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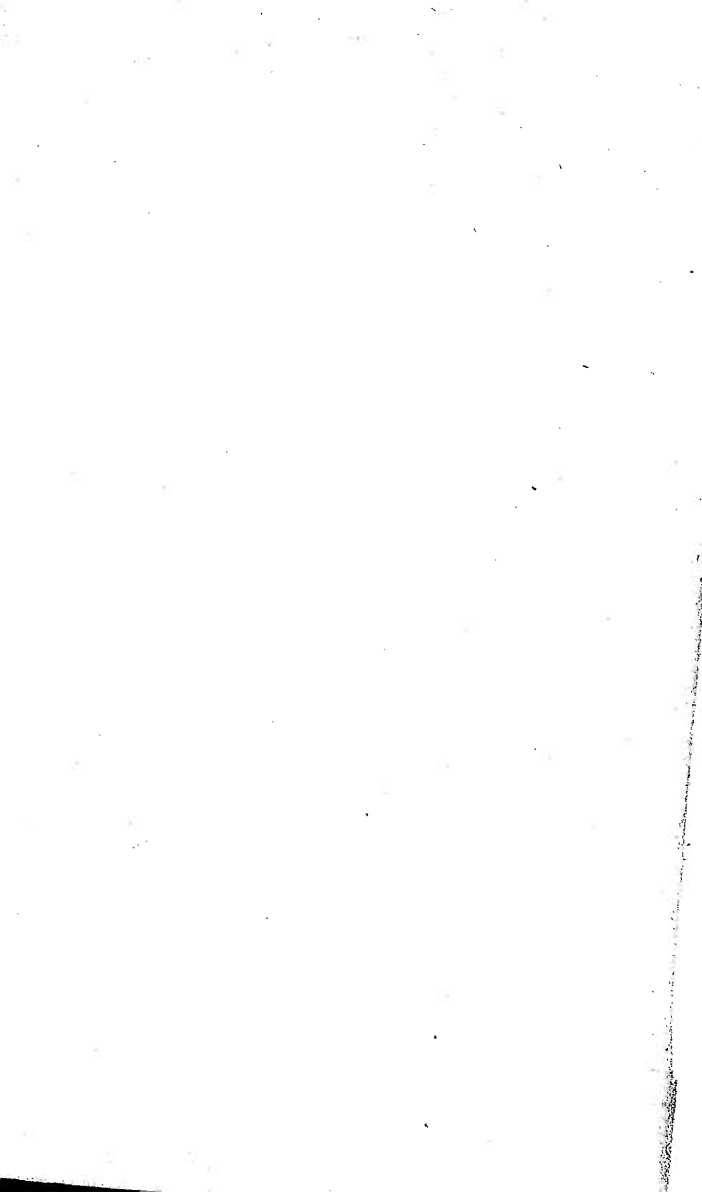
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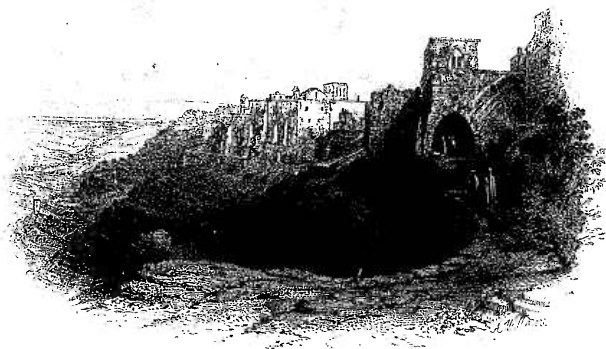
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PREFACE.



WHILST I thank God and take courage because these Readings have received so large a circulation, extending monthly and weekly to many thousands, and have lighted up many a fireside with pure, if not brilliant, instruction, I find nevertheless, they have not given satisfaction to everybody. Complaint, it is true, is the exception, but complaint has been expressed. The most determined opponent is a writer in a monthly periodical, called "The Baptist Magazine," whose own mind seems extremely uninstructed, and his feelings, for what reason it is impossible to guess, irritated and hostile. A few remarks on his critique may be useful to the reader, and perhaps to him also. It seems I have stated in the Readings on St. Matthew "that there is no evidence of demoniacal possession subsequent to the death of our blessed Lord." On this the writer asks, "If this be true, what is the meaning of the words of Jesus addressed to his

disciples, 'And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils?'" He quotes also instances of expulsion of evil spirits, in the Acts of the Apostles. To a candid mind it would have been obvious that I meant, no new possessions after that event. I did not mean to convey, nor do my words convey, that all demoniacs ceased the instant Jesus cried, "It is finished," but that then and there evil spirits ceased to take possession; while I did not, and do not, deny that demoniacs, taken possession of prior to the death of Jesus, continued till they died, or till their evil tenants were exorcised by apostles.

There were demoniacs before the death of Christ. Some of them outlived his death and the day of Pentecost; but after their departure, and for eighteen hundred years, as far as we have any credible record, no evil spirits have entered into human beings, and made them what Scripture calls demoniacs. It is undignified and unutterably small to quibble about words in a captious spirit, and especially in a religious magazine. Either the writer must admit that demoniacs have continued since the age of the apostles, or that those existing in the days of Jesus died out in his life-time, or were freed from their demons soon after, in consequence of, and in connexion with, the death of Jesus.

The writer's next criticism, which is as unfortunate as all the rest, is as follows.

I have observed on Matt. xxi. 19: "The expression, 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever,' is perhaps over strong; 'for ever' is not the Greek word translated 'for ever' in the sense of everlasting, but, Let no fruit grow on thee *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, that is, till the age. What age? Why, the age when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come, and the Jew shall be grafted in."

My critic adds, "Let the reader judge the correctness of this statement from the following verses, in which the words *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα* are employed:— 'I am the living bread; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever,' *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*." He selects apparently from the Englishman's Greek Concordance a series of similar texts, and on the strength of his collection he says, "Dr. C.'s statement is rash, unqualified, and incorrect." The candid reader will see at once that I do not pronounce on the general use of *αἰών*,—which means simply "age," and is applied often to this dispensation,—or of its specific use with the preposition *εἰς*. All I assert is, that in the passage on which I was commenting "the translation 'for ever' is perhaps over strong." I could not have expressed myself with greater delicacy, or with a more obvious reference to those

uses of the words which my critic has collected. But the reader asks, Why hesitate to give *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα* the usual meaning "for ever" in this passage? The reviewer is clearly unaccustomed to delicate exegesis, and may be pardoned his ignorance. The question of the ordinary reader, for whom these Readings are intended, I at once proceed to reply to. The fig-tree was confessedly the type of the Jewish people, and its blasting the symbol of their decay and dispersion. If "for ever" be the textual meaning here, how can I reconcile it with the express prediction of our Lord, repeated in three of the Gospels, that the fig-tree is to put forth her buds as well as the prediction of St. Paul, that the Jews shall again be grafted in? It is the symbolical nature of the fig-tree, and its withering at the words of Jesus, that made me suggest, rather than dogmatically assert, the modified sense of *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*. But to show how a true scholar, to whom I have expressed my deep obligations in my Lectures on the Miracles and Parables, estimates these words, I quote from Professor Trench's work on the Miracles as follows: "And yet this 'for ever' has its merciful limitation, when we come to transfer the curse from the tree to that of which the tree was a living parable—a limitation which the word *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα* favours

and allows. None shall eat fruit of that tree to the end of the present *αιων*, not until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." I am quite satisfied to be found in company with so competent a scholar as the Professor of Divinity of King's College, London, even if it should expose me to the ignorant and schoolboy criticism of B. in the "Baptist Magazine." I have given a little space to this criticism, because it is a sample of a style of comment on these Readings, which apparently the same writer is inserting in one or two periodicals of extreme views which have been sent me.

It does seem not altogether the right spirit, to try to hinder the circulation of evangelical instruction among the ignorant, on pretexts and grounds which the learned alone can easily expose and demolish.

The writer in the "Baptist Magazine" should not calculate on the ignorance of his readers, and so venture to make assertions which require educated men to reply to and expose.

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SCRIPTURE READINGS.

EXPOSITION OF LUKE I.

THE EVANGELIST LUKE—A PHYSICIAN—REFERS TO OTHER WRITERS
—THIS GOSPEL WRITTEN BY A LAYMAN—ADDRESSED TO A LAY-
MAN—ZACHARIAS AND ELIZABETH—BIRTH OF JOHN,—SONG OF
ZACHARIAS.

I MAKE necessarily a few and very superficial remarks upon so long and interesting a chapter.

The author of this Gospel, to the reading and study of which we now come in our evening course, was Luke, the companion of Paul, called by him "the beloved physician."

It is purely a tradition, baseless, and without the least foundation in fact, that Luke was a painter, or that any painting, sacred or otherwise, as recorded by the Romish Church, the production of his pencil, exists in any section of the Church, or in any country. He was a physician,—as such he is alluded to by Paul. He was the companion of Paul in his labours, and it is supposed—more than supposed, it is almost certain—that he wrote this Gospel under the personal *surveillance* of St. Paul,

and that it records many of those things which Paul saw and recognised as most precious and important, and fitted to instruct. Matthew was an uneducated and illiterate publican, or tax-gatherer, in Judea, inspired by the Spirit to record, in simple words, the great truths of the Gospel. Mark, it is evident, was not a highly educated man; but Luke, it has been agreed by all, was a scholar, with a cultivated mind and a thorough knowledge of general literature. Indeed, it has been justly said, that the first four verses of this Gospel are written in the purest Attic Greek, and indicate the writing, not of a Jew, whose Greek is full of Hebraistic idioms, but the writing of a good scholar—a Gentile, as he is supposed to be, by the side of one of his parents, and accustomed to speak and use the Greek tongue. At the same time, it is rather strange, that after the beautiful introduction, the remainder of this Gospel should contain a considerable number of Hebraisms, and give less evidence of pure style; and that this should show itself most when he records the events and discourses that are the subject of this Gospel. This seems to arise from the fact that the Hebrew, or the Syro-Chaldaic, was the popular or vulgar tongue, and that he translated from that tongue, in which he heard them, the facts and occurrences which are here embodied, and which look very like a translation from the original tongue in which they were uttered. This does not in the least degree preclude the thought that he was inspired. When God regenerates a man he gives him a new heart, but he does not make him a totally different man; and when God inspired an evangelist to write the truths of his gospel, he did not destroy that man's personal feelings, identity, or affections; but he inspired

him, so that in the very best words, all things considered, he might convey absolute truth for the benefit of all generations.

Now it would seem, from the introductory remarks, that several had undertaken to record the preaching of our Lord, and the facts connected with his history. Luke does not refer to Matthew's, or to Mark's, or to John's Gospel, for this last at least was not yet drawn up, and it is probable that the others were not yet written,—the first two could not have been written long before Luke's, and that of St. John was confessedly written long after the Gospel of St. Luke. It is, therefore, evident, that beloved disciples who had listened to the preaching of Jesus, and who knew all the truths connected with that wondrous biography, had treasured up scraps, fragments, and incidental chapters, and occasional narratives of the incidents of his life that occurred to them as being most striking, as well as those truths which he taught which they thought to be the most important. They did so of their own free will, and in their own strength, not by inspiration from God.

Luke therefore says, addressing his introduction plainly to a distinguished nobleman, because the title, "Most excellent Theophilus," was the title given to nobles in ancient times, and does not denote personal, but official or social dignity,—“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.” The

Gospel was addressed to an individual; is it meant for us? The Epistle to the Corinthians is addressed to one people; that to the Romans to another people; that to the Galatians to a third; and yet they are all meant for us. Because it was addressed to an individual it does not therefore follow that the truths contained in it were not meant for all. The address to Theophilus is a sort of dedication, and no more, and does not imply that he had any monopoly, or that his interest in the Gospel can make it less interesting or precious to us.

You will naturally notice here, that it is clear that the Bible is meant to be read and to be studied by the laity. Luke was neither a pharisee, a priest, nor a scribe, but a layman; and to a layman also, as such, this Gospel was addressed; and therefore, if any priest were to say to you, We claim to read the Bible for you, and inhibit you from reading it; your answer must be,—Because this Gospel was written by a layman, and was addressed to a layman, laymen, it must be meant, are entitled to read it.

We read at the commencement of the history, that “There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God;” that is, their character and conduct were consistent, Christian, and holy. And they not only were personally righteous, but “they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;” in other words, they were also outwardly and consistently religious. There may be morality of a certain stamp without religion, but there cannot be religion of the true stamp without morality. We may be morally

good from constitution, from conventionalism, from expediency, from taste. But when a man is religious in the sight of God, he is moral because he has a new heart, and because he instinctively delights and desires to observe all God's commandments, and to walk in them blameless.

It was while they were of this character, and walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, that, while Zacharias was executing his priestly office in the ancient economy, and burning "incense when he went into the temple of the Lord, —and the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense,—there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side;" and the angel told him—what was glad tidings to a Hebrew father, and still more to a Hebrew mother—that his wife Elizabeth should bear a son, and that that son's name should be John, and that he should sustain a relationship to the great Hope of Israel that should make him shine in the reflected glories of the Master, and be great in the sight of the Lord, and prove himself to be of service and a blessing to others. He states that he should go before Christ "in the spirit and power of Elias." He was not Elias—John the Baptist was not Elias,—Elias is still to come; and before the second and glorious advent of the Son of God Elijah the prophet will come, to herald in the glorious kingdom that shall never have an end, just as John the Baptist came, in the spirit of Elias, to herald in that suffering Saviour who laid the foundations of his kingdom in his own atonement, meritorious sacrifice, and expiatory death.

He then states that the office of John the Baptist should be "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the

children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zacharias doubted; and, not in chastisement or in punishment, but rather as a sign significant and expressive to his own mind, he was struck dumb; that is, silence was imposed upon him—the power of speech was taken away from him; and when he came out the people saw that something had happened, "for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless."

After reading of John the Baptist in these words, we find that "in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused"—not married, but pledged, dedicated, devoted, engaged, but not married,—“to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.” The angel addressed her in words that must have sounded all mystery to her,—“Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.” This would not prove that she ought to be worshipped; but it does assert that she was and is highly favoured. The expression, “highly favoured,” is applied to believers in the Epistles—“in whom we are accepted,”—or, as it might be translated, for it is the same word,—“highly favoured in the beloved.” Then the expression, “Blessed art thou among women,” which is so often quoted in order to prove that Mary ought to be worshipped as the queen of heaven, does not prove, nor in the least degree indicate, any such character.

Our Lord says, “Blessed are the meek;” “Blessed are the pure in heart;” “Blessed are they that mourn;” “Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake.” And if it should be said that she is distinctly,

peculiarly, "blessed among women," we admit it is a mark of distinguished honour; but because she is blessed among women, she is not therefore to be worshipped as a goddess. We find in another part of the Bible—in the Old Testament, the Book of Judges—that Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, had a higher benediction pronounced upon her than Mary; for it is said, "Blessed shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be *above* women." Now then, this would show that if Mary should be worshipped as being blessed among women, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, should receive adoration also as being blessed above women; and there is more proof in favour of the worship of Jael, than there is in favour of the worship of the Virgin Mary.

But because Mary is not to be worshipped, she was not the less favoured—she is not the less distinguished and blessed among women. And the phrase, "All generations shall call me blessed," is very properly retained; it is very proper to say, "The Blessed Virgin;" and if I were arguing with a Roman Catholic I would always use that expression, for he must not think that because we do not worship Mary, therefore we degrade, despise, and disesteem her; and in order to disabuse his mind of this awful and atrocious prepossession, we would apply to Mary every epithet that Scripture appropriates to her, and call her, what we may do scripturally and justly, "the Blessed Mary," or "the Blessed Virgin;" for she herself gives a prophecy—a prophecy that is true,—"All generations shall call me blessed." Augustine, the Latin father, says, "She was more blessed in believing on Jesus than in being the mother of Jesus according to the flesh; and our Lord himself, in fact, has said so."

She was then told that she should conceive, and bring forth a son, whose name should be Jesus. In the Gospel of St. Matthew we are told that it is because "he shall save his people from their sins." And you will notice that the prophecy respecting him is quite distinct from that respecting the son of Zacharias. "He shall be great, and shall be called"—that is the Hebrew phrase for "he shall be"—"the Son of the Highest," that is, the Son of God;—"and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Mary, startled by this extraordinary prophecy, as it seemed contrary to all the laws and all the analogies of her mind, asked how it could be possible? and the angel, in condescending kindness, said to her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing"—that is, Jesus in his humanity—should not be an inheritor of Adam's sin, or participate in Adam's depravity, but should be in this humanity that holy, spotless, pure, and perfect thing, in which, as in a shrine, the Son of God should dwell.

We then read that Mary, with most beautiful simplicity and childlike confidence, said, "Then there is nothing more to say. Let man reproach me, let the world misconstrue me, let men think what they will,—be it unto me according to thy word."

Nothing can be more beautiful than the conduct of Mary—nothing more worthy of our admiration,—and a finer female example and precedent does not exist in the whole inspired record than that of the blessed Mary.

We then read of the interview between Elizabeth

and Mary, and Elizabeth prophetically pronouncing a benediction upon her. Then we have Mary's most beautiful song—a song so expressive of thanksgiving, of sense of sin and need of a Saviour, and of gratitude, and of joy. Zacharias thus sings :—

“ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

These words seem almost the echo of the ninth chapter of Isaiah: “ Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to esta-

blish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." And because these words are translated from prophecy into performance, Zacharias, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, broke forth into the hymn of thanksgiving and of praise which we have just now read.

Zacharias, who uttered these words, was one of the few in the midst of Jerusalem who were waiting for redemption in Israel. Anna, the prophetess, and Simeon, the old man with one foot in the grave, and Zacharias, were three lights in the midst of darkness,—exceptions to the almost universal degeneracy, believers in the midst of scepticism and of unbelief.

Zacharias, as soon as his tongue was untied, and he was able to express himself, praised God. You thus perceive that we, too, after receiving mercies, should indulge in praise,—we, too, after deliverance, should not be unmindful of God, the great and ever present and ever mindful deliverer. But Zacharias praised God less for the physical benefit he had received than for the spiritual blessing which his eyes had just seen and his heart had just been refreshed with; and therefore he makes no mention of his individual mercies in his praising God for so great, so unspeakable universal or general mercies. He begins, therefore, his song with—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people." That word "visited" occurs frequently in the word of God. Joseph on his death-bed predicted that God would visit his people, and in the Psalms you will frequently read of God having visited his people. You have also the prayer, "Visit me with thy salvation, and with the favour that thou bearest unto thy own."

Zacharias, having seen the performance of this ancient promise,—having beheld Him who is “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel,”—feeling his ruin and the ruin of all mankind, and seeing in Christ the restorer, the healer, the redeemer,—breaks forth into the anthem song, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.” “*Redeemed* his people,” he says; that word means ransom, restoration, by the cross. We are of God’s people, redeemed, not with gold or silver, or any such corruptible things, but with the precious blood of the Lamb, who is without spot and without blemish. Christ is the Redeemer from the curse of sin,—from the power, the poison, the pollution of sin: a complete and perfect Redeemer; but a Redeemer through sacrifice, by blood, at a great price,—a price without precedent and without parallel, his own precious and atoning blood.

He hath also “raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.” The horn is frequently employed in the Psalms, and in the songs of the saints of old, to denote empire, or authority, or power. In this instance it may be an allusion to the horns of the altar—the four corners of the altar—to flee to which was for the criminal safety and respite, at least, from punishment until the judge should decide what the guilt was, and what its penalty should be. Jesus is the horn of salvation, and whoever lays hold upon that horn—or, translated into familiar language, believeth on him—shall never perish; for there is no condemnation for that man who holds fast by the horn of that altar,—who believes and trusts in Christ Jesus. The words here, too, are emphatic. It is a horn of

salvation *for* us : not *by* us, as if we had any share or merit in it; not *in* us, as if there were anything in us that was a ground of salvation or deliverance, or reason for interposition; but it is a horn of salvation *for* us,—nothing done *by* us, nothing done *in* us, but a great and glorious work done *for* us. The very essence of Christianity is something done for the creature, that the creature, having that perfect thing done for him, may go forth to serve God better than he ever before had done, loving him with all his heart and mind and strength.

This horn of salvation is stated to be “in the house of his servant David.” The Messiah was to be the root and the offspring of David. In fact, the translation of the Hebrew word David is “beloved,” and Jesus is often spoken of in ancient prophecy as David; and it was no doubt in the prospective hope of this that David said, “Though my house be not so with God,”—that is, “Though matters be not as I wish, nor as they should be,”—“yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, and this is all my salvation.” It was in that royal though faded house of David that Jesus appeared; and if he had not so appeared, there would have been a failure of many ancient and precious promises, which “he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” In other words, Christ has been the burden of all prophecy. The first prophecy was sounded in Paradise, by God, the first Prophet: “The woman’s seed shall bruise the serpent’s head;” and that prophecy had been expounded, made more minute, more specific, more un mistakeable in its reference, gradually, till Christ came, of whom the prophecy is, like the promise, “yea, and amen.” Along,

therefore, the corridors of time—the centuries of the world—this precious promise has sounded, till the dim and misty words spoken in Paradise were translated into the unmistakeable words announced by Isaiah,—“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

Zacharias says that the effect of this was that “we should be saved from the power of our enemies, and from the hand of them that hate us.” I do not believe that Zacharias even thought, in his song, of the Roman empire, or of our merely temporal opponents. The song has one entire tone of spirituality, of real Christianity and holy feeling in it, that indicates that he who sang it was inspired by the sensible presence of the Holy Spirit of God. The enemies of Zacharias are our enemies still: Satan, the prince of the powers of the air, whose head the prophecy said would be bruised, whom the Saviour saw fall like lightning from heaven, and who at last is to be cast into the burning pit and put away for ever from teaching or tampering with mankind, is the one enemy; not figurative nor fanciful, but personal and real: he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. It is true of every believer,—“Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat;” and it is no less true,—“I have prayed that thy faith fail not.” Before Satan tempts, Christ has prayed; Christ anticipates, by his intercession, the temptation of Satan the wicked one.

Another enemy from whom we are saved is sin,—saved from its curse, saved from its poison, delivered

from its destructive tendency, and liberated from its predominating power. Its poison is neutralized and diluted day by day, by the Spirit's influence, so that it prevails against us less and less, and in Christ's strength we are ultimately victors.

Another enemy is the world. The lust of the eye, the pride of life, and love of the world,—these are three formidable divisions of it; and who does not know that in the charms and fascinations, the profits and pleasures, the gains and losses, the shame and honour, the smiles and frowns of the world, there are elements of temptation? who does not feel that these things have power over us? who has not to lament that often he has yielded to them? but we are, if believers in Jesus, delivered from the prevailing power of these. Iniquities prevail against us, but they shall not have dominion over us. And we are delivered from the last enemy, death. The mere man of the world lives in bondage, through fear of death; to him death is a most terrible thing: it is to every one an unnatural thing; no one can court death, no one can love death, no one can wish to die, *as dying*; but the believer is prepared to encounter death for the sake of what lies beyond, he is ready to stem the waves of Jordan for the sake of the beautiful land which he sees on the other side. It is not that he loves dying, or that he courts death, but the very reverse; but that he can encounter dying, knowing that though "I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," I will not fear, as I am sure that I can encounter no evil, and for this reason alone, "Thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Once Paul, in enumerating what a Christian has before him, says.—"Neither life nor death shall sepa-

rate us from the love of Christ;" and in another part he says, "All things are yours, life or death, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Then, if we are believers, we may praise God that he "hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies." And the last enemy is death; and "thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

He adds, "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers; and to remember his holy covenant." All this is done in *mercy*. Now mercy implies the absence of merit; if there be merit, then justice deals with us; but if there be no merit, then it is mercy dealing with us. Love is shown to the holy and the unfallen. Mercy is love in contact with sin, forgiving it; and hence, whatever God has done, is in mercy, and the covenant he offers to us is that spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah, when he says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God; and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his

brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Now this is the prophecy that Zacharias well recollected, that Paul refers to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and that every pious Jew felt the fulfilment of to be the day-spring from on high, the great and blessed accomplishment of God's great and precious promises.

Then he adds also, remembering not only this covenant, but remembering "the oath which he sware to our father Abraham." What oath was it that he remembered? The oath made in the 22d chapter of Genesis, at the 16th verse, where the Lord saith, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore." Now that promise, the Apostle says, was made, (or that oath) "not unto seeds, as of many; but unto one seed, as Christ;" and that promise made to Abraham is realized in Christ, and in all the true children of Abraham, who are children according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. Hence this pious saint, at the dawn of the Christian day, fell back upon the ancient covenant of God; and when he had heard God's word, how his heart hung upon the promises of God, and how he asked for that promise of God to be realized where he should grant "that we being delivered from the hand of all that hate us,—" how beautiful is that! delivered from sin, Satan, the world, and death!—not for selfish enjoyment, not for monkish abstraction or

seclusion, but for active usefulness,—that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might,—What? Not sit still, but “serve him” “in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.” We are delivered from being slaves, raised to the dignity of sons, in order that we may the more thoroughly and heartily serve Him who has ransomed us by his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.

And Zacharias evidently regarded this service, not as laborious; he does not look upon it as a hard duty; but he makes it matter of thanksgiving to God, that he had made it his privilege to serve him. To the Christian, all God’s commands are not grievous, his service is perfect freedom. He regarded the opportunity of serving God as a subject of thanksgiving, and rejoiced that there was before him an opportunity of serving God in holiness and in righteousness.

And that, “in holiness and in righteousness,” is also very expressive. Zacharias evidently saw beyond the ritual and rubrics of his day—serve him, not *in form and ceremony*, but “*in holiness and in righteousness* all the days of our life,” that is, for ever.

Then he addresses the infant Baptist, and says to John, “Thou, child,” that is, his own son, “shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” You have here the child addressed by his father, and the prophecy of his dignity in these words, that “he should go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” Look at John’s position, not to take the place of the Highest, not to supersede or overshadow the Lord, but to go before him; to preach, not himself, but Christ—and himself Christ’s messenger for our sakes. There

is the position of the minister of the Gospel, not to put himself in Christ's room, but to go before Christ's face "to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." Mark, if I may use the expression, the gradient of his force—not to *give salvation*; John had no power to do so—but to give *knowledge* of salvation. No priest, nor prelate, nor minister upon earth can *give salvation*, but the feeblest believer may tell the ignorant what salvation is, where salvation is, and how it may be obtained fully and freely, without money and without price. And to give the knowledge of salvation of what sort? Mark, the salvation promised was the remission of sins. Here is the doctrine of reserve, as the Tractarians preach the remission of sins to be. They say that this doctrine is esoteric; that is, a mysterious doctrine which ought only to be made known to the initiated; but Zacharias, speaking of the Baptist, says, that the very essence of the salvation which he should make known, was "the remission of sins." And the Apostle Paul says, "I first of all declared to you that Christ died for us," &c. Instead of being a doctrine subordinate, it is a doctrine superlative; instead of being a doctrine of reserve, it is a prominent doctrine; instead of being a doctrine to be kept in the background, it is the one that takes the lead. Salvation without sacrifice is impossible; and salvation that does not embosom remission of sin, would be of no use. Blessed be God that we have a salvation, whose whole sum and substance is the remission of sin.

And then he adds, too, "Through the tender mercy of our God," (remember that mercy again,) "whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us." What

a beautiful picture is that of dawning Christianity, "whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us;" that is to say, this Sun of Righteousness, who had just merged from the horizon, was shedding his slanting or level rays along, and gilding the hills and mountains of Palestine. And that day-spring began to send forth its earliest beams when Simeon took the child in his arms, and said, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." That Sun is rising gradually above the horizon; he has not yet attained his meridian, his noon shall be when he shall come again, and shine upon a new heaven and a new earth, which shall be the abode of a people new in spirit, and new in body, when all things shall be made new. At present the beams of that Sun are horizontal; and every object has a long shadow projected from it, every truth is placed in the midst of thick darkness. But when he comes again, his rays will be vertical. You know, when the sun is at noon, there is no shadow, but his rays fall vertically. What a blessed day, when truth shall have no shadow, when every doctrine shall have no shadow, when there shall be no disputes; but we shall see as we are seen,—no more as in a glass, darkly, but face to face!

We thank God for the day-spring, we thank God for the brightening intensity of his beams, and we will pray to him, while we thank him, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." What a clear view this Christian living in the twilight had—for this was a Christian in the twilight; mark what clear perceptions this Christian

had of our blessed Lord. First, he regarded him as the Redeemer—"For he hath visited and redeemed his people"—next, as a horn of salvation—"And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David"—next, as the subject of prophecy—"As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began"—next, as the performance of mercies long promised, "to our fathers"—next, as the deliverer "from the hand of our enemies"—next, as the author of a salvation, of which the first characteristic is "the remission of our sins"—next, as the Sun of Righteousness, "to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death."

It would be interesting to compare the song of Simeon and the song of Zacharias, for in both there is one key-note, and only one; and in both you will see how low the creature is laid, and how high the Redeemer is placed with regard to him. You will notice in both songs that the creature is sinful, and fallen, surrounded by enemies walking in darkness, and in the shadow of death, without a horn of salvation to lay hold by, or any hope; cold, blind, naked, miserable, and perishing; and Christ bursting upon the world, which deserved not the blessing, with the day-spring from on high to visit us.

Have we an apprehension of Christ as clear as that Zacharias had? With more light, have we as clear views? And have we not only views clear in our heads, but have we them real, deep, growing in our hearts? Can we sing Simeon's song? Can we use the praise of Zacharias? Can we add our Amen to their testimony, the Amen of the heart and the lip, as of the head? And if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious,

do we, too, not keep silence, but avail ourselves of every means and opportunity of making known what he is to us, and what he hath made us? "Come, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." When the heart is full, the lips will not be silent; and when the lips are silent, the hands will only do with greater energy and greater speed, the work that belongs to them.

Here we have the fulfilment of the prophecy, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father."

Glorious truth! A portion of our humanity is now amidst the light, the splendour, and the glory of heaven—a first-fruits now before the throne, a pledge and an earnest to all that believe, that this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible incorruptibility, and death shall be swallowed up in victory!

Blessed truth, too, that this nature which we lost in Adam has been restored, reinstated, glorified in Christ! And blessed thought, likewise, that He who was born of a virgin—whose life was that of the Man of sorrows—whose death was without precedent and without price—that He is God our Saviour, our Atonement, our Sacrifice; through whom we have access to God, and by whom, as the mercy-seat, God comes down to us, and visits us, and becomes our salvation.

NOTE.—Theophilus had then been orally instructed in the narratives which form the subject of this Gospel; and Luke's intention in writing it is that we might have a more accurate knowledge of these histories.—*κατηχήθης*, literally "catechised," "catechetically taught."—*λόγων* is not to be rendered "things:" neither it, nor *ῥήματα*, nor *ῥήματα* ever have this meaning, as is commonly but erroneously supposed. In all the commonly cited examples of this, "things expressed in words" are meant: here, "the histories," accounts. See Prologue to the Gospels, i. 3.

[11.] The altar of incense (Exod. xxx. 1) must not be confounded with the large altar of burnt-offering that stood outside the holy place in the court of the priests. It was during the sacrifice on the great altar that the daily burning of the incense took place: one of the two priests whose lot it was to offer incense, brought fire from the altar of burnt-offering to the altar of incense, and then left the priest alone, who, on a signal from the priest presiding at the sacrifice, kindled the incense. (See Exod. xl. 5, 26.)

[46—55.] Compare throughout the song of Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 1—10). As connected with the defence of the hymns contained in these two chapters, we may observe, taking the lowest ground, that there is nothing improbable in matter of fact, in holy persons, full of the thoughts which permeate the Old Testament prophecies, breaking out into such songs of praise as these, which are grounded on, and almost expressed in, the words of Scripture. (See Dr. Mill, *Historical Character of Luke i. vindicated*, p. 40, ff.) The Christian believer, however, will take a higher view than this, and attribute to the mother of the Lord that same inspiration of the Holy Spirit which filled Elizabeth (verse 41) and Zachariah (verse 67).

[80.] The *ὄρειν* of Judea was very near this wilderness, and from the character of John's official life afterwards, it is probable that in youth he would be given to solitude and abstemiousness. It cannot be supposed Essenes dwelling in those parts had any, or only the most general kind of influence over him, as their views were wholly different from his.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER II.

