. The sermon was evidently a hard saying, and, no doubt, gave bitter offence to many of the hearers. "If any man *will*," that is, *wishes* to, "come after me, to follow me where I am going" (Jesus was going to his kingdom), "let that man be prepared to give up earthly ease and comfort, and be ready to bear the sufferings which will be sure to fall on him if he struggle after holiness." This readiness to give up ease, this willingness to bear suffering, will be a matter, they must remember, of every-day experience. The terrible simile with which the Lord pressed his stern lesson home was, of course, suggested to him by the clear view he had of the fearful end of his own earthly life—an end then so near at hand, though the disciples guessed it not. *The cross* was no unknown image to the Jews who that day listened to the Master. The gloomy procession of robbers and of rebels against Rome, each condemned one bearing to the place of death the cross on which he was to suffer, was a sadly familiar image then in their unhappy land.

Ver. 24.—**For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.** The Greek word here rendered "life" signifies the natural animal life, of which the main interests are centred in the earth. If a man grasp at this shadowy, quickly passing earthly life, he will assuredly lose the substantial enduring heaven-life. If, on the other hand, he consents, "for my sake," to sacrifice this quickly fading life of earth, he shall surely find it again in heaven, no longer quickly fading, but a life fadeless, eternal, a life infinitely higher than the one he has for righteousness' sake consented to lose here. The same beautiful and comforting truth we find in that fragment, as it is supposed, of a very early Christian hymn, woven into the tapestry of St. Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy—

> "If we be dead with him,
> We shall also live with him:
> If we suffer,
> We shall also reign."
> (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.)

Ver. 25.—**For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?** Godet's comment here is pithy and quaint: "Jesus supposes, in this twenty-fifth verse, the act of *saving one's own life* accomplished with the most complete success . . . amounting to a gain of the whole world. But in this very moment, the master of this magnificent domain finds himself condemned to perish! What gain to draw in a lottery a gallery of pictures . . . and at the same time to become blind!" "O flesh," writes Luther (quoted by Dr. Morrison), "how mighty art thou, that thou canst still throw darkness over those things, even to the minds of the holy!"

Ver. 26.—**For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.** Here follows the punishment in the world to come. It consists in the Judge's solemn award to the man who has succeeded in saving his life in this world. The award is, "Depart from me: I know you not." Of such a selfish soul, who here has loved his own ease, and has declined all self-sacrifice, will the Son of man, in the day of his glory, be justly ashamed. The suffering Messiah thus completed his vivid picture of himself. Not always was he to suffer, or to wear the robe of humiliation. The Despised and Rejected would assuredly return with a glory indescribable, inconceivable. His assertion, advanced here, that *he* will return as Almighty Judge, is very remarkable. In the parallel passage in St. Matthew (xvi. 13) it is put even more clearly. There Jesus asks his disciples, "Whom do men say that *I, the Son of man*, am?" In ver. 27 Jesus goes on to say, "*The Son of man* shall

come in the glory of *his* Father, with *his* angels, and then *he* shall reward every man according to his works." The lesson was very clear. His own might surely be content. Only let them be patient. Lo! in the poor rejected Rabbi now before them, going to his bitter suffering and his death, they were looking really on the awful form of the Almighty Judge of quick and dead. These words, very dimly understood *then*, in days to come were often recalled by his hearers. They formed the groundwork of many a primitive apostolic sermon.

Ver. 27.—**But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.** This magnificent promise has always been more or less a difficulty to expositors. Two favourite explanations which (1) in the Transfiguration mystery, (2) in the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Jewish state, see the fulfilment of this great prediction, must be put aside as inadequate, as failing utterly to satisfy any idea of the kingdom of God. Concerning (1), it must be borne in mind that the words were addressed, not only to the disciples, but to a mixed multitude; the expression then, "there be *some* standing here," etc., would seem to point to more than *three* (Peter, James, and John were alone present at the Transfiguration) who should, while living, see the kingdom of God. Concerning (2), those who were witnesses of the great catastrophe which resulted in the sack of Jerusalem and the ruin of the Jewish polity, can scarcely be said to have looked on the kingdom of God. It was rather a great and terrible judgment; in no way can it fairly be termed the kingdom, or even its herald; it was simply an awful event in the world's story. But surely the Lord's disciples, the holy women, the still larger outer circle of loving followers of Jesus, who were changed by what happened during the forty days which immediately succeeded the Resurrection morning—changed from simple, loving, fearful, doubting men and women, into the brave resistless preachers and teachers of the new faith—the five hundred who gazed on the risen Lord in the Galilæan mountain,—*these* may in good earnest be said to have seen, while in life, "the kingdom of God." These five hundred, or at all events many of them, after the Resurrection, not only looked on God, but grasped the meaning of the presence and work of God on earth. The secret of the strange resistless power of these men in a hostile world was that their eyes had gazed on some of the sublime glories, and their ears had heard some of the tremendous secrets of *the kingdom of God*.

Vers. 28—36.—*The Transfiguration.*

Ver. 28.—**And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.** Some eight days after this question asked in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and its reply, and the sermon to the people on the subject of "No cross, no crown," which immediately followed, our Lord summoned the three leading disciples and took them up into a mountain to pray. They had spent the last few days apparently in quiet converse together. SS. Matthew and Mark speak only of six days. St. Luke gives the period in round numbers, counting portions of the first and last days as whole days. We may well imagine that this was a period of intense depression in the little company of Jesus. Their Master's popularity was fast waning among the people. His powerful enemies seemed gathering closer and closer round the Teacher whom they were determined to crush. The late utterances of Jesus, too, whether spoken to them alone, or publicly to the people, all foreshadowed a time of danger and suffering in the immediate future for him and for them—a time which, as far as he was concerned, would close with a violent death. To raise the fainting spirits of his own, to inspire them with greater confidence in himself, seems to have been the *immediate* purpose of that grand vision of glory known as the Transfiguration. It is true that to only three was vouchsafed the vision, and silence was enjoined on these, but the three were the leading spirits of the twelve. If Peter, James, and John were brave, earnest, and hopeful, there was little doubt that their tone of mind would be quickly reflected in their companions. Tradition, based on the fairly early authority of Cyril of Jerusalem, and of Jerome (fourth century), speaks of the mountain as Tabor, but the solitude evidently necessary for the manifestation would have been sought for in vain on Mount Tabor, a hill which rises abruptly from the Plain of Esdraelon, not very far from Nazareth to the south-east, for the summit of Tabor at that time was crowned with a fortress. The mountain most probably was one of the lower peaks of Hermon, at no great distance from the fountain source of the Jordan and Cæsarea Philippi, in which district we know Jesus and his companions had been teaching only a few days before.

Ver. 29.—**And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered,** etc. The marvellous change evidently passed over Jesus *while* he was in prayer, probably *because* of his intense prayer. Real, close communion with God ever imparts to the countenance of the one who has thus entered

into communion with the High and Holy One, a new and strange beauty. Very many have noticed at times this peculiar and lovely change pass over the faces of God's true saints as they prayed—faces perhaps old and withered, grey with years and wrinkled with care. A yet higher degree of transfiguration through communion with God is recorded in the case of Moses, whose face, after he had been with his God-Friend on the mount, shone with so bright a glory that mortal eye could not bear to gaze on it until the radiance began to fade away. A similar change is recorded to have taken place in the case of Stephen when he pleaded his Divine Master's cause in the Sanhedrin hall at Jerusalem with such rapt eloquence that to the by-standers his face then, we read, "was as the face of an angel." Stephen told his audience later on, in the course of that earnest and impassioned pleading, that to him the very heavens were opened, and that his eyes were positively gazing on the beatific vision. Yet a step higher still was this transfiguration of our Lord. St. Luke tells us simply that, "as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered." St. Matthew tells us *how* it was altered when he writes that "his countenance shone as the sun." **And his raiment was white and glistering**; literally, *lightening forth*, as if from some inward source of glorious light. The earthly robes were so beautified by contact with this Divine light that human language is exhausted by the evangelists to find terms and metaphors to picture them. St. Matthew compares these garments of the Blessed One to light; St. Mark, to the snow; St. Luke, to the flashing lightning.

Ver. 30.—**And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias**; literally, *there were talking*. Evidently these two glorified beings had been conversing with Jesus some time before the three apostles, heavy with sleep, had noticed their presence; wearied and tired, slumber had overtaken them; we are not told how long they slept. The glorious light which environed them and the murmur of voices probably roused them, and in after-days they recounted what, after they were awake, they saw, and something of what they heard.

Ver. 31.—**Who appeared in glory.** Why were these two chosen as the Lord's companions on that solemn night? Probably (1) because they were what may be termed the two great representative men of the chosen race of Israel. The one was the human author of the Divine Law which for so many centuries had been the guide and teacher of the covenant people. The other had been the most illustrious of that great order of prophets who, during the centuries of their eventful history as a nation, had, under the commission of the Most Highest, kept alight the torch of the knowledge of the one true God. And (2) because these men alone of the race of Israel apparently had kept their earthly bodies as the shrines of their immortal spirits. *Elijah*, we know, was translated *alive* into the other and the grander world; and as for *Moses*, God, his heavenly Friend, closed his eyes, and then hid his body from mortal sight, and, the mysterious words of Jude (ver. 9) would seem to tell us, from mortal corruption. **And spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.** Why was *this* the chosen subject of the august conference between the Lord and the heavenly pair? (1) In all reverence we may feel that one reason for the visit of these blessed spirits on that solemn night was the strengthening the sinless Sufferer himself. The vista which lay immediately before Jesus, of rejection, desertion, the death of agony, and the dreadful sufferings which preceded it, —all this had been very present before him lately. He had dwelt upon these things, we know, to his own. He had pondered over them, no doubt, often when alone. It was not only in Gethsemane that his "soul was sorrowful even unto death." As in the garden-agony "appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him," so here on the mount came to him these glorified spirits for the same blessed purpose of ministering. And (2) it was to help the three disciples. Their wavering faith would surely be strengthened if the words which they heard from those heavenly visitants dwelt with reverent awe and admiration on the circumstances of their Master's self-sacrificing career of agony and suffering. It must be remembered that a few days earlier they had listened to him, when he spoke to them of these things, with shrinking terror and incredulous amazement. They would now know what was thought of all this in the courts of heaven.

Ver. 32.—**And the two men that stood with him.** It has been asked—How did the disciples know the names which those glorified ones had once borne? Three replies are at least probable. (1) They may have heard their Master address them by their old earthly names. (2) In subsequent conversations the Lord may have disclosed them to the three. (3) Is it not a very *thinkable* thought that the blessed bear upon their spirit-forms their old individuality transfigured and glorified? Were such a vision vouchsafed to us, should we not in a moment recognize a Peter, a Mary, or a Paul?

Ver. 33.—**And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and**

let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. The three evangelists who relate the Transfiguration scene, with trifling variations repeat this remark of Peter's. It is valuable to us when we remember that the tradition of the marvellous event comes from Peter, James, and John; and that they repeat the strange inconsequent words uttered by one of themselves—their acknowledged spokesman. No thought of self-glorification evidently tinged this strange memory of theirs. They simply wished to record the plain truth just as it happened, and in the course of the narrative they had to repeat their own poor, babbling, meaningless words—for the remark of Peter is nothing else. Their own remark, which immediately follows, is the best comment upon them, "not knowing what he said." There was a deep feeling that in such a company, bathed, too, in that glorious and unearthly light, *it was well with them.* But they saw the heavenly visitants preparing to leave them. They would stay their departure if they could, so they stammered, "Let us build some shelter; let us erect some temple, however humble, to do honour, Lord, to thee and thy companions."

Ver. 34.—**While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.** This luminous cloud, bright though it was, yet veiled the more intolerable brightness within. That such a bright cloud had the power of overshadowing and concealing, is not strange, for light in its utmost intensity hides as effectually as the darkness would do. God dwells in light inaccessible, whom therefore "no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. vi. 16). Milton writes—

"Dark with excess of light."

Philo speaks of the highest light as identical with darkness. Anselm thus understands the cloud here, quoting the words of 1 Tim. vi. 16, referred to above, and then the words of Moses, "And Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was" (Exod. xx. 21), and then this passage from the Transfiguration, and comments thus: "Illa caligo et ista nubes, atque illa lux idem sunt" (see Archbishop Trench on "Transfiguration," in 'Studies in the Gospels,' 8). The fear which these eye-witnesses remember as one of their experiences that memorable night was a very natural feeling. As the cloud stole over the mountain ridge, and the glory-light gradually paled and waned, the sensation of intense pleasure and satisfaction, which we may assume to be the natural accompaniment of such a blessed scene, would give place to awe and amazement.

Ver. 35.—**And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.** The reading here of the older authorities must be adopted. Instead of the voice out of the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son," we must substitute, "This is my Elect." As SS. Matthew and Mark both read, "my beloved Son," we have here another of the many proofs that each of the three records of the Transfiguration is a distinct and separate memory of itself. The voice was evidently for the disciples—one more help for them in their present and future struggle against the cold and chilling doubts which ever and again would be suggested to them by the enemy of human souls, with a view to marring their present training, their future mighty missionary work.

Ver. 36.—**And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.** The reasons of this silence for the present have been already discussed. The scene, doubtless, had done its work in the education of the three. Without telling their companions what they had seen and heard on the mount, we may assume that the sight of the serene confidence and renewed trust on the part of Peter, James, and John did its effectual work in strengthening their brethren. No doubt directly after the Resurrection, possibly during the days of darkness and gloom which followed the day of the cross, the chosen three related at length their experience of the Transfiguration mystery. The narrative of the Transfiguration and its attendant circumstances, as might have been expected, has been a favourite subject for hostile criticism. It does not, however, lend itself to any probable, or even possible, explanation which refers the story to some exaggerated report of a mistaken natural phenomenon. The whole story, as we have it thrice—with very slight variation in the details—repeated in the synoptical Gospels, must stand as we have it, or else must be wholly rejected as a myth. But, if a myth, whence did it spring? for nothing in the Jewish expectation of Messiah could possibly have suggested the "legend." The strange and even childish interruption of Peter could never have been *invented.* No one *friendly* to the apostle would have chronicled such a saying had there been any doubt resting on its authenticity; and a writer *hostile* to the apostle would scarcely have invented a narrative which treated of the Divine glory of the apostle's adored Master. If it be an invention, whence comes it? in whose interest was it composed? and how did it find its way into the very heart of the three synoptical Gospels? for there we find it woven into that marvellous tapestry of

revelation and teaching which has at once charmed and influenced so many millions of men and women now for more than eighteen hundred years. Something of the purpose which the Transfiguration was intended to serve in the education of the twelve has been already discussed in the foregoing notes. Dr. Lange, who has made this difficult passage in the story of Jesus a subject of deep and earnest study, has given us some beautiful thoughts on the real signification of the Lord's transfiguration. This scholar and divine considers that, just at this period of his public ministry, Jesus had reached the zenith of his power. This is indicated by the grandeur of his recent miracles. There was nothing higher and more sublime to be reached by him. From this moment, therefore, earthly existenee became too narrow a sphere. There only remained death; but death is, as St. Paul says, *the wages of sin*. For the sinless Man the issue of life is not the sombre passage of the tomb, rather is it the royal road of a glorious transformation. Had the hour of this glorification struck for Jesus? and was the Transfiguration the beginning of the heavenly renewal? Gess, quoted by Godet —from whose *précis* of Lange's note these observations are derived—gives expression to Lange's thoughts in these words: "This event (the Transfiguration) indicates the ripe preparation of Jesus for immediate entrance upon eternity." "Had not Jesus himself," goes on Godet to say, thus concluding this very beautiful and suggestive, if somewhat fanciful note, "voluntarily suspended this change which was on the point of being wrought in him, this moment, the moment of his glorious transfiguration would have become the moment of his ascension."

Vers. 37—45.—*The scene at the foot of the hill of Transfiguration. The healing of the demoniac boy.*

Ver. 37.—**On the next day, when they were come down from the hill.** The Transfiguration had taken place in the late evening or night. It probably lasted for a much longer period than the brief account, preserved by the eye-witnesses, seems to speak of. How long the three disciples slept is not mentioned. Wearied and exhausted, deep slumber overtook them while the Master was praying. When they awoke, Jesus was bathed in glory, and the two heavenly spirits were conversing with him. They only tell us generally that the subject which occupied the blessed ones was their Master's speedy departure from earth; no mention is made of the time all this consumed. It was morning when they rejoined their company. **Much people met him.** St. Mark, whose account here is more detailed—evidently Peter preserved a very vivid memory of these events—tells us that the crowds, "when they beheld him, were greatly amazed." Without concluding that any lingering radiance of the last night's glory was still playing about his Person, we may well imagine that a holy joy just then lit up that face over which for some time past a cloud of deep sadness had brooded. The heavenly visitants; the words he had been listening to, which told him of his home of grandeur and of peace, voluntarily left by him that he might work his mighty earth-work;—had no doubt strengthened with a strange strength the Man of sorrows; and when the crowds gazed on his face they marvelled, as St. Mark tells us, at what they saw there.

Ver. 38.—**A man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.** The tender sympathy of St. Luke is shown in this little detail. He is the only evangelist who mentions that the poor tormented boy was an *only child*.

Ver. 40.—**And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.** This appears to have been a case of the deadliest kind of epileptic lunacy. Our Lord distinctly assumes here that the disease in this case was occasioned by an unclean spirit who had taken possession of the suffering child. The whole question of demoniacal possession, its extent, its cause, whether or no it still survives in some of the many mysterious phases of madness, is very difficult. It has been discussed elsewhere (see notes on ch. iv. 33 and following verses).

Ver. 41.—**And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?** This grave and mournful expression of the loving but just Master was addressed to the entire crowd, in whose midst he now found himself. *The people*, swayed hither and thither, now enthusiastic in his favour, when some sweet promise, or noble sentiment, or marvellous work touched their hearts, now coldly indifferent or even hostile, when his teaching seemed to exact some painful sacrifice of self at their hands,—these were looking on with quiet indifference at his disciples' failure in the case of the poor possessed child, and listened to their scribes as they wrangled with the Lord's dismayed and perplexed followers. These followers, trying to imitate their Master in his wonder-works, but failing because, after all, their faith in him wavered. The father of the child, confessing his unbelief, but utterly wretched at the sight of the suffering of his boy. The ghastly spectacle of the insane boy writhing and foaming on the ground, and then lying all bruised and dishevelled

with the pallor of death on the poor, pain-wrung face, and this sorely afflicted one *a child*, one of those little ones whom Jesus loved so well. Poor child-sufferer, on whose comparatively innocent life the sin of mother and father weighed so heavily! What a contrast for the Lord between the heavenly hours he had just been spending on the mount, and this sad sight of pain and suffering, of jealousy and wrangling, of doubts and indecision, in the midst of which he now stood! "O faithless and perverse," cried the pitiful Lord with a burst of intense sorrow, "how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?" One word, he knew, and for him all *this* might be exchanged for the scenes of heaven, for the company of angels and of blessed spirits, for the old home of grandeur and of peace; only it was just to heal this bitter curse that he had left his heaven-home. But the contrast between the glory of the Transfiguration mount and the memories which they evoked, and the present scene of pain and woe unutterable, of human passions and weakness, called forth from the Lord this bitter, sorrowful expression.

Ver. 42.—**And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.** A word of the great Master was sufficient, and the spirit which had brought the cruel curse of disease and madness into the boy was cast out, and the strange cure was complete. St. Peter supplied St. Mark with fuller details here, and especially adds one priceless gem of instruction in the Christian life. The Lord told the father of the suffering child that the granting of the boon he craved for his son depended on his own faith. Then the poor father, won by the Divine goodness manifest in every act and word of Jesus, stammered out that pitiful, loving expression, re-echoed since in so many thousand hearts, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." If he accepted and rewarded *that* trembling, wavering faith in him, will he reject mine?

Ver. 43.—**And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples.** Once more were kindled the disciples' hopes of an earthly royalty in the Person of that strange Messiah. For was he not Messiah after all, who with a word worked such stupendous works as the miracle they had just witnessed? But Jesus read their thoughts, and again tells them (in ver. 44) of the terrible doom which awaited him. They must remember there was no earthly crown or human sovereignty for him.

Ver. 45.—**And they feared to ask him of that saying.** The "saying" was to them so utterly distasteful, perhaps inconceivable. It is possible that they thought this betrayal and death simply veiled for them some bit of teaching to be explained hereafter; it is possible they at once dismissed it from their minds, as men often do painful and mournful forebodings. At all events, they dreaded asking him any questions about this dark future of suffering which he said lay before him.

Vers. 46—48.—*How the Lord answered the question which arose among the disciples as to which was the greatest.*

Vers. 46, 47.—**Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart.** Somewhere on their journey back to the south, between the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi and the old scene of his labours, Capernaum, this dispute must have taken place. Shortly after their arrival at Capernaum, the Master called them together, and gave them the following lesson on human greatness. **Took a child, and set him by him.** St. Mark mentions that this teaching was "in the house," and commentators have suggested, with some probability, that the house was St. Peter's, and the child one of his. Clement of Alexandria ('Stromata,' iii. 448, B) especially mentions that this apostle had children. St. Matthew relates this incident at greater length, and, still dwelling upon the text of "the little one," gives us another and different sketch of the Master's teaching on this occasion. St. Mark tells us how Jesus folded his arms round the little creature in loving fondness. If the child, as above suggested, was Peter's own, such an incident as that embrace would never have been forgotten by the father, and would, of course, find a place in the memoir of his faithful disciple Mark. A (late) tradition of the Eastern Church identifies this child with him who afterwards became the famous Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, a martyr. Ignatius styled himself Theophoros; this, understood in a *passive* sense, would signify "one who had been carried by God." But in this Father's own writings we find the name used by himself in an *active* sense, as "one who carries God within himself." *And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child.* The dispute "which of them should be greatest," which no doubt had taken place among themselves in their last journey from the north of the Holy Land to Capernaum, was still a leading thought in the hearts of the twelve, so little had they really understood their Master's teaching, and especially his later solemn words which pointed the *way of the cross* as the only way to heaven and to *real greatness*. The Lord reads these poor sinful hearts; then, calling them together, he takes a child in his arms, and sets him by him. *By this action* the Lord answers the silent questioning thought

of the worldly twelve. "The child stands as the type of the humble and childlike disciple, and (the dispute having been about the comparative greatness of the disciples) such a disciple is the greatest; he is so honoured by God that he stands on earth as the representative of Christ, and of God himself (ver. 47), since "he that is [willingly] least among you all, the same shall be [truly] great' (ver. 48)" (Meyer).

Ver. 48.—**Whosoever shall receive this child in my Name receiveth me.** The general lesson here—and it is one that has gone to the heart more or less of *all* professing Christians—is that all the followers of Jesus should practise humility before, and show tenderness to, the weak. It is one of the great sayings of the Master which has stirred that practical charity which has ever been one of the great characteristic features of Christianity. But while the general lesson is clear, the particular reminder still claims attention. Singular and touching was the affection of Jesus for children. Several marked instances of this are noted in the Gospels. To this passage, however, and to the sequel as reported in St. Mark (ix. 42), may be especially referred the thought which has founded the countless child-homes, schools, and hospitals in all lands in different ages, and in our own time the institution of the Sunday school, not the least beautiful of Christian works done in the Master's Name.

Vers. 49, 50.—*A question put by John.*

Ver. 49.—**And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy Name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.** The character of John is a strangely interesting one. With the exception of his forming one of the chosen three who were in a peculiar manner received into their Master's confidence, John seldom appears, during the public ministry of Christ, to have played a prominent part. Many years had to elapse before he attained that unique position of influence in the early Church which no one seems to have disputed. In the mean time, his character was slowly forming. Fiery and impetuous, although reserved and retiring, it seemed in these first days scarcely probable that such a nature would ever deepen or ripen into that John who became the world-teacher of his Master's love. St. Luke here records two circumstances which suggested some of the Master's important teaching, in both of which John plays the prominent part. The question of John was evidently suggested by Jesus' words spoken in connection with his teaching respecting little ones. "Whosoever," said the Master, "shall receive this child in *my Name*." But John and others had just been sternly rebuking some one not of their company, who had been using, to some effect evidently, that same Master's Name, which possessed, as John saw, wondrous power. Had he and his friends been doing right in rebuking the comparative stranger for using a Name which Jesus, in his words just spoken, seemed to regard as the common property of kindly devout men? Meyer remarks here "that outside the company of disciples of Jesus there were, even then, men in whose hearts his teaching and acts had evoked a higher and even a supernatural power. Certain sparks which had fallen here and there beyond the little circle of his own, kindled flames occasionally away from the central fire." Those who were ever close to the Master seemed to dread lest, if these were allowed unchecked to teach and to work in the *Name*, grave error might be disseminated. Some natural jealousy of these outsiders no doubt influenced men like John in their wish to confine the work in the limits of their own circle.

Ver. 50.—**And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.** The older authorities, manuscripts, and the more venerable versions here read for the last clause, "He that is not against you is for you." Exegetically as well as critically this amended reading is to be preferred. The offence of the stranger, if it were an offence, was not against Jesus, whose Name had evidently been used reverently and with faith, but against the disciples, whose rights and privileges were presumably infringed upon. The Master's reply contained a broad and far-reaching truth. No earthly society, however holy, would be able exclusively to claim the Divine powers inseparably connected with a true and faithful use of his Name. This is the grand and massive answer which stretches over a history of eighteen centuries, and which will possibly extend over many yet to come; the answer which gives an ample reason why noble Christian work is done whether emanating from Churches bearing the name of Protestant, or Roman, or Greek.

THE SO-CALLED JOURNEYINGS TOWARDS JERUSALEM. The great characteristic feature in St. Luke's Gospel, distinguishing it especially from the other two synoptical Gospels of SS. Matthew and Mark, are the events in the public ministry of Jesus dwelt on in the next ten chapters of this Gospel. Many incidents in the succeeding chapters are recorded by this evangelist alone. Two questions suggest themselves.

1. To what period of the Lord's public work does this large and important section of our Gospel refer?

2. (1) Why is this period, comparatively speaking, so little dwelt on by the other two synoptists SS. Matthew and Mark? (2) Where did St. Luke probably derive his information here?

1. Commentators frequently, and with some accuracy, speak of this great section of St. Luke's work as "the journeyings towards Jerusalem." Three times does this writer especially tell us that this was the object and end of the journeys he was describing; in ch. ix. 51, "He steadfastly set his face *to go to Jerusalem;*" in ch. xiii. 22, "He went through the cities and villages . . . *journeying toward Jerusalem;*" in ch. xvii. 11, "And it came to pass, *as he went to Jerusalem.*"

These journeyings to Jerusalem were evidently just before *the end.* They were the close of the public life. They immediately preceded the last Passover Feast, which all the four evangelists tell us the Lord kept at Jerusalem, and in the course of which he was crucified. They fill up, then, the last six or seven months of his earth-life—that period, roughly speaking, from the Feast of Tabernacles (alluded to in John vii.), which falls in October, until the Passover Feast in the following spring. These last months were occupied by the Master in a slow progress from Capernaum, through those parts of Galilee hitherto generally unvisited by him, gradually making his way toward the capital, which we know he reached in time for the Passover Feast, during which he was crucified.

In the course of this period it seems, however, likely that, in St. Luke's account of Mary and Martha (ch. x. 38—42), we have an allusion to a short visit to Jerusalem of the Lord, undertaken in the course of these journeyings, at the Dedication Feast (John x. 22).

2. (1) In these last journeyings it appears that the Lord was in the habit of constantly sending out by themselves small companies of his disciples as missionaries in the neighbouring districts, thus accustoming his followers, in view of his own approaching death, to act alone and to think alone. It is, therefore, extremely probable that SS. Matthew and Peter (the real author of St. Mark's Gospel) were, during this period of our Lord's work, constantly absent from their Master's immediate neighbourhood. These apostles would naturally choose, as the special subjects of their own teaching and preaching, those events at which they *personally* had been present. Much of what was done and said by the Master during these last six months was done during the temporary absence, on special mission duty, of these two evangelists.

(2) When we consider the probable sources whence St. Luke derived his detailed information concerning this period, we are, of course, landed in conjecture. We know, however, that the whole of his narrative was composed after careful research into well-sifted evidence, supplied generally by eye-witnesses, of the events described.

Thus, in the earlier chapters, we have already discussed the high probability of the Virgin-mother herself having furnished the information; so here there is little doubt that SS. Paul and Luke, in their researches during the composition of the Third Gospel, met with men and women who had formed part of that larger company which had been with Jesus, we know, during those last months of his ministry among us. Nor is it, surely, an unreasonable thought for us to see, in connection with this important portion of our Gospel, the hand of the Holy Spirit, who, unseen, guided the pen of the four evangelists, especially throwing Luke and his master, Paul, into the society of men who had watched the great Teacher closely during that period of his work, when the other two synoptists, SS. Matthew and Peter (Mark), were frequently absent.

From the language employed in this portion of the Gospel, there seems a high probability that many of the notes or documents supplied to SS. Luke and Paul were written or dictated in Aramaic (Hebrew).

Vers. 51—56.—*The Samaritan insult to the Lord. The Master's reception of it.*

Ver. 51.—**And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.** This is a very solemn introduction to this great section of St. Luke's writing. It at once marks off all that now follows as a winding-up of the earthly ministry. The expression, "that he should be received up," is simply the rendering of one Greek word, which signifies "ascension." The Passion, the cross, and the grave are passed over

here, and the glorious goal alone is spoken of. What a lesson of comfort is here suggested! The words in the Greek original, "he steadfastly set his face," are evidently literally translated from a well-known Aramaic (Hebrew) expression.

Ver. 52.—**And sent messengers before his face.** Probably, as the sequel shows, these were John and James. This was necessary at this period of the Lord's life. A numerous company now usually followed the Lord; it is probable that many of those most devoted to him, both men and women, scarcely ever left him, now that the popular enthusiasm was waning, and the number of his deadly enemies increasing. **And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.** These Samaritans were the descendants of a mixed race brought by Esarhaddon (eighth century B.C.) from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, to replace the ten tribes carried captive to the East. These became worshippers of Jehovah, and, on the return of Judah and Benjamin from captivity, sought to be allowed to share in the rebuilding of the temple, and then to be admitted as Jews to share in the religious privileges of the chosen race. Their wishes, however, were not complied with. They subsequently erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, and henceforward were known as a schismatical sect, and continued in a state of deadly enmity with the orthodox Jews. This bitter hatred is noticed in the New Testament (see John iv. 9), where it is stated that the Jews "had no dealings with the Samaritans," whom they looked on as worse than heathen. In the synagogues these Samaritans were cursed. The Son of Sirach named them as a people that they abhorred (Ecclus. i. 25, 26); and in the Talmud we read this terrible passage, "Let not the Samaritans have part in the resurrection!" This hatred, however, we know, was not shared in by our Lord, and on more than one occasion we find him dealing gently and lovingly with this race.

Ver. 53.—**And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.** Here the kindly overtures were rejected by the inhabitants of the Samaritan village in question. The reason alleged by them was that this Teacher, who wished to come among them, was on his way up to worship at the rival temple at Jerusalem.

Ver. 54.—**And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?** The natural fiery temper and burning zeal of these highly favoured and loved brethren—who, we know, received, perhaps in half-playful rebuke from their Master, the epithet Boanerges, sons of thunder—flamed forth at this insult offered to their adored Master in return for his tender, loving consideration for this hated people. Possibly, what these two had lately witnessed on the Transfiguration mount had deepened their veneration for their Lord, and caused them the more bitterly to resent an insult levelled at him. So they prayed him—him whom they had so lately seen radiant with the awful fire of heaven—prayed him to call that fire down, and so wither in a moment those impious despisers of his gracious goodness. The words, "even as Elias did," form a very appropriate historical instance, but they are of doubtful authenticity—the older authorities have them not.

Ver. 55.—**But he turned, and rebuked them.** "Christ wrought miracles in every element except fire. Fire is reserved for the consummation of the age" (Bengel). **And said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.**

Ver. 56.—**For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.** This entire clause is absent in a large majority of the older authorities. On every principle of criticism it must be, if not struck out, at least marked as of doubtful authenticity. Commentators are, however, very loth to part with the words, which breathe, as has been remarked, "a spirit far purer, loftier, and rarer than is usually discernible in ecclesiastical interpolations." They are certainly very old, as old almost as the apostolic age, being found in the Italic and Peshito, the most venerable of versions. Many, therefore, of the contemporaries of apostolic men must have read these words as a genuine utterance of our Lord. **And they went to another village.** The Greek word translated "another" suggests that our Lord, after the insult offered by the Samaritans, quietly turned his steps to a Jewish community.

Vers. 57—62.—*Three would-be disciples. The Lord, in plain terms, tells them what is required of men who seek his service.* The first two of these incidents in the life of Jesus are related by St. Matthew (vii. 19—22), but he places them in an earlier period. They evidently did not occur together, but most probably they took place about this time in the ministry. They are placed in one group as examples of the way in which the Master replied to numerous offers of service made to him under different conditions.

Vers. 57, 58.—**Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.** St. Matthew tells us that the "certain man" who made this

offer of service was a scribe. This detail is useful, as showing that those who were attracted by our Lord's teaching were by no means confined to the peasant and artisan class. If we look a little below the surface of the gospel story, we find numberless indications of this. In the Master's reply it is probable that the depression, naturally the result of the churlish refusal of the Samaritan villagers to receive him (ver. 53), coloured the sad but true reflection. The wise Master distrusted the too-ready enthusiasm of his would-be disciple. He saw it would never stand the test of the severe privation or the painful self-sacrifice which would be the sure lot of any one, especially at that juncture, really faithful to him.

Vers. 59, 60.—**And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.** In this case the Master was the Summoner. Something he read in this man's heart, or words he had heard him speak, moved the Redeemer's great love, so he gave him a special call. This was a very different character from the last. Whereas *that* seeker for work from Jesus was impulsive, and even thoughtless in his enthusiasm, one who would begin to act without counting the cost, *this* one was over-cautious, cold and calculating to an ungenerous excess; yet there was evidently sterling stuff in the character, for Jesus argues and remonstrates with him; there was, too, much gold mingled with the earth of that man's disposition, for the Lord lightly to let it go. It is thus that the Spirit pleads still with the selfishness which disfigures many a noble and devoted servant of high God. He seems to say, "My call is too imperative to yield to any home duties, however orderly and respectable." During the official days of mourning (in the case of a funeral, these were seven) the impression now made by his summoning words would have worn off. It is noticeable that the home duties, which Jesus suggested should give place to other and more imperative claims, were in connection with *the dead*. It was not the *living* father who was to be left to hirelings, only the inanimate corpse. It was rather a *society* call than a *home* or *family* duty which was to give place to work for the Master. St. Chrysostom makes some quaint, but strikingly practical, remarks here. "He might need, if he went to the funeral, to proceed, after the burial, to make inquiry about the will, and then about the distribution of the inheritance, and all the other things that followed thereupon; and thus waves after waves of things coming in upon him in succession might bear him very far away from the harbour of truth. For this cause, doubtless, the Saviour draws him, and fastens him to himself."

Vers. 61, 62.—**And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.** There is an implied reproach in our Lord's reply to what, on first thoughts, would seem a reasonable request. The offer in this case came from the man himself. It would appear that this would-be disciple, on thinking the matter over, considered it might be desirable to hear what his family and friends thought about his project. At all events, one thing is clear—his first ardour was cooled, his first love left. The Master, in his pithy but striking comment, shows when such is the case, that there is little or no hope of any real noble work being carried out. The simile is drawn from agricultural imagery. Jesus was evidently very familiar with all the little details of rural life. We find a similar saying in Hesiod, "He who would plough straight furrows, must not look about him" ('Works and Days,' ii. 60).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—22.—(See afterwards in connection with ch. x.)

Ver. 24.—*The life saved, and the life lost.* The martyr, then, is the type of the true Christian. Christ (ver. 22) predicts his own fate. And immediately afterwards (ver. 23) he announces to all that whosoever will come after him must, through the gate of suffering, pass into glory; must "deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow him." This is the essence of martyrdom. The martyr is not necessarily one who is burned at the stake, or slain by the sword, or left to rot in damp prison-cells; he is one who, in will, surrenders the life to God, and daily bears the cross of Jesus. Let not the variations of the meaning attached to the words "save" and "lose" be overlooked. In the first clause, "Whosoever *wills to save* shall lose;" *i.e.* whosoever is bent on preserving the life may in a sense preserve it, but, in the nobler sense, he shall lose his real being, or as in the verse following, "he shall lose *himself*." In the second clause,

"Whosoever *wills to lose* his life for Christ's sake"—to subordinate all considerations merely personal to the command of a supreme affection—may incur shame, may suffer many things, but, in the nobler sense, he shall realize the truth of his existence, he shall receive the crown of his life. Ah! wonderfully suggestive are the sharp antitheses of Jesus' saying. What, then, is the abiding reality of the Christian type of manhood? of the true martyr-life? Shall we say that the abiding reality is *a capacity of self-forgetfulness*? Undoubtedly, there is this capacity. We recognize the man of genuine goodness at once. With him there is no part-acting. He is not one who stands before mirrors, studying attitudes and effects; in what he does there is the absence of the feeling of self. "Whither the spirit that is in him is to go, he goes straight forward." A great enthusiasm always removes the action, if not from the shadow, at least from "the corrosive power," of selfishness. Certainly, Christ looked forward to a love that could hold the closest affections as only second to it; that could sacrifice all in which the self is most bound up; that, as against the very pleadings of nature, would close with a higher vision, "Here am I; send me." And, more or less, this is always a characteristic of the martyred soul. "If," says Thomas à Kempis, "a man should give all his substance, yet is it nothing. And if he should practise great repentance, still it is little. And if he should attain to all knowledge, he is still afar off. And if he should be of great virtue, and of fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting; especially one thing which is most necessary for him. And what is that? That leaving all, he forsake himself, and go wholly from himself, and retain nothing out of self-love." But, when we speak of self-forgetfulness, we speak of only half the truth. The question remains—Whence the *inward pressure* which causes this self-forgetting spirit? We cannot be self-denying by the mere resolution to be so. We may subject ourselves to the most rigid of disciplines, and the result only be that we assert self in one aspect to deny self in another aspect. There must be some force in the soul, some obligation which, once discerned, becomes an irresistible spiritual power. Take, *e.g.*, one of the purest forms of self-devotion. The mother's love is not an affair of reasoning. There is no calculation of quantity in it. When the child is stricken with sickness she watches by the bed and ministers to the wants of the sufferer, denying herself by day and night, and never stopping to ask what is the limit to be observed. The action is the consequence of an obligation inlaid in the relation of mother to child. This relation takes her out of self. She "goes wholly from herself, and retains nothing out of self-love." She loses her life in the child. And thus with self-sacrifice, through its diversity of forms. Its root is, some relation into which one mind enters with another, or with a higher and vaster issue whose vision has dawned on it. The relation supplies at once the motive, and the food which nourishes the motive. It is in the mind an omnipotent "*I must.*" Remember, self-sacrifice may be a power for evil as well as good. The devil's martyrs far outnumber God's martyrs. For what is evil, or for ends that are "not of the Father, but of the world," persons spend themselves with a zeal and persistence which may well put Christians to shame. Self-consecration is not necessarily a Christian virtue. It is the character of the alliance into which the soul enters which makes the virtue. "He that loseth his life *for my sake* the same shall save it." This was the new thing which came into the world through Jesus Christ. Truthfulness as between man and man was no new thing. The sanctions of morality were no new thing. Through the religions and philosophies of paganism there came gleams of an ethic pure and spiritual. But an obligation to One unseen, yet ever-present, One to whom the life was bound, and in whom the life was hidden; an obligation that regulated all aims, that was sovereign over all the action, to deny which, or be false to which, was the soul's damnation;—that was the new thing. And that new thing was the secret of the Christian martyr-life. And it was this Christian martyr-life which lifted the individual man from his obscurity, as a mere unit in the mass of humanity, and invested him, be he bond or be he free, with the inalienable glory of the calling—"an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ." And from that day to this there has echoed back, from a great multitude which no man can number, the sweetly constraining "For my sake." The cross of Jesus has really gone before the ages. Its spirit has entered into the conditions of human life, has influenced the minds and hearts of men far more widely than we can estimate. We trace its witness far outside the circle of his professing followers. But where the response to him is con-

scious, where there is a real personal relation to him, where the adoring cry of Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" is felt,—in this supreme spiritual affiance we recognize the pressure which constrains to live not to self, in Jesus' love to lose the life for Jesus, sake. It is this pressure which bestows a beauty quite unique on the career of a man who has a place in the foremost rank of Christian heroes. Exploits brilliant and daring are associated with the name of Gordon. And whether we think of him in China, or in Egypt, or in the quiet garrison town, or speeding on the swift dromedary across the desert, or shut up in Khartoum, waiting for the succours that arrived too late, and facing death as one who had learned to regard it without quailing,—there is always an unmistakable and lofty individuality. But the crown of the glory is the spiritual elevation of the soul, the enthusiasm for God and good which filled the heart. How he believed in God!—not to him a mere sign of some unknown quantity, but the Living One, the Father in heaven. How he believed in Christ!—not a mere "apotheosis of humanity," but Jesus Christ who is to-day what he was yesterday, and of whom he writes, "There would be no one so unwelcome to come and reside in this world as our Saviour, while the world is in the state it now is." How he believed in the government of the world by a loving and righteous will! To reveal this will; to work out its purpose with all his might; to raise the down man; to strike the fetter from the slave; to make God's universe a little better, happier, wholesomer;—for this he lived, for this he died. Died? Nay, verily, "the immortal dead live again in minds made better by their presence." He who loses his life for Jesus' sake, he only has saved it. Let this, then, be accepted as the lesson of Jesus' saying: We find the true life, the great, wide, everlasting Christ-life, only by losing, for his sake, the narrow, small, merely self-life. Shall it be said by any that to speak thus is to speak in parables? that heroics are not for ordinary Christian people living in quiet, ordinary ways? There is no parable. The words bear on all in all sorts and conditions. Every person is called to settle on what plan his life shall be built, what manner of person he shall be. He who has no ideal of conduct is little better than a creature drifting through his days. The Christian ideal is sketched in this word of the Lord. If any one will come after Christ, let him know this; and let him know further that it is not the circumstances that make the man—he makes his place, works his ideal out in different kinds of circumstances. General Gordon, in an obscurer lot, in a humbler sphere, might not have developed the same *amount* of force; but, given the grace of God with him, he would have developed the same *kind* of force, he would have been the same type of man. And it is faithfulness to this type in the place we occupy, there not elsewhere, that Christ demands. Are we confessing him before men? Day by day, do we take his cross and follow him? Then, no matter what the scene of the life-work may be, we are losing our life for his sake. This is the obligation of that life "which martyred men have made more glorious for us who strive to follow."

Vers. 28—36.—*The Transfiguration.* "When, in the desert, he was girding himself for the work of life, angels of life came and ministered to him. Now, in the fair world, when he is girding himself for the work of death, the ministrants come to him from the grave, but from the grave conquered—one from that tomb under Abarim which his own hand had sealed long ago, the other from the rest into which he had entered without seeing corruption. 'There stood by him Moses and Elias, and spake of his decease.' And when the prayer is ended, the task accepted, then first since the star passed over him at Bethlehem the full glory falls on him from heaven, and the testimony is borne to his everlasting Sonship and power—'Hear him!'" Thus beautifully and truly writes Ruskin of the solemn transaction in Jesus' history recorded by the synoptical evangelists. It is a new anointing of Jesus as the Christ of God, his installation into the last part of his ministry on the earth. At the baptism, the Spirit descended, and the voice came from heaven, "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was the general inauguration of the Messiahship. Now there comes the special inauguration of Christ as "the End of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "Moses and Elias appear to hold converse on that sublime event which had been the great central subject of all their teaching, and solemnly to consign into his hands, once and for all, in a symbolical and glorious representation, their delegated and expiring power." Now the voice is, "Hear" *not* Moses and Elias, but "my

beloved Son!" A wondrous, awe-striking hour! The hush over nature, the darkness illumined by an inexpressible radiance, the face of the Man of sorrows then and there shining as the sun, the raiment penetrated by the glory "white and glistering" as the light, and the conversation of the three shining ones,—these, the features of the scene, left an indelible impression on the chosen witnesses. Peter, ever ready, though not ever wise, has some foolish speech about erecting three booths. But by-and-by they realize the significance of that which they saw. "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty," cries the same Peter. "This voice we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." Not, indeed, that such a momentary illumination of Christ is to be held as a proof of first authority. He proceeds, "We have also a *more sure word* of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." But it was a hint as to the "power and coming of the Lord Jesus," confirming the "more sure word," and helping into the understanding of the truth that, with the decease at Jerusalem, the old was finished and the new began. "God had reconciled all things to himself." Now, with regard to the vision, observe—

I. IT WAS ON A MOUNTAIN. The hill or upland scene occupies a prominent place in the history of our Lord. It seems to have been a craving of his human heart to get "where beyond the voices there is peace." There he could breathe more freely; there he found a nourishment and invigoration which were welcome. On the high ground he preached his famous sermon. To the mountain he was wont to retire for prayer. When all went to their own homes, he went to the Mount of Olives. On the hill of Golgotha he died. The mountain in Galilee was the meeting-place with his apostles after the Resurrection. From the slope of Olivet he ascended to heaven. Now, for this brief moment of glory, the place chosen is "the high mountain apart." Do we not need an upland scene in our life? No hill, no transfiguration. The face never shines. It is a dull, dreary toil. The holy mount, on whose top one can leave the carking care and the weary plod, where the air is always pure—the hill that is commanded only by the heights of God's presence—ah! this is the secret worth possessing.

II. IT IS AS HE PRAYS THAT THE FASHION OF THE COUNTENANCE IS ALTERED. He goes up to the mountain, not to meet Moses and Elias, nor to have a *séance* with spirits, but to pray—to meet his Father, that, out of the Father's heart, he might fill the fountains of his spirit. As he prays he passes into that blessed light of God which "enwrapped him in such an aureole of glistering brilliance, his whole presence breathed so Divine a radiance, that the light, the snow, the lightning, are the only things to which the evangelist can compare that celestial lustre." Christian! the lesson thereby suggested thou needst not that any teach thee. It is the same lesson, but in a higher form, that was shadowed forth in Jacob's Peniel, in the wrestling by the brook Jabbok. Through the wrestling of the angel the heart of the supplanter was plucked out of him; in his prayer which prevailed he found the new name—the Israel, the prince with God and man. Hast thou never found it so? Hast thou never, in some great sorrow, poured out thy heart before God, and realized that, when thou didst kneel, thou wast only the worm, and no man—weak and spiritless; when thou didst rise from thy knees, thou wast the man, and no worm—the fashion of thy countenance had been altered? Let the sons of pride speak as they choose, the children of quietness know that "more things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of."

III. THERE IS CONFERENCE WITH THE DEPARTED. The two shining presences are spoken of as invested with the properties and functions of life. "Two men, which were Moses and Elias." We know little about the world of the dead, about the possibilities of intercommunion—they with us, and we with them. There is a feeling, widely diffused, that some kind of intercourse there is. Even the negro, in his African platoon, lays aside a little rice each day as the share of his departed kindred. Through all times, everywhere, the human heart is found asking, speculating over the question, "Is there no bridge between the dead and the living? Is all speech, all fellowship, for ever broken?" Well, in this Scripture we read of two men, who for long generations had been removed from this earthly scene, profoundly interested in events to be transacted on this globe of ours on which depended the salvation of the world. May not this be a glimpse into the hidden economy? May not that which we see in them during this moment of sight into the unseen, be the picture of what is going on even now in the home of the blessed and holy dead? Is not the talk on Hermon an illus-

tration of the communion of saints; reminding us that heaven and earth are nearer than we think of, that it is given to us in prayer to

"... join hands
With those who went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore"?

"Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect."

IV. THE GLORY IS TRANSIENT. A brief moment, and then the vision fades into the light of common day. Moses was forty days and forty nights on the mount. Jesus is on the Mount for only a short hour. Even while the foolish apostle spoke, there came a cloud that overshadowed them. The Lord cannot afford to luxuriate on the mountain-top. There is a universe to be reclaimed; there are shapes of disease and sin and want waiting for him below. More than ever is he straitened until his bloody baptism is done. And so with the disciple. It is good to have the retreat, the mountain, the sabbatical hour each day, the sabbatical day each week. But the purpose of the rest is to refit for the labour. And, after all, the highest transfiguration is not that of the dazzling outward light, but that of the beauty shining through the common ordinary things, and investing them with a heavenly grace and truth. The teaching given the apostles next after the transaction on the mountain is the taking of a little child, and saying, "Whosoever shall receive this child in my Name receiveth me."

Vers. 46—50.—*Humility and charity.* Were these apostles sinners above all ecclesiastics because of this reasoning which arose among them? Were their controversies about precedence one whit more foolish and unseemly than the controversies with which the air of councils and courts is laden, and by which passions are often enkindled to fever heat? Alas! is it not the earthenness of the vessel in which the heavenly treasure is deposited which is made manifest in the strife, "Who shall be greatest"? Jesus' action is a symbol to be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested by all. "He took a little child, and set him by his side," as if to say, "See, there is the greatness of the kingdom of heaven;" nay, as may be gathered from St. Matthew, as if to say more strongly still, "There is no other greatness recognized in the heavenly kingdom than that of character. Except you are fashioned according to the character delineated in childhood, you cannot even enter the kingdom." Reflect on the import of this saying, this symbol. Does it seem strange that (Matt. xviii. 4) Christ should distinguish *humility* as the characteristic of the child? But is not the essence of humility unconsciousness of self? And is not this unconsciousness the trait conspicuous in a truly childlike child? The little one has a will, a temper, but there is not much of the feeling of self. Watch the caresses and endearments; they are less love seeking to be loved, than love merely loving, absorbed in loving. Observe the play; the costly toy is seldom the most prized; the pleasure found in toy or romp is the outgoing of self. Nature is spontaneous, free. Therein, says Jesus, we have a revelation of heaven, a sign of the real greatness. The image likest God, the fact, in this universe, nearest God, with most in it of the stamp of the high and holy One, is the little child whom Christ has called. The everlasting love humbles itself as the little child. It loves, it is absorbed in loving. The Incarnation only makes us see what is hidden in the very being of God—self-emptying, making self of no reputation. The King of kings is the Servant of servants. He is among us the one that serveth. "Be ye therefore imitators of God as the children of his love." For it is pride that stands between us and the true greatness. We are great only in the measure in which we lose ourselves, in which we find our life, in a cause or truth which is higher than ourselves. The world has three chief patterns of greatness. *Culture*—the development, through science and art, of a certain inward sweetness and light. *Power*—the ability to use men as pawns on a chess-board, to project far and near the image of self. *Luxury*—imbedding the years in the voluptuous comfort which money commands. That which is common to all these forms, from the most gross to the most refined, is that the supreme reference of the mind is to *having* rather than *being*, getting rather than giving, being served rather than serving. Christ's idea is in sharp antagonism to this. To be of use, to be free from that self-love which is

always akin to self-idolatry, to be men in understanding but children in heart and spirit,—this is the mark which he presents when, in answer to the reasoning in the heart, he says, pointing to the child, "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great." A sentence ever to be pondered, implying (Matt. xviii. 3) that the soul has been *turned* to the right law of its being. "He restoreth my soul." With this lesson of humility there is joined at this time a lesson of *charity and forbearance.* How this lesson was occasioned is explained in ver. 49. The expression used by the Lord, "in my Name," seems to have suggested to John an incident, perhaps the circumstance which somehow gave rise to the reasoning, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy Name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us." Interdict honestly enough meant! But one wholly foreign to the law of the spirit of Christ's life. His greatness is that he is not confined to any circle; his gospel is "the presence of a good diffused." There is a virtue in even the hem of his garment. The communion of God with men is always wider than the communion of men with God. He is in contact with minds which do not even consciously surrender to him. Beware of identifying the bestowment of spiritual grace with the acknowledgments of belief according to any set of words, or with adherence to any particular company of believers. "The Spirit divideth to every man severally as he wills." It is not for any to forbid another "because he followeth not with us." No; in the next chapter we shall find Christ protesting, "He that is not with me is against me." That is the one side of his mind. But it is balanced by the other (ver. 50), "He that is not against us is for us." The two sentences are not mutually contradictory. The one establishes that there is no middle course between Christ and Satan; that those who will not join Christ in his warfare against Satan must, directly or indirectly, aid Satan against Christ. In the other it is shown that the man whom John and his brethren forbade was really with Christ in his warfare, and had received from him the faith which was mighty against the kingdom of darkness. The miracle in Christ's Name was the proof that he was really on Christ's side, gathering with him. "Try the spirits," such is practically the rejoinder of Jesus; "do not forbid simply because one has not complied with what you consider necessary or right; look at the character of the deed, at the motive present to him; if that bear the mark of my Name, account him with me, although he follows not with you." John would have been justified in going to the man who cast out devils, and expounding the way of God more perfectly to him; he was not justified in prohibiting. Most difficult of graces is the grace of charity; charity as distinguished from the toleration which is the outcome of a mind that has no positive conviction of its own, and regards all views as alike to it; charity which has its hand firm in definite truth, but recognizes that Christ, not any man or any system, is the Truth; "Thou, O Lord, art more than they;" and because of this reverence, this feeling of the infiniteness of truth, allows for many forms of apprehension, welcoming the Name of the Lord, howsoever it is revealed in character and life, and, when there cannot be fellowship, sorrowing rather than denouncing. Humility and charity God has joined together. They are the two inseparable features of the childlike character. Where humility reigns, there is always the desire to be fair, to acknowledge the excellences even of doctrines and opinions to which the mind is opposed; most of all, of persons from whom it may differ. "O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee."

Vers. 51—62.—*The face steadfastly set.* Very pathetic and sublime is the announcement of the fifty-first verse. The bright, joyous spring-time has gone. The cornfields and gardens, the hill and dale, the "lake's still face sleeping sweetly in the embrace of mountains terraced high with mossy stone"—all the scenery which the Son of man so dearly loved, must now be left behind. No more for him the crowds of simple fisher-folk hanging on his words; no more for him the circuits from village to village, returning to the quiet Capernaum home; no more for him the happy work which marked the earlier years of the Prophet of Nazareth. Now there are only the deepening opposition of scribe and Pharisee, and the lengthening shadow of the cross. He is the Man of men. Not without pain must he have left Nazareth in the distance,

and taken his way through the Plain of Esdraelon, past Nain and Shunem, bound for Jerusalem. But this is sublime: "He steadfastly set his face." It implies that there were solicitations, temptations in another direction. The Christ of God needed to gird up all his energies. Flesh and blood cried, "Stay a little longer at least." The mind of the Son made answer, "Nay, how am I straitened until the baptism be accomplished!" It is of an hour in this journey that Mark speaks, when he says that "Jesus went before the disciples: and they were amazed; and, as they followed, they were afraid." Why they were afraid, we are not told; but we may well conceive that there was the print of a secret agony on his brow, that there was something in his aspect, as he walked a little way ahead of them, which awed and silenced. His face was "steadfastly set." And would that we better knew the secret of this steadfast face! How we shrink from the duty which our Father lays on us! How we withdraw our gaze from the cups of suffering, from the cross-bearing, which our Father assigns us! How we run away from what is irksome! or, when we must do it, how often we meet it with a countenance awry! Lord, we cannot penetrate the mystery of thy way. At times even thy presence seems dreadful. But lead us in the truth of thy steadfastness, and keep us following thee, even although amazed and afraid! Two features of the beginning of the journey are set before us in the passage under review.