PROPHECY FULFILLED—TAXING A DIFFICULTY—MANGER—SHEPHERD VIGILS—CHRISTMAS IN APRIL—MARY'S KEEPING AND PONDERING THESE THINGS—MARY'S OFFERING—SIMEON'S SONG—JESUS GREW IN STATURE—HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS.

THERE is an ancient prophecy contained in the book of Micah the prophet, which has its fulfilment, and is recorded in the history written by St. Luke, in this chapter; and which the decree of Cæsar Augustus was the means of fulfilling. It was predicted many hundred years before, "And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Now, Joseph and Mary were not at the place predicted to be the birthplace of Jesus, when this decree went forth from Cæsar Augustus, the Roman emperor, to whose empire Judæa did belong; and this decree originated their leaving the place where they were, namely, Galilee, and going to Bethlehem, there, in the language of the passage, "to be taxed." Now, let me explain, that the word here translated "taxed," means properly "enrolled;" it does not mean that they went up to pay money, but simply to have their names enrolled in the registers of their tribe, that it might be known by that census what was the strength,

and how great was the population of that portion of the empire. This decree was first made, we are told, "when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." This has extremely puzzled critics. It has been ascertained that Cyrenius did not actually become governor till fifteen years afterwards; but it has been supposed that the expression, "first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria," is alluding to Cyrenius by the name and relationship that he subsequently succeeded to, that it was made fifteen years before he was governor, but made simply in connexion with him as a ruler, or as an official, occupying a responsible position, and in that province or elsewhere, at that time. Alford, in a magnificent critical edition of the Greek Testament, has discussed the question at great length; and, whilst he admits the difficulty, he thinks that this is the nearest possible solution. Some critics, however, have gone so far as to say that the second verse is an interpolation, that it is not in the original; but I do not think that we should be justified in coming to that conclusion from any difficulty that may arise in its interpretation, since all the ancient manuscripts have the text, and it was never doubted or disputed till this difficulty was first brought to light.

Well, in order that each individual might be enrolled, they went "every one into his own city." Joseph went up, accordingly, from Galilee to the city of Bethlehem, "because he was of the house and lineage of David: to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife." And in that place Jesus was born; the prophecy of Micah was fulfilled through the instrumentality of Augustus Cæsar. Princes do not originate, they only execute; they are not the sculptors, they are only the chisels in the Great Sculptor's hands; unconsciously they fulfil his behests;

and the pages of history record the prophecies of the God of wisdom, of love, and of truth.

When Jesus was born, we read that he was laid in "a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Now, that must seem absurd to a person who concludes that Jesus was actually laid in a manger; for there is no reason, and it could be no reason for being laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. The truth is, that the word ought to be translated "barn," or "stable;" and it means that Jesus was laid in the barn, the outhouse, or the stable, because there was no room in the inn; the people were going from the distant provinces up to their respective villages to be enrolled; and a great many strangers being present in Bethlehem, every spare room in the *caravanserai*—for it was that rather than an inn—every spare room in the *caravanserai* was occupied; and Jesus was laid in a spare place in which the cattle fed: the Eastern horses are so domesticated and so tame, that the keeper, or the Arab, or Bedouin, may and does sleep with them without any danger. But mark this, the Lord of Glory, that stretched out the firmament, could find no room in an inn! He that made the world could not find a place in it whereon to lie, worthy of his greatness, his dignity, his power! What traces of humiliation are here! What lights and indices are here of his moral and exalted glory!

"There were shepherds," it is said, in the country, "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." Now it has been argued from this alone that Jesus was born about Easter; I do not say that this is the only reason, but it is not likely that shepherds in Palestine would be out all night upon the fields;

the grass is not then sufficient, the fields are not fitted for the pasturing of sheep at that season, and it seems unlikely that the shepherds would be out on a cold and frosty night of December or of January. And from this, and not from this only, but from a variety of reasons which have been discussed at very great length, it has been proved to demonstration that what we call Christmas is not the birthday of our Lord, but that the real birthday is somewhere about April, and that Good Friday is much nearer being the birthday of our Lord than what we call Christmas day. I do not say that it is of any very great consequence; but it teaches us this, that all that is insignificant in the history of Jesus is left in an obscurity, from which we cannot withdraw it: while all that is profitable and instructive is luminous and clear as the light of noon-day. And one is almost pained at the recollection that in ancient days, the question whether Easter should be celebrated on a Sunday, or celebrated on a week-day, was a discussion that rent Christendom to pieces; and while humbled at the recollection of that, we should be none the less humbled at one's experience of modern times, where Christians often seem to quarrel with a violence and an intensity proportionate to the insignificance of the matters about which they are quarrelling.

An angel appeared to these shepherds, and said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy;" literally, "I preach the Gospel to you, and these good tidings shall not be only to you, or only to the Jews; the original sounds shall be heard in Palestine, the echoes and reverberations of them shall roll through the length and breadth of the universe itself.

‘for unto you is born this day in the city of David,’” —that is, Bethlehem; how remarkable are the words that follow, applied to an apparently helpless babe!—“a Saviour, which is the Messiah Jehovah,” for that is the meaning,—“a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,” in a barn, or in a stable. And then, suddenly, there was a choir heard from the skies, pealing sweet music upon the ears of them that waited for redemption in Israel. Now, from that babe, so unnoticed and unknown, and despised and rejected by mankind, there shall arise glory to God in the very highest—the intensest glory—there shall spread on earth, deep and wide, peace; and there is exhibited in it that good-will to men, which is otherwise expressed by the text, “God so loved the world,” God had such good-will to the world, “that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life.”

The shepherds were too much amazed at the glorious tidings to remain where they were; they said, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.” Let us catch a precedent from them; wherever we hear the truth is, let us go and seek it; be not satisfied with hearing, go and investigate, and the issue we know will be good.

The same day, we read, “they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.” And then they went and told it abroad—made known all these good things. And in the 19th verse, mark what is said, “Mary,” a specimen of simple, beautiful, retiring religion; one who had a faith that

faltered not in the worst, and wearied not in the best of times; one who was everything that we can say of the highest Christian, but with nothing that would mark her for the degradation of being worshipped as a goddess, instead of being regarded as a pious, holy, spiritually-minded Christian mother,—“Mary kept all these things,” what we read of in the first chapter, all the marvellous incidents, the strange sights, the music of the heavenly choirs, the shepherds and the magi coming to worship, and to give incense,—she kept these things, they were too remarkable to be forgotten; she not only kept in her memory, but she did what we also should do, “pondered them in her heart.”

I noticed, when I addressed you upon the refrain; “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; for He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name;” that Protestants are not justly chargeable with showing disrespect to the memory of the Virgin Mary, and that, though we are not prepared to join with the Church of Rome in giving her homage, which we believe to be absolute idolatry, we do not hesitate to call her, as the prophecy says she should be called, “blessed;” nor do we hesitate to set her forth, as far as she followed our blessed Master, as a beautiful precedent for every mother in Israel, as a flower of female piety and a vital specimen of motherly virtue. I do not know a character in the whole New Testament more beautiful than Mary’s. I do not know an example fitter for every woman to follow; her silence, where silence seemed to be dutiful,—except in one instance,—her

thankfulness, which betokened a deep sense of distinguishing mercies, her deep interest in Jesus, her mysterious—her almost, at times, awful sympathy with him, indicates that she had a mind far, far more enlightened than the generation of which she was a part; and, though not immaculate, as a foolish priest would make her, yet she was a sinner saved by the cross, and made a living epistle, written not with pen and ink, but by the Holy Ghost, and seen and looked upon by all believers.

There is something very remarkable and beautiful in these words. No elevation, no exaltation, nothing that intimated a mere earthly carnal sense of sudden dignity, breaking forth in sudden transport; but a quiet, meditative study of all that had transpired; and in her own secret and sequestered moments keeping things that the world knew not, and some things that she herself could not fully comprehend; and, like a true Christian, pondering them in her heart, till she could clearly comprehend them with her intellect, and know even as she was known.

Now, some of those things which Mary must have pondered in her heart, were the startling revelations that were made to her, the echoes of which must have kept ringing in her memory. There was, for instance, that great prophecy of Simeon; "A sword shall pierce thine own heart also,"—this child is no ordinary child, he is "set for the raising and falling of many in Israel." When she heard that, and heard the salutation of the angel, and then remembered ancient prophecies clearly budding into fulfilment in that babe that lay upon her breast, she looked wistfully at that mysterious face, that infant, and yet the Almighty; and some-

times perplexed—sometimes upheld,—sometimes fearing, oftener hoping, occasionally rejoicing, she kept those things and pondered them in her heart.

No doubt, among other things that occurred to her, that she pondered in her heart, were some of a peculiarly Jewish and national character. She thought; If this be the Messiah,—and she was sure that he was so—then there was deliverance for her people, for her beloved Israel; for every Jewish woman was a patriot, every Jewish mother longed to contribute to the emancipation of the land of her people from the iron tyranny that ground it to the very dust under the sceptre of the Cæsars. And when she saw this child, and remembered that the Messiah was to be the deliverer of Israel, and connected it with Simeon's prophecy, that he should be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people, Israel;" and when she thought that the sceptre should not depart from Judah until the Messiah should come; she saw sweetly reposing in her lap the light to lighten the world, the glory of Israel, the first bright beam of that day whose glory should cover the land, and all the earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the channels of the deep.

No doubt Mary thought also of the interesting fact, that must have startled every Jew when he heard it, that the Messiah, "the glory of Israel," should also be a "light to lighten the Gentiles." The Jews had turned their peculiar privileges into intense sectarianism. God had surrounded them as a nation with peculiar privileges, not that they might worship those privileges, or selfishly refuse them to others; but instead of being thankful to God, and enjoying and properly using their

privileges,—they became proud of them and jealous of their participation; and the very idea of a general possession of them by other nations was intolerable,—the very thought that the blessing which they had, should be diluted by spreading among the Gentiles, was insufferable; they could not understand, that with grace, the more it is spread, the more it multiplies in him that spreads it; and they thought that in proportion as Christ was a light to lighten the Gentiles, so much the less would he be the glory of their nation, Israel. Now, Mary looked beyond the boundaries of her own nation, and saw the lamp lighted that should not give a partial, but an universal light, a Saviour who should not be Jewish, but Catholic, “a light to lighten the Gentiles,” that should shine beyond the limits of Palestine, and overflow the whole earth with his glory. And Mary kept “these things, and pondered them in her heart.”

Another thought which must have occurred to her, and which she pondered in her heart, was the sweet sense of forgiveness which she looked for in that babe, and from that child whom Simeon had blessed and restored again to her motherly arms. Strange that she should look for forgiveness there. I do not know a more beautiful sight than a babe,—I do not know a more helpless one; and therefore, for Mary, the mother of that babe, to expect to receive from that helpless infant forgiveness, required a faith that pierced the veil of sense and circumstance, and looked into the holy of holies, and saw the child, indeed, in all the helplessness of young humanity, but God, also, manifest in the flesh in all the glory of the everlasting Father; and by that faith which she had, and through that hope, which

was no less a cross to her, she saw in him the sacrifice, the high priest, the altar, the glory between the cherubim, old things passing away, and a new light, a new splendour breaking forth and covering all.

She also saw, no doubt, and pondered in her heart, this prophecy, that the "lion should eat straw like the ox," &c. ; she pondered upon the promise, "the wilderness shall rejoice, the desert and the solitary places shall be glad;" and she saw, in holy and beautiful perspective, Eden again coming down to earth, and the new Jerusalem, the temple of God and of the Lamb; and heard the first tidings of the voice; "Behold, I make all things new."

Mary, too, probably pondered upon God's great love thus manifest,—“God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son;” and there she had in her arms the expression of God's infinite love, the proof that he so loved, the living image of that infinite love; and also of his faithfulness; he had given a promise, “The woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head;” Mary kept that too, and pondered it in her heart. “A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;” she kept that too, and pondered it in her heart. And as she put all these types and promises together, as if into one mighty cluster, and thought of the signal distinction that she, a sinner, selected in sovereignty, though born in sin, should, in spite of her demerits,—not, as poor Dr. Newman thinks, in consequence of her merits,—be made the mother of the Lamb of God, truly might she prophesy of herself: “All generations shall call me blessed.”

Let us notice in the conduct of Mary, which we are studying, the expression, she *pondered* all these things, —and again, the other expression, she *kept* all these things, or dwelt upon them. These blessed truths she not only *thought* of, but she pondered in her heart,—dwelt upon them, till they became familiar to her. If we want the truth to be incorporated in our hearts, the plan is to dwell upon it, to look at it in every light, to study it until it becomes part and parcel of yourselves, and to pray that the Spirit of God would so show it to us and set it in such lights to us, that we shall see it in such light as we never saw it in before, and then ponder it in our heart, till we find the truth of God's holy word to be, thus pondered, not mere husks, but nutritive and living bread.

And when Mary pondered all these things in her heart, we observe, there was no appearance of unnatural transport, or of carnal excitement, or of creature pride. Knowing she possessed such a privilege as that bestowed upon her, it must have needed much grace to be silent and to be humble. I say, she must have needed much grace to be silent and humble. She was silent; she pondered these things in her heart; she thought and said nothing; and, no doubt, when she pondered these truths, she did so too prayerfully; praying unto God that he might keep her humble, and might make her a model to all mothers in Israel. And when Mary pondered these things in her heart, she did so first probably as a sinner; her heart condemned her, and "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." It is quite a delusion to suppose that Mary was born immaculate. If Mary were different to any mother in Israel, Jesus is not of the seed of David.

And, therefore, it seems that he becomes the Antichrist by his own confession, who denies that Christ is come in the flesh. Now, the assertion upheld by Romanists is, that Mary was immaculate,—that she was made as sinless as Eve was when she came forth from the hands of God. If she was so, then Jesus is not descended from David, but was lifted out of the mass of humanity and made of a different creature, not sharing in the lot and destiny of all humanity. Therefore we hold that Mary was a poor sinner with a corrupt nature just as we have. But, you say, then, must Christ's nature have been so? No; because what distinguishes that holy and spotless nature from ours is, that though it was our nature, it was our nature made perfect, and purified, and spotless, and infinitely holy; so that it was, as the angel predicted, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee," and which should "be called the Son of God."

And that Mary felt herself a sinner is plain, as I showed you before, when she said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." It is the sinner that needs a Saviour. A saint in glory does not need a Saviour; he is saved, he needs not to be saved. But, you hear, Mary looked to Jesus as a Saviour; and by that looking to him, proves that she felt herself to be a sinner, standing in need of that Saviour. Now, Mary, as a sinner seeking forgiveness through Christ, as a sinner pardoned and blessed through him, pondered and kept the solemn truth in her heart, that—sinner as she was—God should thus look upon the lowliness of his handmaiden, and make her in all generations blessed. No doubt Mary kept and pondered in her heart, the truth, that as a mother

she was the mother of that Saviour. I do not like the expression that the Roman Catholics employ: "The Mother of God;" or, as they call her, the Deipara, or the Parent of God. God is infinite, without beginning and without end. She was the Mother of the Manhood, or humanity of Jesus; and, therefore, may be called the mother of Jesus; and our denying that she ought to be called the Mother of God does not imply that Jesus is not God. We assert that he is God, and was God, and ever will be God; and yet Mary is not the "Mother of God."

But Jesus was also everything that man can be,—sin excepted. He was finite, and grew up in years and in stature, and in the knowledge and love of God and man, till he reached thirty years of age, which was held to be a full and perfect manhood. And Mary, as a mother, viewed that Son as a mother views her firstborn still, with joy and transport; for every mother in Israel rejoiced with exceeding joy when a man-child was born into the world.

But still more did Mary rejoice in him, and still more did she ponder in her heart all these blessed truths, as a Christian. Mary was a Christian; and like every Christian, in her heart Christ was all and in all. In the language of an ancient father, she felt more joy in being a Christian, and more blessed in being saved as a Christian, being washed in the blood of the Saviour on the cross, than she ever felt as the mere mother of Jesus.

Let us, too, ponder these truths in our hearts; let us lay them up in our memory; let us take the truths of God's word and lay them up in our memory as precious seeds deposited there. It is an interesting fact that

the Holy Spirit is promised to help the believer's memory, just as he is promised to sanctify the believer's heart. The promise is; "He shall bring all things to your memory, whatever I have said unto you." And many times, in suffering, in bereavement and in loss, a single text, long forgotten, flashing upon your memory, will be to your soul as the guiding star in the firmament to the tempest-tossed sailor. Ponder them, retain them, and lay them up in your memory as precious truths; but above all, lay them up in your hearts. Do not ponder the truths of Scripture as if they were dry doctrines; but ponder them as vital, cheering, and sanctifying truths. There is a religion of the intellect, which is hard and dry; there is a religion of the imagination, which lasts for a moment; there is the religion of sentimentalism; but all these are perishing. The religion that lasts and lives and sustains and cheers and endures, is the religion of the heart; and therefore, till we have pondered these truths in our hearts, we have never yet learned what those truths are in all their glory and all their blessedness.

The root of Christianity struck into the intellect, will bear no fruit; the roots of Christianity struck into the imagination, will soon wither and decay and disappear; but if the roots are in the heart, and the dews of heaven water them, and the beams of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon them, they will grow up into everlasting life, to the glory of God and to your own comfort.

Let us learn this lesson from Mary. We will not worship her; we will not degrade her by ranking her as a goddess; we will not grieve her (if she can hear of it) by asking her to be a mediator; but we will

imitate her beautiful example; we will admire her as one of the brightest exponents of whatsoever things are pure, and holy, and lovely, and of good report; and we will teach the Romanist that because we cannot be guilty of idolatry, we will not be unjust towards a pure and beautiful mother; we will thank God for whatever is good and beautiful in Mary; imitate her as far as she imitated Christ, and endeavour in brighter light, with greater privileges, and through richer grace, to excel and greatly to outstrip her.

“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the good things that they had heard and seen.” When Jesus was taken to the temple, to be introduced, according to the Jewish law, and to be made a member of the visible Jewish Church, we read that Mary and Joseph offered, what poor people only offered, turtle doves. The usual offering, I believe, was a lamb for a sin offering. They were not able to afford that; and therefore they offered that which the poor were allowed to offer. It is no sin to be poor; it is no shame to be poor; there is shame in vice only, there is none in poverty; often a nobler heart beats under rags than beats beneath the imperial purple. Simeon, then an aged man, was in the temple, “waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” Now, “it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” We need to do that as well as Simeon, that we should see Christ by faith before death should visit us in fact; and if we have seen him,—and faith is the evidence of things not seen,—and “whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice,”—if we have

seen him and found him as our Saviour, then death comes not as the *poursuivant* of justice, to bring us to the judgment bar, but as the herald and the messenger of the cross, to usher us into the presence and the glories of an everlasting day. And when "he came by the Spirit into the temple, and the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." This hymn is addressed to the Third Person in the glorious and blessed Trinity; it is a remarkable proof of the Deity of the Holy Spirit; for you will see it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. These were his words: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." Which word? The revelation of the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ. You have in this hymn, therefore, an instance of prayer addressed to the Third Person in the glorious Trinity; in other words, the Holy Ghost recognised as God.

And how beautiful is that prayer!—Lord, I am thy servant, serving thee on earth; now let me depart in peace, let my service close. I have been an outdoor servant, let me now be an indoor servant; I am ready to depart from this life, or to depart from this temple, or from this scene, in the possession of perfect peace; for I have seen him on whom my heart has rested, through promises and prophecies, for many a year; and now I am ready to close my eyes upon a world, the best and most blessed sight in which I have now had the privilege of witnessing; "mine eyes have seen thy

salvation, which thou hast prepared"—thou, the author of it—"a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." One of the most beautiful hymns in the Christian Church, suitable for Christians now to sing, as well as an experience of the most precious truth and privileges of our faith, is this song.

Simeon then spoke to Mary, and said, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." We read, also, that one Anna, "the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser," was another aged Christian that waited for the consolation of Israel.

The child is said to have grown, "and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." You must not be startled by all that is said of the humanity of Jesus. Many Christians when they read these expressions, say, This is a human being. I would say to them, Certainly, he was human; all that can be said of you and me ought to be said of Jesus, sin excepted. And therefore, when the Socinian quotes these passages, and says, "Are not these descriptive of Christ being man?" I answer, Certainly, they are so. But then, you should turn over the leaf, and you will find other passages that are no less descriptive of Christ being God. Our complaint of the Socinian is, that he takes the profile view of Christ, and not the full face. He looks at him on one side of his character,—does not take a full view of his character; if you would read the whole, you would see that where he is described in the one passage as the suffering, weak, and infirm man, he is delineated in the next as the Prince of Peace, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of the age to come.

We read that his parents were returning from

Jerusalem, and that Jesus tarried by the way; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it; and, supposing him to have been in the company, they went on. At last they missed him, and went after him to look for him, and “they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions;” indicating supernatural wisdom when a child,—for Jesus was a child, he was a boy; he grew in stature and wisdom, and in grace, as he grew in years; “and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” His mother then said to him, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” You then see how prominently the mother comes into view, and how the reputed father, for that was his relation, is here thrown into the background. It is supposed that between this time, and Christ’s manifestation in his ministry, Joseph had died; we read no more of him, he disappears from the scene, and is spoken of no more.

But when they say to him, How is this? his answer was, “Wist ye not,”—know ye not, are ye not aware—“that I must be about my Father’s business?” What a mysterious speech! How inexplicable to Mary! and yet it was not inexplicable, for she saw that child was no common child, and therefore it is said of her again, “His mother kept all these sayings in her heart,” with a mother’s affection, with a Christian’s love, with a believer’s trust.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,” and there was more and more manifested the favour of God towards him.

NOTE.—“A public inn, or place of reception for travellers;” not “a room in a private house,” for then the expression would be, They found no *κατάλυμα*. Of what sort this inn was does not appear.

[14.] The disputes about this short song of praise are (with one exception, see below) so much solemn trifling. As to whether *ἔστι* or *ἔστω* should be supplied, the same question might be raised to every proclamation which was ever uttered. The sense of both these is included. It is both “There is,” and “Let there be,” “Glory,” &c. The song is in two clauses—forming a Hebrew parallelism, in which the third clause is subordinate to, and an amplification of the second, and so is without a copula to it; *εὐδοκία* (see ref.) is that good pleasure of God in Christ by which he reconciles the world to himself in him (2 Cor. v. 19). The reading *εὐδοκίας*, which would destroy the whole structure of the parallelism, is of very insufficient authority, but has been rendered famous by its adoption in the Vulgate, and consequently by the Romish Church.

[35.] This prophecy I do not believe to have its chief reference to the deep sorrows of the mother of our Lord on beholding his suffering (Euthym. al.), much less to her future death by martyrdom (Epiphan. Lightf.), for they stand in a totally different connexion. The prophecy is of the struggle of many in Israel through repentance to faith in this Saviour; among which number even his mother herself was to be included. The sharp pangs of sorrow for sin must pierce her heart; and the end follows—that the reasonings out of many hearts may be revealed, that they who receive the Lord Jesus may be manifest, and they who reject him (see John ix. 39).

CHAPTER III.

MINISTRY OF JOHN—TETRARCHS—HIGH PRIESTS—BAPTISM—APOSTLES
NOT BAPTIZED WITH WATER—HEBREW NAMES IN NEW TESTAMENT
—TRANSLATIONS—JOHN'S PREACHING—QUESTIONS PUT TO JOHN—
BAPTISM OF JESUS—BAPTISM WITH FIRE—DESCENT OF SPIRIT.

WE now enter on the preliminary ministry of John the Baptist—the great herald of the Saviour's Advent—as the voice of one that cried in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord:" and next, we enter on the ministry of him who now had passed the years of infancy and childhood, and attained to the strength and vigour of manhood, as the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind.

The chapter opens by specifying the era when these things began; it states also who were the leading governors of the provinces, or districts, or compartments into which Judea was then, under the Roman dynasty, divided.

The word Tetrarch means, properly, the governor of a fourth part of a kingdom; and those who had a fourth part of the kingdom assigned to them, were called Tetrarchs; but afterwards the word came to be applied to a person who had a section of a kingdom, whether that section was a third, or a fourth, or even a sixth part of the kingdom.

The Herod that is here spoken of as being tetrarch, or governor, of Galilee, was the son of Herod the Great, not

Herod the Great himself. It has been thought strange that in the second verse two personages should be mentioned as being the high priests; but it is evident from history, that about this time the whole Jewish ecclesiastical polity had fallen into a state of the greatest confusion. There were several quarrels and disputes about the office of the high priest. It is impossible that there could have existed in office two high priests at the same time; but it is plain from other cotemporary historians, that Annas was the high priest who had been deposed from his office, and that Caiaphas was the actual high priest in possession of that exalted and important dignity.

Now, during the priesthood of Caiaphas, and while the superseded high priest Annas was still living, "the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias," whose history in infancy we have previously read, "and he came into all the country about Jordan," which runs from north to south, as you are aware, from the mountains of Carmel to the Dead Sea, along the narrow strip of land called Palestine; and on each side of that central river, that runs through the whole of Palestine, John preached "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Is the word "baptism" used here in the sense of baptism with water? I very much doubt that; but if it were, it would show that John's baptism, which was not complete, and which required to be supplemented, or rather superseded by the baptism of Jesus, was in some way connected with the remission of sins. It seems to me that the word "baptism" is used here in that broad sense in which it is often used in the Bible. I have often mentioned to you before that we commit a great mistake in con-

stantly associating water with baptism. The fact is, there are four different kinds of baptism, and baptism with water is only one of them. There is baptism with suffering—"the baptism that I am baptized with;" there is, secondly, baptism in the sense of miraculous gifts—"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" and there is, thirdly, baptism in the sense of baptism with water—"Go and teach all nations, baptizing;" and there is, lastly, baptism with the Holy Ghost, or that inner and spiritual baptism which is always and everywhere regeneration. Now, for a person to say, that because he finds baptism associated with remission of sins, baptism with water is regeneration and remission of sins, is most illogical, and most absurd. In the language of an ancient creed—the Nicene Creed—"there is one baptism for the remission of sins;" but that "one baptism for the remission of sins," is not that which has been canonized in the West of England, but that which is alluded to in the word of God—the regeneration of the heart, or the baptism of the heart with the Holy Ghost—which is, in every case, the remission of sins and regeneration of the heart.

Many are baptized with water who are not baptized with the Holy Ghost, and some are baptized with the Holy Ghost who never were baptized with water. The thief upon the cross was baptized with the Holy Spirit; the Apostles, excluding Paul, were not baptized. There is no record or evidence of any sort that Matthew, or any of the Apostles, ever were baptized with water. There is no evidence, I say, that one of the twelve Apostles—that any of the twelve Apostles, excluding Paul—was baptized with water. Now, if

baptism with water be regeneration, and if there be no regeneration without it, then the monstrous conclusion must follow, that the Apostles were never regenerated or renewed by the Holy Ghost. And even if it could be ascertained that some of the Apostles were baptized—if it were discovered that they were all baptized, though it is not mentioned—a very questionable form of argument—then Judas was also baptized with the rest; and yet Judas was not regenerated. In no sense, and in no way, therefore, can you prove that baptism with water, however canonically administered, in whatever form, or by whatever hand, or in whatever shape, is regeneration of heart and remission of sins. Then what was the nature of John's baptism? If it was baptism with water,—which I will not dispute, if that be your idea of it, though it is not stated;—if it was baptism with water, it was a baptism that was preparatory and introductory to that inner baptism with the Holy Ghost, which Jesus alone could bestow. For John himself says, “I baptize you with water; but he that cometh after me baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”

In the next place, we are told that John's mission was founded on a prophecy of Isaiah: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” I may notice here, for those who may not have looked into the subject, that in the New Testament we find names taken from the Old Testament are spelt in a different way. The reason of it is briefly this, that the New Testament writers quote often from the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament; and the Greek language, not enduring the harsh and guttural sounds of the Hebrew, has rendered them into what are

thought softer forms. Instead, therefore, of keeping "Isaiah," as it is in the Hebrew, it is translated "Esaias;" and so, in the list of the names of those from whom Jesus is said to be descended, you will find some that sound to you strange, simply because they are spelt after the Septuagint Greek, and not after the original Hebrew. But the fact is, it is our anglicising of the Hebrew that renders it so guttural; the Hebrew in itself is not guttural; and if we had kept the original Hebrew pronunciation, we should have found it to have been very musical. For instance, we say Jeremiah; well, that seems a very harsh sound, but in the original it is very soft—it is Yeremiah. We say Joseph, but it is in the original Yoseph. So again, we say Judah, it is originally Yudah. And many other names which, as we have rendered them, sound harsh and unmusical, are in the original extremely musical. But the Evangelists, quoting from the Septuagint Greek translation, have given words with different spelling. And one very remarkable instance, which is, perhaps, an unhappy one, is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Paul says, "For if Jesus could have given them rest." That was the *Grecised* form of "Joshua"—"Yoshua" in the ancient Hebrew; in the Septuagint, or Greek, it has been rendered "Yesus," or Jesus; and this is confounded by some with the name of our blessed Lord.

I may also mention here an interesting fact, that the Apostles and Evangelists quote from the Septuagint Greek, which was a translation from the Hebrew. This is suggestive of a very important lesson to us; it shows us that the Holy Spirit has authorized translations of the Bible; because, if the Apostles and Evangelists had always quoted from the Hebrew, or the original, so far

there would have been no presumptive evidence in favour of translations; but the fact that our blessed Lord and the Apostles quoted from a Greek translation from the Hebrew, for the use of the Jews who were generally accustomed to speak Greek, is presumptive proof that our Lord and the Apostles sanctioned the translation of the Bible; so that, therefore, that which has been done by the Bible Society, of sending to every man the Bible in his own tongue, is scripturally sanctioned, as well as a necessary gift to mankind.

John addressed the multitude, and said to them, "O generation of vipers,"—very strong language, addressed to a very depraved and a very dissolute auditory. Perhaps it was a preaching not in consonance with the preaching of our blessed Master; the Apostles did not so speak, they seem to have inherited more of the spirit of Christ; but John occupied, as it were, the midway space between the thunders of Sinai, and the sweet, still small voice of Calvary. He had, therefore, much of the terrorism of the one, though there mingled with it something of the sweetness and the gentleness of the other. You will, therefore, find in the preaching of John much that you do not find in the preaching of the Apostles after the day of Pentecost.

"Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance." You must not understand the word "worthy" as meaning deserving, or entitled to repentance; it means, Bring forth fruits suitable to repentance; such as you might expect to follow a true and heartfelt repentance.

And then he meets that objection which the Jews always felt, and which they always gloried in, "We

have Abraham to our father." He tells them, "That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Do not boast of your lineage; do not feel, that because you have had such illustrious fathers, therefore you are children corresponding to their character. The greatness of our forefathers should humble us, not make us boast; their greatness should make us imitators of them; but to plead our forefathers as an excuse for our own worthlessness, inconsistency, and wickedness, is only to make our own criminality greater by a comparison with their greatness. John, therefore, says to them, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees;" you will be tested, not by your fathers from whom you have sprung, but by your virtues that you yourselves now bring forth. The true test of a Church is not its succession from the Apostles, but its merits; the true test of Christian character is not its genealogy, but its fruits—"By their fruits shall ye know them." The true test of a Church is not its supposed, or imaginary pedigree, or succession, or emoluments; but its only test, and the only test that will stand in the searching age in which we live, is that it brings forth fruits to be expected from the Church of Christ.

While John was thus preaching, the people came to him, and said, "What shall we do? He answered and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him not suffer any one to be without who wants one;" if you have food to spare, then do not allow any one to starve. "Then came also publicans to be baptized." The publicans—or, more properly, the tax-gatherers, for the word "publican" has quite a different sense in its modern meaning from that which it had in its ancient and scriptural one.