I. THE ONE, THE REJECTION OF THE LORD BY A VILLAGE OF THE SAMARITANS. And this for a reason which suggests to us many similar mistakes and misjudgments. Bigotry dethrones reason, and stirs up what is worst against what is best in the heart. To these rude villagers, the one condemning circumstance is that his face is towards Jerusalem. If he had been only going in the other direction, they would have been forward with welcomes, and in return would have received unspeakable blessings. Let us not be too ready to cast the stone. We are all apt to be carried away by the appearance of a person or thing, and, in advance of rational considerations, to judge, sentence, or condemn. Thus many a time the messengers of the Lord, with blessings in their hand, seeking to make ready for him a place in human charities and kindnesses, are repelled. "What wonder," says an old Latin Father, "that the sons of thunder wished to flash lightning!" (ver. 54). There have been many such Boanerges since the days of James and John. They are the exponents of a tendency too frequently illustrated in the ecclesiastical world, to meet Samaritan disdain and rebuke by the terrors of the Lord, by the mere force of authority, in mistaken zeal to denounce and excommunicate. Ah! how often has the voice of the Gentlest repeated the rebuke in the ears of his followers, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

II. THE OTHER FEATURE (though it does not seem clear when it occurred) is, THE WORD BEARING ON DISCIPLESHIP GIVEN IN REPLY TO THE THREE MEN WHO ARE INTRODUCED TO US AT THE CLOSE OF THE CHAPTER. These three men are types of classes whose representatives we need not go far to seek. 1. *There is the hasty disciple.* (Ver. 57.) "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." There is no discernment of what is implied in the "whithersoever." There is no counting of the cost. He is the man of impulse and fresh warm feeling, who has "received some word of Jesus with joy, yet has no root in himself." The "I will" stands forth in its own strength, which is but weakness. Observe how the Lord deals with him. He does not reject the offer made; only he sends the man to prayer and self-review, giving him, in one far-reaching sentence, to see what in his rashness he had been undertaking. "Follow me whithersoever I go? Knowest thou not that I am the poorest of all; that, in my Father's world, I am the One 'despised and rejected. No throne, no royalties, no kingdom as thou conceivest of a kingdom? The fox has its hole, the bird has its nest, the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Think, then, on that to which thou wouldst pledge thyself." A word still called for! The will which is eager to follow is sometimes slow to receive the Law of the spirit of the life which is in Christ Jesus. 2. As the hasty disciple passes out of sight, lo! another appears, he who may be called the *dilatory.* Notice the difference between the two. In the former, the initiative is taken by the man; in the latter, the initiative is taken by Jesus, with the short, peremptory, "Follow me." The one has no misgivings; the other desires to follow but has not courage enough to express his convictions. And the mind is not decided. Secretly there is the attraction to the Lord, but there is also the home, the aged father, the circle in the

quiet village. No; he is nearly, but not quite, ready. It is on him that the Lord looks. He sees him trembling at the word that is working in his soul, and forth comes the calling, empowering, "Follow!" Was it not so natural (ver. 59), "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father"? And will not he whose commandment is, "Honour thy father and mother," at once consent? No; the Lord's need, the Lord's call, sets the private and domestic claims aside. Hence the enigmatical reply of ver. 60. "Thou hast neighbours, brethren, who have not received the life that is pulsing in thee; to them may be left such a charge as that which thou hast named. But thou, with that life in thee, hast something else to do. Life must live; go thou, the living, and fulfil the living man's charge—preach the kingdom of God." 3. Finally, there comes into view *the tender-hearted disciple.* (Ver. 61.) "I will follow thee"—only first let me say farewell at home; a last look, a last adieu is all. Ah! this may not be. The rejoinder is somewhat stern (ver. 62). Now, what is the lesson? It is this. On the rocks and reef of the seashore we find creatures rooted to them. Scarcely can we separate the anemone from its reef. How terrible it would be for a human being, with a human soul, to be doomed, like that zoophyte, to cleave to that rock, with no variety except what is caused by the ebb and flow of the sea! Yet, is the life actually lived by many much better? Day following day, and always the monotone of a mere worldly life; no higher end, no higher reference; all of the earth, earthy! O piteous sight—a soul cleaving to the dust! Have we not seen a nobler truth? Looking into the face of Christ, is there not a voice bidding us higher? What but death and darkness could be if this earth of ours moved only in its own little diameter, around its own axis? Is it not the recipient of life and light because of its higher orbit as a member of the great solar system? And have we not spiritual life and light because the centre of our being is God? Then, disciple of Jesus, as he who has put his hand to the plough is intent on guiding it to the end of the furrow, ploughing on though the clod be hard and the work severe, be thou steadfast, thy face set with thy Lord toward his Jerusalem; no looking back, precursor of going back; this the prayer of all thy praying, "Lord, unite my heart, that I may love and fear thy Name."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Lessons from the first commission.* We learn from this commission and these instructions—

I. THAT CHRIST HAS DIVINE RESOURCES FOR SPECIAL NECESSITIES. He gave to the twelve "power and authority over all devils," etc. If he had such resources at his command then, when he was stooping so low and laying aside so much of heavenly rank and authority, of what is he not possessed now—now that he is enthroned, now that "all power is given unto him in heaven and on earth"? His Church may be very bitterly assailed; it may fall very low in consequence of the slackness and unfaithfulness of its own members; it has thus fallen more than once since he ascended: but in his hand are great reserves; his Divine resources are illimitable. He can equip and send forth men endowed with wonderful power, with marvellous faculty of persuasion or of organization; he can send forth those whose influence shall be felt even "where Satan's seat is," in the depths of spiritual evil and moral wrong, and thus he can establish or re-establish his kingdom.

II. THAT WE MAY COMMIT OURSELVES TO WORKS OF USEFULNESS though conscious of much insufficiency. We may be surprised that our Lord should send out the twelve to "preach the kingdom of God" (ver. 2) at a time when they had so very imperfect an idea as they then had of the character of that kingdom. Their views of it were very elementary; they had yet to learn concerning it facts and truths which seem to us of the first importance. But still he sent them; there was something, and something of substantial value, they could teach; and they were (all of them, at that time) genuinely attached to their Divine Master. If we wait until we know everything it would be well to know before we begin our ministry, we shall be postponing the time until our chance is gone. We should begin the work of holy usefulness *early*, even when there is very much to learn; we shall acquire knowledge, tact, wisdom, power,

as we go on our way of service. The one requisite thing is that we shall be thoroughly sincere, and do all that we do out of a true and faithful heart.

III. THAT CHRIST MAY CALL ON US TO CAST OURSELVES ENTIRELY ON HIS PROVIDING AND PROTECTING CARE. This he did with his apostles now (ver. 3). Usually it is our duty to take every precaution for our bodily necessities; not to expose ourselves to needless perils or to injurious privations. But there are times when it becomes our duty—especially that of the Christian minister, or evangelist, or missionary—to cast aside all prudential considerations, to run all risks, to commit himself absolutely to the care of the Divine Father.

IV. THAT THERE IS A LIMIT WHICH EVEN HOLY PERSISTENCY MAY NOT PASS. (Ver. 5.) It is well to work patiently on under discouragement. It is our sacred duty to do this; we are quite unfitted for the nobler spheres of service if we are not prepared to do so. We admire and applaud those who cannot tear themselves away from work which they have set their hearts on accomplishing. Let patient persistency have abundant scope for its exercise, but there *is* a point where it must stop; to exceed a certain measure is to be disregardful of those who would not reject the Word of life, on whom Christian service would not be spent in vain.

V. THAT PRACTICAL KINDNESS TO BODILY WANTS goes well with earnest attention to spiritual necessities (ver. 6).—C.

Vers. 7—9.—*The tetrarch and the Teacher.* Our Lord had very little to do with the "kings and rulers of the earth," but they did occasionally cross his path. At such times he bore himself as we should expect he would—he who was so far below and yet so much further above them. His relations with Herod, as suggested by the text, were these—

I. THE TEACHER CAUSING TROUBLE TO THE TETRARCH. Herod "was perplexed" by all that he heard concerning Christ: his own wonderful works and those which he commissioned and enabled his apostles to perform (vers. 1—6) made an impression which entered and disturbed the palace. We have reason to think that in Herod's case the fame of Jesus brought not only mental perplexity, but moral perturbation also (see Matt. xiv. 2; Mark vi. 14). He could not understand who this new, great prophet could be, and he consulted his court respecting him. But it was his own apprehension, if not his conviction, that the man whom he had so guiltily slain "was risen from the dead." His carefully trained judgment told him that he had nothing more to fear from that faithful spokesman of the Lord. But his conscience, that struck deeper than his judgment, compelled him to fear that he had not seen the last of that beheaded prisoner. It is a very easy thing to take a human life, but it is a very difficult thing to escape from responsibility for a human death. 1. Christ's coming to us has caused and will cause a large amount of intellectual perplexity. The world has for eighteen centuries been asking who he is, and what is the true and full account of him. In this mental perplexity there is nothing to be regretted; there is no better subject on which the human intelligence could be employed. 2. Christ's coming to man has occasioned much trouble of soul. The truths he taught, the life he lived, the claims he makes upon us,—these have stirred the human conscience to its depth; they have awakened a sense of sin and ill desert; they have turned a strong light upon the guilty past and the perilous future; they have called forth much self-condemnation and self-reproach. It is well that they have done, it is right that they should do so.

II. THE TETRARCH DESIRING TO SEE THE TEACHER. "He desired to see him," perhaps to have his mental curiosity set at rest; perhaps to have his conscientious fears appeased; perhaps for both these reasons. Certainly not in the hope of hearing heavenly truth, of hearing that Divine wisdom which would enable him to be a better man and to live a nobler life. And his motive being low, it proved, as we might have expected, that when he did see him, the interview gave him no gratification, but only added to his guilt (ch. xxiii. 8—11). It is well, indeed, to wish to come into the presence of Christ, but whether the fulfilment of our desire will end in good or evil depends mainly upon our motive. 1. A selfish spirit is almost sure to be unblessed, is most likely to have its guilt increased thereby. 2. A spirit of mere curiosity will probably return unrewarded, though it may meet with a gracious benediction. 3. A spirit of devotion and inquiry will certainly gain a blessing from his holy hand. We may look at—

III. THE TEACHER AND THE TETRARCH IN THEIR STRONG CONTRASTS. 1. Of present position. 2. Of moral character and the purpose of their life. 3. Of their destiny.—C.

Ver. 11.—*The healing hand of Christ.* "And healed them that had need of healing." And who are they to whom these words do not apply? In a world as full of sin as ours is, there is nothing of which we have greater need than a Divine Healer. For sin means sickness, disease, derangement, pain—both spiritual and corporeal. *Every* human ear wants to hear those gracious words, "I am the Lord that healeth thee;" *every* human heart has occasion to plead, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed;" *every* soul is again and again in need of the great beneficent Physician.

I. AS THOSE LIABLE TO DISEASE AND PAIN. Considering the extreme intricacy of our bodily structure, and considering also the irregularities and evils of which we are guilty, it is wonderful that there is as much health and as little sickness as we find. But he is an exception to his fellows who goes for many years without ailment and, indeed, without illness. And we have all of us reason to bless the Lord of our lives that he heals us so readily and so often. He heals in two ways. 1. By conferring on us a nature which has recuperative powers, so that without any medical aid the wound is healed, the organ recovers its power and fulfils its functions. 2. By giving us medicinal herbs which our science can discover and apply, the nature of which is to heal and to restore. In both these cases it is the Lord of our human body and of nature who "works" (John v. 17) for our benefit. Our art, where it is exercised, only supplies one condition out of many; it alone would be utterly insufficient. Whenever we are healed of any malady, slight or serious, we should join in the exclamation of the psalmist (ciii. 3), and feel that we have one reason more for gratitude and devotion. Let those who have been brought back from the gates of the grave by Christ's pitiful and healing kindness consider whether they are paying him the vows which they made in the hour of suffering and danger (Ps. lxvi. 14).

II. AS THE CHILDREN OF SORROW. Possibly we may know nothing of serious sickness—there are those who escape it—but we all know what sorrow means. Trouble is a visitor that knocks at every door, that finds its way to every human heart. It may be some gradually approaching evil, which at length culminates in disaster; or it may be some sudden blow, which badly bruises if it does not break the heart. It may be the heavy, entangling loss; or the grave, oppressive anxiety; or the lamentable failure; or the sore and sad bereavement. How precious, then, beyond all price, the healing of the Divine Healer! In these dark hours our Divine Lord comes to us with ministering hand. 1. He impels all those who are dear to us to grant us their tenderest and most sustaining love; and human kindness is a very healing thing. 2. He grants us his own most gracious sympathy; he is touched with a feeling of our infirmity; we know and feel that he is with us, watching over us, "afflicted in our affliction;" and the sympathy of our Saviour is a precious balm to our wounded spirit. 3. He comes to us in the office and the Person of the Divine Comforter, directly soothing and healing our torn and troubled hearts. Thus he heals us according to the greatness of our need.

III. AS THOSE WHO SUFFER FROM A WOUNDED CHARACTER. A wounded spirit is worse than a bodily infirmity (Prov. xviii. 14); but a wounded character is worse than a wounded spirit, for that is a spirit that has *injured itself.* There are those who present to their friends and neighbours the spectacle of bodily health and material prosperity; but what their Master sees when he regards them is *spiritual infirmity.* They are weak, sickly, inwardly deranged. Their hearts are very far from being as he would like to see them; instead of ardent love is lukewarmness; instead of reverence is flippancy of spirit; instead of a holy scrupulousness and a wise restraint is laxity if not positive disobedience; instead of zeal is coldness and indifference to his cause and kingdom. Of all men living, these are they who have most "need of healing." And Christ both can and will heal them. To such as these he says, "I will heal thy backsliding;" "Wilt thou be made whole?" And if they will but go to him in a spirit of humility, of faith, of reconsecration, they will receive power from his gracious touch, they will rise renewed; and as they rise from the couch of spiritual langour and indifference to walk, to run in the way of his commandments, to climb the heights of close and holy fellowship with God, a deeper note of joy will sound from the depth of their

hearts than ever comes from the lips of bodily convalescence, "I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me."—C.

Vers. 12—17.—*The Divine provision for the world's need.* This miracle of our Lord, meeting as it did the present bodily necessities of the multitude about him, stands for ever as a picture and parable of the far more wonderful and the gloriously bountiful provision which the Saviour of mankind has made for the deeper necessities of our race.

I. OUR HOLY SOLICITUDE FOR THE SPIRITUALLY DESTITUTE. There is a note of true sympathy in the language of the disciples (ver. 12; see Mark vi. 35, 36). They were concerned to think of that great number of people, among whom were "women and children" (Matt. xiv. 21), having gone so long without food, and being "in a desert place" where none could be obtained. How strong and keen should be our sympathy with those who are spiritually destitute; who have received from God a nature with immeasurable capacities, with profound cravings for that which is eternally true and divinely good, and who "have nothing to eat"! No solicitude for hungering human hearts can be extravagant; it is only too common to be guiltily and pitifully unconcerned. And if the stage of spiritual hunger and thirst should have passed into that of spiritual unconsciousness, that is one degree (and a large degree too) more deplorable, for it is one stage nearer to spiritual death. We do well to pity the multitudes at home and abroad who might be and who should be living on Divine and everlasting truth, but who are pining and perishing on miserable husks,—on errors, on superstitions, on morbid fancies, on low ambitions, on unsatisfying and perhaps demoralizing pleasures.

II. THE APPARENT INADEQUACY OF THE DIVINE PROVISION. Well may the disciples, not yet enlightened as to their Master's purpose, regard "five loaves and two fishes" as hopelessly inadequate to the occasion. So to human judgment they seemed. Not less strikingly disproportioned must the Divine provision for man's higher necessities have seemed to those who first regarded it. What was it? It was, in the language of our Lord recorded a few verses on in this chapter (ver. 22), "the Son of man suffering many things, being rejected . . . and slain, and being raised the third day." A crucified and restored Messiah was to be offered as the Bread of life to a hungering world! Would this satisfy the needs of all mankind—of Jew and Gentile, of barbarian and cultured, of bond and free, of man and woman? Could One that seemed to fail, whose cause was all but extinguished in obloquy and desertion, be the Redeemer of mankind? It was unlikely in the last degree; speaking after the manner of men, it was impossible! And the machinery, too, the instrumentality by which this strange provision was to be conveyed to all human souls everywhere and through all generations, was that not equally inadequate? A few "unlearned and ignorant men," a few earnest and true but obscure and uninfluential women,—could they establish and perpetuate this new system? could they pass on these scanty provisions to the waiting and perishing multitude? How hopeless! how impossible! Yet see—

III. ITS PROVED SUFFICIENCY. As those five loaves and two fishes, under the multiplying hand of Christ, proved to be far more than enough for the thousands who partook of them, so is the provision in the gospel of Christ for the needs of man found to be all-sufficient. In a once-crucified and now exalted Saviour we have One in whom is found: 1. Pardon for every sin and for every repentant sinner. 2. Admission, instant and full, to the presence and favour of God. 3. A source of purity of heart, and excellency, and even nobility, of life. 4. Comfort in all the sorrows and privations of our earthly course. 5. Peace and hope in death. 6. A glorious immortality. Well does this great Benefactor say, "I am come that ye might have life, and . . . *have it more abundantly.*" The provision is more than equal to the necessity; there is a marvellous overflow of truth and grace.—C.

Vers. 23, 24.—*Life gained by losing it.* These strong and sententious words may teach us three truths which are of vital importance to us.

I. THAT THE VOLUNTARY SURRENDER OF OUR LIFE TO GOD IS OUR ENTRANCE UPON LIFE INDEED. *What is it for a man to live?* We speak truly but superficially when we say that any one is a living man from whom the breath of life has not yet departed. But there is deep truth in the objection of our English poet, "As though to breathe

wore life." Human life, as its Divine Author regards it, means very much more than this. And, taught of Christ, we understand that we then attain to our true life when we live unto God, in his holy service, and for the good of those whom he has committed to our care. The thoughts of sinful men concerning life are utterly false; they are the exact contrary of the truth. Men imagine that just as they gain that which will minister to their own enjoyment, and keep that which, if parted with, would benefit other people, they make much of their life. This is not even a caricature of the truth; it is its contradiction. The fact is that just as we *lose* ourselves in the love of God, and just as we *expend* our powers and possessions in the cause of mankind, we enter upon and enjoy that which is the "life indeed." For all that is best and highest lives, *not to gain, but to give.* As we pass from the lowest of the brute creation up an ascending line until we reach the Divine Father himself, we find that the nobler being exists, not to appropriate to himself, but to minister to others; when in our thought we reach the Divine, we see that God himself is receiving the least and is giving the most. He finds his heavenly life in giving freely and constantly of his resources to all beings in his universe. This is the supreme point that we can attain; we surrender ourselves entirely to God, to be possessed and employed by him; we enter upon and we realize the noble, the angelic, the true life. Whosoever will save his life by retaining his own will and withholding his powers from his Redeemer, *by that very act* loses it; but whosoever will freely surrender his life to God and man will, *by that very act*, find it. To live is not to get and to keep; it is to love and to lose ourselves in loving service.

II. THAT THE FULL SERVICE OF CHRIST MEANS HABITUAL SELF-DENIAL. 1. It means the abandonment of all that is vicious; *i.e.* of all that is positively hurtful to ourselves or others, and that, as such, is condemned of God as sinful. 2. It means the avoidance of that which is not unlawful in itself, but which would be a hindrance to usefulness and the service of love (see Rom. xiv.). Of the rightness and desirableness of this, every man must be a judge for himself, and no man may "judge his brother." That life must be a narrow one which does not afford scope for the frequent forfeiture of good which might lawfully be taken, but which, for Christ's sake, is declined. 3. It involves struggle and sacrifice at the first, but the sense of personal loss is continually declining, and the consciousness of Divine approval is a counterbalancing gain.

III. THAT TO SECURE ETERNAL BLESSEDNESS IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO LAY DOWN OUR MORTAL LIFE. Many are they who have been called upon to put the most literal interpretation on the twenty-fourth verse; who have had to choose between parting with everything human and earthly on the one hand, and sacrificing their fidelity to Christ and their eternal hopes on the other hand. For that hour of solemn crisis the Lord has granted abounding grace, and from every land and age a noble army of martyrs have made the better choice, and now wear the crown of life in the better land.—C.

Ver. 25.—*The priceless.* Our Lord has taught us as no other teacher ever has—

I. THE TRANSCENDENT WORTH OF OUR HUMAN NATURE. When he came that was held in very small esteem. Men showed what they thought of human *nature* by the use they made of it, and of human *life* by the readiness with which they threw it away. There was no thought of the inviolable sacredness of a human spirit. Jesus Christ has taught us to think of it as precious beyond all price. Man's body is only the vesture of his mind; man, like God, is spirit, but he is spirit clothed in flesh. He is a spirit (1) accountable to God for all he thinks and feels, as well as for all he says and does; (2) capable of forming a beautiful and noble character resembling that of the Divine Father himself; (3) capable of living a life which, in its sphere, is a reproduction of the life God is living in heaven; (4) coming into close contact and fellowship with God; (5) intended to share God's own immortality.

II. THE TEMPTATION TO LOSE SIGHT OF THIS GREAT TRUTH. There are two things that often have such a deteriorating effect upon us that it is practically erased from the tablet of our soul. 1. *The love of pleasure;* whether this be indulgence in unholy pleasure, or the practical surrender of ourselves to mere enjoyment, to the neglect of all that is best and highest. 2. *The eager pursuit of gain.* Not that there is any radical inconsistency between profitable trading and holy living; not that a Christian man may not exemplify his piety by the way in which he conducts his business; but that there are often found to be terribly strong temptations to untruthfulness, or dishonesty,

or hardness, or unjust withholdment, or a culpable and injurious absorption in business. And under the destructive influence of one of these two forces the soul withers or dies.

III. THE CALAMITOUS MISTAKE THAT IS SOMETIMES MADE. It is not only a grievous sin, but a disastrous error to gain worldly wealth, and, in the act of gaining it, to lose the soul. That is the worst of all possible bargains. The man who makes many thousands of pounds, and who loses conscientiousness, truthfulness, spirituality, all care for what God thinks of him and feels about him, sensitiveness of spirit—in fact, *himself*, is a man over whom Heaven weeps; he has made a supreme mistake. Gold, silver, precious stones, are of *limited* worth. There are many of the most important services we want which they have no power to render; and the hour is daily drawing near when they will have no value to us whatever. But the soul is of *immeasurable* worth; no sum of money that can be expressed in figures will indicate its value; that is something which absolutely transcends expression; and time, instead of diminishing, enhances its importance—it becomes of more and more account "as our days go by," as our life draws toward its close. Jesus Christ not only put this thought into words, —the words of the text—he *put it into action*. He let us see that, in his estimation, the human soul was *worth suffering and dying for*—worth suffering for as he suffered in Gethsemane, worth dying for as he died at Calvary. Then do we wisely enter into his thought concerning it when we seek salvation at his cross, when, by knowing him as our Divine Redeemer, we enter into eternal life.—C.

Ver. 28.—*The Transfiguration.* This incident is one that stands quite by itself; it is wholly unlike everything else in our Lord's history. It was miraculous enough, yet we do not count it amongst the miracles of Christ. It may be viewed in many lights; it may illustrate—

I. THE CLOSE RELATION BETWEEN OUR SPIRITUAL AND OUR BODILY NATURE. This manifested glory was not altogether outward; it was more than a radiance thrown around or imposed upon him, which might just as readily have occurred to any Jewish rabbi. It does not correspond with the illumination of the wall of a building or the face of a cathedral. It was the glory of his Divine nature, usually hidden, now shining through and revealing itself in his form and countenance. We are sure that the appearance of our Lord at all times answered to his character and his spirit. We gather this from the charm which he exerted over his disciples and over little children; from the confidence which he inspired in the social outcasts of his day; in the occasional flashings forth of his Divine sovereignty (John ii. 15; Mark x. 32; John xviii. 6). The Transfiguration was by far the most striking instance of his bodily nature being lighted up and irradiated by his indwelling glory; there was as much of the spiritual as of the material about it; it could not have happened to any other than to our Lord. And this opens the question how far our spiritual experiences may and should glorify our personal appearance. The spirit does act powerfully upon and manifest itself through the body which is its organ. We know how love gleams, how indignation flashes, how scorn and hatred lower, how hope shines, how disappointment pales, how all the passions that breathe and burn in the human breast come forth and make themselves felt in the eye, the lip, the countenance of man. We may and should see a kind or a pure heart in a kind or pure countenance, as we do see avarice or indulgence in a keen or a bloated visage. We bear about in our body the marks of our association with the Lord Jesus, and other marks also which are not derived from such fellowship as that. Holiness has its transfiguring influence, as sin has its debasing effect, upon the human form and figure—the one refines and glorifies, as the other disfigures and degrades. There are two things to be heeded here. 1. We must not draw hasty and unjust inferences; there are those who, so far as appearance goes, are victims of misfortune or are vicarious sufferers. 2. We must endeavour to let a holy character be visible in our bodily persons. Inward excellence is *the* source of outward beauty. No tailoring or millinery, no cosmetics or perfumery, will make beautiful the face and form behind which is an ugly heart; selfishness and pride and envy will never look anything but unsightly and forbidding. The thoughts that breathe, the feelings that glow, the spirit that animates, the character that shines through—it is this which beautifies, which adorns, which makes attractive, which wins confidence and love. These are the things to care for, to cultivate, to cherish; it is thence that our influence for good will spring.

II. THE CARE WHICH GOD TAKES OF HIS OWN IN THEIR TIME OF SPECIAL NEED. What was the purpose of this wonderful scene? It was to prepare the disciples (and perhaps the Master) for the last scenes of all. Those two celestial visitants spake of "the decease which he should accomplish," etc. A terrible ordeal was that through which he and they would pass. Therefore it seemed well to the Father to give to him and to them the most imposing, the most impressive, the most convincing proof that he was well pleased with his Son, and that he was, indeed, the Messiah of their hopes. We know from Peter's Epistle (2 Pet. i. 16, 17) how strong a confirmation of their faith it was and continued to be. Thus God cared for his own, and thus he still cares. Our lives glide on like peaceful rivers; but most human lives prove to be rivers with cataracts in their course. Times of grave trial and peril come, when there is a great strain on our faith and patience; when we have to draw on our last resources; critical trial-hours they are, like those which came to the Master and to his faithful band. How shall we be assured of calmness, fortitude, fidelity, when we pass through them? If we are loyal to our Lord in the days of sunshine and prosperity, if we "abide in him" now, he will not fail us then. As our day his grace will be. He will prepare us for the trial-hour; he will be with us in its darkest moments; he will lead us out into the sunshine on the other side.—C.

Ver. 35.—*The wisdom of hearing Christ.* Three things are clear to us, preliminarily. 1. *Jesus Christ is addressing us.* From his home and throne on high our Saviour stoops to call us, to instruct us, to bless us. He is saying to *us*, "Come unto me;" "Abide in me;" "Follow me." 2. *We need not hear him if we choose not to do so.* As in a room where many groups of people are conversing, we only hear the voice of that company to which we join ourselves and listen, so in the large room of this world there are many voices speaking and it rests with each of us to determine which we will regard. Shall it be the voice of ambition? or that of appetite? or that of human learning? or that of Christ? 3. *Our heavenly Father urges us to give our best attention to Jesus Christ.* "This is my beloved Son: hear *him*." We shall see, if we consider, how and why God presses on us this act of hearing.

I. BECAUSE OF OUR URGENT NEED OF A VOICE THAT IS DIVINE. There are two things we urgently require, but which, apart from Jesus Christ, we cannot have. 1. One is *a knowledge of what is true.* We are "strangers on the earth," and know but very little. Like the little bird (of the ancient story) that flew from the darkness into the dimly lighted room and out into the darkness on the other side, so from the darkness of the past we enter and stay for a brief time in the dimly lighted present, and forth we pass into the darkness of the future. 2. The other is *the power to do what we know to be right.* Truly pathetic is the Roman's confession, "I see the better course, and approve; I follow the worse." What men everywhere have wanted is the inspiration and the power to be and to do that which they perceive to be good and right. Whence shall we gain this? Only from a Divine Saviour, from One who has lived and died for us, to whom we offer our hearts and our lives, the love of whom will constrain us toward all that is good and pure, and restrain us from all that is bad and wrong.

II. BECAUSE OF HIS INTIMATE RELATION TO HIS DIVINE FATHER. "This is my beloved Son," *therefore* should we "hear him." For one of the deepest and most practical questions we can ask is—What is God's thought, feeling, purpose, toward us? If there were any human being who sustained toward us a relation which at all approached in intimacy and importance that which God sustains to us, we should be eager indeed to know what was his feeling and intention concerning us. How eagerly, then, should we inquire of him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," "with whom we have everything to do," on whose will we are absolutely dependent for our future here and hereafter! What does God think about us? On what conditions will he receive and bless us? Christ, "the beloved Son," who came forth from God, and who knows his mind as none other can (Matt. xi. 27), can answer this supreme question for us.

III. BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE AND INTIMATE RELATION TO OURSELVES. We want some one to speak to us who knows us well, who understands us altogether; one about whom we can feel that this is true. To whom, then, should we listen, if not to the Son of God, our Maker; to the Son of man, our Brother? "He knew what was in man," as the evangelist testified, and again and again he showed that he knew his disciples

far better than they knew themselves. Such is his knowledge of us. We may think that we know ourselves and what is best for ourselves. But we may be utterly mistaken. We find that our neighbours display lamentable and ruinous ignorance on these great matters. Who are we that *we* should be full of wisdom where others err? Let us distrust ourselves: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Ignorant presumption is a foe that "hath slain its ten thousands." The truly wise will seek the great Teacher's feet, and say, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?"—C.

Vers. 37—42.—*The healing of the lunatic child.* From this most interesting story we may gather the truths—

I. THAT FROM THE VERY FANGS OF DEFEAT A GREAT VICTORY MAY BE SECURED. More than once in the history of war there has occurred such an incident as that which is related concerning the great struggle in the United States (1860—1864). A severe and successful attack is made by one army on the other; the enemy is driven back, his guns and his camp captured. As his regiments are in full retreat, the general of the defeated force, who has been unfortunately absent, arrives on the scene; he arrests the tide of retreat, gathers his soldiers about him, stops the pursuing host in their career, leads a triumphant attack upon them, drives them beyond his own camp, recaptures his guns, and chases the once-conquering but now defeated army for miles to the rear of its first position. Such a victory snatched from the jaws of humbling defeat took place on this occasion. The returning Saviour found his disciples driven before the hostile attack of his enemies, but his presence soon availed "to restore the day," and before long transformed humiliating failure into joyous triumph. In the Master's actual, *spiritual* absence the cause of the Church may be brought very low indeed, and a complete and crushing disaster may impend; but let the Lord return, let his presence and his power be felt, and from the very teeth of threatened calamity there shall be secured a glorious victory. Let no heart despond so long as there is a present Captain; failure is never irretrievable when he is "on the field;" under his leadership even "death is swallowed up in victory."

II. THAT HUMAN AFFECTION IS MEANT TO LEAD TO SPIRITUAL ATTACHMENTS. It was *his son's* sickness that led this man to seek Jesus; but for that he would not have sought and found him. It was his strong *parental* love that would not be denied, that led him to urge his plea, that enabled him to overcome his fears and to gain that valuable victory. God employs many instrumentalities to lead his children into his kingdom. We ought to be influenced by our sense of what is *right* and of what is *wise* in the matter; but, if not won by these, let the consideration of the deep and tender interests of those who are dear to us convince and determine us. For the sake of those children of ours, whom we love so profoundly, and who have such a vital interest in Christian truth, let us sit at the feet of Christ, and be subject to his sway.

III. THAT THE VERY WORST CASE WILL YIELD TO THE TOUCH OF THE DIVINE HAND. There could not well be a worse case of possession than this (see vers. 39, 42). If the malignant forces could have triumphed over the benevolent Spirit, they would have triumphed here. But everything was accomplished when "Jesus took him by the hand" (Mark ix. 27). So is it with the worst spiritual maladies. They may seem so bad as to be incurable; it may be the general opinion that the case is utterly hopeless. But there is a power in reserve against which the most virulent and the most violent evils are not able to stand. For

> ". . . many of whom all men said,
> 'They've fallen, never more to stand,'
> Have risen, though they seemed as dead
> When Jesus took them by the hand."

The most stricken souls will be healed, the most sorrowing ones comforted, the most despondent filled with a new and blessed hope, the most fallen and sunk in sin lifted up to purity and even to beauty and nobility of spirit and of life, when the Divine voice is heard bidding to be comforted, when the Divine hand is laid on the broken heart or the defiled and guilty soul.

IV. THAT THE EARNEST SOUL NEED NOT LET ANYTHING KEEP HIM BACK FROM

CHRIST AND HIS SALVATION. This father had much to overcome—the natural reluctance he would have to bring the poor demoniac into such publicity; the failure of the disciples to effect a cure, well calculated as that was to discourage and dishearten him; his own imperfect faith (Mark ix. 22, 24). But he overcame all these, and gained his plea. Many may be the obstacles in the way of our salvation; they may be circumstantial, or they may be inward and spiritual; but if there be a thoroughly earnest spirit, they will not prevail over us; we shall triumph over them, and go on our way with our cause gained and our hearts gladdened.—C.

Vers. 46—48.—*The Church and the child.* The scene is well worthy the genius of the artist: the disciples together, but still at variance with one another, with cold or averted look; the Master with a little child in his arms (Mark ix. 36), either turning a reproachful glance on his disciples, or a look of tenderness upon that little one; the child himself with a trustful but wondering expression in his countenance. The scene is suggestive of the thought—*What is the child to the Church?* (For homily on the contention between the apostles, see ch. xxii. 24.) We may consider—

I. WHAT THE CHILD WAS TO THE DISCIPLES. The answer to this question is—*not much.* They were devout and worthy men; but they were Jews, and they shared the mental habits of their countrymen. To them the little child was of small account—one to be kept carefully out of sight; one to be taken charge of by parent or teacher, but superfluous in society; one too many when a great man was present, when a great prophet was speaking, or a great healer was healing. This we know from their conduct on a memorable occasion (ch. xviii. 15).

II. WHAT THE CHILD IS TO THE CHURCH. The poor, our Lord said, we have "always with us." So is it with the children. Whoever are absent, they are present; whoever fail, they abound. The child is in the midst of us, and we have to decide what he shall be to us. Taught by our Lord's teaching, led by his example, imbued with his Spirit, we have to take up a very different attitude from that of the disciples. The Christian Church no longer regards the child as one that has to be carefully kept out of the way lest he should be troublesome. It welcomes him cordially; like its Master, it takes him into the embrace of its affection and its care. 1. It regards the children as the *Church of the future.* It remembers that "death and change are busy ever," that the fathers and mothers are passing on and away, and that others will soon be needed to take their place. When a few more years have come, the place which knows us now will know us no more; who then, but the children about our feet, will bear the flag we bear, will speak the truth we speak, will do the work we do? 2. It regards the children as a *present valuable heritage.* For the little child (1) can be a recipient of Divine truth, and not only can he be this, but his natural open-mindedness and trustfulness make him a peculiarly apt learner in Christ's great school; (2) can be a true follower of the Divine Master—to him also Jesus says, "Follow me," and not only can he "rise and follow" him, but his disposition to trust and love and obey makes him to be a close and a very acceptable follower of his Lord; (3) can illustrate in his own way the excellences of the Christian life, by the exhibition of those virtues and graces which most become childhood and youth. The Church of Christ should find in the little child its most interesting and its most valuable disciple. And this a great deal the more because of—

III. WHAT THE CHILD IS TO THE SAVIOUR HIMSELF. This is *very much indeed.* For Christ knows, as we do not, all the possibilities of the little child—the height to which he may rise, or the depth to which he may sink; the good he may live to do, or the evil he may live to work; the blessedness to which he may attain, or the shame and woe which may be his end. He is more deeply interested in the young than we are, and however earnest and eloquent our voice of invitation or of warning may be, more earnest far is the voice of the Lord himself, as he says, "Come unto me, take my yoke upon you, . . . my yoke is easy, my burden is light."—C.

Vers. 49, 50.—*Exclusiveness and neutrality—the forbidden and the impossible thing.* We do well to take together this passage and that of ch. xi. 23. For one is the complement of the other. "He that is not against us is for us;" "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." There is not the

slightest inconsistency between these two declarations of our Lord. One states one truth, and the other a different one. They teach successively—

I. THAT WE ARE IN DANGER OF COUNTING AMONG OUR OPPONENTS THOSE WHOM WE SHOULD RECKON AS ALLIES. It did not seem to be a service of any particular account that a man should use the name of Jesus to exorcise demons, even though he may have had a measure of success in his attempts. But Christ said he was not to be "forbidden" as an outsider, but rather hailed as a friend and as an ally. What, then, would he not say now of those who go so far towards the fullest declaration of his truth as many thousands do, but who remain outside the particular Church with which we may be connected? Would he have us blame and brand these because they "follow not with us"? The spirit of persecution is cruel, foolish, and emphatically unchristian. Rather let us rejoice that there are found so many who, while not feeling it right to connect themselves with our organization, are yet loving the same Lord and serving the same cause. These are not our enemies; they are our allies.

II. THAT WE CANNOT WITHHOLD OUR EARNEST THOUGHT AND DELIBERATE CHOICE FROM CHRIST without being counted by him as his enemies. "He that is not with me is against me," etc. There is no neutrality in the great campaign now being fought out between sin and righteousness. In great European wars it is customary for generals and correspondents from other countries, not involved in the strife, to attend the movements and watch the operations of the armies; they, of course, are strictly neutral. But in this great spiritual campaign we cannot be mere spectators; *we must be soldiers fighting* on one side or on the other. For we are all deeply involved; we are implicated in what is past; we are interested in the issue; we have great responsibilities resting on us; we have great things at stake. God is addressing himself to every one of us, and it is not open to any of us to refuse to take up a decisive attitude in regard to the subjects of his address. 1. *He speaks to us of himself.* He makes himself known to us as our Creator, our Preserver, our generous Benefactor; he makes his appeal to us as our Divine Father, who earnestly desires our return to his home that he may bless us with his parental love. Can we possibly remain unaffected by this? Is not our very silence a most grievous offence and injury? Not to respond to him is to sin grievously against him. 2. *He comes to us in the Person of his Son Jesus Christ.* And he offers himself to us as the Redeemer who at the greatest possible price has wrought out our redemption, as the Divine Friend in the shelter of whose love and power we may spend our days, as the Source of our eternal life. Can we possibly take up a position toward him in which we are neither one thing nor another—neither enemy nor subject? Can we do other than either accept him or reject him? 3. *He summons us to his service,* and to the service of our kind. We are to be "living epistles," making known his truth, revealing to men the goodness of God, the grace of Christ, the excellency of his service. We are to bear witness unto him. Either our life is witnessing for him and for his truth, or our influence is thrown into the other scale. Those who know us are either being attracted toward Christ through all they see and know about us, or they are being repelled. We cannot be cyphers, try how we may. Our lives are telling on one side or on the other. Either we gather with Christ or we scatter abroad. We *must* make our choice.—C.

Vers. 51—55.—*Wisdom, duty, danger.* Among the various difficulties in this passage that have been the subject of exegetical debate, we may clearly discern three important lessons.

I. OUR WISDOM IN FRONT OF APPARENT EVIL. At this time our Lord had before him the dark days which would bring his ministry to a close. The contemplation of them had evidently gone down deep into his own mind, but he found none to share the thought or to sympathize with him in the prospect. He asked his disciples to let these things "sink down into their ears" (ver. 44), but they understood him not. He was the sole possessor of the great secret of his coming sorrow, struggle, and death. How did he face it? With an immovable resoluteness of soul. "He *steadfastly* set his face to go up to Jerusalem." What reason have we to be thankful for that holy and noble tenacity of spirit! Could anything less strong than that have carried him, unscathed, through all that followed? And if there had been any, even the slightest failure, what would have been the consequences to our race? When we have to face

a future of *pain*, or of *separation* and attendant loneliness and single-handedness of struggle, or of strong and sustained *temptation*, in what spirit shall we face that? In the temper of calm and devout resoluteness; with a full and fixed determination to go bravely and unfalteringly through, shrinking from no suffering, enduring the worst that man can inflict, yielding nothing to the enemy of our soul. An unflinching resoluteness will do great things for us. 1. It will *save us from much suffering*; for cowardice and apprehension do not simply *add* to human wretchedness; they *multiply* it. 2. It will *save us from the chief peril and go far to secure us the victory*. The greatest of all perils before us is that of recreancy, unfaithfulness to our own convictions. An unstable mind is only too likely to be guilty of it. A resolute spirit is almost certain to escape it. 3. It will *place us by the side of our Divine Leader and of the noblest of his followers*. We shall be treading in the footsteps of him who "steadfastly set his face," etc., and who went up to that city of martyrs and gloriously triumphed there.

II. OUR DUTY IN THE PRESENCE OF A PROFESSED PROPHET. "They did not receive him;" "They went to another village." How much is contained, in these simple words, of human folly and privation! These villagers were profoundly prejudiced against Christ, and declined absolutely to see what he could do, to hear what he would say. They would not "judge for themselves" on the evidence ready to be furnished. And consequently they suffered a great privation. The great Healer and Teacher of mankind went another way; their sick went unhealed, their souls went unenlightened, while Divine tenderness and truth found other hearts and homes. Often since then has Christ gone, in the person of some one of his prophets or spokesmen, to the city, to the village, to the home, to the individual heart, and offered his truth, his grace, his salvation. But deep-seated prejudice, or strong material interests, or keen love of pleasure, has barred the way. He has not been received. And as he does not force an entrance anywhere, he has gone elsewhere; he has passed by, and all the treasure of his truth has been unpossessed, all the blessedness of his salvation unknown. Of what unimaginable good, of what highest heritage, does human folly deprive itself!

III. OUR DANGER OF MISTAKING THE LOWER FOR THE HIGHER FEELING. The apostles, James and John, gave vent to a burst of strong resentment, and proposed to have a severe punishment inflicted. They supposed themselves to be actuated by an honourable and acceptable indignation. But Jesus "turned, and rebuked them;" they were entirely mistaken; their feeling was not that of pure indignation, it was tainted by an unholy irritation against men who would not receive *them* and *their* Master; moreover, the desire for immediate punishment was to give place, under Christian teaching, to a determination to win to a better way. Not extinction but reformation, not the infliction of the death which is due but the conferring of the life which is undeserved, not rigorous exaction but patient pity, not the folded fist of law but the open and extended hand of helpfulness, is the Christian thing. When we find ourselves giving way to wrath and proposing punishment, we do well to ask ourselves whether we are sure we know the "spirit we are of," and whether there is not a "more excellent way" for Christian feet to tread.—C.

Ver. 61.—*Decision and indecision.* "Lord, I will follow thee; but," etc. Two trains may leave the same platform and travel for a while along the same lines, and they may look as if they would reach the same terminus; but one of them diverges slightly to the right and the other to the left, and then the further they go the greater is the distance that separates them. Two children born under the same roof, brought up under the same religious conditions, are baptized into the same faith, receive the same doctrines, are affected by the same influences;—they should reach the same home. But they do not. One makes a resolution to serve God outright, unconditional, without reserve; he says simply, deliberately, "I will follow thee;" but the other makes a resolution under reserve, with conditions attached—he says, "Lord, I will follow thee; but," etc. The one of these two goes on, goes up, in the direction of piety, zeal, devotedness, sacred joy, holy usefulness; the other goes down in that of hesitation, oscillation between wisdom and folly, and finally of impenitence and spiritual failure. We will look at—

1. THE MAN OF INDECISION ALONG THE LINE COMMON TO HIMSELF AND THE MAN OF

RELIGIOUS EARNESTNESS. 1. They both receive instruction in the common faith; they learn and admit the great fundamental truths of the gospel—the life, death, resurrection, teaching of Jesus Christ. 2. They are both impressed by the surpassing excellence of Christ; for there is in him now, as there was when he lived among men, that which constrains admiration, reverence, attraction. 3. They both feel the desirableness of availing themselves of the blessings of the gospel of grace—of the pardon, peace, joy, worth, hope, immortality, which it offers to the faithful. And when Christ's voice is heard, as it is in many ways, each of these men is prepared to say, "Never man spake, Lord, as thou speakest to me; no one else will give me what thou art offering; evermore give me this living bread, this living water. Lord, I will follow thee."

II. THE MAN OF INDECISION AT THE POINT OF DIVERGENCE. He says not, simply and absolutely, "I will;" he says, "I will follow thee; but," etc. One word *more*, but how much *less* in fact and in truth? What is in that qualifying word? 1. But *I am young, and there is plenty of time.* I am a long way off the "three score and ten years;" and all along the road of life there are paths leading into the kingdom; let me go on unburdened by such serious claims as these of thine. "I will," etc., but not yet. 2. But *I have a bodily as well as a spiritual nature*, and I must satisfy *its* claims. These hungerings and thirstings of the sense are very strong and imperious; let me drink of this cup, let me lay by those treasures first. 3. *I am waiting for some decisive intimation* from Heaven that my time has come. I do not wish to act precipitately or presumptuously; I am looking for the prompting of the Divine Spirit, the direction of the Divine hand; when the Master says distinctly, "Follow thou me," I will arise at once. 4. *I am in embarrassed circumstances*, and am waiting until they clear away. The claims of the business or the home are so urgent, so near, so practical, that they consume my time, and I have none to spare for thee; there are bonds I have formed which I do not know how to break, but which must be broken if thy friendship is to be made and kept. 5. But *I am old and unable.* I have heard thy voice in my ear in earlier days; but I am old and spiritually blind; old and deaf; old and insensitive. I do not expect thee to come this way again; I would follow thee if I felt once more the touch of thy hand upon me.

III. THE GREATNESS AND SADNESS OF HIS MISTAKE. A grievous thing it is for a man to buoy himself up with such false imaginations, to build his house of hope on such shifting sands, to rest the weight of his destiny on such a sapless, strengthless reed. 1. Does death never lay his cold and hard hand on youth? and does not Christ command our strength and our beauty as well as our feebleness and our unsightliness? 2. Does Christ ask us to give up one *rightful* pleasure? and had we not better sacrifice all *wrongful* ones? And has he not promised all we need if we do but take the one true step into his kingdom (Matt. vi. 33)? 3. No man is waiting for God; but God is waiting for many halting and hesitating human souls. Behold, he stands at the door and knocks! 4. We are not more embarrassed than thousands have been, or more than we shall continue to be. If it is hard to *find* time, then for a purpose so *supreme* as this time *must be made;* if evil friendships are in the way, they must be made to stand out of the way. The voice that speaks from heaven is commanding; the case of our eternal destiny is critical in the very last degree. 5. It is true that long disuse is dangerously disabling, and spiritual capacity wanes with neglect; but men are not too deaf to hear the sovereign voice of Christ, not too blind to find their way to his cross, his table, his kingdom.—C.

Vers. 61, 62.—*The workman's qualification.* What more natural, we are inclined to say, than that, before setting out on an unknown future, a man should wish to say farewell at home? How do we account for this strictness, this disallowance of our Lord? First, however, let us remark—

I. WHAT CONSCIOUSNESS OF POWER AND OF ULTIMATE SUCCESS the Saviour shows! How eager we are to secure followers, how pleased and proud to add to our ranks! Especially when a cause is yet young are we desirous of making converts and counting new disciples. At this time the cause of Christianity was very far from being an assured success; yet Jesus did not *hurry* to be successful, to crowd his Church. He said to the *scribe*—not an ordinary disciple—"Foxes have holes," etc. (Matt. viii. 19,

20; ver. 58). He risked the attachment of another (ver. 60); and again of this man (text). How was this? It was that he had such absolute confidence in the rectitude of his cause, in the support of his Divine Father, and therefore in the triumph of his truth and grace. It is never well to hurry even good issues; we should only work with right instruments, content to wait for the result. "He that believeth will not make haste." To the too-anxious workman there needs to come the remembrance of his Master's holy confidence; it says to such a one, "Be still, and know that I am God." We shall better understand our Lord's reply if we consider—

II. WHAT SUPERHUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF INDIVIDUAL HEARTS the Saviour shows! He did not commit himself to men; "for *he knew what was in man.*" This is the key which unlocks the difficulty in many instances. It is this which explains how it was that he encouraged or accepted, how it was that he tested or declined, the services of men. And it is this which explains the differences in his treatment of us now; how it is that to one man he sends so many more trials and sufferings than to another; how it is that he withholds from one man so many bounties or privileges which he gives to another. He knows both perfectly; he knows their nature and their need, and he treats them accordingly.

III. THE FACT THAT CHRIST REQUIRES SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR SPECIAL WORK. There is a faith that "removes mountains" of difficulty; but there is also a faith, much more common, which will do good work, though it will not accomplish such great things. Christ had work for the contemplative John which that man of speech and action, Peter, could not have done; work for the many-sided and devoted Paul which John could not have done. To "follow Christ" as this scribe (of our text) proposed to do was work which meant many and great things—the severance of old and strong ties, the endurance of privation, exposure to hatred and violence, readiness to look death in the face, self-immolation on the altar of a sacred cause. Jesus probably knew that this man had not the spiritual qualifications for such a sacrificial post as this. Even the common labourer must have concentration of mind; he must not have his hand on the plough while his eye is off the field. And the workman in his field of holy service must be a man of unflinching steadfastness, of unwavering resoluteness of soul. No other would be fit for such work as he had on hand. Surely it is far kinder of the Master to keep back, even by strong and apparently hard words, the unfit servant from the sphere in which he would fail miserably, than to let him go on and reap all the bitter fruits of failure; and surely it is wiser far, on our part, to reckon well beforehand, and see whether our mental and spiritual resources will carry us through a proposed service and to retire if we find ourselves unequal to it, than to go blindly forward and to have to come back with something else upon our brows than the crown of honour and success. We may also learn—

IV. WHAT ARE THE PRESENT, CONSTANT REQUIREMENTS which Jesus Christ makes of those who work for him. He is saying to us, "Follow me into the vineyard of holy usefulness." It is in our hearts to say, "Lord, I will follow thee." What must we have in order that he will readily engage us in his active service? We must have that spirit of self-surrender which will make us willing to give up to our Lord all that he asks us to part with; we must be whole-hearted, single-eyed. We must be workmen that have the hand on the plough and the eye on the field. We must be *thorough* in all that we do for him, contributing all our strength and energy in his cause. And there is every reason why we should be. 1. Our Master is worthy of the very best we can bring to him. 2. The sinful, suffering world around us is crying for our pity and our help. 3. It is well worth our while to do our utmost. In full-hearted service is the present recompense of sacred joy as we warm to our work and spend ourselves in it, while in the future there await us those "many cities," that enlarged sphere of influence which will reward the faithful followers of their Lord.—C.

Vers. 1—17.—*The mission of the twelve.* After the group of miracles, we have our Lord next conferring the power of working miracles upon the twelve. This was miraculous power in its highest form. It is important to work well one's self; but it is a still greater feat to get all about one's self into working order too. Jesus was training his disciples to be workers like himself. Let us, then, consider—

I. THE CONDITIONS OF THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE. (Vers. 1—6.) And here we

have to notice: 1. The power delegated was *healing and exorcising power*. That is to say, their miraculous power was to change the sick and the insane into able-bodied members of society. The aim of our Lord's philanthropy and of theirs was to enable men to become useful *workers*. When men can help themselves, then are they in the happiest of all conditions. This is infinitely better than spoon-feeding and pauperizing people. 2. The disciples were *not* to use miracle to *make themselves independent of the hospitality of the people*. Christ never used miracle to make life easier for himself; nor did he allow his delegates to do so. It would seem to some a wiser arrangement to make them independent of random hospitalities. But it was better for all parties that hospitality should be looked for. Rabbis were hospitably entertained, and so should these disciples be. They were also to accept of hospitality as it came, and not to be choosers of the grand and pretentious houses which might be opened to them. There may be as much magnanimity in accepting hospitality as in extending it.[1] 3. In case of rejection, they were *simply to symbolize their separation* by shaking off the dust of their feet against them. This was the symbol of hostility and war; but there was no further outward act to be undertaken. The war was spiritual, and the judgment of the rejectors must be left with God. Toleration was thus made consistent with faithfulness to their convictions; and was freed from all laxity. 4. Their career of *preaching and of accompanying philanthropy* was continued throughout the towns of Galilee. The gospel they brought to men was one of trust in the Saviour who had come and of devotion to him. It was a gospel of work inspired by that faith which operates through love. Hence it carried philanthropy with it, and this philanthropy was of the most useful and stimulating character.

II. HEROD'S FEARS AND CURIOSITY. (Vers. 7—9.) The mission of the twelve had proved sufficiently influential to attract the notice of Herod. It led him to consider his sin and danger in murdering the Baptist. The miracles of which he heard, however, were merciful, and not wrathful; and so, though he was perplexed about the Saviour, he was curious to see him. Most likely he thought he would get Jesus into his power, as he had got John. But John's ideas about the kingdom and its coming were essentially different from those of Jesus. Hence Herod is left in isolation; his curiosity and desire to see Jesus are alike unsatisfied.

III. THE RETIREMENT INTO WHICH JESUS TAKES THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEIR CAREER OF SUCCESS. (Ver. 10.) The disciples, as we learn from the other Gospels, returned with joy, highly elated with their success. It was on this account doubtless that our Lord deemed retirement so needful for them. There is nothing so wholesome for us when dangerously elated as solitude and prayer. In this way the true character of success is appreciated, and all undue elation about it overcome.

IV. THE INCONVENIENCES OF POPULARITY. (Ver. 14.) The seasons of retirement so salutary for public men are apt to be invaded, and more work forced upon them than they would themselves desire. The disciples and Jesus had most likely secured some fellowship with God before the popular invasion; for our Lord anticipated both friends and foes, and wrought out his beautiful plan in spite of interruption. So when the people came crowding around him, he was able to receive them with unruffled spirit, and to give them the counsel and the healing they needed. It was the same policy which the disciples had pursued by his directions which he here pursues. Miracle is used to heal and render useful, but not to minister to self-indulgence or render life easier to men. He made the multitude hopeful through his preaching, and healthy through his miraculous power.

V. THE FEEDING AND DISMISSAL OF THE PEOPLE. (Vers. 12—17.) This miracle is narrated by all the evangelists. The sending of the multitude away is urged by the disciples. They have got the healing, and should expect no more. As for hospitality, the five thousand should have entertained Jesus and the disciples, rather than be entertained by them. But our Lord would go beyond his previous limitations, and become the Host instead of the Guest of men. For after all, he is really men's Host, and we all sit at his board, though he condescends to be our Guest and to take of what we provide. Hence he shows by this miracle how all men really depend upon his bounty and are fed from his hand. The multiplication of the five loaves and two fishes, that is, of *cooked* food, cannot be assigned to any natural law, and could only have been miraculous.

[1] Cf. Emerson's 'Essays,' vol. ii., No. v., on 'Gifts.'

It was not quantitatively so great a miracle as the feeding of the Israelites with the manna for forty years; yet it was a sufficient miracle to show that the Sustainer of the world was among them. Upon him they should depend, and, if they fed by faith on him, they would always be strengthened. It was at the same time sufficiently *moderate* in its size and duration to show that he was *not* going to keep lazy men in idleness by spreading a gratuitous feast for them every day. They are dismissed by him that very evening, that they might not be able to go through the *selfish ceremony* of making him a king. He did not want to be a king over idlers, over men who would like to eat without the trouble of working; and so he defeated their worldly plans. His lesson of *frugality* also was most significant. He wanted no waste in his kingdom. He would not prostitute miraculous power to minister either to idleness or to wastefulness. Very clear light is thus cast upon the *economy* of Jesus. He kept miracle in its place. It ministered to usefulness; it was not allowed to minister to idleness or waste. It would be well if all learned the wholesome lesson which Christ thus conveys.—R. M. E.

Vers. 18—36.—*The Saviour's secret revelations.* After the miracle of the loaves Jesus resumes his season of devotion, and in the course of it he asks the disciples who had just returned from their mission-tour what reports are being circulated about him. They tell him that some say he is John Baptist, some Elias, some one of the prophets risen again. This shows that they regarded his present life as *preliminary* only. The idea of his being the real Messiah, "the Christ of God," was not entertained by any of the outsiders at all. It is then he asks them what their idea is, when Peter answers unhesitatingly, "The Christ of God." And now we must inquire—

I. THE REASON FOR THIS SECRECY ABOUT THE MESSIAHSHIP. (Vers. 18—22.) Though the disciples believed in his Messiahship, they are directed *not* to make it known. Now, we must remember how different the Jewish ideas of the Messiahship were from the reality presented by Christ. Even such a noble-minded man as John Baptist had doubted the propriety of the course Jesus took. How much more liable to mistake would the common people be, if it had been blazed abroad that he was Messiah! It was needful, therefore, to wait till the picture was nearer completion before people were asked to look upon it. In fact, it was only his intimates who could at such a stage realize his magnificence at all.[1] To give the people time to form a proper opinion, to prevent them from rising into premature opposition, to allow them no valid excuse if they rejected him at last, was the purpose of his secrecy and patience. He saw clearly that he "must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain," but he would not provoke the crisis by publishing his Messianic claims. His modesty and secrecy in this matter are in striking contrast to the manners and methods of the world.

II. PERSONAL SALVATION THROUGH SELF-SACRIFICE. (Vers. 23—27.) While predicting his death, he also predicts his resurrection. This is salvation through self-sacrifice. He immediately indicates that we are under the same law. The man alone saves himself who dedicates himself even unto death to Jesus. There are two policies pursued. 1. The *selfish policy.* People think they are so very valuable that they must save themselves at every turn. Hence they give the strength of their time and attention to *self-preservation.* This is their first law of nature. In doing so, they think that if they can only gain as much of the world and worldly things as possible, the better. They think it wise to win the world. But now Jesus shows that such a course only ends in utter loss of self. What does the self-centred, self-preserving soul become? What is the fate of the grasping, worldly mind? Such a soul shrivels up, becomes a nonentity, a mere derelict or castaway on the sea of existence. Such a life is "not worth living." 2. Notice *the self-sacrificing policy.* This is the policy pursued by the soul which is devoted to Jesus as supreme. It is no trial to carry the cross; such a soul is ready to die any day for Jesus. He cannot be ashamed of Jesus, or of his words, but prizes him and them as beyond all price. And what is such a soul's experience? He feels that he is self-possessed and the subject of a grand development. He really has gained himself. His powers of mind and of heart grow into luxuriance, and he feels enriched in all the elements of being as he goes onward. And if perchance

[1] Cf. Kahnis' 'Der Gang der Kirche,' s. 23.

he becomes a martyr for the faith and lays down, as these disciples did, his life for Jesus, he finds in an immortal future of further dedication all his best being carried forward. Death may cripple him in working powers here, but promotion awaits him beyond the shadows, and he finds that "he is himself again" after the death-experience is over. Jesus thus presents the case in the proper light—self-sacrifice is real *salvation of self* if our self-sacrifice is for the sake of Jesus.