The publicans, or tax-gatherers appointed by the Roman government to collect the taxes, came to be baptized, "and said unto John, Master, what shall we do?" And to every one he addressed a word corresponding to his vocation; "Exact no more than that which is appointed you," do not demand more taxes than are really due; do not be guilty of dishonesty in exacting them. "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?" It is remarkable here, that the word translated "soldiers," is not the ordinary Greek word *στρατιῶται*, which means "soldiers," but is *στραπενόμενοι*, the participle of the verb, which means "soldiers marching to battle," or soldiers about to engage in action: and it is supposed that these were some of the troops of Herod, who were going to engage in a warfare which he had provoked or incurred at this time. While on their march, with their knapsacks and all their armour upon them, they came to him, saying, "What shall we do?" Now, did John say to them, "Lay down your arms, you have no business to be soldiers at all: lay aside the uniform of Cæsar; the whole thing is wicked—war is a great crime, you must not engage in it?" Did he say so? No. He said to them, War may be an evil, but it is no sin to be a soldier. "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." I have often noticed what some persons say, that it is sinful to be a soldier; but it is only sinful to be a bad, a wicked, or a profligate soldier. War is a calamity—a terrible calamity—to be deprecated with all our might, to be put off and avoided at any expense, except the expense of principle, of safety, of solemn duty. Do away with soldiers, and

your homes would not be safe; disband our army, burn our navy, and in a very few years all the glory of England would depart, all your merchandise would soon be taken from you, and this great and powerful nation would become a poor helpless province. We respect and esteem the beautiful consistency of those who are called Friends; but in this matter, certainly, their convictions are most unscriptural, and their notions about war are impracticable, not to say absurd. If to be a soldier were condemned in the Bible, then they would be right; but while war is deprecated, and its source is traced, it seems to me that defensive war is a duty; and it has often been stated by those who are the most competent to judge of the whole matter, that the true way to prevent war, is always to be prepared for it. An army does not imply that you love war; the maintaining soldiers does not imply that you are anxious to provoke war; but it does imply that when war comes, you are prepared for it; and those foreign nations who are not inclined to obey the beautiful maxims of the Gospel, and who will not abstain from plundering you because you are Christians, will not endeavour to invade your territory when they see that you have great hearts and stalwart arms to repel them. A day will come when there will be no war; but that day is not yet come; and the true way to supersede the army is, not to make fine speeches against it, and against war, but to spread the glorious Gospel, to circulate God's word, to increase among the nations of the earth the sway of true and living religion, and then we shall render the soldier unnecessary, by making war impossible.

We next read that John explained to them the dis-

inction between his baptism and the baptism of Jesus. We have a second allusion to Herod the tetrarch, who was reproved by John, as we saw in a previous Gospel, and who cast John into prison.

And then Jesus himself was baptized. I may just notice here the promise, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." If this is to be rendered literally, "baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire," and not as some have proposed, "baptize you with the Holy Ghost, even as with fire,"—if it be taken literally, without entering upon a profitless controversy, would not this imply that baptism does not always mean immersion? The Baptist will say that baptism with water must always mean immersion—that the word βαπτίζω always means to dip or plunge overhead. But if you open the Acts of the Apostles, you will find that the tongues of fire rested on the heads of the Apostles; and that flame, resting on an Apostle's head, was the baptism of that Apostle with fire. It is plain, therefore, that the Apostles were not plunged into fire, they were not dipped or immersed in flame; they were simply sprinkled or touched with it. And, therefore, the Greek word for "baptism" does not always mean immersion; and in this case it certainly cannot mean immersion, but only the sprinkling or the touching of a part of the body.

We then read that when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Ghost descended upon him. Now, it is said here that the baptism of Jesus is a precedent for us. His baptism here was not a baptism for remission of sins, it was not a baptism for regeneration, it was in no sense, and in no shape, the baptism that we undergo; it was the baptism by which and through which every

priest entered on his priestly office, and it was introductory to Jesus' office as the great Priest of his Church, and not his baptism or admission into the visible Church. It was totally distinct from, and is not in any shape to be made a precedent for, the baptism that is administered to children, or that is administered to adults.

Then it is said that "the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him." Some have doubted whether the Spirit assumed that shape. I think that we are not warranted in concluding that the Holy Spirit took that shape; but just as the flame of fire upon the Apostle's head was the outward sign that the Holy Spirit had entered the Apostle's heart, so the descent of the dove upon the head of Jesus was the testimony to all that the Spirit entered with his infinite fulness to qualify him for the great and solemn functions he was now about to fulfil.

And then "a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son," literally translated, "in whom I have been, in whom I am, and in whom I will be well pleased." It is the aorist tense, and denotes continuity or continuance.

You will remember that the genealogy in this chapter appears very contradictory to that which is given in Matthew; and it has been supposed, as I think with great justice, that this is the genealogy of Mary, and that the other is the genealogy of Joseph. For you will notice here that this begins thus,—“And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli.” But then, Joseph is stated by Matthew to have been the son of Jacob, and so he was. Then in what

sense could he have been the son of Heli? He was the son-in-law of Heli. But why put it in this manner? I answer, A woman was not admitted into the genealogical tables, but only the husband; and in order, therefore, to have Mary's genealogy traced, it was necessary that it should be done through her reputed husband; and therefore it says, "Being, (as was supposed,)" that is, according to the genealogical tables of the Jews, "the son of Heli, which was the son of Matthat," and so on.

NOTE.—It may suffice us that they are inserted in the Gospels as authentic documents, and both of them merely to clear the Davidical descent of the putative father of the Lord. His own Davidical descent does not depend on either of them, but on chap. i. 32—35, and is solely derived through his mother. See much interesting investigation of the various solutions and traditions, in Dr. Mill's tract.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTATION—JESUS LED, NOT WENT—WEAPON OF DEFENCE—
SATAN—HIS DEFEAT AND DEPARTURE—PUBLIC WORSHIP—JESUS
EXPOUNDING THE SCRIPTURES—LA CALVAIRE AT ANTWERP, AND
PERVERSION OF SCRIPTURE.

THE opening part of the chapter I have read indicates unequivocally enough that Jesus Christ was man, and, in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is a blessed truth, in this opening account of the temptation of our Lord, and one that must be to every Christian immense consolation, that we have a great High Priest, a Saviour, who knows us, and to whom we can appeal, —who is not a stranger, by the elevation of his nature, to what we are, but is able, not only from beneficence, but from practical acquaintance, to enter into the depths of every heart, to fathom the recesses of every sorrow and every temptation, and so to succour them that are tempted. On the other hand, we have evidence enough, from the responses that he gave and the victory that he achieved, that if he was man, capable of being tempted, he was God, able to repel, with perfect success, all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

It is said, that "Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Now, even that statement is instructive

to us. It does not say that Jesus went into the wilderness, in order to brave the trials, but that he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and there he endured the trials. It is one thing to go into danger, with a bravado feeling that we can repel it ; it is quite a different thing to be led, in the providence of God, into trial, and in that trial to seek his strength to be made perfect in weakness. The first would be tempting God—the latter would be complying with his will, and conquering by his grace the trials in which he has placed us in his providence. We may depend upon it, that God never places a Christian, in his providence, in any trial in which he does not give to that Christian, when he seeks it, strength adequate to successful resistance.

Jesus was forty days tempted in the wilderness ; and was forty days, it says plainly, without food. The language of Matthew and the language of Luke clearly indicate that it was not what we call fasting—that is, partial abstinence from food—but that it was absolute and entire deprivation of food. Now, for any one to attempt to imitate Jesus in this seems to me outrageously absurd. There are certain things in the character and life of Jesus which are most imitable, and which we ought to imitate ; but there are certain traits in that great character which are inimitable, and which it is absurdity to try to imitate. We are not to try to imitate him in his walking on the waves of the sea—we are not to attempt to imitate him in raising Lazarus from the grave—in living without food forty days in Lent ; for he that indicated a power vastly above the human is in these respects to remain in his own unapproachable glory and greatness. But in those imitable

perfections in which he was a precedent for us, it is our duty, and if Christians it will be our delight, to approach him as closely as possible; but to suppose that abstaining for forty days in Lent from one sort of food, and indulging in another, or abstaining partially from both, is either commanded or dutiful, or in any shape indicated as devolving upon us because Jesus absolutely fasted, seems to me a conclusion very absurd, very illogical, and to have no foundation whatever in the fact recorded on this occasion.

When Jesus, after the forty days' fasting—that is, total abstinence from food—was hungry, Satan came to him, and told him, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it may be made bread." Satan comes to us just in the moment when our want is the greatest, and suggests to us still a mode of supplying that want which God has forbidden us. He said to Jesus, "You want food: now here is the plan—Command this stone that it may be made bread." Jesus could have done so, but it was not necessary to do so, and he that gave him the command had no warrant or authority to use it; and Jesus told him, "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone"—there is a lower life, which is animal, that lives by bread; there is a higher life, which is intellectual, that lives by truth; but there is a higher life still,—the life of true believers,—and that lives upon the hidden manna, the bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it is very important to notice here, that Jesus repelled every temptation of the wicked one, not by power called into play for the emergency, but simply by "It is written." Can you conceive higher authority placed upon God's holy Word than this—that He that

inspired it used it as the weapon of his defence against Satan? How justly may that Word be called "the sword of the Spirit;" and how proper is it for us to have recourse to that blessed book in the hour and power of temptation, and to draw from that armoury a weapon that will be found, in temper and in goodness, equal to every occasion! "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone."

We then read, that "the devil, taking him"—that does not mean snatching; the word "taking" is used in Scripture in the sense of leading; for instance, it is said, "Jesus taketh Peter and John apart"—that is, led them. So Satan led Jesus to "an high mountain, and shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." How he did so, I cannot say; how he could extend the horizon so as to show all the kingdoms—that is, the choicest, the greatest, and the chiefest—I cannot say; I only suspect that Satan had then more power than we think, and that he has now vastly more power than we are at all aware of. I do not believe, with the Unitarian, that Satan is a figure of speech,—I do not believe that it only means wickedness personated. And, very consistently, the Unitarian concludes that the Holy Spirit also is but goodness personated. I believe Satan to be a person—to be the archangel, reft of his glory, his crown, and his greatness; but possessing still the archangel's wisdom, endued still with the archangel's power, and able still to touch the human heart at far more numerous points than we think; and to exercise in this world a control only second to the sovereignty of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. At all events, we are told here that he showed all the kingdoms of the world, and

all the glory of them, to Jesus ; and then Satan said to him, " All this power will I give thee "—I do not know that he could give it ; for he is a liar and a murderer from the beginning. He professed to give it—" and the glory of them : for that is delivered unto me." He is called the prince of the power of the air—the prince of this world ; and much in the world is from him, and belongs to him : but he said, " If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." Probably he had no power to make them Christ's, and had no jurisdiction over them to bestow them ; but he said so—he assumed it. But mark how Jesus answered. The instant the arrow was shot, that instant it recoiled upon him that shot it—" Get thee behind me, Satan ; for it is written"—here is the only reply. He does not discuss it, saying, " Well, but the bargain will be a bad one ; hast thou power ? is it expedient ? will this be most profitable ?" but he repelled it at once by one decisive reply—" It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." He does not discuss the greatness of the offer ; he does not, for one moment, listen to the temptation that was involved in it ; he repels Satan by an appeal to instant duty—it is written, Thou shalt worship God only—that settles the whole question ; I will enter into no argument, I will make no compromise ; there is plain duty, that duty is mine, and that duty I, as the great Model of believers, am called upon to do.

He then set Jesus on a " pinnacle of the temple." This does not mean a small tapering spire ; the temple was built upon a hill—the roof of the temple no person was allowed to touch ; it was covered with plates of beaten gold, and surrounded by parapets and

sharp spikes, so that no bird, even, might perch upon it for a single moment. But it means that he was taken up to one of the porches, or the doors, that overlooked the valley that was below; and then Satan said to him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence"—another form of temptation. And the devil, seeing Scripture so mighty to repel himself, thought that he, too, might have recourse to Scripture, in order to master Jesus,—showing us that a bad man may quote Scripture for a bad purpose, and pervert it to his own use, in the same way as Satan does here. Satan knows the Bible—he knew the 91st Psalm. He says, "For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Now, the devil did not quote Scripture correctly; he omitted two words—or rather, three words—which very much modify the promise. It is in the original, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways"—that is, in the ways assigned thee by the God who has commanded thee; but if thou goest out of those ways, then there is no promise. Now, Satan omitted the path in which this protection was to be expected—that is, the path of duty—and made the promise absolute, when that promise was only applicable to the way assigned by God; thus quoting, and yet misquoting, Scripture. But Jesus again answered nothing as to the temptation, but simply, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"—you shall not plunge into anything for which you have no commission, or risk a danger that does not come before you in the path of duty.

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation,

he departed from him for a season,"—which shows that he came back again, tempting Jesus. And, indeed, Jesus leads us to infer this, when he says, in a subsequent chapter of St. John's Gospel, "Satan hath found nothing in me"—indicating thereby that Satan tempted him again, as well as on this occasion.

We then find Jesus going into the places of worship of the Jews, namely, the synagogue,—not the temple,—where God's word was read, and expounding it. In this respect he set a precedent for us. He honoured public worship ; and though that worship was very defective, and those that engaged in it were in their practices extremely corrupt, yet, because God's word was read in it, and God's worship still retained in it, Jesus set the example of honouring the house of God, or the place of public worship, by attending it. So should we ; if a place of worship has the worship of what is not God, or if it worships God in a way positively unscriptural and offensive to our conscience, then it would be our duty not to go ; but if it be a place of worship where there may be much that we dislike, and much that we could wish different, yet if in the main there be the substantial of true religion, we must not therefore, because we do not prefer it, but prefer another, hesitate to enter. The maintenance of public worship in a laud is a most precious thing, and wherever we can, we should honour it—if I may say it is honouring it at all, to go and join in it—by setting the example of going into God's gates with praise, and into his courts with thanksgiving, and making mention of his name and his righteousness only.

According to the custom of the synagogue, there was delivered to Jesus, as an illustrious stranger and a

teacher of the people, "the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place"—either the lesson for the day, if you may use the expression, or, as we should say, accidentally—though, of course, there was no accident—"he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down." This last seems strange, but it is intelligible enough, when you know that the custom then was to read the Scriptures in the presence of the people standing—they stood up when the Scripture was read; then, when the Scripture was expounded, the people sat down, and the minister sat down too; and spoke, like a lecturer, *ex cathedra*, rather than a preacher, addressing the people. But it seems to me far more beautiful in the modern minister to stand and speak to the people. The Pope sits and speaks infallibly, as he believes, *ex cathedra*; but a minister of the Gospel stands, reasoning with the people, teaching the people, and expounding and unfolding God's holy word. But in ancient days, the custom was to read the Bible all standing, and then the one that expounded to sit down, and those that listened to sit down also. Therefore Jesus Christ sat down after he had read the passage, and he expounded it to the people.

In these words we have a precedent, not only for preaching, but for the exposition of the Bible. It is therefore that I do, what is not always done in the

Church I belong to—I believe, rarely or very seldom done, except in the case of Mr. Howells, in the Church of England—I mean, expound the chapter that I read. Now, it is most important that we should understand the meaning of God's word, and that we should often be exhorted to duty, awakened to responsibility, and that we should be brought into contact with large masses of that inspired and blessed book ; for the promise and the prayer of our Master is, "Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth." In fact, the modern text, whatever be its advantages, was not the ancient mode of preaching. If you will take the homilies of Chrysostom or of Augustine,—and Augustine has almost gone over the whole Bible,—you will find that they rarely took a text, but generally whole passages of Scripture, and illustrated them by Scripture, and unfolded their meaning by continuous passages of the word of God. Texts began in the schoolmen's days, when their practice was to discuss about how many angels could stand on the point of a needle ; and men also undertook to show how much they could say upon the minimum portion of God's holy word. Hence, very short texts became the cause of very long and very expanded discourses. But the consequence of that was, that minister and people were led away from God's word ; whereas the proper and the true practice is to bring people in contact with large portions of God's holy word. Jesus read the whole of that beautiful passage, which is evidently a prophecy of himself ; and he told them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." There is a very strange perversion of this text in the Romish Church. I once visited a church at Antwerp, in which there is an

ascent called *La Calvaire*, "the Calvary," on which you ascend at an angle of 45 degrees, with statues at each side of it; and at the top of it there is what is called a "dead Christ"—that is, the representation of our Lord lying pale and dead, the size of life; and then there is this very passage written over it (Luke iv. 18). There is a box,—a begging-box, I may say,—and over the begging-box it is written, translated into English, "For the souls of the departed in purgatory;" and, in order to prompt you to give liberally, this passage of Scripture is also written, rendered thus: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to *preach indulgences for the captives*," i.e. *in Purgatory*. It is thus written; you will see it in the church—I forget its name just now, but it is one which contains a great many of Rubens' paintings, and is very much frequented—you will see this miserable perversion of God's word to sanction a miserable and wretched superstition.

And when he had expounded this passage, it is said that they were surprised at his wisdom. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"—how is it that he has this knowledge? "And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself;" and this shows that he had wrought miracles in Capernaum, for he says, "Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country"—that is, Do not work all the miracles at Capernaum, but work them also in your own native place. In other words, he says, "I may do so, and I will do so; but you know that this proverb is true in my case also, 'No prophet is accepted in his own country.'"

“They in the synagogue were filled with wrath,” when he told them of two simple facts—one, the case of Elijah, and the other, the case of Elisha. He tells them, in the first instance,—“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”—that is, he was not sent to any of the Jews, but to a Gentile. So again, “Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus”—or Elisha—“the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian”—another Gentile. He quotes two cases of mercies vouchsafed to the Gentiles. The bigoted Jews were full of wrath, and resolved to destroy him. In other words, they were like some persons in modern times, who assume to have a monopoly of Christianity, and hold that there is no true Church but their own, and no salvation out of that Church. And so it will always be while there are depraved hearts among mankind; we must only try to rise above it, and realize the magnificent truth, that salvation is not connexion with a Church or connexion with a sect, but that it is personal relation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IV. 42.

JESUS IN THE DESERT—PRAYS BY NIGHT AND PREACHES BY DAY—
—JESUS PREACHES IN CITIES—CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION—CHRISTI-
ANITY COURTS INQUIRY—CITIES CENTRES OF INFLUENCE.

WE are told in the first of the verses I have read, namely, the 42d, that Jesus departed from the midst of those on whom he had left most lasting impressions of his beneficence and power, and went away into a desert, or a solitary place. It immediately occurs to us to ask, What was the reason that Jesus went to that desert, or why should one who was so eminently useful withdraw himself from the crowd, and go into this solitary or desert place? The answer is, It was not because he was weary, it was not because he wished to have enjoyment, rest, or even a transient repose,—his whole life was a sacrifice, his death was only the consummation of it. And we know, from another Gospel, that the reason of his withdrawing was that he might engage in prayer to his Father who is in heaven. For we are told in another Gospel, that Jesus retired in order to hold communion with God, and to pray to him alone. We are, therefore, certain, that when Jesus retired into a desert place, it was not for the enjoyment of mere rest or repose from the great work in which he was engaged, but it was, plainly, to hold communion with God in the silence of the night, and in solitude,

that refreshed and strengthened him for again engaging in the work entrusted to him. He prayed by night—he toiled by day. When his disciples went upon the sea, and were toiling in the stormy deep, Jesus was engaged in intercessory prayer upon the mountain-side; and only when despair threatened to overwhelm them did he interpose, saying, “Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid.”

In the second place, we learn that when Jesus went into the desert place he was not yet left alone. The multitude crowded after him, partly from selfish motives, anxious to enjoy a monopoly of the good that he could do; and partly from motives that we can easily appreciate and commend—to derive instruction, and light, and encouragement from Him from whom, as recorded in the previous portion of the chapter, they had already derived so many and so substantial benefits and blessings, and to be guided and directed by his counsels throughout the rest of their life in this world.

Jesus says to the crowd that thus came round him, “I must go and preach the Gospel to other cities also, for therefore am I sent.” He says, “I must go and preach the kingdom of God to other cities also.” They wished to have a monopoly of his presence; he indicates to them that he was a Saviour, not for a few, but for all the masses of mankind. He was not a lamp to illuminate a house, but the great Luminary of heaven, to cast his radiance and his splendour upon all mankind. He would not, therefore, restrict his labours to a city—“I must go and preach the kingdom of God to other cities also.” The rain must not fall upon your field while others are parched and dried; the sunbeams must not ripen your corn whilst that of others perishes

for the want of it. I am a Saviour, not for the Jews only,—I am for them, it is true, if they will receive it, but whilst I am the glory of Israel, I am the light to lighten the Gentiles also.

We read here, that Jesus preached,—“I must go and preach the kingdom.” It is very remarkable that Jesus baptized never, but he preached always. If baptism were regeneration, why did Jesus never baptize? Why did an Apostle say, “I thank God I have baptized none of you?” But that Apostle ever preached; and Jesus, whenever there was an auditory, felt that there was a call to preach the kingdom of God. And what did he preach? We are told that he preached “the kingdom of God.” What is that? It is defined by an Apostle; it is not meat or drink, but “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” That is what Christ preached: not ceremony, for it is evanescent and multiform in its shape, like the clouds that float across the sky: not politics, for he was not the foe of Cæsar, but the friend of every rightly ordered and proper government: not anything relating to this world—this world’s parties, this world’s affairs, or this world’s disputes—but that which will make thrones stable, sceptres mighty, subjects loyal, all hearts happy; he came to preach righteousness, which grows into peace; and peace, which culminates into joy; and all together constituting the substance of the kingdom of God. And this kingdom, I have said, is not political or ceremonial. It begins in the individual heart—it is seed sown there; it does not propose a revolution in social life, but a revolution in the individual heart; no, I will not say a revolution, but a reformation in the individual heart. The Gospel

proposes to make kings more just, and subjects more loyal, not by political change, but by inner transformation of nature. It proceeds to make men first Christians; and next, it leads them to adorn and dignify every relation of human life. Other systems propose to give man something that he has not; this religion proposes to make man something that he is not. All human plans try to make the world happy by something they would add, or something they would subtract, or some outer change that they would appoint; but this religion proposes to make man happy, and society blessed, by changing individual hearts, by turning from darkness them that are the subjects of it into the light of Christ, by changing man into his ancient relationship to God; and when they are reinstated in their true relationship to him, they will find themselves restored to their just and their proper relationship to all mankind.

But while this kingdom was the subject of the preaching of Jesus, let us look, in the next place, at what I call a great peculiarity of his preaching—the parish in which he preached; or, if you like, the diocese in which he preached; or, if you like, the place in which he preached—“I must go and preach the kingdom of God to other cities also.” Now, just trace the preaching of Jesus from his thirtieth year to his thirty-third, and you will find that in almost every instance it was in towns and in cities. If you will take a map, and look at the cities upon the Lake of Gennesaret, you will find that in every one of them, more than once, Jesus preached the kingdom of God, the everlasting Gospel. He himself said to Jerusalem, “How often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her

chickens under her wings," implying that not once, but often, he had preached in Jerusalem the things that pertained unto everlasting peace. Again, he says, in giving his commands to his Apostles, "whatever city or town ye shall enter;" and again, "when ye are persecuted in one city, flee to another." And speaking of Chorazin and Bethsaida, he says, that "if the mighty works that had been done in them had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities would have repented. Thus you will notice that in almost every instance, Jesus selected cities and towns as the radiating centres of influence, in which he desired to make the deepest impression that divine truth could make upon the human heart. Mark, again, how the Apostles adhered to the same practice. They preached in Jerusalem and Antioch, in Azotus, in Pergamos, in Thyatira, in Sardis, in Philippi, in Athens, in Rome. They constantly appeared in cities and towns, preaching the Gospel of Christ. Now, what does all this teach us? It seems to me to teach the very important lesson, that those that preached the Gospel after the death of Jesus had perfect confidence in the truth of the Gospel that they taught. Jesus preached to the crowd in every city—learning and ignorance, prince and peasant, ecclesiastic and citizen—and spoke to them as to rational men, reasoning with them, and bidding them repent. The Apostles, as soon as Christ had risen from the dead, went into all the cities I have mentioned; into Athens, illustrious for its philosophy; to Rome, illustrious for its mighty heroes; to Corinth, degraded by its sensuality and its crimes; and in the midst of each they preached the same message, announced the same truths, and showed, by submitting

those truths to the examination of the acutest minds that were pleased to examine them, that they had perfect confidence in the truth of that Gospel that they taught—that it did not shrink from the light, that it courted inquiry, and that they were sure that the more it was examined, the more it would show its divine origin, and prove itself the benefactress of man, as it indicated itself to be an ambassadress from God.

Now the results of this system were just what we should have expected from a religion that is so eminently the truth. It triumphed amidst the philosophers of Athens—men competent from experience, and from knowledge, thoroughly to analyse it; it triumphed in the midst of the soldiers of Rome, it carried its truths into the palace of Nero himself, it had trophies from some of the imperial family. Surely, then, a religion submitted to this severe ordeal, and accepted by men thoroughly competent to investigate its claims, to point out its defects, proves itself to be a religion of truth. And its claims have not lessened, but have rather grown with years. Fools may mock at it; but the wisest, the holiest and the best will ever hail it, after the severest and the narrowest investigation, as the inspiration of God, a book that he has given for our learning.

But there are other reasons why cities should have been selected by the Apostles for the first places in which they preached; and why they should still be selected by us as the scenes of our best and our greatest efforts to christianise and to enlighten mankind.

First, in a city there is the greatest crowd accessible to the tidings of the Gospel. If one preaches, it is better that a thousand should hear than five hundred;

better still that two thousand should hear than one. In a city, if you have anything worth saying, there will be thousands that will feel it worth their while to come and hear. To select a city, therefore, for the preaching of the Gospel, seems to me to be the selection of the largest possible sphere, and of the greatest possible number of immortal souls for hearing the truth uttered, and for impressions to be made.

There is another reason why we should select cities as the chief sphere of Christian action; and that is, that the influence of cities is very great. In literature; and in fashion, we know that they exercise a prodigious influence. At this moment, I should think that London gives almost their tone to the largest cities of the whole civilized globe; and at this moment, I need not tell you, Paris sets the fashions for all the rest of the world. It depends upon the *fiat* of a Parisian what dress shall be worn next year, what shape the dress shall have, what colour, what costume the rest of the world shall put on. As we have seen that cities have very great influence; how important is it that that influence should be sanctified! If fashion can go forth with such influence from one capital; if mercantile law can issue with such force and corresponding influence from another capital, how much to be desired is it, how earnestly should we pray, that these great and influential capitals may be so saturated with living religion, that on the wings of their gigantic influence there shall go forth the elements of saving truth; and that wherever their power is felt, mankind may feel their blessings too.

In the next place, in a city every section of the country has in some degree its representative. There

is no family in any village in England, however small and insignificant that village may be, that has not some connexion, in trade, in business, in relationship, or in some shape, in the midst of this great city; and anything that makes a deep impression in London, is sure to spread its multiplied waves from one end of the land to the other. London is the great heart of the empire; its pulsations are felt in Cornwall, and in the Hebrides; and like the human heart, if it be diseased, its influence is destructive; if it be healthy, holy, pure, it must send out streams of goodness that consecrate all they touch, and carry health, and happiness, and joy into the dwellings that would otherwise be dark and desolate.

In the next place, cities are, on the whole, perhaps, far more depraved than small villages in the country. The poet has said,—

“God made the country, and man made the town.”

I do not know if that be as true as it is poetical; but this is quite true, that in cities and towns depravity is more concentrated; and in a great capital like this, a person can plunge into sin without being seen, while in a little rural village the eye of every villager is on him, and inspection is over him; but let loose in London, a young man feels that if there be no restraint in his own conscience, there is no paternal, no guardian and protective, nor maternal eye to watch him, and to give him a hint, and speak a truth that may be blessed to him. It is, therefore, important, that where there is the greatest amount of depravity, there should be the greatest efforts made to eradicate it, and to substitute for it the influence of pure and living religion. The strongholds of a city are first assailed by

an invading force; the strongholds of Satan and of sin should first be attacked by the ministers of Christ; and when they have yielded, and holier and better influences have taken their place, no one can calculate the good that will follow. Almost all the judgments that we read of in Scripture, pronounced by our blessed Lord, were upon cities,—Tyre and Sidon, and Nineveh, and Babylon, Chorazin and Bethsaida, and Jerusalem, all have their woes attached to them. They had vast opportunities,—they trampled on them; their lights were extinguished, their candlesticks were removed, and the tide of life and light ebbed away, and their remains—their miserable remains,—are left to tell of the glory they once had, and to indicate the depth of ruin to which they have now fallen.

If, then, we could see all the cities and towns of England with more churches—double the number that they have—with more faithful and devoted ministers to occupy their pulpits; their city missionaries multiplied a thousandfold, Scripture readers increased, and religious institutions extended, I believe that more good would be done to the nation, than by such straggling efforts as are made in the lonely and sequestered villages of the land. Not that the latter are to be forgotten, but that the former ought to have the preference. In London the best and the ablest preachers ought to be, for in London the great battle between Infidelity, or Romanism, and living religion, you may depend upon it, will be fought, and lost or gained. All this is great encouragement to labour, and to spread the truth in such a city as this: and it does seem to me, that of all spectacles upon earth it is the most pitiful to see ministers of different sections of the Church quarrel with each other in the

midst of a city where, if all the population were to go to church on Sunday, there would still be nearly a million that could not, if they were willing, get within church walls to hear the Gospel of Christ. Surely it is a humbling thought, that out of the two millions and a half that move within a radius of eight miles of St. Paul's Cathedral, there are only, at the maximum, 120,000 communicants in any church or chapel of any kind whatever. It surely is a humbling enough fact, that in this great city more people leave every Sunday morning by the railway, and by the steamboat, than go into all the churches and chapels that are in it put together. It is surely a very humbling fact, that the maximum attendance in all the churches and chapels is something about half a million out of two millions and a-half; and it is not less humbling to see ministers quarrel about the excellence of their respective sects; it is as if physicians, in the midst of a prevailing epidemic, should quarrel at the bedside of their patients about the merits of their respective diplomas. Common sense would say to them, Your duty is to prescribe, not to discuss the excellence of your diploma; and common sense will say, and from its silent recesses it does say to every minister of the Gospel in this great city, You have no time to quarrel about the excellence of sects, the superiority of parties; the work is too urgent, the dying too many: you are called upon to preach the kingdom of God, to imitate your blessed Master's example, who said, "I must go and preach the kingdom of God to other cities also."

And if such an influence be radiating, and such the results, as I have described, Christians ought to be themselves more distinct and unmistakeable in their

character in the midst of cities. The world ought not to be able to say, "These Christians just live as we do, only the difference is that they go to church, and we do not; but as to any practical effect, they are just as dishonest in trade, as equivocating in their language, as bad as the rest of mankind; only they make a profession, and we make none." My dear friends, we ought to be as lights in the midst of darkness; we ought to be distinct, separate, sharply defined. The world ought to see, not that a Christian is an eccentric man, or an odd man, but a christian man. They ought to feel your influence; they ought to see religion shine in your conduct; they ought to see your light so shining around you that they are led to glorify, not you, but your Father who is in heaven. We ought to be a chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood; to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us from darkness into his marvellous light.

And lastly, I may add, that you should aid every institution that helps to spread this blessed Gospel in your towns and cities. I know no society that is doing more good at this moment than the London City Mission, or one more evangelical in its nature, more excellent in its constitution, nor, as I can testify from personally following the missionaries, more blessed and owned of God in the happy results it has been honoured to achieve. But I do not mean, by that allusion, to advance the claim of that Society to the exclusion of others; I mention it as one which deserves a portion of your support. And when this great city has been made by grace as great as it has been made in providence, no one can calculate the holy influence, the

Pentecostal influence, it may be honoured to exert over all the rest of the earth.

God be merciful to us in this capital, and bless us, in order that his name may be known upon the earth, and his saving health among all nations. Amen.

NOTE.—Matt. iv. 1—11; Mark i. 12, 13. Verse 1 is peculiar to Luke, and very important. The Lord was now full of the Holy Ghost, and in that fulness he is led up to combat with the enemy—he has arrived at the fulness of the stature of perfect man, outwardly and spiritually. And as when his Church was inaugurated by the descent of the Spirit in his fulness, so now, the first and fittest weapon is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” The discourse of Peter in Acts ii., like the Lord’s reply here, is grounded in the testimony of the Scripture.

It was the custom in the synagogues to stand while reading the law, and sit down to explain it. The Lord on other occasions taught sitting, e.g. Matt. v. 1, Mark iv. 1, xiii. 3. The *ὑπηρέτης* was the *ᾠδὴ* whose duty it was to keep the sacred books.

[25.] The Lord brings forward instances where the two greatest prophets in Israel were not directed to act in accordance with the proverb, “Physician, heal thyself,” but their miraculous powers exerted on those who were strangers to God’s inheritance.

CHAPTER V.