III. THE PRIVATE GLIMPSE OF GLORY. (Vers. 28—36.) Eight days after the noble confession of Christ by the disciples, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up to a mountain-top, that he might have another season of prayer. Though so busy, he never became prayerless. A most useful lesson! And here we have to note: 1. That *transfiguration came through prayer.* (Ver. 29.) There is nothing changes people's appearance so suddenly and so satisfactorily as being on the mountain-top of prayer. Jesus in transfiguration-glory is but a type of his people who come radiant from the secret places too. If there were more prayer on the part of God's people, there would be more transfiguration and less scepticism about its efficacy. 2. *Transfigured ones are attractive to the heavenly world.* (Vers. 30, 31.) Moses and Elias from their abodes of bliss are but indications of a perpetual interest in transfigured men. A new star is not more attractive to the astronomer than is a transfigured and radiant soul to the inhabitants of heaven. And further, the decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem is the supreme topic with the men from the heavenly city. For to this did the Law and the prophets point, and in the abodes of bliss other interests have not superseded this. If the cherubim were represented as gazing rapturously upon the mercy-seat and its baptism with blood, so may we believe the whole society out of which Moses and Elias came concentrate their interest upon the salvation which comes through the death of Jesus. 3. *Transfigured ones attract attention from the inhabitants of earth.* (Ver. 32.) The disciples had fallen asleep, but the glory awoke them, as a candle will when brought before a sleeper. They saw the Master's glory, and Moses and Elias at his side, and they regarded the Messianic kingdom as having in this triple glory dawned. 4. *There is a natural desire to retain the rapturous vision.* (Ver. 33.) As soon as the disciples became watchful witnesses, Moses and Elias appear to have moved away. Their converse has now been interrupted by unspiritual auditors, and so they prepare for their departure. It is in these circumstances that Peter proposes to retain the visitors by making "tabernacles" in the mount. With such a reinforcement, he thinks, as Moses and Elias, in radiance bright, the victory of Messiah will be assured. It is thus we dream. We read the history of the heroes who are gone, and we imagine that if we were only reinforced from the past we should be triumphant all along the line. Their spirit and their history may well inspire us, but they cannot take our burden. 5. *The rapture may pass away in cloud, but Jesus abides with us for ever.* (Vers. 34—36.) There can be little doubt about this bright cloud being the Shechinah.[1] It came to indicate the true manifestation of God in the incarnate Son, and to withdraw the possible competitors. The disciples feared as they entered the cloud. But a gracious paternal voice assured them, "This is my beloved Son: hear him." And when the cloud cleared away, they saw no man, but Jesus only. To the teaching of Jesus, consequently, they would yield intenser attention. Besides, they kept it secret what they had seen. It was one of those glorious visions which could not wisely be yet revealed. Let us enjoy Jesus, no matter how rapturous associations may fade away.—R. M. E.

Vers. 37—62.—*The secret of successful work.* We saw that the Transfiguration was the result of prayer; but it was not the *end* of the prayer. This was preparation for further service. The glory is not the end, but only an incidental accompaniment, of devotedness of spirit. It is work for God, further service in his kingdom, which is the aim of all means of grace. And now these verses bring out in different aspects the secret of successful work. Let us notice——

I. SUCCESSFUL WORK MUST BE PRAYERFUL. (Vers. 37—42.) We have here a case of failure on the part of the nine disciples, and of success on the part of the descended Christ. The difference between the two cases was that Christ had been praying on the mountain while they had been prayerless in the valley. Prayerlessness and powerlessness

[1] Cf. Arndt's 'Leben Jesu,' vierter theil, s. 112.

go hand-in-hand. Work done in a prayerless spirit cannot succeed as it ought to do. The transfigured ones alone can meet the emergencies of Christian work, and succeed where others fail. Some cases are doubtless more difficult than others, and some demons make a harder fight of it than others; but there are none of them who can stand a prayerful Christian who faithfully follows Jesus in his line of attack.

II. SUCCESSFUL WORK MUST BE IN SPITE OF MALIGNANT OPPOSITION. (Vers. 43—45.) Our Lord, as the crowd are wondering at his success, tells the disciples plainly that he is destined to be delivered into the hands of men. This is a sufficient set-off to his success. Men will take and kill him, notwithstanding all his philanthropy and exorcising power. This crucifixion of Jesus is but the type of the world's recognition of the best work done by human hands. A long line of noble workers have followed Jesus along the path of martyrdom. Let no worker, then, be surprised at the world's malignity.

III. SUCCESSFUL WORK MUST BE DIVESTED OF BASE AMBITIONS. (Vers. 46—48.) Notwithstanding recent failure through want of prayer, the disciples are soon selfishly contending about the first places, and who is to be greatest. It is wonderful how soon we forget our failures and betake ourselves to our ambitions. Now, one characteristic of base ambition is pride about work. Certain lines of work are thought to be beneath our dignity and worth. To correct this in the disciples, our Lord sets a little child before them, and shows that such a child might be received in such a spirit as would be recognized by God himself. The nursing of a little child may be done for the sake of Jesus Christ, and in such a case it is such a work as he will regard, and the Father who sent him also. It is not a great work, therefore, that is needed, but a *great heart* carried into the smallest work. *We* think of quantity; Christ thinks of quality. We will not "take our coats off," so to speak, unless it is some work eminently creditable; Christ could throw his great spirit into the fondling of a little child, and do the little one everlasting good. Hence we must do any work clearly laid to our hand with large-heartedness, and we shall find it successful in the best sense. It is the meek ones who are ready to put their hand to anything who are great in the kingdom of God.

IV. SUCCESSFUL WORK DEMANDS, BESIDES, A TOLERANT SPIRIT. (Vers. 49—56.) John and James, after the Transfiguration privileges, seem to have got very excited and ardent in Christ's service. Two cases in particular show how heated and hasty they were. The first was a case of *exorcism through Christ's Name*. Some Jew had witnessed the exorcisms of Christ, and, abandoning the Jewish methods and traditions, had tried the new plan, and proved the power of "the Name which is above every name." But because he did not join the disciples, and so preserve their monopoly of delegated power, he is forbidden by them to do such work. This was intolerance misplaced. The worker, though not uniting with the disciples, was promoting the Master's glory by showing the power of his Name. He was an ally, though not a disciple of the same set. Hence Jesus instructs them always to act on the tolerant principle that "he that is not against us is for us."[1] The second case in which the sons of Zebedee exhibited unholy zeal was in a certain Samaritan village, during Jesus' journeys to Jerusalem. The last journey has begun (ver. 51), and nothing will keep him from accomplishing it. The Samaritans would have liked him to linger with them, and avoid his enemies and theirs. But he would not listen to their syren voice, but insisted on going up to Jerusalem. Taking umbrage at this, one Samaritan village denied him the usual hospitalities when his forerunners sought it. Incensed at this, John and James inquire if they should not call down fire from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans, as Elijah had done. Samaria was the scene of that fiery ministry. But Elijah's spirit would not suit the Saviour's times. Had the prophet descended from the Mount of Transfiguration, he would not have insisted on any such policy as this. He had doubtless got less fiery in the peaceful abodes above! As a destructive force, he had served his generation, but the disciples were to remember that saving men, not destroying them, was to be their mission. From both these cases we learn that the true evangelical spirit must reject all intolerance if it is to secure the highest success.

[1] Cf. Vinot, on 'La Tolerance de l'Évangile,' in 'Discours sur quelques Sujets Religieux, p. 225.

V. SUCCESSFUL WORK REQUIRES FAITHFUL DEALING WITH INDIVIDUAL CASES. (Vers. 57—62.) As Jesus was moving upwards to the capital, the people perceived that a crisis was at hand. Hence the desire of some on insufficient grounds to cast in their lot with him who is to be the conquering King. Here is a case in point. A man comes and professes his willingness to be a follower of Jesus wheresoever he goeth. But Jesus undeceives him by indicating that he is not going to be sure of any lodging in this world. Perhaps the man was hoping to reach a palace by following him; but Jesus shows that the birds and beasts have more certain lodgings than he. He thus laid bare the man's danger, and prevented a rash decision. The second case is an invitation to the individual by Jesus himself. It is a case of bereavement, and Jesus seizes on it to secure a disciple. He knew that the best thing this broken-heart could do would be to become a herald of his kingdom. The bereaved one naturally enough asks leave to go and bury his father, but Jesus assures him that there are sufficient dead hearts at home to pay due respect to his father's remains, and the formalities of the funeral may only change his promptitude into delay and neglect; and so he urges him to become a preacher at once. A third case is that of one who is ready to follow Christ, but wishes to bid those at home farewell. Our Lord tells him the *danger of looking back*. The farewells at home might have resulted in a farewell for ever to Jesus. It is thus Jesus shows the importance of dealing faithfully with individual souls. We have the secret of successful work laid clearly before us.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

Vers. 1—24.—*The mission of the seventy. The Lord's words to them of instruction and direction and warning.*

Ver. 1.—**After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also.** That is to say, after the events just related which had taken place in the north of the Holy Land. "After these things" formally began the solemn marches in the direction of Jerusalem, which ended, as we have stated, in the last Passover. Roughly speaking, the seventy were first sent out about the October of the last year of the public ministry. The manuscripts vary between seventy and seventy-two. The preponderance of authority is in favour of seventy. The Sanhedrin numbered seventy-one. The elders appointed by Moses were seventy. There was a Jewish saying also that the number of peoples on earth were seventy or seventy-two. Fourteen descended from Japhet, thirty from Ham, twenty-six from Shem. In the 'Clementine Recognitions,' a writing of the first half of the third century, the number of peoples is given as seventy-two. The Fathers dwell on the sacred symbolism of the desert-wanderings especially mentioned at Elim—"twelve wells and seventy palm trees," alluding to the two groups of Christ-sent missionaries, the twelve apostles and the "seventy" here mentioned. **Two and two.** As in the case of his apostles sent forth previously, for mutual help and comfort. **Before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.** By their means, as the time left him was now so short, all the needful preparations should be made before he personally visited the place. Villages and towns, too, where his presence was found, as in the case of the Samaritan village, unwelcome, would be thus carefully noted, and no time would needlessly be lost.

Ver. 2.—**Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.** This and many of the sayings reported on this occasion had been said apparently before, when the twelve had been sent out on a similar mission. It seems almost certain that, on several occasions, the Lord repeated the same expressions containing great truths, with scarcely any variation in language. The harvest simile was evidently a favourite one of the Master. "The field is the world" he told them in the parable of the sower. It is reproduced by St. John (Rev. xiv. 14—19).

Ver. 3.—**Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.** These *first* missionaries were to go forth unarmed and unprovided. They were to be a type of the strange, *seemingly* weak Christian preachers of the next two hundred years, before whose simple words and unarmed presence the great system of paganism was to go down. One of the rare but beautiful *traditional* sayings of the Lord is referred to the first occasion of his speaking the words of this third verse. Peter is said to have asked him, "But how, then, if the wolves tear the lambs?" And the Lord said, "Let not the lambs fear the wolves, when the lambs are once dead;" and then

added again the words of Matt. x. 28, "Fear not them which kill the body," etc.

Ver. 4.—**Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes.** They were to burden themselves with no useless baggage, nor were they to be careful for ways and means of livelihood. Dean Plumptre very beautifully writes, on the similar words reported in Matt. x. 10, "Experience (and, we may add, the spirit that teaches by experience) has led the Christian Church at large to look on these commands as binding only during the mission on which the twelve were actually sent. It is impossible not to admire the noble enthusiasm of poverty which showed itself in the literal adoption of such rules by the followers of Francis of Assisi, and, to some extent, by those of Wickliffe; but the history of the mendicant orders and other like fraternities forms part of that teaching of history which has led men to feel that in the long-run the beggar's life will bring the beggar's vices. Yet here, as in the case of the precepts of the sermon on the mount, the spirit is binding still, though the letter has passed away. The mission work of the Church has ever prospered in proportion as that spirit has pervaded it." **And salute no man by the way.** This especially refers to the length and tediousness of Eastern salutations, often very unreal, and which would consume much valuable time. Men were to see that one absorbing interest possessed them, and that to them was no time given for the ordinary useless amenities of life.

Ver. 5.—**Peace be to this house.** The original of the words used in the Church of England Office for the Visitation of the Sick.

Ver. 6.—**The son of peace.** An Aramaic (Hebrew) expression. Although the language here is pure and fairly classical Greek, yet the presence of such expressions as this shows that the basis of this part of St. Luke's narrative was probably an Aramaic document.

Ver. 7.—**And in the same house remain. . . . Go not from house to house.** Similar instructions were given in the case of the sending out the twelve as missionaries. One house and family were to be selected as the centre of their work (see note on ch. ix. 4). **Eating and drinking such things as they give; for the labourer is worthy of his hire.**

Ver. 8.—**Eat such things as are set before you.** Most commentators have simply seen in this charge (1) an instruction to be content with whatever their host should set before them, avoiding even the appearance of caring or wishing for dainties; (2) that his servants should look upon such maintenance in the light of a fairly earned wage, rather than as an alms bestowed upon a beggar. In other words, his servants, while perfectly content with the most frugal fare, at the same time should preserve their manly independence. The bare austere sustenance, the simple lodging,—*these* things they had surely earned. But in addition to this meaning, true and appropriate though it be, there seems a quiet recommendation not to be rigid in inquiring as to the cleanness or uncleanness of the viands. One very able commentator (Godet) remarks that of this there is no question, for we are yet in a Jewish world. But remembering only in the last chapter a mission was specially sent to a Samaritan village, such an assertion can scarcely be maintained. It seems probable that extreme rigidness in this particular, now that mission work on a broad scale had commenced, here began to be relaxed; and that in this charge of Jesus we have, at least, the basis of that yet broader commandment set out by St. Paul in 1 Cor. x. 27.

Ver. 9.—**And heal the sick that are therein.** These were strangely great powers to confer upon poor weak men—men, too, only in the very dawn of faith—and their naive surprise and joy (see ver. 17) show how little they believed in their possession of such powers, even after their Master's words announcing to them the gift. But this prodigality of miraculous energy was needful then. The first beginning of so stupendous a work as laying securely the ground stories of Christianity—what Renan, with all his enmity to revealed religion, calls "l'évenément capital de l'histoire du monde"—required this special aid from another sphere.

Ver. 12.—**But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.** Such a rejection implied that they would have nothing to do with the Master of these preachers, the pitiful, loving, Galilæan Teacher. These were days of possible mighty blessings, of proportional terrible punishments. The woe of Sodom, that well-known swift destruction, most probably through sudden volcanic agency, was tolerable in comparison with the far more awful doom reserved in the immediate future, at the hands of Rome, for these guilty cities of Palestine (see a further note on this on ver. 15).

Ver. 13.—**Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.** In St. Matthew's Gospel (xi. 20), where the woe of the fair lake-cities is announced in similar language, the "woe" is introduced with the words, "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done." Now, we have no record of any miracles having been worked at Chorazin, the first mentioned. But these cities were in the immediate

vicinity of Capernaum, where for a lengthened period our Lord principally resided. He was, no doubt, during the Galilæan ministry, constantly in one or other of those bright, busy cities built on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret. This bears out St. John's statement (xx. 30) concerning the many unrecorded miracles of Christ, and gives us some notion of the numerous events in the life left without mention; much must have happened in Chorazin to have called forth this stern saying. Late research thinks it probable that the site of Chorazin has been discovered near Capernaum; the ruins, however, at a little distance, look but a mere rough heap of stones. A great theological truth is urged in this saying of the Master. Men will be judged not only for what they have done or failed to do, but their opportunities, their circumstances, their chances in life, will be, before they are judged, strictly taken into account.

Ver. 14.—**But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.** Tyre and Sidon, those representative examples of the luxury and vileness of the great cities of the old pagan world, will, when the dreadful awards are made, *be beaten with few stripes*, while the cities of the lake will *be beaten with many*, because these last listened unrepentant to the sweet and tender words, and gazed unmoved at the mighty works of mercy, of the pitiful Jesus of Nazareth. This is one of the passages in the New Testament where the doctrine of degrees in punishment is plainly set forth, and in words which fell from the lips of the Redeemer himself!

Ver. 15.—**And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.** When the Lord came to speak of the woe of Capernaum, his own chosen city, his favourite earthly home, his words grew even more solemn. The simile he uses, "hell," better rendered *Hades*, is chosen to paint the contrast between the glorious destiny this beautiful lake-city might have chosen, and the tremendous woe which she had voluntarily brought on herself. The present state of the Plain of Gennesaret is indeed so desolate and miserable that we can scarcely picture to ourselves that it was once a populous, crowded district, the blue lake covered with fishing and trading vessels, its shores and the plain inland highly cultivated, a very garden in that part of Asia. Rich towns and thriving villages in that favoured neighbourhood are described by contemporary writers in such glowing terms that we, who are spectators of the dreary and melancholy shores of the Gennesaret lake, are puzzled as we read, and should suspect an exaggeration, only an exaggeration would have been purposeless (see Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' iii. 3. 2). Some thirty years after the woe had been uttered, in the terrible wars in which Rome avenged herself on the Jewish hatred and scorn, the garden of Gennesaret was changed into a ruin-covered solitude. Josephus, who had been dwelling on the loveliness of the place, describes the state of the shore strewn with wrecks and putrefying bodies, "insomuch that the misery was not only an object of commiseration to the Jews, but even to those that hated them and had been the authors of that misery" ('Bell. Jud.,' iii. 10. 8; and see Dr. Farrar's 'Life of Christ,' ii. 101).

Ver. 17.—**And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy Name.** How wavering and hesitating the faith of the chosen followers of Jesus was, even at this late period of his public ministry, is clear from this frank confession of surprise at their powers. They were contrasting the present with what had lately happened at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, where the disciples were utterly unable to heal the possessed boy. What a contrast do these true writers of the gospel story paint between themselves and their Master! They never seem to tire in their self-depreciatory descriptions. They describe with the same careful, truthful pen their slowness to understand what afterwards became so clear to them—their mutual jealousies, their covetous hopes of a brilliant future, their shrinking from pain and suffering, their utter failure when they try to imitate their Master; and now we find them marvelling at their own—to them—unexpected success in their imitation of him.

Ver. 18.—**And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.** The Lord's words here were prophetic rather than descriptive of what had taken, or was then taking place. The seventy were telling him their feelings of joy at finding that his Name in their mouths enabled them to cast out evil spirits from the possessed. Their Master replied in an exalted and exultant strain—strange and rare sounds on the lips of the Man of sorrows—telling them how he had been looking—not on a *few* spirits of evil driven out of unhappy men, but on the king and chief of all evil falling from his sad eminence and throne of power like a flash of lightning. Jesus Christ saw, in the first success of these poor servants of his, an earnest of that wonderful and mighty victory which his followers, simply armed with the power of his Name, would shortly win over paganism. He saw, too, in the dim far future, many a contest with and victory over evil in its many forms. He looked on, we may well believe, to the final defeat

which at length his servants, when they should have learned the true use and the resistless power of that glorious Name of his, should win over the restless enemy of the souls of men.

Ver. 19.—**Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.** The older authorities read here, "I have given." The only recorded instance of a literal fulfilment of this promise was in the case of Paul at Melita, after the shipwreck (Acts xxiv. 3—5). A similar promise was made during the "forty days" (Mark xvi. 17, 18). It seems, however, best, in the case of this peculiar promise, to interpret the Lord's words as referring to spiritual powers of evil, taking the serpent and scorpion as symbols of these. It should be remembered that the subject of conversation between the Master and his servants was the conflict with and victory over these awful powers restlessly hostile to the human race (see Ps. xci. 13).

Ver. 20.—**But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.** "After all," went on the wise and loving Master, "though you have made the glad discovery of the power you possess, if, as my servants, you use aright my Name, after all, your real reason for joy is, not the possession of a new, mighty power, but the fact of your name having been written in the book of life as one of my servants commissioned to do my work." Many commentators here cautiously point out that even this legitimate joy should be tempered with fear and trembling, for even this true title to honour might be blotted out of that golden book of heaven (see Exod. xxxii. 33; Jer. xvii. 13; Ps. lxix. 28; Rev. xxii. 19). In *this* deep legitimate joy men and women of all callings, who try to follow the Master, in every age, may share.

Ver. 21.—**In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit.** More than "rejoiced;" the Greek word rather signifies "exulted." Very rarely in the holy story of the life of lives is a hint given us of any gleam of gladness or of joy irradiating the spirit of the Man of sorrows. The exultation of the Blessed here was based upon his conviction that this first success of his own was but the *commencement* of a long and weary, but yet, in the end, of a triumphant campaign against the spirits of sin and evil. What *these*, in their mortal weakness by the aid of their poor imperfect faith in his Name, had been able to accomplish, was an earnest, a pledge, of the mighty work which his followers would, in the power of the same Name, be enabled to effect in the coming ages. In that solemn hour did Messiah see, in the *far future*, of "the travail of his soul," and was satisfied. The absence of all sign of joy in the life of our Lord is well brought out in that touching legend which we find in the spurious letter of P. Lentulus to the senate, that he wept often, but that no one had ever seen him smile. **That thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.** Looking upon his servants after their return from their successful mission, a group made up certainly for the *most* part of poor untutored men—fishers, artisans, and the like, children of the people, without rank or position—Jesus thanks the Father that, in the persons of the men chosen to be the instruments of his work, he has looked away from all the ordinary machinery of human influence. As he gazes upon the band of successful missionaries, Jesus thanks the Father that henceforth his servants, if they would be successful, must owe the powers which gave them success entirely to *his* training, and not to the world's. **Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.** This is "the only record, outside St. John's Gospel, of a prayer like that which we find in John xvii. For the most part, we may believe, those prayers were offered apart, on the lonely hillside, in the darkness of night; or, it may be, the disciples shrank in their reverence, or perhaps in the consciousness of their want of capacity, from attempting to record what was so unspeakably sacred. But it is noteworthy that in this exceptional instance we find, both in the prayer and the teaching that follows it in St. Matthew and St. Luke, turns of thought and phrase almost absolutely identical with what is most characteristic of St. John. It is as though this isolated fragment of a higher teaching had been preserved by them as a witness that there was a region upon which they scarcely dared to enter, but into which men were to be led afterwards by the beloved disciple, to whom the Spirit gave power to recall what had been above the reach of the other reporters of his Master's teaching" (Dean Plumptre).

Ver. 22.—**All things are delivered to me of my Father.** These words, spoken late in the public ministry, evidently refer to the Almighty power possessed and frequently exercised by the incarnate Son of God. During the days of his humiliation, Jesus Christ exercised the power of Creator, Lord of the elements, Lord of the secrets of health and disease, Lord of life and death. Dean Mansel, comparing this statement, recorded both by SS. Matthew and Luke, with the language of St. John, remarks "that there is no substantial difference between the different evangelists in their views of our Lord's Person and nature, and that the Gospel of St. John, far from being the representative of a later theology,

does but more fully expound what is implicitly contained in the earliest of the Gospels." St. Matthew (xi. 28—30) here gives us that sublime invitation of the Master's to the weary and heavy-laden. In the consciousness of his possession of all power, Jesus, with infinite compassion, offers to the great army of sufferers that rest which he alone can give.

Vers. 23, 24.—**And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see.** Alluding, especially, to such prophets and their words as Balaam (in Numb. xxiv. 17) and Jacob (in Gen. xlix. 18). Keble has a quaint verse here, striking, as is usual with him, the central truth—

> "Save that each little voice in turn
> Some glorious truth proclaims;
> *What sages would have died to learn,*
> *Now taught by cottage dames.*"

These last words, the evangelist expressly says, were spoken *privately*. In fact, such a statement could only have been addressed to the inner circle—to those men (not exclusively the twelve) who had been much under the immediate influence of the Lord's teaching about himself. Gradually their sense as to who and what he was was becoming more acute. Glimpses of his Divinity ever and anon flashed before their eyes. But, to the last, their faith was very weak and wavering. Such words as these, after what had gone before, must have sunk deep into many of the listeners' hearts.

Vers. 25—37.—*The question of the lawyer. The Lord answers with the parable of the good Samaritan.*

Ver. 25.—**And, behold, a certain lawyer.** It seems (as has already been noticed) probable that in St. Luke's general account of our Lord's teaching during the six months which immediately preceded the last Passover, certain events which took place at a short visit which Jesus paid to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Dedication are noticed. This question of the lawyer was probably asked on the occasion of this visit, and the little episode connected with the Bethany family of Lazarus took place at the same period. The "lawyer" is sometimes termed "scribe." There is little difference between these appellations. They were professional teachers and expounders of the Mosaic Law and of the vast complement of traditional sayings which had gathered round it. As the whole life of the people at this period was ruled and guided by the Law, written and traditional, this profession of scribe and lawyer was an important and influential one. **Stood up.** The Master was evidently teaching in a house or a courtyard of a house. Many were sitting round him. To attract his attention, this lawyer stood up before putting his question to Jesus. This scene, as we have said, took place most likely in or near Jerusalem, not improbably, as the Bethany episode follows, in that suburb of the city, and perhaps in the house of Lazarus. **And tempted him**; that is to say, tested him and his skill in answering questions out of that Law which then was the rule and guide of daily life in Israel. It is not unlikely that the lawyer hoped to convict the broad and generous Rabbi of some unorthodox statement which would injure his reputation as a Teacher. It was a hard and comprehensive question, this query how eternal life was to be won, and possibly one carefully prepared by the enemies of Jesus,

Ver. 26.—**He said unto him, What is written in the Law?** The Lord replied, perhaps pointing to one of the phylacteries which the lawyer wore on his forehead and wrist. These phylacteries were little leather boxes (the dimensions of these varied from the size of an ordinary hazelnut, to that of a large walnut, and even in some cases much larger). In these leather boxes were little parchment rolls containing certain texts from the Pentateuch. Certainly the first of the two great rules, that concerning *God*, was one of these texts (Deut. vi. 5); possibly, but not certainly, the second concerning the neighbour formed another text.

Ver. 28.—**This do, and thou shalt live.** The learned Jew was evidently confounded at the Galilæan Rabbi's first answer referring him to the sacred Mosaic Law. His perplexity is increased by the Lord's quiet repartee when he had rehearsed the two duties, to his God and his neighbour, "This do, and thou shalt live." It seems as though the clever, unfriendly critic of Jesus of Nazareth now forgot the hostile purpose with which he stood up to question, and, really conscience-stricken, willing to justify himself, in real good faith put the query which called out the famous parable.

Ver. 29.—**And who is my neighbour?** The self-righteous, but probably rigidly conscientious, Jewish scholar, looking into the clear, truthful eyes of the Galilæan Master he had been taught to hate as the enemy of his own narrow, lightless creed, was struck, perhaps for the first time, with the moral beauty of the words of his own Law. Of the first part, *his duty towards God*, as far as his poor distorted mind could grasp the idea, he was at ease in his conscience. The tithe, down to the anise and cummin, had been scrupulously paid; his fasts had been rigidly observed, his feasts

carefully kept, his prayer-formulas never neglected. Yes; as regards *God*, the Pharisee-lawyer's conscience was at ease! But his neighbour? He thought of his conduct towards that simple, truthful-looking Galilæan Rabbi, Jesus, that very day; trying to trip him up in his words, longing to do him injury—*injury* to that worn-looking, loving Man who had never done *him* any harm, and who, report said, was only living to do others good. Was *he*, perchance, his neighbour? So, vexed and uneasy—but it seems in perfect honesty now, and in good faith—he asks this further question, "Master, tell me, who do you teach should be included in the term 'neighbour'?"

Ver. 30.—**And Jesus answering said.** For reply the Master told him and the listening by-standers the parable-story we know so well as the "good Samaritan"—the parable, which has been "the consolation of the wanderer and the sufferer, of the outcast and the heretic, in every age and country" (Stanley). The story was one of those parables especially loved by Luke (and Paul), in which instruction is conveyed, not by types, but by example. It was very probably a simple recital of a fact which had happened, and at some period in the Lord's life had come under his own observation. The local scenery, the characters of the story, would all lead to the supposition that the parable was spoken in or near Jerusalem. **A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.** We are not told who the traveller was, Jew or Gentile; not a word about his rank, descent, or religion; simply that he was a man, a human being. It seems, however, from the whole tone of the story, most probable that the wounded traveller was a Jew. The way he was travelling was the road leading down from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of twenty-one miles—not the only way, but the most direct. It was a rugged, rocky pass, well adapted for the purposes of thieves and desperadoes, and was known, owing to the many dark deeds of which it had been the scene, as "The Way of Blood." The Lord's words tell the story. The traveller, likely enough a Jew pedlar, had fallen among thieves, who had robbed him, and then had left their victim—dying or dead, what cared they?—lying in the pass.

Ver. 31.—**There came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.** Both the priest and Levite were frequent travellers along this road between the capital and Jericho. Jericho was especially a city of priests, and when the allotted service or residence time at the temple was over, these would return naturally to their own homes. It has been remarked that the grave censure which this story levels at the everyday want of charity on the part of priests and Levites, fills up what would otherwise have been a blank in the Master's many-sided teaching. Nowhere else in the gospel narrative do we find our Lord taking up the attitude of censor of the priestly and Levitical orders. We have little difficulty in discovering reasons for this apparently strange reticence. They were still the official guardians and ministers of his Father's house. In his public teaching, as a rule, he would refrain from touching these or their hollow, pretentious lives. Once, and once only, in this one parable did he dwell—but even here with no severe denunciations, as in the case of scribes and Pharisees — on the shortcomings of the priestly caste. The bitter woe was fast coming on these degenerate children of Aaron. In less than half a century, that house, the glory and the joy of Israel, would be utterly destroyed, not to be raised again. No woe that the Christ could pronounce could be as crushing in its pitiless condemnation. *The very reason for the existence of priest and Levite as priest and Levite would exist no longer.* The selfish life of the doomed order, in which holiness seemed effectually to have been divorced from charity, is portrayed in the lifelike picture of the parable of the good Samaritan.

Ver. 32.—**And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.** They both, priest and Levite, shrank from the trouble and expense of meddling with the poor victim of the robbers; perhaps a cowardly fear of being identified with the robbers was mixed with these feelings. The whole of their conduct was inhuman, but not unnatural; alas! how faithfully is it copied by multitudes of men and women professing Christianity now! The Levite's conduct was better and worse than his official superior's—better, in that he did feel a little pity, and stopped to look, no doubt compassionately, on the sufferer; and worse, because he selfishly strangled the noble impulse in its birth, and passed on to his own place without so much as throwing a cloth over the poor maimed body to shelter it from the scorching sun, or the cold night dew.

Ver. 33.—**But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.** Now, for the sake of strong contrast, Jesus paints on his canvas the figure of one who, as a Samaritan, was as far removed as possible from being a neighbour to the sufferer (who, most probably, was a Jew) in the sense in which the austere Jewish lawyer would of

himself understand the term "neighbour." The Samaritan, hated of the Jews, and most probably, in common with the rest of his nation, hating them—he, in his turn, was journeying along the ill-omened "Way of Blood;" he too sees, like the priest, the form of the man, wounded perhaps to death, lying by the way, and, like the Levite, draws near to look on the helpless sufferer; but, unlike priest and Levite, stays by the wounded man, and, regardless of peril, trouble, or expense, does his best to help the helpless.

Vers. 34, 35.—**And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him. Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.** All these little tender details of the Samaritan's pitiful love are sketched in by a master-hand. There is first a noble, generous impulse, at once crystallized into a kindly brotherly act. Not satisfied with merely carrying out the first impulse, the Samaritan puts himself to inconvenience, perhaps to peril, and, after dressing the wounds, takes the wounded one along with him, provides lodging for him, and even takes care of the sick and friendless man's future. The wounded man was no rich and powerful merchant or noble—that is clear from the necessity of the little provision which the Samaritan made for him at the inn when he went on his journey; probably just an itinerant Jew pedlar. There were many of these always travelling about the East, we know. The piled-up acts of kindness were all clearly done to a poor stranger, without hope of recompense or reward. The life of that kindly man was evidently one which finds its high but secret guerdon in the blessedness of its own deeds. The Master had been called by his bitter foes, in their blind rage, a "Samaritan." Was he in any way picturing himself? *To an inn.* The Greek word is not the same as the "inn" of ch. ii. 7. It reminds us that, besides the open khan or caravanserai spoken of at Bethlehem, and which was crowded with travellers, in Palestine at this period was to be found the Greek type of inn, where a host or landlord entertained the guests. The khan was simply a group of empty buildings kept up for the use of travellers, who provided furniture and food for themselves. Throughout the Levant, Greek customs were gradually being introduced.

Vers. 36, 37.—**Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him.** The deep pa[thos] of the little story, the meaning of which the trained-scholar mind of the lawyer at once grasped, went right home to the heart. The Jewish scribe, in spite of prejudice and jealousy, was too noble not to confess that the Galilæan Master's estimate of a neighbour was the true one, and the estimate of the Jerusalem schools the wrong one; so at once he replies, "*He that showed mercy on him.*" Even then, in that hour of the noblest confession his lips had ever made, the lawyer trained in those strange and mistaken schools, the outcome of which is the Talmud, could not force himself to name the hated Samaritan name, but paraphrases it in this form. The scene closes with the Lord's charge, "Then imitate *that* act." **Go, and do thou likewise.** The parable thus answers the question—Who is my neighbour? Any one, it replies, who needs help, and whom I have power and opportunity to help, no matter what his rank, race, or religion may be. Neighbourhood is made coextensive with humanity; any human being is my neighbour who needs aid, or to whom I can render aid. But it answers the other and the still larger and deeper question with which the scene which called the parable out began. "Master," asked the lawyer (ver. 25), "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Or in other words, "What is the virtue which saves?" The Scriptures teach that without holiness no one shall see the Lord, that is, shall inherit eternal life; and in this parable two kinds of holiness are set before us—the one spurious, the other genuine. The spurious holiness is that of the priest and Levite, two officially holy persons;—spurious holiness is sanctity divorced from charity. In the person of the Samaritan the nature of true sanctity is exhibited;—we are taught that the way to please God, the way to genuine holiness, is the practice of charity. Another and a very different exposition of this great and loving parable treats it as a Divine allegory. It commends itself to the present generation less than the plain matter-of-fact exegesis adopted in the foregoing notes. In the allegory, the wounded traveller represents mankind at large, stripped by the devil and his angels; he is left by them grievously wounded, yet not dead outright. Priest and Levite were alike powerless to help. "Many passed us by," once wrote a devout mediæval writer, "and there was none to save." Moses and his Law, Aaron and his sacrifices, patriarch, prophet, and priest,—these were powerless Only the true Samaritan (Christ), beholding, was moved with compassion and poured oil into the wounds. Among the ancients, Chrysostom and Clement of Alexandria and Augustine might be cited as good examples of these allegorical expositors. Among

mediæval Churchmen, Bernard and his devout school. Although this method of exposition has not been adopted here, still an exegesis which has commended itself so heartily to learned and devout Churchmen in all the Christian ages deserves at least a more respectful mention than the scornful allusion or the contemptuous silence with which it is nowadays too often dismissed. Godet, for instance, describes this allegorical interpretation adopted by the Fathers as rivalling that of the Gnostics.

Vers. 38—42.—*The sisters of Bethany.* The following points are noticeable. A close intimacy evidently existed between the brother and his two sisters and Jesus. They evidently were prominent friends of the Master, and during the years of the public ministry were on many occasions associated with Jesus of Nazareth, and yet a singular reticence evidently existed on the part of the writers of the first three Gospels in respect of the brother and sisters. His name is never mentioned by them. Here, for instance, Bethany is simply alluded to as "a certain village."

There was some reason, no doubt, why the three synoptical evangelists exercised this reticence. We have before explained that these Gospels more or less represent the "texts," so to speak, upon which the first preachers of the religion of Jesus based their sermons and instructions.

The long recital of John xi. gives us the clue. For the disciples of Jesus publicly to call attention in their sermons and addresses to *Lazarus*, on whom the Master's greatest miracle had been worked, would have no doubt called down a ceaseless, restless hostility on the Bethany household; for it must be remembered that for years after the Resurrection the deadly enemies of Jesus and his followers were supreme in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood.

There were reasons, no doubt, now unknown to us, which rendered it important to the welfare of the early Church that the Bethany family should remain undisturbed and in comparative privacy. The peculiar and unique position of Lazarus. *During those four days what had he seen and heard?* Much curiosity, no doubt, existed to question the risen one: what fierce hostility, what morbid useless speculation, might not have been easily aroused?

St. John's Gospel was not written for long years after the event. It probably represents no public preaching, rather a private and esoteric teaching. The home of St. John, too, for years prior to putting forth his Gospel, was far distant from Jerusalem. Probably Jerusalem had ceased to exist as a city and the Jews as a nation well-nigh a quarter of a century before St. John's writing was given to the Church. There were no reasons *then* for any silence. Jerusalem and Bethany were a heap of ruins. Lazarus and his sisters and well-nigh all their friends had probably then been long in the presence of the loved or hated Master.

Ver. 38.—**Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village.** The scene here related took place, no doubt, at Bethany, and, most probably, during that short visit to Jerusalem, at the Feast of Dedication, in the month of that December which preceded the Passover "of the Crucifixion." This visit to Jerusalem, as has been suggested above, was made in the course of that solemn progress the account of which fills up the long section of St. Luke's Gospel, beginning at ch. ix. 51. The characters of the sisters here mentioned exactly correspond, as do their names, with the well-known Bethany family of that Lazarus for whom the great miracle, related at length by St. John, was worked. There are several mentions of this family in the synoptical Gospels, besides the long and important notice in St. John. **A certain woman named Martha.** The name is rather Aramaic than pure Hebrew. It is equivalent to the Greek *Kyria*, and signifies "lady." It has been suggested that the Second Epistle of St. John was addressed to this Martha. It was written, we know, to the elect *kyria*, or "lady" (2 John 1). Various identifications, more or less probable, have been attempted in the persons of the Bethany family. Martha has been supposed to be identical with the wife of Simon the leper (Matt. xxvi. 6; Mark xiv. 3). One hypothesis identifies Lazarus with the "young ruler" whom Jesus loved (see Dean Plumptre, in Bishop Ellicott's Commentary); another, with the saintly Rabbi Eliezer (or Lazarus) of the Talmud. These are, however, little more than ingenious, though perhaps not quite baseless, fancies.

Ver. 40.—**Came to him.** Dr. Farrar very happily seizes the tone and temper of Martha. He renders the Greek words here, "but suddenly coming up." We see in this inimitable touch the little petulant outburst of jealousy in the loving, busy matron, as

she hurried in with the words, "Why is Mary sitting there doing nothing?" **Bid her therefore that she help me.** "We almost seem to hear the undertone of 'It is no use for *me* to tell her.' Doubtless, had she been less 'fretted,' she would have felt that to leave her (Martha) alone and withdraw into the background while this eager hospitality was going on, was the kindest and most unselfish thing which Mary could do."

Ver. 41.—**And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha.** There are several notable instances of this repetition of the name by the Master in the New Testament story, and in each case apparently in pitying love. So "Simon, Simon," in ch. xxii. 31, and "Saul, Saul," in Acts ix. 4.

Ver. 42.—**But one thing is needful.** Jesus had been saying to this kindly but overfussy friend, "Are you not *too* anxious about these household cares of yours?" and then he adds, "See, only one *thing* is really needful." Now, what is the exact meaning of these last words? Some expositors have taken the expression to mean "a single dish is sufficient" for my entertainment; so much careful, anxious thought is thrown away. A curious variation in the reading occurs here in some, though not in all the oldest, authorities. It seems as though some of the early copyists of the text of the Gospel were wishful to make the words, which they possibly understood as a lesson of the Master's on *simplicity* of *food*, clearer and more emphatic. This other reading is, "There is need of few things, or of one only." In other words, "Few things are enough for me and my friends to sit down to, or even one dish only." The teaching contained in ver. 7 gives a little colour to this quaint interpretation of the Master's words here, which sees in them a general warning against taking thought for the pleasures of the table. But, on the whole, the old reading contained in the received text is preferable, and the old interpretation, too, viz. that the true life of man needs but *one* thing, or, if the other reading be adopted, needs but few things. If we must specify the *one*, we would call it "love," or "charity." So John, we know, in his old days, summed up all man's duties in this "love." If, on the other hand, we are asked to name the *few*, then we would add to love, *faith* and *hope*. The parable of the "good Samaritan," that practical lesson of the love or charity the Master was alluding to, had just been spoken; it was still, we may reverently assume, fresh in the Divine Teacher's mind. **And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.** And Mary, his dear Bethany friend, had made *her* happy choice of the *one* thing, that love or charity which never fails; or, perchance, had made her choice of the *few* things needful (if we prefer the longer reading of those old manuscripts we have spoken of)—the few things would then mean that faith, hope, and charity which abide both *now* and in the ages of ages yet to come!

HOMILETICS.

Ch. ix. 1—6 and ch. x. 1—11.—*The mission of the twelve, and the mission of the seventy.* The differences between the two missions can be easily distinguished. The scene of the mission related in the ninth chapter is Northern Galilee; the scene of the mission related in the tenth chapter is Southern Galilee. The one speaks of a power delegated to the twelve apostles; the other, of an office and of gifts delegated to seventy—"other seventy also"—the two numbers of completeness, seven and ten multiplied. And these seventy are sent before the Lord's face, while the twelve are kept near to his Person. The one, although actually exercised for only a short time, is the sign of a work which, in its design and consequences, is coextensive with the world and its ages; the other refers to a merely temporary work—to objects local and immediate. But, different as the two missions are, they are connected in this homily because they set before us the great principles and features of Christian work in every time. The instructions in the ninth and tenth chapters are similar; and this, as we may conclude, because the instructions contain hints and suggestions to be embodied in ministries and services for Christ. No portion of the evangelical narrative more deserves to be attentively considered in connection with all that the hand of love finds to do. Let us regard some of its more salient features.

I. Observe, first, THE EVER-ABIDING CHARACTER OF TRUE CHRISTIAN WORK. Ch. ix. 2 and x. 9 give us the word "heal." And the meaning of this word "heal" may be learned from the life and sacrifice of Christ himself. In both the sending of the twelve and the sending of the seventy, the spring of the action is the perception of a harvest waiting to be reaped (cf. Matt. ix. 36—38). He sees the multitude around him tired

and worn out, like sheep exhausted and scattered over a plain, with no shepherd. "The harvest truly is plenteous." It is the emotion thus expressed which always beats within his breast. "I am come," he cries, "that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." His presence is that of the Healer in a charnel-house of corruption. Before him evil spirits exclaim, "What have I to do with thee?" Foul shapes of sin and want are expelled by his touch. His works are more than wonders; they are signs of redemption, of healing—the overflow of that fountain of life which was enclosed in his Person. Now, it is in this, the sphere of the Lord's love and power, that the servant is to labour. He is sent to save. He is to calm the troubled. He is to exorcise the demons which prey on the life of man. He is to be a channel of the love which is neighbour to man in all man's need.

"The world's a room of sickness, where each heart
Knows its own anguish and unrest;
The truest wisdom there and noblest art
Is his who skills of comfort best."

Notice what this healing includes. The apostles (ver. 1) were endowed with authority over all devils, and power to cure diseases. "Go and preach," commands Jesus; but also, "Go and heal the sick." The clergyman and the medical man represent the two halves of the Christian ministry. We shall never rise to the height of the Church's calling until we realize more systematically the conjunction of these aspects. To some extent we do. In our medical missions we do. In the increased care of Christian communities as to sanitary regulations, nursing, and so forth, we do. But much remains to be developed. And what we need, as the sustaining spirit of all work, is the conviction that Christ has given his Church power to heal, to cure diseases. Those who magnify "faith-healing" have hold of a truth, though they press it unduly, and indeed often give it a twist which makes it practically an untruth. They are right in the contention that it is Jesus Christ who makes whole, that the power of the cure is with him, and that, in respect of the cure, as of all else, the way of blessing is the way of prayer. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. On this, undoubtedly, faith should build. But why oppose this to the use of means? Or why suppose that there is a higher faith in trusting him and dispensing with ordinary means, than in trusting him and availing ourselves of the medicinal properties with which he has endowed things in nature, or of the knowledge and skill which also are gifts of God? God answers prayer as really in making the means effectual, as in restoration without the application of surgeon's or physician's art. The essential point is that the power over body and soul is his, and delegated by him to men. Let the Church's devotion be, not less theological, but less polemical; more emphatic, first in the requirement of personal righteousness, and next in such work as "shall deliver the poor and him that crieth, the fatherless, and him that hath none to help him."

II. Now, this general position assumed, observe, secondly, THE CONDITIONS WHICH CHRIST LAYS DOWN AS REGULATIVE OF ALL TRUE CHRISTIAN WORK. Putting ourselves alongside of the twelve and the seventy, let us listen to our marching orders, our code of instructions. *Condition the first*: "Begin at the point next you." The twelve (ch. ix. 6) are sent through the towns preaching the gospel. The seventy (ch. x. 1) are sent "into every city and place, whither the Lord himself would come." Let us not mistake. These are special embassies. By-and-by the word is, "Witness in Jerusalem, and Judæa, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The principle is this—there are times when attention should be concentrated on the field that is at our own door. And generally, the beginning, though not the end, of all work, is with our own. We are to work outwards from the circle that is next us; thence are to be extended, outwards, ever outwards, the golden pipes through which the healing oil empties itself. *Condition the second*: "Proclaim, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The twelve (cf. Matt. x. 6, 7) are to speak this to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The seventy (ch. x. 9) are to stand by the sick, and, while they heal, preach the advent of the kingdom. They are to raise a supreme expectation. Not halting to give elaborate courtesies. As men hastening, full of a great word, they are to sound in the ear, now in trumpet-tones, now in gentle whispers, "God's kingdom is come close to you." To tell poor weary men and women of the Christ who is behind them,

of the love that is seeking them; to hold before their gaze the reality of a kingdom which is, not a name in a book, not a Utopia of priest or poet, but a living fact, a kingdom which "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,"—this is the burden of the preaching—the free giving of that which they have freely received. *Condition the third:* "Willingly, wholly, give yourselves to the work, trusting in the Lord whose it is." The pith of the Master's charge is, Be not anxious as to worldly provision—'purse, scrip, shoes.' Confer not with flesh and blood. Lo! I have sent you." Let us distinguish between the letter and the spirit. To act on the mere letter, in the conditions of nineteenth-century civilization, would be fanaticism. "The sterility of missionary labour," writes Dr. Farrar, "is a constant subject of regret and discouragement among us. Would it be so if all our missions were carried out in this wise and conciliatory, in this simple and self-abandoning, in this faithful and dauntless spirit? Was a missionary ever unsuccessful who, being enabled by the grace of God to live in the light of such precepts as these, worked as St. Paul worked, or Francis Xavier, or Henry Martyn, or Adoniram Judson, or John Eliot, or David Schwartz?" Undoubtedly not; yet, are Christian people to demand of missionaries what they are not, in some measure, practising themselves? Are they to insist that the missionary shall have all the self-denial whilst they take all the ease? Is it not better for each person to aim at levelling up to the mark required of the missionary? to ask what his or her Christianity amounts to? what is given for it? what living, working force is in it? what of self-sacrifice is really prompted by it? Oh for a more heroic trust in the King, and devotion to the kingdom! "Lord, here am I." And *condition the last:* "Your whole conduct in the discharge of your mission is to be marked by courtesy." "Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house" (ch. x. 5). First—before the character of its inmates is declared. The house is the home of men and women. No matter what it may prove to be, it is to be treated with respect. Christ's disciples are to be pre-eminent for the kindly courtesies which are the beauty of Eastern life. Contrast the sketch in the Book of Ruth, of Boaz coming to the reapers, "The Lord be with you," and the reapers answering, "The Lord be with thee;" with the picture of our worlds of capital and labour, each too often addressing the other in tones suspicious, if not defiant. All that is rude and bitter in speech and thought should be alien to the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. There is a time to be firm. "The wisdom which cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable." He who commands the gracious politeness tells the seventy that against the city which will not receive them, they are to testify, "The very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you." But first, and always, let the Christian see that the name of gentleman is not, in service for Christ, soiled by any "ignoble use."

So much for the nature and conditions of Christian ministry. Note, in conclusion: 1. *The twelve and the seventy go in the strength of the Lord God.* They are solemnly appointed to the work. God is a God of order; and ordinance is always honoured. But, with the ordination, they receive the power; and the power is in Christ for them, and from Christ into them. Let *us* recollect that Christ is risen. He has received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. The Church is his body—"the fulness of him who filleth all in all." The strength which inspired apostle and evangelist in the first days is waiting for all who will to serve the Lord. 2. *The seventy are sent, two and two, before his face.* Economy and helpfulness in ministry are thus secured. The order of the "two and two" in the ranks of the apostles is given by St. Matthew—Simon and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, James and Jude, Simon and the son of Carioth. By some law of affinity these companionships were formed. In the Church there are alliances also. For two are better than one, and mutual sympathy and tenderness are Christ's rule.

Ch. ix. 10—23 and ch. x. 17—24.—*Utterances on the return of the twelve, and of the seventy.* These passages are separated by an interval of time. But as the missions of the apostles and of the seventy were considered together, tracing in them the great laws and principles of Christian ministry, so let us connect the utterances called forth by the reports of the two companies, tracing in them the expression of all that is to be most vividly realized by those who yield to the command, "Go work to-day in my

vineyard." A threefold lesson seems to be conveyed. 1. A lesson as to the spirit of mind proper to the servant of Christ. 2. A lesson as to the ministry appointed to the servant of Christ. 3. A lesson as to the confession of him demanded from the servant of Christ.

I. THE SPIRIT OF MIND PROPER TO THE TRUE SERVANT OF CHRIST. Turn, for guidance as to this, to the words contained between the seventeenth and twenty-fourth verses of the tenth chapter. The seventy have returned triumphant. They have succeeded far beyond their expectation. Healing of the sick? "Even the devils are subject to us through thy Name." What a strange new sensation! Men, hitherto utterly obscure, the custodiars of a power so marvellous, beholding, at the word which passes from them, the most marvellous results in the lives and characters of men! There is no such jubilation in the tone of the twelve when they return; perhaps the issue had fallen below their expectations. But the seventy, the special and temporary executive of Jesus, are filled with the supreme joy of the conqueror—"the devils are subject to us." Now, there is no rebuke of this spirit. On the contrary (ver. 19), they are told that, in Christ's strength, they shall tread on all sorts of evil spirits—on the serpent and the scorpion, opposing them in serpent and scorpion-like natures—on "all the power of the enemy." And the Lord shares their elation. In their tidings (ver. 18) he sees the presage of the complete victory of the good over the evil. He pours forth (ver. 21) a fervent stream of praise that, at length, and through these poor babe-like souls, his holy love has been declared as victorious over the kingdom of darkness. Was not the message brought (ver. 22) a new sign of the Father's acceptance of the Man Christ Jesus, and of the universal sovereignty which had been assigned to him? But mark the "notwithstanding" of ver. 20. It is the interposition of a great check. Undoubtedly, nothing is more thrilling than the sense of strength. It may be tyrannous to use, but it is great to have, a giant's strength. But there is nothing more hurtful than a complacent resting on the evidences and results of power. Many a good man is spoiled by the overweening consciousness of force; he becomes inflated with pride; and, as he does so, he loses rank before God; he is not far from the loss of power even with men. Therefore the importance of Christ's "Notwithstanding, rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." "Not, *i.e.* in the tokens of command, but in the capacity of service; not that you rule, but that you are ruled; that God in his grace has called you to work with him, has written your name in the register of the citizenship of heaven, has allowed you a part in the heavenly life and ministry." Both in what he thus said, and in the glimpse into his own mind (vers. 21, 22), he indicates that the true disciple finds his joy, not in what *he* does, but in what God does by him; not in trophies of power, but in signs of Divine acceptance and anointing; not in the subjection of spirits to him, but in the subjection of his own life to, and his sympathy with, the eternal Father and the purpose of his love.

II. This being the spirit of the mind, look back to the narrative from vers. 10—17 of ch. ix., and recognize in it A SYMBOL OF THE TRUE DISCIPLE-WORK—the work in which Master and scholar are at one. This work is set forth in *its essential character*, and its *Divine order, or method*. 1. *Its essential character is giving.* (Ver. 13.) "Give ye them to eat." The most typical pictures of the Divine love are those which most purely bring out the relation of the Giver—man wanting, God supplying; man's argument, "I need," God's argument, "I have." The babe cries, settles at once to the kindly bosom—the argument being the need. The mother has, and her abundance is the life of the child. This is a reflection of God and man. So, on that grassy plain near Bethsaida, we are introduced to a scene and work most significant of the love of God in Christ. All the evangelists relate it. It is the occasion of one of the most memorable of Jesus' discourses—that concerning the Bread of life. Altogether, it is a notably royal act, the picture of the ministry of the kingdom of God. How it came about we are told (vers. 10—12). The compassionate heart of Jesus is moved with pity by the sight of the great multitude which has followed him. "Send them away, Master," is the whisper. "We are here in a lonely place. They are hungry; they may become furious; let them go into the towns and villages, and lodge, and get victuals." The answer is, "Give ye them to eat." This is the manifestation of God in the flesh—God in his power, no less than his will. "What! Master," exclaims Philip, "all our store

consists of five loaves and two fishes: shall we go and buy meat for all the people?" Oh, it is the unbelief, the slow-heartedness of man, which thus speaks out. "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Does not faith need to be reminded that the little brought to Christ is multiplied a hundredfold? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." 2. Notice *the order or method of the work.* Christ is always orderly. He sent the twelve, and the seventy, two by two, giving them their rules of procedure. Here, again (ver. 14), "Make the men sit down in companies of fifties." Dr. Farrar reminds us of the expression of Mark, "reclined in parterres, like a multitude of flower-beds in some well-cultivated garden." Organization is thus implied. And yet the life, the strength, is not in the organization. It is "the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich" (ver. 16). The outstretched arm, the food held up to heaven, the look, the blessing, the breaking, the giving to the Church, and, through the Church, to the world,—every part of the action is sacramental, every part is expressive of some aspect of the truth as to the dispensation of the Bread of life. And then note, in ver. 17, the care as to the fragments—the teaching of thrift even in the midst of abundance. The transaction, from beginning to end, is inlaid with suggestions which admit of endless applications to the changing circumstances and the varying conditions of the world and the Church.

III. Finally (in vers. 18—22) we have THE RECORD OF A PRIVATE INSTRUCTION—one given "as he was alone, praying, his disciples with him"—TO THOSE WHOM THE LORD HAD CALLED INTO HIS MINISTRY. It is the instruction which gives the third of our lessons—that as to the confession of Christ which is demanded of the disciple. Observe: 1. There is *the confession* (vers. 18—21) which is a secret between the soul and the Lord himself—that which is apart from all that men say, which is the expression of the personal loyalty and devotion. "Whom say *the people* that I am?" "Whom say *ye* that I am?" Parent, teacher, worker, pastor, is thy labour, is thy life, built on Peter's noble testimony, "The Christ of God"? 2. There is *the living out of that inward life*—the bold and fearless testimony for that preference as dominating all the action (vers. 22, 23). The Master lays a cross on the back of his disciple, and bids him carry that cross daily, in token of his being grafted into a suffering, sacrificed Son of man. Solemn and searching are the words about the willing to come after him, and all which this involves. May our hearts answer, "Amen!"—"amen" to the daily following, "amen" to the losing of life for Christ's sake, "amen" to the sturdy witnessing for him in the midst of the crooked and perverse nation; our "amen," rising upwards to receive his when he shall come "in his own glory, and in the Father's, and of the holy angels."

Vers. 25—37.—*The parable of the good Samaritan.* The second of the parables peculiar to St. Luke, and one of the loveliest and most suggestive of the matchless pictures of him who "spake as never man spake." Notice—

I. ITS OCCASION. Our Lord is in Judæa, not, as we infer from what follows, at a great distance from Bethany. He and his disciples, we may suppose, are resting, when a lawyer—*i.e.* a person who made the Law both oral and written his study—proposes a question with which, or its likeness, we meet at six different times in the ministry of Jesus. "Tempting him" is the phrase descriptive of the motive for the question; probably the phrase means nothing more than putting the Rabbi to the proof, submitting a question, the answer to which would, in the lawyer's view, settle his right to be heard as a Teacher from God. Jesus meets his interviewer as one not far from the kingdom of God, yet in a way which proved that, in regard to the issue presented, mere dialectics were of little avail. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The mind is at once referred to the underlying reality of the Law. "What is written therein? thou who dost profess to know, how readest thou? That which thou hast read, that which thou dost find there—the love, in its two great aspects, upward and outward—that is the eternal life." Ah! this is not quite according to the jurist's expectation. "He came to catechize Christ that he might know him, but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself." Seeking to parry the thrust, there comes forth the next question (ver. 29), "Who is my neighbour?" This question is the occasion of the parable. Note, before passing, the clause, "willing to justify himself." The true heart casts itself on the Lord, "Lord, save, help! lighten my darkness!" The proud

heart wills some self-justification, and, thus willing, produces some excuse, some word by which to turn aside the arrow of conviction.

II. THE SCENE AND THE PERSONS OF THE DRAMA. 1. *The scene.* The wild road, proverbial for deeds of blood, which Jesus and the disciples had just traversed. 2. *The persons.* The traveller, who had been attacked by the Bedouins, had fallen among them, and been spoiled, mutilated, left half dead. The priest, coming that way by chance, or rather "by a coincidence;" it was natural that he should be there, since Jericho was a station of the priests. When the priest saw the half-dead man, afraid of any defilement, "he passed by on the other side." Next, the Levite. Observe, "he came and looked on him," with the life ebbing away, and he too moved to the other side. And then, finally, the Samaritan. (1) Look at him in contrast with the other two. Of them the kindness might have been expected. The traveller, we may suppose, is their co-religionist. They, at least, are fresh from the sanctuary—from the reading of Moses and the prophets. They hide themselves from their own flesh. The desire is to get home, and they pass by. The one not expected is "he who shows mercy." Is it not often so? Recall the word used concerning the Roman centurion, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (2) Who is the Samaritan? Priest and Levite denied him a share in the kingdom. He was a heretic, a descendant of the half-heathen stock, "the men from Babylon and Cuthah, whom the King of Assyria placed in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel." Cursed in the synagogues, the people were taught that to entertain a Samaritan was to lay up judgments for a house. This is the man. If it had been a Jew approaching a Samaritan, the Jew would have left him in his blood. The Samaritan stops, compassionates, binds the wounds, pours in the oil and the wine, puts him on his own beast, tends him, pays for him, provides for him. Brave, tender-hearted Cuthite that he is! Thus the Lord answers the inquiry, "Who is my neighbour?" Neighbourhood is dissociated from the range marked out by co-religionism; it is constituted by the fact of need. "Where you can be helpful, to whom you can be helpful, there, in him, is the neighbour." There are circles within circles. To love them that love us is not wrong; but, if that is all, what do we more than others? Humanity is neighbourhood. Do not ask what the man is. Enough that he is there, and in want. Sad, and worse than sad, when the representative of religion is not also the representative of humanity! After all, who is man's neighbour? Like the traveller in the parable, man has left the heavenly city, and has fallen among thieves. To man the sinner the love of God in Christ is the neighbour. He has showed mercy; he is our Example: "Go, and do likewise." "Be imitators of God, as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also loved us."

Ver. 27.—*The love of the neighbour.* Fixing, then, on Christ's definition of the sphere of neighbourhood, we are called to give a length and a breadth to his rule, which make it equivalent to the assertion, "Your neighbour is, not your blood-relation only, not the circle of your acquaintance only, not your countryman or co-religionist only; but he or she whom you can help in any way whatsoever—the wretched tatterdemalion from the slightest contact with whom you shrink; the besotted and degraded; even your enemy, who hates you and despitefully uses you; him, her, mankind, you are to love." "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." A very searching word indeed. God help us! how far are we from realizing it? Here some may will to justify themselves, and assume the defensive in some such manner as this: "It is impossible. We may cherish a feeling of benevolence towards all men in virtue of their common humanity; but how can we love them? Love requires the perception of what is lovable; it requires, too, that there shall be some link connecting one personally with another. But to summon us to love the neighbour, in Christ's sense of the phrase, is to insist on love before the discovery of any such link, or notwithstanding the discovery that such a link is wholly wanting." Or, again, "This is a commandment to love. Now, we cannot love by commandment; we cannot go beyond the prompting of our own natures. Some we can embrace with affection, but from others we turn away. We have tried the law that is announced on a limited scale, and the result of the trial was this—So long as we thought of the world in a general, ideal way, we felt, in a measure, ardent; but as regards the persons actually crossing our path as neighbours, before the selfishness and greediness and ugliness which confronted us, we were forced to retreat, and to

confess that we cannot love because we are told to love our neighbour as ourselves." Now, let it be acknowledged that these and similar difficulties are real difficulties. But, in the mean time, see whether Christ, in commanding, has not indicated the way of assistance; whether a more spiritual exposition of his teaching may not lead us into a region of thought in which the solution of the difficulties lies. Such a region seems to be opened up in the sentence reported by St. Matthew, "The second commandment is *like to* the first." To the first, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," we must look for the full truth of the love enjoined in the second, and for the significance of the measure which the second proposes, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

I. For, to show that the love enjoined in the two commandments is really one grace, WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SPEAK OF LOVING GOD? Surely we mean a delight in God for what he is; for his righteousness, his goodness, his holy and loving will; we mean that surrender of ourselves to him in which our spirits respond to the Father of spirits. Now, in the first moment of such self-surrender, is it not the longing of the mind that he be glorified? Such a longing necessarily takes beyond self. It embraces the desire that the Eternal Name be hallowed, the eternal will be done in earth as it is in heaven, and the eternal kingdom of the Father come; that God be honoured in all, and all find their true life in God. The pulse of this longing beats in friendship like that of Mr. Erskine of Linlathen. To his friend, the cold, astute lawyer, Rutherford, Mr. Erskine writes, "I love you. I could die for you to bring you to your true Centre, God." In the love of God, his love for his friend had been quickened and intensified. Yes; when Christ revealed God as our Father, he gave us men as our brethren; when the Spirit of the Son is sent into the heart, the spirit of the brother is formed in the heart. However we may distinguish in speech, in the working of the eternal life, there is no distinction between the love of God and the love of man. Each is implied in the other. They are the two sides of the one grace, the one life—love. And in this we have the solution of the difficulty already referred to. If there is no higher prospect than the neighbour, it is not to be wondered at that persons cry out, "Impossible! where the special links fail, there love must stop." But, observe, when we have gained the second commandment through the first; when the love of the neighbour proceeds out of the love whose first and greatest is God; such links are always at hand; there are interests and sympathies which serve as points of approach to all, to any one. Our love is God's love extending through us. All sorts and conditions of men are within the reach, before the vision, of God's love. Even beneath the hateful we can discern that which, to the Creator who is also the Redeemer, is immeasurably precious.

> ". . . . who loves the Lord aright,
> No soul of man can worthless find;
> All will be precious in his sight,
> Since Christ on all hath shined."

We are, then, partners in the Divine interest in man. We clothe the neighbour with this interest. "Thy Father is my Father; my Saviour is thy Saviour too, and thou art precious in his sight. As he loves, so would I love thee—'as myself.'"

II. BUT WHAT OF THE MEASURE, "AS THYSELF"? Let it be answered, "Thyself, after the first and great commandment has been fulfilled in thee—thyself loving the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind." There is a true self-love, and what the true self-love is is thus defined. Recollect, Christ's phrase is, "as thyself." In his teaching there is no place found for the pretentious altruism which strives

> ". . . . to wind itself too high
> For mortal man beneath the sky,"

which insists that the love of man shall swallow up, shall annihilate, all self-feeling; that it shall involve the renunciation of all that is individual for the sake of a universal good, of humanity. The teaching of Jesus is too practical, has too keen a sight of "what is in man," for this humanitarianism. He recognizes a love of self as right and natural; but it is the self when truly consecrated to God. "There is no need," says one, "of a heart of supernatural texture in order to the love of our brother. What is needed is only the heart of flesh instead of the heart of stone." Yes; but this heart of flesh is a new

heart. It is described in the Scriptures as the gift of God. It is "a heart of supernatural texture"—part of that new ordering of the life which is realized when the wayward will is offered to the consuming fire of God, and the inner man is born from above. See, then, what this pure self-love, which is the measure of love to the neighbour, represents. It represents *a power of sacrifice.* "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Not only so; the principle which illustrates the direction of the love of our neighbour exhibits that which is to be sought for in it. He who prays that his self shall be in harmony with God's thoughts and ways, loving his brother with the same love, will discriminate between that which only serves the flesh, and that which tends to promote the righteousness which God reckons the permanent well-being; he will strive against the things in internal life and external condition which hinder this well-being; he will study the ways through which the greatest good may be realized for the neighbour. Thus, given the love of God poured out in the heart, the love of self, instead of separating, unites the man to his world. It is the dynamic of a holy and enlightened philanthropy.

Let the two commandments, then, be kept in the order which our Lord has marked—the first, as the first and greatest; and the second, as the second which is like to the first. Let them, in this order, abide in us; and, though the keeping of them may be to the flesh a cross, possible only through the slaying of that in the flesh which objects, the external nature of the commandments will gradually disappear; from laws outside us they will be changed into states of life, each finding its congenial nourishment in the other. The love of God will be fed by the love of the neighbour; the love of the neighbour will be fed by the love of God. So thought, so wrote St. John, in his own profound yet simple manner, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

Vers. 38—42.—*Christ's sermon in the house of Martha.* A very short sermon, its substance being given us in the two last verses. But it is a sermon whose teaching goes far down into the truth of our hope and faith. Let us trace it, first, in the revelation made in Christ's word of the differences which the heavenly life comprehends; and, secondly, in the counsel with regard to this life which Christ's word conveys.

I. How interesting is the sketch of the two sisters at Bethany! They are so lifelike that we feel as if we had seen and known them. And, indeed, we have, because they portray familiar types of character and temper. No person of candour will regard the elder sister as only the embodiment of worldly mindedness in contrast with the younger as the embodiment of spiritual-mindedness. When we look more closely into the narrative, we see the injustice of this view. It is Martha who receives Jesus; it is she who provides for his comfort. If she is bustling and busy, this is only the sign of her devotion. Nor does Jesus say that, in her anxiety about many things, she had lost the one thing needful, and that she had no share in the good part which could not be taken away. He is defending Mary against the temporary petulance of Martha, and, in so doing, he cautions her against the temptations incident to her activity. "Jesus," says St. John, "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Assume, then, that each of the two has a place in the communion of saints, and see what this place is and wherein each is fulfilled in the other. 1. The usefulness of the Martha character is at once suggested. It bears the impression of the liberal soul who deviseth liberal things, who will take any amount of pains to oblige, who is eager to serve. Honour to those who have the readiness to do, and the knack of business! In such persons there is generally a vast amount of self-denial. You will find them toiling when there might be many excuses for resting. Prompt, energetic, shrewd, they go straight on, their activity being in a high state of development. All honour to the housekeepers! They enable the quiet and thoughtful to think and write. Erasmus and Melancthon can study when Luther and Farel are up and doing; the Leightons can preach for eternity because the Melvilles and Hendersons preach to the time. Your Marys could not sit at Jesus' feet unless the Marthas were going about the house.

But the Marys, too, have their place. Busy business people are apt to underrate them. They exhibit something of the elder sister's impatience: "We are left to do all; these dreamers do not help." Not help? It is Mary who sees into the truth of Jesus' sacrifice. It is she who, sitting and listening, divines the joy and the sorrow which meet in the heart of the Lord. By-and-by, when Martha makes a feast, she feels that the hour has come, and she brings the alabaster box of ointment which she has been keeping for the hour. "Against the day of my burying," says Christ, "has she kept this box . . . this that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." The prophetic spirit belongs to the meditative. Martha is the worker, but Mary is the seer. 2. The conclusion, therefore, is, "Let the Marthas and the Marys abide together in peace and mutual self-respect. Let the world of action and the world of letters recognize, each in the other, the balancing, completing half. God has created minds male and female—the active and the contemplative, the communicative and the receptive, the objective and the subjective. The Church of Christ, the progress of humanity, demands both; if the one is the guide, the other is the inspirer, of movement; and, for permanent effect, as well as for the discovery of truth, the Johns outrun the Peters. Let each person ascertain which of the two sides is predominant in him, and seek the balance supplied by the other. Whoso is Martha-like should cultivate the Mary temper. Unless he sit at Jesus' feet, he will be cumbered about the serving. It is not enough to get all right for the Lord; the first thing is to be right with and in the Lord. Whoso is Mary-like should recollect that gymnastic is needful to health; that he must work as well as enjoy quietly. He must not eat all the fat and drink all the sweet. The sitting at Jesus' feet must be with a view to the following in Jesus' steps. The real moral strength is found when this balance is found. So, from the Martha side it was found by St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly than all the apostles, yet all the while sat at Jesus' feet. From the Mary side it was found by St. John, who, although the one who leant on Jesus' bosom, was the one named Boanerge—Son of thunder. To serve much, without being cumbered about it, "inquiring in the temple;" to be the thinker, with the liberty of the seat at the Master's feet, and yet the doer of the Word;—this is the beautiful proportion of the heavenly life. This life is love; and love must first see as did Mary; then, but in a sweeter and wholesomer spirit, it can work as did Martha.

II. Consider NOW THE TRUTH OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE WHICH IS INDICATED IN THE COUNSEL GIVEN BY CHRIST. It is a counsel administered under the twofold form of a *caution* and a *commendation*. 1. *The finger of caution is pointed to Martha.* (Ver. 41.) Observe the antithesis—the "many things," the "one thing." The good, kind soul is distracted by a multitude of concerns. Who does not know the worry which comes through the pressure of many littles? May it not be added that there is nothing which more wears the energy out than attention to the details of home-management? The whole sentence of Jesus is most expressive. First, the "careful, or anxious,"—this is the inward fault; and then the "troubled,"—this includes the external, the "restless turning and bustling hither and thither." Is it not eminently characteristic of what we notice in others and sometimes feel in ourselves? And note the mistake. It is not the serving; it is the being "cumbered" about the serving—the serving impeding the movement heavenward, as a heavy garment impedes the one who runs a race. The "many things" run away with both the peace and the strength of the mind. We may not absolutely forget; in a kind of way we recollect; but we cannot really concentrate our attention on the one thing which is needful. "Martha, the feast over which thou art exercised is good in its way. The intention is kind. But this day salvation has come into thy house. There is no need of all these dishes, all this cooking and preparing. But there is need of thine acceptance of the gift of God. If thou knewest that gift, and who it is that speaks to thee, thou wouldst feel that the one thing needful is to ask life of him, to learn what the life is from him, to receive the gift of the life eternal. O Martha-like souls, of every type and shade, 'why do ye spend money on that which is not bread, and your labour on that which satisfieth not'? The heart hearkening for Christ is the one thing, and you cannot have that without an inward collection and repose of spirit, without peace and liberty in God. Why be so greedy of the unneedful? Why pursue it with such impetuous eagerness that there are only odd times, fragments of thought, for that which is needful to health of mind,

to the wants and desires of an immortal nature?" 2. *The finger of commendation is pointed to Mary.* (Ver. 42.) "She hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." The good part is a *place*, a *nourishment*, and a *choice*. The *place*—Jesus' feet. Oh the blessedness of sitting there! When the Gadarenes went out to see what had been done in their country, they saw the man who had devils long time—the devils now departed—"sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in his right mind." To find that place is the sign that the strong one who binds with chains and fetters has been bound by the Stronger One, who has come into the heart. The *nourishment*—"She heard his word." That is the meat which endures to life everlasting. What cares she for the feast about which Martha is so busy, whose care is—

"Oh, take away whate'er has stood
Between me and the highest good!
I ask no better boon than this—
To find in thee my only bliss"?

The *choice*—"She has chosen." Behold the way of deliverance from the Martha carefulness and trouble. Choose your portion. Have within you, as the centre of your life, a fixed, supreme determination. In this there is force. It keeps a united heart among the competitions of the "many things." The part is good, because it interprets the voice of reason; it expresses the wedding of the actual life to the truth and calling of God. It is good, because it confers a real spiritual independence, so that a man is not mastered by things, but can be the master of things. It is good, because it never can be taken away. Your banquets last for only a short time. The most satisfying food, apart from God, must one day fail and forsake you. Whatever is *yours* will be taken away. This part alone is *you*. It is you hidden with Christ in God—hidden where death can obtain no entrance. "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever . . . Thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceedingly glad with thy countenance." It is good, to sum up all, because it is not, as was the part of Martha, a moving about and around Christ, but "a seeking, laying hold of, and enjoying Christ himself." Thus one of the poets of the German Fatherland has sung—

"As Mary once devoutly sought
The eternal truth, the better part,
And sat, enwrapt in holy thought,
At Jesus' feet with burning heart,
For naught else craving, yearning for the word
That should be spoken by her Friend, her Lord,
Losing her all in him, his word believing,
And through the One all things again receiving;

"Even so is all my heart's desire
Fix'd, dearest Lord, on thee alone.
Oh, make me true and draw me higher,
And make thyself, O Christ, my own!
Though many turn aside to join the crowd,
To follow thee in love my heart is vowed.
Thy Word is life and spirit. Whither go?
What joy is there in thee we cannot know?"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*Spiritual husbandry.* I. THE LARGENESS OF THE FIELD. "The harvest truly is great." It is not a few human families, or a few small populations; it is not one large nation; it is not even one great continent; it is the entire human race, which Jesus Christ proposed and which he still purposes to redeem—this great human race, with all its nationalities, with all its creeds and all its doubts and denials, with all its pride and all its degradation, with all its profound estrangement from Divine truth and the living God. The harvest is great indeed; the task is tremendous; the victory, if it be gained, will make all other victories sink into utter insignificance;

they will be but the small dust in the balance. There is encouragement in the thought of—

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE SEED WHICH IS SOWN. That seed was in course of preparation as Jesus Christ was speaking and working and suffering. It was his whole life; it was, indeed, *himself* in all his relations with men, in all the aspects in which he could be regarded, whether as Teacher, or Friend, or Exemplar, or Divine Sufferer. This was the seed which should be sown, the fruits of which would be the great harvest of God. "I, if I be lifted up," etc. But, on the other hand, there has to be taken into account—

III. THE CHARACTER OF THE AGENTS at work in the broad field of the world. 1. Their *infirmity*. They are men; good men, but "the best of men are but men at the best;" all (they should be) renewed by the Spirit of God and fired with the love of Christ and of human souls; but all (they are) "compassed about with infirmity," all bound with limitations of understanding, of character, of wisdom. 2. Their *paucity*. "The labourers are few"—few in comparison with the agents of evil and the sources of error; few, regarded in their proportion to the multitude on whom they are to act. In this light they are lamentably insufficient. There are great breadths of the field scarcely worked and other vast districts positively untouched. What, then, is—

IV. THE HOPE OF THE FAITHFUL? When we survey the greatness of the harvest and the fewness of the labourers in the field, where does our hope lie? In the providing power of the great Lord of the harvest. He who moves the stars in their spheres can create human souls, can endow them with noble faculties, can inspire them with generous aims, can send them forth on glorious and triumphant missions. We cannot tell the possibilities which are hidden in one great human soul whose heart God has touched, whose hand God has strengthened. One such man may be instrumental in turning a whole tract of barrenness into fertility: what, then, may not a number of such souls accomplish? When the Lord of the Harvest speaks the word, great will be the company of the preachers, the number of the labourers. Wherefore let us pray the Father of spirits to put forth his creative power and send mighty workers into his waiting fields.—C.

Ver. 7.—*Our due.* "The labourer is worthy of his hire." What is it that we deserve? The answer depends entirely on the light in which we regard the question. We may look at it in three aspects.

I. OUR UNWORTHINESS OF ANYTHING. If God were to give to us exactly what we deserve, everything of every kind being taken into account, we should receive nothing more. For, weighing in one scale all that we owe to him for everything he has been to us and wrought for us and bestowed upon us, and in the other scale what response we have made to him in gratitude, love, service, we should "be found wanting," and could claim nothing. We are *not* worthy the least of all his mercies. All that he gives us is so much beyond our desert.

II. OUR OBLIGATIONS TO ONE ANOTHER. It is well that we do not make these a "matter of account," as tradesmen do with the articles they supply to one another, only paying the balance now and then. For who would decide on which side that balance lay? And of how much beauty and excellence would our daily life be divested! The true and wise course is to make acknowledgment of every kindness received, the warmer gratitude for the greater favour, but some thanks for the least indebtedness, not waiting to consider who is the greater debtor of the two. We are to "owe no man anything" only in the sense that we are to be ever paying and therefore ever cancelling our debts. But we are to be constantly indebted to one another. Poor and small indeed would that human life be which did not owe much to the service of others. What we are to seek after is not a life without obligation, but a life in which we are very freely placing our neighbours in our debt by the kindness we show them, and in which we are making very free acknowledgment of all that we owe to the love and the service we receive. Every labourer should receive his hire, his due reward, and among others the Christian workman should be rightly recompensed. 1. It is a matter of righteousness, as between man and man; faithful service should have its meet reward; and this reward should be in (1) affectionate honour, and (2) substantial, material support. 2. When rightly rendered, the reward received will be

an incentive to fuller labour and more energetic service. 3. The payment of the reward will react beneficially on him that pays it—he will appreciate more highly the ministry he receives.

III. GOD'S GRACIOUS AND GENEROUS OFFER. Though (as said) we can claim nothing from God as our right, yet he is pleased to offer us much. Our Lord has told us (1) that the humblest service, done in a true and loyal spirit, shall certainly be rewarded (Matt. x. 41, 42); and (2) that the reward we shall hereafter receive will be in proportion to the fidelity of our service here (ch. xix. 16—19). Our tone and spirit will be that of men who are not conscious of deserving anything (Matt. xxv. 37). But his spirit and action will be that of a magnanimous Master, and he will make the most of all that we have done (Matt. xxv. 40), and count us worthy of a large reward.—C.

Vers. 12—15.—*Guilt and punishment.* These very solemn words of our Lord demand our attention the more, because his thought is so fully illustrated. They suggest or convey to us three truths.

I. THAT GREAT INIQUITY MAY LOOK FOR SIGNAL PUNISHMENT AT THE HAND OF GOD. Jesus does not intimate that Tyre and Sidon suffered any more than they deserved, that Sodom had a retribution which was in the smallest degree out of proportion to its guilt. These cities deserved their doom; they sowed the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. That which happened to them was exactly what they might have expected; and it is just what such cities as they were may always look for. It does not require a desolating army or a miraculous storm to bring disastrous evil upon the head of shameful wrong. Without such particular instruments as these, the blow which slays and buries will certainly descend. If destruction comes not on the wings of one wind, it will come on those of another; whether we think of the vicious city or the profligate man, we may be sure that great guilt will, sooner or later, work out the downfall and extinction of the evil-doer. By human history and the record of the lives of men, as well as by the sacred page, "the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men;" they cannot and will not "escape the judgment of God."

II. THAT NEITHER SWIFTNESS NOR APPARENT SEVERITY IN PUNISHMENT IS A SURE CRITERION OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CRIME. Destruction had come down suddenly and terribly on Sodom; Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida were still existing, and were still rejoicing in outward prosperity. Was the ancient city so much guiltier in God's sight than the (then) modern towns of Galilee? No, replied the great Teacher. Had these ruined cities of a former age enjoyed such privileges as the citizens of his own time were possessing but neglecting, they would have repented and would have been spared. We must take care how we argue from sudden and severe evils to the *relative* guiltiness of the sufferers. These evils may clearly indicate wrong; they *may* (though in some cases they do *not*) indicate very great wrong-doing; but they do not prove that those on whom they descend are more guilty than others who are spared. 1. God may think well, in one case, to manifest his holiness by severe visitation, and in another case to illustrate his patience by delaying long the stroke of justice. 2. God may punish one city (or man) by physical and visible inflictions; he may chastise another by letting his moral laws do their appointed work, and bring down the *men themselves* to that low spiritual estate which is the saddest and direst consequence of sin.

III. THAT PRIVILEGE IS VERY PRECIOUS, BUT IT IS ALSO VERY PERILOUS. Capernaum was "exalted to heaven," raised very high indeed in privilege. There the Son of God abode; there he wrought his mightiest works; there he lived his holy, patient, loving life; there he spake his deep, broad, ever-living truths; there God was manifested in power and grace. It was favoured above all cities in the height of its spiritual privileges. But it knew not the day of its visitation; it drew not nigh in reverence to its Lord; it rejected his doctrine; it remained afar off from God and heavenly wisdom. And it incurred thereby the Saviour's strong condemnation; it accumulated guilt, and laid up for itself wrath against the day of wrath; it was "thrust down to hell" in reproach and retribution. We learn, more particularly: 1. That humility of spirit, rather than reproachfulness of tone, becomes us. 2. That the children of special privilege have great reason for devout heart-searching, lest they should find themselves the heirs of Divine condemnation.—C.

Ver. 16.—*The largeness of our life.* Jesus Christ is sending his disciples, two and two, to prepare his way; it is certain that by some towns and villages they will be well received, and equally certain that by others they will be repelled. He tells them that those who received them would be doing more and better than barely receiving *them*,—they would be entertaining *him*; but those who rejected them would do more and worse than repulsing them,—they would be despising *him*, nay, even the Father himself. That there is more in our acts, and so in our lives, than appears on the surface was a frequent doctrine of our Lord. In his first sermon he intimated that those who cherished a causeless anger or spoke a contemptuous word against their brethren were guilty of a very serious offence in the sight of God; and so also they who imagined themselves chargeable with nothing more than a hasty word (see Matt. v. 22, 34—36). He told his disciples that that "poor widow" was making a very much larger offering than the rest—a much greater one, we may be sure, than she herself suspected (ch. xxi. 1—4; see also ch. xxiii. 34). Christ saw more in men's actions, both for good and evil, than they saw themselves at the time. It is the wisdom of the wise to recognize much in words and deeds, in decisions and in actions, which seem small to those that do them. Our human life is larger than we think as we live it; its several actions have more seriousness in the sight of God, and from our life greater issues will proceed than any we can estimate. This main underlying principle will apply to—

I. THE MESSENGERS AND THE MESSAGES THAT COME TO US FROM JESUS CHRIST. There may come to speak to us concerning the habits or the purpose of our life, or the character we are forming, or the good we are doing or leaving undone, or the prospects that are before us, some messenger that appears in very humble form, not delegated by any high authority, not sustained by any learning, not armed with any eloquence; there may be nothing more about the outward spokesman than a plain or even a blunt man, nothing better about the form of the message than a periodical which has no worth in the market at all; and yet the message which comes through that very common, through that vulgar medium, may come from above, may come from Christ himself, to warn or to arrest us, to lead us out of the dark shadows we were entering, into the path of life. And in repelling that message we should be rejecting the very truth of God; in accepting and heeding it we should be welcoming our Lord himself, and taking his Divine influences into our soul. This principle of the greater value and seriousness of our life finds an illustration in—

II. THE STUDIES OF YOUNGER DAYS. They who have to go through the daily task in the school or home see nothing more in their work than the laborious gratification of their teacher. But there is much more in it than that. There is obedience to parents; there is the consequent pleasing of God, and the reward of filial behaviour; there is the serving and honouring of Jesus Christ by diligence and dutifulness, by doing the right thing as in his presence and as unto him; there is the mental and moral growth which prepares for an honourable and useful manhood. Life at home or at school, in our earlier days, is really a larger thing, with larger and greater issues, than it seems to be at the time. The same is true of—

III. STRUGGLES FOR HONOURABLE MAINTENANCE. The Christian man who thinks he is doing nothing more than "paying his way," is or may be doing a very great deal more than that. He is illustrating in his sphere the very principles which the Lord himself taught and lived when he was here; he is translating godliness, Christliness, into busy human life; he is preparing for some broader sphere in that higher kingdom where, if not before, he that has been found faithful in that which is least will be proved to be faithful in much. We not only speak in the spirit and strain of our Lord's words, but we pursue the same subject when we refer to—

IV. ENDEAVOURS TO SERVE OUR FELLOW-MEN; and this, whether in the way of common philanthropy, or of distinctively religious service. Do we ask of those whom we find in the school, or the mission-room, or the church, "What are you doing here?" And do they reply, "We are only teaching some children, only feeding some poor people, only trying to gather some wanderers into the fold"? Then shall we reply to them, and say, "Nay, but you are doing much more than that: you are serving them; and you are rendering the very highest service you can to yourselves, for you are sowing seed of which you shall one day reap a glorious harvest of joy and power; and

you are also serving your Saviour, and that in a way in which he most delights to be served. He is saying to you, 'If you had eyes to see, you would recognize *me* in those pinched faces and ill-clad forms; if you had ears to hear, you would recognize *my* voice in those plaintive tones; it is *my* need that you are supplying, it is *my* heart that you are gladdening: inasmuch as you are carrying succour, strength, hope, life, to one of the least of these, you are doing it unto *me*.'"—C.

Ver. 20.—*Better things.* When Jesus said, "Rejoice not, . . . but rather rejoice," he did not mean to condemn the satisfaction which the seventy were expressing in their triumph over the evil spirits. There was nothing wrong in such gratification. To exercise power, especially a newly acquired power, and more especially a power that is possessed by few,—this is simply natural; and to rejoice in the exercise of beneficent power is not only not wrong, but is distinctly and positively right and worthy. But there are other sources of joy that are more excellent; it is a question of the relatively rather than the absolutely good. We conclude from our Master's words—

I. THAT IT IS BETTER TO BUILD ON CHARACTER THAN ON CIRCUMSTANCE. This was a very pleasing incident in the life of the seventy; they would always look back to it with pleasure, and speak of it with interest to themselves and others. But it was *only an incident.* It was decisive of nothing. It did not determine their future course, their final destiny. They might have done what they did and yet have gone downward and reached an evil end. To have "their names written in heaven" meant to be right at heart, to be reconciled to God, to be loyal citizens of the spiritual and heavenly kingdom, to be sound and true within. It is this which is to be desired and to be sought and to be built upon. Life may have a large number of interesting episodes, of gratifying circumstances, and may yet be a miserable failure, may have to be looked back upon with pain and shame. To be right with God, to have "truth in the inward parts," to be such a one on earth as that those who live in heaven will recognize us as their kindred,—that is the thing to be concerned about, that is the goal to be gained at all costs, the true source of human joy.

II. THAT IT IS BETTER TO ENJOY THE ABIDING FAVOUR OF GOD THAN THE SHORT-LIVED THANKS OF MAN. Doubtless one part of the satisfaction which the seventy enjoyed was the gratitude they received from those whom they relieved; but better than human gratitude is the favour of the living God. The thankfulness of a sensitive and responsive human soul is by no means to be despised or disregarded, but it is a very precarious basis of human happiness. It is sometimes denied where it is most due; it is sometimes very slight and transient when it should be deep and lasting. But God's favour abides. "Having loved his own, he loves them to the end;" "In his favour is life." If we are upheld in our integrity, and God sets us before his face for ever (Ps. xli. 12), we can afford to part with other things.

"Better to walk the realm unseen
Than to watch the hour's event
Better the smile of God alway
Than the voice of man's consent."

III. THAT IT IS BETTER TO EXERT A LASTING INFLUENCE FOR GOOD UPON THE SOUL THAN TO CONFER A TEMPORARY GOOD UPON THE BODY. The bodily service rendered by the seventy was great as far as it went and so long as it lasted. But the eyes then and by their means opened, and the ears then unstopped, were soon closed again in death; and the feet then made to walk were soon motionless in the grave. But to have their names written in heaven, and to be thus prepared to enlighten the minds and to quicken the souls of men, was to be in a position to render lasting, even everlasting good; that was to confer immeasurable benefit on those whom they sought to bless. 1. Are our names written in that book of life? 2. Are we appreciating its inestimable value? 3. Are we making use of the qualifications it implies to serve our fellow-men in the highest ways?—C.

Ver. 21.—*The gladness of gratitude, etc.* Our thought is directed to—

I. THE GLADNESS OF GRATITUDE. "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee,

O Father." Joy and thankfulness are here united, as indeed they are everywhere. It is gratitude that holds the key to happiness of heart and life. Who are the miserable? Not the poor; they are often the most contented. Not the afflicted; they are often very cheerful under great privation. Not the lonely; they are found happy in their solitude, conversing with the departed great or communing with the Highest. It is the ungrateful who are the unhappy; it is they who take every kindness shown them by their fellow-men in a spirit of surliness, as if they deserved more than they have received; it is they who accept innumerable mercies and the "unspeakable Gift" at the hand of God without response, unmindful of the one, unappreciative of and ungrateful for the other. Who are the happy? Not the rich because they are rich; not the strong because they are strong; not those who have many friends because they have them. These may be burdened, wearied, wretched, and their life be darkly shadowed. It is the grateful who are the happy souls; it is they who receive with appreciation and thankfulness whatever man may give them, whether of love, of confidence, of sympathy, of practical help; it is they who have a deep sense of the kindness of the heavenly Father, and of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart that is full of gratitude is the heart that is full of joy; and such joy is both pure and lasting.

II. THE HERITAGE OF THE HUMBLE-HEARTED. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise, . . . and revealed them unto babes." 1. In our Lord's time the scribes and lawyers "rejected the counsel of God;" they refused the wisdom of the Wisest; and the supercilious Sadducees stood aloof from the kingdom of Divine truth, from the kingdom of God. The "wise and prudent" were too haughty of heart to part with their beloved prejudices and to welcome the new truth which the great Teacher brought them. But the "common people heard him gladly;" all "the people" were "very attentive to hear him." The fishermen of Galilee left their nets and their ships to follow him. 2. In the time of the apostles the same results were found (see 1 Cor. i. 26—28). 3. In our own time we find that they who have gathered together a little human learning are apt to think that they are competent to solve, unaided, all the great problems of their being and their destiny, and they close the gates of their mind against the great verities of the Christian faith. But they who know how little they have grasped of all that is to be acquired, and who stand as "babes," as very little children, before the Divine Father, are ready to welcome to their souls all that he is ready to reveal to them, and theirs is the blessed heritage of spiritual truth, of heavenly wisdom, of eternal life.

III. THE REFUGE OF THE PERPLEXED. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." We have our perplexities now, and they may weigh upon our spirit with crushing power. We cannot understand God's doings or his inaction in the wide human world, or in the Church of Christ, or in the more limited sphere where our own interests and efforts lie. The more we think the more we are assured that we are baffled and beaten. The various solutions proposed do not reach the heart of the difficulty. What, then, can we do? Just retreat to that safe refuge—the strong, immovable assurance that all things are in the hands, and are subject to the guidance, of a holy, wise, loving Father.—C.

Vers. 23, 24.—*Apostolic advantage and disadvantage.* Our Lord compares the position of his apostles with that of the great and enviable of past times. We may follow his thought and may also pursue the same line of comparison in our own times. We look at their position—

I. AS RELATED TO DISTINGUISHED MEN BEFORE THE ADVENT. 1. It was one of some *disadvantage;* they were men in a very much *humbler* position than many of the great in past days. Great kings had lived in a social state and with pleasant surroundings to which they could lay no claim; in society they were nowhere; of this world's luxuries and trappings they had nothing. Moreover, they were in a much *less powerful* position than some of the great men that had gone. Prophets had made or unmade kings; or they had delivered laws or changed customs, materially affecting the civil, social, moral, and religious life of the nation; witness Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Nehemiah, John. The apostles of our Lord were not doing anything of this kind when he spoke to them; they had done very little of a public character thus

far; their influence had not been felt in the life of their countrymen. 2. It was one of glorious *advantage* in one respect. They had the most distinguished honour of being the personal attendants upon the Messiah himself. They not only *saw* his face and *heard* his words, but they ministered to his wants; they rendered him service; and, by rendering him service, they contributed largely and importantly to the well-being of all later generations. 3. It was one of *greater honour* than they themselves supposed; for he at whose feet they sat and of whose truth they drank was One very much higher than they imagined even their Messiah would be; and he wrought a greater good for a larger world than they conceived it possible even for the Anointed of God to work.

II. As related to ourselves. 1. Their position was one of supreme privilege in one great particular—they attended upon and they served Jesus Christ himself, *in his own Person*. That was an honour which stands by itself; it is unique; of its kind it is unapproachable. Let any disciple of the later time reach any imaginable position; he must feel that in actually ministering to our Lord, supplying his necessities, being sympathetically as well as bodily present "with him in his trials," helping him in his supreme and critical work, the apostles of our Lord stand pre-eminent. 2. And in being *the first to publish the gospel* after our Lord's ascension they also stand in the very front rank. 3. It was also a very distinct advantage to receive Christian truth *direct*, without intervening media, with nothing to subtract from it or to add to it; they had truth at the fountain source, uncorrupted by the channels through which it passed. 4. But they were subject to some disadvantage also. (1) Jesus Christ was not, in his *Divine Person*, so fully revealed to them as he has been to us; that would have made free and full fellowship utterly impossible. (2) His *doctrine* was not as complete at the time of our text as it afterwards became; for his death, resurrection, and ascension constitute a very large part of Christian truth. (3) They had not the advantage of Christian *experience* we possess. All the thoughts of wise Christian thinkers during many centuries; all the recorded experience of multitudes of Christian lives; all the moral and spiritual workings and triumphs of Christian truth and principle under many skies and through many ages;—these are ours as they were not theirs. Our privilege, even as compared with theirs, is very great indeed. Perchance our Lord would tell us, if he spake to us to-day, that it is *as* great as theirs, and that our responsibility answers to our privilege.—C.

Vers. 25—27.—*Our love of God.* It is the glory of the gospel that it has made common to the multitude of mankind that which was once dimly seen by a few solitary men; that it has put into the mouth of the little child that which once was stammeringly spoken by a few philosophers; that the truths which once were only found upon the summit by a few hardy climbers are the fruits which are now gathered by thousands as they walk the King's highway. Here is one of these—the duty, binding on us all, of *loving God*. 1. If to those Greeks who came to see Jesus (John xii. 20), he had said that the greatest obligation, or, as they would have put it, the most fitting thing, was for man to love God, they would have been amazed. They would have been prepared to render services and sacrifices to their deities, but to love God with all the heart was beyond their most active imagination. 2. If Christ had uttered this truth to the Roman procurator before whom he appeared, he would have been equally astonished. 3. This truth was far in advance of the Jew, as well as of the Greek and the Roman. It is true that it was to be found in his Law (see Deut. vi. 4, 5; x. 12; xxx. 20). But it was not in his mind, in his heart, in his cherished convictions, in his life. He "tithed mint and rue and all manner of herbs, but passed over . . . the love of God" (ch. xi. 42). Even the worthies of Old Testament times were men who were more constantly and profoundly affected by the sentiment of holy fear than fervent love. "I fear God," rather than "I love God," was the summary of their religious character. How do we account for this?

I. The Jew had reverence enough for God to be able to love him. The Roman, the Greek, had not. We must respect those whom we love, and the beings they worshipped could not be respected; they were unworthy of regard. Not so he whom the Jew worshipped. He was the Just, the Righteous, the Faithful, the Holy One. The Jew honoured, he revered, God enough to be able to love him.

II. He had a very considerable knowledge of the grace and mercy of God.

For we find in Old Testament Scripture passages affirming the kindness, the pity, the patience, the mercy, of God, well worthy to be placed by the side of any we find in the New (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7; Ps. ciii. 8—14; cxlv. 8, 9; Micah vii. 18, etc.). It was surely possible for him to let reverence ascend to love.

III. TO SOME EXTENT THE JEW DID LOVE GOD. Abraham was "his friend." David could exclaim, "Oh, love the Lord, all ye his saints!" "I love the Lord, because," etc. Yet it was not love but fear that was the central, commanding, regulating element of his inner life. This need not surprise us when we consider—

IV. THE JEW DID NOT KNOW GOD AS REVEALED IN JESUS CHRIST. 1. He had not heard Jesus speaking of the Divine Father hating sin but pitying and yearning over the sinner, determining at his own great cost to redeem him, as we have done. 2. He had not witnessed the Saviour's life as we have followed it; had not seen the Father's character and spirit reflected in that of the Son, with his tender affection, his inexhaustible patience, his matchless condescension, his generous forgiveness. 3. He did not know the story and the meaning of his death; had not had, like us, a vision of the love of God paying that great price for our redemption, bearing that burden on our behalf, pouring itself out in pain and shame and sorrow for our sake. It is at Calvary, far more than elsewhere, that we learn the blessed secret of the love of God—his love for us, our love for him. We learn: (1) *That to love God is the highest heritage of our manhood.* "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he;" *as we think, we are;* a man is great or small, noble or ignoble, according as he thinks and feels; the height of our love is the stature of our soul, is the measure of ourselves. God invites us to love him, the Highest One, and by so doing he immeasurably enriches and ennobles us. If he filled our house with gold he would only give us something pleasant *to have;* but in inviting us to love him he confers on us that which is blessed and noble *to be.* (2) *That not to have loved God is the most condemning fact of our lives.* Do we say, "All these [prohibitions] have we kept from our youth up: what commandment have we broken?" We reply, "The first and great commandment. Have you loved God with all your heart?" We may well bow our head in shame as we realize the poor and pitiful response we have made to the Fatherly love of God. (3) *That the fact that we can at once return to God,* in filial devotion, is the *best of all glad tidings.* Our return to him begins in humility, goes on in faith, is completed and perfected in love. (4) That the fact that we shall continue to love God is the *brightest of all good prospects.* Other things will fail us sooner or later, but "the love of God which is in Jesus Christ" in our hearts will take us everywhere, will be our refuge and defence in all emergencies, will sanctify our joy and our prosperity, will be with us at the last scenes, will cross the river with us and will be with us and in us on the other side, will be our passport to and our qualification for the brightest and broadest spheres in the heavenly kingdom.—C.

Ver. 29.—*Who is our neighbour?* This was a very pertinent question, by whatsoever motive prompted. None better could possibly have been asked, for it drew forth Christ's own interpretation of his own Law. And, like the Jews of his time, we are in no little danger of limiting the Divine thought, "Who is *our* neighbour?"—in *our* thought, in *our* feeling and practice? Who are those we feel bound to love and help? Our kindred, those of our fellow-citizens from whom we want the interchange of civilities, our countrymen,—do we draw the line there? If so, we "have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" in this matter; we are falling out of rank as his disciples. There is nothing especially Christian about the affection we feel or the kindness we show to these. Going thus far, we go no further than pagans have gone before us. We must transcend this if we are to be worthy of the name we bear. In order to be that, we must find our neighbour everywhere and in every one, but more especially in the man who has need of us. The Christian conception of "our neighbour"—

I. OVERSTEPS THE LIMIT OF RACE. It is painful to think that men have been taught to look upon those who inhabit other lands with positive enmity, so much so that even Cicero could say that the natural relation of neighbouring nations was that of enmity; that whole peoples (like the Greeks and the Chinese) should treat the outer world as "barbarians" to be despised and avoided. It is foolish and illogical enough, but it has been all too common. Nothing but the prevalence of Christian principle and

the permeating force of the Christian spirit will avail to lead us to love those beyond our borders, without the pale of our own civilization.

II. REMOVES THE LIMIT OF SPACE. The simple and common notion of a neighbour is that of one locally near to us. But that idea, under Christ, has been very greatly enlarged. 1. It is true that, since he spoke, we have seemed to be further off, in space, from one another. For those to whom he spoke had no notion of the width of the world, no idea that there were fellow-men living twelve thousand miles away from them. 2. But it is also true that, since he spoke, we have been brought near to one another. (1) Christian civilization has given us an intimate knowledge of one another, so that we know more of what is happening in India than the "dwellers in Jerusalem" knew then of the events occurring in Nazareth; and (2) Christian zeal has made possible to us a genuine sympathy and a practical kindness. We can, by putting a coin in a plate, help to send the light of Divine truth to men of every colour, in every latitude and longitude of the habitable globe. Who is our neighbour? All men beneath all skies, and it is open to us all to do something to help the wounded pilgrim on life's highway, even in remotest lands, to health and joy and life.

III. TRANSCENDS THE LIMIT OF CHARACTER. If that lawyer had answered his own question, it is certain that he would have given a reply which would have excluded the ungodly and the immoral. But in Christ's view the neighbour we should commiserate and rescue is not only the poor traveller who has fallen among thieves, but the erring soul who has lost his way in the search of truth, and that pitiable one who has fallen into the mire of guilt and shame; those who have been smitten by the worst of all strokes, and have descended into the darkest of all shadows. Our neighbour, in the view of our Lord, is not the man who is up and who can assist us on our way, but he that is down and whom we can help to rise; he is the man who is most in need of our sympathy and our succour; he is the man who has a bruised and bleeding heart that patient, sacrificial love alone can heal. If we will go to him and help and bless him, and make ourselves "neighbour unto" him, we shall thus "fulfil the law of Christ;" and we shall thus be not only "keeping his commandment," but living his life.—C.

Vers. 38—42.—*Christ at Bethany.* There are few places at which we so much like to think of our Lord's presence as Bethany. We like to think that there the Son of man, who had not where to lay his head, did find a home; that there, away from the conspiracies of those who hated him, he found a refuge with those who loved him. We like to think that there he found a diligent disciple in one sister, and an assiduous and eager ministrant in the other. We must carefully consider—

I. THE COMPARISON WHICH OUR LORD WAS MAKING. (Ver. 42.) For it *was* a comparison, not a contrast—a comparison between the choice that was good but was not the best, and the choice that was *the good one*. It was not a contrast between the absolutely bad and the positively good; it was a comparison between the good that was insufficient and the good that sufficed. There are those who choose the positively bad—pleasures which are unlawful, profits which are dishonest, a life that is ungodly. Christ condemns this elsewhere; but here (in the text) he is condemning another thing. He condemns the too-absorbing pursuit of that which is not supreme, which is good only up to a certain point, and beyond that is powerless. Christ was comparing the woman who was absorbed in doing a right but an inferior thing with her sister who was intent on the highest and best of all.

II. THE INFERENCE HE WAS DRAWING. That many good things, however many they may be, do not constitute *the good thing*, and that they will disappear and disappoint. Health, home comforts, worldly position, literary delights, art,—these are good in their measure; but they will not together make up our human requirement; they are not "the bread of life" and "the water of life;" they do not satisfy, and they will not last; sooner or later they break down and leave us portionless and hopeless.

III. THE POINT WHICH HE WAS PRESSING. There is one thing which is so surpassingly excellent that it may be considered *the one good thing*—"that good part which shall not be taken away." To Mary this was Divine truth as it came to her in the Person and in the words of Jesus Christ. And to us it is also heavenly wisdom, as we gain it direct from our Divine Lord. She drank in that immortal truth as she "sat at his

feet, and heard his word." We also receive it into our hearts as we "go unto him" and "learn of him," as we follow him, and as we abide in him. Of him we learn the way to God, the way to the light and the peace and the life which are in him. From him we gain forgiveness, friendship, purity, usefulness, a hope that does not make ashamed. This is the "good part," the intrinsically precious, the invaluable thing, of which no figures can indicate the worth; it is the good part which can never be lost. For there is no power on earth that can touch it to harm it. Disease will not waste it, fire will not consume it, force will not crush it, fraud will not steal it, time will not enfeeble it, death will not destroy it, the grave will not hold it. It lives ever and outlives everything which the eyes can see, on which the hand can rest. This is the one thing which is above high-water mark; all other, all earthly good things will be washed away by the incoming tide; but this portion, this heritage, no wave will reach in the mightiest storm. This is the "part" to choose. 1. We all *can* choose it. God is opening his hand to offer it; we can open ours to take it if we will; our destiny is in our choice. 2. We *must* choose it. If we fail to do so, we shall not only shut ourselves out from all that is most worth having and being, but we shall shut ourselves in to loss, to shame, to death.—C.

Vers. 1—24.—*The mission of the seventy.* Jesus, as we have seen, is now going up on his last journey to Jerusalem, and he is anxious that the places he is to visit for the last time, and some possibly for the first as well as last, should be ready to receive him. On this account he organizes the mission of the seventy in addition to that of the twelve already noticed. They are to be forerunners, going to announce his advent in the different cities and villages. Let us study the mission as here presented to us. And—

I. THEY ARE TO GO FORTH IN A SPIRIT OF PRAYER FOR ADDITIONAL LABOURERS. (Ver. 2.) The desire in the world to limit and regulate the number of labourers, to keep up wages, is to have no counterpart in the Church of Christ. The needs of men are so great, the harvest of souls is so enormous, that as many reapers as can possibly be equipped are needed and should be prayed for. Narrow-mindedness and jealousy are, therefore, out of place in Christian work. Those already labouring for God are to be the chief intercessors for more workers, and it is the inspiration of God which can alone fit men for such work.

II. THEY ARE TO GO FORTH PREPARED FOR OPPOSITION EVEN UNTO DEATH. (Ver. 3.) It seems at first a foolish policy to send lambs among wolves. Will they not be torn to pieces instantly? Is it not to court defeat and failure? But it so happens that it is the manifestation of a meek and lamblike spirit among ravenous and wolfish men which wins the battle for Christ and conquers the world. Were it not for such exhibitions of meekness the world would never be won. Hence the martyr-spirit is the safety of the Church.

III. THEY ARE TO DEPEND UPON THE PEOPLE FOR SUPPORT. (Vers. 4—8.) Some of the seventy, like some of the twelve, might have taken some provision or money with them. They were not all absolutely poor. The Lord himself might have brought from heaven or furnished miraculously all that he needed during his ministry on earth, but he preferred to depend upon his Father in heaven, and to accept of the loving ministrations of his friends on earth. The same rule he prescribes for his servants. They are to receive their support from those among whom they labour. And in the reception of support, they are to be content with whatever hospitality comes first. Peacefully are they to dwell in the house of their host, and they are not to be choosing some better hospitality and showing a mean and worldly spirit.

IV. THEY ARE TO GIVE THEMSELVES UNRESERVEDLY TO THE KING'S BUSINESS. (Ver. 4.) The instruction, "Salute no man by the way," does not advise any discourtesy, but as the Eastern salaams are protracted pieces of etiquette, they are to show so clearly that their "King's business requireth haste," that such cumbrous formalities must be dispensed with. It is a great thing gained if the Lord's servants are so concentrated upon their work that nothing is allowed in the least degree to interfere with it. God's work must be paramount.

V. THEY ARE TO HEAL THE SICK AND ANNOUNCE THE KINGDOM. (Ver. 9.) It is the advent of salvation to these cities and villages of Palestine; hence the healing of

the sick is performed as a sign of the higher salvation which is included in the coming of the kingdom. Physical miracles are spiritual signs. The health of the soul is to follow that of the body, if the people will only trust the King. The delegated miraculous power is the sign and announcement of coming spiritual power and salvation.

VI. THE PENALTIES ATTACHED TO THE REJECTION OF THESE AMBASSADORS. (Vers. 10—16.) The Lord directs them, as in the case of the twelve, to simply shake off the dust of their feet against them. This was the sign of separation complete and final. But he indicates that in the judgment it shall be more tolerable for such cities as Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, than for the cities which reject them. Now, the doom of Sodom and of Tyre was terrible. In the one case God destroyed the cities of the plain by fire; in the other case by siege and bombardment. But for Sodom and for Tyre—meaning, of course, for their inhabitants—there yet remains a judgment in the great day. Yet their sin, though heinous, was not so great as that of rejecting Jesus and his ambassadors. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum will experience a deeper doom than even Tyre and Sodom, because they repented not. The solemn position of an ambassador of Christ cannot be over-estimated. To speak for Christ, in his Name, in some way worthy of him, is surely a great commission. What an altitude in ministration should we reach before we can conscientiously adopt the attitude of the apostles![1]

VII. THE JOY OF THE SEVENTY AT THEIR SUCCESS. (Ver. 17.) They delighted in the thought that the devils had become subject unto them through the Name of Jesus. How natural it is to rejoice in the success the Lord grants! But as Jesus here shows, it is dangerous. While assuring them of triumph over Satan and all the power of the enemy, he also would have them to rejoice rather in this, that their names are written in heaven. The meaning of this seems to be that they should rejoice in *what the Lord has done for them rather than what they have done for the Lord.* In the one case, they are liable to be puffed up and to think highly of themselves; in the other case, they are kept in wholesome humility. Let the Lord's work and the Lord's part of the work, rather than ours, be the source of our spiritual joy.

VIII. THE JOY OF JESUS ABOUT THE ARRANGEMENTS OF HIS KINGDOM. (Vers. 21—24.) While Jesus advised them to rejoice in God's salvation of them, he himself proceeds to rejoice in their successful work. His reason for this was: 1. That it *put to confusion the wise and prudent, through the revelation being made to babes.* Those who are proud and self-confident miss the meaning of the gospel and the kingdom, while those who are babelike in their docility get an apprehension of both. 2. It is in *virtue of his mediatorial commission.* The Father has committed all things to Jesus, and he proceeds, as Son, to reveal the Father to whomsoever he will. Without such a revelation we should never know the Father. 3. Christ's joy is also because of *the distinguished privileges enjoyed by the disciples.* Many prophets and kings desired to see such things as they saw, but the prophets and kings had been passed by, and these weak ones selected. Hence it is that Jesus rejoices in such God-glorifying arrangements. The more humble we are in heart, the fuller shall be the revelation which God will make to us through Jesus Christ.[2]—R. M. E.

Vers. 25—42.—*The good Samaritan, and the good part.* From the success of the seventy we now pass to the temptation of the Master. The tempter is a lawyer, one who, therefore, professed special acquaintance with the letter and spirit of the Divine Law. He thinks he may find accusation against Jesus by inquiring from him the way of life. His question implies the belief on the lawyer's part that he can win his own way to heaven. But Jesus, when he asks, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" puts it to himself to answer, eliciting from the lawyer the reply, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. Jesus then drives home the arrow of conviction by saying, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." The lawyer, if he will only analyze his life fairly, must admit that he has failed to fulfil the Law. This suggests—

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN FULFILLING THE LAW. When our Lord said to the lawyer, "This do, and thou shalt live," he was giving forth his own experience. He was himself loving God with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his strength, and

[1] Cf. Bruce's 'Training of the Twelve,' pp. 113, 114.

[2] Cf. Martineau's 'Hours of Thought,' vol. i. p. 114.

all his mind; he was also loving his neighbour as himself; and he found and felt that this was life, and life everlasting too. Doubtless he might have to die, but beyond death there was the compensation of resurrection. He was entitled to life on the ground of law, since he had kept it in every particular. What the lawyer imagined he could do, Jesus had actually done. He had acquired the right, not on his own behalf merely, but also on behalf of all who trust in him, to the life everlasting. The obedience of Jesus to Law was the perfect obedience required.

II. THE ATTEMPT AT SELF-JUSTIFICATION ON THE LAWYER'S PART. He seems to have thought that his attitude to God was unimpeachable; but he was not so clear about having fulfilled his duty by his neighbour. Hence he asked Jesus to define "neighbourhood." The Jew had the notion that, because he belonged to the chosen people, he had to show neighbourliness only to those of his own nation; all the rest were "dogs." And this lawyer had been as proud and as contemptuous as any of his tribe. Hence he wants from Jesus some definition of who his neighbour is, that he may estimate his own duty and the patriotism of Christ. The excuses in which selfish men indulge are marvellous. They are ready on any pretext to defend their selfishness.

III. JESUS DEFINES "NEIGHBOURHOOD" BY THE PRECIOUS PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN. And here we have four characters brought before us. Let us look at them in order. 1. *The half-murdered traveller.* The road from Jerusalem to Jericho has been from time immemorial infested by robbers. It is so still. This poor traveller has met the cruel fate of many before and since Christ's time. The highwaymen have robbed him of all he had, and almost of his life too. It is a case of unmistakable need. There is no possibility of deception in the circumstances. 2. *The heartless priest.* Coming down from the holy services at the temple, he so far forgets himself as to ignore the half-murdered man's wants, and pass by on the other side. The aristocratism of office has steeled his heart against those charitable impulses which the case should have evoked. 3. *The heartless Levite.* The sole difference between these two officials was that the Levite seems to have crossed the road, to have looked upon him, and then, judging it a hopeless case, or one in which he could render no help, passed by, like the priest, on the other side. 4. *The good Samaritan.* This man might have said, "This poor fellow is one of those Jews, who will have no dealings with us Samaritans; he has often, most likely, called us dogs; he deserves no care." But instead of looking for excuses for neglecting the sufferer, he gives his heart free play, and owns the poor man as a brother in distress. The result is he dismounts, and pours into his wounds oil and wine—the best remedies, the one to keep down inflammation, and the other to heal; and, having carefully bound up his wounds, he sets him on his own beast and brings him to the nearest inn and has him comfortably lodged. The next day he pays the bill, and becomes the innkeeper's security for anything more the patient may require until he is sound and well. Here is neighbourliness. Our neighbour is whoever is laid in our path by Providence and really needs our help. If we look carefully into the case, as the Samaritan here did, and conclude that it is a case of real need, then we should recognize in the needy one our neighbour, and have mercy on him. As Jesus dismisses the lawyer with this ideal neighbourliness before him, the self-justification must have passed completely away.[1] Now, we have here the cosmopolitan spirit which Christianity fosters, and which is above and beyond the fellow-citizenship and patriotism which alone earlier civilizations fostered. Christ taught his people to be "citizens of the world," and to recognize in every needy human being a "man and a brother." It was in this spirit our Lord himself lived, and so he was able to inculcate it powerfully upon his people.