POPULARITY OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS—PULPIT SHIP—SIMON'S EXPERIENCE AS A FISHERMAN, AND CHRIST'S WORD—PETER OVERWHELMED—LEPER HEALED—ABSOLUTION—THE PARALYTIC—CALL OF LEVI—LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF ST. MATTHEW—HOSPITALITY—NEW WINE AND OLD BOTTLES.

IT appears, in the introductory part of the chapter we have read, that the preaching of Jesus made a deep impression upon the great mass of the people of Palestine; and that, in consequence, a very great crowd gathered round him at the Lake of Gennesaret, in order to hear him preach. It seems that on this occasion there were two ships that were moored near the shore, into one of which he entered, and had it thrust out a little from the land, and there he sat down and taught the people. One can easily conceive the reason of this; it was a still and placid lake; the boat was thrust out a little in one of its creeks, or bays, and Jesus, sitting in the boat, had the whole mass of the multitude lining the shore, and forming, as it were, a vast amphitheatre around him. He selected this as being the best and the most convenient place for conveying his lessons to those that were listening; thus showing us that a church ought to be made for the convenience of the people, and that no elegance of architecture ought ever to be suffered to interfere with the availableness and practical usefulness of the building, which is, that the

minister may preach with the greatest ease, and the people hear with the greatest advantage.

When he left off speaking, he told them to launch out into the deep, and let down their nets. Simon, that is, Simon Peter, who was an old and experienced fisherman, and who knew that fish were to be caught only during the silent watches of the night, said, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing;"—we have caught nothing by night, and there is very little prospect of catching anything by day: but how beautifully he adds, in the face of all precedent, in the face of all experience, "Because it is thy word, I will let down the net." So, one word from the lips of Jesus should outweigh all else; and the great truths contained in this blessed book should overrule all prejudices, and all precedents; for it will ever be found that all precedents that oppose this blessed word are wrong, and that this word alone abideth for ever.

It is said in the sixth verse, that when they had "inclosed a great multitude of fishes, their net brake." This is one of the unhappy mistakes of our translators. If their net had broken, of course the fish would have escaped; and then it would have been impossible to fill the ships, so that the very ships should begin to sink. It is in the imperfect tense. Now, the imperfect tense, both in the Greek and Latin, means a thing lasting, or going on, or continuing to be. The perfect tense means a thing absolutely finished. In this case, it is the imperfect tense, and it means really, "the net was just a-breaking," or, just upon the verge of breaking, or, beginning, or, almost beginning, or, had begun to break. And translating it in this way, which is the exact and literal rendering of the word, you can see that the help

was obtained before the net broke, which it would have done if it had not thus been saved from doing so. The Greek word is perfectly definite, but our translation of it is not correct.

When Peter saw this, "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." How like truth is that! You cannot read it without seeing that this is the picture of an original; a picture drawn from imagination has many defects, but a sketch in actual history of actual facts, always may be detected by its being in its most delicate touches true to nature. How natural, when this great manifestation of divine power, indicating the presence of a Divine being, was revealed, that one conscious of his sins, his unbelief, his imperfections, his grievous apostasy on many an occasion, overwhelmed by the beneficence as well as the omnipotence of the miracle, and conscious of his nearness to God, and God's nearness to him, should, under the deep conviction of his sinfulness, say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" One who has no grace at all feels nothing; a man who has grace to see his sins will just speak like Peter; one who is in glory, and beyond the reach of all sin, would never say so at all. It was the language, not of a hardened sinner, nor of a glorified saint, but of one who felt his sins, by having grace to see and to deplore them.

There were also present James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus then said to Simon, drawing a lesson from his own trade, and from the scene they had just witnessed, "Henceforth thou shalt catch men;" —or, "Feed my sheep," or, "Feed my lambs;" the equivalent command which is contained in another Gospel.

A man who was a leper came and besought Jesus, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand and touched him." This was an unlawful act: the leprosy was a disease in ancient Israel that neither man nor priest could cure; and the leper was sequestered from the rest of the people, and nobody might dare to touch him. The fact that Jesus touched him was evidence that that touch was the touch of one who was more than human; and the fact that Jesus said, "Be thou clean," and he was healed, was evidence that he was the Son of God. The priest never said so, the high priest never said so; but when a person was a leper, or was cured of a leprosy, he went to the priest, and what the priest did was to say, by certain signs and proof, or phenomena or facts, whether the leprosy had really departed. Hence, this explains to us that passage, "Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven." That is just Levitical language applied to New Testament economy facts. In the original Hebrew, when the leper comes to the priest, if his leprosy be still on him, it is said that the priest shall—if I translate the Hebrew word literally—"uncleanse" him; but if the leprosy be healed, the Hebrew is, when he comes to the priest, the priest shall "cleanse" him; properly rendered, the priest shall pronounce him clean or unclean. But how was he to do so? By the signs or proofs that were upon the man. So, the expression, "Whose sins ye forgive," is equivalent to "Whose sins ye pronounce forgiven"—on evidence, just as the high priest did—"they are forgiven." "But whose sins ye pronounce not forgiven"—by the obvious fact that the party sinning neither repents, nor renounces, nor abjures them—then "they are not forgiven."

But what was the reason, you ask, that Jesus bade the man not to tell it, but "show thyself to the priest?" It meant that the miracle could not be proved, that the people would not believe that he was cleansed, till the priest had pronounced him to be so. The man went, therefore, to the priest, and the priest pronounced him clean, whom, perhaps, the day before he had pronounced unclean,—not knowing that he was cured by a miracle. And thus, out of the priest's reluctant lips, Jesus was attested and proclaimed as the great Healer of the incurable disease, and therefore God manifest in the flesh.

We then read that Jesus withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. After this, "as he was teaching," the Pharisees came round him, and some brought "a man which was taken with a palsy," or a paralytic, that is, a person with a whole side paralysed. This was a person, perhaps, in whose case—if it be possible—both sides were paralysed, or who was so paralysed that he was unable to rise from his bed, or to help himself. Now, the house was so crowded that they could not obtain admittance, and they therefore did—what sounds strange to us—let him down through the roof of the house. But recollect, that an ancient house consisted of one story; it was in the shape of a quadrangle: the inside square was made the *caravanserai*, where cattle were put; then there was a flight of stairs outside the house, consisting of some twelve or fourteen steps, which led to the top; and they had only then to lift off a little of the flat tiling that was upon the roof of the house, and let the man down some twelve or fourteen feet, and he was directly in contact with Jesus. The only thing was the ingenuity of the contrivance; there was no impossibility about it. And Jesus said to him first of all—

looking at the soul before he touched the body—"Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." That was absolutely pronouncing forgiveness. Well, then, the Pharisees—who seem to have been in this matter much better theologians than our modern Roman Catholic priests—said, and said very justly, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" The high priest did not pretend to do it; Jewish priests, who had, as I told you, a real Aaronitic succession, never assumed to do it; and they gave utterance to a great truth when they said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" For any man—priest or people—to assume to forgive sins, is to be guilty of blasphemy; and if Jesus was not God, he was guilty of blasphemy. But now Jesus put them to the test. He said, "Very well, then I will show you whether it is easier to heal the body, or to pardon the sins of the soul: the effects of the last are inner, you cannot see them; the effects of the first are outer, you can see them. Both are equally impossible to man, both are equally possible to God: I will therefore heal the body, and you will see that the Healer of the body is present; and you may then very fairly admit that the Sin-forgiver, in the case of the soul, is also present." In other words, you will come, by the visible proof of supernatural power exerted on the body, to the inferential belief of supernatural power exerted on the sinful and guilty soul. They saw the one, they inferred the other, and "they glorified God."

We then read of the call of a publican, or tax-gatherer, called Levi,—called, in another Gospel, Matthew. And he said, "Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him." You say, Perhaps he had not much to leave. That is quite true; but it is just

as difficult to leave the ten pounds that is our all, as it is to leave the ten thousand pounds that is our all. A poor man makes as great a sacrifice when he leaves his little home, with its little furniture, as does the great lord or lady when they give up the noble hall, with all its magnificent and precious contents. It is the leaving all, whether that all be little or much, that constitutes the true sacrifice.

Levi made a great feast. Now, you have in that statement in Luke a very delicate and beautiful touch. Matthew, or Levi, who made the feast, does not allude to the circumstance in his own Gospel. In other words, he shows that absence of *egoism*, or egotism, which is the evidence of true humility; but Luke, the other Evangelist, records about Matthew what Matthew does not venture to record of his own hospitality; but another, who probably shared in it, speaks of it for him.

The Pharisees complained that he was eating with sinners; and Jesus explained to them, by a very beautiful remark, that that was his place—that he was a physician, that he had come to heal the sick and to save them that were lost. And then, when they said, “Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink?” Jesus said, I am with them—their life, their joy, their teacher—you cannot expect them to weep now; the days come when they will mourn, when I am taken away from them. He thus shows them that fasting has its appropriateness—that it may be appropriate at one time and inappropriate at another. In other words, he teaches them that fasting is not a duty to be done, a penance to be gone through, an expiation to be made, but a contribution to our spiritual well-being; and that we ourselves are the best

judges whether we ought to fast. If you feel that abstinence from food in any way promotes your spiritual edification, then abstain from it; but if you feel that it would injure your spiritual edification, then eat and drink. The fasting is made for man, not man for the fasting. It is not necessary to feast, it is not necessary to fast, but it is always necessary to eat and drink moderately, to the glory of God, and for our own good. He says, "No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent." Now in reading this verse in our translation, I could not make out any meaning from it; but I referred—and it was only this afternoon—to the Greek Testament, and there I saw that again (and those that understand the rudiments of the Greek language will see it also) our translators are at fault. They make it here, "If otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent." The proper translation is this: "No man putteth a piece of a new garment, *i. e.* takes a piece from a new garment, and adds it to an old one; for otherwise, then he rends the new garment, and the new piece that is added to the old garment does not agree with it." In other words, he does two mischiefs; he rends a new garment, and he adds this new bit to an old garment, and he spoils them both,—he spoils the new garment, which he has rent, and he adds a piece to the old garment which does not at all agree with it. In fact, he just does what those persons called Tractarians do: Puseyism is the spoiling of Roman Catholicism, and it is the spoiling of Protestantism,—it is a mixture of the two that improves neither, and certainly spoils both.

And so again he says, "No man putteth new wine into old bottles." I explained to you before, that in ancient times bottles were made of skins: the unfer-

mented wine was put into the skins, and as carbonic acid gas was generated by fermentation, the skins expanded to the very utmost. Then if you were to pour this wine out of the bottles, and to put more unfermented wine into the skin—already stretched to the very utmost—when the fermentation began, the skin would necessarily burst, and the wine would be lost.

Then, the close of the chapter is, "No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better." Now, I have seen this quoted as if it meant that our Lord here pronounced that old wine is better than new. That may be true; but then we ourselves are the best judges of that. But this is not our Lord's meaning. The Greek is, "No man having drunk old wine, straightway liketh the new wine." Now what is meant by that? He is speaking figuratively. No man, accustomed to the Jewish economy—its fasts, its feasts, its rites, its ceremonies,—likes at first a new religion, such as I am now preaching; but you will say, The old, to which we have been accustomed, is better, and I would rather not adopt the new. It is not pronouncing upon old and new wine, it is using wine to illustrate two economies,—the old economy of Levi, which was passing away, and to which the Jews were accustomed, and the new economy of the New Testament, to which they were not accustomed,—and he says, No man who has been long accustomed to the old economy will immediately desire the new; but when he becomes more acquainted with the new, he will prefer it infinitely to the old, because the old vanisheth away, it is become a shadow, but the new abideth for ever,—the new, the living way, that leadeth unto God.

CHAPTER V. 31, 32.

AN APHORISM — THE RIGHTEOUS—THE PSEUDO-RIGHTEOUS — THE CEREMONIALLY RIGHTEOUS — SINCERITY, ITS VALUE — SINNERS —ELECTION—DIFFICULTIES—NATURE AND DURATION OF SIN.

THE first remark contained in verse 31—"They that are whole need not a physician"—is an aphorism that everybody accepts; it commends itself to the common sense of every one that hears it. The sick are the proper subjects for a physician—the healthy are not. And so, indicating the great analogy between the natural and spiritual world, Jesus adds, The sinner needs a Saviour, the righteous, of course, need none. If, therefore, you belong to the list of the righteous, there is nothing in my office that suits your case, there is nothing in my mission that can apply to your condition; but those that are sinners, and confess themselves to be so, I am in my proper place when I am in the midst of them; for what so appropriate a place for the physician as the hospital? what so suitable a company for a Saviour as sinners, and the chiefest of sinners?

But Jesus seems to indicate, or at least to suppose, or admit hypothetically, a class who are called "righteous." Now, who are they? I will tell you. They are they who love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their strength, and with all their

mind; whose affection never wavers for a single second, whose heart's polarity never alters for a moment,—who everywhere and always, and with all their strength, and with all their might, love God, obey his will, walk with him, feel a sense of responsibility to him,—whose every thought is inlaid with Deity—whose every affection worships Deity—whose whole life is in God, and in whose life God is; thus loving him with all their heart, and all their strength, and all their might.

And secondly, “they love their neighbour as themselves.” They think more of a neighbour's wants, however small, than they do of their own wants, however great; they delight to do good to all, and to do injury to none; they would suffer and sacrifice in order that others may be saved; they have no pride in what they do, no self-gratulations; they love God with all their heart, and their neighbour even as they love themselves; and they add, “When we have done all, we have only done that which we ought to have done.”

These are the righteous. Are there any such here? Is there one here who can lay his hand upon his heart, and say, “That is the category I belong to—that is the list amid which I am numbered?” Ah, my dear friends, we must each say, If these be the righteous, we are not of their number. Our own hearts condemn us; and God that made the heart is greater than the heart, and knoweth all things. God be merciful to us sinners—we are not in the number of the righteous. But whilst we will admit this—and every one, probably, will admit it—there are those, on the other hand, who are not righteous in the true sense of the word, as I have just now defined it, but who think that they are so, and persuade themselves that, if not absolutely per-

fection, they are still, on the whole, most amiable, most kind, most unexceptionable characters. But these parties have lowered the law to suit themselves, instead of lifting themselves to suit God's holy law. In other words, the life of such men is not conformity to the law, but it is the law's conformity to them. They have diluted the exactions of God's law, they have reduced its demands to the very minimum; and when they have done so, and rendered a sort of imperfect obedience to a law that they have lowered to their own temperature, then they say—and they say it with great plausibility—We are righteous. They have made the law to their own taste, and they have obeyed the law they have made; but they must recollect—and it is my duty to tell them—that their idea is a dream; that the law remains in its unbending greatness, in its undiluted exactions; and that at this day, as in Paradise itself, it is still the law, undiluted, uncompromising, unaltered in the very least degree—perfect holiness; “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength.” If I address such, you have placed yourself in the company of the righteous, where you really ought not to be, and you have lost the advantage of being in the company of sinners, where you ought to be, and where mercy could have reached you; and the result is that, presenting yourself at God's judgment bar, you will be tried by a perfect law, and condemned by the law; you have lost the benefit of being forgiven through the gospel, and, seeming righteous, you are self-deceived, and lost, and ruined sinners.

But again; there are they who number themselves among the righteous on the ground of ceremonial conformity to the ceremonies of a system to which they

may have attached themselves. It is too true, that many think ceremonial exactness a reason for moral laxity; and wherever there is a church whose ceremonies are extremely multiplied, there it is not only the tendency, but there is the historical fact, that rigid compliance with the form is made practically, if not openly, a substitute for true conformity to God's law. Obedience to the church takes the place of obedience to Christ;—"Hear the Church" is twenty times uttered by the preacher for once that he says, "Hear Christ;" the prescription of the minister takes the place of the precepts of God. Pater Nosters, Ave Marias, anointings, absolutions, and priestly satisfactions and indulgences, are all most rigidly complied with—thoroughly exhausted—and the man dies, believing that he is truly righteous because he is ceremonially clean. Alas, alas! it is not in all the waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, to cleanse the soul; all anointings of the body will not do for the unction of the Holy One; no baptism with water can ever be a substitute for baptism with the Holy Ghost; no forgiveness by a pretending priest ever will be recognised in heaven for the forgiveness that God only is able, and—oh, blessed truth!—ever willing and ever ready to bestow.

Then in the last place, among those that are righteous there are they who think themselves on the whole good enough, and that God will accept a sincere, though it be an imperfect obedience. They think if they are perfectly sincere that this is all that can be expected. Sincerity in any cause, or sincerity in any religion, makes us respect the individual, whatever the religion may be. I respect a sincere Roman Catholic. I will not indulge in contempt—for one should have a con-

tempt for no man,—but I have the lowest possible opinion of an inconsistent Protestant, of an insincere Protestant. If a man be sincere in his attachment to his creed, I respect him for his sincerity, I pity him for his creed if it be a wrong one; but if he be insincere in his attachment to a creed, and cleave to it only because it leads to selfish advantages, then that man is guilty in the sight of God, and will be despised by right thinking and honourable men. Sincerity does not consecrate error; and though you be sincere in your obedience, if that obedience be not what God demands, then by deeds of law, however sincerely done, you never can be justified in the sight of a holy God. It is just as true in 1854 as it was 6,000 years ago; man must present at God's judgment-seat a perfect righteousness, or he never can be admitted into heaven. But what is the difference, then? you say. I answer, Adam had to perform a righteousness in the position in which he was placed; he tried it, and he failed and fell: but in our case, we have not to perform a righteousness by which we are justified, but to accept a righteousness performed for us; and in it and by it, and for its sake, to be justified and accepted in the sight of God. In other words, Adam was placed in a condition in which he was to be justified by deeds of law, or by obeying the requirements of God's law; we are placed in a condition in which we neither can attempt it, nor can we be justified by deeds of law, but in a state in which we are justified; and, in the language of an Article of the Church of England, "we are accounted righteous before God only for the righteousness of Christ Jesus, received by faith alone,"—he was made sin for me, I am made righteousness by him. My sin was laid upon him, and

he suffered for it; his righteousness is laid upon me, and I am saved by it. There was nothing in Jesus sinful when he died upon the cross,—there will be nothing in me perfectly holy when I am admitted to wear the crown. When Jesus died he did nothing to deserve death; when I shall be saved I shall have done nothing that will deserve heaven. He suffered because of sins that were not his own; I shall be saved because of a righteousness that is not my own. My sins were laid upon that spotless Lamb—the tainted fleece upon the spotless One; his righteousness is laid upon me—the spotless fleece upon the stray and the lost sheep, brought back again to the fold, and made one with Him.

Jesus came, then, not to save the righteous, but he came to save sinners. We have thus seen, that every form of existing righteousness which we have tried to examine is no righteousness at all. We must, therefore, come to the conclusion, that there are none but sinners upon the earth. There are no righteous ones, strictly so called; there are many righteous ones, pretending to be so, who are not so, and who ought to be undeceived.

But there are sinners—great sinners, the chiefest of sinners,—and Christ has come, we are told, not to call the righteous, if they be so; but this is his mission, this is the very purpose for which he came down to earth from heaven—to seek and to save the very chiefest of sinners. Now, what has he done? He has made a provision, by his atonement, which opens the gate of heaven to all. “When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.” The kingdom of heaven is

now open; and the provision that Jesus has made upon the cross exhibits the fixity of God's law. God would save a world—he would save sinners—but he would not break his holy law to save a whole world. But this provision exhibits God as just, as holy, in pardoning me, a sinner, as he ever was in punishing, in his own place, Judas, an unbelieving and a hardened transgressor. God is not more just when he punishes a criminal that rejects the Gospel, in hell, than he is when he justifies a sinner that believes on Jesus, and admits him to everlasting happiness. And the atonement is meant to show forth God to be just, and to continue just, and be visibly and demonstrably just, whilst at the same time he does what, according to his law, he otherwise could not—justifies every sinner that believes on Jesus. And this provision that Christ has made by his cross is so effectual, that if one human being that hears of it now is lost, it is not because the road is too steep, or the gate too narrow, or the provision not sufficient, but because he will not believe, accept, and be saved by it. Every lost soul, I have often told you, was not slain—he is a suicide; hell is filled with them that have ruined themselves—nobody else is there. There is not one lost spirit that will ever feel, or that ever has felt, “God's decree sent me here;” but every lost spirit feels this, as the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched, “I am here just because I would not be at the trouble to accept God's offer of eternal life.” That is the only reason, and no other. But then, why is it that, in the language of our blessed Lord, so many walk in the broad way that leads to destruction, and so few adopt and accept the narrow way that leads to everlasting life? I have heard some

say, "You believe in the doctrine of election, you believe that only the elect will be saved: then if I am not elect, of course I shall not be saved; if I am elect, I am certain to be saved; then what is the use of troubling myself about it?" Now, my reply to that is this: The same book that tells you of the doctrine of election, tells you of a Saviour also; and if you believe in election on the strength of that book, why do you not believe in freedom of access to the Saviour, which is equally and oftener asserted in that same blessed book? If you will read in one page, "No man can come to me, except the Father, who has sent me, draw him," why do not you open your eyes, and read upon the other page, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have everlasting life?" But, perhaps, you fear that you are not elected, and that therefore you cannot believe. Many a one has been found to say, "Alas! I am not elected, and therefore I cannot believe." But the answer to that is, You cannot believe, because you thus reason about election. It is not God's decree that prevents your coming to Christ; but it is your foolish reasoning about that decree that stands in the way of your coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact is, if you should believe yourself to be one of the elect, I should say, You are not one of the people that Christ came to save; he did not come to save the elect, or the unelect; but he came to seek and to save sinners. And if you can prove yourself or place yourself anywhere except in the lowly category and company of sinners, you place yourself out of that spot on which the dew of forgiving mercy descends as upon the fleece of Gideon, and you deliberately exclude yourself from the reach of God's pardoning grace.

Remember, you must go to Jesus, not as an elect sinner, or a predestinated sinner, but you must go to Jesus simply as you are—a sinner, if you like; the chiefest of sinners, if you like; a miserable sinner, if you like; but a sinner, in order that you may be saved. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save sinners simply as such; not Churchmen—he did not come to save them; not Dissenters—he did not come to save them; not Presbyterians, not Episcopalians, of the strictest sect in either case, for they both have their Puseyism; but he came to save sinners, in spite of the shortcomings, the defects, and the errors of both; not the righteous, but sinners, Jesus came to call to repentance.

Having disposed of that, let me now notice another difficulty that sometimes springs up in religious minds. This, they say, may be very true; but then, does he save sinners—great sinners—men that are inveterate in sin; who have lived forty, fifty, sixty years without God and without Christ in the world? Will he take the dregs of life? Will he take us just as we are? Have we no penance to do, no preparatory process to go through, no washing seven times in the Jordan first—nothing to do, nothing to pay, no time to wait; just as we are—may we come thus, in this condition, to a holy, holy, holy Saviour, Jesus Christ? I answer, The worse you are, the more need you have. If a man is in the last stage of disease, he does not say, “I am so bad that I had better leave myself to be cured by myself;” but he says, “The worse I am, the more I have need of a physician.” And the patient is healed, not by feeling his pulse, but by taking his physician’s prescription. A sinner is saved, not by meditating upon his sinful condition, but by looking to Jesus, the

Lamb of God, and by resting upon him for pardon, and for forgiveness. If you remain as you are, it is quite certain that you cannot be saved; if you go to Christ Jesus, you may be saved; you cannot be worse than you are, you may be better than you are. And I tell you, on his own authority, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." If Christ be a physician, then it is patients that he came to cure; if Christ be a Saviour, it is sinners that he came to save. He nowhere specifies that it is sinners only of a certain degree that he came to save. If you say at forty years of age, "I need not think about religion till I am seventy," that is the most hardening process you can possibly pass through; if you say, "I am a young man, and I need not think about my soul till a death-bed come," that is of all resolutions the most depraved; but if I find you now an old man, the heart, like a muffled drum, beating its few last steps in the final march to the grave, one step in it, and the other step out—for you now, without money, without price, without waiting, without process, there is instant pardon, instant peace, if you will just look to Jesus, who came to save the chiefest of sinners. When you say, But did he come to save me? my answer is, Why not you? Is there anything that excludes you? Has any heavenly revelation been made to you that tells you that you were never meant to be saved? Have you heard any decree that damns you for ever? You know that there is no such thing. Then why not you? If you feel that you are a sinner, you may that moment believe there is a Saviour for you. The Israelite in the desert, who was dying of the poison of the serpent's sting, what did Moses say to him?—"Look at

the brazen serpent on the pole;" and the moment that the dying Israelite looked at it, by God's ordinance he was set upon his feet again, and was strong and well. Now, it is not I who apply the illustration, but Jesus himself applies it, when he says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that whosoever looked on him was healed, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him may not perish." Thus it is not my application, but Christ's application of it; therefore I infer, upon Christ's own authority, that it would take no more time for a sinner to be saved than it took for the dying Israelite to be healed. A look in the desert at the brazen serpent was instant restoration to health; a look now at Christ, as set forth by God to be the propitiation for your sins, that is instant pardon. And if you have this trust, this belief, this confidence, go out rejoicing in the possession of perfect peace. How long did it take the jailor of Philippi—one of the most abandoned criminals that ever had charge of a gaol—to be saved? He came in trembling, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Now, what was their answer? They did not say as modern priests would, "Kneel down, and confess to me your sins, that I may absolve you;" they did not bid him go and do penance, as some Protestant ministers still say; but they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," look at Christ as the Israelite looked at the brazen serpent, "and thou shalt be saved." And what is added? The jailor believed, was baptized, and he and all his house rejoiced. In ten minutes he was a happy man, a pardoned sinner. And why not you? Are you worse? Has the truth parted with its powers? Has God ceased to be gracious? Is his arm shortened, that it cannot save?

God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and the glory of Protestant Christianity—that which makes it joy to preach it, and joy to hear it—is, that there is nothing between the greatest sinner and God, the Sin-Forgiver, but his reluctance to go to him, and be pardoned, and justified, and forgiven; for Christ is come to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

But, my dear friends, the only thing I can conceive of at all to enable you to do—or I will not use that word, lest it should be mistaken—to believe, is the deep conviction that you are in danger. If you do not think that there is anything the matter with you, you never would think of applying to a physician: if I am well, I would never go to a physician to ask his advice; I must feel that I am ill, or, if I do not feel it—and the worst diseases, it is said by physicians, are often the least felt—some one must convince me on good grounds that I am ill, or I should never think of consulting a medical man. And so, my dear friends, if you do not feel your sinfulness, you will never seek a Saviour; and if you do not feel that sin leads to everlasting ruin, you will not think it worth while to take the trouble of going to an everlasting and glorified Saviour. The fact is, if you think that sin is merely a little temporary inconvenience, or, as Emerson, and Carlyle, and others of that school, I fear, think, that sin is only a sort of imperfect or blighted virtue,—if that is your idea, of course let it remain, and no doubt it will blossom into virtue. But all history is against this supposition. We do not find that vices blossom into virtues; we do not find tares transformed into wheat. It may be very fine rationalism, but it is not history, fact, or Christianity. We believe sin to be essentially a poison—a

poison that carries the individual that is its subject to irretrievable and hopeless perdition. Now, the great conviction that must be driven home to every one to induce him to seek pardon is, that your sin is not only inconveniencing you, but that it is that which will prove your everlasting ruin, unless you be delivered from it. It is at this point that the Universalists leave us. Their idea is, that sin does not end in everlasting ruin, and that our fears that it will do so, are merely nervous disquiet; and that our teaching that it does so, is merely to keep men in order. They do not think that sin is so dangerous, they do not think that it is associated with eternal woe; and therefore there cannot be in their preaching great urgency to men to flee to a Saviour. And secondly, at this point the Socinian also leaves us. He believes that man's sins are so venial, that God may connive at them, or at least that he can forgive them without an atonement; and that the law is so accommodating, that as we cannot go up to it, it will come down to us; and therefore they cannot preach the urgency of instant recourse to a Saviour. But convince the Socinian that the least sin carries in its bosom everlasting ruin, and he will soon infer, Therefore there must be a Divine Atonement; therefore there must be a Divine Being to make it; therefore I must lean, not upon an arm of flesh, but upon the arm of the living God.

It is at this point, too, that the profane world will leave us. They will mock at such statements, they will despise these threatenings, they will pour contempt upon them. And here, too, the very decent, the very respectable, the very decorous, will leave us. The most polished, the most refined, the most elegant

will say, That preaching is too shocking—the idea of people going to hell! It is too shocking to be spoken of. It cannot be a true religion, that cannot be faithful preaching, that frightens people with such statements as that; and therefore we do not believe it. It is too severe, too rigid, too strict a Christianity; we should like something more gentle, a sweeter song, something more palatable; we want something joyous—we do not want to hear such preaching as that.

My dear friends, it is not what it is, but is it true? Is it true that the wages of sin is death? Is it true, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the law, to do them?” Is it true, “Tribulation, anguish, and wrath upon every man that doeth evil?” Is it true, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire?” If I preach that as the only thing I have to teach you, you would be quite right to go where you will be better taught; but I tell you of your peril that you may escape from it; and I tell you of your disease, not to torment you, but to lead you to the Physician that can heal you. I tell you what sin is, and what sin will lead to, in order to carry you to Him who waits more willingly for you to come than ever you can desire to go. And therefore the preaching that seems so shocking may seem so in its profile—in its first aspect—but if heard as a whole, it will be the good news that rings like sweet music from the skies, “Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.” And if they are not forgiven thee, it is not because Christ cannot, or Christ will not, but because you will not go to him, that you may have life.

We bless God, then, that Christ thus came into the world to save sinners. And if sin be not an evil of

the greatest magnitude, if sin be not a load that sinks the soul to hell, then Christ threw away his life to no purpose. I say, if sin be anything less than an evil which ruins the soul for ever, then Calvary was not required, and Jesus Christ threw away his life; it was not necessary that he should die.

It is said, that by the shadow projected from the Pyramids you may estimate their magnificent height. By Christ's death and Christ's sacrifice you may estimate what sin is; and by what sin is you may estimate the depth, and length; and breadth of that atonement through which you may be forgiven. You may depend upon it, it was an infinite evil that demanded such an infinite sacrifice; and if sin could have been otherwise forgiven, and sinners saved at a less expense, Jesus had not so suffered, the Bible had not so recorded it.

NOTE.—“Below this, is the utterly profane state, in which there is no contrast, no contradiction felt, between the holy and the unholy, between God and man. Above it, is the state of grace, in which the contradiction is felt, the deep gulf perceived which divides between sinful man and an holy God; yet it is felt that this gulf is bridged over—that it is possible for the two to meet—that in One who is sharer with both they have already been brought together.”—(Trench on the Miracles, p. 132.) The same writer remarks of the miracle itself, “Christ here appears as the ideal man, the second Adam of the eighth Psalm: ‘Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.’”

CHAPTER VI.

EATING CORN ON THE SABBATH—CHRIST VINDICATES THE DISCIPLES—
A MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND—CARPING SCRIBES MAD AT JESUS
—JESUS MAN AS TRULY AS GOD—SELECTION OF APOSTLES—DISCOURSE
ON THE MOUNT—INSPIRATION AND STYLE—SPEAKING WELL OF
MIRACLES—LAW-SUITS.

WE find, in the opening part of the chapter, a rebuke addressed to those who attached a superstitious and not a spiritual veneration to the Sabbath, by Him who is also, as he tells us here, the "Lord of the Sabbath." It appears that the disciples went through the corn-fields, and, famished with hunger, having had little to eat, and that little not of the best kind, they ate of the growing corn, rubbing the corn in their hands, and appeasing their hunger with this not very luxurious repast. The Pharisees, who devoured widows' houses, who made broad their phylacteries and exacted homage, who preferred ceremony to sacrifice, and typical rites to whatsoever things are just, and true, and lovely, and of good report—that is, of real and everlasting excellence—these Pharisees murmured, saying, "Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days?" Now, we have in this very fact a striking proof of what has always been the case. Where men are excessively attached to the ceremonials of religion, they are found very often—not always—very lax in their observance of the morality of religion. The tendency of the human heart is to make ceremony take the place of morality,

and to fancy that a rigid adherence to the one is a sufficient compensation, or atonement, for a very lax observance of the other. The Pharisees murmured. They were most strict in their observance of the lighter matters of the law; but lax in their observance of those weightier matters of the law, which alone are beautiful in the sight of God, and of value to mankind; and the observance of which is the end of the ceremony; not the ceremony a substitute for them, or a compensation for the neglect and non-observance of it.