IV. THE GOOD PART AS DEFINED AT BETHANY. (Vers. 38—42.) And here we have to notice the two types of character presented to the Lord. 1. *Martha, to whom life is a perpetual worry and weariness.* She was a Christian in the real sense, for she loved her Lord; but she was a Christian who had not escaped from the fuss and weariness which make up the life of so many. Besides, all her bustle was really under a false impression, that the greatest compliment she could pay her Master was to give

[1] Cf. Trench on the Parables, p. 296; Arndt's 'Gleichniss-Reden Jesu Christi,' zweiter Theil, s. 112; Gerok's 'Aus Ernster Zeit,' s. 529.

him a good physical feast. She never fancied that a good listener like Mary complimented the Master more than any repast could. Hence Martha's fret and weariness. 2. *Mary, to whom life is a calm fulfilment of her Master's will.* The good part Mary chose was that of a scholar at Christ's feet, whose word is deemed Mary's law. This one idea made life simple and supremely blessed. Let us make sure of it, and the fret and worry of life shall cease, and an orderly and blessed procession of duties will make us experience a foretaste of heaven. The following poem expresses as beautifully as possible the thought of this passage; it is entitled "Cumbered about much Serving:"—

"Christ never asks of us such busy labour
As leaves no time for resting at his feet;
The waiting attitude of expectation
He ofttimes counts a service most complete.

"He sometimes wants our ear—our rapt attention,
That he some sweetest secret may impart;
'Tis always in the time of deepest silence
That heart finds deepest fellowship with heart.

"We sometimes wonder why our Lord doth place us
Within a sphere so narrow, so obscure,
That nothing we call work can find an entrance
There's only room to suffer—to endure!

"Well, God loves patience! Souls that dwell in stillness
Doing the little things, or resting quite,
May just as perfectly fulfil their mission,
Be just as useful in the Father's sight,

"As they who grapple with some giant evil,
Clearing a path that every eye may see!
Our Saviour cares for cheerful acquiescence
Rather than for a busy ministry.

"And yet he does love service, where 'tis given
By grateful love that clothes itself in deed;
But work that's done beneath the scourge of duty,
Be sure to such he gives but little heed.

"Then seek to please him, whatsoe'er he bids thee!
Whether to do—to suffer—to lie still!
'Twill matter little by what path he led us,
If in it all we sought to do his will."

(From Randolph's 'At the Beautiful Gate.')

R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

Vers. 1—13.—*The Lord's teaching on the subject of prayer.* Again the scene is far away from Jerusalem; no special note of *time* or *place* enables us to fix the scene or date with any exactness. Somewhere in the course of the last journeyings towards Jerusalem, related especially in this Gospel, did this scene and its teaching take place.

Ver. 1.—**Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.** It seems as though some of his disciples—we know at this period many were with him besides the twelve—heard their Master praying. It appeared to them—no doubt, as they caught here and there a word and expression as he prayed, perhaps partly alone, partly to himself—as though a friend was speaking to a friend; *they* would pray like that: would not the Master teach them his beautiful secret? In reply, Jesus repeats to them, in rather an abbreviated form, what, at an earlier period of his ministry, he had taught to the multitudes and the twelve. It was very likely one of the seventy who made this request, who had not been present on the first occasion, when the Lord gave his prayer of prayers to the people. We have already remarked that at this time the twelve, who *had* heard it, were probably often absent on mission work. It was a

usual practice among the more famous rabbis to give prayer-formulas to their pupils. We have no tradition extant of John the Baptist's prayer here alluded to.

Ver. 2.—**And he said unto them, When ye pray, say.** The older authorities leave out the clauses erased. The prayer, as originally reported by St. Luke, no doubt stood as follows. The erased clauses were filled in by early scribes from the longer formula supplied by St. Matthew, and spoken at an earlier period by the Master:—

"~~Our~~ Father ~~which art in heaven,~~
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.
~~Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.~~
Give us day by day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins;
for we also forgive every one
that is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation;
~~but deliver us from evil.~~"

It has been said that our Lord has derived from the Talmud the thoughts embodied in this prayer. If this could be shown to be the case, it would in no way detract from its admitted value and beauty. Indeed, the earthly training of Jesus would naturally lead him to make use of whatever was true and practical in the teaching of the schools of his people. There is no doubt that in the New Testament many a gem of exquisite beauty could be found, drawn from that strange, weird Talmud, where the highest wisdom is mingled with the wildest errors and conceits. But in the matter of the "Lord's Prayer," it must be borne in mind that only a comparatively small portion of its thoughts can be traced to Talmudical sources, and there can be no positive certainty as to their priority, since the Mishna was not committed to writing before the second century of the Christian era, and the Gemara later still. The Lord's Prayer, in the report of St. Luke, contains five petitions. Two have reference to the love of God, and three to human needs. **Our Father which art in heaven.** It was not now uncommon in Jewish liturgies and prayers to invoke the Eternal of Israel under the dear name of "Father." "Thou, O Lord, art our Father." **Hallowed be thy Name.** Not only do we pray that the Name of God may be to us a sacred precious thing, not lightly used in trivial speech, still less in bitterness and anger, only in holy reverent prayer; but we include in these words a prayer, too, that all our *thoughts* of God may be pure, lofty, holy. **Thy kingdom come.** No Messianic kingdom, in the old Jewish meaning of the word, is signified here. It is a far onlook to the close of this dispensation, which close, we believe, is hindered by human sin and perversity. It is the prayer for the end, when there will be no more tears and partings, no more sorrow and sin. It tells of the same feeling which John, at the close of the Revelation, expressed in "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Instead of these words, Gregory of Nyssa, in his manuscript of St. Luke, appears to have read, "Thy Holy Spirit come upon us, and purify us."

Ver. 3.—**Give us day by day our daily bread.** There would need no comment upon this—at first sight—quite simple prayer, but for the word ἐπιούσιος, rendered "daily." This word, in all Greek literature, occurs only in these two evangelists, in SS. Matthew and Luke's report of the Lord's Prayer. Now, does this strange word mean "daily," as our translation gives it; or is it the rough Greek rendering of some Aramaic word of a loftier signification? Most probably our Lord was speaking Aramaic in this place, far away from the capital, in the heart of Palestine. Jerome attempts to Latinize literally the Greek compound word with *supersubstantialis;* hence the Rheims Version renders it "supersubstantial," and Wickliffe "over other substance." Generally speaking, the patristic expositors interpret this famous word in such a way that the petition prays, not for the *common bread* of everyday life, but for a spiritual food, even the Bread from heaven, which giveth life unto the world. So, with unimportant differences, interpret Origen, Tertullian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, Ambrose, and Augustine. Among the moderns who adopt the same view may be cited Olshausen, Stier, and Dean Plumptre. The last-named scholar's words are an admirable answer to any who would abandon this higher and nobler meaning, for the sake of preserving the reference to the commonplace of everyday life. "So taken, the petition . . . raises us to the region of thought in which we leave all that concerns our earthly life in the hands of our Father, without asking him even for the supply of its simplest wants, seeking only that he would sustain and perfect the higher life of our spirit." If, however, the interpretation (on the whole unlikely) of *common, everyday bread,* be accepted, and the simple reference of ch. x. 42 to the necessity for only one dish at table be adopted, then, with the charge to the seventy contained in ch. x. 7, to eat and drink "such things as they give," and the further instruction to "take no thought . . . what ye shall eat" (ch. xii. 22), we have, in this last period of our Lord's public life, clear expressions on the part of the Master of his wish that his followers should ever content themselves with the simplest human food, avoiding not

only all excess, but all extravagance, and even consideration and thought, in providing for anything beyond the simplest daily sustenance.

Ver. 4.—**And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.** Unforgiving is unforgiven. Nothing apparently more easy to frame with the lips, and to desire intensely with the heart, than this petition that the Father would forgive us our sins, only, in praying the prayer, how many forget, or at least slur over, the condition of that forgiveness—a condition they impose themselves! We forget the ten thousand talents as we exact the hundred pence, and, in the act of exacting, we bring back again the weight of the great debt on ourselves. **And lead us not into temptation.** The simple meaning of this concluding petition in St. Luke's report of the prayer is, "Thou knowest, Father, how weak I am; let me not be tempted above that I am able."

Vers. 5—13.—*Prayer continued. The wisdom of perseverance in prayer is pressed. The Lord introduces his argument by the short parable of the selfish neighbour.*

Ver. 5.—**And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves.** This whole passage follows naturally the Lord's own formula of prayer. The teaching contained in vers. 1—13 may be well summarized as the Master's *lesson on prayer*. The disciples, when they heard Jesus pray, asked him to instruct them in the holy art. The Lord then suggested to them a series of short *subjects* for constant prayer, and further gave them *words* in which they could embody these subjects, and then proceeded to press upon them that this constant seeking help from God should never be interrupted; no discouragements were ever to prevent their praying. "See," said the Master, "*this*" (telling them the little parable) "is what God appears to be when prayer receives no answer." Of course, he is not what he appears to be (see ver. 9). The truth concerning *God* does not really come out before the words of ver. 9; but the parable, grotesque and quaint, and picturing a common scene of everyday life, arrested the attention *then* as it has done in many a million cases since, and told men out of heart and despairing of receiving any answer to their prayers, to think. Well, here is a case in point; but is God like this? The Lord replies shortly to this mute heart-query. *At midnight.* The whole picture is drawn from a poor man's house—children and parents sleeping in one room. "With me in bed" probably suggests what is common in an Eastern house, where a divan or raised platform (rendered here "bed") often filled well-nigh half the room. The hour *midnight* has nothing strained in it—it was frequently the practice in the East to travel by night, and so to escape the great heat of the day.

Ver. 8.—**Because of his importunity, he will rise.** The one idea left upon the minds of the hearers of this little quaint homely parable is—*importunity is completely successful.* The borrower had only need to keep on knocking to get all he wanted.

Vers. 9, 10.—**And I say unto you. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.** Then the Lord—taking advantage of the state of mind into which his strange words had brought his hearers—made, as Professor Bruce well points out, the solemn declaration on which, and not on the parable, he desired the tried soul to lay the stress of its faith: "And *I* say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you," etc. Jesus here pledges that those who act in accordance with this counsel shall find the event justify it. This statement, that those who pray to God shall surely be heard, rests absolutely on Christ's authority. It is not given as a fact which is self-evident, but as a fact which he, the Speaker, knows to be true. The man in bed is pictured in the parable as utterly selfish, regardless of his poorer neighbour's wants and sufferings. So God *seems* to us often, as we pray to him day after day, month after month, and our prayer receives no answer; he merely appears to us then as a passionless Spectator of the tragedies and comedies of time. "Children," said the Saviour, "the selfish man of my story yields to constant importunity. Think ye God, who only *seems* to be deaf to man's pleading voice that he may deepen his faith and educate his soul—think ye God is not listening all the while, and will not in the end, in all his glorious generosity, grant the prayer? Only pray on."

Ver. 11.—**If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?** The Master keeps on adducing instances of the loving Fatherhood of God. All the while men were thinking hard things of him and his sovereignty. "Children," urged the Saviour, "such things, such a cruel part as you would in your dark sad thoughts ascribe to the loving heavenly Father, is simply unthinkable in the case of *earthly* parents. *They* never really turn a deaf ear to their children's pleading; think you that your Father which is in heaven will refuse to listen to *you* when you indeed call on him?"

Ver. 13.—**How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them**

that ask him? In St. Matthew we find the last portion of this teaching related as having taken place at a much earlier period of the Lord's ministry. It is more than probable that much of Jesus Christ's general instruction was repeated on more than one occasion. There is an important difference between the words reported by the two evangelists. St. Matthew, instead of the "Holy Spirit," has the more general expression, "good things." In both accounts, however, is the Master's assurance that prayer, if persisted in, would ever be heard and granted, and there is the all-important limitation that the thing prayed for must be something "good" in the eyes of the heavenly Father. How many requests are made by us, poor, short-sighted, often selfish men, which, if granted, would be harmful rather than a blessing to the asker! Here the Lord, the Reader of hearts, having taken notice of some of the deep earnest longings, perhaps scarcely crystallized into prayer, of his own disciples, of a John or a James, pictures the case of one who deserves a special deepening of the spiritual life, and prays some prayer for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Such a prayer, says Christ, *must* be granted.

Vers. 14—36.—*The bitter attack of the Pharisees. Their accusation of the Lord that he was in league with the evil one. His reply.* The grave and terrible charge which was formally made by persons evidently of rank and position sent down from the capital to watch, and if possible to entrap, the hated Galilæan Teacher, was a charge no doubt brought against the Lord on more than one occasion. Of this we have clear evidence in the Gospel narratives. Puzzled and dismayed by the marvellous acts of power worked by Jesus, it was only too easy to say that he had friends and helpers among those spirits of evil which the Jew knew well were working unseen on earth.

The circumstances under which the accusation was made, and the reply of the Lord spoken, were as follows: The scene is still in the provinces, the time somewhere in the period between October and the spring of the last Passover—the period which the Master spent in that slow solemn progress, through as yet unvisited places, towards Jerusalem. Learned and experienced members of the Pharisee party, scribes and doctors of the Law, had been told off to watch the dangerous and popular Galilæan Teacher, and, whenever it was possible, to lessen his influence among the people.

Jesus (ver. 14) had been occupied in one of his (probably) daily works of healing. He had expelled an evil spirit from a sufferer whose malady had assumed the grave form of insanity which refused to speak. The people around were wondering at this gracious act of power; then broke in voices of accusation, voices to challenge him to show them some sign from heaven, saying that his power was only derived from evil sources. To this the Master replies with consummate skill, knowing the trained minds with whom just then he had to do. He is interrupted by murmurs of approval from the crowd (vers. 27, 28). He notices these for a moment, and then proceeds in detail to reply to that subtle request that he would prove his claims by showing them some sign from heaven.

Ver. 14.—And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. Some very terrible and apparently helpless form of possession which manifested itself in a mute, possibly in a motionless, melancholy insanity. **And the people wondered.** Not improbably the professional exorcists had tried here and signally failed; hence the special *wonder* of the people.

Ver. 15.—But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. The accusation seems to have been whispered among the people by the Pharisee emissaries from the capital; the words of the charge were evidently not addressed to Jesus. These men could not deny the reality of the work of healing, so they tried to suggest that the great Healer had dealings with some great evil angel, whom they call, from some old Jewish tradition, Beelzebub. In 2 Kings i. 3 we read that this idol-deity was the god of Ekron. The name signifies "lord of flies." He was very likely worshipped in the low-lying cities of the sea-coast of Philistia as a god who would be likely to avert the plague of flies and insects which infested that locality. So Zeus was adored as Apomuios (the averter of flies), and Apollo as Ipuktonos (the slayer of vermin).

Ver. 16.—And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. As in the case of Manoah or Elijah. Some such sign as the pillar of fire these cavilling Jews probably referred to. No doubt, in the course of the public teaching, in the presence of his mighty acts, Jesus was asked for such a sign on several occasions. His questioners would argue after this fashion: "We suspect that these great works of yours, especially your strange power over spirits of evil,

are derived from the realm of darkness; now, show us that our suspicion is baseless by some splendid sign of the visible approval of Heaven."

Ver. 18.—**If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.** Throughout this argument Jesus assumes the existence of a kingdom of evil, all armed and thoroughly organized to carry out its dread purposes. He concedes, too, in language which admits of no questioning, the existence of a chief of this evil confederacy. Throughout his reply, the Master, while carefully bearing in mind the ability and skill of his enemies who had suggested this questioning to the people, addresses himself to the common sense of the mixed multitude who were present on this occasion. The argument is perfectly simple. It is not thinkable that the prince of evil would fight against himself, which he would be doing if he put such mighty weapons into Jesus' hands.

Ver. 19.—**By whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.** But he goes further in his skilful line of argument. "I am not the only one," said Jesus, "who claims to cast out devils. There are those in the midst of you, your sons, who make a similar assertion. Have *they* too entered into a league with this evil angel?" A question has been raised respecting these professed exorcists of evil spirits whom Jesus here styles "your sons." Who were they? Some, notably the older patristic expositors, have supposed that our Lord here alluded to his own apostles, to whom a measure of this power over unclean spirits was certainly given. Others, that they are identical with the "pupils of the wise," disciples of the great rabbinical schools, such as were presided over by the famous doctors of the Talmud. This is quite possible; but we have no proof that professional exorcists were pupils in any of the known rabbinical schools. It is more likely that by this general term Jesus alluded to the exorcists. These were, at this period of Jewish history, numerous. They are alluded to in Acts xix. 13; by Josephus ('Ant.,' viii. 2, 5); mention of them is also specially made in the Talmud, which even describes something of their mode of procedure. Our Lord seems to affirm in some cases, to a certain extent, the efficacy of the power of these exorcists. "These, Jews like yourselves," argued Jesus, "some of them, you know, belonging to your own Pharisee sect,—those have in certain cases apparently driven out the evil spirit of insanity: you do not accuse them, do you, of working with an evil angel?" Godet, in the next seven verses, has suggested a new line of interpretation, which, while generally preserving the traditional exposition of the various details, supplies the connecting thought between ver. 23 ("He that is not with me is against me," etc.) and the verses which precede and follow. This, apparently, has never been done satisfactorily by any commentator. Indeed, some, *e.g.* De Wette and Bleek, are frank enough to confess that they abandon the attempt. In these seven verses Jesus draws two pictures, in which he contrasts one of those expulsions of evil spirits which he works with that of a cure worked by an exorcist.

Ver. 20.—**But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.** Here Jesus points to a fact well known and thoroughly established. There was no question here; the most obstinate cases of possession had yielded to that "finger" he spoke of here; the fiercest of the, alas! (then) great company of the insane, at the bidding of that quiet, humble Rabbi, for ever shook off the spirit of madness, in whatever form of terrible possession it had been dwelling in his body. There was no question here; the only point raised by his enemies—*how* had that quiet Rabbi done these strange, mighty works—Jesus had answered; and now draws a picture of one of these acts of his. The "finger of God" in St. Matthew, where the same or a similar discourse is related, is called the "Spirit of God." The expression is strange, but is one not unusual in ancient Hebrew phraseology. So the Egyptian magicians said to Pharaoh, "This *is* the finger of God" (Exod. viii. 19). The ten commandments are described as written on the two tables of stone with the "finger of God." "You have seen by what power the devils obey *me;* yea, the kingdom of God, for which you are waiting and looking, lo, it is come upon you."

Vers. 21, 22.—**When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.** The exegesis is easy here. *The strong man* is the devil; *his palace* is the world; *his goods* especially here the poor possessed; *the stronger than he* is Jesus himself, who, as he paints this feature in the picture, is thinking of the scenes of the temptation, when in good earnest he overcame his ghostly adversary, then he took from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and now he, the Conqueror, *divideth his spoils*, among which are these unhappy possessed ones now being rescued from the power of their tormentor.

Ver. 23.—**He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me**

scattereth. Our Lord here is referring to the exorcists, and contrasting *their* imperfect work with *his*, showing how hopeless a task it was to attempt to combat the evil one and his satellites apart from him—Christ. It is particularly to be noticed that Jesus neither here nor elsewhere charges these with imposture. Pretence and ridiculous spells and incantations were doubtless constantly mixed up with their attempts to exorcise; indeed, the term used to describe them in Acts xix. 13 is one of contempt; but Jesus assumes in his argument here, what was no doubt the fact, that in these cases there was often, in the person of the physician-exorcist, earnestness and prayer mingled with the deepest pity for the unhappy sufferer, and before these there is no doubt that, in the less severe cases of possession, the evil influence or spirit yielded, and for a time at least let go his victim. "See," said the Master, "he that is not with me is against me in this dire conflict against evil;" for these would-be exorcists were utterly unable, even in those instances where they expelled the devil, to render him powerless to do mischief for the future. "*My* power sent these dread beings to the abyss, there to wait. The would-be exorcists were unable to replace the hellish tenant which they expelled by another and a holier influence. *I* bring back the once-tormented soul to its old relations with its God-Friend, and replace the unclean spirit by the Holy Spirit." He goes on to say—

Vers. 24, 25.—**When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.** The devil, expelled for a season, watches his opportunity and quickly returns; the exorcist-physician was powerless without the aid of Christ to accomplish anything more than a half-cure; the relapse, as we shall see, was worse than the original malady. The imagery of the "dry place" through which the devil walked during his temporary absence from the afflicted soul, was derived from the popular tradition that spirits of evil frequented ruins and desert places (see the Talmud, 'Treatise Berachôth,' fol. 3, *a*; and Tobit viii. 3).

Ver. 26.—**Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.** As instances of such a terrible possession, not improbably the result of a relapse such as is above portrayed, might be cited the cases of Mary Magdalene, out of whom we are told went seven devils, and of the Gergesene demoniac, who was possessed by a swarm or legion of these unclean spirits. There is another well-known historical reference contained in these words of Jesus, which speak of the triumphant return of the temporarily banished devil. In this, the chosen people represent the one possessed; the expelled devil was the one besetting sin which from the time of the Exodus to the Captivity—that fearsome idolatry with its attendant mischief—exorcised over Israel a strange and horrible fascination. After the return from exile, idolatry seemed driven out for ever. But the house was only empty; there was no indwelling Presence there of the Holy Spirit of the Lord, only an outward show of ceremonies and of rites, only a religion of the lips, not of the heart; and so the old state of possession returned under the form of hypocrisy, envy, narrowness, jealousy, covetousness. The Jewish historian, Josephus, has dared to paint the picture of national degradation which closed in the sack and burning of the city and temple (A.D. 70). But this striking application belongs to St. Matthew, who represents our Lord closing his sad sketch of the return of the devils with the words, "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." It may have been that Jesus prolonged on this occasion the terrible sermon, and drew out lesson upon lesson suggested by his words; but it is more likely that St. Matthew is writing of another occasion, when, taunted with working with the aid of the devil, the Master spoke similar words, drawing from them other lessons. The general lesson to be learned—if the above exegesis be in the main followed—is the utter hopelessness of attempting any work which has as its object the amelioration of the human race *without the aid of Christ*. Earnestness and imposture will alike in the end fail here. The case of the one of whom the disciples complained to their Master as casting out devils, but who followed not with them, was very different. *Here* the Lord said, "Forbid him not: he that is not against us is for us." The good work in this case was done, we read, *in the Name of Christ*: hence the Divine approval.

Ver. 27.—**And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!** This woman seems to have expressed the popular feeling. The crowds who had seen the great miracle, had listened to the cavilling suspicions, and then heard the Master's wise and skilful reply, were evidently impressed with the wisdom as with the power of the famous but hated Teacher, for they no doubt echoed the lofty and sublime blessing of the woman here. She, perhaps, had in her own person experience of the two kinds of healing just

contrasted by the Master; at all events, she had rightly comprehended his words. "How many women have blessed the holy Virgin, and desired to be such a mother as she was! What hinders them? Christ has made for us a wide way to this happiness, and not only women, but men may tread it—the way of obedience; this it is which makes such a mother, and not the throes of parturition" (St. Chrysostom). It has been ingeniously noticed that this is the first direct fulfilment of the "Magnificat"—"all generations shall call me blessed."

Ver. 28.—**But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.** As was invariably his practice, he declines to enter into any discussion respecting the peculiar blessedness which earthly relationship to him might bring. It was not for public discussion. The Lord, in his reply, tells her, however, that there was something even more blessed than that earthly relationship to which she was alluding, and to that something all, if they pleased, might attain.

Vers. 29, 30.—**And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.** Jesus now proceeds—the crowd was, we read, become denser—to reply to the unbelieving suggestion that he should show by a sign from heaven that it was not by the help of Satan and the powers of hell that he was enabled to exercise so mighty a power over the spirits of evil. No sign of the startling nature demanded would be given to the Jews of his day. Evidence in support of his high claims and lofty assertions was then in process of being supplied. What were their eyes beholding day by day, and their ears hearing? Evidence still more complete would yet be given them, but it would avail nothing! Lo, the solemn sign of the Prophet Jonas, who preached to wicked Nineveh after his strange resurrection—*that* would be given them. It is clear that St. Luke's account of our Lord's words is abbreviated. To make the symbolism of the resurrection-sign complete, we must compare St. Matthew's report (xii. 39, 40), where in plain terms the Lord's death, and the resting in the tomb, and subsequent resurrection is foretold, and compared to the well-known story of the entombment of Jonah at sea for three days. This simile of the Master's was no doubt one repeated on several occasions. It is likely enough that it was so well-known a comparison when St. Luke wrote his memoir of the life that the evangelist felt it was not needful to go into all the details of the comparison; to mention the simile was enough; no Christian individual, household, or congregation but could at once fill up the details originally spoken by the Lord here. In the catacombs the Jonah-story is, owing to its use by our Lord, an oft-repeated and very favourite representation on those long galleries of tombs of Christian men and women of the first three centuries.

Ver. 31.—**The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.** The Queen of Sheba, her visit to King Solomon, and its subsequent results made a lasting impression throughout the East; probably the immediate consequence was that a great commerce was opened up between Yemen, of which she was queen, and other parts of Arabia and the far East. The Talmud and Koran, for instance, have various legends respecting this Eastern queen who was so dazzled and impressed by the magnificent Israelitic sovereign. Such a simile would be singularly attractive to the common folk who were then, we know (from ver. 29), crowding round Jesus. King Solomon's wisdom charmed and attracted from far countries the famous queen. Lo! One wiser than Solomon was in their midst: can we not hear from the honest, plain folk around him a murmur of assent here? Hadn't they been just listening to his wise words when the Pharisees tried to prejudice them against him? Hadn't they burst out, in the person of the woman of vers. 27, 28, with an irrepressible sign of admiration? Lo! the great Arabian queen, when at the day of judgment she arose, would condemn Israel for their blind folly.

Ver. 32.—**The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.** And these poor sinners of the wicked city of Nineveh, they, too, will join in approval of the sad condemnation of the chosen people. In Nineveh, when Jonah appeared among them and bade them repent, they obeyed the solemn warning voice. Lo! a greater Preacher far than Jonah was in their midst; but, alas! Israel was deaf.

Ver. 33.—**No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.** The Lord continues his reply to those who asked him to support his claims by a visible sign from heaven, "Do not think for a moment that the sign I speak about, and which was prefigured in the story of the Prophet Jonah, will be an obscure or secret thing

No man lights a lamp to hide: so will it be with that sign which will be given to you." Jesus was speaking all the while of the mighty sign of his resurrection.

Vers. 34, 35.—**The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.** He goes on, though, with his solemn warning words. Plainly visible though the *sign* would be—shining bright as a lighted lamp set on high—still it, too, was possible to miss seeing it. If the eye, the organ of the body which perceives the light, be sound and healthy, then the illumination given by the lamp is seen, and the whole body, so to speak, is full of light; but if the eye was diseased, purblind, no bright shining light would be seen—the body then would be full of darkness. The word rendered "single" denotes the eye in its natural healthy state; that translated "evil" speaks of the eye as diseased, as incapable of perceiving the rays of light. The imagery to those Orientals, accustomed to parable and allegory in the stories and poems they had listened to from their childhood, was easily translated into the language of everyday life. If they gave way to passion, jealousy, prejudice, impurity, lawlessness in its hundred forms, then for them the spiritual eye of the soul would become diseased, and therefore incapable of rightly discerning any heavenly sign. It was this danger that the Master was pointing out to the crowd. "Ah!" he seems to say, "you ask a heavenly sign which will substantiate my lofty claims; that sign, in a grander and more stately form than ever you have dreamed of, shall, indeed, be given you. Have no fear on *that* score; rather dread that blindness, the punishment of a hard and evil heart, will come upon you, and render you incapable of seeing the sign you ask for, and which I mean to give you." *He was speaking still of his resurrection.* Alas, for them! the blindness of which he warned them was the unhappy lot, we know, of very many of those listening then.

Ver. 36.—**If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.** The Lord here completes his allegory, still preserving the same images, with a sketch of the condition of a holy and humble man of heart, who with a "single eye," that is, honestly, trustfully, lovingly, has looked upon the sign and believed. Godet's comment on this hard and mystic saying of the Blessed is very beautiful: "When, through the fact of the clearness of thine eye, thy whole body shall be penetrated with light, without there being in thee the least trace of darkness, then the phenomenon which will be wrought in thee will resemble what takes place on thy body when it is placed in the rays of a luminous focus. Jesus means that from the inward part of a perfectly sanctified man there rays forth a splendour which glorifies the external man, as when he is shone upon from without. It is glory as the result of holiness. The phenomenon described here by Jesus is no other than that which was realized in himself on the occasion of his transfiguration, and which he now applies to all believers." There is little doubt that this teaching had been spoken by the Master on one, if not on more than one, previous occasion. In St. Matthew's report, in almost identical language (v. 15 and vi. 22), the immediate application was different, and the reference of the lamp put in a prominent place was not to the Resurrection.

Vers. 37—54.—*In the Pharisee's house. The Lord's stern denunciation of the Pharisee teaching and life.* The day was not far advanced, and the Master was probably weary and faint after the long and exciting discussion just related; taking advantage, probably, of this evident weariness, some of the Pharisee emissaries from the capital, to whose presence we have before alluded, suggested to one of their friends, who had a residence in the town where the events just related had taken place, that he should invite the Master to come in and rest awhile and partake of a repast. They wished, no doubt, to get him away from the fast increasing crowd, and, when alone with him, they hoped to entangle him in a fresh discussion, and entrap him into some statement which they would be enabled subsequently to make use of, when they formally accused him of heretical, blasphemous teaching. There is no doubt that at this period of his ministry a deep-laid plot had been formed to compass in some way or other the death of this Teacher, whose words and acts were beginning so deeply to compromise their position and influence in the nation.

Ver. 38.—**He marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.** An elaborate system of utter meaningless ablutions, each carried out with particular gestures, had been instituted by the rabbinical schools. All these senseless forms and ceremonies had been developed out of the original

simple directions to secure cleanliness in the Levitical Law. It is probable that our Lord, intending to bring about this discussion, pointedly abstained from even the ordinary ablution on this occasion. The language of ver. 37 seems to point to his entering the house and at once sitting down at the table. The Talmud has many references to these practices. R. Akhibha, it proudly relates, died of thirst rather than pass over these preliminary washings. In the same compilation we read that it was currently supposed that a demon sat on hands unwashed.

Vers. 39, 40.—**And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?** Many of the words spoken on this occasion had been uttered by the Master previously. The variations in them, slight though they be, necessitate often quite a different interpretation. This helps us to come to the conclusion that in these cases the Lord must have spoken such sayings on different occasions. In this place, for instance, in the report of a similar accusation levelled against the Pharisees reported by St. Matthew (xxiii. 25), the second clause of the verse, which treats of the outside of the cup and the platter, reads thus: "but within they are full of extortion and excess." The meaning of this is—while every care had been taken to purify the cup and the dish, *no pains whatever had been paid to the source whence came the contents of these.* They were too often the proceeds of extortion, they were too frequently consumed with self-indulgence. But here, in St. Luke, the second clause reads, "your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." The meaning of these words is, "In spite of your extreme care for the vessels of your table, *your whole moral life is unclean and defiled.* Are you not," argues the Master, "fools to lay down such strict rules to avoid *outward* defilement, while within, in the soul, you allow all manner of wickedness? Surely God, who created the things we see and touch, created the soul also!"

Ver. 41.—**But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.** The translation here should run, *but rather give the things that are in them as alms*, etc. The thought of the *contents* of these cups and dishes—a thought which came out, as we have seen, so prominently in St. Matthew—here is evidently in the Lord's mind. "Ah!" he seems to say, "what you Pharisees and your schools of formalism indeed want is the knowledge of that great law of love" (the law Jesus was ever teaching in such parables, for instance, as that of the good Samaritan). "I will tell you how really to purify, in the eyes of God, these cups and dishes of yours. *Share their contents with your poorer neighbours.*" "Let them do one single loving, unselfish act, not for the sake of the action itself, not for any merit inherent in it; but out of pure good will towards others, and their whole inward condition would be different" (Bishop Basil Jones, in the 'Speaker's Commentary').

Ver. 42.—**But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.** Probably the primitive Law of Moses, which directed that a tenth of every income in Israel should be given up to the service of the invisible King alone, referred to such important products as corn, and wine, and oil, and the like; but the present elaboration of the Law and the Pharisee schools had extended the primitive obligation to the smallest garden herbs, such as mint and rue. The Talmud even condescends to discuss whether, in tithing the seeds of these garden herbs, the very stalk too ought not to be tithed! The Master, ever tender and considerate, does not blame this exaggerated scrupulosity, if it were done to satisfy even a warped and distorted conscience; what he does find fault with, though, and in the bitterest terms language can formulate, is the substitution of and the clear preference for these infinitely lower duties for the higher.

Ver. 43.—**Ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues.** These seats were in a semicircle round the pulpit or lectern of the reader; they faced the congregation. **And greetings in the markets.** The love of these Jews in the time of our Lord for exaggerated titles of respect and honour is well known.

Ver. 44.—**Ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.** Here and in St. Matthew the same imagery was present in the great Teacher's mind—the whitewashed tombs of a cemetery. But in the report of St. Matthew the Master's picture drew a sharp contrast between the fair outward appearance of the clean white tomb, and the decaying, loathsome mass of what represented poor humanity within! When Jesus spoke the saying related by St. Luke here, the imagery was still drawn from the graves in a cemetery; but now he compared his hosts and their school of thought to graves, from the wood and stones of which the whitewash was worn off, and passers-by would walk over them, thus touching them and contracting ceremonial defilement, without

being conscious *what* they were walking over and touching. All contact with sepulchres involved ceremonial defilement; hence the fact of their being constantly whitewashed in order to warn passers-by of their presence. This silent warning of the graves has been compared to the leper's cry, "Unclean, unclean!" with which he warned passers-by of his sad defiling presence. These tombs were whitewashed usually yearly on the fifteenth day of the month Adar (about the beginning of March). Tiberias on the lake was built partly on the site of an old unsuspected cemetery; no true Jew would reside there in consequence.

Ver. 45.—**Then answered one of the lawyers, . . . Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.** It did not follow that all these professed jurists were of the Pharisee sect; some, doubtless, were Sadducees. It seems, however, probable that the greater proportion of these professional teachers and expounders of the Law did belong to the Pharisees. The oral and written Law, based upon the comparatively simple Mosaic code, had now become the absolute guide and director of the whole life of the people in all its smaller details. The various copyists, lecturers, teachers, and casuists, who debated the many doubtful points constantly arising in the perplexing and elaborate system, were all known under the general term "scribes." The *lawyer* was the scribe who had especially devoted his attention to the unravelment of the difficult and disputed questions which arose in the daily life of the people. This lawyer was certainly, considering the company he was associated with, of the strictest sect of Pharisees. This person could not believe that this able Rabbi from Galilee—for that they must all, after the morning's discussion, have allowed Jesus to be—could include him and his holy order in his terrible denunciations, the truth of which the learned scribe not improbably dimly discerned.

Ver. 46.—**Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.** Then the Lord turned to the accomplished Jerusalem scholar, and with withering emphasis pronounced upon his famous and influential order those scathing reproaches which for eighteen centuries have been the woeful inheritance of all hypocritical self-deceivers. How true was the expression, "burdens grievous to be borne," a very superficial study of the Talmud will amply show; for although even the earliest parts of that stupendous compilation were not committed to writing until some time after, yet very much of what we now peruse in those strange, weary treatises existed then in the *oral tradition*, which it was the life-work of scholars and pedants, like the lawyer to whom Jesus was then speaking, to learn, to expound, and to amplify; and these vexatious and frivolous ordinances which the lawyers and scribes pressed home upon the people with such urgency were often shirked and avoided by the learned and cultured scribe-class as a body.

Vers. 47, 48.—**Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.** There are still existing four singular tombs at the foot of Olivet, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Remarkable objects now to the modern traveller at Jerusalem, in all their fresh beauty they would be still more striking in the days of our Lord. The peculiar composite nature of the architecture of these great tombs has decided antiquaries to ascribe the building of these to the days of the later Herods. It is, therefore, not improbable that these conspicuous objects in the landscape, seen from the temple platform, and possibly others like them, which have since perished, were the tombs and sepulchres especially in our Lord's mind when he was speaking to the lawyer, and later at Jerusalem, when he repeated, with some slight variations, the same awful woe (Matt. xxiii. 29). It was, indeed, a speech of awful and cutting irony, these words of Jesus. "Your fathers," he said, "killed the prophets; *you* complete their evil work by building tombs for these slain men of God. In other words, you pretend to make amends for the crimes of past generations by this show of ostentatious piety; but if you really differed from your wicked fathers in spirit, if you indeed honoured, as you profess to do by this gorgeous tomb-building, the holy men of God whom *they* slew, would you be acting as you now are doing—trying, as you know you are, to take my life? Is not *my* life like the lives of those old murdered prophets? are not *my* words resembling theirs?"

Ver. 49.—**Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets.** "'Therefore'—in other words, 'Because of the determined, irreconcilable hatred of you Pharisees, and the people whom you guide, to all that is noble and true and real; because, in spite of your seeming piety, you are fast rooted in impiety'—'*Therefore* said the wisdom of God, I will send.'" The expression, "wisdom of God," has been a difficulty to commentators. The words have been referred (1) to a quotation of the Lord's from a lost apocryphal book of that name; but we have no instance of Jesus ever quoting from an

apocryphal book, known or unknown. (2) St. Luke is here quoting from the similar passage in St. Matthew's Gospel, which, when he was compiling his Gospel, lay before him, and alludes to the earlier memoir as "The Wisdom of God." Against this we have no proof that St. Luke ever saw St. Matthew's Gospel, but a strong probability exists to the contrary; besides which, the expression is never used by an apostolic writer in such a sense. (3) A reference is here intended to the Book of Proverbs, which in the early Church was known by the title of "The Wisdom of God," and the passage referred to is ch. i. 20 and 31. Putting aside all these, it seems best to consider the expression simply as a solemn utterance of the Lord, in which he identifies himself with the "Wisdom of God." And this certainly is borne out by a comparison with the report of St. Matthew of a similar announcement made by Jesus on another occasion (Matt. xxiii. 34). There we read that the Master said, "Behold, *I* send unto you prophets," etc. The *I* is emphatic, and betrays the Divine self-consciousness of Jesus. For a moment the poor Rabbi of Galilee is forgotten, and in his lofty indignation, in his profound sorrow over the stubborn heart of Israel, on both the occasions in which he is reported to have spoken these words of awful prophecy, the Redeemer identifies Himself with *God*. St. Matthew, "Wherefore, behold, *I* send unto you prophets," etc.; St. Luke, "Therefore also said *the Wisdom of God*, I will send them prophets," etc. The form of the prediction and the original thought were both, no doubt, derived by Jesus from the solemn passage in 2 Chron. xxiv. 19, "Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; . . . but they would not give ear," etc. This was followed immediately by the account of the preaching of Zechariah (the instance chosen here by the Lord, ver. 51), and how the faithful witness was stoned by the people in the court of the house of the Lord (2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21). **And apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.** The title "apostle" is joined here with the well-known title of "prophet." The earthly reward that these *his* servants, the apostles, will meet with at the hands of the people of Israel will be the same as that meted out to those old martyr-prophets, viz. persecution and death.

Ver. 50.—**That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation.** He looked on to his own bloody death; to the day of the last witness of Stephen and of James; to the long series of persecutions which his servants would ceaselessly suffer at the hands of the Jews;—he looked on to the state of Israel growing worse and worse, till the day when the storm of Divine anger at last burst over Jerusalem, and overwhelmed the city and the temple and the nation. That terrible day came in less than forty years.

Ver. 51.—**From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple.** The reason, probably, why these two are selected out of the long red list of the noble army, must be sought for in the special position which the recital of these two deaths occupies in the Jewish canon of Scripture; the death of Abel being related in Genesis, the first book of the canon, that of Zacharias in the Second Book of Chronicles, which occupies the last place in the sacred volume (in the Jewish canon). They were simply two martyrdoms of illustrious men at the beginning and at the close of the long many-coloured story of the chosen race. There is no doubt that the Zacharias here alluded to was Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the high priest—a prophet and preacher of righteousness, who at the commandment of the king was stoned in the court of the house of the Lord. This is related in 2 Chron. xxiv. 20—22, in the same passage which was evidently in the Lord's mind when he pronounced the awful woe upon the generation then living. This martyrdom of Zacharias was to his Jewish listeners a very familiar and painful memory. It evidently ranked among the most terrible crimes committed by their fathers, and was the subject of some wild strange legends in the Talmud. The martyr's blood would not dry up; it was still bubbling when Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans took the temple. No sacrifices availed to stop the awful flow. Tradition assigns one of the four great sepulchral monuments at the foot of Olivet, alluded to above, to the murdered Zacharias.

Ver. 52.—**Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.** The Talmud gives us the clue to the Master's words of bitter reproach here. There were very many, in that restless age of inquiry, waiting for the consolation of Israel, who longed to enter into the real meaning of psalm and prophecy; but the scribe, the lawyer, and the doctor, with their strange and unreal interpretations, their wild and fantastic legends, their own often meaningless additions, effectually hindered all real study of the Divine oracles. The Talmud—in the form we now possess it—well represents the teaching of these schools so bitterly censured by the Lord.

Ver. 53.—**And as he said these things unto them.** The older authorities here, instead of these words, read, *and when he was gone out from thence.* Thus, after uttering the last "woe," Jesus appears abruptly to have risen and left the house of his Pharisee entertainers. A crowd of angry men, composed of scribes and lawyers and friends of the Pharisee party, appear to have followed the Galilæan Teacher, whose words just spoken had publicly shown the estimation in which he held the great schools of religious thought which then in great measure guided public Jewish opinion. From henceforth there could be only one end to the unequal combat. The bold outspoken Teacher must, at all hazards, be put out of the way.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*Christ teaching his disciples to pray.* "He was praying in a certain place." Might not *he* have dispensed with the special season and act of prayer? Was not *his* whole life one continuous act of prayer? Did he not always realize that communion with the Father to which praying is the means? Yes; but even he needed the time and the place of prayer. "Made in all things like to his brethren," he, too, required to recruit the energy; he, too, for power with God and men, must lift up his eyes to heaven. Those who say that they can dispense with the particular form and the definite act; that all places are their oratories, and all words and deeds the form of their conference with the Unseen; have realized a spirituality sublimated beyond Christ's, and, it may safely be said, beyond the truth and limits of our human nature. Is it private or is it social prayer of which the evangelist informs us? It would seem that the disciples heard the "strong crying" of their Master; it may be that he and they were united in prayer—he speaking with them and for them, as the Father of the family, as the Head of the household. Be this as it may, one of his followers, impressed with the action, expresses the desire that such instruction should be given them as the Baptist had given to his proselytes. And the request, by whomsoever proffered, occasions an answer which is full of meaning. Notice its two points—*what* to pray for, and *how* to pray.

I. WHAT TO PRAY FOR. This is set forth in the words which are so familiar to the Christian ear. The same words, slightly modified, are found in the sermon from the mount. There they are presented in opposition to the repetitions and much speaking of the Pharisees' prayers; here they are presented as the brief but comprehensive summary of the desires of a true disciple of Christ. "When ye pray, say," etc. Notice two points. 1. A good deal has been made of supposed parallels between the Lord's Prayer and some devotional utterances in Jewish and even in heathen scriptures. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that our Lord appropriated sentences in use by his countrymen: what matters it? Did he not express his innermost feeling on the cross in the words of the Psalter? The affectation of novelty is one of the poorest kinds of affectation. What could have been more worthy of the Divine Teacher than the selection of that which was fitted to nurture the soul-life from the devotional literature which his followers already had, or which had moulded the sweetest elements of the religious consciousness of his nation? And for the rest, if he is the Truth, I should expect to find traces of his thought, rays of the light by which he has lightened all men, in every quarter and age of his world. Truth is always Catholic. The finder of truth unites scattered fragments, and, as he unites, he creates a new thing, a new unity. The thoughts of many generations might be gathered into the prayer which Christ taught his disciples; but not the less on that account would it be a new and blessed fact. 2. Observe, further, there are slight differences in the form of the fourth and the fifth petitions in the prayer as rendered in Luke, and the prayer as rendered in Matthew. May we not infer from this that, whilst the prayer is to be used, whilst it is more than a mere outline, whilst it is indeed the Breviary of the Christian Church, it is not pressed on us as a hard-and-fast rule. For the same reason that rendered it fitting that Christ should teach words, it may well be argued that it is expedient, so far, to prescribe words when the wants of many are to be interpreted, sometimes even when the wants of individual worshippers are to be expressed. But there is an elasticity, a freedom, which is an essential element of spiritual worship. Christ's prayer is not to

be slavishly used. His own deviations in the second from the first giving of it are suggestive of flexibleness. And so also his commands. In the Third Gospel we read, "say ye;" but in the first, "After this manner pray ye." Have these sentences in the heart; let the mind realize the fulness that is in them; at times speak them forth; yet take your liberty. As those who have confidence as to their entering into the holiest in the blood of Jesus, let the cry of the Spirit of adoption freely ascend, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

II. For in teaching to pray, we need instruction, not so much in *what* to say as in HOW TO SAY IT. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." Therefore, no sooner has Christ expounded the rule, or form, than he proceeds to exhibit the spirit of prayer, the right mental attitude, the faith without which the most perfect words are no prayer at all. And this he does, according to his wont, first in the shape of a simple parable, and next through an appeal to and from the heart of Fatherhood. The parable (vers. 5—8) is very short, referring to things of commonplace life. A great many meanings have been fastened on every point in this little story. Take it, however, as it is wiser to do, as bringing out the one feature—that if, as between friend and friend, importunity overcomes reluctance; if it triumphs even over surliness; much more effectual will it be when reluctance to give is only seeming—when, indeed, that of which it takes hold is the willingness of eternal love! Therefore ought we to pray, and not to faint. Augustine (quoted by Trench) has some good sayings on this. "When God sometimes gives tardily, he commends his gifts; he does not deny them. Things long desired are more sweet in their attainment . . . God for a time withholds his gifts, that thou mayest learn to desire great things greatly." It is this great desiring of great things that is the moral of the story. Prayer is not a mere isolated act; it is, as typified in the story of Jacob with whom the angel wrestled, as proved in the history of the Lord himself, an energetic, prolonged dealing with God: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." An old Greek writer calls it "the silence of the soul;" and there is in it the silence of the soul that ceases from the will of self, and worships only the sweet will of God. But there is another view taken in the word of Jesus. In this word it is described (vers. 9, 10) as an asking; beyond this, as a seeking; beyond this even, as a knocking—"an ascending scale of earnestness." To this earnestness the promise is given. Mark how full and unqualified the promise is. The relation of friend to friend can teach much; but there is the relation more intimate still of child to parent, and this can teach more. For here we come into the inner circle of the thoughts which are connected with prayer. Therefore the Lord proceeds to illustrate what it is in his heart to teach by a reference to this analogy. What is it in his heart to teach? Surely, that the Father's good things are open to all his children, and, as the Crown of all, as the Gift of gifts, his own Holy Spirit. This is the climax of all childlike desire. Even in what is lower, the child stretches forth to this as his highest. "Father, give me the Holy Spirit." Is it possible to conceive a refusal? Would a parent who has bread meet the cry of a hungry child with the offer of a stone? Would he torment him by giving a serpent when he asked a fish? or by giving him a scorpion when he asked an egg? If it is so with us imperfect men, if we wish to share our good things with our children, how much more (ver. 13) shall our heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them who ask him? His Fatherhood must be the fountain-light of his children's day. "Fear not," says Christ, "to appeal to it." "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." Thus the Lord answers the request of the disciples. Is it not a request as pertinent to us in the nineteenth as to them in the first century? There is a secret in prayer which only the Lord can teach. We may recall a remarkable passage in the life of Coleridge which suggests this: "Shortly before his death he was conversing, solemnly, although familiarly, on his own history and thoughts. 'I have no difficulty,' he said, 'as to forgiveness. Indeed, I know not how to say with sincerity the clause in the Lord's Prayer which asks forgiveness as we forgive. I feel nothing answering to it in my heart. Neither do I find or reckon the most solemn faith in God as a real object the most arduous act of the reason and will. Oh no, my dear, it is to pray—to pray as God would have us: this is what at times makes me turn cold to my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart and strength, with the reason and will, to believe vividly that God will listen to your voice through Christ, and verily do the thing he pleases thereupon—this is the last, the greatest, achievement of the Christian's

warfare on earth. Teach us to pray, O Lord!' And then," adds his biographer, "he burst into a flood of tears, and begged me to pray for him. Oh, what a sight was there!"

Vers. 14—26.—*Christ and his adversaries.* Observe—

I. THE CONTRAST. "He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb." This was his work. As the Redeemer, he was ever intent on setting the human nature free from its manifold evil by acting on the hidden cause of the evil. It is to be noted that the dumbness is traced to a demon—to the possession of the inner nature by a spirit whose fettering of the man was evidenced in the fettering of the organ of speech. "To cure sorrow by curing sin" is the special service of Christ's Church. In this deeper reference—the reference to sin and the evil one—it is distinguished from mere philanthropy. Philanthropy contemplates the evil, and seeks to remove its occasions in social life or in the personal history. Christianity reaches to the springs of the evil. It contemplates sin; and it sees in sin an enslavement from which the soul is to be delivered by the One stronger than Satan. But see the attitude of the world. There is wonder (ver. 14) on the part of some when the long silence is broken, and the dumb speaks. There is (ver. 15) the tempting or provocation of the Holy One by the demand for some flaming portent. And there is the devilish opposition of the Pharisees, who always hung on his rear, and who, unable to deny facts, insinuated that there was a league between the Lord and Beelzebub. So it is still. The darkness which will not receive the light has degrees of guilt. The blackest form of the guilt is that which cannot but admit the force that is active amongst men, which sees the results of that force, and yet refuses to acknowledge it to be light, closes the soul against it.

"The deaf may hear the Saviour's voice,
The fettered tongue its chain may break;
But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
The laggard soul, that will not wake,
The guilt that scorns to be forgiven,—
These baffle e'en the spells of Heaven.
In thought of these, his brows benign
Not e'en in healing, cloudless shine."

II. THE LORD'S DISCOURSE IN REPLY TO THE THOUGHTS WHICH HE READS. The three "*ifs*" in vers. 18, 19, 20, may well be studied. The first exposes the absurdity of the supposition that he is possessed by Beelzebub. Beelzebub *in* him divided against Beelzebub without him! the one destroying the works of the other! How could such a power stand? The second takes another ground. Before him there are heads of the state; now, their sons claimed to exorcise spirits by repeating formulas of incantation: would they allow that such exorcism was by Beelzebub? They pointed to it as an evidence of Divine favour; how inconsistent and absurd to see the hand of the devil in his work, and the finger of God in theirs? The third drives the argument home. If the same finger as that which they recognized in their so-called exorcisms is being really put forth, as they themselves can discern, is it not clear that the kingdom of God is come on them, and that to resist this kingdom is their condemnation? The parable and the words which follow (vers. 21—26) relate to this. A strong man, fully armed, guards his own court, and all his goods are secure; he and his will stand or fall together. How can the goods be taken? Only by overcoming the strong man, by proving that there is Another stronger than he. It is only through this personal conflict that the possessions can be abstracted. So in the Lord's holy wars, a symbol of which had been given that day. Satan had been holding the afflicted person in his grasp; and the wasted life could be restored only by the mightier power of love—the love incarnated in Christ—"coming upon him, and overcoming him, and taking from him his whole armour wherein he trusted." This he had done; the departure of the malignant spirit, and the restoration of the man, were the sign of his victory to be fulfilled through all the ages.

III. And then follow TWO WORDS CONSTANTLY TO BE PONDERED. 1. In respect of this, Christ's holy war, there can be no neutrality. The eye, perhaps, is directed to the groups of the people "wondering," and of those tempting him. They had not actually taken part with the scorners; they are now reminded, as all in all times are reminded,

that a negative attitude is virtually an attitude of hostility. It is, by so much, a subtraction of the strength to be utilized against the enemy. It is an occasion of stumbling to others. More than this, it withdraws from the attraction of his presence and love, and lays the heart open to alienating influences. Ever to be insisted on is the sentence, "He that is not with me is against me." There is another saying of Christ, one uttered a short time before (ch. ix. 50), which may seem to be at variance with the tone of this saying, "He that is not against us is for us." But a glance at the context shows the difference between the circumstances in which the words are spoken, and the references which they bear. The case brought before us in the ninth chapter is this: John mentions that he and his brethren had seen a man casting out demons in Christ's Name, and that they had forbidden him, because he was not one of their company. This was the only offence. The man acknowledged the authority of Jesus, was really receiving the power from Jesus. He wanted only in knowledge of the Lord; the affection and will were right. And the charge of the Master is, "Do not forbid such a one; no one can do a miracle in my Name who will lightly speak evil of me; he that is not opposing me is, in such a ministry, on our part." In the case introduced in the eleventh chapter Christ is alluding to the attitude of the affections and will. The one sentence is a reproof of exclusiveness of spirit; it is virtually—and truly the lesson is most necessary to-day—"Do not ban one who is seeking the same ends as yourself, who is acknowledging me as you do, because his methods are not yours, or his orders seem of doubtful validity, or he stands apart from your fellowship." The other sentence is a reproof of indecision, of colourlessness in the religious life, of the absence of vital sympathy with the Lord. Virtually it is, "Let every one take his side, and stand by it; be out and out with me; have his share in my war with the devil: for all purposes, the unsympathetic or faint-hearted is my enemy; he whose life by its influence, whose action by its tone and aims, is not gathering with me, is practically scattering." We hear the old cry, sounding ever on, "Who is on the Lord's side?" 2. The picture of moral deterioration in vers. 24—26 is most graphic. Those around Christ had been witnesses to the exodus of an unclean spirit. Let them suppose that such a spirit is impelled by a ceaseless activity; "it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, but finding none." It must have some embodiment. It resolves to return to the old home—"the house whence he came out." "How can a devil find rest which the creature can find only in God? He has lost it for ever; he seeks it in vain in all waste places, which otherwise please him; he seeks it especially in vain there where God, the Lord of creation, will have his rest, and where, therefore, the devil, if he can force an entrance, finds himself relatively best—namely, in man. Therefore the desire soon returns upon him to look after his own more peculiar house" (Stier). He finds the old home "swept and garnished." "Empty" is a word added—and an expressive word it is—by Matthew. Good the sweeping would have been, if the house had not been empty. God is not there; it is open to the evil one. There is his opportunity. He comes to it, resumes possession, but with reinforcements. "Seven other spirits more evil than himself. And the last estate is worse than the first." Verily, a sketch awfully true! It was applied by the Lord to the generation whom he addressed. Israel had indeed been swept from the corruption of idolatry; it had been garnished by the traditions of the elders, by the scrupulosities of the Pharisees; but it was empty—a living faith in God had been crushed out. And the attitude of its wise men towards the Truth was the token of an occupation by a spirit of darkness, sevenfold more virulent than in the earlier days. But its applications reach to all. "He that hath an ear, let him hear."

Vers. 27, 28.—*The voice out of the crowd.* The preacher never knows how far his words reach, what responses they elicit, or what chords they cause to vibrate. Here is one "out of the crowd,' a witness for the emotion of many hearts which had felt the mighty power of the Prophet. That she had any real insight into the mission of Jesus, or that she was really attracted to the truth uttered by him, cannot be affirmed. It was, perhaps, only a passing excitement, "a most artlessly unintelligent outcry of mere womanly feeling." But the soul had been stirred; "while it had mused, the fire burned, then spake she with her tongue." A woman's word!—the idea with which it is charged being the honour which had been put on her whose relation to the Prophet was that of mother. She was the echo of the angel in his salutation, the pioneer

of the generations who should call Mary blessed. The answer of Christ is very striking in respect of—

I. THAT WHICH IT IMPLICITLY CONDEMNS. We see, in this incident, the germ of Mariolatry. A natural interest in the one who had been so highly favoured grew, and corrupted as it grew, into a veneration for her person, and the supposed influence of her motherhood. Instead of recognizing the sacredness which had been put on motherhood, and dwelling on the very and real humanity of the Lord, the reverence of the mind was gradually transferred to the image of the woman, as that rose before the imagination of the nameless one of the crowd, nursing the babe. And the mother and her motherhood became, like Gideon's ephod, a snare to the Israel of God. Observe how constantly and expressively Christ bids away from the region of such veneration. His silence as to his mother implicitly condemns it. He recognizes her, not as mother, but in the title "Woman." His last earthly care was for her, but the sentence which conveyed it was, "*Woman*, behold thy Son!" and to John, "Behold *thy* mother!" And his declinature to allow the praise to pass unchallenged, his call to consider something else as the only legitimate blessedness, confirms the reproof (see the parallels, Matt. xii. 46—50; Mark iii. 31—35). "What is the preaching of the Reformation more than the word which the Lord here speaks? In the Council of Trent they heard not that voice, but repelled it with anathema—for a maranatha to themselves" (Stier).

II. THAT WHICH IT OPPOSES TO THE CRY OUT OF THE CROWD. Mark the "yea rather." The woman's saying is not denied, but thought is directed to the only legitimate cause of blessedness. The mother herself was blessed because she had given herself entirely to the Word of God. She had felt herself the Lord's handmaiden when the salutation came at which she was troubled; and when the Divine Son, even as a Child, spoke, she kept his sayings in her heart. This, then, is singled out as the "*yea rather*, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it." It is a word both of *encouragement* and of *searching*. There is a tinge almost of jealousy in her who accosts him. One had been selected for the honour which she might have coveted. "Nay," is the encouragement, "this is the honour which thou canst share with her. If she had it not, whilst thou hadst it, she would have no lasting honour, whilst thou wouldst have praise evermore. If thou hast this honour, thou art near me as she is." The vital question is—What is the relation of the life to the Word of God? To have heard it is well, but there must be both the hearing and the keeping. "He that hath my words, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." The only relationships which Christ recognizes are spiritual relationships. They are the blood-relationships in the family of heaven. "He stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!"