These Pharisees therefore, seeing a favourite ceremony violated, as they thought, were furious. If they had seen a moral law trodden under foot, they would have looked upon it with great indulgence or complacency. They therefore said, "Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days?" Then Jesus answered them, "Have you not heard of that remarkable case, that David, when he was hungry, ate even of the showbread"—that is, the consecrated bread, or, as we should say, the sacramental bread, that remained in the temple upon the table that was before the mercy-seat and the holy of holies—"David, when he was hungry, ate of that." Well, what does that prove? That, what seems to be a breach of the Sabbath is not always a breach of the Sabbath. All works of necessity and of mercy are excepted: and whatever one can show to be mercy to the poor, or necessity in his own case, provided it be not otherwise sinful, he is justified in doing though it be on the Sabbath day; because mercy is greater than sacrifice, and morality is higher than ceremonial observance. Our Lord thus shows that if there be an extreme in society who would desecrate the Sabbath, there is an opposite extreme who would idolize the Sabbath.

The Sabbath must not be placed in the room of other duties of the law. The observance of the Sabbath is no reason for neglecting those equally obligatory duties that devolve upon us in the providence of God, or neglecting that mercy which, both upon the Sabbath day and upon all days, we ought to exercise towards each other in cases of sorrow or suffering. And he states, that he himself was competent to decide what the Sabbath was, and what its duties are, for he is Lord of the Sabbath.

After this he entered into the synagogue, and there happened to be there, in the providence of God, a man who had a withered hand. "The scribes and the Pharisees watched him." That would seem to show that they knew that wherever there was suffering to be relieved, there Jesus would be found ready to give succour; and seeing a man with a withered hand draw near to Jesus in the temple, and well knowing that he was ever ready to help them that were truly needful of that help, they watched him to see whether he would heal this man on the Sabbath day—not that they might glorify God, or see in him the credentials of his holy mission; but for the malignant and wicked end "that they might find an accusation against him." "But," it is added, "he knew their thoughts." He is the searcher of hearts: "Thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my rising up and my sitting down:" and he that was Lord of the Sabbath shows by this single allusion that he was also the searcher of the human heart—"He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand"—just as if they had no thoughts upon the subject at all—"Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth." We have here a striking

proof that we are not to neglect duty because it may be misconstrued ; but we are to do what is right, whatever be the thoughts of men that are around us : we have only to do with our duty in the sight of God ; we have nothing to do, at least as far as that duty is concerned, with the misrepresentations and misapprehensions of men. He regarded their thoughts as if they had no such thoughts, and proceeded to heal the man with the withered hand ; doing what was right, and leaving all mankind to justify him, or the reverse. “Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing ; Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good”—that you must admit—“or to do evil?”—that, of course, you will deny. “Is it lawful to save life”—that, of course, you will not dispute—“or is it lawful to destroy it?”—that, of course, you will deny also. Well, then, if it be never lawful to destroy life, nor to do evil—and to do evil is to omit an opportunity of doing good—then why must I be prevented from doing good because it happens to be the Sabbath day ? “And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so : and his hand was restored whole as the other.” And therefore, on the Sabbath day, you are bound to attend to the ordinary claims of nature ; if you meet the poor and the destitute on your way, you are bound to administer to his wants ; if you know of a friend or a relative on a sick-bed, go and sympathise with him ; if you know an opportunity of doing substantial good, it is your duty to do it ; and, instead of being inconsistent with the sacredness of the Sabbath, it is the very first duty that you owe to the Lord of the Sabbath, who loveth mercy rather than sacrifice. Whatever, then, can be shown to be a work of necessity must

be done ; or a message of mercy, it ought to be said ; and to urge, It is the Sabbath day, is no excuse for neglecting the one, or being silent about the other.

But mark, now, how they felt—" And they were filled with madness." Now, is not this very strange ? They venerated the Sabbath, they worshipped on the Sabbath, they attended to their physical wants on the Sabbath ; and yet when Jesus did good, which was in perfect harmony, we are told that "they were filled with madness." How greatly corrupted must human nature be. Here was a miracle that proved the presence of divinity, and human nature would not listen to it ; here was a miracle of such beneficence and power that they ought to have exclaimed, unanimously—"This is the saving power of God !" and yet they were filled with madness—madness because he had shown he was God ; because he had, according to their ideas, desecrated their Pharisaic Sabbath ; madness because he had justified his claims to be the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.

"It came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." This means that he continued in prayer all night ; but some think that the proper idea is, that he continued in a place of prayer all night ; but surely the interpretation is perfectly reasonable, and according to what we should conceive of our blessed Lord, that he continued all night in prayer. The mere Unitarian, who denies the deity of Jesus, will ask you as he reads such a text as this—Why did Jesus pray to God, if he was God ? I would just ask him another question—Why did Jesus eat ? why did he sleep ? why was he weary ? why did he lie down ? why did he rest ? The

fact that he ate, that he slept, that he lay down, that he wept, that he was weary, is the evidence that he was man ; and the fact that he prayed, is the evidence that he was a creature. We never deny that Jesus was man. When the Unitarian asks us—How can you reconcile this? We answer—Everything that man is, everything that man does, sin excepted, Jesus was, and Jesus did ; and if Jesus had not prayed, if he had not wept, and been weary, and lain down, and slept, he would be God ; but there would be wanting the strongest evidence that he was man. My dear friends, it is as precious a truth to us that Jesus was man, as it is that Jesus was God. As he is God, he is able to save me ; but as he was man he can enter into all my sorrows, and sympathise with me in all my sufferings, for he has entered into all the intricacies of human nature : he knoweth our frame. He is the Great High Priest, able to succour them that are tempted ; because he himself was tempted also. And it is a very singular fact, in reference to this subject, that when the Unitarian speaks against the deity of Christ, as if not clearly taught, he forgets that the great object of the Gospel was to prove that Christ was man. In the days of our Lord, none who knew what the Messiah was, doubted that he was God ; the great doubt was, Is he man? They had no doubt that he was God ; but their great difficulty was, Is he man? And therefore the Gospel was to show that the Word was made flesh, that God was manifest in the flesh, and that we beheld his glory as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth. It is quite as essential that Jesus should have been man, as that Jesus should have been God ; and we say to the Unitarian at once, Every text you quote, from the com-

mencement of Matthew to the end of the Apocalypse, that ascribes a human nature to Jesus, we set our seal to, and subscribe to as most true. But then, we ask you not to stop with the examination of those texts ; but begin again at Matthew and go on to the Apocalypse, and you will find texts as decided as clear that Jesus was God. And we ask you on the same authority on which you uphold his manhood to uphold his deity, and to believe that he was also very God, whom angels worship, and in whom all believing men put their confidence and eternal trust.

We next read of his selection of the Apostles, who are here named—Simon, and Andrew, and James, and John, and the others. The word “apostle” means, a person sent, that is all ; and these twelve persons he sent out to preach the truth, and therefore he called them “sent persons,” or, as we call them, apostles.

We then read of the discourse that he preached on this occasion. There has been a great difficulty as to whether this be the same as Matt. v. I think it is. It does not say that he preached this sermon in the plain ; but it states in the 17th verse—“And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases ; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits : and they were healed.” Then, after that, it says, “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said.” But, in the interval that elapsed between these two events, he may have stationed himself, as was his wont, upon the mountain side ; and from that mountain pulpit he may have preached that beautiful discourse

that is here given. But you naturally observe, that this cannot be the same discourse as that given in Matthew, because the expressions that are used in this chapter are considerably different. But Matthew may have given what are called the *ipsissima verba*—the exact words of Jesus; and Luke may have been equally inspired by the Holy Ghost to record what Jesus said, if not always in the very words, yet always the substance, the thought, the idea. Now, that which is real and lasting is the idea. The language is no more to an idea than clothing is to the human body; the clothing may vary in its colour or its shape, but the wearer is the same; so the phraseology may vary, but the idea is the same. I may take a text, and preach from that text three or four times in succession, and I will state to you almost the very same ideas, and yet I will clothe them on each occasion in different language; the discourse is the same, the drapery is varied, and that is all the difference. So our blessed Lord spoke the discourse recorded in Matt. v. Matthew's may be the very words; they look as if they were the exact echo of the utterance of Jesus. Then what Luke has given may be the very thoughts, but not the very words; and the same Holy Spirit who inspired Matthew to record the *ipsissima verba*, inspired Luke to give the substance, or an epitome of the discourse, without giving the very words in which that discourse was preached. And besides, you know quite well—and this is one of the proofs of the reality, the authenticity, and the genuineness of this gospel—if you were to hear one preach, and if twenty hearers were each to give separately, and from recollection, an account of what he said, one would give one thought that struck him most

forcibly, another would give another thought that struck him most forcibly ; but each would give a very fair *résumé* of what the preacher said, though it would be found that one would make prominent one point, and another would make prominent another point, and each would clothe these thoughts, not in the very words that the preacher used, but in what seemed to him to be best suited for the idea, and to make it clearest to his own and to another's mind. When God raised up apostles and evangelists, he did not make insensible machines of them, but he made inspired men of them—he enabled them to record the ideas that they heard in the words that seemed to them best ; and yet those apostles were so guided and inspired, by the Holy Spirit of God, that they have conveyed in the best formulas the truths of heaven ; and these formulas are, however varied, always the inspiration and teaching of the Holy Spirit of God. Now, instead of this being an argument against the inspiration of the Scriptures, it is in favour of it. God does not destroy in the apostles and evangelists their idiosyncrasy, but he so inspires each apostle's idiosyncrasy that each in his own way, but all guided by the same Spirit, records the wonderful works in the wonderful words of God himself. Nobody that reads the New Testament can hesitate to say that the elegant and beautiful style of Luke, in the opening of his Gospel, is as different as possible from the rude, rugged, Hebraistic Greek of St. Matthew ; no one can fail to see that the gushing oratory of Paul is perfectly distinct from the plain matter-of-fact and sententious statements of James. You can see at once that the gentle and affectionate John writes in a way totally different from Peter. And yet each writer was so guided by the Holy Spirit of

God, that while the writer was not destroyed or extinguished as an individual, he was guided and inspired by the same Holy Spirit as an evangelist, or an apostle. The Spirit made use of John's style, and Peter's style, and James's style, and Luke's style, and Matthew's style, and made each and all the combined harmony of truth, and the vehicles of instruction to the ignorant of mankind.

Thus, when we look at this discourse here preached, we find it very different in words, but the sense you will find is the same. . "Blessed be ye poor : for yours is the kingdom of heaven." Well, that is almost exactly the same, only in Matthew it is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" and it evidently means here, "Blessed are ye poor;" in a moral sense : because a poor man, simply as such, is no nearer heaven than a rich man. Poverty and riches are merely the circumstantials ; there may be a bad man under a ragged coat, and there may be a saint under the imperial purple. Mere poverty is not a passport to heaven ; mere wealth is not an absolute barrier to heaven. It is plain, therefore, that this poverty is that of those who are poor in spirit, or spiritually poor.

"Blessed are ye that hunger now." In Matthew it is, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." And so again, "Blessed are ye that weep now : for ye shall laugh." It is in Matthew, "Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted." Again, "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. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy : for, behold, your

reward is great in heaven." In proportion as moral character becomes clear, definite, sharply defined, in the same proportion will the world hate it, and therefore such persons so persecuted give evidence of their belonging to the kingdom of heaven. "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger"—that is, they who are rich and increased in goods, and want nothing, that is the worst condition or crime of all.

"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" What a solemn rebuke is that to the aspirant for earthly honours. It is often humbling to see man clutching at such trifles. I always regard it, when a minister of the Gospel preaches faithfully, as one of the signs that he does so, that some persons speak ill of him. It is a bad sign if everybody should go away pleased—the worldly, the sensual, the learned, the tasteful—if they should all go away pleased, it would be a very equivocal sign indeed; but when they speak ill of him—when they say, "That offends good taste; that is contrary to our feelings; that is a very rigid religion; that is a very severe doctrine; we do not like that; we like smooth things; peace, peace;" then that is a sign that he is only doing what becomes him to do—speaking the whole truth. And yet it is desirable that everybody should speak well of one. I should like that every man living should speak well of me, and none speak ill of me; but then, if I heard around me the voice of flattery and praise, I should begin to examine my conscience, my religion, my preaching, my living, and to feel that there must be something wrong to provoke the applause and the *éclat* of the mass of mankind.

He then bids us love our enemies—"Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other ; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also." This, of course, requires to be received with some reservation ; it is to be taken in such a sense as this—"Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." That does not mean that men are not to work for their bread ; but it means that they are not so to work for the meat that perisheth that they lose all thoughts about the bread that endureth to life everlasting. So here, if a robber meet you in the streets, and if he take your great-coat, or your upper-coat, surely it would not be in the spirit of the Gospel if you were to give him your under coat also. What it means is, submit to very great inconvenience rather than go to law ; lose a little rather than lose the peace of your hearts. Our Lord, therefore, says to those who are in the habit of contumaciously wrestling and fighting about trifles—Do not quarrel ; pay with both hands rather than go to law. It is far cheaper to pay at first, than it is to go to law even when you are certain that you are right. Not that I think it is sinful to go to law. In heathen times, it was sinful for Christians to drag one another before a heathen judge ; but in our country judges are, some of them personally, all of them judicially, Christians. Our courts of law, at least constitutionally, are based upon Christian principles ; and I do not think there is any sin whatever in two persons that cannot agree about the settlement of something in dispute, applying to the Christian judge, and getting that judge's decision upon the question about which they are at issue.

CHAPTER VI. 47—49.

THE GREAT END—TWO PLANS—VARIOUS GROUNDS OF HOPE AND TRUST.

WE have here, in the last words of the chapter we have read, two most remarkable and expressive contrasts; the one being a foundation utterly opposed to the foundation of the other. But there are certain points in which the two parties agree, whilst in one most vital and material point they totally differ. Both felt the necessity of something beyond, or above, or superior to the earth, that should give them a refuge and a shelter while in it; and with this desire and feeling they resolved to raise—each for his shelter, his refuge, and retreat—a building, or house, into which the rains and the winds should not penetrate, and under whose hospitable roof-tree there should be a rest, and peace, and quiet, as they expected, for many days to come. Both felt that something else was needed beyond what nature, or God in nature, had given them; both, therefore, began to build an edifice; both engaged in the same work,—the remedy they contemplated was the same,—the end they had in view was the same,—the means they adopted to obtain that end were substantially the same; both prosecuted their plans, both succeeded in bringing their work to a conclusion, and both saw the houses built, the roof on, and all the

requisites of comfort and happiness and rest for many years satisfactorily provided for them.

But each work, we learn from this part of our Lord's parable, had to be submitted to an ordeal. Winds were to blow in the future, as they had blown in the past,—the rains were to descend, and the mountain torrents to rush past the foundations of both buildings; and then would be seen which of the two buildings was founded upon a rock, and which was founded only on the sand. But up to this point, you will observe that both were perfectly the same. Each was equally confident that he was safe, and each looked forward to the coming year with perfect certainty, or at least with a reasonable expectation that nothing would materially or vitally injure his erection.

But amid all this certainty, there was in the edifice of the one that which was an element of perpetuity, and at the very foundation of the edifice of the other—invisible, it might be, to the outward eye—were all the elements of ruin and of decay. One builder was quite satisfied to build upon the surface of the earth, supposing thoughtlessly that no storm would overtake him, and no torrent rush past him, adequate the one to overturn it, or the other to undermine it; but the other builder had a presentiment of coming ordeal that would put to the test the strongest structures in the earth, and, in the well-founded belief that heavy winds would blow, and deep and violent currents would set past him, dug downwards in the earth till he found the solid and the everlasting rock, and built his house upon that rock, and then quietly waited all that was to come.

Now these two persons are two types of different

Christian characters. One builds upon what is the nearest, and to him a plausible enough foundation, but utterly insufficient, because he has no adequate apprehension of the ordeal of the judgment-day; he has no clear conviction of the exactions of the law,—no just view of the holiness, the justice, and the faithfulness of God; and, thinking that he is to deal with a judgment that will connive at much that is evil, and that he is to meet a God who is very much like himself, and will overlook much that is sinful, whilst he will take large notice of much that is supposed good,—thinking in this way, he was quite sure that a very slight foundation would be quite sufficient to bear the stress and the pressure of a very slight ordeal through which he had to pass. But the other feels that he has to meet a God whose hand “will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;” he feels and knows that he must present at the judgment-day a righteousness perfect, spotless, without blemish, made over to him; and that therefore, unless he lays the stress of his hopes and his prospects upon something that will stand, his superstructure, however fair it may look in the sunshine, or however plausible it may seem to the uninstructed eye, will inevitably at that day, and subjected to that great ordeal, become one mighty mass of ruin. The former, having no just apprehension of God’s law, of God’s character, of a judgment-seat, of the nature of the Saviour, lays a foundation correspondingly: the other, having a just apprehension of what God is, what God demands, what his law requires, seeks out and happily settles on a foundation which, on good authority and from the best of information, he knows to be adequate to bear the

superstructure that will be built upon it, in all states of weather—in sunshine or in storm, in summer or in winter. The one building looked as beautiful as the other while the sunbeams shone upon them: it was only when the winds began to beat, and the rains to descend, and the mountain torrents to rush past, that the one, however beautiful its architecture, however exquisite its symmetry, fell down; and the other, however plain its superstructure and unartistic its decorations, however unlikely to stand to the eye of the gazer, remained for this reason only—that it was founded upon a rock.

Every one of us is building for a world to come. We all, more or less keenly, gaze into the future—we all are anxious to decipher it—we are all making, some a more slender, others a more solid and a more solemn, preparation for what awaits us in that future. Each man is a builder upon something—every man is making some preparation for futurity: it depends upon the nature of the foundation on which he builds, what shall be the issue, ruin or restoration,—whether he shall appear in the general assembly of the firstborn, or be among them to whom Christ will say, “Depart from me: I never knew you.”

Let us inquire what are some of the false, but plausible grounds, on which men build. Some are building their hopes, their prospects, their certainty and their assurance of future happiness, upon what they have done and what they are. They do not see that the law demands an infinite obedience; and therefore they are satisfied that the mutilated obedience they may be able to render is quite sufficient to cover all the demands and the exactions of the law. They do

not feel that one breach of God's law is in God's sight equivalent in principle to the breach of all; they do not feel that God will require at a judgment-seat of each and of all the same perfect, faultless, spotless righteousness that he required of Adam in Paradise before he fell; and not seeing this, they think that they are good enough to meet God's requirements, that they have a righteousness quite sufficient to stand the test of a judgment morn,—they believe that by deeds of law they will be justified,—they think their righteousness is good enough for God,—they hope that he will overlook defects, that he will magnify excellences, and thus that they shall be able, amid the glories of the blessed, not to give the undivided tribute of their praise unto the Lamb that redeemed them, but some portion of the mighty stream to their own excellence, their own worth, their own triumphs, their own strength, and their own right hand. My dear friends, it is written, "By deeds of law"—however excellent they may be—"no flesh can be justified." In other words, translated into the language of my text, "On a foundation laid by ourselves,—however plausible it may seem, however beautiful it may appear,—no superstructure that we can rear will ever be able to stand at that day."

But others, again, are building on their connexion with some Church or visible creed, and they say, "I must be right, for I am connected with an orthodox Church,—I have been properly baptized,—I am a communicant,—I attend every Sabbath twice a-day upon the worship of God,—and surely I am doing all that can fairly be required; and on this I will build my hopes and prospects of joy in the world to come." The answer to all this is, that nowhere in the Bible is it

stated that a Church is the foundation of our hopes; we are not to be saved in the name of a Church: it is no more saving to go to a church than it is to go to a theatre, however relatively different; because neither the one nor the other is ordained by God to be the way to heaven. It is not said that it is in the name of the Church that our sins are forgiven,—it is not said that the Church died for us; but it is said that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; and it is said that many will appear at that day, saying, “Lord, Lord, we have eaten in thy presence, and in thy name have done many wonderful works:” and he will say to those professors—loud, consistent professors, fair professors, seemingly as good and as excellent as the most sainted that live, “Depart.” They have this great defect, they want the real foundation, and they are building upon the shifting sand, instead of resting where the superstructure of a world’s hopes may repose in security—upon the Rock of Ages; and the whole superstructure, therefore, must necessarily fall. Whatever, in short, be the ground on which you build for heaven, except on that ground, it will fail you in that day. Let us ask ourselves, then, my dear friends, On what are we building? If we are looking, each of us, for happiness beyond the grave,—if we feel as we gaze into the future, when dust shall return to the dust, and the spirit goes to be dealt with by the God that gave it, that there is some reason why we expect to escape the condemnation of a broken law, and some ground on which we can stand and defy the wind, the rain, and the storm that will test every edifice, and put to the proof every superstructure, however beautiful and plausible in appearance, however

seemingly strong in structure,—What is that ground? Where is it? Will it stand? Are we sure it will stand? Is it the ground that God has chalked out? Is it the foundation that he has laid? If it be not, it matters not where it is, nor what it is, the superstructure will fall; the greater its height, the greater the crash,—the fairer the edifice, the sadder the sorrow to gaze on its inevitable ruin.

Where, then, is the foundation? We are told in very few but very decisive words by one who is said by some to have been himself the foundation, but who never knew it, or professed to be so, but, on the contrary, like a true apostle, points to him that is so. “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.” And you will notice here that Peter, so far from regarding himself as the foundation, seems apparently altogether ignorant that any such mighty position was ever attributed to him; and he does what is very inconsistent with the creed of those that profess to regard him as the foundation; for he says, “It is said in Scripture”—and the Scripture to which he refers is the book of the prophet Isaiah, where we read, “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious stone, a chief corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”

We have seen, then, that whatever be the foundation on which you raise the superstructure of your hopes,—be it the green grass, be it the sand, be it the earth, be it hill or valley,—it matters not; the superstructure must fall if it be raised on anything in the height or anything in the depth save that stone or rock that God himself has laid in Sion, upon which you are to build the superstructure of your hopes, as God builds the superstructure of living stones, perfectly satisfied that when the ordeal comes you shall not be confounded, the edifice shall not fall.

Now, how is this foundation, on which the house that will stand is built, described? It is said to be, first of all, “a tried stone.” What a beautiful epithet is that! It is not a stone on which the pressure is to be laid for the first time. We know that machinery is first tried or tested—it is then put to its proper use; and after it has thus been tested, they say that it is not an untried thing, that may fail on experiment, but it is a tried thing, on which we can calculate as able to stand the stress that is laid upon it. So this stone—this rock—that is laid, and on which the builder is to raise the superstructure of all his hopes, has been thoroughly tried. It was tried by God himself; he laid the pressure of a world’s transgressions on it; it descended to the grave, but it rose again, and is now at God’s right hand. It was tried by the envy of Satan; for Satan came to him, and searched him: and Jesus himself said that “he hath found nothing in me.” It has been tried by innumerable crowds of believers: no Christian ever rested for acquittal from the sentence of a law that he had broken—for justification in the sight of a God that he had offended—on Jesus Christ

alone, as all his salvation and all his desire, and yet was put to confusion. The foundation is strong; and the superstructure receives from the foundation a portion of its strength, its perpetuity, and its potency.

Thus, then, we build on a stone laid in Sion that has been tried. But it is not only a tried stone,—it is also called “a corner stone.” The corner stone still embraces the two sides of the building, and knits into one walls that are at right angles to each other. The corner stone was always regarded in ancient times as the guiding stone of the whole superstructure; it was also beautifully fashioned, and held to be the most valuable stone. Hence the expression occurs in the Psalms, “Ye corners of the people”—that is, Ye chiefs of the people. And Isaiah says, “I have cut off the corners of the people.” And in an Eastern divan, the corners are occupied by the chief or the most illustrious personages who are present. And when the Psalmist would describe the daughters of Israel as the most beautiful of all, he says that they are as corner stones. In the corner stone were laid up coins, and medals, and precious stones. So, then, Christ is all this to the believer—he is the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely; he is the sure foundation on which he leans; in him are all the treasures of God; and to a believer Jesus Christ is all—his wisdom, his righteousness, his sanctification, and his salvation.

But Isaiah, as quoted by Peter, calls him also a sure foundation. It is no vacillating or precarious support; it is not the sand that will waste by the wind or be washed away by the wave, but it is the rock that God selected, that God has laid, on which he that leans the hardest will have the greatest comfort in doing so,

and on which you may raise the loftiest superstructure of your nearest and your dearest hopes, and be perfectly satisfied that all will be preserved safe and sure against that day.

And also, says Isaiah, he is precious—a precious stone. Why, no wonder that he is called so: he is the only Being in the whole universe of God on whom a believer may lean with perfect security, and be never disappointed; and he is the only Being in the whole universe of God on whom any one may lean, and be accepted, justified, acquitted, and forgiven at that day. He is precious in the estimate of God—he is beyond all price to them that believe.

Have you, therefore, my dear friends, come to him? Do you build upon him? Is he your only foundation? Can you say, I dare not build a single hope or expectation upon anything I have suffered, upon anything I have done, upon my connexion with a Church, my participation of a sacrament: my only trust is in Christ, the Rock of Ages; and trusting in him, I know, as sure as that there is a God in heaven and a judgment-seat before me, that I shall never, never be confounded? All other foundations, however plausible, are but as the wasting sand; to build there is only to make the final desolation more bitter and intolerable; but this foundation has been built upon by prophets, by patriarchs, by apostles, by evangelists, by martyrs, by saints; and not one ever repented upon earth, or felt himself disappointed in heaven.

Let us then, my dear friends, build upon it—let us say what we feel, “I look for heaven only because Christ is my title; I look for pardon only because Christ died for me; I expect a weight of glory because he

deserved it for me. This is the only name I will plead—this the only righteousness I will put on—this the only foundation on which I will build—this the only object of my expectations and my hopes; and I am certain that he is able to keep what I have committed to him—what I have built upon him—till that day.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS FOR ALL—THE GOOD SOLDIER—HIS FAITH
—SOLDIERS ARE OFTEN THE VERY BEST CHRISTIANS—EXTRAMURAL
INTERMENTS—THE ONLY SON OF A WIDOW—RAISING OF DEAD SON
—THE SINNER WOMAN—SERMONS—DIFFICULTIES—SIN FORGIVEN.

THE truly beautiful chapter I have read is so full of instructive lessons and incidents, that it is almost impossible with anything like satisfaction to illustrate them in the course of a few desultory remarks.

The first incident that comes before us is, that "he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people." His religion was not like the ancient philosophy, esoteric, as it was called, meant for the audience of the few; it was a religion that was addressed to the multitude, and Jesus Christ preached, we are informed frequently, "in the audience of the people." It is said that after this a certain centurion—that is, a soldier—had a servant, whom he very much valued, and who "was sick and ready to die." When this soldier heard of Jesus, thinking himself not worthy to approach him, but supposing, rightly or wrongly, that the elders of the Jews—the leading representatives of the Sanhedrim in the nation—would be more acceptable to so great and illustrious a personage, he sent these elders to Jesus; and the very Jews, who rejected

Christ as the Messiah, were constrained to attest the character of this good soldier, and to say that he was worthy to receive the benefit that he asked ; and they gave proof of his worthiness,—“for he loveth our nation”—evidently he was a Gentile,—and, secondly, he has expended his money in building us a church, a proof that he not only loves us as a sister nation, but that he feels sympathy with us as a portion of the Israel and the Church of the living God. Now when he heard this appeal, accompanied with credentials or certificates so satisfactory as these, “Jesus,” it is said, “went with them.” But the centurion, hearing that he came, and still humble and lowly in his own estimation, and afraid to approach him, “sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.” What interesting and striking evidence of true Christian humility was here—humility that did not shrink from asking what it felt to be most needful, but asked in terms alike honouring to Jesus, and expressive of the humility of the military petitioner. He then said to Jesus, or rather sent to him, this illustration:—He not only asked the blessing, but he expressed his perfect confidence in Christ’s power to give it, by saying, “I also am a man set under authority”—that is, I am not commander-in-chief of the Roman army, but I am an officer occupying a lofty and responsible position in the army, having some above me, but having also others beneath me and obedient to me. I say to one soldier, or to one battalion, or to one company, “Go,” and instantly I am answered with all

the precision of military obedience—"he goeth;" I say "to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it:" military law, in ancient as in modern times, being prompt alike in the command that was issued, and in the obedience that was given to it. Now, what was the meaning of this? It was this—and, in understanding it, you will see the perfect faith that the centurion had in Jesus:—"Lord, just as the soldiers in my company are obedient to me, and execute my commands the instant that I give them, so, blessed Jesus"—as if he had said—"the winds and the waves, disease and health, all things in creation, all facts in Providence, all laws, all effects, are but thy soldiers and servants, obedient to thee. Speak to the wind, it will be hushed at thy holy fiat; touch the waves, they will recognise the tread of the great Sea Lord and Land Lord of the universe; speak only to the powers that are in my servant's body, and instantly they will become restorative. Command the disease to depart, and that disease will take flight and shrink from the presence of thee, to whom all things are possible, and in whose benevolence and in whose beneficence all things will be benevolently guided." Thus the centurion gave his illustration to Jesus, not as if he felt that Jesus needed information, but as if he could not help pouring out the fulness of his own heart, and showing how truly he had confidence in Christ's power to heal his sick servant.

Jesus instantly said, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." I have found outside the Church richer Christianity than within it; I have found in the camp a nobler Christian than in the cabinet; I have found a soldier far

above the Pharisee, the Sadducee, the Levite, and the priest, in true Christianity. And thus we see, what I had occasion to state before, that soldiers are not—as some good Christians seem to suppose—all reprobates in the pages of the New Testament. War is denounced as the offspring of evil passions; but a soldier is recognised as a necessity while this dispensation lasts. And we do see that it is possible for a holy heart to beat beneath a red coat; and you will find many times in the army—at least I have seen myself—more genuine Christianity, more simple-minded, straightforward specimens of what the Gospel can make man, than you will find in statesmen's cabinets, in lawyers' offices, in merchants' counting-houses, or in any section of society that I know. And I have noticed that when a soldier or a sailor becomes a Christian, he turns out one of the very choicest and noblest specimens of Christianity. Now this is a proof that the Holy Spirit has not cast off the soldier and the sailor: and what a pity it would be if it were so—that those to whom we must look for the defence of our land from the ruthless intruder that would invade it, and for the repelling of those that would destroy all that is beautiful, and spoil us of all that is precious, were none of them Christians! but how delightful is it to us that there are among them Christian men, that fear God as well as are loyal to their Queen, and are prepared to defend our country, not because it is rich, but because the Church of Christ in Great Britain's heart is the noblest thing that is in it, and the most worthy of the defence of the brave, and the devotedness of the good!

In this chapter we have another incident, scarcely less beautiful and interesting. "It came to pass the day

after, that he went into a city called Nain ; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people." It accidentally happened, as the world would say—though we have no belief in accidents at all, for I believe that the accidents of man are the missives of God, are nonentities—that “when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out.” The reason why he was carried out was this—that in ancient times, with all their faults, they were more civilized in one respect than we in modern times : we bury the dead among the living, and think it is a very beautiful, and holy, and right thing ; the ancient Jew and Gentile never buried the dead among the living, but always outside the walls of the city ; and thus showed that they were more sensible, and had far more respect for the health of the living, without in the least less reverence for the ashes of the sainted dead. And hence in those times the dead were carried outside the city. The origin, I believe, of the dead being buried within the city in modern times is a purely Roman Catholic one ; it is not a Protestant one. I know that it is very beautiful to see the green hillocks around the ancient church, or to read the monumental inscriptions that are upon the stones that rest over the ashes of the dead, or to think that the shadow of that spire goes round all the graves from sunrise to sunset every day ; and we thus come to associate a sort of sacredness with the ashes of the dead that are around the ancient, the venerable church of the parish : so far it seems very beautiful—it is, undoubtedly, very sentimental ; but then there are very hard and stern facts that tell us it is very injurious to the health and comfort of the living.

The origin of it was, that in Roman Catholic times they thought that the dead could be affected by the touch of the holy or the consecrated living: hence, in ancient Roman Catholic days, the man that had robbed widows' houses, who had amassed his fortune by plunder, it was thought that if he left plenty for the priest—or, as it was called, for the Church, which simply means for the priest—or for pious uses, as it is now called, which means simply for priestly purposes—he was buried after death very near what was then called most improperly “the altar;” and his dead dust resting close to the altar was thought to be a pretty strong guarantee that his polluted soul would be admitted to heaven, and be in happiness in the presence of God. Hence every one desired to be buried near the altar; those who could not pay so much, were laid near the church; and those that could not pay at all, were buried near those who were buried near the church. And thus the dead were buried in towns, and the health of the living was sacrificed to an absurd superstition. But in ancient times the dead were carried outside the city, and this explains why the dead man in the instance before us was carried out for interment.

There is something exquisitely touching in the words that follow. It is here as we sometimes find in the composition of music—a few notes strike with a beauty and a force with which all the composition does not: so occasionally in Scripture a single word is so suggestive, so touching, that it calls up a whole tragedy, and is in itself a history. It says, “the only son of his mother”—not the son, but the *only* son—“the only son of his mother.” And, as if to complete the greatness of the catastrophe, it adds, “she was a widow.”

And to show that this was a good woman, and he a good son, "much people of the city was with her"—following with tears in order to express and deplore a calamity they could not rectify or repair. Jesus "saw her"—how interesting! And do you think his sight is now darkened, or his arm now shortened? He sees and notices individual sorrow now, just as truly as he did then; and he relieves it now, as he relieved it then. When he saw her, it is said, "he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." That command addressed by me to a widow mourning over the loss of her only son, would be almost mockery; it would be absurd in me to say to a sorrowing mother—a sorrowing widow—"Weep not." She must weep; it is natural that she should weep. There is no virtue in stoicism,—there is no excellence in insensibility. Tears are human—often they are Christian—never are they forbidden. He said to that widow, "Weep not;" but he could say it, because what followed was to turn her weeping into joy, her tears into smiles: for he had no sooner said so than he added, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." There was the mandate of power. When an apostle did a miracle, he said, "In the name of Jesus, I say unto thee;" but when Jesus wrought a miracle, he said, "I say unto thee, Arise"—indicating that his power was the power of Deity, not a delegated prerogative, such as an apostle exercised. And the minute that the dead heard it, he sat up; and then it is added, in very touching words, "he delivered him to his mother." Now, if I or you had been writing this history, or any one of our gifted novelists, or historians, or orators, or poets, they would have given such a long, sentimental, and beautiful description of all that took place, that the reader

would have been enchanted by it; but the very artlessness of this tale is its exquisite force, reality, and sublimity. Why, it would take me an hour to exhaust all the thoughts that start into one's mind by that simple clause: he delivered the raised, the only son—the only son of his mother, and that mother a widow—he delivered him to her.

There is another thing worth noticing. If any one else had been writing this narrative, he would have been sure to give what this young man said about the place where his soul was—how he felt when he was dying—how he felt when the soul reanimated the fallen and deserted shrine—what he had seen in heaven, what he had heard, and with whom he had held converse. I say, such a subject would have been an irresistible temptation to any one of us to speculate, dilate, and portray. But it has always struck me, in the case of Lazarus raised from the dead, and of this young man also raised from the dead, that their silence about what they saw in the far distant, better land is evidence that the writers of the Bible were guided by an influence celestial and divine. You must all have noticed how in this book there is everything that sanctifies the mind, everything that impresses the heart, but never, never anything to please a morbid and useless curiosity. Now, just remember this one *trait* when you read the Bible; bear with you this fact—that there is nothing in it to gratify the morbid and inquisitive curiosity of man; and you will see in that circumstance the evidence of the presence of a divine and inspiring Guide.

All the people when they saw it, “glorified God, saying, That a great Prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.”

The next incident is, that "John called unto him two of his disciples, and sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Now, why did John do this? John was perfectly satisfied himself; he had already testified to the Messiah: he did it for the satisfaction of others, not for the satisfaction of himself. "And Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John"—while thus it was telling John, it was really instructing themselves, as he gave proof of it: he said, "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed"—these are the evidences that the Prophet promised to the fathers is now come: go and tell John this, and you need have no doubt who is here, or who I am, or what is the solemn function I have come into the world to fulfil. He then spoke of John. He says—"What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? Was it a mere reed shaken with the wind—a worthless thing that grows up in a day, that waves in the wind, and that dies in autumn? Or was it a man clothed in soft raiment? No. Or was it a mere prophet? No, I tell you; for John occupies a place that a prophet never occupied. For he is my messenger, predicted in Malachi, who has come before me to prepare my way." And then he adds, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist"—greater in privilege, by being the immediate herald of the Messiah: but he adds—and this is another remarkable trait in the Bible, there is something more than privilege—"he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." When they came and said, "Thy mother and thy brethren are outside," and when they said, "Blessed is she that bare thee," Jesus answered,

“Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and do it.” When he said that John was the most distinguished among the prophets, he added, more blessed is the humblest Christian that lives in the Christian dispensation,—teaching us that privilege exalts us, but does not commend us to God; but that grace humbles us, while at the same time it commends us to God.

The Pharisees, we then read, rejected his testimony, and the testimony of John; and Jesus explains to them that their objections were founded, not upon facts, but upon their own prejudices and passions. He says,—“John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil:” the Messiah has come to you—if I may use the expression—feasting, or “eating and drinking,” and not fasting, “and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of tax-gatherers and of great sinners!” So that let me do what I will, let my prophets and apostles do what they will, they never can meet with a reception from you; because your minds are preoccupied, the door of conviction is shut, and you will receive us upon no terms, and accept us on no grounds.

We read of another incident. He went into the house of a Pharisee called Simon, and sat down to meat with him. This was dining with that Pharisee, not as a piece of festal enjoyment, but rather as a time and opportunity of Christian instruction. There stood, it is said, behind him—washing his feet with tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head, and kissing his feet and anointing them with ointment—a woman that was a sinner—a sinful woman. You ask, How could she have done so? Remember that in those days they did not sit at table as we do, but they reclined upon

the left elbow—a sort of semi-siesta, a sort of half lying, half sitting, and helped themselves to food from the table: the body was stretched all along the couch, and the feet were at the end of the couch, and at that end of the table where it was not shut in. The table was a square; there was one seat along the side, another along the top, another along the opposite side, and then the lower end was left empty or open for the servants easily to approach. Jesus was leaning on his elbow, his feet at the end of the table; and while in that position, this woman came and began to kiss his feet, to wash them, or to let her tears fall upon them, and to anoint them with a precious perfume, the box of which she broke for that purpose. “Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself”—he did not speak out—“saying, This man”—the Messiah—“if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner”—that is, he judged of Christ by his own mind and thoughts, because Jew, and Sadducee, and Pharisee, and Levite, and Scribe, would have thought it a disgrace even to speak to a sinner, or to touch a sinner; and therefore, judging of Jesus by his own standard, he said, “This man cannot be the Messiah; if he were, he would never have suffered this woman thus to kiss his feet, and to wash them with her tears.” Jesus instantly saw his thoughts. Just notice that fact. “He spake within himself”—nobody heard him; but “Jesus answering said unto him.” Now you have here an indirect, but a decisive, proof that Jesus was the Searcher of hearts; that to him the thoughts of Simon were as transparent as if he had expressed them in words. Instead of answering his objection directly, he

does so by one of those exquisitely beautiful and touching parables that are full of life, and that instruct by portrait painting of the most effective description. "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence"—or five hundred times sevenpence-halfpenny—"and the other fifty." Well, they had both nothing to pay, and this creditor frankly forgave them both—that is, completely and entirely. Now, a benefit conferred always provokes gratitude in the recipient of it; the greater the benefit the greater the gratitude. Well, one of these debtors had forgiven him "fifty pence"—or somewhere about twenty-five or thirty shillings; the other had forgiven him "five hundred pence"—or somewhere between twelve and thirteen pounds. Which of the two, therefore, would love him most? Why, he that had the greatest benefit conferred upon him would naturally feel the greatest gratitude. Simon, not knowing that Christ had read his thoughts,—not knowing that Christ was answering his own difficulty,—instantly answered, "I suppose"—that is the natural thing—"that he to whom he forgave most." And Jesus replied, "Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet"—in warm and Eastern countries they do not wear shoes, but what are called sandals: the feet were naturally covered with dust by walking along the road; and the very first act of hospitality that was offered to a visitor in Eastern and in ancient times was water for the washing of his feet and his hands. Now Simon omitted that act of hospitality; and Jesus says, "This woman"—with that sensitive perception of what is

due which is peculiar to woman, and very much alien to the less acute perception of man—"has tried to supply that act of hospitality which you omitted from the deep fountain of her love, by letting her tears fall upon my feet." "Thou gavest me no kiss"—this was the same symbol of recognition then, that shaking of the hand is now. The ancient custom, which I believe in some degree prevails in some parts of France at this moment, was to give a kiss of friendship, friend to friend, relative to relative. That is now superseded by another habit, according to which two that meet together as friends shake hands. Jesus says, "You did not give me the ordinary kiss of friendly recognition: this woman has done so. In short, you omitted what she has fulfilled; and, instead of complaining that a sinful woman has done this, you ought rather to take shame to yourself that you omitted it, and that she had the love, and the beautiful and holy feeling, to do that which you have so rudely forgotten altogether. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." Our translation is here wrong, and you need not to be acquainted with the Greek to see it; because the last clause of the 47th verse, "But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," shows that love was the fruit of forgiveness, not forgiveness the fruit of love: and therefore the text ought properly to be, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, *therefore* she loveth much"—her love to me resulting from her sense of forgiveness, not her love being the cause of that forgiveness of sin.

And then, to assure the woman that her sins were forgiven, he said to her—not what was forgiveness, but what was the assurance of forgiveness; for to be for-

given is one thing, to be assured of it is another thing—“Thy sins are forgiven.” Then Simon, who could not see a prophet in Jesus because he allowed the woman who was a sinner to touch him, now saw more than a prophet, and he exclaimed, with others, “Who is this that forgiveth sins also? Jesus, taking no notice, said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace with God, and in peace with thy conscience, and with all mankind.” Amen.

NOTE.—Doubtless there was a deeper reason than the mere consoling of the widow, (of whom there were many in Israel now as beforetime,) that influenced the Lord to work this miracle. Olshausen (vol. i. p. 271) remarks—“A reference in this miracle to the raised man himself is by no means excluded. Man as a conscious being, can never be a mere means to an end; which would here be the case if we suppose the consolation of the mother to have been the only object for which the young man was raised.”

[42.] What depth of meaning there is in these words, if we reflect who said them, and by what means this forgiveness was to be wrought! Observe that the $\mu\eta\ \epsilon\chi$. is pregnant with more than at first appears:—how is this incapacity discovered to the creditor in the parable? how, but by themselves! Here then is the sense and confession of sin; not a bare objective fact, followed by a decree of forgiveness, but the incapacity is an avowed one—the forgiveness is a personal one.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIVINE PREACHER—MISREPRESENTATIONS OF MARY MAGDALENE
—THE SOWER—INFLUENCE OF CHARACTER—TRUE AFFINITY—THE
LORD OF WIND AND WAVES—A DEMONIAK—EVIL SPIRITS—HELL
AND HADES—THE SWINE—SITTING AT JESUS' FEET.

THE chapter opens with a record of the labours of Jesus, intimating that he went "preaching, and shewing the glad tidings"—that is, the Gospel—from city to city, and village to village. He removed from place to place, feeling, that wherever an audience was ready to hear him, there was a call, in the providence of God, to preach to them the glad tidings of great joy. We read next, that "certain women," who had received many and special mercies from his hand, and one out of whom seven evil spirits had been cast, "ministered unto him of their substance." They had received spiritual blessings; they felt that the least that they could do was to return to the Dispenser of spiritual blessings the little that they had, even if that little was their all. Mary Magdalene is popularly supposed to have been a depraved woman; but there is no evidence that she was so. The fact seems to be, that she was a demoniak,—as much misfortune as crime,—out of whom Jesus cast the evil spirits that tortured her; and we find that in every period of the life and ministry of Jesus she was present, like a ministering angel—the last at the cross, the first

at the tomb, and the subject of the most interesting and touching conversation, after the resurrection, recorded by John, found in any one period of the history of Jesus.

“When much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable ;” that parable the outward vehicle of inward and spiritual truth. But he addressed the parable to the crowd ; he told his disciples, in private, its meaning ; and now it is read by all people and ministers together, and made to all a vehicle of precious and important instruction. He explains the parable to his disciples in these words—“Those by the wayside are they that hear.” There is something very remarkable in this, that the seed, and the soil in which it is sown, seem in the moral world to be identified. First of all, it is the seed cast into the soil ; but when he explains it, it is “those by the wayside.” The seed is mentioned in the parable ; but he identifies the seed with the receptive hearts into which it was cast, and shows that they were one. This teaches us a great lesson ; that the truth sown in the individual heart ceases to be a thing separate from the individual, and becomes part and parcel of his new nature ; and he himself is not the soil in which the tree of righteousness grows, but he becomes himself a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. He says, “Those by the wayside are they that hear ; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts.” The wayside is trodden hard ; the traffic of many feet has beaten it almost into stone ; seed cast upon it falls upon its surface, it does not sink into the soil ; and lying on the surface the birds of the air pick it up, or the foot of the passer-by crushes it, and there is no product. So is it with the truth spoken to

men that hear it with obdurate, unprepared hearts ; it is no sooner received, or descends on them, than it is seized by the wicked one, and no good result is produced in such a case.

“They,” he says again, “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.” The proper rendering is not, “They on the rock,” but “on rocky ground.” It does not mean seed cast upon a bare granite rock, but seed cast upon soil that is full of stones, having very little black earth, and a great deal of broken stone. Well, in the crevice of a rock, nourished by the rains, the dews, and the sunbeams, the seed germinates, grows up ; and having no soil equal to the nutriment required by the stem, the heat of the noonday sun blasts it, and it droops and dies. So is it with many that receive the truth, are delighted with it in the sanctuary, go to their counting-houses next day, or to their places of business, and the cares of the world, or the pleasures of the world, crush and cover it, though it be very good ; but there is no soil for the nutriment of the good seed, and all the virtue of all the little soil that is in the heart is exhausted by the weeds—the baneful weeds—of Mammon and of the world, that vegetate in it.

Then they, again, which fell among thorns are they who have heard the word, but it grows up among thorns, and by-and-by it is soon choked. It first germinates like the seed in the rocky ground ; it grows up just as the seed there did ; but mingling with thorns and thistles which have preceded it, and are much more exuberant in their growth, the sunbeams are intercepted from it ; the rain-drops are all expended in nourishing

these, and so the good seed is "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life."

Then there is the good ground—the honest and the good heart ; not naturally so, but made so by grace ; for it needs as much the grace of God to make the heart receptive of the seed as it does to give the seed or a blessing upon the sowing of that seed. Well, they that receive it into a good heart keep it, "and bring forth fruit with patience." Four classes of hearers are here ; three classes are not profited,—one class only is savingly profited. One dare not so parcel out every congregation ; this would be exercising judgment, instead of lifting up prayer ; but when one looks abroad upon the world, one is constrained to own that it is the few that receive the seed into good hearts, and bring forth much fruit ; it is the many that are to be classified in some of the three categories that are first mentioned in this instructive parable.

Our Lord then proceeds to another illustration : "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed." If you have any light, you will be luminous ; if you are the salt of the earth, you will have and exert its savour. It is no use exhorting men to engage in missionary action ; it is of very little advantage to ask men to give to the Bible, or the Missionary Society ; if men be Christians they cannot help giving ; if they have grace, that grace will unfold itself. There cannot be light without its being luminous ; you cannot cast salt into anything, without that salt penetrating that substance with its peculiar virtue ; and a man cannot be made a Christian without in some shape, on some level, or in some sphere, letting his Christianity be felt. It is, therefore, a fair question to put to each of

ourselves—Is anybody better for my being a Christian? Will any circle in the little world at home, or in the larger world abroad, meet me at the judgment-seat, and say, "I am indebted to you, under God, for that contribution which sent me a Bible, a tract, a Missionary, a messenger of glad tidings?" If we ought to suspect that Christianity that does not radiate, we ought to suspect ourselves if our character is in no shape, in no sphere, and in no degree active. If there be light, it is not put under a vessel; if we be Christians, anybody knows, others will participate in the blessings which we ourselves have received.

"Then came to him his mother and his brethren," evidently according to the flesh; and some told him that they waited without, "for they could not come at him for the press." Jesus answered, in language that is only paralleled by similar remarks, "My mother and my brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it." I have ceased to have these relationships; I have ceased, now that I have entered on my ministry, to be subject to her who is my mother; and they are my brothers and my sisters who hear my word and do it. The spiritual is greater than the physical; relationship by grace is truer and more real than relationship by nature. And this teaches us that, in the world to come, we shall feel a deeper and a closer relationship to the humblest believer on Jesus, than to the dearest relative that we ever possessed in time; the earthly is lost in the heavenly, the carnal in the spiritual, and all that are in Christ are brothers and sisters. I need not say, that this rebukes the very culpable view which some take of the Virgin Mary. She came to Jesus before and interfered with his ministry, and he rebuked

her—"Woman, what have I to do with thee?" or, as it ought properly to be rendered, "What hast thou to do with me?" On another occasion, when some said, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," what was his reply? "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and do it;" thereby distinctly declaring that a dearer and nobler object, in the estimate of Christ, is the humble widow that believes the word of God, and does it, than even the Virgin Mary, permitted, according to the flesh, to be the mother of the humanity of our blessed Lord.

We then read of a miracle wrought upon the Lake of Gennesaret, or the Sea of Galilee. The waves struck the little ship, and it was nearly filled with water. The disciples, in despair, cried, "Master, Master, we perish." Jesus slept sweetly in the vessel. Jonah once slept, a refugee from God, seeking to drown his fears; but Jesus slept the Lord of the storm, the Prince of Peace, and alone had perfect peace, while all around was tumult. He then woke at their bidding, spoke to the winds and the waves; they knew the voice that said, "Let there be light," and there was light; nature recognised the tones of nature's Lord; and the winds, that had broken loose from their loyalty to man when man broke loose from his loyalty to God, and the waves, that had been lashed into storm ever since man had rebelled against God, recognising the voice of the great Sea Lord, and Land Lord of the universe, instantly settled down, like infants, obedient to his bidding, and there was a sweet and a universal calm. No wonder that the disciples, struck by the magnificence of the spectacle, said, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and waves, and they obey him." And

yet, a greater miracle is wrought than this : there are winds of passion in the human heart—there are waves of tumultuous prejudice in the human mind. It requires as much of Heaven's power to command prejudices and passions to be still, as it ever did to command the winds and waves on the sea of Galilee to lie down and be at peace ; and we do, I trust many of us, say, " What manner of man is this, who makes the winds of passion and the waves of prejudice in the troubled sea of the human heart to be still ; and from war, fear, commotion, anxiety, to ensue a great and a blessed calm ! "

Another interesting miracle here, so interesting that it would take hours to exhaust it, is that of the demoniac, who had evil spirits a long time, and who lived among the tombs. This seems to us, at first sight, a strange locality to live in ; but you will recollect that the tombs in Judea were outside the city ; they were immense catacombs, or cavities cut into the solid rock. The remains of Petra are still evidences of what they were ; and in these tombs half-a-dozen, or a dozen people might locate themselves in company with the dead with the greatest ease. These were not maniacs, but demoniacs ; for lunacy is one thing, demoniac possession was quite another thing ; for you will always notice that in the lunatic there is one will, but in the demoniac there were always two wills ; there was the man's own will, frequently expressed by himself, and there was the will of the evil spirit within him that often crossed his will, and drove him where he himself would not. When Jesus rebuked the evil spirits within him, and told them to come out of him, the evil spirits that bound him with chains, and drove him into the wilderness, answered, thinking to alarm Jesus, We are legions.

As much as to say, We are as numerous as a Roman legion, a company of troops, a battalion of soldiers—do not meddle with us, for if you do, we are more than a match for you—you are alone, and we are many. But they saw his power; the evil spirits recognised the presence of Him who will one day bind them in chains, and cast them into the bottomless pit; “and they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.” It is a pity that our translators have rendered it *the deep*; it is *ἄβυσσος*, literally translated, *the abyss*, and is the proper word for *hell*. The word *hell* is not strictly the place of lost spirits. In the Book of Revelation you will see a distinction—“Death and hell were cast into Gehenna,” the place of lost spirits, called in this place “the abyss.” David speaks of the separation of the soul from the body, without specifying whether the soul is in happiness or in misery, when he says, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.” David’s soul was not in hell. The Greek word here rendered *hell* is *hades*, and literally translated it would be, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in the place of separate spirits”—not a third place; that place may be heaven, or it may be hell; it is the place of separate spirits. “The deep,” therefore, is here the native home, the terrible prison of the fallen angels; and they prayed that they might not be cast into it. What a home must that be which the tenant dreads! what a place must that be from which they that are doomed to it for ever shrink and recoil in unutterable horror! they prayed for any calamity rather than to be sent there. And what a terrible allusion is that, in another place, where the evil spirit asked if Jesus had come to torment him before the time—indicating the time of torment that is coming; but

that there is a momentary respite. And what is the evil spirit's respite? His happiness is in our misery, his joy in the ratio of his success in ruining souls. It is a very awful thought that there should be suffered by God, in his infinite benevolence, a fallen spirit that lives on the wrecks and the ruins of mankind ; but yet it is so. All the why, the wherefore, and the use of it, we cannot see now, but there is no doubt that we shall see hereafter. They besought him, then, that he would suffer them to go into a herd of swine. It is said in one Gospel, "Jesus said, Go ;" in this Gospel the meaning of that command is less decided and expressive ; it is said, "And he suffered them." But, it may be said, Why should Jesus make the swine—the dumb, inoffensive brutes—receptive of a demoniac influence that would drive them to destruction? And secondly, it may be asked, How could brutes be demon-possessed? My answer to the first is, that these swine were the property of Jews, who did not directly keep them themselves, but employed Gentiles to take care of them. The Jew thought that he escaped the sin if he got the Gentile to do it. The Jew, in London, holds Saturday to be a Sabbath, and I rejoice to see in the Jew, while he is wrong, that he is in earnest, and I cannot but respect him. I have never seen a Jew's shop that had not the shutters closed from Friday night until sunset on the Saturday evening, rebuking by that act the less scrupulous Gentile, who, knowing the truth, and having a lovelier Sabbath, yet keeps his shop open and does this world's traffic notwithstanding. I say, then, that this permitting the evil spirits to go into the swine was a judgment upon the Jews ; the destruction of the swine was loss to the greedy Jewish owners, as

well as a striking and significant miracle. But you say, Is it right to destroy dumb and inoffensive brutes for man's sin? You set fire accidentally to a house, the noble horse is destroyed in the stable; you erect a Crystal Palace, a scaffold falls, and poor men not only suffer, but the dumb brutes are found crushed beneath the ruins. You do find, as a matter of fact, that cattle suffer when men mistake; and if it was wrong in God to let cattle suffer for man's sin, on the supposition that God governs the world, it must equally tell against God to allow cattle still to suffer when man mistakes. But besides this, there is the difficulty, How could swine be possessed of devils? I think that the creation all fell when man fell. It is, I think, the most humbling truth—a truth that I have elucidated elsewhere, upon the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where it is said, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth;" I have shown there what I think can be irresistibly proved, that man's sin has influenced all creation, and that nature now is not in her normal state, but her abnormal state. Everything is imperfect,—there is not a flower that blooms to perfection, there is not a fruit that ripens to full maturity, there is not a single tree, or flower, or gem, or rock, that was as it was when Paradise retained its glory, and man held fast his innocence. The dumb brutes are not in their original condition; how are they worn out prematurely, and galled, and pained, in order to meet the demands of an age of intense competition! But that brutes are receptive of influence is plain; the horse can be taught, the dog may be trained. Dumb brutes are receptive of influence from man, and so they may be, as they were here, receptive of superior influence still; and the evil spirits

“entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.” This was judgment on the Jews they belonged to; it was an exhibition of power on the part of God; it was the deliverance of a poor demoniac at the expense of a herd of swine which ought not to have been there, and were kept by Jewish owners, in spite of the commands and interdict of their own law. And “when they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then went they out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man”—where? How beautiful is this—“sitting at the feet of Jesus,” the place of safety, “clothed”—no longer ragged or naked amid the tombs, but clothed—“and in his right mind.” And the peaceable and beautiful spectacle, indicating a transition so great, made the spectators afraid.

A nation without religion is the demoniac amid the tombs; a nation saturated with living Christianity is the demoniac cured, sitting at the feet of Jesus, in its right mind.

We then read that this poor man “besought Jesus that he might be with him;” but that Jesus did not permit him to do so, and said, “Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee.” He wished to remain with Jesus; but he said, No; privilege is duty, a blessing is responsibility—you have received, you must now give. Go to your home, therefore, and show what things God hath done for you. That is just the lesson for every Christian in this assembly. Many persons, when they first come under the influence of the Gospel—as I can personally testify—want instantly to go and be preachers of it. Not

that there is any objection to this, for there is no risk of there being too many preachers ; but some of these I find are anxious to leave the trade or the profession in which they are engaged, and become ministers. I have said to them, Your feeling is quite proper ; but go to your own home first ; see what you can do in the little pulpit and the little congregation called home, and then, if you find that God has called you, and commissioned you, and enabled you to preach, it will be your duty to obey the command, by going into the great pulpit, and addressing the larger congregation abroad.

But I dwell too long upon the chapter I have read, and must here stop. I pray that God will bless the reading of it to us, for Christ's sake, Amen.

CHAPTER VIII. 43—48.

THE AFFLICTED WOMAN—A GREAT SUFFERER NOT ALWAYS A GREAT
SINNER—SEARCH OF HEALTH—EMPIRICISM—TRUE BUT ERRING
FAITH—FAITH AND SENSE—CURE AND CONFESSION—OBSTRUCTIONS.

I HAVE selected the miracle recorded in these words as the subject of a few suggestive and profitable remarks, because it has some peculiarities which the rest of the miracles of our blessed Lord do not possess. This woman, affected with some malady, we know not what, and anxious to receive the cure that no physician could supply, drew near to Jesus, and looked for a cure from him who is the Lord and Giver of life.

Suffering in the body is connected some way with sin in the world. I do not say it is true that the suffering in an individual is always proof of sin in the individual, and proportionate thereto. We are not to judge of the greatest sufferers as if they were the greatest sinners. "Think ye that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell,"—think you that those twelve on whom a scaffold of the Crystal Palace fell,—"were sinners above all men? I tell you, No;" there is no ground for such judgment whatever; it is not ours to judge; "but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We are to look each to his own state in the sight of God, and not to pass judicial sentences on those who, in the provi-

dence of God, may be the greatest sufferers among mankind.

Now many a soul is conscious of moral disease just as this woman was of physical, and is anxious, most anxious, to be healed; but many a soul, just like that woman, goes to every physician that empiricism can mention, and seeks a cure where that cure is not to be found. The priest—the altar—the penance—payment—are all quacks and empirics, and unable to heal a single disease of the soul, or to stanch a solitary sorrow of the heart; and they that go to such physicians as these will just have the same moral experience as this woman had physically,—they will suffer many things, spend all their money for that which is not cure, and be no better, but rather worse at the close than they were at the commencement. We are told here, that this woman had rather got worse than better by the treatment of those to whom she had recourse. This is the experience of all in diseases of the body, and it is no less so in diseases of the soul. Let a person who is ill go to a physician who is ignorant, or who misunderstands the complaint, or to an empiric, who cannot know anything about it; and the result will be that by such treatment the disease will be worse instead of one single step being made towards its cure. Better have been without physician than submit your malady, whatever it may be, to a physician that mistakes it, or treats you one way when you ought to be treated in the very opposite. I have seen a book whose very title is a satire and a libel on the true profession, "The destructive Art of Healing." Persons become worse from treatment that is erroneous, however well meant it may be, instead of having their disease removed. So

we read that this woman not only got worse, but it shows that she also suffered much from many physicians—she suffered much. You know that all attempts to cure necessarily involve a portion of suffering; in this economy no cure of disease can be attained without either tasting the nauseous drug or undergoing a painful operation; and if the real disease be misapprehended, not only is the original malady made worse, but you have more than the suffering that would have been incurred by right treatment, and you have not the good and the beneficial results that would have followed. And so, my dear friends, those that seek to be healed of the great disease of the heart—the leprosy of the soul,—and go to wrong physicians, find that those physicians give them opiates when they ought to prescribe something altogether different,—and deaden the sense of pain, which is a ministry of beneficence to lead you to seek a cure; and thus going to the wrong physician you are made positively worse; and secondly, you suffer only more in consequence. What suffering will devotees go through! A poor Hindoo devotee will suffer more in the vain hope of having his sins expiated than many Protestants will endure to show their love to Christ Jesus. How many a monk scourges himself by day, lies upon hair-cloth by night, starves and stints himself, and barely shields himself from the cold—most sincerely, most earnestly, thinking, like Martin Luther, that he can thus strike out by dint of such processes a path to heaven; he suffers very much, like the woman, in his attempt to get peace; but he finds that all his sufferings and all his penances have done him no good at all, but made him worse; just as a man seeking his way to a given point, and going the wrong road, has

not only to come to the right road, but he is weary, and wayworn, in retracing all the steps that he has taken, before he pursue the very opposite direction. A man seeking to get to heaven by a wrong process is just like a man upon the treadmill ; he is always active, always toiling, always walking, but never making one inch or atom of progress. There is but one way, and that way is declared in Scripture ; and if you go to any other, you are not only made worse, but you suffer very much to no purpose, while you do not make one single step towards being made better.

And lastly, the poor woman had done—what many a person seeking peace of mind has also done—spent all that she had ; she had paid fees till she had impoverished herself and enriched her physician, and all she had got in return was much suffering, so that the disease was very much aggravated instead of being wholly cured. How many spend all their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come, and let him eat that which is good, and let his soul delight itself in fatness.” After she had learned how little good she could get from physicians, and after she had spent all, and could get no more prescriptions because she had no more guineas, she heard of one great Physician whose skill had startled the world from its apathy, and who was surrounded, it was reported to her, by thousands ; the blind, whose eyes he had opened ; the deaf, whose ears he had unstopped ; and the dumb, whose tongues he had unloosed. She determined at all hazards to approach him. It was, it may be, in desperation. She could not get any other medical advice, for she had nothing to pay ; and there-

fore, weary and half-exhausted, and in agony marching to the grave, she came to Jesus; and she said within herself, after having discovered that he had wrought so many great cures, done so many great works, If I may but touch the fringe of his garment, such must, from what I hear, be the virtue stored up in this man that I am certain I shall be cured. Now, this seems, at first sight, a strange idea in the woman. But you will see that it was a thoroughly ecclesiastical one; for it was the injunction of God himself to the Jews—"Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue; and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes . . . that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God." The Pharisees abused it, by making broad their phylacteries, that is, ostentatiously displaying them; but true Christian men in Judea complied with it; and Jesus Christ, therefore, around the outer flowing robe, had a fringe, or a *phylactery*, not too broad, as the Pharisees made it, nor too narrow, as the Sadducees would have it, but just as God had ordered it. Now she thought, as the fringe of the robe was a divine institution, that if she but touched it she should receive the virtue from the wearer of it that she needed.

This woman's faith was so far wrong that she looked to the robe, and did not look exclusively to the wearer; but it was so far right that God forgave the alloy of imperfection that was in it, and honoured the

fervour and intensity which it displayed ; and the beautiful response was given to her, " Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole : go in peace." My dear friends, there may be true faith with many drawbacks in it. I suspect and believe that many a true saint gets to heaven with many errors in his creed. We must not be less zealous for the truth, but I believe that many a saint is in glory who did not accept in all its clearness every article of the creed ; who had some wrong, odd notions upon many points, but who held fast this one, " There is none other name under heaven whereby ye can be saved but that name Christ Jesus ;" and God forgives the imperfections of our faith just as he forgives the sins of our life, and accepts us through Him on whom faith still leans while it trembles as it does so,—Christ, our Foundation, our Saviour, and our all.

Jesus knew that virtue had gone out from him. This expression seems at first rather a perplexing one ; as if he distributed or gave unconsciously virtue or power. The word properly translated is, " Jesus *knowing* that virtue had gone out of him ;" but that power did not go out from him contrary to his will. It was not virtue communicated to a touch, irrespective of him who was touched ; but it was virtue which he bestowed spontaneously, and not unconsciously, as the phrase would seem at first to imply. We have an instance of this in another part, where it says, " The whole multitude sought to touch him ; for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all." It is plain, that he himself distributed the virtue, and healed them all ; and that it was not an unconscious virtue that went from Jesus.