Vers. 29—36.—*Truth; the conditions of its reception, and our responsibility with regard to it.* We are on trial, placed in a scene of conflict between good and evil, and called to make our election. Our whole life is such an election; every day, every action, goes to complete that solemn probation on which depend issues of unspeakable moment. Such has always been the contention of Christian teachers. There is a higher aspect of life than that. To say that life is a Divine education is to give the fuller and nobler conception of God's purpose concerning us. He is not merely testing us; he is training us, disciplining our character, seeking to perfect our moral being. This world is his school, and the influences of which we are conscious, the events which mark our days, the varieties in befalling and condition, are the schoolmasters through which he is stimulating or correcting, guiding or controlling, the natures with which we are endowed. But it is wrong to set this higher, as against the other aspect referred to. The two—that which regards probation and that which regards education—are not opposed. Our part is to refuse the evil and to choose the good, and to stand by our choice. In respect of this we are on trial. We are called to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Yet, in all, God is working in us to will and to do; educating the response of our will to his, that as his dear children we may walk before him in love. In this passage the Lord reminds all to whom he speaks of the relation of the human mind to the truth that looks down from heaven. His discourse bears on the test of inward state supplied by the attitude of the mind to the truth. Let us listen to it as reminding us (1) of *the proper and characteristic force of truth*: (2) of *the*

spiritual condition in which this force is realized; (3) of *the responsibility with regard to it which rests on us individually.*

I. THE PROPER AND CHARACTERISTIC FORCE OF TRUTH. Christ is grieved with the generation whose representatives are with him. He had wrought in their presence the works of God; he had spoken to them the words of God. And what did they aver? That he was secretly leagued with Beelzebub; in the ministry of love they saw the malignities of hell, the finger, not of God, but of Satan. Those who shrank from such wilful misconstruction clamoured for a sign—some portent in the skies, some miracle so striking as to prove the Divine Source of his mission. And, feeling the pain of this contradiction of sinners, he says (vers. 29—32), "Sign, more than the preaching itself? What Jonah was to the Ninevites—the testimony against them—that the Son of man shall be. Sign, more than the preaching itself? The heathen Queen of Ethiopia shall condemn them; for her the preaching of Solomon was enough, and the Greater than Solomon is here. The people of heathen Nineveh shall condemn them, for they repented when the prophet preached; and yet this generation repents not, though the Son of God is himself speaking to it. Sign? The truth is its own sign. It is open; it may be known and read of all men. It is light (ver. 34), not covered by a bushel, but set as a candle on a candlestick, that all who come into the house may see it." This is the abiding characteristic of truth. It is light. Pharisees with cabbalistic lore, so-called philosophers, with their doctrine for the initiated, their pretentious knowledge, are not the light-givers. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light." When the soul is interpreted or helped; when God in nature, in providence, or in thought, is declared; when the relations and proportions of facts are discerned; when the order of the universe is apprehended and felt; when, if puzzle and problem are not seen through, the light pierces into what is beyond, and the heart is enabled to say, "I cannot understand, I love;"—when thus the truth is known, the truth that is known makes free. It is the freedom of light before which the darkness passes. Let us realize the self-evidencing nature of truth. Signs outward and carnal it does not need. What speaks of Christ in miracle is not the mere wonder. That only called attention to the real sign, the object and the manner of the work. The claim of truth consists, not in what adheres to it, but in what it is. We do not need a sign to tell us that the sun shines; the shining is the sign. We do not need a sign to tell us that a candle is lit; the candlestick shows that. And so with regard to Christianity. As it has eloquently been said, "The central unquestionable miracle is Jesus himself—One from the cradle to the grave, walking in spotless purity, through all temptation wearing a conscience without a scar, treading the great deep of human life and never wetting his feet with the spray; equally at home with saints in the glory of the mount, and with men writhing in misery at its base; elect to wipe away the tear of humanity, to bear it undwarfed and undimmed to the heavenly places, yet to whom we can go when the shame burns in the cheek, and the sweat stands on the brow." Ah! yes; and this *miracle* is still writing its mark on the conscience and life of man. Persons speak dolefully about the decadence of the evangelical faith, and indeed the signs are mixed; but the evangel of the living Christ is still the power of God—never more than now

> "The presence of a good diffused,
> And in diffusion ever more intense."

Not less, but all the more, as the world waxes old, and the needs of men become more urgent and complicated, is this evangel "the light shining in the darkness, and the darkness will never overtake it."

II. But now observe THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH THE FORCE OF THE TRUTH IS REALIZED. These conditions, as stated by the Lord, are two. 1. There is the *quality of the receptive organ.* "The light of the body is the eye" (ver. 34). Whatever affects the eye affects the impression of the object beheld. For example, the very common defect known as *colour-blindness* necessarily vitiates the discernment. Any injury to the eye, any disturbance of the wondrously delicate mechanism, mars the vision. All this has its moral counterpart. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The truth presented to the soul may yet not be apprehended as truth by the soul, and the fault lies in the soul itself. The moral necessarily acts on the intellectual. The intellectual life that springs out of or develops in harmony with a developing spiritual life is the

light of the soul. All is then beheld in its real force and its right proportions. But not otherwise. And therefore the great Teacher emphasizes the need of "the *single* eye," the mind purely intentioned to know God and his will and truth, and this intention undisturbed by appetite of sense, or by prejudice closing against the evidence of the light. Ah, the single eye! The tiniest mote may confuse and becloud. One cunning bosom sin, one aberration from the right, so small as scarcely to be thought of, may yet impair the organ. And once let the eye become evil, "thy body also is full of darkness." 2. There is, as the second condition, *a complete enlightenment of mind* (ver. 36). See to it that every part of the thinking, willing, activity is submitted to the light. The whole being must be yielded to it. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be *any wicked way* in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." It is the partial illumination which we have so often to deplore. The prophet describes Ephraim as "a cake *not turned*"—one part of it under the influence of the fire, burned; the other part uninfluenced and doughy. So there is often to be noticed an imperfect sanctifying of character, an imperfect acquaintance with the way of the Lord. Men are always apt to measure what is due to God, what is to be kept for themselves. The apostle says, "The God of peace sanctify you *wholly*." We are often pained by a narrowness of view in Christians, by their failure in learning the lesson suggested by the evangelist, when he speaks of Christ "looking round about on all things." We are often pained, again, by a so-called breadth of view—no height in it, no mountain, forgetful that in the city which lieth foursquare, the length and the breadth and the height of it are *equal*. Oh, how needful is the prayer to increase in the knowledge of his will *in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*! Offer all, conscience, intellect, emotions, affections, will, all to the light; make an unreserved surrender. "If the whole be full of light, having no part dark, that whole is full of light." Not like a candle burning dimly, flickering and feeble, but as "when by its bright shining it giveth light."

III. Here, then, is THE RESPONSIBILITY WITH REGARD TO THE TRUTH. Men discuss whether we are responsible for our faith. We are responsible for ourselves, and what we are individually will greatly determine what, individually, we believe. This seems most obvious. "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness" (ver. 35). There is a light, a capacity of receiving and verifying the light, in every man—unless, indeed, in rare cases, or in those who are described as "past feeling." In speaking to men, in preaching the gospel to every creature, we assume this. And it is this which defines the responsibility resting on all. For the state of this receptive faculty, for its exercise, we must answer. "Take heed," says the Master. How solemn and expressive his sentence! Not merely "that the light shine," or "lest the light be extinguished," but more strongly still, "that this inner light be not darkness itself"—that what should lead to God does not take from God and become an angel, a power, of darkness. This was the catastrophe already fulfilling in the Pharisees, the catastrophe which he had declared (see parallel passage, Matt. xii.) to be the sin against the Holy Ghost. And the word of warning still confronts us. Take care of all that savours of sophisticating the conscience. Take care of all that cuts off from the light. Take care lest your prayers lose tone, your desires lose fervour, your soul loses interest in Divine things. Take care lest any way of thought, through companions, or literature, or otherwise, blight what is best and holiest in yourselves. The life of God in a soul is very sensitive. It needs to be guarded; it needs to be kept open to all Heavenward influence; it needs to be ever filled anew out of the fulness of God. A very little may destroy the organ, may separate from the vision. "The little rift within the lute by-and-by will make the music mute." Walk in the light. As the Light of God is ever seeking you, so let the light in you be ever seeking him. "Feed daily on Christ in your heart by faith, with thanksgiving." Do God's will with all the strength. Then the life is a beauteous order. Apart from the Light, the life is a chaos, a darkness *how great!*

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*The influence of devout example*, etc. The fact which is stated in the first verse of this chapter suggests—

I. THE INFLUENCE OF A DEVOUT EXAMPLE. "As he was praying . . . one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray." It was the sight of his Master in the act of prayer which prompted this disciple to make his request. Thus devotion in him begat devotion in them. All actions, good and bad, are contagious. Bad actions entice the evil, and good ones attract and inspire the holy and the pure. An oath is an encouragement to the profane, a prayer is an incentive to the devout. Only infinite wisdom can tell whether we produce the greater effect by the unconscious influence of our life, or by the result of direct, verbal persuasion. But we can all see that they go well together; that persuasion to piety with the drawback of a prayerless life would be of very small account. But to be a man of prayer, to be (without ostentation) known to be such, to be evidently "at home" with God, to be felt to be one that continually seeks Divine guidance in the daily conduct of life,—this is to be influential for good. It is to be saying in the most effective way, "It is good for me to draw near to God," and indeed to be saying most forcibly also, "It is good for *you* to draw near to God." The man of sustained piety, of devout habits which he never lays down, who compels men to feel that in his view God is not to be forgotten or his service relegated to the second place, is a power for good; he is living a truth of vital consequence, he is a blessing to the society in which he moves.

II. THE HIGHEST FUNCTION OF A RELIGIOUS TEACHER. "Lord, teach us to pray." 1. Not to instruct in sacred truth, high as that is, enlightening the mind on the greatest of all subjects. 2. Not even to cause disciples to meditate on their spiritual condition, and to consider how they are themselves affected by the truth they have learned. 3. But to lead to God in direct and immediate devotion: the teacher or religious friend who helps another to unburden his heart in prayer to God, to pour out his spirit in submission or in dedication to the Divine Saviour, is rendering the highest possible service one human being can render to another.

III. THE OFFICE OF THE DIVINE TEACHER. This is not only or chiefly to instruct or to cause us to inquire, but rather to lead us to God in direct, spiritual communion. This Jesus does by: 1. Opening the way to God; becoming the one and only Mediator between God and man, through whom we have constant and perfect access to the Holiest One. 2. Showing us the efficacy of prayer; and this he does (1) by his own most strong and satisfying assertion (vers. 9—13); and (2) by revealing God to us as a Father who distinguishes each one of his children from all others, earnestly desires the return of each absent child, and purposes to renew and transform every son and daughter into his own likeness. Such a Father could not but listen and respond when his children cry to him. 3. Giving to us a deep sense of the need of prayer; and this he does by his own example, and also by his teaching. In this he so impresses us with the value of each human soul, with the sinfulness of sin, with the possibilities of spiritual worth and sacred usefulness, and with the grand opening for the faithful soul in the higher spheres beyond, that we are impelled to come to God for his redeeming, sanctifying, strengthening grace.—C.

Vers. 2—4.—*The true service of the Lord's Prayer.* It is a very painful and pitiful thing that words which came from the lips of the great Master of the spiritual and the living should have been allowed to degenerate into an unspiritual and lifeless form. That this has been the case to a large extent with the "Pater-noster" is a lamentable fact. It is very doubtful whether Jesus Christ ever intended these words which he gave to his disciples to be a permanent formula for the Christian Church. It is clear that the true obedience to his Word is not found in a number of correct and regular repetitions of the phrases, but in the devotion which is rendered in the *strain and spirit* of the "prayer." The true service to be gained from "the Lord's Prayer" is to gather from it the way in which to draw nigh to God, not only in the worship of the sanctuary, but in the quiet, unseen fellowship of the chamber. What Christ would say to us is this, that in our prayer to God—

I. WE SHOULD GIVE A PROMINENT PLACE TO THE PROGRESS OF HIS SPIRITUAL KINGDOM. Out of six petitions the first three are devoted to the growth of the glory and the kingdom of God. This is surely a very significant fact. It rebukes all selfishness and short-sightedness in the presence of God. It invites us, and indeed it summons us, to make the object of our first and deepest solicitude the cause of Jesus

Christ, the exaltation of our Divine Father in the minds and in the lives of men. It suggests to us the consideration whether we are as much concerned as our Master would have us be for this great issue. How much do we care that God's Name is profaned as it is, his will left undone and violated as it is, his claims disregarded as they are, by the irreverent, by the disloyal, by the disobedient children of men? In prayer our mind should turn readily and frequently to this theme.

II. THAT WE SHOULD ASK FOR GOD'S HELP IN THE CONDUCT OF OUR TEMPORAL AFFAIRS. "Give us day by day our daily bread" is a petition that not only warrants, but requires, that we make our bodily necessities and all matters pertaining to our world-life the subject of prayer. It is right to ask for strength and skill, for wisdom and guidance, that we may discharge our daily duties and earn our livelihood honestly in the sight of all men. It is wrong to leave this out of our daily devotion. Jesus Christ would have us look to God for the supply of temporal needs, and ask his blessing and aid in securing it. We shall work all the more worthily, honourably, uprightly, through the day for asking God's guidance at its commencement; we shall make a better use of what we earn if we continually seek strength of God to earn it.

III. THAT WE SHOULD SEEK EARNESTLY FOR THE DIVINE FAVOUR. "Forgive us our sins," etc. It should be a matter of vital interest to us that we are walking in the light of God's loving favour, our sins forgiven, and ourselves regarded as his beloved children, reconciled to him in Jesus Christ. God's abiding favour should be the very sunshine of our soul, the presence of which makes all things bright, the absence of which throws everything into dark shadow.

IV. THAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR DIVINE HELP IN OUR SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE. "Lead us not," etc. We should be daily recognizing the fact that our condition here is that of men that are fighting a hard battle against powerful enemies; that we need continual deliverance from evils which beset us; that the worst foes that assail us are those which would lead us into sin and down to shame and death. In this supreme struggle we need the arm of the Almighty on our side. If he be on our side, we shall conquer; if not, we shall be defeated. Therefore let us seek daily help from our heavenly Father for the daily conflict through which we pass on our way homeward.

V. THAT THERE ARE TWO SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS under which alone we can expect to find favour with God. 1. That we breathe a forgiving spirit in our relations with our fellow-men (ver. 4). 2. That we shun the path where perilous temptation lurks; for how can we ask God to "lead us not" thither, when we deliberately walk into it?—C.

Ver. 2.—*The will of God.* "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." A few very short words with a very large meaning. We may ask what doing God's will here on earth as in heaven—

I. WOULD MEAN TO OUR RACE. It would mean very much more than the triumph of the Strong One. 1. It would mean the rule of the absolutely *Holy One*—of that One who only wills that which is pure, just, good, in every possible relation. It would mean, therefore, the abolition of all wrongs of every kind, and the establishment of the right and the true in every scene and sphere. 2. Also the guidance of the perfectly *Wise One*—of that One who chooses the very best means to secure the right ends. It would bring about the adoption of the wisest course in the pursuit of every worthy aim. 3. Also the supremacy of the altogether *Benevolent One*—of him who desires the perfect welfare of all his creatures, of all his children—their temporal prosperity, their spiritual well-being.

II. WOULD MEAN TO OURSELVES. The light in which it would present itself to our minds would, perhaps, be this—that *our* Divine Father was exalted to the throne of humanity; that he whom we worship and whom we love and obey had become the object of the reverence, the affection, the obedience, of all mankind; that he who, in our heart's deepest convictions, is alone worthy to receive the homage of the race, was receiving it; and in that crowning triumph we should find our victory and our joy.

III. DEMANDS OF US THAT IT MAY BE REALIZED. 1. And the first demand is that we ourselves become subject to his holy will. And to do this we must (1) accept his Son as our Divine Teacher, Redeemer, Lord (John vii. 29; 1 John iii. 23); (2) live in daily obedience to his will as revealed in his Word; (3) bow in meekness of spirit to his will, whatever he may ordain for us. 2. And the second is that we seek, in prayer

for his transforming influence, that the will of evil men may be overthrown, and his holy will be done; that he would send forth noble workers into the great harvest-field (ch. x. 2); that he would greatly bless the labours of those who are sowing the seed of the kingdom, and cause it to multiply a hundredfold. 3. And that by our lives and by our lips we commend the truth of his Word, the gospel of his grace, to the understanding and the conscience of all whom we can affect.—C.

Vers. 5—10.—*Continuance in prayer.* These words of our Lord are not intended to present God to us as one that is reluctant to respond to our prayer, and that, consequently, has to be besought and entreated with growing energy and ardour, as Baal's prophets imagined to be the case with the deity they worshipped (1 Kings xviii.). Rather should we think of him as of a Divine Father who, *for our sake*, delays his answer to our prayer, in order that we may be disciplined in devotion, and in order that he may give us what we ask, with a fuller blessing in the bestowal.

I. THE FACT OF UNANSWERED PRAYER. It is a fact attested by the common, if not the universal, experience of the devout, that prayer is often presented to God without any answer being presently and consciously received. And this is not only true of prayer that is not worthy of the name—of mere sacred formalities which proceed only from the sense and not from the soul; it is true of genuine, spiritual devotion. Men honestly and earnestly pray God to give them blessings, and he withholds them. The sickness is not removed, the life not spared, the burden not lightened, the son not reclaimed, the friend not reconciled, the cause not blessed, the wrong not stayed, the faithful not delivered; and the hearts of the people of God are filled with sorrow and dismay; the question that rises to their lips is, "How long, O Lord, how long dost thou not respond?"

II. THE MEANING OF GOD'S SILENCE. 1. It may mean that we ask for the *wrong thing*—for that which we think will help us, but which God knows will harm us; which (he knows) will do us much more of lasting, spiritual harm than confer on us present bodily or temporal relief. 2. It may mean that we are expecting the answer in the *wrong way*. Like Naaman, we may have laid down, in our own thought, the precise way in which God is to help or heal us, and it may be with us, as it was with him, that God is purposing to respond in another way altogether—perhaps by some simple means (as in his case), which we are disposed to consider unworthy of the occasion; perhaps by some way in which we shall be taught a lesson in humility or in some other grace. 3. It may mean that we are expecting the answer *at the wrong time*, much sooner than it would be wise for God to give it, or well for us to receive it.

III. THE REWARD OF CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER. We find, as our Lord teaches us in the parable, that while our friend will not always give us our request at once, yet he will grant it if we do but persevere (ver. 8). And so with our Divine Friend; he may not answer our prayer at once; he may delay long to respond to us. He may know that if we received immediately everything we desired of him, we should become unduly confident or be otherwise injuriously affected. He may know and may wish us to learn by disciplinary experience that

> "His help is always sure,
> His methods seldom guessed;
> Delay will make our pleasure pure,
> Surprise will give it zest."

But sooner or later, in one way or in another, in his own good time, God will reward our persevering prayer with his effectual blessing. We must ask, and go on asking, and we *shall* certainly receive; must knock, and go on knocking, at the door of his mercy and his power, and it *will* assuredly be opened to us. This will be found in our seeking: 1. Conscious and joyous acceptance with God through faith in Jesus Christ. 2. Our spiritual growth. 3. Our usefulness in that especial sphere in which we are engaged for him.—C.

Vers. 11—13.—*The argument from the human fatherhood to the Divine.* Jesus Christ revealed the Father *to* men, and he revealed him *as* the Father *of* men. He taught us to address him as such (ver. 2), and to feel toward him as such. He would

have us realize that God sustains to us a relationship very closely indeed corresponding to that which a human father sustains to his child. In the text he teaches us that this analogy is so close and so real that we may draw practical inferences from the lower to the higher one. The particular conclusion which our Lord draws is—

I. FROM OUR GIVING TO HIS. No human father would give his son a stone when appeal was made to him for bread, etc.; would put him off with a response which would only be a bitter disappointment. Such a one would be not only an exception to his kind, but would be guilty of an act that would be simply monstrous in general regard. If, then, we, "being evil," cannot withhold "good gifts" from our children, how much less will the heavenly Father deny his blessings to us, his sons and daughters! What we, with our finite and limited love, could not refuse, it is certain that he, in his infinite goodness and boundless pity, will readily bestow. There are two blessings which we particularly want of God our heavenly Father—*provision* for our *temporal* well-being, and *succour* for our *soul*. We cannot live without these. Our bodily nature craves the one, our spiritual nature needs the other. Bread we must have, and all that "bread" stands for, that we may live happily and serviceably as those that tread the path of mortal life. But "man cannot live on bread alone;" he needs those higher and holier gifts which nourish the soul, which feed the flame of piety and zeal, which strengthen him for spiritual conflict, and give him the victory over his worst enemies. For these two great blessings we may confidently ask God, and he will assuredly grant them. It is much more certain that God our Father will provide for our real necessities, and will strengthen our souls with all needful Divine influences, than it is certain that the kindest human father will not mock his beloved children when they appeal for his bounty. With holy boldness, then, may we go to the throne of grace, and pray for all those things that are requisite alike for the body as for the soul. But we may carry this argument with which our Lord has supplied us into other spheres, and may thus "assure our hearts" concerning him.

II. FROM OUR FORGIVING TO HIS. We may have a difficulty in realizing the great truth that God is willing to forgive us all our sin and to reinstate us fully in his favour. But if as sons we have been forgiven by our parents, or if as parents we have forgiven our children and taken them back into the fulness of our favour, we may argue safely from the human fatherhood to the Divine. If we, "being evil," with such small and scanty magnanimity as we possess, can forgive freely, how much more can he—he whose ways of mercy are as much higher than ours as the heaven is higher than the earth!

III. FROM OUR GUIDANCE TO HIS. How impossible it is for any of us that is a father to refuse guidance to one of our children when he comes to ask it of us! Only the most heartless, the most unfatherly, could think of declining it. And since that is so with us, in all our human imperfection, how positive it is that the Divine Father will guide us by the shaping of his providence, or by the prompting of his Spirit, when we see not our way, but make known our request unto him to "lead us all our journey through"!

IV. FROM OUR SOLICITUDE TO HIS. One of the very greatest questions we propose to ourselves is this—Does God care enough for each one of us to renew our life in another realm when we leave this world? Jesus Christ's declaration is *the* answer to this question (John v. 24—29). But we find strong, reassuring help here. How much do we care for the continuance of the life of our children? How much do we *not* care? What words will express our parental solicitude that death should not strike them down, that they should *live*, and that their life should be large, free, blessed? If that is our concern for them, what will not God our Father desire for us? What will he not care that we do not perish in the arms of death, but have everlasting life in the embrace of his own heavenly love?—C.

Ver. 20.—*Christianity the benignant power.* Lasting *power* shows solid worth. The corrupt empire falls; the false system is exploded; the demoralizing custom is discarded. That which, under all changes, shows itself strong and enduring, is proved to be sound and good. But add the element of *benignity*. Jesus Christ adduces his beneficent power in the expulsion of evil spirits from the bodies of men as a convincing evidence of the Divine presence; that being done, "no doubt the kingdom of God is come." Power for good, for healing, for restoring, for transforming, such power con-

tinuing for many generations and acting under all skies,—"no doubt" that is from above; it is of God. If we find that Christianity has proved itself to be the one great benignant power in the world, exerting a gracious, redeeming, elevating influence on humanity, then "no doubt the kingdom of God is come" upon us. We shall see that this is so if we consider—

I. THE STATE OF SOCIETY WHEN JESUS CAME. And we have to take into our account the *parental tyranny*; the position of *woman* in her state of inferiority and even degradation; the universal sentiment toward the *stranger* or the foreigner, spoken of and treated as a "barbarian" and an enemy; the prevalence of *war*, and its conduct with every imaginable cruelty and the most shocking recklessness of life; the prevalence of *slavery* under a system in which the slaves were regarded and treated as absolutely without any rights or claims whatsoever; the existence of *gladiatorial shows*, in which the lives of hundreds of strong men in the midst of life were sacrificed for sport to men and even to women; the common usage of *infanticide*; the abundance of *pauperism*, existing to such an extent that in the time of Cæsar "nearly three-fourths of the whole population of the city of Rome were on the roll of public succour;" the institution of *torture*; the practice of licentious *shows*, and of unnatural and unnameable vices. We have here no more than a bare outline of the evils which existed in the world when "Jesus was born at Bethlehem."

II. WHAT AMELIORATION CHRISTIANITY HAS WROUGHT AND IS WORKING. Three things have to be mentioned—one to be admitted, and the other two to be maintained. 1. That there have been one or two auxiliary forces in the field, which have contributed towards the elevation of mankind; but theirs has been very much indeed the smaller share. 2. That Christianity was prevented from doing all it would have done by being bitterly opposed. 3. That its action has been most pitifully weakened by its truth having been so greatly corrupted. But what, notwithstanding, has it accomplished? (1) It has cast out the demon of parental tyranny, and made the child to be the object of respect and kindness. (2) It has raised woman, and made her the helpmeet, in every way, of her husband, causing her to be treated with deference and consideration. (3) It has mitigated the terrible severities of war, carrying its red cross of succour into the very midst of the battle-field, and, to a large extent, removing its hideous savagery. (4) It has gone far towards exorcising the demon of slavery. (5) It has abolished the shameful scenes of the old Roman arena. (6) It has extinguished infanticide and torture wherever it has authority to legislate. (7) It is carrying on a stern and victorious campaign against impurity and intemperance. (8) It has built hospitals, lunatic asylums, reformatories, orphanages, almshouses, by the hundred, by the thousand. (9) It has opened the school-door in which youth everywhere is prepared for the duties, the joys, and the conflicts of life. (10) It has sent forth its many hundreds of heralds to carry light, peace, love, purity, wisdom, into the haunts of superstition, violence, and vice. (11) It is penetrating the worst slums of our great cities, seeking out the profane, the abandoned, the criminal; and with its touch of holy pity, which surely proceeds from "the finger of God," it is casting out the demons of sin and shame. At the present rate of progress, another half-century will see a most wonderful and glorious change in the aspect of the human world.

III. THE CONCLUSION THAT WE DRAW. If Christianity has done, is doing, will do, all this, then "no doubt" in its advent we have the coming of the "kingdom of God." No doubt Christ has *that to say to us* which it is infinitely worth our while to know; that *to do for us* it is our highest privilege to have done on our behalf; that *to be to us* which it is immeasurably desirable he should be. Let us learn of him; be led by him into paths of sacred service; and invite him to become our personal Lord and Saviour.—C.

Vers. 24—26.—*Spiritual failure.* These words apply to—

I. THE JEWISH CHURCH. Delivered of the demon of idolatry, and having a house "swept and garnished," perfected with all external religious proprieties, it became possessed of the worse demon of hypocrisy—worse in that it was more hopeless. For the idolater may be and often is convicted of his folly and is led into wisdom and piety; but the formalist and hypocrite is scarcely ever, if ever, won from his unreality and spiritual pride.

II. MANY A CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Delivered from worldliness, from vanity, from vice, in the first instance, many a Church has cherished the cruel demon of persecution, or the evil demon of pride, or the dangerous demon of formality. And it proves to be harder to awaken the sinful Church, living under its Lord's condemnation, to a new repentance and a revival of religious earnestness, than it was at first to conduct it into his kingdom. Its last state is less hopeful than the first.

III. MANY A HUMAN SOUL. 1. Men go a very long way in the direction of heavenly wisdom. They listen, they understand, they feel, they purpose, they pray, they profess, they preach or teach Divine truth to others, they conform their conduct to the requirements of the Word of God. 2. In this good course they are arrested, and they return on their way. Their devotedness slackens; their habits of worship become less regular; their habits of life become less scrupulous; the "spirit of their mind" grows secular, and indeed profane; they fall out of the ranks of the earnest, and, at last, even of the reverent; perhaps they descend to the unworthy, and even to the criminal. Not literally, but metaphorically speaking, there are "evil spirits" in them. They "are gone away backward." 3. Thus returning, they have almost hopelessly separated themselves from Christ; the "last state of that man is worse than the first" (see Heb. vi. 4—6). Not that renewal is *absolutely* "impossible," but it is so spiritually difficult and so exceedingly rare that it may be said to be *morally* impossible. You cannot restore elasticity to the spring that has been overbent. You cannot make pungent again the salt that has lost its savour. You cannot infuse new force into truths which an emasculating familiarity has deprived of their virtue and their interest. Far more hopeless is the condition of the human soul that has drifted away from Christ than the one that has never heard of his Name or never been impressed with his claims. Therefore what? (1) Let the Christian teacher see that his work is deep as well as broad; that the roots of sacred conviction are well planted in the soil; let him not be satisfied with his "converts" when they only manifest feeling; let him be assiduous in his attention, earnest in his prayer, until he is well assured that the soul for whom he is watching (Heb. xiii. 17) has yielded himself, fully and whole-heartedly, to the Lord his Saviour. (2) Let the Christian disciple be on his guard; let him "watch and pray" lest he come under the power of some insidious temptation, lest he "lose that which he has wrought," lest the powers and principles that are from God and that have entered and touched his soul should depart from him, lest evil influences that are from beneath should take possession of him; for in that sad event he will be in a far worse spiritual state, more hopeless and pitiable, than if he had never heard the voice of Christ, and never risen at his call.—C.

Vers. 31, 32.—*Christ and Solomon.* It is one of the strong arguments in favour of our Lord's Divinity that, while there was that about him which made him free to claim for himself the attribute of meekness (Matt. xi. 29), and which saved him from the charge of immodesty, yet was there in him a wonderful and wholly exceptional consciousness of greatness. On appealing to his own consciousness, he found himself anterior in existence to Abraham (John viii. 58); greater (of more consequence to the nation) than the very temple itself, that object of boundless veneration (Matt. xii. 6); living in heaven even while dwelling on the earth (John iii. 13); associated in the most intimate way possible and (to us) inconceivable with the Divine Father (John v. 19; vi. 46; x. 30); wiser and worthier than the "wise man" himself (text). It may not be surprising that One claiming to be a Prophet should believe himself to be superior in worth and work to Jonah; for there was nothing remarkably great either in the moral character or in the professional course of that erratic prophet. But in respect to Solomon? It may be said that only One who could claim to be highest among the highest was entitled to say, "I am greater than he." But the actual superiority of Christ to Solomon is apparent enough if we consider—

I. THE DIGNITY OF HIS PERSON. The Son of David was great, as such; but nothing in comparison with the Son of God. The King of Israel was great, as such; but nothing when compared with the Prince of peace, with him "who sitteth on the throne" of heaven.

II. THE CHARACTER OF HIS WISDOM. Solomon was very learned in the knowledge of his age (1 Kings iv. 29—34); he was also very skilled in the intellectual conflicts

of his time (1 Kings x.); he had, moreover, a very keen discernment of the ways and wants and weaknesses of human nature (Proverbs). And he had (what Jesus Christ had not) an acquaintance, gained by his own experience, of the hollowness of earthly greatness, of the pitiful consequences of human folly. But the wisdom of Christ was the wisdom of God. For such he had, and such indeed he was. He *was* "the Truth" (John xiv. 6); he *was* "the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24, 30). He knew and taught mankind, as Solomon could not do, the nature and the will of God (ch. x. 22); the capacities and the possibilities of man (John ii. 25); the way home to God (John xiv. 6); the secret of spiritual triumph (Matt. x. 39); the glory and the shame awaiting the faithful and the unfaithful in the future (Matt. xxv.).

III. THE BEAUTY AND EXCELLENCY OF HIS LIFE. Beginning admirably (1 Kings iii. 5), and continuing well for a season, Solomon gave way to dangerous luxury, to selfish and exacting legislation, and at last to moral corruption (1 Kings xi. 1—10). The surpassing beauty of the character of Jesus Christ became more manifest as his life continued, and it culminated in a supreme act of self-sacrifice which is the crowning glory of his life.

IV. THE GLORY OF HIS CAREER. Solomon's career began in brilliance, it remained bright for many years; but its light waned as his character declined, and it was concluded in sombre shadows. The career of Jesus Christ began in lowliest obscurity, it continued in struggle and in sorrow for a while; but it has risen into the light, it becomes ever more blessed as his influence grows ever wider and deeper; it will not be complete until all the kingdoms of the earth are in subjection to his holy will. 1. Are we wise in the wisdom of Christ? 2. Are we the subjects of his benignant rule?—C.

Ver. 32.—*Comparative guilt.* The main truth of the text, that the weight of our guilt depends on the measure of our privilege, rests on the solid foundation of—

I. MAN'S MORAL FREEDOM. However much character may be affected by circumstance, it remains true that man is a free agent. When we condemn ourselves or others, as we continually do; when we distinguish between misfortune and sin, between calamity and crime; whenever we apply the word "ought" to our own or to another's behaviour;—we practically assent to the doctrine that man is spiritually free; otherwise such action on our part is unjust or illogical, such language improper. But, in truth, a sense of our moral freedom is inwrought in our deepest convictions; we cannot extricate it from our nature, however much we try.

II. OUR ACCOUNTABLENESS TO GOD FOR OUR CHARACTER AND LIFE. 1. God is requiring great things of us—thought, reverence, affection, submission, obedience. 2. He is marking at every moment the life we are living, the character we are forming; he is looking upon us and into us. 3. He is recording all our actions, including among these the thoughts of our mind, the feelings of our heart, the purposes of our will. 4. He will one day call us to give an account of "*all* the things done in the flesh."

III. A REVEALED PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT. The men of Nineveh, the great Teacher tells us, will be a source of condemnation to those of Judæa, for with slighter privilege they repented, while the contemporaries of our Lord remained impenitent at the preaching of Christ himself. 1. There is to be punishment in the future. 2. This will be comparative—some guilty servants will be "beaten with few stripes," others with "many." 3. This, again, will depend on the degree of condemnation, whether it will be less or more severe. 4. And on what, then, will God's condemnation hang? Surely on two things. (1) On the *guiltiness of the character* and life; for of the condemned there will be those in whom there was the "some good thing," or even many good things; and there will be those in whom there was no good thing toward God, but in whom were shameful things of many kinds. (2) On the *character of God's requirement;* for God will require much less of some men than he will of others. What he will require of us depends on the measure of spiritual capacity he has conferred upon us, and also (and very largely) on the measure of the privilege he has granted to us. From those to whom Christ had preached he would require far more than from those to whom Jonah had delivered his brief warning message. And if we reject the gospel of the grace of God, how guilty shall *we* be in comparison with the men of our Master's own time! Surely we shall be at least as guilty as they. For though, indeed, we do not actually behold the countenance of the Son of man, nor hear

the tones of his voice, yet we do "sit at his feet;" we are his disciples; we know the thoughts of his mind; we understand his will; we are familiar with his overtures of love. Indeed, we have certain great advantages which those to whom our Lord was speaking did not possess. (*a*) We have the light that shines not only from the whole of his completed life, but also from his death and resurrection. (*b*) We have Christ's own commentary, through the writings of his inspired apostles, upon his life and death. (*c*) We have freedom from the national prepossessions which misguided those, his hearers. (*d*) We have the accumulated experience of the Christian Church through eighteen centuries. If we heed not his Word, and range not ourselves on his side, if, "gathering not" with him the sheaves of righteousness, we scatter abroad the seeds of sin and death, who will there not be "to rise up in the judgment" and condemn us!—C.

Vers. 34—36.—*Spiritual sight.* "The light of the body is the eye;" *i.e.* the eye is the organ through which light enters so that the mind perceives; and if our eye is "single," if it is sound, and does not give a double or distorted or coloured impression, then the "whole body is full of light," then the man knows exactly what is about him and how to use his hands and direct his feet; but if the eye be diseased, if it be "evil," giving false impressions, then all is confusion in the mind, and it is as if "the whole body were full of darkness," no member of the body can take its proper part—the hands do not know how to handle, nor the feet to walk. Here we have a parable, very easily understood. "The spirit of man is the candle [lamp] of the Lord." God has given truth to the mind as he has prepared light for the body; he has also given us a spiritual eye, an organ through which Divine truth enters the mind. We may call it mind, conscience, reason, the soul; it is of no consequence what we call it; it is that in us which distinguishes between right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and falsehood, nobility and baseness; it is that which gives us the place we occupy in God's creation. If the light we receive into us is sound, pure, healthy, then our whole soul is full of light, then we "see light in God's light." But if this inward light be confused, disordered, discoloured, our whole spirit is "full of darkness;" that is to say, if our understanding be darkened, if we are habitually judging unrighteous judgment, if our conscience be condemning what is good and be approving what is evil, if our reason be misconceiving and misinterpreting, how hopeless is our condition! When that which should lead is misleading, when that which should be guiding us into wisdom is betraying us into deadly error, when the light that is in us is darkness, "how great is *that* darkness" (Matt. vi. 23)! But if, on the other hand, our reason is directing us to right conclusions, and our conscience is "approving things that are excellent," then our whole soul is walking and rejoicing in the light of the Lord, our spirit is full of light, it is a house wherein the bright shining of the lamp of truth does give us light. What, then, brings about bad spiritual sight? What are the diseases of the inward eye?

I. PREJUDICE. How that warps the judgment and blinds the eyes of men! Determined to recognize one object only, men can see no other, however it may stand before them in bold relief. It was prejudice that made the men of Christ's time fail to perceive that the kingdom of God had come among them. His wisdom, his worth, his power, everything was distorted and misconceived by them; their inward eye was diseased, and how great was the darkness that resulted!

II. PRIDE. How many men there are walking, strutting, across the stage of life, confident, complacent, contemptuous, that have been too proud to learn! Pride has bent their judgment, has affected for evil the inward eye; the truth has become distorted; there is darkness in the soul. Well does the apostle say, "If a man think himself to be wise, let him become a fool [in his own opinion], that he may be wise." Pride blocks the path, while humility opens the gates of the kingdom of truth. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way."

III. SELFISHNESS. The worst of all diseases spoiling the spiritual sight. The man who lives under its evil dominion "sees double," is mentally confused, wanders in bewildering error. The slave-owner could not see the iniquity of slavery when his temporal interests covered the eyes of his mind with a thick film of falsity. Present prospects, worldly advantages, fleshly indulgences,—do these not form *thick* scales which cover

the eyes of the children of men, leaving them in the darkness of error and of sin? Who can understand his errors? Who of us can be sure that he is not allowing some folly, some unworthy habit of the body or the mind, to intervene between the pure truth of Christ and his own spiritual understanding? The thought of Jesus Christ calls upon us to be humble, vigilant, prayerful, that "the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed by the inspiration of his Spirit," so that instead of great darkness, or even an imperfect and ineffectual light within us, the whole house of the soul may be illumined with purest heavenly wisdom, "as when the bright shining of a candle does give us light."—C.

Vers. 37—42.—*Piety out of perspective.* We have seen pictures in which no regard whatever has been paid to the laws of perspective, and in which, as the consequence, the mountain has appeared as small as the men, the men as large as the mountain. These have been objects of amusement, but not of admiration. Unfortunately, there was nothing either amusing or admirable in these practical pictures of piety which the Pharisees were drawing, wholly out of perspective, in the time of our Lord. In them were—

I. OBJECTS OF GROSS EXAGGERATION. Our Lord pointed out the exaggerated importance which they attached to the outward, to the bodily, to the minute. They made everything of religious observances and customs. To wash the hands after coming from market, before eating bread, was to them quite a serious obligation, which they would on no account neglect; to tithe the small herbs that grew in their garden was to them a sacred duty, which they took pains to observe; to make the outside of their culinary vessels clean was a rule by no means to be forgotten; to carry no smallest stick on the sabbath day was a very sacred law, etc. These things, and such things as these, were made the staple of their religion; their piety was composed of small observances, of conformity to prescriptions and proscriptions which only touched the outside and not the inner sanctuary, which only affected the body and not the soul; they made everything of that which was only of very slight importance; they exaggerated the minute until these became misleading and practically false.

II. OTHER OBJECTS FATALLY OVERLOOKED OR SLIGHTED. These were: 1. *Inward purity.* What did it matter if some cups were not quite clean? Something certainly, but very little comparatively; it was a matter of infinitesimal consequence. But it mattered much that their "inward part," their soul, was "full of ravening and wickedness." If they were themselves corrupt, no ceremonial cleanness would avail them. It is of infinite consequence to any man that he should be "all glorious within;" that there should be truth and purity "in the inward parts," in the deep recesses of the soul. It is the pure in heart alone that can see God and that can enter his kingdom. 2. *Charity;* a kind heart showing itself in a generous hand. Whoso has this disposition to pity, to heal, to help; whoso spends himself in endeavours to do good, to lighten the burdens of the afflicted, to brighten the path that lies in shadow;—this man is one to whom "all things are clean." He who is earnestly concerned to mitigate the sorrow of some bleeding heart, or to extricate some fallen spirit from the cruel toils of vice, or to lead some weary wanderer from the desert of doubt into the bright and happy home of faith and love,—he is not the man to be "greatly moved" because he carries a speck of dust upon his hands, or because a utensil has not been washed the proper number of times in a day. 3. *Rectitude.* The Pharisees passed over "judgment;" but they should have given to this a front place. To recognize the righteous claims of men on our regard, on our considerateness, on our fidelity, on our truthfulness,—is not this a very large part of any piety that is of God, commended by him and commending us to him? 4. *The love of God.* This also the Pharisees slighted. But it was of the very first importance. Their Law laid stress upon it (Deut. vi. 4, 5). It is the heritage and glory of manhood (see homily on ch. x. 27). To make little of this was so to misrepresent as to lead into ruinous error. Purity, charity, rectitude, the love of God,—these are the precious things which make man great, worthy, dear to God his Father.—C.

Vers. 1—13.—*Lessons on prayer.* Luke takes us from "the one thing needful," which Mary's loving waiting on her Lord illustrates, to a kindred subject, viz. the

lessons on prayer which Jesus gave his disciples. He had been enjoying what we should now call a "retreat" with them, and had himself led the devotions of the little band. Struck by the beauty of his petitions, one of his disciples asked him to teach them to pray, as John had taught his disciples. To this appeal Jesus responds at once, and in doing so gives them first a *form*, which was also meant to be a *model*; and secondly, a *theory* of prayer, in which we shall have little difficulty in finding its true philosophy. Let us look at these two matters in their order.

I. THE FORM AND MODEL OF PRAYER COMMONLY CALLED THE LORD'S PRAYER. (Vers. 2—4.) Jesus is represented here as saying to the disciples, "When ye pray, *say*," while in Matt. vi. 9 it is "*After this manner* therefore pray ye." It is evident from this that he meant the words to answer the double purpose—to be a form in constant use, and to be a model constantly imitated. It is consequently most important to look carefully into its contents. And here we have to notice that it sets *intercession* before petition for *personal benefits*. Prayer thus becomes a great instrument for rendering us disinterested and unselfish. When modelled on this peerless prayer of Christ, it carries us at once into the wide interests of God's kingdom before we devote any consideration to petty personal interests. The genius of prayer is thus seen to be the *subordination of self to the universal interest*. The hallowing of the Father's precious Name comes first, then the coming of his kingdom, and then the doing of his will on earth as in heaven. What a statesmanlike view we are thus led to take of the general problem before we even think of the particular and personal problem! The moment we have in our closet entered intelligently and heartily into these three petitions, we have got out of the narrowness of petty cares and troubles into the broad expanse of the Divine love. We are taken to mountain-tops at once, and from the sublime heights of Divine compassion we are led to intercede for the world below us, that it may be as speedily as possible transmuted into something like what heaven happily is. Then as for the minor personal petitions, these refer to daily bread, and daily pardon, and daily deliverance from evil—the personal blessings, in fact, which fit the individual for aiding the wider interest and subserving the universal blessing. We are thus warranted in asking for bread to sustain the body, for pardon to relieve the heavy-laden soul, for deliverance amid the further temptations to which we may be exposed. And in the petition for pardon, it is clearly implied that forgiveness can only be realized by a forgiving spirit. The soul which will not forgive a brother who asks for forgiveness shows that forgiveness has not been and cannot be realized. In fact, the unforgiving spirit is, as far as we can judge, the unpardonable sin (cf. Matt. xviii. 21—35).

II. OUR LORD'S THEORY OF PRAYER. (Vers. 5—13.) When we analyze our Lord's argument here, we find it to be *analogical*; and the truth is that we are shut up in this matter to analogical reasoning. It can be shown that it is to analogy we owe our knowledge of human beings, of the lower animals, and finally of God above us. In order to any other than analogical knowledge, we should require to become incarnated, so to speak, in the other being whose condition we desire to know. Seeing that this is impossible, we are shut up to the argument from analogy upon such a subject.[1] Our Lord, then, looked around him, and saw that *efficacious prayer* was embedded as a fact in the very constitution of society. Petition is the form which conscious need assumes in social intercourse; and a response comes forth with more or less promptitude and grace, and demonstrates that the prayer has proved efficacious. It is further to be noticed that our Lord, in pointing out efficacious prayer as existing in the society of his time, gives us first an example of efficacious *intercession*, and then an example of efficacious *personal petition*. His illustrations consequently follow the lines laid down in his prescribed form of prayer. To encourage intercession, he presents the picture of the importunate friend begging successfully a supper for an unexpected and hungry guest; to encourage personal petition, he presents the picture of hungry children crying to their father for food; and he would have us to reason from the efficacious prayer among men to the certainty of prayer being efficacious when presented unto God. Let us look at the illustrations in the order given. A kindly, hospitable man is about to retire to rest with his household, having in the last meal consumed the small stock of

[1] We have discussed this subject in the *Christian Monthly* for July, 1882; also in the 'The logical Handbook' upon the subject of prayer, published by Hodder and Stoughton.

food which his humble house contains; when, lo! to his surprise, a friend arrives after a long journey, hungry as well as weary—a most fitting object, therefore, of hospitality. What is to be done? He quickly decides. Having most probably arranged for the washing of the guest's feet, he passes out into the darkness, and seeks the door of a friend who can, he believes, lend him as many loaves as he needs. It is not a personal want he is about to urge, but the need of a hungry and weary friend. He stands before the door, consequently, in the simple majesty of disinterestedness. He begins to knock, but at first receives no encouragement. "Trouble me not," says his friend within: "the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee." Nothing daunted, however, and pocketing all his pride, for he knows well it is no selfish plea he is urging, he resolves to knock on till his beleaguered friend capitulates. At length importunity triumphs; the friend in bed sees plainly that the only chance of rest that night for himself and his children is to give in as soon as possible, and let the importunate petitioner have his way; and so he rises and gives him as many loaves as he needs. Here, then, according to our Lord, is a case of efficacious intercessory prayer as between men. It may not receive an immediate answer, but importunity secures an ultimate answer. We are warranted, therefore, in rising from efficacious intercessory prayer among men to the assurance that intercessory prayer will prove efficacious with God. God may keep us waiting, not certainly from any selfish consideration, but for our own good, but ultimately he will respond to every unselfish intercession. Hence our Lord reaches the assurance, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," etc. The second case brought before us by Christ is efficacious prayer in the family circle. Hungry children present prayers to parents for food, for bread, for fish, for eggs, as among the humbler classes in Palestine; and the fathers who are asked for such things never think of mocking the hungry ones with a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion. The earthly parent hears and answers the children's prayer; the prayer is efficacious. So will it be, argues our Lord, as we appeal for the needful blessings to our Father in heaven. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" It is surely instructive to think that earthly parents, in the midst of a "reign of law," which they only partially understand, can yet know how to give good things to their children. Be the times ever so hard, they can generally manage to give the little ones bread and keep them off the parish. Is it not reasonable to argue that the heavenly Father, who knows *all* "the reign of law," because its Author and Lord, can give the Holy Spirit, or any minor and needful blessing his children crave, unto the prayerful? We have only, in conclusion, to emphasize the fact that the Holy Spirit is the great need of human souls. Let us ask him as God's supreme Gift, and we shall assuredly receive him even in Pentecostal power. It is this Gift which individuals and Churches need to make them truly useful!—R. M. E.

Vers. 14—36.—*Inspirations.* Our Lord had just held out the possibility of Divine inspirations for prayerful disciples, and the evangelist next takes up and contrasts *diabolical* inspirations with this. Unless we notice the artistic treatment by the accomplished author of the Third Gospel, we shall miss much of his meaning. The circumstance which led to the question of infernal inspiration was the healing of a man who was possessed by a dumb devil. Here was a case, then, where a demon, entering into and possessing a human being, had sealed his lips so that he could not speak. Our Saviour expelled the demon, and the man immediately recovered the power of speech. At this the people wondered. But the wise men among his enemies had a theory to meet the case; they insisted that it was because Beelzebub, the chief of the devils, dwelt in Christ that he was able to expel the inferior demon. Others insisted on a sign from heaven to supplement these "signs" on earth. To both classes he gives due answer. Let us look at the two theories, and the interlude which separates Christ's treatment of them, in their order.

I. THE THEORY THAT JESUS WAS POSSESSED BY BEELZEBUB. There was something plausible in this. Assuming that demons are subject to their superiors, the hostile spirits insinuated that Jesus had got the chief of the devils in him, and so was able to order the inferior demons. In the theory there was the admission that the devil, who

had made the poor possessed one dumb, had obeyed Christ's command and left his victim. But so far from this demonstrating Christ's goodness to their suspicious souls, it only demonstrated his league with the chief of the devils. It is truly wonderful how unholy hearts can twist the clearest demonstrations into the foulest suspicions and insinuations. The question of infernal inspirations is thus raised, as a set-off and contrast to the Divine inspirations which Jesus showed his disciples were possible for them, and which he illustrated in perfection himself. Let us see how our Lord meets the insinuation of his enemies. 1. *Christ shows that in expelling the dumb devil he had been so far breaking up Satan's kingdom.* Although, therefore, it must be acknowledged that Satan and his emissaries do often take *suicidal courses*, and by fancied wisdom really undermine their kingdom, yet it could not be supposed that the chief of the devils would deliberately restore a man to sanity and the power of speech. This would be too insane a course for the arch-fiend to take. When souls are rendered sane and social, we may conclude at once that it is *not* Satan's work. Hence in the fact that the kingdom of Satan was being broken up by the philanthropic policy of Jesus, there was proof positive that their theory was false. 2. *Christ reminds them of Jewish exorcism, and asks if they have considered the suspicion their theory casts on their own exorcists.* By certain incantations and tedious processes the Jews had been accustomed to expel the demons and cure the demented ones. The difference between the Jewish exorcisms and this one of Jesus was that his was simpler and speedier. Hence if it was Beelzebub that enabled him to exorcise the demon, it must be some other form of diabolic inspiration which enabled their own exorcists to succeed. Our Lord thus used a crushing *argumentum ad hominem*, which they could not resist. 3. *Jesus insists on the victorious character of the spiritual inspiration of which he was at once an Embodiment and the Source.* It was by "the finger of God" he expelled the demons, and in his Person the triumphant kingdom of God had come nigh to them. For, as he here shows, there is a contention between two opposing parties for the palace of the human heart. The devil may for a time usurp possession. There is peace throughout the palace; there may even be silence, as in the present case, when the devil had made the possessed one dumb. But the Stronger One comes, the Spirit of Christ enters, overcomes the devil, robs him of his armour in which he trusted, and divides the spoil. Thus graphically does our Lord represent the conquest of the soul and the glorious result of the victory. It is the Mightiest overcoming the strong, and claiming his rights in the palace of the soul. Thus does God's kingdom come within us! 4. *Jesus shows the dangers of a vacant soul.* Referring possibly to the Jewish exorcisms, wherein the demons were expelled, but no stronger occupant introduced to the palace of the soul, our Lord shows how the vacant soul becomes a prey to demons once more. And the result of reoccupation is generally worse than the first occupancy. How often is it seen that superficial reform is followed by a backsliding worse than any previous sin! The last state of the man is worse than the first. It is essential, therefore, that when a soul is freed from one spirit, it should be tenanted by another and a better. Only the radical change which the indwelling of the Divine Spirit secures can make the soul safe amid the temptations of Satan and his hosts.

II. THE INTERLUDE UPON THE BLESSEDNESS OF OBEDIENCE. (Vers. 27, 28.) As Jesus spake these wise words about inspiration, a woman in the crowd, touched by their beauty and faithfulness, exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!" Her idea was that it must have been a great privilege to be related to such a Person, especially to have been his mother. And the blood-relationship, of course, could have no wide radius; only a select few could stand around him in actual relationship. But Jesus interposes at once to show that there is a blessedness which all may realize, a blessedness which his mother or brethren could not monopolize, and this is the blessedness of obedience to God's Word. Motherhood involved many trials in the case of Mary, as well as many privileges; but obedience is an open door into which all may enter. In the keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward. Thus he forbade all discontent and all envy, and put the woman and the audience generally upon the true track in which to realize blessedness. Receiving God's Word in humble faith, trying to keep it in dependence upon God's grace,—this is the secret of true blessedness. Such spiritual relationship is better than blood-relationship. At it all of us should aim.

III. THE THEORY OF INSUFFICIENT SIGNS. (Vers. 16, 29—36.) The miracles of healing, it would seem, were insufficient to convince Christ's enemies that he was from God. They demanded more—a sign from heaven; something, that is, which would connect him with the heavenly world. 1. Now, the way our Lord meets this unreasonable demand is by *denying their right to such a sign.* It was most unreasonable, and to unreasonable clamour our Lord never yielded. His miracles were of such a character, were so numerous, and so instructive, that nothing but wilful blindness could prevent the demonstration from being final and conclusive. 2. *Jesus declares that in the history of Jonah they would have a sign.* (Vers. 29, 30, 32.) Now, in what respect was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites? Accepting as historic the narrative of his flight, his imprisonment in the fish, his release from it, and his subsequent preaching to the Ninevites, we see a striking parallel between it and the history of Christ. As Jonah was buried in the fish, and so the endangered seamen were saved, so Jesus was buried in the tomb, and through his death saved endangered sinners. Again, as Jonah was cast forth from his imprisonment to land and life again, so Jesus by resurrection passed from the imprisonment of the tomb into the newness of immortal life. And as Jonah became a witness to the Ninevites of the truth of God's threatenings and God's mercy, so Jesus, in the persons of his apostles, and in Pentecostal power, became a witness to his generation. Moreover, the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, and in so doing they would be a standing rebuke and condemnation to Christ's contemporaries, who resisted his preaching and would not repent of their sins. In the light of Christ's subsequent fate, the sign of the Prophet Jonah must have proved striking in the extreme. 3. *Jesus declares that the Queen of Sheba would condemn his contemporaries, as she was attracted by the wisdom of Solomon, while a greater than Solomon was here.* (Ver. 31.) The wisdom of Solomon was not associated with any miracle. It stood alone. It was rendered impressive by a halo of worldly glory; but this was all. Yet it commanded the queen of the south, who came from her distant land and learned wisdom at Solomon's feet. The worth of wisdom is the lesson of her long journey. But Christ's contemporaries, who have more wisdom by far in his discourses, and who have the miracles backing up the whole, are refusing the matchless testimony. Their condemnation shall be all the greater considering the noble conduct of the queen. How prone we are to despise the present opportunity, and to imagine that the former days were better than these, when the truth may be that now the most magnificent opportunity of all the ages is lying to our hands! 4. *The great necessity he shows is singleness of eye.* (Vers. 33—36.) This is the practical lesson with which our Lord closes his answer to his enemies. There is a light in the world, and it is not hidden. As the Light of the world, he was himself occupying a sufficiently elevated candlestick, and illumining all within the house. But if his hearers and interviewers had duplicity and not singleness of aim, they would miss the illumination and be filled with darkness. This was their danger. Hence he urges singleness of eye. If they but gazed on him with the proper motive, they would find their whole lives illumined, and glory waiting upon their work. He was anxious for this result—hence his warning. We learn, then, the necessity of singleness and simplicity of aim. In such a case we shall need no theories to account for Christ's power, but acknowledge its Divine and gracious character at once. Then shall our whole heart go forth in sympathy to him, and we shall be with him in co-operation and in success.—R. M. E.

Vers. 37—54.—*Pharisaism and legalism rebuked.* Our Lord, who was eminently social in his habits, accepts an invitation to dine with one of the Pharisees, and meets many Pharisees and lawyers there as guests. Such scenes were, to his pure and philanthropic mind, important opportunities, and as such he entered upon them. In this case he breaks ground at once by deliberately neglecting the usual preliminary ablutions. This was through no slovenliness in his personal habits, we may be sure; for if cleanliness is next to godliness, we may be pretty certain Jesus practised it. But as it is quite possible for men to put cleanliness in place of godliness, to be scrupulous about outward cleansing and careless about the heart, it was necessary that Jesus should expose the Pharisees' error and danger in this particular. Accordingly, we find him at this dinner-table exposing with great power first, Pharisaic hypocrisy, and, secondly, legalized impositions. Let us look at these in their order.