But, you say, if it was not unconscious virtue, why does he ask the question here, "Who touched me?" I answer, Why did God ask in Paradise, "Adam, where art thou?" Why did God ask of Adam, "Hast thou eaten the forbidden fruit?" God knew both answers: but he asked in order that Adam might have the opportunity of confessing his sin, and that he himself might be glorified. And so here Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" not that he did not know, but that the woman might see that her blessing, received in secret, would be no real blessing; that its preciousness would be enhanced by being followed by her confession that she came believing, and that Jesus bestowed loving; and that his name, therefore, would have glory, while she herself would have no less the blessing and the privilege.

Now it is said, also, that when this woman came to him—and it shows that there was something in the woman peculiar and distinct from what was in the rest, that there was a great crowd—and touched Jesus, and he asked, "Who touched me?" Peter rebuked him—I would not say *rebuked*, but replied roughly, "Dost thou ask this, when numbers throng thee and press thee?" Then it is quite plain that numbers of the crowd pressed against Jesus, that numbers of those that were about him touched the hem of his garment; but there was not one received a blessing, save only this woman. Then what was the distinction? They touched, and she touched; if virtue had been a spontaneous efflux, irrespective of the will of the wearer of the garment, and in spite of the faith or faithlessness of them that touched him, all that touched him would have received, some greater, some lesser, but all some blessing. But we find that only this woman

received the virtue. Why? Because she came believing in his ability to do her good, and believing in his willingness also to do her good. And the distinction is still the same in spiritual things. Thousands touch the Saviour's robe still who do not rest by faith upon the Saviour's person. Thousands come to baptism, to the Lord's Supper, to the sermon, to the church, to the ministry, and touch these fragments of the hem of Christ's robe, who do not, like the woman, believe that he is mighty, and able, and willing to save to the uttermost all them that come to him. It is not personal contact with Christ that is salvation; but it is believing reliance upon him. If that very robe—which the Roman Catholics say they have still—were present in the midst of this assembly, nobody could be healed by touching it; no sinner would be pardoned by touching it. It is faith in an unseen, but not an unknown Christ; it is not superstition in a rag or relics of any shape or of any sort whatever. If those relics that are this year exhibited at Aix-la-Chapelle were real,—if they were the actual coat of Christ, the actual cross of Christ, the actual thorns of the crown of thorns that he wore,—the most reverent treatment would be to bury them in the waters of the Rhine, or in the bowels of the earth, or to burn them; they generate superstition, not religion. Salvation is reliance upon a Christ who is everywhere, and may be approached everywhere; for wherever an anxious heart beats in prayer, there is a sympathising Saviour to heal its diseases, and to give it peace; “whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” He is nearer to us than the contact

of rags and relics ; those rags and relics do not bring Christ near to us, nor us to him ; but faith in him. Thousands pressed him, touched him ; none received virtue save this woman, who he himself attests had faith in his omnipotence and willingness to heal her.

When Jesus asked the question, in order to discover the woman who had touched him, we are told that all denied except the woman. They thought it was an offence ; and though they had been pressing upon him, yet they denied that they had touched him. But this poor woman, who saw that she was detected, and knew that he who had healed her could not be ignorant of her individuality and her person, at once confessed that she had done so. But how merciful was this ! Jesus did not insulate the woman from the crowd until he had healed her disease, and given her strength, and confidence, and love to bear the insulation. A female would not like to be conspicuous in a multitude. She would require great nerve, or great courage, or great love to Jesus, to enable her to consent to be so. This woman did not first confess, and then come to be healed ; she would rather have retired and concealed herself even after she was healed ; but Jesus first healed her, inspired her heart with confidence and courage, and grace that makes a woman more courageous than a hero, and do exploits that will make the world ring with their renown, beside which the deeds of great heroes become pale and sink into insignificance. It was a woman at Samaria who left her water-bucket at the well, rushed into the town, preached in every street—and said, “Come and see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ ?” There is the element of real

heroism, in gratitude to Jesus, in love to God for his mercies. The reason why men so little confess Christ and defend his cause is, that they have so little tasted of his mercy, his love, and power. Yet this confession must not be ostentatious—it must not be pride; but it must be the acknowledgment of Him from whom we have received blessing, when that acknowledgment shall give glory to his name and do good to those that are about us.

Then notice how Jesus addressed her after she had owned in the presence of the crowd that she was the person who had come believing. Jesus instantly addressed her, “ Daughter.” No more what she was called in the beginning, but “ Daughter.” She came a stranger by nature—she departs a daughter by grace. And she felt that word, “ Daughter,” addressed to her, more dear and beautiful than if a coronet had been wreathed about her brow, or a sceptre had been placed in her hand. It was recognition from the King of kings. She came exhausted; she retires now rejoicing, and recognised as a daughter by One who was not a creature, but God.

He then removes her anxiety, “ Be of good comfort.” I doubt not that poor woman, when she saw she was detected, was afraid that he would withdraw the virtue that had passed from him, or that he would punish her for daring to touch even the hem of his garment; and therefore she was afraid. Jesus showed that he is not satisfied with making his people well, he desires also to make his people happy; and wherever a Christian finds his safety in the Rock of Ages, he will instantly feel comfort in the Holy Spirit—the Comforter of God. And therefore, Jesus says to her, “ Be of good comfort.”

Do not doubt that you are accepted of me ; do not fear that I will use one harsh word, or revoke the blessing which is given, and is without repentance.

Then Jesus specifies to her the means by which she had been cured—"Thy faith hath made thee whole." Faith, the instrument : the virtue that cured was mine ; faith in thee, virtue in me ; thy faith, emptiness seeking fulness, disease seeking health, sin seeking pardon. There is no mystery about faith ; there ought to be no metaphysics in the explanation of it. Faith is just conscious want of something ; applying to Him who is able and willing, and has promised to supply it. A beggar, when he feels the pangs of hunger and of cold in winter, exercises faith—it may be, of a feeble kind—when he goes to the benevolent and the rich, and asks bread and raiment. And every time that you take a 5*l.* note, you exercise faith in the Bank of England. And why? The paper is of no more worth than a halfpenny sheet of writing-paper, or, it may be, not so much ; but you believe in the Bank of England, and that that note will be available to you for bread, for food, for books, for learning—for whatever you need. And what is faith here? Just faith in God ; trusting his promises as you trust the " I promise to pay you 5*l.*;" just taking his promises as realities, and not waiting till they are fulfilled, but acting upon them as if they were already yours. When you have a 5*l.* note, you go away, not believing that one day you will have five pounds, but believing that you have in that piece of paper the five pounds. And so with God's promises. You are not to believe that one day you will get the blessings that he promises, but you are to believe that his promise is surer than man's performance.

You may draw upon it now; you may count upon it as if it were real; you may avail yourself of it as if it were your possession, and treat it as if you were rich with all the riches of heaven, though your dwelling may be a hut, and your covering only rags.

“Thy faith hath made thee whole,” he says; “go in peace.” If our faith has made us whole—if we are pardoned, if we are restored to our right place—we shall not long remain altogether ignorant of it. I admit, there are many persons who are truly pardoned who yet doubt, and fear, and are anxious to be certain that they are so. I cannot believe with many truly good men, that assurance is of the essence of religion. I believe that many a one enters into glory who died doubting, fearing, trembling; but at the same time, it is our privilege to seek to attain the blessed assurance that our sins are pardoned. We cannot be assured that we are pardoned by seeing our sins cancelled in God’s hidden book; but we may infer that we are pardoned by feeling the disease subdued, the new heart given us, the new nature imparted to us, in our own experience within. We can feel the fountain of our sins dried up, and the springs of wickedness removed; and thus from the inner work of God’s Spirit in the heart, we may justly infer the outer act of God’s pardon at the judgment-seat of all our past sins.

He says to her, “Go in peace.” I did not state on a previous reading of this chapter, what indeed I did not know till I looked at the original this day, or rather, yesterday; I found there that it is not strictly, “Go in peace;” but it is, “Go into peace.”

You say,—Is not this perhaps a distinction without a difference? No; it means, Go into the scenes of

martyrdom; it is yet into peace—go into life's duties, into its trials, into its sick rooms, into its dying chambers, into its sufferings, its ills, its aches, its pains, and in each into peace—all that is to the worldling a sphere of sorrow is to the Christian a chamber of peace. He goes into peace wherever he goes. Go into battle, step upon the quarter-deck, be sent into want, into trials, into poverty,—a Christian cannot go where an atmosphere of peace does not envelope him, where the peace that passeth understanding does not keep him.

I draw these few remarks on this most interesting miracle to a close, by noticing, first, that there is no case, moral or physical, so bad that Christ cannot cure it. I cannot believe, with many excellent Christians, that we ought not to pray to God to remove temporal calamity. I think, if you felt a want of means to support a family, you ought to pray to God to give you a better situation and a better income. If a man is suffering disease, he ought to pray to God that He would be pleased to heal his disease. If there be something that your heart is set on, and that you think would do you good and make you happier and better if you had it, pray to God that he would give it you. I know some Christians say, How do we know that these things are good for us? and therefore, if we do not know, we ought not to pray for them. My answer is, You are intruding on God's prerogative when you entertain that question at all. It is no business of yours; it is God's prerogative to decide that, and if it be not good for you, he will not bestow it. All he asks you is to unburden the heavy heart, to tell him—just as the child tells his father—that which you feel most painful, and ask him to give you relief; and if it be not right you should get relief,

you may be sure that he will not give it, but will impart something in it that will be more a blessing to you than its removal. But do not discuss, do not even put the question, Is it good for me? but ask for what you feel to be needful, and he will give or withhold it as he sees it to be truly expedient for you.

This woman never in the worst of circumstances despaired. I am sure she had suffered enough to make her almost utterly despair of a cure; but she did not despair. She had consulted physician after physician; she had taken medicine till taking it became worse than the disease; she had spent all her money, and yet, notwithstanding all, she would not give up. Despair is a word that belongs not to the Christian vocabulary. It is a thought that ought not to be entertained for a moment in a Christian's heart; there is no state for which there is not relief; and the worst, the most wicked, and the most depraved may, at the eleventh hour, nay upon the stroke of the twelfth, touch the hem of the Saviour's garment, and they may be pardoned, and have everlasting peace.

Jesus receives to himself those who have tried everything else, and at length come to him only as a last resource. This woman had tried everything—she had spent all—and only then she came to him. What a blessed thought is here! Not a truth to presume on, but one to be thankful for—that Christ takes the dregs of life, that he will accept you when nobody will have you; even when society has thrust you from its bosom, Christ's bosom is still open to pardon and to forgive you.

Let us notice, what great humility was in this woman; there was no presumption in her conduct—

she was trusting, yet humble. The greatest faith is always coupled with the greatest humility.

She had to approach Jesus through a crowd. It is still true, no sinner ever tries to get to Jesus without a thousand standing up to protest against it. There is always a crowd, not near Christ, but very near to us that seek to go to him ; and the instant you make a movement to approach him, prejudice and passion, the fear of the world, the praise of the world, the profits of the world, vain-glory—a thousand obstructions will stand between you and Christ. One will say, You are become a fanatic; another will say, You are enthusiastic ; another will say, You are Presbyterian, or Independent, or Baptist, or something of that kind ; another will make some other objection, however absurd, if it can only help to swell the crowd that keeps you from going instantly to the Lord and Giver of life, and seeking pardon, and peace, and salvation. But mind them not ; press through the crowd—let no crowd stand between you and him ; no man—priest, or Levite, or Popé, or Church,—has any right to keep you away from Christ. It is your privilege to go ; and you must let no man repel you from Him who has expressed his mind in his own beautiful and blessed words, “ Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I *will* give you rest ;” and whose complaint is not that too many and too eager people come ; but that, “ Ye *will* not come to me that ye may have life.”

May He heal our diseases, and forgive our sins, and bless us as he blessed this woman ; and to his name be glory and praise. Amen.

NOTE.—Ver. 30. The fact of many devils having entered into this wretched man sets before us terribly the utter break-up of his personal and rational being. The words will not bear any figurative rendering, but must be taken literally (see ver. 2 of this chapter, and chap. xi. 24, ff.), viz. that in the same sense in which other poor creatures were possessed by one evil spirit, this man, and Mary Magdalene, were possessed by many.

Ver. 44. Her inner thoughts are given in Mark v. 28. There was doubtless a weakness and error in this woman's view; she imagined that healing power flowed as it were magically out of the Lord's person; and she touched the fringe of his garment, as the most sacred as well as the most accessible part. See Matt. xxiii. 5; Numb. xv. 37—40. But she obtained what she desired. She sought it, though in error, yet in faith; and she obtained it, because this faith was known and recognised by the Lord. It is most true objectively, that there did go forth from Him, and from his Apostles, (see Mark vi. 56; Luke vi. 19; Acts v. 15; xix. 12,) healing virtue; but it is also true that, in ordinary cases, only those were receptive of this whose faith embraced the truth of its existence and ability to heal them. The error of her view was overborne, and her weakness of apprehension of truth covered by the strength of her faith; and this is a most encouraging miracle for us to recollect, when we are disposed to think despondingly of the ignorance or superstition of much of the Christian world; that He who accepted this woman for her faith, even in error and weakness, may also accept them.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES AND THOSE OF THE APOSTLES—MODERN MIRACLES
—HEROD—MIRACLE OF FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES—PERSONAL
RELIGION—THE MOUNT TABOR—A DEMONIAK HEALED—CLERICAL
RIVALRY—INTOLERANCE—PERSECUTION—FOLLOWING CHRIST.

IN the opening part of the chapter I have read, we have a special, but rather a temporary commission given to the Apostles to go forth and to work miracles in the name of Him who is the Lord of life, and Heir of all things. He had an original or underived power; and therefore, when he wrought a miracle he did it in his own name, and in virtue of his own inexhaustible resources; but it is worthy of notice, that when the Apostles carried out their delegated commission, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and elsewhere, and whenever they wrought a miracle, they said, "In the name of Jesus, rise up"—or, "stand up"—or, "stretch out thy hand." This proves that theirs was a borrowed, not an original power. It has been asked, Has this power been transmitted to those who are, either in spirit or otherwise, the true successors of the Apostles, by being true followers of their doctrine, and imitators of their example? The answer is, that if there be such transmission it will be shown to be fact. A miracle is not a thing that can be kept *in retentis*: there is a miracle only when there is something done that strikes

the senses, as greater than nature, and gives evidence, not only of itself, but of the truth that is above and beyond it, which it attests. An unseen miracle is no miracle at all ; and if miracles be in the Church now, then they can be visibly wrought ; but we have seen no miracles wrought, and having seen none, and having no credible testimony of any, we must conclude that none are now delegated by the Head of the Church as of old, to perform them. And at all events, if they say there ought to be such power, and if such power be not, it must be from want of faith in us, or want of Christianity altogether. But it does seem to me that a perpetual miracle would be by very necessity of no value. It is as great a miracle that the grass should grow as that the dead should rise. It is as great a miracle that water, and dew, and a little oxygen, carbon and hydrogen should grow into a little stem, and that stem into blossom, and that blossom into grapes, and those grapes into wine, as that water should be made wine at Cana : it is not recognised as a miracle, only because we are accustomed to it ; we call it a law of the vegetable creation. And on the other hand, when we see water turned into wine by a word, we call it a miracle, just because we are not accustomed to it. But a vine growing into grapes, and those grapes turned into wine, is just as great a proof of God's power as water turned into wine by a word : only we are accustomed to the one and we are not accustomed to the other. But if the process were reversed—if a vine producing grapes, and those grapes being turned into wine were to occur once in a century ; and if it were a matter of every-day occurrence that a man should speak to water, and that it should be turned into wine,—we should say that water

turned into wine was one of the great laws of our creation; and that the vine growing in the earth, and bearing grapes, is an extraordinary phenomenon—in short, a miracle. A miracle is a suspension of the laws, as we call them, or, in popular language, of the habits of nature—simply to call people's attention, by an appeal to their senses, to something that is about to be spoken of great importance to them. But now we have in this book such miracles wrought, proved, attested, historically recorded; and we have in the book itself such internal evidences of its inspiration that the great truth is now, "If ye will not believe Moses and the Prophets, and the Evangelists and the Apostles, neither would ye repent if one were to be raised from the dead." It is not more power that men want as an appeal to the senses; but more grace that men need in their hearts. But to show that there was much of the miraculous character of this dispensation, which was peculiar to its first establishment, you find they were not to take food, or staves, or clothing, or any of the ordinary necessaries of ordinary life. But now, if any man were to go out in winter without a cloak, to preach the Gospel, in Greenland, it is a matter of fact that he would perish of cold. If another man were to go without food, and think he could live on air, he would find that he was not imitating the Apostles, but tempting God. God now works by means; the time may come when He will work without means; but as far as we can see at the present moment he works by means, and we have no right to expect the least blessing, unless it be bestowed upon the use of the best and the most efficient means.

After this, we read of Herod being perplexed and

puzzled about Jesus. He heard of all that was done by Him: and in one Gospel it is said, that he guessed that it was John who had risen from the dead; in this Gospel he was told that it was so; but he could not understand this, because he recollected himself that he had beheaded John; but there is no doubt that the conscience of Herod was better than his creed. Herod was a Sadducee. He did not believe in the resurrection; he did not believe in the separate existence of the soul; and yet his own conscience so rebuked him for the murder of John the Baptist, that it made him dread, if not conclude, that John was again risen from the dead.

We read next the record of a miracle performed by our blessed Lord: where the people wanted bread and could not procure it, being in a desert place, Jesus turned the five loaves and the two fishes into food adequate to feed five thousand. This was a miracle—a very striking and a very startling one; and as if to show how genuine it was, and that there might be no misapprehension about it, twelve baskets were gathered of the fragments that were left,—vastly more remained of the feast than there was of original preparation for the feeding of the people. This shows that man doth not live by bread alone. When food does not come in the fulfilment of our duty, God will make our bread and our water sure. Trust in Him is strength; leaning on Him is life; and in the discharge of duty, and the use of all the means that belong to us, we may expect that in answer to prayer He will give us each day our daily bread. Still this does not imply that we are not to exert ourselves to procure a subsistence. “If a man will not work, neither shall he eat;” he has no right to expect God to minister to his

indolence. Jesus then made this miracle the pedestal of a great truth, and by it convinced them that he was the Messiah. While he was alone praying, his disciples came around him, and he asked them whom the people said that he was—not that he needed information, but that he wanted to bring home to them a lesson. They said that some said he was John the Baptist, some Elias, some that he was one of the old prophets. This was tradition. And then he put that question, which is so just a precedent to every minister, and so fit for every human conscience, not, What says the Church? or, What says the world? but, Who do you say, and think, and feel that I am? And blessed is that man—blessed above Christ's own relations according to the flesh—who can say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Jesus told them to tell these things to no man—that is, at that present moment, and in this conjuncture of circumstances. There were reasons for it; his time was not yet come; and on various occasions he throws forth hints of this kind to the Apostles, seasonable in their place and at their time; and he tells them that something else was to take place before the Christ of God, the Messiah, should sit upon his throne, and appear invested with his glory—that there must be a cross, and agony and passion; that there must be suffering; that he must be slain, and be raised the third day, and that now was the time for each to deny himself—to deny his profitable self, his pleasureable self, his favoured self, his vain self, his joyous self, and to take up his cross—not what he makes for himself, but what God assigns in his providence—and bearing that cross meekly and patiently, as by God's assignation, to follow

Christ in all his imitable perfections. He then tells us, that whosoever is ashamed of him and of his cross, of him will he also be ashamed in his kingdom.

We have next a beautiful account of the transfiguration, recorded in varying circumstances, recorded also in each of the previous Gospels, as we have already read. On this occasion it seems that "Peter and they that were with him" were worn out, and wearied and listless, and so fell asleep. We then read, that "as they departed from him"—that is, Moses and Elias—"Peter said unto Jesus"—ever first to speak, and ever rash in expressing himself—"Master, it is good for us to be here,"—as much as to say, We do not want that you should be slain, and that you should rise the third day; we would rather get rid of the cross; we would rather inherit the glory without passing through the discipline that fits for it. Peter was one of those who would have the crown, if he could reach it, without having to bear the cross that must precede it; and therefore he says, "It is good for us to be here"—this is just what we want; this is what we have been looking for. Come, now, let us rest here; do not let us go down again to a bitter world; let that transient Tabor be a permanent transfiguration. Let us now live here, Moses, Elias, you, and I, for ever. It is added, in language that expresses everything in few words, he said this, like many other people when they speak on subjects too high for them, "not knowing what he said."

A voice came from the clouds, saying, "This is my beloved Son; hear him." How remarkable was this! not, "hear Elias," who was speaking of Christ; nor Moses, also talking of him; hear neither of these saints in glory; but, "This is my beloved Son; hear him."

Let his voice ring loudest ; let his words be felt alone obligatory ; follow Apostles only in so far as they follow Christ ; and hear sermons only in as far as they are the echoes of the voice of him of whom God said, "Hear ye him."

Jesus wrought a miracle on one possessed of an evil spirit, that tore the child, and left him. This demoniac possession is a thing that seems to have passed away, and of which, as far as we can see, we have no present experience.

But, how sad that just after this beautiful and solemn scene upon Mount Tabor—a scene that one would have thought would have left an indelible impression upon every mind—that just after the Apostles had descended from the Mount, and the glory that shone upon them was scarcely yet quenched, "there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest." Pride, vain-glory, ambition, passion, have raged among priests from Hildebrand till now, which should be greatest ; instead of contending, if contention is to be at all, which should be most useful, they are contending who shall be most popular, who shall earn most wealth, who shall attain the loftiest dignity. And whenever ministers of the Gospel are actuated by motives like these, strength parts from their right hands, and the tongue that was eloquent will soon cleave to the roof of its mouth. Our blessed Lord, seeing the thoughts of their hearts, needing not to be told, but seeing the inner man just as he sees it now, teaches them. Striking fact is this. All faces in this assembly are conspicuous to me ; the dial-plate of the mind, that sometimes expresses the mind, and sometimes, as Talleyrand said of language, seems given to conceal and to disguise it, is all that I can see ; but God sees the

thoughts that are sweeping through the mind, and hears the beating of each heart just as truly as if there were but that one heart in the universe, and God's omniscient eye were riveted upon it alone. We should try, my dear friends, in order to realize our position, occasionally to insulate ourselves from the crowd, and to feel this thought, which, I think, has its precious value, as well as its solemn importance—that Christ sees me just as well as if there were no other individual in the universe. And, oh! blessed thought, that he died for me just as if there were none else to die for; and that he loves me just as if there were none else to love; and that he takes care of me just as if there were none other that needed his care, from the height of heaven to the depth of the earth beneath. Solemn, but blessed and happy thought! Knowing their thoughts, he took a child, and put that child in the midst of them, and presented him as a model. Now, in what respect is a child a model to us? Its grand characteristic is, its perfect confidence in its parent; a child loves his parent; never suspects his love, never doubts his will. But as they grow up, they come to be accustomed and acclimated to a false world, till they, too, learn to doubt and suspect, like their parents that have gone before them. But a little child has perfect confidence in its parent; and that is just the great thing that is wanted in us. The great want of Christians is confidence in God—perfect, unfaltering, implicit confidence; or our taking God at his word, without hesitating, without suspecting, without doubting—saying, This is true, and we will act up to it to the very utmost, and are sure that we shall do right.

We then read after this, that Jöhn said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad

him, because he followed not with us." Who would have expected this of the mild, the gentle, the genial Evangelist, John—one who was so full of love? Yet it teaches us that the best have their faults—that there are few gems without a flaw—that there is no gold without alloy—that even John had one burst of rash and unhappy passion. "We forbid him to do it"—and why? "Because he followed not with us;" we are Churchmen, they are Dissenters; we wanted therefore to shut their chapels, and banish them; or, We are Roman Catholics, and these are Protestants; we wanted to pull down their chapels and put an end to them. That is just the reasoning of human nature still; it is fallen nature still. Wonderful how little change has passed upon it by the lapse and flood of eighteen centuries. The Churchman does not like the Dissenter, because he will not follow him; and the Dissenter does not like the Churchman, because he will not follow him; both forgetting this great maxim—that he that is not against Christ is for him; that he that preaches Christ must be on the right side, whether he do it in this formula or in that formula, in this communion or in that communion; all that is not opposed to Christ, however much we may dislike it, we should receive. One man uses a Liturgy; there is nothing in a Liturgy against Christ, and it is therefore a mere matter of expediency; another man uses extemporaneous prayer; there is nothing against Christ in that, it is a mere matter of form, and nothing more. And therefore that which is not against Christ is naturally for him. Let us learn therefore to forgive forms in which we differ, for the sake of great truths in which we agree; preferring Gospel truths in the worst of forms, to Popish or infidel error in the best and most

beautiful ones. Do not like your own form less, but love truth more. Be ready never to sacrifice truth for the sake of the form; but often be ready—always be ready—to sacrifice the form, if needs be, for the sake of the precious truth, of which it ought to be a vehicle.

We then read, after this, that the same passion that tried to interdict that which was not to their taste, because it did not follow with them, here burst into its full development—positive persecution in the case of his disciples, James and John. Jesus was passing through a village of the Samaritans, “and they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.” Now, why should that be a reason? It was simply this. The Samaritans received the Pentateuch alone, and held that this mount was the place on which the temple should stand; the Jews held that Mount Zion was the true mount on which the temple should stand. You will recollect the conversation between Jesus and the woman of Samaria, as an instance of this. But, so jealous were these two sects, that seeing Jesus looking in the direction of Jerusalem was enough to awaken the hatred of the Samaritans, and therefore they would not receive him into their presence, just because his face looked towards Jerusalem. “And when his disciples, James and John, saw this,” instead of trying to undeceive the Samaritans (for the greater a man’s error is, the more anxious we should be to put him right,) instead of this they showed that Popery is a very old religion, not an Apostolical religion, for it was in the Apostles’ hearts before those hearts were truly renewed by the Holy Spirit of God—“his disciples, James and John, said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven,

and consume them?" What a terrible wish! and how foolish to think that burning a man's body can at all rectify a man's creed. The thing is monstrous. You may make a man deny from intensity of suffering; but you cannot change convictions. Convictions are stronger than thrones, greater than kings, and, if true, lasting as eternity itself. Never let us have the least sympathy with prescriptions for extinguishing another body, because it will not join with us; still less let us have any sympathy with that persecution which would light fire upon earth, or call down fire from heaven to destroy those that differ from us. If the faggots are to be kindled, let Hildebrand be the gatherer, not Protestants, not Christians, not those that know the Bible and have the spirit of our blessed Master. We see, however, how early persecution was. And what is more, these very disciples quoted a Scripture precedent. The fact is, you may quote a Scripture precedent for anything, if you take a broken fragmental passage, and apply it arbitrarily to what you want. And so many quoted of old for persecution what took place in the Old Testament, forgetting that the Old Testament economy was what was called a theocracy—where God visibly ruled, audibly commanded, and visibly acted; and that this dispensation is not a theocracy, but that we are to prefer mercy to sacrifice, and to do to the worst as we would that the best should do to us.

Our Saviour, it is said, "rebuked them;" and said, in words so true, so just, and so applicable, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of"—no idea could be formed of what it would be if it were left to itself.

CHAPTER IX. 57—62.

A VOLUNTEER—EXTENT OF OFFER—ANSWER OF JESUS—PLACE OF JESUS ON EARTH—JESUS SAYS TO ANOTHER, FOLLOW ME—PREACH—ANOTHER EXCUSE—REASONS WHY MEN REFUSE CHRIST.

WE have alluded to following Christ. You will notice, that the first individual stated in the passage I have read, gives unasked and unsolicited his pledge, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." He was not asked by our Lord to do so; he volunteered his promise, "I will follow thee." He did it rashly; he spoke from impulse; it was not the result of well weighed and deliberate resolution, but the expression of high-wrought, but speedily evaporating feeling, originated in listening to him who spake as never man spake. He looked at the bright side of Christianity, he shut his eyes to the dark side; or, he he saw only the joy that sparkled in its train, he did not see the sorrows into which all its professors must one day be baptized; and therefore he said rashly, without deliberation, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." In itself the resolution was beautiful,—"I will follow thee." What duty more intensely devolving upon us all—what pursuit more delightful than this, "I will follow *thee*,"—the Teacher who is infallible; the great High Priest, the only Intercessor, the Perfect Example, that has no flaw and no failure; in fol-

lowing whom is all the safety that the human heart can desire, all the progress that human nature is capable of, and that sure and ultimate success which crowns every effort made in divine strength to follow Him, the great High Priest and Ensample of the flock who has preceded us to glory. The resolution, I say, was most Christian, and most worthy of a Christian to entertain.—“I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,”—into life’s sunny places, and its shady places; into life’s trials, adversities, and sorrows; into life’s joys, and blessings, and delights, “I will follow thee;” believing thy lessons, imitating thy example, trusting in thy intercession, and looking with certain assurance for thy glory. The resolution expressed by this man was most unrestricted,—“I will follow thee,” he says, “*whithersoever* thou goest.” I will not select the place I am to follow thee in; I will not object to the path thou prescribest; I will not embrace this path because it is delightful, and reject that because it is painful; but “I will follow thee,”—as a Christian ought to follow Christ,—“*whithersoever* thou goest.” And the resolution, too, is full of persistency,—“I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,”—not ceasing to do so at any point, but following thee till with thee I enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God. And the resolution, too, was very exclusive,—“I will follow,”—not an apostle, not a prophet; but the apostles’ and prophets’ Lord,—“I will follow *thee* whithersoever thou goest;” as if the utterer of the words in this passage had lingering in his memory the accents of a beautiful resolution, uttered by one of old,—“Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, thy God shall be my God.” But why did he

not do so? Because he made his resolution without knowing all the extent of the difficulties, the perils, the losses and cares it necessarily involved. I said in the beginning of my remarks, he saw the crown, but he saw not that the way to it was by a cross; he saw all that was bright in the religion of Jesus; but he saw not the sorrows, the pains—it might be the martyrdom, through which the faithful followers of the Lamb must necessarily pass before they appeared with Christ in glory. He had a profile view of Christianity, he did not see the whole portrait of what it is, and what it demands, and what it would necessitate of passing through. And perhaps he erred in this other respect; he uttered this resolution in self-righteousness. “*I will follow thee;*” as if he had strength equal to the pursuit. Never is a man so weak as when he fancies he is strongest; and never is a Christian so strong as when he feels he is without strength, and that in Christ’s strength only he can do anything, in his own he can do nothing at all. Partly then with the rashness of impulse, partly in ignorance of what was involved, partly trusting to his own strength, he gave utterance to the resolution—beautiful, just, and Christian in itself, but too much for him to do, to dare, or to undertake,—“*I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*”

What was the answer of Jesus? He did not conceal the road he would have to tread; he did not paint the blessings of the Gospel in the richest hues, and tone down its trials and its difficulties till they almost disappeared; he would not have a single follower to come after him with his eyes shut, or with his mind ignorant of what that pursuit necessarily implied and involved. He told his followers distinctly, that “*through*

much tribulation ye must enter into the kingdom of heaven :” “in me ye shall have peace, but in the world ye shall have tribulation.” He said, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man,” that you purpose to follow, “hath not where to lay his head.” Will your resolution stand that? Are you still disposed to follow me whithersoever I go? You have said so in ignorance of my place in this world; now that you know it, will you repeat your resolution? The silence of Scripture is the too certain proof, that when he learned that the foxes of the earth were better lodged, and the birds of the air were better off than the Son of man, that the resolution formed in the sunshine disappeared in the shadow, and he went away to his farm, his merchandise, or his worldly employments. But how humiliating is that answer of Jesus—how humbling! “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head!” Jesus could not find a place in the world that he had made, or hospitality in a heart that he came to save and to sanctify. “He came to his own,” says John, “and his own received him not.”

Can we have stronger proof, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, than this?—that the brightness of God’s glory, the embodiment of all that is pure, and just, and holy, and excellent, and true—God manifest in the flesh—came into the world, and the men of that world, who might have been expected to have hailed him as the Messenger of the skies, preferred a thief and a robber to the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners! You do not need texts to prove that your heart is worse than you ever dreamed by nature; the reception that we gave to the Son of

God when he came to our world, and the reception that thousands still give to the Gospel of Christ when preached to them, shows, that if it needed God in our nature to make atonement for us, it needs no less God the Holy Spirit to convince us that he did so.