I. CHRIST'S EXPOSITION OF PHARISAIC HYPOCRISY. (Vers. 37—44.) Pharisaism was a supreme regard for appearances. Long garments, phylacteries, multiplied ablutions, long prayers in public places, ostentatious tithing of little things, combined to make up Pharisaism, a reputation based upon externals. One who looked upon the heart, like our Lord, could easily see that all this outward decorum was quite compatible with wickedness of heart. And so he told his host deliberately, "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening ['extortion,' Revised Version] and wickedness." The cure is suggested when he leads him to think of God as alike the Author and Observer of what is without and within. "Ye fools ['foolish ones,' Revised Version], did not he that made that which is without ['the outside,' Revised Version] make that which is within ['the inside'] also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have ['Howbeit give for alms those things which are within,' Revised Version]; and, behold, all things are clean unto you." In this way he tries to lead his Pharisaic host to spirituality of life, to the expenditure of sympathy, of love, of brotherly kindness upon others, instead of indulging in outward acts behind which there was no real heart, but only a desire for personal reputation. Following up this line, he charges them with tithing pot-herbs, "the mint, anise, and cummin," while the weightier matters, "judgment and the love of God," matters that were within and spiritual, were left undone. Their preference for appearances, for the uppermost seats in the synagogues, for greetings in the markets, and all that goes to form a reputation, showed that they had not weighed aright the matters of the heart. No wonder that he concludes by comparing them to graves—"tombs," Revised Version—that appear not, over which men unwittingly tread. Whited sepulchres they were, beautiful outwardly, but within were dead men's bones and all uncleanness. It was a manly and terrible indictment for our Lord to make against them. And in doing so he exposed the principle of hypocrisy. It rests on appearances, on superficial judgments, on a forgetfulness that God searcheth the heart. It can be got rid of only by our getting down to first principles, and remembering that God "searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, even to give to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. xvii. 9, 10).

II. CHRIST'S EXPOSURE OF LEGALIZED IMPOSITIONS. (Vers. 45—54.) A lawyer in the company, seeing his Pharisaic friends so severely handled by Christ, complains that his special department was involved also in the reproach. This leads our Lord to handle the lawyers more severely still. Their position was one of *monopoly of the Law*. To sustain their profession they had to make a great mystery of the meaning of the Law. Though it was largely plain enough for a runner to read and understand, it would have swept away all their privileges and profits to have left such an impression on the common people. Hence they took the Law into their own especial keeping, and interpreted it for the people as they pleased. The result of this was the imposition of heavy burdens upon the ignorant people. This has been the temptation of legal experts always; they increase the burdens of the common people—burdens which they leave the people to carry alone. Not only so, but the lawyers were manufacturing reputations out of the shortcomings of their fathers. Their fathers had murdered the prophets; the sons were now busy building their sepulchres, and so far pretending to dissent from their fathers' murderous spirit. But our Lord shows that this policy is a simple hypocrisy, for, in seeking the life of Jesus, they were demonstrating that the old spirit was still within them. It is easier to serve on a building committee than to entertain kindly feelings towards the Saviour. All this hypocrisy, however, will receive judgment in due season. Upon the generation that murdered Christ will descend the judgment which the murderous spirit of so many generations deserved. Our Lord in this way brings out how we may, by our conduct in the present, become involved in the responsibilities of the past. We cannot isolate ourselves from the past; we are not only heirs of all the ages, but share the responsibilities of all the ages by reason of our attitude towards them. History is thus brought into the field of responsibility, and we are either for or against the good in the olden time. It would be well for us to treat history in a sympathetic fashion, and have our hearts in proper training as we review the past. We may sin by hating an old martyr's memory just as really as by despising his counterpart to-day. Our Lord concludes by denouncing the dog-in-the-manger

policy of the lawyers, pretending to knowledge, while at once they had lost the key and kept others effectually from finding it. No wonder that, when our Lord came out from the banquet, he found himself violently beset on every side by those he had so exposed, in hope that some such statement would form the basis of his accusation. But they found themselves baffled by his limitless knowledge of human nature. Instead of contending with him, it will be better for us all to submit to his superior judgment and gracious pleasure.—R. M. E.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

Vers. 1—59.—*The Lord, after leaving the Pharisee's house, speaks at great length to a numerous crowd waiting for him, addressing his words principally to his own disciples.* The foregoing scene (ch. xi.), when the Master addressed his bitter reproaches to the learned and cultivated of the great Pharisee party, took place in a private house belonging to an apparently wealthy member of this, the dominant class. The name of the large village or provincial town where all this happened is unknown. The crowd who had been listening to the great Teacher before he accepted the Pharisee's invitation still lingered around the house. Many from the adjoining villages, hearing that Jesus was in this place and was publicly teaching, had arrived; so, when the Lord came out from the guest-chamber into the street or market-place, he found a vast crowd—literally, myriads of the multitude—waiting for him. The words descriptive of the crowd in ver. 1 indicate that a vast concourse was gathered together. His fame then was very great, though his popularity was on the wane.

Ver. 1.—**Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.** In dwelling on this and similar expressions used by our Lord in respect to the life and work of this famous section of the people who were generally so bitterly hostile to him and his teaching, we must not condemn their whole character with a condemnation more sweeping than the Master's. Utterly mistaken in their views of life and in their estimate of God, whom they professed to know, our Lord here scarcely charges them with deliberate hypocrisy. These mistaken men dreamed that they possessed a holiness which was never theirs; unconscious hypocrites they doubtless were, without possibly even suspecting it themselves.

Vers. 2, 3.—**For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light.** The day would come when his estimate of this now popular teaching of the Pharisees would be found to have been correct. Its real nature, now hid, would be revealed and fully known and discredited; while, on the other hand, the words and teaching of his disciples, now listened to but by few, and those of seemingly little account, would become widely and generally known and listened to. **Upon the house-tops.** These were flat, terrace-like roofs, and, the houses generally being low, one who spoke from them would easily be heard in the street beneath. "These words have a strong Syrian colouring. The Syrian house-top (in Matt. x. 27 and here) presents an image which has no sense in Asia Minor, or Greece, or Italy, or even at Antioch. The flat roofs cease at the mouth of the Orontes; Antioch itself has sloping roofs" (Renan, 'Les Evangiles,' p. 262, note 1).

Ver. 4.—**And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.** All this the Master knew was true and would shortly happen. His words were verified before fifty years had passed. The triumphant success of the great Christian preachers and the discredited condition of the old rabbinic schools is testified to by such words as we find in St. Paul's letters. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe?" (1 Cor. i. 20). But this success the Master well knew would be accompanied with many a suffering on the part of the heralds of his message. Persecution in its many dreary forms would dog their footsteps; a death of agony and shame not unfrequently would be their guerdon. It was, for instance, we know, the earthly recognition of that devoted servant of the Lord (Paul) who, we believe, guided the pen of Luke here. This painful way, which his disciples must surely tread, had already been indicated in no obscure language by the Master ("*some* of them"—my apostles—"they shall slay and persecute," ch. xi. 49). A triumph, greater than any which had ever been given to the sons of men, would surely be theirs, but the Master would not conceal the *earthly* price which his chosen servants must pay for this splendid success. There was a point, how-

ever, beyond which human malice and enmity were utterly powerless; he would have his servants turn their thoughts on that serene region where men as men would have no power.

Ver. 5.—**But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell;** literally, *into Gehenna*. This is simply *Gee-hinnom*, "valley of Hinnom," translated into Greek letters. This valley was situated in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and originally was noted for the infamous rites practised there in the worship of Moloch, in the times of the idolatrous kings of Judah. King Josiah, to mark his abhorrence of the idol-rites, defiled it with corpses; fires were subsequently kindled to consume the putrefying matter and prevent pestilence. The once fair valley, thus successively defiled with hideous corrupting rites, by putrefying corpses, and then with blazing fires lit to consume what would otherwise have occasioned pestilence, was taken by rabbinical writers as a symbol for the place of torment, and is used not unfrequently as a synonym for "hell." The translators of the Authorized Version have done so here. The reminder is, after all, we need not fear *men*. When they have done their worst, they have only injured or tortured the perishable body. The One whom all have good reason to fear is God, whose power is not limited to this life, but extends through and beyond death. Some have strangely supposed, not *God*, but the *devil*, is intended here to be the real object of human fear. The devil can be no object of fear to the Master's disciples.

Vers. 6, 7.—**Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.** Though persecution and bitter suffering, even death, may be the guerdon of the Lord's true servants here, none of these things can happen without the consent of God. This thought will surely give them courage to endure. Suffering undergone in God's service, inflicted, too, with his entire consent, so that the suffering becomes part of the service,—what an onlook is afforded to the brave, faithful servant by such a contemplation! Oh the welcome from God he is sure to meet with when such a death has been endured! These extreme instances of God's universal care—his all-knowledge of everything, however little and insignificant, belonging to his creatures—are chosen to give point to the Master's words. If he knows of the death of these little, almost valueless, birds—ay, even of the falling of one of the many hairs of your head—surely you cannot doubt his knowledge of, his caring for, the life or death of one of his proved and gallant followers. These little sparrows were sold in the markets, strung together, or on skewers.

Ver. 8.—**Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.** The great Teacher pursues the subject of the future of his disciples. It is by no means only to a wise *fear* of that God, whose hand stretches beyond this life, that he appeals as a mighty inducement for his servants utterly to disregard all dangers which may meet them in the course of their service; he tells them, too, of a splendid recompense, which will assuredly be the guerdon of all his true followers. Before that glorious throng of heavenly beings, whose existence was a part of the creed of every true Jew; before the mighty angels, the awful seraphim; before that countless crowd of winged and burning ones who assisted at the awful mysteries of Sinai, would they who witnessed for him, and suffered because of him, be acknowledged by him. Their sufferings in the service of the King of heaven, whom they knew on earth as the poor Galilee Teacher, would be recounted before the angels by the same King of heaven, when he returned to his home of grandeur and of peace in heaven.

Ver. 9.—**But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.** Splendid as would the recompense be to the faithful and the loyal, equally shameful would be the guerdon meted out to the cowardly and faint-hearted. Before the same glorious throng would the King detail the failure, through slavish fear, of those whom he had chosen for so royal a service. Such an announcement as this proclamation of glory and of shame before the holy angels, in which stupendous scene *he*, the poor Galilæan Rabbi, was to play the part of the Almighty Judge, could only have been made in the last weeks preceding his Passion. All reticence was then laid aside. Before friend and foe, in public and in private, in these last solemn weeks Jesus tore away the veil of reticence with which he had been pleased hitherto in great measure to shroud his lofty claims, and the Master now declared before all that he was the King of kings, the Lord alike of angels and of men. In the face of such an announcement, his prosecution by the priests and the Pharisee party for blasphemy naturally follows. He was either a daring impostor or ——. In the latter case, to the poor Galilee Rabbi belonged the *Name of names* which no Jew dared to pronounce.

Ver. 10.—**And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him.** And yet even *that* offence,

which consisted in playing the renegade and the coward; which refused to suffer for him here; which, out of slavish fear of man, consented to abandon his pure and righteous cause;—*that* offence, which would be proclaimed before the angels of heaven, would in the end find forgiveness. Some commentators point, as an illustration of this, to the fact of the dying Lord praying on the cross for his murderers; but the offence alluded to here, which should in the end be blotted out, was of far deeper dye. He prayed on his cross for those Romans who sinned, but sinned in the face of little light. But this forgiveness was to be extended to men who, through fear of men and love of the world, should deny him whom they knew to be their Redeemer. This is one of the most hopeful passages which treats of sin eventually to be forgiven, in the whole New Testament. But even here there is no so-called universal redemption announced, for in the next sentence the Lord goes on to speak of a sin which he emphatically said shall *never* have forgiveness. **But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.** What is *this* awful sin? We have only to speak of its connection in this place. Here there is no possibility of mistake; it was that determined hatred of holiness, that awful love of self, which had induced the Pharisee leaders to ascribe his beneficent and loving works to the spirit of evil and of darkness. The accusation was no chance one, the fruit of impulse or of passion. They who accused him knew better. They had heard him teach, not once, but often; they had seen his works; and yet, though they knew that the whole life and thoughts and aspirations were true, who were conscious that every word and work was holy, just, and pure, in order to compass their own selfish ends, simply because they felt his life and teaching would interfere with them, *they dared to ascribe to the devil what their own hearts told them came direct from God.* This sin, now as then, the merciful Saviour tells us *has no forgiveness.*

Ver. 11.—**And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer.** The Master comes back again to his old calm, and continues his loving instructions to his disciples; and turning again to the little group of his friends, he says to them, "*When* they bring you before hostile tribunals, special help, you will find, will be given you. Have no fear, then, that you will be wanting in wisdom or courage; the Holy Spirit of God will be your Advocate, and will whisper to you words for your defence." The best example of this supernatural aid to the accused followers of Jesus which we possess is the grave and stately apology of Stephen before the Sanhedrin. Peter's speech before the same tribunal, and Paul's before Felix and Festus, are also fair instances.

Ver. 13.—**And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.** Apparently there was a pause here in the Lord's teaching. The Master was about to enter on a new subject, and at this juncture one of the crowd, waiting for such a break in the Master's discourse, came forward with a question. It was purely connected with his own selfish interests. He seems to have been a younger brother, discontented with the distribution of the family property, of which, most likely, in accordance with the usual Jewish practice, a double portion had been taken by the elder brother. This was likely enough the point which he submitted to the Lord. Such a reference to a scribe and rabbi of eminence was then not uncommon. Jesus, however, here, as on other occasions (see John viii. 3—11), firmly refuses to interfere in secular matters. His work was of another and higher kind. The word he addresses to the questioner has in it a tinge of rebuke. The utter selfish worldliness of the man, who, after hearing the solemn and impressive words just spoken, *could* intrude such a question, comes strongly into view. Was not this poor unimpressionable Jew, so wrapped up in his own paltry concerns that he had no thought or care for loftier things, perhaps a specimen of most of the material upon whom the Lord had to work? Is he an unknown figure in our day and time?

Ver. 15.—**And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.** The older authorities read, "beware of every kind of covetousness." No vice is more terribly illustrated in the Old Testament story than this. Prominent illustrations of ruin overtaking the covetous man, even in this life, are Balaam, Achan, and Gehazi. Has not this ever been one of the besetting sins of the chosen race, *then as now, now as then?* Jesus, as the Reader of hearts, saw what was at the bottom of the question: greed, rather than a fiery indignation at a wrong endured. "A man's life." *His true life*, would be a fair paraphrase of the Greek word used here. The Master's *own* life, landless, homeless, penniless, illustrated nobly these words. *That* life, as far as earth was concerned, was his deliberate choice. The world, Christian as well as pagan, in each succeeding age, with a remarkable agreement, utterly declines to recognize the great Teacher's view of life here. To make his

meaning perfectly clear, the Lord told them the following parable-story, which reads like an experience or memory of something which had actually happened.

Ver. 16.—**The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.** The unhappy subject of the Lord's story was a common figure in Palestine in an ordinarily prosperous time. We have the portrait of a landowner whose farms do not seem to have been acquired by any unjust means. This man, after years of successful industry, having acquired great wealth, wholly devotes himself to it and to its further increase. He does not give himself up to excess or profligacy, but simply, body and soul, becomes the slave of his wealth; utterly, hopelessly selfish, he forgets alike God and his neighbour.

Vers. 17, 18.—**And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater.** "No place to bestow my fruits." Well answers St. Ambrose, "Thou *hast* barns—the bosoms of the needy, the houses of the widows, the mouths of orphans and of infants." Some might argue, from the sequel of the story, that God looks with disfavour on riches as riches. St. Augustine replies to such a mistaken deduction, "God desires not that thou shouldest lose thy riches, but that thou shouldest change their place" ('Serm.,' xxxvi. 9). The Greek word rendered "barns" (ἀποθήκας—whence our word "apothecary") has a broader signification than merely barns; it signifies store or warehouses of all kinds, thus suggesting that the hero of the story was more than a mere wealthy farmer—he was probably also a trader. **And there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.** As he grew richer, he grew more covetous. Absolutely no care or thought for anything save his loved possessions seems to have crossed the threshold of that poor mistaken heart of his. This strange hunger after riches for riches' sake is, alas! a very usual form of soul-disease. Can it be cured? Alas! it is one of the most hopeless of soul-maladies. This unhappy love in countless cases becomes a passion, and twines itself round the heart, and so destroys all the affections and higher aspirations.

Ver. 19.—**And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.** "What folly!" writes St. Basil. "Had thy soul been a sty, what else couldst thou have promised to it? Art thou so ignorant of what really belongs to the soul, that thou offerest to it the foods of the body? And givest thou to thy *soul* the things which the draught receives?" *Many years.* How little did that poor fool, so wise in all matters of earthly business, suspect the awful doom was so close to him! He forgot Solomon's words, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow" (Prov. xxvii. 1). **Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry** "Extremes meet," suggests Dean Plumptre; "and the life of self-indulgence may spring either from an undue expectation of a lengthened life" (as was the case here), "or from unduly dwelling on its shortness, without taking into account the judgment that comes after it. The latter, as in the 'carpe diem' of Horace ('Odes,' i. 11. 8), was the current language of popular epicureanism" (see St. Paul's reproduction of this thought, 1 Cor. xv. 32); "the former seems to have been more characteristic of a corrupt Judaism."

Ver. 20.—**But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.** The literal rendering of the Greek here is more solemn and impressive in its awful vagueness: *This night they require thy soul of thee.* Who are meant by *they?* Most likely the angels: not necessarily "avenging," as Trench would suggest; simply those angels whose special function it was to conduct the souls of the departed *to their own place.* So we read in the parable of Lazarus and Dives how angels carried the soul of Lazarus into Abraham's bosom. On the words, "they require," Theophylact writes, "For, like pitiless exactors of tribute, terrible angels shall require thy soul from thee unwilling, and through love of life resisting. For from the righteous his soul is not *required*, but he *commits* it to God and the Father of spirits, pleased and rejoicing; nor finds it hard to lay it down, for the body lies upon it as a light burden. But the sinner who has enfleshed his soul, and embodied it, and made it earthy, has so prepared it to render its divulsion from the body most hard; wherefore it is said *to be required* of him, as a disobedient debtor that is delivered to pitiless exactors." **Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?** Our Lord here reproduced the thought contained in passages with which no doubt he had been familiar from his boyhood. "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" (Eccles. ii. 18, 19). "He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Ps. xxxix. 6). The parallel in the apocryphal book, Ecclus. xi. 18, 19, is very close.

Ver. 21.—**And is not rich toward God;** better rendered, *if he is not.* And this slight change helps us, too, in drawing the right lesson. The *being rich* is never con-

demned by Jesus Christ; nor even the *growing richer*. Among the saints of God in both Testaments are many notable rich men, whose possessions seem to have helped rather than hindered their journey to the city of God. The lesson which lies on the forefront of this parable-story is the especial danger which riches ever bring of gradually deadening the heart and rendering it impervious to any feeling of love either for God or man.

The directions which immediately followed upon this parable were addressed to the inner circle of disciples. The general instruction, it will be seen, belongs to all who in any age wish to be "of his Church;" but several of the particular charges cannot be pressed as *general* commands, being addressed to men whose work and office were unique.

Ver. 22.—**And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.** A better rendering for "Take no thought" is *Be not anxious about*. This, too, suggests a more practical lesson. "What ye shall eat." How repeatedly in the Master's sermons do we find the reminder against the being careful about eating! We know from pagan writers in this age how gluttony, in its coarser and more refined forms, was among the more notorious evils of Roman society in Italy and in the provinces. This passion for the table more or less affected all classes in the empire.

Vers. 24—27.—**Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. . . . Consider the lilies . . . they toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.** What a contrast between the life of the rich and prosperous landowner just related, whose whole heart and soul were concentrated on a toil which should procure him dainty food and costly raiment, and these fowls fed by God so abundantly, and those flowers clothed by God so royally! The ravens knew nothing of the anxious care and the restless toil of the rich man in the midst of which he died, and yet they lived. The lilies simply grew, and God's hand painted the rich and gorgeous clothing for each golden-jewelled flower; Solomon, the splendid Jewish king, the example of all that was magnificent, was never arrayed, men knew, like one of these lilies. With such a God above them, who surely loved each one as he never loved a bird or flower, was it worth while to wear a life away in toiling for less than what God simply *gave* to raven and to lily? Such was the Master's argument, adorned, we may well conceive, with all the beauty and force of Eastern illustration. We possess, after all, but a scant *résumé* of these Divine sermons. To apostle and chosen missionary his words had a peculiar interest. He bade them, in coming days of poverty and abandonment, never to lose heart. They would remember *then* their loved Teacher's words that day when he spoke of the fate of one whose life had been wasted in filling his storehouses and his barns; would remember how he turned from the foolish, toiling rich man, and told them of the birds and flowers, and how God tenderly cared even for such soulless things. Did they think he would ever lose sight of them, his chosen servants? They might surely reckon on the loving care of that Master to whose cause they were giving their life-service. Yet have these and other like words of the great Teacher been often misunderstood; and St. Paul's earnest and repeated exhortations to his converts—not to neglect honest toil, but by it to win bread for themselves, and something withal to be generous with to those poorer than they—were his protest against taking the Master's words in too literal a sense, and using them as a pretext for a dreamy and idle life. Paul's teaching, and perhaps still more Paul's life—that life of brave, simple toil for himself and others—were *his* comment upon this part of the Master's sermon. *The lilies.* It is a little doubtful whether our Lord meant to speak of the red anemone, a very common but beautiful flower, with which the meadows throughout all Palestine are enamelled (*Anemone coronaria*), or the great white lily (*Lilium candidum*), or the exquisite red lily (*Lilium rubrum*); these latter are more rare. The Saviour, probably, had each of these and other specimens of the flora of Palestine in his mind, when he spoke of the inimitable beauty and the matchless splendour of these flowers of God.

Ver. 29.—**And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink.** Again, after the moving, touching words we have been commenting on, does the Lord return to the pressing injunction with which he began his lessons to his disciples upon the parable of the "rich fool." Trouble not yourselves about your eating and drinking. This repeated insistence of the Master upon this point in the future lives of his disciples has evidently a deeper significance than a mere injunction to cast all their care on him, and not to be over-anxious about their poor earthly maintenance. This was, of course, the first lesson they had to learn from these

words; but beneath all this they could, and no doubt often in later days did, read in the words a clear expression of their dear Lord's will in favour of the utmost simplicity in all matters of food and drink. His own must be marked men here, ever frugal and temperate even to abstemiousness. It is a grave question whether his Church has ever fully grasped the Master's meaning here. **Neither be ye of doubtful mind**; literally, *do not toss about like boats in the offing* (so Dr. Farrar very happily). The word is not found elsewhere in New Testament writers, but it is known in classic writers. Its use here is one of the many signs of St. Luke's high culture.

Ver. 32.—**Fear not, little flock.** Another term of tender endearment addressed to his own who were grouped near him. In the earlier part of this discourse (ver. 4) he had called them "my friends." He had told them of the troublous life which awaited them, but at the same time wished to show them how dear they were to him. It was as though he said, "Endure the thought of these necessary trials *for my sake;* are you not my chosen friends, for whom so glorious a future, if ye endure to the end, is reserved?"

Ver. 33.—**Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.** "Those of you who *have* riches, see, this is what I counsel you to do with them." In considering these much-disputed words of the Master, we must remember (1) *to whom* they were spoken: they were addressed to men and women who, if they would follow him, *must* set themselves free from all worldly possessions; they must literally forsake *all* to follow him. (2) We must bear in mind (*a*) that the only community which attempted, as a community, to obey this charge *literally* was the Church of Jerusalem, and the result was that for long years this Church was plunged into the deepest poverty, so that assistance had to be sent even from far-distant Churches to this deeply impoverished Jerusalem community. [This we learn from Paul, the real compiler of this very Gospel, where the charge is reported. See many passages in his letters, notably the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, *passim.*] (*b*) The mendicant orders in the Middle Ages, with no little bravery and constancy, likewise attempted to carry out to the letter this direction. The impartial student of mediæval history, while doing all justice to the aims and work of these often devoted men, can judge whether or no these mendicant orders can be reckoned among the *permanently* successful agencies of the cross. We conclude, then, that these words had a *literal* meaning only for those to whom they were specially addressed, viz. the disciples. While to the Church generally they convey this deep, far-reaching lesson, a lesson all would-be servants of Christ would do well to take to heart—it is the Master's will that his followers *should sit loose* to all *earthly possessions, possessing them as though they possessed not.* Thus living, the heart will be free from all inordinate care for earthly treasure, and will, in real earnest, turn to that serene region where its real and abiding riches indeed are—even to heaven.

Vers. 35, 36.—**Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.** The Master goes on with his teaching on the subject of covetousness, still addressing himself primarily to the disciples. "There is another reason why my chosen followers should treat the amassing of earthly goods with indifference; no man knows *when* the end of this state of things may come; their hearts must be fixed on something else than perishable things. They must act as servants on the watch for the return of their lord. See now, my own," Jesus proceeds to say; "your attitude in life must be that of servants, at once loyal and devoted, whom their employer has left in his house while he is absent at a great wedding-feast. The day of his absence passes into evening, and evening shades into night; and even the night wears slowly and tediously away, and still the master of the house comes not back from his festival." But the *faithful* servants all this while never slumber, or even lie down to rest. All the time of his absence, with their loose flowing Eastern robes taken up, and the skirt fastened under the girdle, with their lamps all trimmed and burning, these watchers wait the coming of their lord, though he tarry long, that they may be ready to receive him and serve him the moment he arrives. All kinds of busy house service, too, carried on during the long night of watching, is implied by the girt-up robes and the lit lamps of the tireless watchers.

Ver. 37.—**Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.** The title "blessed," when used by our Lord, is ever a very lofty one, and implies some rare and precious virtue in the one to whom this title to honour is given. It seems as though the house-master of the parable scarcely expected such true devotion from his servants; so he hastens to reward a rare virtue with equally rare blessedness and honour. He raises the slaves to a posi-

tion of equality with their master. These true faithful ones are no longer his servants; they are his friends. He even deigns himself to minister to their wants. A similar lofty promise is made in less homely language. The final glorious gift to the faithful conqueror in the world's hard battle appears in the last of the epistles to the seven Churches: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with *me* in my throne" (Rev. iii. 21).

Ver. 38.—**And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so.** Among the Jews at the time of our Lord, the old division of the night into three watches had given place to the ordinary Roman division into four. They were reckoned thus: from six to nine, from nine to midnight, from midnight to three, and from three to six. In this parable the second and third watches are mentioned as necessary for the completeness of the picture; for the *banquet* would certainly not be over before the end of the first watch, and in the fourth the *day* would be breaking. The second and third watches, then, represent the still and weary hours of the night, when to watch is indeed a task of difficulty and painfulness; and here again the Lord repeats his high encomium on such devoted conduct in his second "blessed are those servants." It is perfectly clear that in this parable the master's return signifies the coming of Christ. The whole tone, then, is a grave reminder to us, to all impatient ones, that the great event *may* be long delayed, much longer than most Christian thinkers dream; but it tells us, too, that this long delay involves a test of their loyalty. "The parousia does not come so quickly as impatience, nor yet so late as carelessness, supposes" (Van Oosterzee).

Vers. 39, 40.—**And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.** The Lord abruptly changes the scene of his parable imagery, and with another striking and vivid example enforces his teaching on the subject of the urgent necessity of his servants keeping a sleepless and diligent watch and ward against his coming again in judgment. Very deeply must this image of the Lord's sudden return, as a thief breaks into the house in the still hours of the night, have impressed itself on the hearts of the awe-struck, listening disciples, for we find in the case of SS. Paul and Peter the very words and imagery, and in the case of St. John the imagery again made use of (see 1 Thess. v. 1, 2; 1 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3; xvi. 15). The meaning of the simile is obvious. The disciples and all followers of Jesus would do well to remain always on the watch for the second advent of the Lord. The time of that awful return was unknown, never could be known; men, however, must not be deceived by the long tarrying; the day of the Lord would surely come on the world as a thief in the night.

Ver. 41.—**Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?** Peter's question here referred evidently to the longer and more important parable-story, where the reward which the faithful watchers were to receive is mentioned (ver. 37). The grandeur of that reward seems deeply to have impressed the impulsive apostle. Some true conception of the heaven-life had entered into Peter's mind; we know, too, that now and again dimly Peter seemed to grasp the secret of his Master's awful Divinity. What meant, then, thought the faithful, loving man, the figure in the parable of the lord? Who was that lord—*himself serving* his faithful followers? The same curious perplexity evidently passed through Peter's mind when, on the evening before the death, in a symbol-act the Master repeated the words of the great promise made here, and washed his disciples' feet. Then we read how Peter said to him, "Lord, dost *thou* wash *my* feet?" Were *all* who followed Jesus to share in that strange, mighty promise; or only a few, such as Peter and his companions, called for a special purpose?

Vers. 42—44.—**And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.** Jesus goes on with his discourse. *Apparently* he pays no heed to Peter's question, but *really* he answers it fully, giving in fact more details on the subject of rewards to the faithful in the life to come than even Peter's question required. "Who then," asks the Lord, "is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household?" Who? Peter must answer the question. *This* steward should be Peter himself and each of Peter's chosen companions. *This* high position of steward in the household of the Lord should be filled by those whom Jesus had specially chosen. If, when he came again, the Lord found *these* faithful to their solemn trust, then *these* should receive a still higher and grander recompense even than that inconceivably splendid reward (mentioned in ver. 37) which had so struck Peter: and the higher recompense which

these, the faithful and wise stewards, should then receive would be *the being made rulers over all that the Lord hath*. The answer of the Master then told Peter that *all* his followers, if found true and loyal, should receive the reward promised (in ver. 37) to the watching servants, who in the world to come would be not the *servants* but the *friends* of God. While the *few*, the chosen apostles of the Lord, if *they* endured to the end, if *they* were found wise and faithful, to them would be given in the new life a yet more glorious recompense; they would be set in some special position of government and dominion in the glorious city of God. This teaches, too, indirectly, but with great clearness, that in the heaven-life *all* Christ's redeemed will enjoy in the friendship of God a perfect blessedness. Still, in that perfect blessedness which will be the heritage of all the redeemed, there will still be degrees in glory.

Vers. 45, 46.—**But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware.** "But," continued the Master, "although certain of my servants have outlooks to higher degrees of glory than the great mass of their fellows, these seemingly favoured ones have at the same time more perilous responsibilities; and only if in these graver responsibilities they are faithful to the end, will they receive their high and peculiar reward." If, on the other hand, they fail in their perpetual watch for the coming of their Lord, and instead of the restless toil which the Master has assigned to these stewards, these servants, weighted with higher responsibilities, give themselves up to worldly pleasures and passions, terrible will be their doom. Again the excesses of the table are specially mentioned. If, instead of spending themselves in the cares of their high office, they make a profit out of that office, if they live as oppressors of the flock rather than as shepherds, then to these unfaithful stewards will the Lord suddenly come, as pictured in the parable imagery, a thief in the night. **And will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.** The terrible punishment here specified was not unknown among the ancients (see Herodotus, vii. 39; and Heb. xi. 37). Isaiah was said to have been sawn asunder. Bengel's comment is curious: "Qui cor *divisum* habet, *dividetur*." It has been suggested, to bring the punishment into harmony with the statement immediately following, which speaks of a definite and, perhaps, of an enduring position for the guilty one, a "portion with the unbelievers," to understand the word as an equivalent for scourging; so in the Latin we find *flagellis discindere*, to scourge the back with the rod. There is, however, no known instance of the Greek word διχοτομεῖν being used in this sense. The expression is, however, used as simply implying that a terrible doom is surely reserved in the life to come for those who have so sadly misused their high opportunities and neglected their great responsibilities. "The image of the parable itself is blended with the reality which the parable signifies; this thought of the human master who can punish his slaves with temporal death passes into that of the Divine Judge who can punish with spiritual death" (Dean Mansel).

Vers. 47, 48.—**And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.** These verses are easy to understand. They explain the broad principles upon which the foregoing statements, in parable and in direct teaching, are based. Rewards and punishments will be allotted in the coming world with strict justice. To some, great knowledge of the Divine will is given and splendid opportunities of work are afforded; to such, if only they are faithful and true, will indeed a high place in the city of God be allotted; but alas for them in the life to come if they fail, if they miss the splendid chance of being true toilers with and for God! Their portion will be the *many stripes*. To others a knowledge of the Divine will, scanty compared with those just spoken of, is given, and opportunities of doing high and noble work are here comparatively few; if these use the little knowledge and seize the few opportunities, they will, while occupying a lower grade in the hierarchy of heaven, still enjoy the perfect bliss of friendship with God. The punishment for failure here is designated by the *few stripes*. In this solemn passage it is notable that degrees or grades in punishment as well as degrees or grades in glory are distinctly spoken of.

Ver. 49.—**I am come to send fire on the earth.** It is still the same train of thought that the Master pursues—a train which had been only slightly diverted by Peter's question. The text, so to speak, of the whole discourse was "the strange attraction which riches possess for men, and the palsying effect which this attraction, when yielded to, exercises over the whole life." The Master's argument was as follows: "Beware of covetousness; let your attachment to earthly possessions sit very lightly on you

all; and as for *you*, my disciples, do you have *nothing* to do with these perishable goods." And here, with an abrupt solemnity, probably the voice changing here, and ringing with an awful emotion, he enforces his charge to the disciples with the words, "I am come to send fire on the earth." "My stern, sad work is to inaugurate a mighty struggle, *to* cast a firebrand on the earth. Lo, my presence will stir up men—you will see this in a way none now dream of; a vast convulsion will rend this people asunder. In the coming days of war and tumult, what have you, my disciples, who will be in the forefront of this movement,—what have you to do with earthly goods? Toss them away from you as useless baggage. The pioneers of the army of the future, surely *they* must be unencumbered in the war, which is about to break out; for remember, 'I am come to send fire on the earth.'" **And what will I, if it be already kindled?** better rendered, *how I would that it had been already kindled!* That is to say, "How I wish that this fire were already burning!" (so Olshausen, De Wette, Bleek, and Farrar). Through all the woe, however, the Redeemer could see, shining as it were through a dark cloud, the unspeakable glory and blessedness of his work. But this fire could not be kindled into a flame until something had happened. The cross must be endured by him; till then his work was not finished; and in his pure human nature—it is with stammering tongue and trembling pen we speak or write here—he felt, we believe, the bitter stinging pain of dread expectation of what was coming. With this onlook he was weighed down, we know, at times; witness especially the Gethsemane agony. He goes on to say—

Ver. 50.—**But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!** The baptism he here speaks of was the baptism of pain and suffering and death—what we call the Passion of the Lord. He knew it must all be gone through, to bring about the blessed result for which he left his home in heaven; but he looked on to it, nevertheless, with terror and shrinking. "He is under pressure," says Godet, "to enter into this suffering because he is in haste to get out of it, mournfully impatient to have done with a painful task." This passage of the discourse of Jesus here has been called "a prelude of Gethsemane."

Ver. 51.—**Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.** But the Master quickly leaves himself and his own sad forebodings. He puts by for a season his own holy impatience and continues his warnings. "I have been dwelling on the troublous times quickly coming on. Do not deceive yourselves, my disciples; the great change about to be inaugurated will only be carried out in war and by divisions in the individual house as in the nation. I bring not peace, but a sword, remember." And then follows a curious picture of a home torn asunder by the conflict of thought which would spring up as the result of the cross and of the preaching of the cross.

Ver. 54.—**And he said also.** A note of the compilers, SS. Luke and Paul, which seems to say, "Besides all the important sayings we have just written down, which were spoken on this occasion, the Master added as a conclusion the following words." It is probable that the expressions used in the next seven verses were called out by the general apathy with which his announcement of the coming woes was received by the listening multitude. Possibly he had noticed a smile of incredulity on the faces of some of the nearer by-standers. The words had already been used on other occasions in a different connection. Here he used them as a last appeal, or rather as a remonstrance. He seems to say to the people, "O blind, blind to the awful sins of the times! You are weather-wise enough, and can tell from the appearance of the sky and the sighing of the wind whether a storm is brewing or no: why not use the same faculty of discernment in higher and more important matters? Ah! be wise; make your peace with God without delay; it will soon be too late; there is an awful judgment close at hand!" **When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.** To the *west* of Palestine lay the great Mediterranean Sea, from which, of course, came all the rains which fell on that country.

Ver. 55.—**And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.** To the south of Palestine lay the desert; when the wind blew from that direction, it was usually a time of heat and drought.

Ver. 56.—**Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?** *These* things had an interest for them. Heat and drought, wind and rain, affected materially the prospect of their wheat-harvest and vintage, the fruitfulness of their orchards and olive-yards, therefore they gave their whole mind to the watching of the weather; but to the awful signs of the time in which they were living they were blind and deaf. What were these signs? (1) *The low state of morality among public men.* Did none of them notice how utterly corrupt were priests and scribes and people, how hollow and meaningless their boasted religious rites, how far removed from them was the presence

of the God of their fathers? (2) *Political situation.* Did none of them notice the terribly strained relations between the Roman or Herodian, and the great national party? Were they blind to the bitter, irreconcilable hatred to mighty Rome which was seething scarcely beneath the surface of Jewish society? Were they deaf to the rumbling noises which too surely heralded a fierce and bloody war between little Palestine, split up into parties and sects, and the mighty world of Rome which had seized them in its own grip? What could be the result of such a war? Were they devoid of reason as well as blind and deaf? (3) *Heavenly warnings.* What had they done with John the Baptist? Many in Israel knew that man was indeed a great prophet of the Lord. His burning words had penetrated far and wide; vast crowds had heard the awful sounds with breathless awe; but no one heeded, and the people watched him die. And now—they had listened to him who was speaking to them. He had told them all; no sign of power was wanting to his ministry, and it was just over, and the people had not repented.

Vers. 58, 59.—**When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.** And then the Master passed into one of those parable illustrations with which his hearers were now familiar, and which in a homely way taught the crowd the same grave truth which he had been dwelling upon—the impending terrible judgment which was coming on the people. The lesson, "be reconciled to God while it is yet time," is, of course, applicable to all lives, precarious and hanging seemingly on a thread as they all are, but it was especially spoken to that generation in view of the awful ruin which he knew was so soon to fall on every Jewish home. The general meaning of the parable illustration was obvious; no hearer could fail to understand the Lord's meaning. It is *before* arriving at the judgment-seat that you must be reconciled with the one who accuses you, otherwise it will be too late, and nothing would remain for the guilty accused but the eternal prison-house. At *that* moment, when the Master was speaking, individual or nation might have turned to the Lord and lived. There was no time, however, for hesitation. The sands in the hour-glass, which marked the duration of God's long-suffering with Israel, were just running out. Theologians in different ages and of varied schools have made much of the concluding sentence (ver. 59). Roman Catholic divines see in it a strong argument in favour of the doctrine of purgatory, arguing that after death condemnation would be followed by liberation, when a certain payment had been made by the guilty soul; strange ways of paying this debt by means of others we know have been devised by the school of divines who teach this doctrine of purgatory. But the Lord's words here are terribly plain, and utterly exclude any payment of the debt of the soul *by others.* The Master emphatically says, "till *thou* hast paid the very last mite." The advocate who pleads for universal redemption, and shrinks from a punishment to the duration of which he can see no term, thinks that in the words, "till thou hast paid," he can discern the germ at least of eternal hope. But the impenetrable veil which hangs between us and the endless hereafter prevents us, surely, from even suggesting that any suffering which the soul may endure in the unseen world will ever pay "*the very last mite,*" and so lead to pardon and peace.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*An evil to be shunned, and a virtue to be cultivated.* Jesus had been partaking of the light forenoon meal with a Pharisee. In this Pharisee's house he proclaimed war to the death with the bigots who had been dogging his steps. A small fire may kindle much wood. For some reason unknown to us, he had omitted the washing of hands before sitting down to meat. Instantly the whole company turned on him with scowl and sneer and shrug. And the action of the Truth incarnate, in reply to this, was the utterance of the six "woes"—scathing thunderbolts—which St. Luke has recorded between vers. 42 and 52 of the previous chapter. His utterance was the signal for something like a riot (vers. 53, 54). Ah! thou Son of Mary, thou Meekest and Lowliest, the column has turned. Hitherto thy progress has been, not without contradiction of sinners, but for the most part one of sweet poetries—unbounded the wonder and generous the admiration of the people. Thine enemies have been kept back; they have been held in restraint by the lightning which has flashed from thee.

But now thou must enter on a new phase of thy ministry; henceforth the issues towards which thou hast been looking will be hastened.

"Ride on, ride on in majesty!
The winged squadrons of the sky
Look down with sad and wondering eyes
To see the approaching sacrifice."

"In the mean time," whilst the dinner with its tumultuous conversation is proceeding, the crowd has so accumulated that "many thousands are gathered together." They are so eager to hear the Prophet that some persons are trodden down. To this seething mass Christ comes forth, his heart stirred by the controversy, vehement and provocative, which single-handed he had sustained. Most natural, in view of the circumstances related, is the discourse which follows, addressed immediately to his followers, but reaching the ear of "the many thousands." 1. First, there is the word as to "*the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy*" (vers. 1—3). Hypocrisy was the evil which permeated and vitiated their action. What is meant by hypocrisy? The hypocrite is "the man who has to play a part, to maintain a reputation, to keep up a respectable position, to act consistently with the maxims of the party to which he is allied, or the profession to which he belongs." As thus interpreted, is not the "beware!" of the afternoon long ago, a "beware!" for this day as well? "Pharisee" and "Sadducee" are words which no longer distinguish classes; but when the classes which they once designated are studied, it is found that, for what was most characteristic of each, there are correspondents among us. Let it not be supposed that the Pharisee was nothing else than a sanctimonious charlatan, a mere pretentious formalist. He was the representative of the more earnest religious spirit. The Sadducee was generally a wealthy man, one belonging to the ruling order. Content with easy and low standards, the worldly or rationalistic Jews belonged to the party comprehended by the name. The Pharisee disowned such a conception of religion. He would not have any fellowship with such latitudinarianism. To him the Law was the Law of God, and he was bent on keeping it to its minutest point. In over-zeal he even added, to the observances enjoined, observances which might be inferred or which had been added by rabbins. The traditions of the elders were, in his view, a supplement to the Law and the prophets. "It is needless," as has well been observed, "to show that there was something in Pharisaism worthy of admiration, for this is implied in the charge brought against the Pharisees of our Lord's time. They were accused of being hypocrites, of not being what they pretended to be; in which it is implied that, if they had really been what they seemed, they would have deserved the praise they claimed. And doubtless there were some whose goodness was more than outside show, both in the first original of the sect, and in those later times when Pharisaic culture prepared the soil on which the seeds of the gospel most readily flourished; for to this sect belonged the majority of the first converts, and the many thousands who believed are all described as 'zealous for the Law.'"[1] Any one playing the hypocrite will prefer the Pharisee type. The scanty clothing of the Sadducee will not suit; the fitting dress is the long robe and the well-phylacteried garment of the Pharisee. The devil's homage to truth, which hypocrisy has been declared to be, is more becomingly rendered in such a garb. A *part-actor!* Ah! we need to be reminded that this is a character still to be found in the religious world. Bunyan introduces us to persons who are not mere fictions—My Lord Turn-about, my Lord Fair-speech, Mr. Smooth-man, Facing-both-ways, the parson Mr. Two-tongues; the points in which all agree being "that they never strive against wind and tide, and that they are always most zealous when religion goes in his silver slippers." A *part-actor!* Almost unconsciously, we play a part which marks an excess of what we have ourselves verified—a part beyond, if not covering, the very thought of the soul. "Beware of the leaven!" Milton describes hypocrisy as "the only evil that walks invisible except to God alone." To be real, not to be a Mr. Facing-both-ways, is one of the great lessons of the life of Christ. In any diagnosis of human nature, we must remember the mixture to be found in character. Few persons intend, deliberately and systematically, to lie to God

[1] 'Non-Miraculous Christianity,' pp. 263, 264, by Professor Salmon, D.D., of Dublin.

and man. The Pharisees whom our Lord condemned were not—at least we may in charity so suppose—intentionally false. If they prayed to be seen of men, we need not imagine that they secretly mocked at and disbelieved in the duty of prayer. The *leaven* was the endeavour to maintain a reputation with which they were credited; so much had this endeavour gained on them, that they were far more anxious about it than about their possession of truth in the inward parts. And thus they became part-actors. Now, so with regard to ourselves and our fellow-men. A person is observed doing, in some directions or at some times, what is inconsistent with his conduct at other times or in other directions. And worldly minded people, always eager to scent blemishes, cry out, "Hypocrite!" This is a harsh, and may be a wrong, judgment. A lapse from the standard aimed at does not evidence insincerity. Nay, those who observe most closely the facts of life, can often trace what seems a twofoldness of self. The Apostle Paul in a most striking passage (Rom. vii.) has described the struggle in his own heart, the contending laws, the spiritual and the carnal, the oppositions and thwartings of the sin that dwelt in him—oppositions so fierce that it seemed as if he were sold under sin. "O wretched man that I am!" he cries. His hope, his triumph, is, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Looking up to Jesus Christ, he saw his right and higher self; looking down on the evil ever present with him, on the body of death in which he appeared to be enslaved, he saw the lower and the wrong self. "I myself with the mind serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." The one feature in this portrait is the determination of the will. That was God's; the deflections from it were the signs of an alien force from which he wished to be free. So long as this feature is predominant, the sanctification may be imperfect, but the life is true. What constitutes hypocrisy is appearing to be what one is not; concealing the want of piety in the heart under the cloke of piety in the action; such a study of outward effect that the conduct gradually becomes a tissue of dishonesties. This *posing* to be something and this anxiety about the *pose* rather than the truth, constitute the leaven of hypocrisy. "Be no part-actor," says Christ (vers. 2, 3); "be no whisperer in darkness, be no mutterer in the ear in inner chambers. Be not one thing in secret, and another thing in public. Keep clear of pretences of all sorts. Remember, concealment cannot avail. Walls have ears. The universe has its libraries on which all that is whispered is written. And there is an Eternal Truth to whom 'all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.'" 2. Next, there is the word as to *courage*. Is it not the word which we might expect from him who had defied the most compact order in the land? Listen to the Christian's "Fear *not*," and the Christian's "Fear." "Fear not man, having power only over the body" (ver. 4). Have the courage of your convictions. Trust in God and do the right. Fear *God* (ver. 5). Fear not to speak the truth; fear to tell the lie. "Yea, I say unto you, fear the Eternal Righteousness." The lesson is enforced by three considerations. (1) The value to God of every true and honest life (vers. 6, 7). Not one sparrow is forgotten, not one of the tiniest and least valued of God's creatures is outside his care. Every hair on your head is numbered. You are dear to God. He is waiting for you to work with him. The life of each of you is of value to him. Fear not. (2) The danger of trifling with conviction (vers. 8—10). Do not refuse, for some fear of man, to give effect to it. You may possibly, says the Lord, quench the Holy Spirit. This was the sin of the Pharisees. This is the unpardonable sin. A word against Jesus may be spoken "ignorantly in unbelief;" and the Redeemer says, "Father, forgive; for they know not what they do." But to shut the eye to the light, to refuse to see light as light, to sophisticate the voice of God's Spirit speaking through reason and conscience, this is to destroy the possibility of spiritual health. Christ says to the disciples, "To confess me before men, no matter what the consequences to yourselves, is to deliver your souls, is to realize the confession in heaven; to deny me is to lose the fellowship of the holy angels, is to approach the confines of the sin which shall not be forgiven." (3) The support assured for all testimony to him (vers. 11, 12). God is ever on the side of the true. Christ bids those who confess him dismiss anxiety when brought to "synagogues, magistrates, and powers." They are never alone. Moses, the stammering, had his Aaron with him when he went in unto Pharaoh. A Mightier than Aaron is with the most timid and stammering of the confessors of the kingdom of God. "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

Vers. 13—31.—*Worldliness.* To the earnest teacher nothing can be more irritating than a half-attentive attitude or a remark which indicates preoccupation of mind with other and inferior things. Think of Christ, towards the close of a day of controversy with the Pharisees, and in the midst of solemn speech as to the duty of a true man, invited on a sudden to decide in a family quarrel, to settle a dispute about some money or some acres of soil. We know nothing about the person who appealed to him (ver. 13)—"one out of the multitude." But it is evident that, while the discourse proceeded, he had been engrossed with the consideration of his own rights and interests; like many who may be in the multitude thronging around Jesus, but are secretly busied with their own concerns—earth-grubs, intent only on getting all they can get from others for themselves. The abrupt reply (ver. 14) shows the displeasure of the Lord. It is a reply of reproof; it is a reply of instruction also. God has a great variety of spheres and ministries for men, and the Son of God will not contravene his Father's ordering. The judge, the measurer, the arbiter as to property, is a Divine calling. Those who are entrusted with it are God's servants. The State is no less sacred than the Church. Let each realize its own place, and each respect the other—the State looking to the Church as the expounder of the eternal principles, the Church looking to the State as charged with government and the settlement of the issues between man and man. "My kingdom," says the Christ, "is not of this world." The incident gives a new direction to the teaching of Jesus. It is a disclosure of the mind against which he must warn his followers. And then follows one of the most solemn and beautiful of expositions—that in which the Lord conveys his great lesson as to worldliness. Observe (1) *the more public instruction* between vers. 15 and 21; and (2) *the more private instruction*, specially addressed to the disciples, between vers. 21 and 32. The more public is the admonition concerning *covetousness;* the more private is the admonition concerning *carefulness.* The two types of the one spirit—worldliness.

I. The former instruction is enforced by a parable, by observing the point of which we discern THE MEANING WHICH CHRIST GIVES TO THE WORD "COVETOUSNESS," AND THE PRINCIPLE IN RELATION TO IT WHICH HE LAYS DOWN. Notice, it is the most insinuating, therefore the most dangerous, form of the temptation which is presented. The ground (ver. 16) of a man already rich brings forth plentifully. There is no dishonesty charged; there is no financial *finesse* suggested; it is in the natural course of things. The money makes money, and good soil and good harvests aid. The covetousness is the greed of *having* rather than *getting;* it is manifest in the thought as to that which has been already got. The anxiety is to treasure up for self. Existing barns are insufficient (vers. 17, 18). What is to be done? There never enters the thought of any stewardship of the substance with which the man is enriched; never the feeling, "What I have God has given me. The labour of others, too, has helped me to acquire it. I am the custodiar of so much of a commonwealth. God wills that I enjoy richly, but not that I keep all to myself. I enjoy in the measure in which the use of the gifts unites me to the will of him who is the Giver." Bengel remarks, "Not a word of the poor in all his self-communion." It is simply a hard, selfish "greater barns." Covetousness is not the desire to enjoy so much as the desire to have. First, the having of a great store; then, not until then (ver. 19), "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Very delicate is the Master's touch. The happiness in the wealth is a thing future, and the *future never comes.* Do we not often see abundance going about with a load of care on its back—fear about losses, anxiety about investments, etc.? The wealthy are often prevented from getting the full good of their wealth. They are possessed by their money more than they are possessors of their money. "The increase serves not as water to quench, but as fuel to feed the fire; he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver." Christ is not condemning wealth or denouncing abundance of things. "The filling of the barns with plenty, and the bursting out of the vats with new wine," is represented (Prov. iii. 9, 10) as the blessing prepared for those who honour the Lord with their substance. What he condemns is the vice which specially threatens the rich—the tendency to identify the life with the possessions (ver. 15), to love the money, to hoard it, and regard it all as a treasure to be devoted to self. And truly the words of the Truth are most needful for our time. "The desire to accumulate is the source of all our greatness and of all our baseness." The baseness begins when the barn, with its "much goods"

is regarded as the soul's portion; when that is the man's main interest; and, looking on to some day when the pile will be complete, he says in himself, "Then eat, drink, and be merry." Very striking the sentence (ver. 20) "*God* says, Thou fool!" Folly indeed! Thomas Adams quaintly says, "The competency of earthly things is a blessing; but what is this to abundance? Is not he as warm that goes in russet as another that rustles in silk? Has not the poor labourer as sound a sleep in his flock bed as the epicure on his down bed? Doth not quiet lie oftener in cottages than in glorious mansions? And, for a good appetite, we see the toiling servant feed savourly of one homely dish when his surfeited master looks loathingly on his far-fetched and dearly bought dainties. This gentleman envies the happiness of his poor hind, and would be content to change states with him on condition he might change stomachs. It is not the plenitude, but the competency of these things that affords even content; so that a man's estate should be like his garment, rather fit than long." Folly indeed! What stupidity to contemplate the many years! "This night thy soul shall be required." Thy soul, thyself, without all the goods. "When I die, let my hands be outside my shroud," said the emperor, "that all may see they are empty." And what is to become of the "much goods"? Pass into the hands of others, possibly only to do them harm, neither the accumulator nor his kind made the better for all the gathering. "Fool, fool! this thou art, O man, who, without generosity of heart or liberality of hand, day by day scrapest the dust of earth to thy store, oblivious of the celestial crown above thy head, rich in man's estimation, but (ver. 21) a pauper, a bankrupt, towards God."

II. THE MORE GENERAL INSTRUCTION SOUNDS THE WARNING. "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness." The more *special and private instruction* to the disciples is joined to the preceding parable by a "therefore" (ver. 22). It, too, is an admonition against *worldliness*. It presents that aspect of the worldly spirit which more immediately tempted the disciples of Jesus; it gives also the key-note for that higher life which, as those joined to the Lord, they are called to live. The two parts of the discourse illustrate the meaning of St. Paul's saying as to "the new man created, after God, in righteousness and true holiness [or, 'holiness of truth']" (Eph. iv. 24). The righteousness which is incumbent on all, from the very nature of their existence and their relation to God and men, is represented in the part already considered; "the holiness of truth"—that *plus* which is because of our place in the body of Christ, and our relation to him as the Head of the body—is represented in the beautiful words which are prefaced by the injunction, "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." With some variations, a part of the sermon from the mount is repeated (see homiletics on the sermon). One or two remarks will here suffice. 1. The life which marks the holiness of the new man created in Christ Jesus consists in *a supreme preference* (ver. 31). What distinguishes this life is that it has a "rather" or a "howbeit" at its heart. Its first concern is the kingdom of the Father; its second is (ver. 30) the things which the nations of the world seek after. "These things"—eating, drinking, clothing, etc., have their value. But the mind is not in search of them. They are not its good or portion. Its sympathies and craving are towards the eternally right and true. To realize that in self, and aid its fulfilment everywhere, is the highest aim and object of the being. The property of the soul rich towards God is, indeed, a vast property; but it has heights as well as lengths; it is the threefold estate—"all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The things which the nations of the world seek after are given into the bargain, so to speak, as far as they are necessities, to all who seek the Father's kingdom. 2. For those in whom this life is formed, *a rule is laid down* (ver. 22), "Be not anxious as to these things." The rendering of the Greek word in the Authorized Version might mislead. Christ himself has taught us to take thought for our life—to provide for the morrow. He bade his disciples gather up the fragments, that nothing might be lost. He had a bag, of which Judas was the bearer, from which things needful were purchased. It is a sign of the savage, not the civilized man, to live only for the present hour, wasting what he does not immediately consume. The teaching is that, living the true life, and preferring what is right to what is merely politic, we may reckon on God for the supply of all our need. As to eating and drinking, we will not ask the satiety of abundance, we will ask only sufficiency; and on this we may rely. He who feeds the ravens will not forget those who faithfully serve him

(vers. 23, 30). We are to labour constantly and diligently whilst we have strength, to sow and reap, to "provide things honest;" for labour is God's appointed means of feeding and clothing—as even the raven witnesses, which God feeds, but which yet is ever picking what it can find; as even the lily witnesses, which is faithful to the conditions of its growth. But we are to toil with a free heart, delivered from carking and worrying care, turning ever trustfully to the love of our Father in heaven. Matthew Henry puts it thus: "As in our stature, so in our state, it is our wisdom to take it as it is, and make the best of it; for fretting and vexing, carking and caring, will not mend it." "Do not live in suspense; do not cherish the doubting, doubtful mind," says the Lord to his followers. "Do not fear. A little flock you may seem; but the shepherding is perfect. Live generously, self-denyingly, self-sacrificingly (ver. 31). The purses which hold good deeds never wax old. The treasure bestowed on that which is out of sight is laid up in the heavens (ver. 33), and no thief can abstract it, and no moth can destroy it. Living in the unseen, in God's kingdom of grace as its subjects, your heart (ver. 34) will settle towards its treasure; you will be prepared and fitted to be the princes of your Father's kingdom of glory."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Hidden things.* Our Lord's affirmation implies that there is a great deal which has been long beneath the surface, and we naturally ask—*Does God hide?* And the answer is—Yes, truly, "thou art a God that hidest thyself." He hides his own glory, that we may not be dazzled thereby; he hides the bliss of the beatified, that we may not be discontented thereby. Like as a father hides from his children many things which they will better learn a little later on, or had better make out for themselves, so God hides many things from us for the very same reasons. But he has so hidden treasures of truth and wisdom from us, that we have every possible inducement to search for them, and full capacity to find them.

I. THE PROVISION MADE FOR OUR TEMPORAL WELFARE. Did he not hide the coal, the copper, the iron, the lead, the silver, the gold, that we might discover, might raise, might refine, might shape them to our use? And the corn which he gives us to eat, the raiment to wear, the music to enjoy,—these are only to be had by searching, by inquiry, by study, by endeavour. The powers of steam, of electricity, were long hidden from the knowledge of mankind, but they, with the other secrets of the world, are being known.

II. HIS SAVING AND SANCTIFYING TRUTH. Paul speaks much of "the mystery hidden from the generations," *i.e.* God's great purpose to redeem, not a nation from political bondage, but the whole human race from spiritual servitude and degradation; his purpose to accomplish this by coming to the world in the Person of his Son Jesus Christ. This was hidden in Old Testament promises, and in the Law given by Moses; it was there, undiscovered by any but a few discerning souls; and it was "not revealed unto the sons of men" until, enlightened by the Spirit of God, the apostles made known the riches of his grace. There are still some things in connection with Christian doctrine which may be said to be hidden, but which sooner or later will be revealed and known.

III. HUMAN CHARACTER AND HUMAN LIFE. There are depths of secrecy in these human hearts of ours. Evil thoughts may hide there unknown to any but to those that entertain them; nay, may lurk and work within the soul unsuspected even by that soul itself. For men are both better and worse than they know themselves to be. What purity and gentleness and self-sacrificing love may steal silently through life, and may pass and be forgotten! what deeds of truest heroism may be wrought which no pen records and no tongue recites! Yet the wrong shall be exposed, and the right be understood and honoured; human character shall be read in the light of truth; the guilty shall be humbled and the upright be exalted "in that day." 1. *Our duty.* It is that of: (1) Exposure. Tear the mask from the hypocrite; let the covering be torn off the false man, the charlatan, the betrayer of the soul, with a firm and fearless hand; make him stand out before his fellows stripped of his pretences; *make* it true that "there is nothing covered," etc. (2) Disclosure. Live to teach, to enlighten, to enlarge.

Let the secret of health, of wisdom, of usefulness, be published on every hand. Tell all you can reach—the children in the school, the sick by the bedside, the loiterers by the wayside, the congregation in the cottage, or the hall, or the church—the secret of pure and lasting joy, of real and true success. 2. *Our danger.* Since God *will* cause the hidden things to be known, since he will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts," since he "will judge the secrets of men," well may the guilty shudder, well may we all ask—Who shall abide that solemn hour? But there is an alternative. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." True penitence and genuine faith will secure for us such a covering that *nothing* shall be revealed. There is a Divine forgiveness which swallows up and hides for ever the wrong that we have done. 3. *Our hope.* "And then"—at that day—"shall every man have praise of God;" *i.e.* every man who is, in the true sense, praiseworthy; every man to whom Christ will be free to say, "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; for inasmuch," etc. He who does good "to be seen of men" *has* his reward now; his recompense is exhausted here. But he who works for Christ and for men in the spirit of his Master has *not* his reward now; he has only a foretaste of it. The best of it has yet to come. And it will come; for there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed. Blessed is the quiet, humble life of unpretending goodness, which is like the silent spring that makes the meadows green; from such lives as these come deeds of loveliness and usefulness to be made mention of by the lips of the Lord himself, when the things that are covered now shall be revealed, and the things which man overlooks God will own and honour.—C.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The power to hurt and bless.* We are admonished of—

I. THE POWER WHICH MAN HAS TO HURT US. 1. He can *wound our body.* He can smite, can wound, can slay us. The sad story of human persecution contains only too many illustrations of this fact. 2. He can *wound our spirit.* This is a course he can, and still does very often take; he can mock, can sneer, can indulge in heartless ribaldry, can hold up our most sacred convictions to ridicule, and thus he can inflict on us a very deep wound. For words, though they may be the slightest, are yet the keenest of weapons, and "a wounded spirit who can bear?" 3. He can *tempt us to evil.* This is the worst thing he can do; he can make the evil suggestion, can give the perilous invitation, can make the guilty overture, which leads down to sin and to spiritual failure. There is no measure of pain he can inflict, or loss he can cause us to suffer, which equals in shamefulness this act of dark temptation. That is the *deadly* thing to do.

II. THE LIMITATION OF HIS POWER. Beyond these lines our worst enemies cannot go. 1. No man can *follow us into the unseen realm.* Beyond the veil we are safe from the questions of the inquisitor, the blows of the tyrant, the suggestions of the tempter. These may hunt us to very death, but "after that have no more that they can do." Truly, if this life were the sum of our existence, that would be much indeed—it would be everything. But since we know that it is not so, but only its first short term, only its initial stage, only its brief introduction, we may console our hearts with the thought that it is no great harm that the strongest potentate, with the sharpest sword, can do us. 2. No man can *compel us to sin.* A sinful deed includes the consent of the agent; and all the forces of iniquity and error can never compel a true and brave soul to assent to an evil act. The only great harm that can be done us is that which we do ourselves when we "consent to sin" when men *tempt* us to sin,—after that there is no more that they can do; if more is done, if the line is crossed, it is of our own accord; the tempting is theirs, the sinning is ours.

III. THE ONLY ONE OF WHOM WE HAVE TO BE AFRAID. "Fear him," etc.; *i.e.* shrink from the disfavour of that Divine Lord of the human spirit who can punish according to our desert. To shrink from the condemnation of God is not an unworthy act on our part. It is both right and wise; for his condemnation is that of the Righteous One, and of the Mighty One also. It is only the guilty that are lost to all sense of obligation, and the foolish that are dead to all sense of prudence, who will be indifferent to the anger of God. Fear God's solemn displeasure, for if he rebukes it is certain that you are grievously in the wrong; fear it, for if he inflicts penalty there is none to deliver out of his hand, and, what is more, even death, that *does* deliver from the hand

of man, is no shield from his power. Beyond the veil we are as much within his reach as we are on this side of it. There is every reason why we should seek and find his Divine favour, and live in the light of his countenance. We may go on in our thought, and be reminded by our Lord's words of—

IV. THE ONE WHOSE FRIENDSHIP WE SHOULD SEEK. "I say unto you, *my friends*." We do not simply want to escape the wrath of an offended Judge; we aspire to his favour and his love. Jesus Christ is offering us his friendship (see John xv. 14, 15). If we will cordially accept him for all that he desires to be to us, we shall find in him the Friend in whom we shall implicitly confide, whom we shall gladly and happily love, by whose side and in the shelter of whose guardian care we shall walk all the way till the gates of home are reached.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Confessing Christ.* From these solemn words we gather—

I. THAT CHRISTIANITY CENTRES IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST. Our Lord taught us much concerning *ourselves*—the inestimable value of our spiritual nature; the real source and spring of evil in our own souls; the true excellency of a human life; whom we should regard as our neighbour, etc. But he taught us still more of *himself*—of his relations with the Divine Father; of his essential superiority even to the greatest among mankind; of his sorrow and his death on behalf of the human race; of his mission to enlighten, to redeem, to satisfy the souls of men. And he not only affirmed, but frequently and emphatically urged, the doctrine that, if we would enter into life, we must come into the very closest personal relation with himself—trusting in him, loving him, abiding in him, following him, making him Refuge of the heart, Sovereign of the soul, Lord of the life. Not his truth, but himself, is the Source of our strength and our hope.

II. THAT JESUS CHRIST DEMANDS AN OPEN CONFESSION OF OUR FAITH IN HIM. More than once (see Mark viii. 38) he insisted upon a clear recognition of his authority and regal position. He will have us "confess him before men." How shall we do that? 1. In a heathen country, by avowing the Christian faith, renouncing Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc., and declaring before all that Jesus Christ is the one Teacher of truth and Lord of man. 2. In a Christian country, by making it clear that we have accepted him as the Lord whom we are living to serve. We shall probably think it right to do this by attaching ourselves to some particular Christian community; also by regular, public worship of Christ; but certainly, in all cases, (1) by paying honour to his Name; (2) by upholding against his enemies the truth and worth of his religion; (3) by translating his will into active human life in all its departments—domestic, social, commercial, political, ecclesiastical.

III. THAT COMPLIANCE WITH HIS DEMAND WILL SOON PROVE TO BE AN ACT OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE. The day draws on when we shall meet our Master: then will he tell us what he thinks of us. Then, if we have failed to honour him, he will refuse to honour us "before the angels of God." What is involved in that denial? The worst of all exclusions—exclusion from the favour, from the home, of God. And then, if we have honoured him, he will acknowledge us as his own. And what will that include? 1. Acceptance with the Judge of all. 2. The expression of his Divine approval—the "well done" of the Lord. 3. Admission to the heavenly kingdom, with all its advancing glory, its deepening joy, its extending influence, its enlarging life.—C.

Ver. 15.—*A man's life.* What is the worth of a man's life? Clearly that does not depend merely on *duration*. For while to the insect the term of seventy years would seem a most noble expanse, on the other hand, compared with the age of a mountain or the duration of a star, it is an insignificant span. The truth is that the value of human life depends on *what is done within its boundaries*. Here quality is of the chief account. To the insensible stone all the ages are as nothing; to the dormant animal time is of no measurable value. To a thinking, sensitive spirit, with a great capacity for joy and sorrow, one half-hour may hold an inestimable measure of blessedness or of woe. There are three things it may include; we take them in the order of value, beginning at the least.

I. HAVING WHAT IS GOOD. "The things which a man possesseth" are of value to him. "Money is a defence," and it is also an acquisition, for it stands for all those necessaries and comforts, all those physical, social and intellectual advantages which it

will buy. But it is a miserable delusion—a delusion which has slain the peace and prospects of many a thousand souls—that the one way to secure the excellency of life is to gain amplitude of material resources. 1. Muchness of money does not even ensure human happiness. The wealth that lives in fine houses and sits down to sumptuous tables and moves in "good circles" is very often indeed carrying with it a heavy heart, a burdened spirit, an unsatisfied soul. This is not the imagination of envy; it is the confession of sorrowful experience, uttered by many voices, witnessed by many lives. 2. Muchness of money does not constitute the *excellency of human life*. In a country where "business" means as much as it does in England, we are under a strong temptation to think that to have grown very rich is, *by so doing*, to have succeeded. That is a *part* of some men's success; but it does not *constitute* success in any man's life. A man may be enormously rich, and yet he may be an utter and pitiable failure. "In every society, and especially in a country like our own, there are those who derive their chief characteristics from what they have; who are always spoken of in terms of revenue, and of whom you would not be likely to think much but for the large account that stands in the ledger in their name. . . . So completely do they paint the idea of their life on the imagination of all who knew them, that, when they die, it is the fate of the money, not of the man, of which we are apt to think. Having put vast prizes in the funds, but only unprofitable blanks in our affections, they leave behind nothing but their property, or, as it is expressly termed, their effects. Their human personality hangs as a mere label upon a mass of treasure" (Dr. Martineau). A *man's life* should rise higher than that.

II. DOING WHAT IS JUST AND KIND. Far better is it to *do* the just and kind action than to *have* that which is pleasant and desirable. Life rises into real worth when it is spent in honourable and fruitful action. In sustaining right and useful relationships in the great world of business, carrying out our work on principles of righteousness and equity; in ruling the home firmly and kindly; in espousing the cause of the weak, the ignorant, the perishing; in striking some blows for national integrity and advancement —in such a healthful, honourable, elevating action as this "a man's life" is found. But this, in its turn, must rest on—

III. BEING WHAT IS RIGHT. For "out of the heart are the issues of life." Men may do a large number of good things, and yet be "nothing" in the sight of heavenly wisdom (see 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3). The one true mainspring of a worthy human life is "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." To love God, and therefore to love all that is good; to love God, and therefore to interest ourselves in and try to help all those who are so nearly related to him; to love God, and therefore to be moving on and up in an ever-ascending line toward Divine wisdom and worth;—this is the one victorious and successful thing. Without this, "a man's life" is a defeat and a failure, hold what it may; with it, it has the beginnings of a true success—it is already, and will be more than it now is, *eternal life*.—C.

Ver. 20.—*Sudden death.* The parable which Jesus Christ delivered in rebuke of covetousness puts in striking and even startling form the facts on which God's providence requires us to look. For we know—

I. THAT SUDDEN DEATH IS AN EVENT WHICH MAY OCCUR TO ANY ONE OF US. Human science has done much for us; and much in the direction of preserving and prolonging life. It has given to us a considerable knowledge of disease, and therefore an increased sense of danger. But it has not *materially* diminished the fact of a sudden and unanticipated end of our mortal life. It is probable that with the advance of civilization and the growing intricacies, complications, and obligations of human life, diseases of the heart have increased, and it is quite open to doubt whether sudden death is less frequent than it was. Certainly it is an ordinary rather than an extraordinary event. It is probable that these two words will be found at the head of at least one paragraph in any newspaper we may chance to be reading. Little as we realize it, it is a stern fact that it is quite possible that any man, enjoying the most robust health and in the midst of the most pressing and weighty duties, may be dead within the day on which we speak to him; that to this possibility there is absolutely no exception. Just now life may be to us and to those related to us of the greatest value; there may be a thousand reasons why, as it seems to us and to them, our life should be spared; and

yet it may be of us that the word is passed in that realm where there is none to hinder, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." It may be very trite, but it is most seriously true, that sudden death may come to any one *of us*.

II. THAT SOME SUDDENNESS IN DEATH IS AN EXPERIENCE WE ARE ALL LIKELY TO SHARE. Few remarks are more often made than that death was "sudden at the last." Even the sick man thinks that he will live; that there are months, or at least weeks, before him. They who are clearly and even loudly admonished, either by serious illness or by advanced age, that their end is drawing on will think and talk of the days that are coming, of the things they will accomplish. It is usually with a start of surprise that the patient learns from his attendant that he must die. Such is our human nature that, even when death comes gradually and kindly, the Master's words are applicable: "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

III. THAT AMIDST HUMAN UNCERTAINTIES WE MAY HOLD FAST SOME DIVINE AND EVER-LIVING TRUTHS. 1. That it matters little whether our life be long or short, if only it be given to the service of Christ. Our Lord died a young man, and the term of his active public life is counted by months rather than by years; but what did he achieve! 2. That temporal success is not the true or the wise aim to set before the soul. There are far higher things we can do, and therefore should do; besides, our material achievements and possessions may be taken from our grasp at any hour. 3. That the right and wise course to take is to be ready for death whenever it may come. Readiness for death will secure us a true peace when the hour of trial arrives; it will also give us calmness of spirit, and therefore capacity for service and for pure enjoyment in the midst of life.—C.

Ver. 21.—"*Rich toward God.*" Jesus Christ is here drawing a contrast between the inward and the abiding on the one hand, and the outward and the perishing on the other hand. When he disparages the act of "laying up treasure for ourselves," he does not mean to say either (1) that *material wealth* is not of God, for it is he who gives us "power to get wealth" (Deut. viii. 18); or (2) that the *spiritual treasure* a man secures is not "for himself,"—indeed, that is the only treasure he can make permanently his own; he that is wise is wise for himself (Prov. ix. 12), and he has "rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." But Christ would have us regard material acquisitions as of very small account indeed in comparison with the enrichment of the soul in God, with spiritual wealth. To be rich toward God may include—

I. A WEALTH OF RIGHT FEELING TOWARD GOD. There are certain thoughts and feelings which every intelligent being ought to cherish toward his Creator, in the absence of which he himself is poor, and in the presence of which he is rich. The more we have in our hearts of reverence for God; of trust in his Word of promise; of gratitude for his goodness and faithfulness; of love for him, our Father and our Saviour; of filial submission to his holy will; of consecration to his cause and interest in the advancement of his kingdom,—the more "rich we are toward" him.

II. WEALTH IN QUALITIES WHICH ARE DIVINE, or being rich in the direction in which God himself is rich. We cannot, indeed, hope to be rich in some of his attributes—in majesty, in power, in wisdom. But there are qualities in him in which we may have a real and a valuable share. As God is rich in righteousness, in truth and faithfulness, in goodness and kindness, in mercy and magnanimity, so may we hope, and so should we strive and pray, that we may be "partakers of the Divine nature" in these things also. Illumined by his truth, guided by his example, and inspired by his Spirit, we may have a goodly share in these great and noble qualities.

III. WEALTH IN GOD HIMSELF; in the enjoyment of his Divine favour and friendship; in the indwelling of his Holy Spirit in our souls, being thus enriched with his abiding presence and his gracious influence; in the enlarging and elevating contemplation of his character and worship of himself. 1. *Have we any treasure at all in God?* As the Church at Laodicea imagined itself to be spiritually rich when it was miserably poor (Rev. iii. 17), so may any Christian society of our own time; so may any individual member of a Church of Christ. If, in a searching and devout examination, we find that we are poor, there is nothing for us but to go to Jesus Christ anew, in humblest penitence and simplest faith and whole-hearted surrender. 2. *Are we rich toward God?* There are many degrees between beggary and wealth. We may not

be absolutely destitute, and yet we may be far from *rich* toward God. We should aspire to "abound," to "be enlarged," to have a good measure of those qualities which constitute spiritual wealth. We must "buy of Christ" (Rev. iii. 18), that we "may be rich;" we must abide in him, and so "bring forth much fruit" (John xv. 5). 3. If we are rich toward God *we may thankfully rejoice.* The man who is "laying up treasure for himself" may be essentially and radically poor; he may be securing that which will give him no happiness, but only be a burden and a bane to him; he must part with it all soon. But he who is "rich toward God" has that which is wealth indeed; has a treasure which will gladden his heart and brighten his life; has a joy and an inheritance which are his for ever.—C.

Vers. 22—30.—*Anxiety or trustfulness?* We read of "care-encumbered men;" and truly we see more than we could wish of them. As we look into the faces of those we meet daily, we are saddened with the thought that a great weight of care rests on our race as a heavy burden. And when we see, as we do, a few faces that wear the look of a sweet serenity born of holy trust in God, we ask—Is it necessary that such an oppressive burden should be borne by the children of men? Jesus Christ answers this question in the negative. He says that anxiety is quite needless to the children of God; he says, "*Trust and rest;* believe in God, and be at peace; recognize the power and the love of your heavenly Father, and do not be 'greatly moved' by temporal necessities." And he reasons with us on the subject; he desires to prove to us the needlessness of anxiety in the presence of such a God and Father as is he whom we worship. He argues this—

I. FROM GOD'S GREATER KINDNESS TO OURSELVES. (Ver. 23.) Any one of our friends who would do us a very great kindness would certainly be prepared to render us a very small favour. To one who has done us a valuable service we should look with perfect confidence to do some slight office for us. The love which is equal to the one will be more than equal to the other. Now, God has given us life, and has been sustaining us in being by his constant visitation; he has given us our wonderfully constituted body, and he has been preserving it in health and strength for years. Will he who has conferred these great boons upon us withhold from us blessings so simple and so slight as food and raiment? "Is not the life more than meat [food], and the body than raiment?" Will he who grants the greater refuse the less?

II. FROM GOD'S CARE OF THINGS THAT ARE OF LESS ACCOUNT THAN WE ARE. (Vers. 24, 27, 28.) "Consider the ravens"—birds of the air, creatures that are interesting in their degree, but unintelligent, unaccountable, perishable: God feeds *them.* "Consider the lilies, how they grow;" they do nothing for their clothing; and not only are they unintelligent and irresponsible like the birds, but they are unconscious, insentient *things;* yet they are exquisitely fair: God clothes *them.* If he takes thought for such creatures and for such things as these; if he concerns himself with that which is so much lower in the scale than are we, his own beloved children, created in his image and formed to share his own immortality, how certain it is that he will provide for us! The Divine wisdom that expends so much upon the lower will not neglect the higher.

III. THE COMPLETENESS OF OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD. (Ver. 25.) So completely are we in the hands of our Creator that we cannot, by any amount of thinking, "add one cubit to our stature." Do what we may, try what we can, we are still absolutely dependent on God. It rests with him to decide what shall be the length of our days, what shadow or sunshine shall fall on our path, whether our cup shall be sweet or bitter. We are in his Divine hands; let us be his servants; let us ask his guidance and blessing; and then let us trust ourselves to his power and his love. And this the more that we should remember—

IV. THE UNWORTHINESS OF GREAT CONCERN FOR SUCH TEMPORALITIES. To be greatly troubled about what we shall eat, or what we shall wear, or in what house we shall live,—this is pagan, but it is not Christian; leave that to "the nations of the world" (ver. 30).

V. THE RELATION IN WHICH GOD STANDS TO US. (Ver. 30.) This is that of an all-wise Father. "Our Father knows." We are in the power of One who is perfectly acquainted with our circumstances and with ourselves; he will not deny us anything we need because he is ignorant of our necessity; he will not give us anything that

would be hurtful, for his fatherly love will constrain him to withhold it. We are immeasurably safer in his hands than we should be in those of the kindest of our human friends, or than we should be if it rested with our own will to shape our path, to fill our cup.—C.

Ver. 31.—*Service and sufficiency.* It has been much debated whether God should be represented as the Sovereign or the Father of mankind. It has been but a foolish strife; it has been another case in which both disputants have been right and both wrong. God *is* the Sovereign of the world, and a great deal more than that; God *is* the Father of men, and a great deal beside. He is a royal Father, or a fatherly King. The Lord's Prayer might have taught us this: "Our Father . . . thy kingdom come." God is to us all and much more than all *both* these human relationships represent, only that one presents him in one aspect and the other in another. Here Christ invites us to think of him as a Sovereign; and we look at—

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD, of which we may become citizens. "Seek ye [the citizenship of] the kingdom of God." Jesus Christ launched a perfectly new idea when he spoke of this kingdom. In his mind that was nothing less than a universal spiritual empire; a kingdom of peace, righteousness, and joy, wide as the world and lasting as time; a kingdom to be established without forming a regiment, or shaping a sword, or fashioning a crown; a kingdom of God, in which all men of every land and tongue should own him as their rightful Sovereign, should cheerfully obey his righteous laws, should dwell together in holiness and in love.

II. THE ALLEGIANCE WHICH IS OUR SACRED DUTY. Christ summons us to citizenship. He says imperatively, "Seek ye the kingdom;" and he bids us seek entrance into it "rather" than pursue any earthly objects, rather than be anxiously concerning ourselves about temporal supplies. He indicates that this is something which has the first claim on our thought and on our endeavour. And so, indeed, it has. For God is that King (1) without the exercise of whose sovereign power there would be no other kingdom, no subjects, no liberties, no riches, no honours, in fact, no being; (2) to be disloyal to whom is the lowest depth of ingratitude, is the deliberate abandonment of the most bounden duty, the guilty severance of the most sacred tie. Being what he is to all men, and having done what he has wrought for all men, he rightly demands of us, through Jesus Christ, our fealty, our loyal service. To respond to this summons of the Saviour and to become citizens of the kingdom of God, we must offer him something more than the honour of the bended knee, or the tribute of the acclaiming voice, or the service of the dutiful hand; we must bring the homage of the reverent spirit, the affection of the loving heart, the submission of the acquiescent will. And out of this inward and spiritual loyalty will proceed the praises of the tongue and the obedience of the life. Seeking the kingdom means a real returning of soul unto God and a consequent devoting of the rest of our life to his service.

III. CHRIST'S PROMISE OF SUFFICIENCY to all loyal subjects. "All these things shall be added unto you." It is well for the world that there is not attached to the service of Christ any very valuable and attractive treasures which are of this earth. If there were, we should have the Church choked with insincere and worldly minded members, paying as little devotion as they thought necessary for as much enjoyment and prosperity as they could reap. Christ has mercifully saved us from this calamity; but he has not found it needful to leave us without a provision for our need. 1. He has made present happiness an attendant upon virtue, and virtue is an appanage of piety. 2. But he has given us a promise and a pledge in our text. He assures to those who enter his holy kingdom not, indeed, luxury, not a large measure of prosperity and enjoyment on an earthly ground, but *sufficiency*. They who yield themselves to him and who live in his service may be well assured that they will want "no good thing;" nothing that would really make for their well-being will he withhold. All resources are at his disposal, and he will see that his children are supplied. (1) Let none be kept out of the kingdom because they dread social or pecuniary evils; God will shield and save them. (2) Let none who are in the kingdom despond, though circumstances are against them; at the right moment God will appear on their behalf; "goodness and mercy will follow them all the days of their life," and attend them right up to the gates of the heavenly city.—C.

Vers. 35—40.—*Death a Divine visitation.* To us the coming of the Son of man means the hour of death; that is the practical view and therefore the wise view of the subject. And we may well regard our departure from this world as a coming of God to us.

I. DEATH AS A DIVINE VISITATION. 1. At death God comes to us all in judgment. Death is the appointed penalty of sin. It is true that the burden of that penalty is spiritual rather than material, and that God grants us a kind reprieve before he executes it; but still, in conformity with it, the accidents of death have to occur to us; that ancient sentence has to be fulfilled; the shadows of the last hour must fall around us; and whenever and however that may happen, with whatever mitigations, God will come to us then in solemn penalty, saying, "My child, thou hast sinned, and thou must die." 2. At death God comes to us in providence. (1) God has given to us a perishable frame, one that is only constructed to last for a term of years, that after a certain point begins to waste and wane. (2) He suffers, if he does not send, the special circumstances which lead up to death; at the least, he withholds the interposing act or suggestion which would prolong the life that is taken. Man never "goes to his long home" but we may say, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." On each such occasion the Son of man comes and says, "Put off thy tabernacle, and come within the veil." 3. At death Christ comes to us in sacred summons. In life God's voice should be daily heard saying, "Put out those powers; use those opportunities; cultivate that spiritual nature I have entrusted to thee; serve thy brethren; glorify my Name." But at death Christ comes to us and summons us to his presence; then we hear him say, "Give account of thy stewardship;" "Reap what thou hast sown."

II. READINESS FOR DEATH A PART OF HUMAN WISDOM. "Let your loins be girded about . . be like men that wait for their Lord . . . the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." 1. It is true that there is usually less suddenness than there seems in cases of sudden death; on inquiry, it is nearly always found that there were premonitory signs of danger, kindly warnings from the Author of our nature, that the end was not far off. 2. But it is also and equally true that death is unexpected when it does arrive. (1) So do we cling to life, that we are not willing to acknowledge concerning ourselves the fact which is obvious to every one else respecting us. (2) It is our mental habit to expect continuance where we ought to look for severance and cessation. The oftener we have crossed the decaying and breaking bridge, the more confidently we do cross it, though we know well that it is nearer than ever to its fall. We may be almost sure that, in whatever form and at whatever hour the Son of man comes to us, we shall be surprised at his appearance. 3. It will be a terrible thing to be unready; to have to do, if we can, in a few brief hours that for which a long life is not a day too long. 4. It will be a blessed thing to be ready for this vision of our Lord; not merely, nor chiefly, because we shall thus be enabled to cross, with calm hopefulness, into the other country, but because we shall then be ready for those high services and celestial honours which our gracious and generous Master intends to confer upon us (ver. 37).—C.

Vers. 49, 50.—*Spiritual strenuousness.* Our Lord's life deepened and enlarged as it proceeded, like a great and fertilizing river. And as conflict became more frequent and severe, and as the last scenes drew on, his own feeling was quickened, his spirit was aflame with a more ardent and intense emotion. We look at the subject of spiritual strenuousness—

I. IN VIEW OF OUR LORD'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. In these two verses we find him passing through some moments of very intense feeling; he was powerfully affected by two considerations. 1. *A compassionate desire* on behalf of the world. He came to the world to kindle a great fire which should be a light to *illumine*, a heat to *cleanse*, a flame to *consume*. Such would be the Divine truth of which he came to be the Author, especially as it was made operative by the Divine Spirit whose coming should be so intimately associated with and should immediately follow his life-work (see ch. iii. 16; Acts ii. 3). As he looked upon the gross and sad darkness which that light was so much needed to dissipate, upon the errors that heat was so much required to purify, upon the corruption that flame was so essential to extinguish, his holy and loving

spirit yearned with a profound and vehement desire for the hour to come when these heavenly forces should be prepared and be freed to do their sacred and blessed work. 2. *A human longing to pass through the trial* that awaited him. "*But*"—there was not only an interval of time to elapse, there was a period of solemn struggle to be gone through, before that fire would be kindled. There was a baptism of sorrow and of conflict for himself to undergo, and how was he "straitened" in spirit until that was accomplished! Here was the feeling of a son of man, but it was the feeling of the noblest of the children of men. He did not desire that it should be postponed; he longed for it to come that it might be passed through, that the battle might be fought, that the anguish might be borne. Truly this is none other than a holy human spirit with whom we have to do; one like unto ourselves, in the depth of whose nature were these very hopes and fears, these same longings and yearnings which, in the face of a dread future, stir our own souls with strongest agitations. How solemn, how great, how fearful, must that future have been which so profoundly and powerfully affected his calm and reverent spirit!

II. IN VIEW OF OUR OWN SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES. We cannot do anything of very great account unless we know something of that spiritual strenuousness of which our Lord knew so much. 1. We should show this in our concern for the condition of the world. How much are we affected by the savagery, by the barbarism, by the idolatry, by the vice, by the godlessness, by the selfishness, which prevail on the right hand and on the left? How eagerly and earnestly do we desire that the enlightenment and the purification of Christian truth should be carried into the midst of it? Does our desire rise to a holy, Christ-like ardour? Does it manifest itself in becoming generosity, in appropriate service and sacrifice? 2. We may show this in our anxiety to pass through the trial-hour that awaits us. Whether it be the hour of approaching service, or sorrow, or persecution, or death, we *may*, like our Master, be straitened until it be come and gone. Let us see that, like him, we (1) await it in calm trustfulness of spirit; and (2) prepare for it by faithful witness and close communion with God in the hours that lead up to it.—C.

Ver. 57.—*Individual responsibility.* "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" Those to whom our Lord was speaking were men of intelligence, education, religious privilege. They exercised their mental faculties with great keenness on some subjects (vers. 54, 55): why could they not recognize the supreme fact of their time, viz. that the Messiah was before them (ver. 56)? why did they not employ their powers to discern between the false and the true, between the evil and the good?

I. THAT WE MAY NOT DEVOLVE OUR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HOLDING THE TRUTH on any one or any body of men. It has not been merely "the *right* of private judgment" which has been in question, which some have striven so hard to withhold, and which others have suffered so much to obtain or to preserve. It has been the sacred *duty* of determining for ourselves what is the mind and the will of God, the solemn obligation to put into use the talents he has committed to our care. We are to discharge this duty under all circumstances and whoever may propose to relieve us of it. We may not delegate it: 1. To *the State.* The State may prescribe Islamism in one region, Confucianism in another, Catholicism in a third; but we are not at liberty to make our religious creed depend on the latitude and longitude where we reside. 2. To *the Church;* or Jesus Christ himself would have been criminal, for he entirely disregarded the decision of the "council," and the Christian Church has, in its collective capacity, spoken differently in different times and places. 3. To *society;* that is frequently at fault. 4. To *the parent.* For a time this is necessary, right, becoming, praiseworthy; but the time comes when the son must no longer shield himself behind his filial obedience, he must think and must decide for himself. If we are possessed of ordinary human powers and privileges we must "of ourselves judge what is right." It is a solemn burden, a sacred duty, which our Creator has laid on each human spirit he has called into being.

II. THAT GOD HAS GIFTED US WITH A SPIRITUAL NATURE for this very purpose. He has endowed us with *reason,* or with that faculty which intuitively perceives the great and deep truths which are presented to it; with *conscience,* the faculty which commends and condemns, filling with inward joy or inward pain; with *judgment,* the faculty that

compares and concludes, and arrives at just decisions as to the thing that should be done, the way that should be taken. It is, indeed, only too true that a long course of sin will warp and degrade this spiritual nature of ours; but where there is as much enlightenment as the Jews of our Lord's time had, and as we ourselves possess, we ought to be able by its means "to judge what is right."

III. THAT THE HEALTHFUL ACTION OF OUR SPIRITUAL NATURE IS ONE LARGE PART OF OUR PROBATION. If "the light that is in us be darkness," if our conscience is misdirecting us, it is because we have been wrong, it is because we have not been true to ourselves. Sin has weakened or even distorted our faculty of spiritual discernment. But if we are true to ourselves, if we (1) honestly seek *to know* what the will of God is concerning ourselves and others; (2) faithfully endeavour to *do* what we believe to be his will; (3) earnestly *ask* for Divine guidance in our pursuit of wisdom;—we shall be "led into the truth." We may not see everything in the light in which other true-hearted people see it, but we shall recognize those great leading truths which bring us into right relation to God, which constrain us to take a right attitude toward our brethren, which light up our earthly path and conduct us to our home. 1. We may not refuse our responsibility under any plea, not even that of humility. It would be pleasant to say, "We will leave to others who can do it better the work of deciding what is true, which message is from God, which path leads heavenwards." But we may not say this without declining the sacred duty our heavenly Father devolves on each one of his children. 2. Accepting our post as truth-seekers, we must do our work conscientiously, thoroughly, without prejudice. 3. We may be sure that Christ will grant us all the Divine aid we need if we honestly endeavour and devoutly pray.—C.

Vers. 58, 59.—*The inexorable.* From the lips of such a parabolic teacher as Jesus Christ we expect to have some striking illustration of a general principle, our duty being to detect that principle and to make our own practical applications of it. Here the great Teacher adduces an illustration drawn from the legal practice of his time; the general truth underlying it is evidently this—that *law* is a *rigorous* thing, a broken law a terribly exacting thing; that, if we are in any danger of coming under its power, we should refrain from so doing with the greatest carefulness; that, if we do not act thus prudently, we must be prepared to pay a very heavy penalty a little way on. The principle applies to—

I. A BREACH OF THE LAW OF PEACE. We are here in this world to sustain toward one another interesting and important relationships. It is the will of God that, in all of these, we should be actuated by the spirit and be ruled by the law of love, of kindness, of charity, of peace. But in this world of sin the Divine Law is continually broken, and the broken Law exacts a terrible penalty What wretched homes it makes! what lamentable feuds in families! what miserable ruptures of friendship! what deplorable contentions even in Christian Churches! what social dissensions! what national and international strife! The violated law of love exacts "the uttermost farthing" from those who break it. Christ's word of wisdom is this—Look to it at once; do not lose a day; fill up that little crack; tear up that small root; let everything, even devotion itself (Matt. v. 24), give place to the sacred work of reconciliation; do your best, your quickest, your utmost, to heal the breach before it widens into a gulf, or the slight difference, the small suspicion, the trivial offence will grow and deepen, and hearts that once were the home of trust and love will become the haunts of doubt and enmity. Therefore agree with thine adversary *quickly*. The same principle applies to—

II. A BREACH OF THE LAW OF VIRTUE. We owe it to ourselves to be temperate, truthful, pure, industrious; we owe it to others to be just, fair, kind, considerate; we are under law to be all this—the sacred Law of God. This Law we break, and it becomes our "adversary;" it arraigns us as its debtors, and it makes us pay the penalty that is due. *And what a penalty!* In the *body*—disease, pain, weakness, shattered nerves, death; in *circumstances*—loss, poverty, beggary; in *reputation*—humiliation and disgrace; in *heart*—compunction, agony of soul; in *character*—deterioration, baseness, ruin. Christ says, "Beware of the first step; if tempted to violate any law of virtue of any kind, consider what you will have to pay a little further on; think how that broken law will rise against you and condemn you, and you will not escape until the

last farthing has been paid." If there should be any breach, however minute it may be, hasten to repair it.

III. A BREACH OF THE LAW OF PRIVILEGE. Privilege and peril, opportunity and obligation go together, like substance and shadow; they cannot be dissociated. From those to whom much is given will much be required (see vers. 47, 48). It is a constant law, and its violation will be rigorously attended with penalty. If we neglect our privilege, if we abuse our opportunity, we must expect "many stripes," the uttermost farthing of condemnation and retribution. We are the firstborn children of privilege; ours is the dispensation, the period, the land, the home of privilege. Ill will it fare with us if we pass on to the last tribunal and stand before the great Judge, not having repaired this breach, not having sought and found forgiveness for this great transgression.—C.

Vers. 1—12.—*A call to courage.* The commotion between the scribes and Pharisees and our Lord seems to have increased his audiences, as we find "an innumerable multitude," as the Authorized Version has it, or "the many thousands of the multitude," as the Revised has it, treading on one another in eagerness to hear him. And his subject at this time is important—a denunciation of Pharisaic hypocrisy and a call to courage under their certain opposition. And here we have to notice—

I. THE CURE FOR HYPOCRISY. (Vers. 1—3.) Our Lord brings this out in a distinct revelation that everything is yet to be dragged into the light of day. These are his words: "There is nothing covered ['covered up,' Revised Version], that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." There is nothing in nature which would lead us to such a wonderful truth; it is a matter of distinct revelation. Everything, it appears, is constructed on the *public* principle. We are all living *public lives* if we only knew it. All attempts at secrecy are destined to prove failures; consequently, hypocrisy is a mistake. It can impose only for a time; sooner or later it will be exposed and despised. Hence our Lord recommends the people to speak, if they have to do so, in the darkness only what they are willing should be heard in the light, and to whisper in closets only such things as may be proclaimed on the housetops. By God's arrangement secrecy is impossible, and publicity the inevitable destiny of all and of everything. It is consequently this persuasion of ultimate publicity which constitutes the Divine remedy for hypocrisy. All hypocrisy proceeds from forgetfulness or disbelief of this.

II. THE EXPULSIVE POWER OF GODLY FEAR. (Vers. 4, 5.) Our Lord wishes to guard the people from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, and also from cowardly fear of Pharisaic opposition. Accordingly, he points out that the Pharisees could at the very most kill the body; they have, after that, "no more that they can do." But there is another One who can cast into "Gehenna" after he hath killed, and him they should fear. We discard the idea suggested by Stier and others that this is the devil; especially as courage is not likely to be created by substituting, for fear of diabolical men, the fear of the devil himself. This would be a poor basis for the martyr-spirit. We believe that the fear of man is to be expelled and supplanted by the fear of God, who can consign the soul to Gehenna after death. And our Lord shows here that the fear of God begins in *dread* of his infinite power. No soul, we suppose, ever turns to God without passing through this stage, however brief may be the sojourn in it. God's vaster power makes the hostile power of mere men appear trifling, and we wisely resolve to have men for our enemies rather than God. But once this sense of God's great power has overcome our craven fear of man, we begin to realize that we may have all his power on our side. He will pardon us and take us under his protection, and enable us to fear no evil. Godly fear, consequently, gets modified in our experience, and passes from slavish fear and dread into reverential and filial fear of God as an almighty Father.

III. GOD'S MICROSCOPIC AND PRESENT PROVIDENCE. (Vers. 6, 7.) The sparrows may be cheap in man's estimation—five for two farthings—but "not one of them is forgotten before God." He caters for them. His providence is minute enough to take them under his wings. Men ought, therefore, to take courage from the assurance that, in God's sight, they "are of more value than many sparrows." And God's oversight is so microscopic that he counts the very hairs of our head. Hence the contest with their Pharisaic and worldly foes is to be conducted under the sweet assurance that

greater is he who is for them than all who are against them, and that his care is so minute as to extend to the numbering of the hairs of their head. A great Being on our side, so minute and careful in his interest, is fit to inspire with dauntless courage every one who realizes his presence by faith and trusts him.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFESSING CHRIST. (Vers. 8, 9.) Our Lord further shows how important it is to confess him; but in the other life there is to be another confession—the confession before the angels of the courageous souls who have confessed Christ here. On the other hand, there is to be a denial of the cowards who denied Christ here. Out of the publicity of the future life, therefore, our Lord draws such considerations as are fitted to rally souls around him in courageous confession. And there can be no doubt that this great publicity which our Lord locates in the future life is a fountain-head of courage for souls struggling with opposition. The highest type of courage can undoubtedly be produced through the doctrine of a future life with its rewards and punishments.

V. THE DANGER OF BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST. (Ver. 10.) The introduction of the Holy Ghost in connection with the Pharisaic opposition seems to have been suggested in this way: the Pharisees, not content with libelling and defaming Christ, professed to trace his power over demons to its source. This, they asserted, was not the Holy Ghost, but Beelzebub within him. That is to say, they attributed spiritual results to a diabolic origin. In this way they blasphemed the Holy Ghost. Now, our Lord, in his meekness and lowliness of mind, declares that there is forgiveness for unfair words against *him*, but warns those who are misinterpreting the Spirit's work, that blasphemy against him if continued cannot be forgiven. Now, this subject of the unpardonable sin has given rise to much discussion, but, perhaps, the best view is that adopted by such men as Stier, Tholuck, Olshausen, Hahn, Julius Muller, and Hoffmann—"an internal state of the highest sinfulness which cannot be changed, and shows itself in speech or action, resisting or deliberately setting the soul against the influences of the Holy Ghost." Its practical value is immense. It should lead every thoughtful soul to guard against all trifling with or grieving of the good Spirit whose agency within us alone secures the victory over evil. The Pharisees were treading on the confines of the terrible sin in their denunciation of Christ, and the multitude Christ was addressing and all who have the offer of spiritual help should guard against all offence offered to the all-important Spirit.

VI. THE INSPIRATIONS TO BE EXPECTED FROM THE GOOD SPIRIT. (Vers. 11, 12.) The calumniated Spirit would sustain the confessors of Christ before their enemies, so that all the tried men had got to do was to rely on his inspirations, and they would never fail them. The Holy Ghost would prompt such words and thoughts as would secure on their part a good confession. And a similar aid is to be expected by all Christ's witnesses as they confront the world. If we but rely on his help, he will never fail us. Of course, this does not encourage idleness and want of preparation for the emergencies of life. The Spirit is more likely to inspire a studious, careful, prayerful man than a self-reliant idler. But reliance on the Spirit's inspirations must never be rendered needless or doubtful by any prudent forethought we entertain. We are to be organs of the Spirit, and ought to act worthy of our high calling.—R. M. E.

Vers. 13—21.—*A warning against covetousness.* Amid the important teaching of our Lord there comes an interlude by reason of a brother, who had been wronged out of his share of the inheritance, appealing for redress to Christ. He wanted our Lord to play the part of a small attorney and get conveyed to him some share. This our Lord deliberately declines to do, indicating that he has come into the world for higher work than worldly arbitration. This aspect of the subject has been well handled by Robertson of Brighton, and, following him, by Bersier of Paris.[1] But our Lord does far better for the poor brother than if he had become arbitrator for him. He warns him against covetousness, and indicates that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." To back up the lesson, he relates a parable about a certain rich man whose whole concern was to multiply his possessions, but who is surprised by death while doing so. He leaves his wealth behind him, and enters the other world utterly poor. If by this timely warning our Lord succeeds in

[1] Robertson's 'Sermons,' second series, p. 1; and Bersier's 'Sermons,' tome iv. p. 3.

leading the claimant to the possession of better riches, then all will be well. And here we notice—

I. A MAN CAN NEVER BE SATISFIED WITH THINGS. (Ver. 15.) This is the great mistake men are making. They imagine that things can satisfy their hearts; whereas we are so constituted, with our affections and emotions, that fellowship with persons is indispensable to any measure of satisfaction, and to *full* satisfaction with no less a Being than God himself. All the effort, consequently, to be satisfied with things, with gifts, when the Giver is left out, proves vain.[1] No abundance can satisfy the craving of the heart. And the feverish desire for more and more wealth on the part of worldly men demonstrates simply that they are on the wrong track altogether, and that satisfaction can never be found in things. Covetousness, consequently, as the idolatry of things, is a total mistake. It misinterprets human nature, and is doomed to terrible disappointment.

II. SUCCESS MAY DOOM MEN TO LIFELONG WRONG. (Vers. 16—18.) The rich fool, as the man in the parable has been generally called, is overwhelmed by success. It outgrows his calculations. His barns are too small; they must be pulled down to allow of bigger barns being built, so that years of anxious labour are provided out of his inordinate success. He gets steeped to the lips in care. His life becomes a ceaseless worry. His grasping only secures his misery. It is truly lamentable to witness the self-inflicted wrong which worldly minds experience as they try to garner more and more of this world's goods to the neglect of better things. How well our great dramatist understood this! In his poems Shakespeare says—

> "The profit of excess
> Is but to surfeit, and such griefs sustain,
> That they prove bankrupt in this poor-rich gain.
> The aim of all is but to nurse the life
> With honour, wealth, and ease, in waning age;
> And in this aim there is such thwarting strife,
> That one for all, or all for one, we gage,
> As life for honour in fell battle's rage,
> Honour for wealth; and oft that wealth doth cost
> The death of all, and altogether lost."

III. IN THE CAREER OF SUCCESS THERE IS ONLY A VAIN DESIRE FOR REST. (Ver. 19.) The soliloquy betrays the utter weariness of the man. After his bigger barns are built, away down the fretful years he will reach, he hopes, a time when he will be in a position to say to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." He longs for rest, but it will be years yet before he can think of it. All the worry and the fret of the interval must be passed before rest can come. His idea is to *win* rest by wealth; to buy it up by a certain measure of success. And the experience of all men is that rest is never got on this line at all. It is something that cannot be purchased, but must be God-given.[2] How often do we see men who have retired with a competency at a loss how to kill time, and as weary and restless as ever!

IV. DEATH CUTS THE SOUL OFF AT ONCE FROM HIS WORLDLY POSSESSIONS. (Vers. 20, 21.) We never hear of millionaires carrying their money-bags with them. A moment after death Crœsus is no richer than the beggar. The *things* which were so anxiously amassed remain to be divided among the heirs, while the owner goes out into another world absolutely penniless. The state to which death reduces him is pitiful indeed. Having forgotten God the Giver through occupation with his gifts, he faces his Judge without a single feeling or aspiration which, in God's sight, is valuable at all. A miserable and wretched soul receives dismissal from the gracious God whose bounty was ignored and whose Being was despised.

V. HOW ALL-IMPORTANT IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES TO ACCEPT OF CONTENTMENT AND REST AS THE SAVIOUR'S OFFERED GIFT. If the young man had accepted of contentment in place of cherishing covetousness, he would have been at ease at once. Rest of spirit and growth of spirit would thus have been secured, and he would have been on

[1] Cf. Gerok's 'Evangelien-Predigten,' s. 690.
[2] Cf. Goebel's 'Osterbeute,' s. 272.

not only equal terms with, but most probably superior terms to, his more grasping brother. It is thus that Jesus deals with us. He can give us a present rest from sin, from worry, from care of all kinds, and make us rich in the sight of God. With the riches of the soul in graces and gifts, we may hope to pass into the Divine presence and enjoy the Divine society and escape being castaways.—R. M. E.

Vers. 22—40.—*Lessons from the fowls and lilies.* Our Lord, having related the parable against covetousness, or the selfish use of money, proceeds in the present section to show how foolish the anxious thought is about these temporal things. And here we have to—

I. CONSIDER HOW POOR THE LIFE IS WHICH MAKES EATING AND DRESSING THE CHIEF THOUGHT. (Vers. 22, 23.) A man's life is intended to be much more assuredly than this; and yet are there not some who have no thought beyond this? The weight of anxiety is purely secular and physical. The devotees of the table and of the fashions make eating and dressing all. Now, the idea of the passage is that no one is so circumstanced as to be compelled to think only or chiefly of food and raiment. There is not a poor man but may feel that he was born for higher thoughts and things than to "keep the pot boiling" and to have something seemly to wear! He can think of the government of the world, and gain insight into it. He can rise into the thought of the government of God's kingdom, and the noble ideas it embodies. He can make ends meet without being the slave of circumstances and the creature of a day. He can walk among the eternities like others of his kind. Hence we must be on our guard against such a low view of life as this purely secular and temporal one.[1]

II. CONSIDER THE LESSON ABOUT FOOD FURNISHED BY THE FOWLS. (Vers. 24—26.) The fowls of the air are not "gentlemen at large," but most patient gatherers of their food. Life is not a sinecure with them, but a season of continual work. True, they do not become anxious farmers, sowing seed or reaping harvests, or building and stocking barns. They are spared a world of anxiety, but they accept the world of provision as God gives it to them. That which he gives they on unwearied wing gather. "God feedeth them" in the wisest way, and they accept it as he sends it. Moreover, the feeding of themselves is not their whole labour. There is much more in the bird's day than the quest of food. Whether they appreciate the beauty about them or no; whether their thoughts are like ours as from dizzy heights we see magnificent landscapes or stretches of sea, we cannot of course tell; but one thing seems certain, that the birds realize something more in the make-up of life than the mere satisfaction of their appetites. Their lesson is, therefore, one about a busy life, a thoughtful life, not always occupied with the satisfaction of the flesh. Let us trust God more in temporal matters, and think more of eternal things; and then life will be more thoughtful and more happy. No amount of thinking will add a cubit to our stature; and no amount of anxiety will deliver us from life's burdens. It is better to let God reign, and accept the conditions which in his wisdom he assigns.

III. CONSIDER THE LESSON ABOUT RAIMENT FROM THE LILIES. (Vers. 27, 28.) Here again we are face to face with nature. The purple lilies which deck the spring fields are gorgeously apparelled. Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. So that when God is allowed to work, he weaves a more splendid texture in his loom than ever was produced by man. The lilies are evidences of his microscopic care of the flower of the grass, how worthy he regards it of beautiful raiment. But then he values his children more than his plants. Men may go the length of lavishing more attention upon their exotics and their flowers than upon their children. But this is not God's order. He has taken more thought for his human children than for all his gardens and their magnificent contents. He loves a family more than a conservatory; a school more than a forest; a population more than a deer-park or prairie. Hence we may trust him about raiment; it will come in due season and order. He will not give it to us like *paupers' clothing*, for we should hardly like it in that way; but to honest work there will come substantial reward.

IV. CONSIDER THE NOTORIOUS SECULARITY OF THE NATIONS. (Vers. 29—32.) Now, the analysis of heathenism will show that at heart heathen are *secular*. There is no better way of seeing this than by looking into their prayers. As one has said, "Idola-

[1] Cf. Martineau's 'Hours of Thought,' vol. i. pp. 17—44.

trous nations have in all places and in all ages prayed with unanimous voice that their god would give them health and physical force, riches, honour, pleasure, success; for it is indeed for these the pagans pray."[1] This is what composed the life of paganism for the most part, and does so still. There is all the more reason why the Lord's little flock should trust him about the kingdom he has promised, and give themselves fearlessly to the bringing in of the kingdom from above. If we seek God's kingdom and glory first, we shall find a sufficient amount of food and raiment stored for us by no niggard and no pauperizing hand.

V. CONSIDER THE BENEFIT OF ALMSGIVING. (Vers. 33, 34.) Now, by almsgiving we are to understand enlightened and not lackadaisical charity. It is the investment of love, the expenditure of money for God's sake and for his kingdom. It is truly wonderful how *all* may become almsgivers. Is this not proof positive that God is a bountiful Provider? How is it that there is hardly one in this hard world but could give if he only tried? And what a transference of the heart's affections this will secure! The heart no longer grovels amid the secular and temporal, but passes outward to the spiritual and eternal. Then the people whom we have tried to help, on the principle of giving "the greatest amount of needful help with the smallest encouragement to undue reliance on it," will form for us a bright and wholesome field for thought and hope, and the building up of God's kingdom shall be the result.

VI. CONSIDER THE DUTY OF WAITING FOR THE ADVENT. (Vers. 35—40.) From almsgiving our Lord proceeds to the duty of diligence in expectation of his advent. He has gone to attend a wedding, and will return when the marriage is complete. This has surely an instructive bearing upon the advent as *subsequent* to the completed plan about the bride, the Church. But what we have to notice is his readiness to serve the servants who are found faithful and diligent in his work. He has had a sufficiency at the wedding-feast; he can consequently wait at the supper-table of the servants. And what an honour it will be to receive such attention from the Lord himself! Let us, then, be *semper paratus*, and then, whether his advent be soon or late, we shall be overtaken by no surprise![2]—R. M. E.

Vers. 41—59.—*The glories and responsibilities of the Christian ministry.* The previous parable attracts Peter by reason of its glorious promise, and he accordingly wonders if it can apply to all believers or to the apostles only. Having asked our Lord, he receives light upon the responsibilities and glories of the ministerial office. From our Lord's words we learn—

I. IT IS CHRIST'S WILL THERE SHOULD BE STEWARDS IN HIS CHURCH, WHOSE DUTY IT IS TO GIVE HIS PEOPLE MEAT IN DUE SEASON. (Vers. 42—44.) This is the great design of the ministry—to feed the flock of God. All other duties are subsidiary to this. For souls need to be as regularly fed with truth as the body with food. To this end the Christian ministry should, therefore, direct all its effects, that the people may be fed. And need it be said that the truth which nourishes men's souls is the truth as it is in Jesus? When Jesus is presented in the glory of his Person and offices, then the famished souls are saved and satisfied. Now, our Lord declares that the ministry will continue for such a purpose until his advent. The household of God will always need the food furnished by the ministry. No time will come when the ministry shall be superseded. And the ministers who are diligently employed at their teaching and feeding of souls when our Lord comes will find themselves blessed (1) in their own experience, and (2) in the magnificent promotion awaiting them. Christ promises the faithful minister no less than *universal influence*. He is to be ruler over all he has. Others may have some influence, but a faithful minister will, in the world made new, have universal sovereignty. Ministerial influence is often incomparably the grandest and widest exercised among men in this life: how much more in the life and order which will be ushered in by the advent!

II. OUR LORD AT HIS ADVENT WILL MAKE SHORT WORK OF SPIRITUAL DESPOTS. (Vers. 45, 46.) Some in the ministry, it would seem, instead of living in expectation of the advent, will live as if the long-delayed advent would never come. In such a case selfish tyranny over the people committed to them will soon manifest itself; and

[1] Rougemont's 'La Vie Humaine,' p. 279.

[2] Cf. Gerok's 'Pilgerbrod,' s. 787; also 'Aus Ernster Zeit,' s. 10.

upon the self-indulgent despot our Lord shall come suddenly, to appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. A ministry that is not earnest, but self-indulgent and tyrannical, has before it a terrible doom.[1]

III. HE ALSO SHOWS THAT JUDGMENT IN THE WORLD TO COME SHALL BE GRADUATED ACCORDING TO DESERT. (Vers. 47, 48.) The difficulties about the Divine judgment have been partly owing to the forgetfulness of the fact that sinners are not to be cast indiscriminately into some common receptacle, but subjected to a series of graduated punishments of the most carefully adjusted character. The rhapsodies which are so plentiful against any thoroughness in punishing the impenitent are based mainly upon the false assumption of indiscriminating punishment. According to a person's opportunities will be his doom.

IV. OUR LORD DECLARES THAT HIS PRESENT ADVENT MUST GENERATE OPPOSITION. (Vers. 49—53.) The fire which our Lord came to kindle is that of spiritual enthusiasm; such a fire as burned in the disciples' hearts as he spoke to them on the way to Emmaus; such a fire as was promised in the baptism with the Holy Ghost.[2] Such incendiarism is just the blessed commotion the world needs. But in the kindling of the holy flame our Lord will have to pass through a bloody baptism. He sees how inevitable this dread experience is, and yet he pants for the cross which is to crown his work and revolutionize the world.[3] The cross of Christ is really the great divider of mankind; by its instrumentality families are divided into different camps, and the battle of the truth begun. But the division Christ creates is infinitely better than the unity without him. Better far that we should have to fight for truth than that we should live, like lotus-eaters, through indifference towards or ignorance of it. The battle for Christ is wholesome exercise, and the victory at last is assured.

V. HE CHARGES THEM WITH MISUNDERSTANDING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES, WHILE THEY CAN APPRECIATE THE SIGNS OF THE WEATHER. (Vers. 54—56.) He is now speaking to the people, and not to the apostles. He points out how they can anticipate shower and heat by certain signs on the face of nature. People become "weather-wise," and can often show wonderful predictive power. And yet the *times* were providentially more significant than the weather. And before their eyes were hung the signs of a great contest between good and evil, between Christ and the world; and yet their hypocritical hearts would not allow them to appreciate the signs or take the proper side. It is a curious fact that many will study the laws of physical nature with intense interest and success, and yet neglect utterly those laws of the Divine government which involve the mightiest of revolutions. The hypocrisy of the heart is, our Saviour here says, the secret of such inconsistent apathy.

VI. HE DECLARES THE URGENCY OF RECONCILIATION WITH GOD. (Vers. 57—59.) The adversary, magistrate, and officer, are three individuals needful for the initiation and execution of human judgment. But the context shows that Jesus here refers to the Divine judgment which these hypocrites are courting. In this case—as Godet, *in loco*, observes—the adversary, judge, and officer are united in the Person of God. He is the Adversary to charge us with our defaults; he is the Judge to decide our guilt; he is the Officer to execute due vengeance on us in case we incur it. Christ consequently urges reconciliation with God without delay upon these hypocrites. To secure this he appeals to their conscience. They can surely come to this conclusion themselves, that, in opposing and persecuting him, they are not doing right. Their own inward monitor must witness to the guilt of their present course. Let them see to it, then, that they are delivered from their doom. Only one way is open, and that is by throwing themselves upon his mercy manifested in Christ. In this appointed way our Lord leaves them without excuse. There is surely a hopeless air about the terms of this judgment. The payment of the last mite is surely impossible in the prison-house of eternity, and current remedial programmes about the future life are but "will-o'-the-wisps" to lure thoughtless minds onwards towards doom! May we calculate upon no *post-mortem* reformation, but enter upon the pardon and spiritual progress God offers to us now! —R. M. E.

[1] Cf. Urwick on 'The Second Advent,' pp. 46, 47.
[2] Cf. Tholuck's 'Werke,' band iii. s. 304.
[3] Cf. Hull's 'Sermons preached at King's Lynn,' vol. iii. p. 70.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

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