After this another instance occurs: Jesus said to another, after the first had gone away, "Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." Now recollect, the first unsolicited gave the promise, or expressed the resolution spontaneously; to the second individual in this story, the command was addressed by Jesus, "Follow me." The first might have been silent; the second, by hearing the command, instantly came under the responsibility of doing it. Christ's commands, understood by us, are to us and on us instant and obligatory duties. The man that knows what Christ commands is from that moment under solemn obligations to comply with that command. It is true, this individual did what many do—gave an excuse for his obedience at the moment; but all duties, if they be duties, are in the present; they are for now, not for to-morrow. The fact that it is duty involves the necessity of our obligation to observe it. If there be an excuse, then that dispenses with your obedience; a duty and a valid excuse are incompatible: if there be a valid excuse why I should not obey Christ, why I should not believe the Gospel, then to obey Christ and to believe the Gospel are not duties devolving upon me. But though you may give a plausible excuse, no man living can give an excuse that will bear the ordeal of a judgment-seat, or that will even bear the light, the inspection, and the analysis of his own conscience in its best and purest moments. Now, this man's excuse was,

“Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father;” that is, “I understand thy command, I feel the obligation of it, I have no doubt that it is my duty: but let me just put it off for to-day, in order to discharge something that takes precedence of it; and then to-morrow, when I have fulfilled the obligations of my home, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Now, in all probability this was a pretence, and not a duty that remained to be done at all. And in the second place, suppose it was not a pretence, but that his father lay unburied, and that reverently it devolved upon him, the son, to attend that father’s remains to their resting-place; he ought to have known—at least we know—that no duty that we owe to our relatives in this world is disposed of or interfered with by our first fulfilment of the duties and the obligations that we owe to God. It never yet was found that rigid observance of the first four Commandments in the least interfered with the most rigid observance of the last six: it never yet has been found that our obligations to God and our obligations to man, if the latter be genuine, have clashed and come into collision. And therefore if this was true, it was the man’s first duty to embrace the Saviour, to follow the prescriptions of his Lord, and to be quite sure that in doing so he would find time reverently to commit dust to dust, and ashes to ashes, in the hope of the resurrection from the dead. No duties that we owe to father, or mother, or sister, or brother, or wife, or children, ever can be excuses for disregard of the duties that we owe to God. No respect for the living, no reverence for the dead, should interpose the least obstruction to our faith in Christ, our obedience to his will, our sense of responsibility to him as the Lord and Maker of all

things. It was right that this man should bury his father; but when he urged that as a reason why he should reject Christ, then he made a lesser obligation a pretext and an excuse for dispensing with a higher and a more instant one. Obedience to Christ will give impulse, not obstruction to our discharge of the relative and social duties of this present life. In other words, the more thoroughly a man is a Christian, the better father, the better brother, the better husband, the better son will that man be. Christianity elevates and inspires every duty, lightens its load; translates duty into privilege, gives wings not weights, and enables us to do the most difficult things, feeling that his commandments are not grievous,—his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

Jesus said to him that it was not only his duty to follow him whithersoever he went, but, "Let the dead bury their dead." He uses the word "dead" in two senses. The word "dead" is used in Scripture in the sense of insensibility—"I am dead to the Law;" that is, not under its obligations: "I am dead to sin"—that is, I am not under its influence. So Jesus uses "dead" here in the first case, of the spiritually dead, and he uses the second in the literal sense, in relation to the man's dead father; and he says, There is a duty instantly devolving upon you; and if you feel that duty in all the length and breadth of its obligation, you will let those who do not feel it yet, but who may feel it by your acceptance of it, discharge a duty which anybody can discharge, and which you, in present circumstances, are called upon to postpone to a second place, not to prefer and place in a first place.

And then he says, "Go thou and preach the Gospel"—as if he had said, It is not only your duty to know

the Gospel; but it is your duty also to preach the Gospel. People often fancy that a class alone is accountable for preaching Christianity; but the truth is, every Christian that knows the truth, knows its presence in his heart, is bound to preach it. There are different modes of preaching, but the obligation is the same. Some preach by their silence, some preach by their eloquence; some preach in words, some preach by deeds; some preach by suffering silently, others preach by working actively. Every man has his own gift; but every man that knows, feels, and loves the Gospel, will in some formula—the mode that Providence may give him—make known to others how sweet that grace has been to his heart, how dear that Saviour is to his soul; and he will tell you that he cannot but speak or live the things that he has heard. A man that does not desire to extend the Gospel to others, has never himself felt its influence in his own heart; as sure as a man is made a saint by grace, so sure he becomes a servant by duty; the unction of the saint is given that there may follow the duties of the servant. It is first the prayer, “God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us;” it is next my duty—“that thy ways may be known upon the earth, thy saving health among all nations.”

The third incident that occurs is, “Another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.” Now this individual makes a spontaneous offer; but his excuse for non-compliance differs from that given by the former. The former professed a previous duty as a reason for his non-compliance with Christ’s command; he professes a pleasure that he wished to enjoy, as a

pretext for putting off till to-morrow the duty that devolved upon him to-day. Let me go, he says, and bid farewell to my friends. This was an act of courtesy—it was an act of kindness; it would have been so far a gratification to him; but when God's precepts run cross to our pleasures, it is not the precepts that must give way to the pleasures, but the pleasures that must bow to the precepts. This man therefore seeks the enjoyment of a pleasure, and makes that an excuse for his non-compliance with an instant duty. Jesus did not accept his excuse, and the reason was, no doubt, very obvious; that if he had gone and consulted with his friends, who were strangers to the Gospel of Jesus, probably enemies to his claim, they would have persuaded him that he was not the Messiah, but an impostor, assuming his name, and professing to fulfil the prophecies that belonged to him. Jesus said to him, This will not do; it would be perilous to you, it is not dutiful to me; for "no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." It is a proverbial expression; it implies that just as the ploughman must not look behind, to see who follows, or look on either side, to see who looks on; but must keep his eye on the furrow that the share is making in the field; and if he divert his eye for a moment, the furrow will be crooked, or the share will not go deep enough, in the same manner, a man who has accepted the Gospel must set his whole heart upon it; it must not be the subordinate thing, but the supreme thing; it must be the regulating thing; to translate, or rather to vary the figure of the Apostle, he must run the race, he must direct the plough, he must guide his course, looking neither to the right nor

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to the left, but looking unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of his faith. There must be no divided allegiance; there must be no half of the heart with Christ, and half with the world. Love your relations, love your friends, love the good opinion of your friends, but be always ready to subordinate the best and choicest of these loves to the love and glory of your Lord and Master, Christ Jesus. Christianity does not enjoin the maceration of the monk, or the withdrawal of the nun, or the denial of the joys and enjoyments of the world that now is. There is no asceticism in the Gospel; its prescriptions do not enjoin a life of sadness or of separation; it asks you to enjoy the good things God in his providence may give you, but it gives you the limit and the law, according to which you are to enjoy them—rejoicing as though you rejoiced not—using the world but not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of it speedily passeth away. All that is demanded by our Blessed Lord, is that you shall seek, first, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then look for a' other things to be added. Whatever duty you engage in, whatever relationship you form, whatever change you make, if you be a Christian your chief thing will be the Saviour's will, and subordinate things, but true things, nevertheless, your own preference. If you change your residence, by all means look for the best residence, in the best situation, at the lowest price, most adapted to your convenience, most agreeable to your taste. All these are rational, proper, Christian elements; but never forget that there is something above them all. Will it interfere with my progress in conformity to Christ? Shall I be able to hear the Gospel? Shall I be able to live in it? Is there

anything inconsistent with the prior duties that I owe my Lord. If there be, all must give way to that, not that give way to them. In the same manner, in forming any relationship in life—in selecting a wife, suit your taste, your preferences, your sympathies, your feelings, everything considered, but consider primarily and chiefly this, that you should marry in the Lord. The Christian graces first, beauty next; the riches of the heart first, the riches of the world next; the last two not forbidden, but subordinate, ever subordinate to the first two graces. So in every profession and trade, in all that you do, make the law, the word, the command, the glory of Jesus the chief thing; and all else, not to be extirpated, but to be sanctified and subordinate thereto.

Thus, we see that none of these were valid reasons for rejecting what was the obligation to follow Christ. We see from all this how some persons commence the journey to the kingdom of heaven, and yet stop short of it. Here were men ready to give up all, but some one thing interposed, and for that one thing's sake—it might be a father, it might be a flock, it might be Herodias—it was for some one thing that they gave up the obligation, and went away sorrowing.

We see, in the next place, that the greatest and most successful obstruction to the reception of the Gospel into our hearts, is not so much the forbidden love of things that are sinful, as the excessive love of things that are lawful. In each of these cases, the excuse was not sinful; to show reverence to the ashes of a dead parent, was beautiful and good; to go and consult with one's friends is often a duty, always a pleasure; but to make the one or the other—most

proper in their respective places—a reason for refusing to comply with the prescriptions of our Lord and Master, that was putting the pyramid upon its apex, that was turning obligation upside down; that was giving to the human the allegiance which we owe to the Divine, and subordinating the commands of Christ to the pretences and the pleasures of the world. Never forget, then, our greatest danger is not in persisting in the practice of things that are sinful, but in our excessive, in some cases, idolatrous love of things that in themselves are lawful.

And, lastly, let us feel that true religion consists just in following Christ; not as if he were only an example, but also as an atonement, as a priest, as a prophet, as a king. When the Apocalyptic seer describes those that are in glory, he says of them, “These are they that have followed the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” that is, that believe his word, that trust in his sacrifice, that are clothed with his righteousness, that follow him through good report, and bad report, through sorrows and through joys, up hill and down hill; whithersoever he goeth, it is their privilege, their pleasure, their duty, and, finally, their eternal joy to follow him.

CHAPTER X.

THE SEVENTY—THEIR MISSION—THE FALL OF SATAN—JOY OF
JESUS—THE LAW AND ITS OBLIGATIONS—MY NEIGHBOUR.

THE seventy disciples that Jesus appoints upon this occasion, appear to have held a temporary commission altogether. The language in which he speaks of the Apostles and those who were to follow them in preaching the tidings of the kingdom of God, indicates a permanent institution; but the language in which he speaks of the seventy, and the fact that the seventy do not appear in the Acts of the Apostles, indicates that they were a mere temporary appointment, sent to prepare his own way, and to make ready the people for his preaching the glad tidings of the Gospel. But whilst they lasted, they were gifted with those powers, which clearly were not successional, and have not been inherited by any minister of any Church, or of any communion, in any after age of the world. He said, "The harvest truly is great," there is plenty of corn standing in the field, but there are few reapers to cut it down; and if not gathered into barns now, it will decay, and perish, and be useless. There are thousands of souls longing for the bread of life, ready to receive the glad tidings of the kingdom; there are only wanting men to show them the way that leads to it, and they will joyfully accept the message. Go, therefore, he says, *your way*;

but you must count the cost. Understand, he says, what is before you. "I send you forth as lambs among wolves," helpless in yourselves, as lambs surrounded in the world by fierce wolves: be strong in the strength of your blessed Master, whose strength is made perfect in weakness. He tells them when they entered into a house, to wish that house,—what an Eastern *salaam* is still,—the possession of the inestimable blessing of peace—"Peace be to this house." And then if they accept you, be satisfied with the fare that they give. Make yourselves more than worthy of that fare by telling them of the living bread that cometh down from heaven. If they will not have you, then let them know that they have turned away a great and precious opportunity of good, and that they will have to answer for what they have done at the judgment-seat of Christ: and show that you so feel by wiping, according to Eastern manners, the very dust of that city from off your feet, that it may remain a testimony against them. He then tells us that comparative privileges create comparative responsibility. Sodom had not the mercies that Chorazin had; this city, again, had not the mercies that Capernaum had, and Capernaum had not the privileges that we have. It seems here as if national responsibility was not forgotten at the judgment-seat of Christ—it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom—or, perhaps, it means the inhabitants of Sodom, than for that city which has had much greater light, but has criminally and culpably rejected it. But does not this teach us that there will be trial at a judgment day, that there will be retribution; because it speaks here of comparative penalty, and that comparative penalty indicates that there is a place of punishment as well as

a place of reward, when the great drama of this world shall be closed, and all shall gather round the great White Throne to receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil?

We then read that "the seventy returned again with joy;" and they stated that the commission they had received had been carried into practice, and they found that, as Christ predicted, the very devils were subject to them through the name of Him who had sent them. Then Jesus says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." That does not mean that he beheld it through their ministry, or at that time; it is what is called by critics a proleptic statement; and means, that from the foundation of the world onward to the end of time, is the ceaseless descent of Satan. Satan had less power after the Flood than he had before it; he had less power after the Crucifixion than before it; and in proportion as the kingdom of Christ gains footing in the world, the kingdom of Satan, which is a usurpation, has less power. Now Jesus says, I saw him, not with the speed, but with all the dying splendour of the lightning, fall from heaven. The very simile indicates the original greatness of Satan; and that even now, he is still the archangel ruined—I saw him like lightning fall from heaven. He then tells them what power he gave them—power over scorpions and serpents, and over all the power of the enemy, and that nothing should hurt them. But he bids them rejoice, not on account of great gifts, great power; but rejoice because they were assured of their everlasting acceptance in the sight of God, by their names being written in heaven. It is then said, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." This is one

of the occasions where we read of Jesus having joy. He was never seen to smile, it is said; he was often seen to weep; but on more than one occasion he is recorded to have rejoiced. And prophecy tells us that "for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame;" and that the travail of his soul, that is, the triumph of his cause, will be more than a compensation for all that he has suffered. What he thanked God the Father for on this occasion was, that he had hid the simplest truths from the philosophers, who believed they were wise in this world, and that he had made them known to the simplest peasants, who were despised as stupid and ignorant, likened here to babes in the kingdom of God. How often do we find that a very great philosopher perplexes himself about needless and unprofitable questions, which his own genius starts, but which it has not power to lay; while a humble, illiterate Christian receives the truth just as that truth is made known, and derives nourishment, and support, and consolation from it; while he does not trouble his mind about many a perplexing inquiry with which it is nearly connected. The fact is, the more one knows, the more one sees remaining to be known; and very often the unsanctified inquirer is led by the very light that he has, to plunge into perplexities which he is unable to explain; instead of waiting, like a babe in the kingdom of heaven, to know hereafter what Christ has promised he shall know, though he know it not now. God has revealed in his holy word enough to enlighten, and sanctify, and save, and comfort, but he has not given a line to gratify mere curiosity, or to answer those endless questions which do not minister to our edification.

Jesus here pronounces a benediction upon the disciples, because of what they saw ; and says, " Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see ; for I tell you, that many prophets"—that is, gifted men—" and kings"—that is, excellent men—" have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

After this " a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him,"—this does not mean that he tempted him to evil, but that he wanted to ascertain what amount of knowledge he had,—saying, " Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ?"—a very important question ; but he knew only of doing, he did not know of believing, in order to obtain eternal life. There are two ways : either do the whole law perfectly, without a single flaw, from the first pulse of your heart to its last beat upon the brink of the grave, and stand spotless and unblemished ; or believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who has done it for you, and in your stead ; and thus you shall be saved. It ought never to be forgotten, that God exacts from us now just the same perfect righteousness that he exacted from Adam and Eve in Paradise before they fell ; but the difference is here :—Adam and Eve had to do the righteousness, and in their attempt to do it they failed in innocence ; how much more must we fail in the fall ! whereas, we have not to perform the righteousness, and thus obtain heaven as the reward of what we do ; but we have to accept the righteousness done by Christ, our Substitute, and justified by it to have peace with God. The difference between us is, that Adam worked towards heaven in order to obtain it ; we have, by grace, already obtained heaven, and we

work because we have obtained it. Under the Law it was doing in order to live; under the Gospel it is living, and therefore doing; we believe, and through faith we accept that righteousness which is unto all and upon all that believe. Now Jesus,—not to teach this man that he was worthy of heaven, or was righteous enough to deserve heaven; but to show him how completely he had come short in the second half, and therefore the most practical part of the Law—relates to him the following incident. He first says, The Law is this—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind,”—and that is a very blessed and merciful law: it does not say, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with an angel’s fervour, or with an archangel’s strength, but with *all thy heart*—no more; it exacts of the creature no more than the creature can be expected to give—not with more or less, but with all thy heart—“And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The man that can do that shall live by it; but to love God with all our heart!—alas, how many rivals are in that heart, disputing the sceptre of supremacy every hour! How often is God forgotten, how often forsaken, how often is man ashamed of him, how often is he resisted, how often despised! Oh, to speak of fulfilling God’s perfect law for an hour is to speak of absolute moral—not physical, but moral—impossibility. And then to love our neighbour as ourselves—not more than ourselves, Christ alone could do that; not less than ourselves, but just as we love ourselves; ready to share with him in all things, to wish him the same good that we wish ourselves. Our own hearts condemn us; and at the foot of Mount Sinai we learn—we feel as well as

learn—"by deeds of law no flesh shall be justified;" and we are taught to pray, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight no man living can be justified." Now to put this self-righteous, vaunting, boastful lawyer to the test, Jesus answers him, when he asks, "Who is my neighbour?"—you wonder that he should ask such a question. The reason that he asked it was this:—every Jew thought another Jew a neighbour; but a Samaritan, or a Gentile, he did not think his neighbour at all. It was their intense ecclesiastical sectarianism that made them think so; just as we often find a churchman thinks a churchman his neighbour, and a dissenter thinks a dissenter his neighbour; but they cannot see through the outer robe of Church or Dissent, and recognise a brother notwithstanding. He asked, therefore, "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus answered him by a parable, or rather by a history:—"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho,"—a road, according to Jerome, that was exceedingly beset with robbers, who plundered the travellers from Jericho to Jerusalem—and "fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance,"—that does not mean that there was any accident in it; it is a peculiar mode of expressing coincidence of events,—there came down "a certain priest that way," who ought to have had sympathy with the sufferer, whose office it was to minister to the broken heart, and pour balm into the wounded spirit; but he, with all the contemptuous scorn of a Jewish priest, passed by on the other side. And a Levite—a superior officer—passed by; and he did more than the priest, for "he came and looked on him," indicating a wish to help him; but

he saw that there was or might be risk, and he passed by also, and left him. A certain "Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him,"—that Samaritan, who ought to have had no sympathy with him, between whom and him there were interchanged only hostilities,—“he had compassion on him,”—which neither the priest nor the Levite had,—“and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil”—an ancient cure,—“and set him on his own beast; and brought him to an inn,”—the word here translated *inn*, means an all-reception-house, *πανδοχείον*, a place for receiving everybody; it might be called, as our public vehicles are, an *omnibus*, a place for all sorts of people,—“and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence,”—not pence according to our money, but about fifteen pence; sevenpence halfpenny being a *denarius*, or a penny; and fifteen pence then was worth more than fifteen shillings now,—“and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him,”—that is your duty; and whatever thou spendest more than the fifteen pence that I have given you, when I come again I will repay you. Then Jesus says, “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” But you say that this is not a proper parable; because the one that was relieved was the neighbour. The meaning is, that he that helped was neighbour to him that was helped; and that implied that he that suffered must have been neighbour to him that so kindly alleviated his suffering; if the one was neighbour, the other of course was also. And then the Jew, with all his pride, but with a smiting conscience—the convinced intellect, but the ecclesi-

astical pride that would not venture to name the name of a Samaritan—said, “He that showed mercy on him.” He could not muster courage to say, The Samaritan was the neighbour; that would have shocked him: but he was obliged to say it substantially, though not verbatim,—“He that showed mercy on him.” Then if he that showed mercy was the neighbour to him that needed it, he that needed it was neighbour to him that showed mercy—the one was neighbour to the other; their obligations, their relations were reciprocal. “Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise;” and by doing so you will overcome that exclusive feeling which makes you think that a Jew only is your brother; and prevents you from seeing that wherever there is suffering on the face of the earth, there remains a duty for you to discharge; and teaching us in this age and century that wherever there is want, there is a call for you to feed it; wherever there is ignorance, that is a summons to you to enlighten it. One man is made richer than another, not that he may exact more, but that he may give more; and one man is poorer and needier than another, not that he may be trodden down, but that he may be made the recipient—the grateful recipient, of your liberality and goodness.

CHAPTER X. 38—42.

MARTHA AND MARY.

BEHOLD a beautiful domestic scene ; a family portrait, simply drawn, true to nature in every land, interesting and instructive to all. In this blessed Book there are lessons for kings and queens upon their thrones, for parents at the head of their homes, for brothers and sisters—for all ranks, relations, classes and degrees of mankind.

These two Christian ladies occupied not a humble, but rather an elevated position—elevated according to this world's standard—in social life. Their house was frequently the scene of hospitality ; their hands had often ministered to the Man of sorrows ; their brother had been raised by him from the dead. Their home was holy and happy, because consecrated by the presence of Him who gives to lowly homes a beauty that princely halls have not. Without his blessing the sheen and splendour of the noblest palace is but a transient beam on an April day, showing their evanescence and their vanity.

Martha on this occasion is rebuked ; Mary, her sister, is praised : yet both were Christians. Martha was a true Christian as well as Mary. But there are degrees of grace ; there are modifying peculiarities of tempera-

ment. These we shall see evolved and delineated as we proceed with this interesting picture. That Martha was a true Christian is plain from the narrative given of her in the Gospel according to St. John, in the 11th chapter, where we read, "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." What a beautiful distinction to a town! its proper name was Bethany—the house of song—but its holier and its nobler name was "the town of Mary and her sister Martha." These two Christian women gave to that town a distinctive name that will last while there are hearts to be affected by so beautiful a narrative. "Therefore his sisters sent unto Jesus, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." To show that Martha was a Christian, at the 20th verse we read, "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house." You can see at once the distinctness of the characters, related by different Evangelists. John had no communication with Luke; Luke had no communication with John; both their portraits are sketched from the same original. We can see the meditative Mary that sits and studies in the house; the active, the bustling and the domestic Martha, who is ever anxiously ready to show to her guest due and proper hospitality. "Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." How beautiful is this! She calculated there was a love in the bosom of Jesus that would not suffer a beloved brother to die; and she assumed that if he had been present, he could not have resisted their entreaty or the temptation to heal him. "But I know," says Martha, "that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it

thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." Now Martha replies—what a Christian alone could have said—"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then Jesus preached what came home to her heart. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life;" by that he either imposed upon the listener, or he was the mighty God;—"I am the resurrection,"—my voice shall ring through the homes of the living, reverberate through the graves of the dead; and as creation came into being at my bidding, dead humanity shall rise, and stand upon its feet again, as soon as the trumpet shall sound, and the voice of the Resurrection and the Life shall be heard. Then he said, "Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ,"—that is, the Messiah,—"the Son of God, which should come into the world." There can be no doubt, therefore, from the testimony of John, that Martha was a Christian. Her conduct even on this occasion, as recorded by Luke, indicates *traits* that none but a Christian could have developed. At the time that the incident occurred which led to her rebuke, Jesus was persecuted by the Scribes, and hunted from place to place. To sympathise with him was to be guilty of an offence in the sight of the Rabbies; to receive him into one's home was, according to them, to commit treason against the rulers of Israel, and to disregard the decision of them that sat in the chair of Moses. Martha, notwithstanding the peril, received the persecuted Man of sorrows into her home, and ministered to him those things of which he had need. The flower that blossoms through the snow-drift, and flourishes in the midst of the beating winds, must have its root struck deep into

the earth, and have within the elements of true vitality. She who could thus risk a barbarous treatment because of her faithfulness to her Lord, was not a mere professor, but a true Christian; and though a person of some distinction, she felt ennobled when her own hand ministered to the wants of the Lord. She felt that those hands which would be nailed to the cross, had often ministered to her; and that the least that she could do was, that her sinful hands might have the privilege and the joy of ministering to him. All these features indicate the Christian woman; and we must not suppose, that because there was alloy there was no gold, because there were imperfections there was no Christianity. If she erred on this occasion, as unquestionably she did, much may be said in palliation. She was evidently the eldest; she had all the weight of domestic duty; she had all the responsibility of providing for every visitor, and arranging all the constituent elements of her home. Having all this responsibility resting upon her, and not prepared, as she supposed, as she should be to receive Him with all that was due to so holy and so beloved and so illustrious a Visitor, she did—what other Marthas have done in less provoking circumstances—she lost her temper for a little, and forgot what was dutiful to the Lord of glory in her anxiety to present what was due to a visitor and a guest in her home. But if there was palliation, it must still be admitted there was also blame; and the blame lay less in what she said, and more, perhaps, in what Jesus saw in her heart—a little pride, a sprinkling of vain thoughts, a feeling akin to that of the Virgin Mary at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee; afraid that her home should be seen in dishabille, grieved and vexed that she was not ready to

entertain this Visitor with all the pomp and circumstance which she thought due; ashamed that things were not so elegant as she could wish; thinking less about the furniture of her heart, more about the furniture of her house—more anxious that the outside of the platter should be beautiful, and forgetting for a little that the reception of Christ into the heart was the first, if not the only duty that she owed to him. It was the excess of a taste, beautiful and just in itself, and only becoming sin by the feelings that it provoked. But every one has his temptation,—what is called his “weak side,” his polarity in evil, his besetting sin. With one man literature is his idol; with a mother it is her babe, her firstborn; with a statesman, ambition; with some great scholar or mighty soldier, reputation or renown; and with many a Martha, domestic elegance—spending more in making the drawing-room look beautiful, than in making the heart become holy in the sight of God. This was her peril, her besetting sin: it was mercy that it showed itself then—it was mercy to her that Jesus rebuked it, and put her and hers in their proper places. The aggravation of Martha’s offence was clearly the loss of temper she displayed. She was bustling, preparing to receive with due dignity, with great ceremony, the illustrious Visitor she had received into her house; and while she was doing so, what seemed to her hot temper—for a hot temper is in many a Christian, and sometimes the best Christians have the hottest,—what seemed to her hot temper so provoking was the coolness with which Mary sat, drinking in every word and syllable that fell from the lips of Him that spake as never man spake; while she was toiling, struggling, excited, having lost her self-possession and her composure, in order to arrange all that

was within for the reception of the Visitor who had crossed her threshold. In the excitement, therefore, and heat of her temper, she said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she come and help me." This was the language, evidently, of temper—it was more, it was a rude interruption of holy discourse that related to far more important things; and showed that she was more anxious to entertain respectfully a friend than to receive instruction from the great Teacher,—thought too much about the guest, and too little about Him who had come not to be ministered to, but to minister. Now we can see precisely what Martha was—a true Christian, excessively attached to her home, very desirous that it should have all that could possibly be desired in her day; with a very warm temper, and not careful to restrain the expression of it when it was tried. People who are true Christians are too often too easily provoked, but are Christians still. Anger is not sin; I do not believe there is any more sin in being angry than there is in being hungry; it is part and parcel of the original constitution of our nature; the sin consists in its excess: and that is a lesson that we all need to learn. The Latin poet says, "Perimus in licitis." "We perish in things that are perfectly lawful." It is less the doing of what is sinful, and more the excessive attachment to what is lawful, that destroys souls. So in anger; there may be anger, and yet there may be no sin; there may be anger issuing in great sin. What does an apostle say? "Be ye angry,"—I do not forbid you to be angry—but he does forbid sin,—"be ye angry, and sin not." Anger is a passion that ever trembles on the very verge of sin. We read, that Jesus

—the very Son of God himself—was angry; but then there is added, “being grieved for the hardness of their hearts,” anger dissolved and diluted into sorrow. Anger becomes sin when you allow the sun to go down upon it. Many a true believer is harassed with a very hot temper—many a worldly, carnal, avaricious, cold-hearted man is calm and placid as the ocean under a summer’s sun, and contrasts most favourably with a true Christian, who has the misfortune, as the world would call it, not to be gifted with the same amount of cold and freezing indifference. We see in Martha, anger which burst forth into expressions that partook in some degree of rudeness, and at least interrupted a profitable and useful conversation; but she was a Christian still.

Mary was another Christian; both sisters were so; but Mary was a Christian of a higher stamp. We read of her, that “it was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.” You recollect the interesting account of it, which we found in a previous chapter, where she showed love, faith, patient self-sacrifice, rich liberality, and proved by her fruits that she was a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. Her peculiar character as a Christian was this—that she seems to have had less temper than her sister Martha, and also to have been of a meditative and studious temperament; she so appreciated the visit of the Lord of glory, that she felt she dared not miss one word that fell from his lips, or let go the opportunity of hearing the precious instruction that he had come to teach them; she cared nothing about the household. Her Christianity was of a maturer and riper nature than that of Martha; and she teaches us that the younger sister may have more grace

than the elder—that Christianity is not of flesh nor of blood, nor of age, but a spiritual and a free gift. And we see, too, that constitutionally—for it does not teach us that Christianity did it—she had a milder and a gentler temperament. For when she was thus rebuked by Martha—when she heard Martha complain of her to her blessed Lord, “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she come and help me”—Mary might have said, and it would not have been unchristian if she had done so,—“Martha, I may be wrong; but this is not the place to rebuke me, in the presence of our Lord. This is not the time for telling me of my faults; could you not have waited till his blessed footstep had crossed the threshold, and then told me what my fault was, instead of passionately proclaiming it before all?” But she did not do so: she was silent. She recollected the maxim of her own Scriptures, “A soft answer turneth away wrath.” It often requires much grace to be silent under provocation, as it does to be eloquent in defence of truth. There is a time to speak, and it needs grace to enable us to speak; there is a time to be silent, and it needs as much grace to enable us to be so.

Having seen Martha, the domestic Christian, busy in the arrangements of her home; and Mary, the gentle and retired Christian, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and listening to his beautiful and instructive lessons, let us look to one greater than either—the central personage in the holy, and happy, and favoured group—the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He came for shelter to their home! he makes their reception of him not merely a shelter to himself, but a blessing to their souls. He preferred to feed with living bread them that hungered

for it, rather than to partake of the most bountiful repast that the hands of industrious Martha could prepare. He showed on this occasion, by the rebuke that he administered to Martha, that he would rather have Mary listening to what could not profit him, but would profit her, than Martha serving what would profit him but could not profit her. He came not to be ministered to, but to minister. It was his "meat and drink"—what an expression!—"to do the will of his Father in heaven." By his presence the home of the sisters was elevated into a heavenly sanctuary—that domestic circle became a congregation and a church in the house. Let us, like Mary, bring Christ into our home. Let us bring more of the church into the home, and not, like Martha, bring the home so much into the church.

We have seen that both sisters were Christians : but you have already gathered from what I have said, that there was a marked constitutional difference between them ; you can see under-lying the Christian influence, an aboriginal and a constitutional difference. I do not believe there are any two men in the world who are in temperament and disposition the same. It is plain there are no two faces in the world cast in the same mould, and the facsimiles of each other ; and I do not believe that there are any two temperaments in the world constitutionally the same. These two Christians had each their peculiar tempers,—one full of activity, the other of meditative retirement : the one ever delighting to work, the other ever anxious to listen and improve. When I see grace influencing a man, I do not dislike to see the traces of the original temperament breaking out through the sanctified and restrain-

ing influences of the grace of God. Christianity does not macadamise mankind, and lay them all down upon the same dead level—turning A into B, and making all men exactly the same; but it seizes the peculiar temperament of each, and sanctifies, restrains, sweetens, ennobles, inspires it. The stream is coloured by the bed over which it rolls in its course to the ocean; and the Christianity of every man is toned and tinged by the polarity of that man's constitution. And instead of being an argument that there is no grace because the hot-tempered man retains his hot temper when he becomes a Christian, it would seem to me rather a presumption in the opposite way. The remaining traces of the original peculiarity would seem to me proof that grace was there—not by their absence, but by their being subdued, restrained, sanctified, guided and directed aright. Grace leaves Peter still Peter, but Christian Peter; and John still John, but Christian John. Let anybody watch the two apostles, Peter and John, in their whole history; nothing can be more marked, no features more perfectly defined than the features of each. Peter all zeal, all fervour, speaking almost before he thought, and feeling far faster than he spoke; John listening, silent, quiet. And yet it is very striking, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, that though Peter was the only speaker, and John stood by perfectly silent, yet it says, that the Jews took notice that *both* of them had been with Jesus—as if the silence of John had an eloquence as convincing as the action and the utterance of Peter. We thus see, that grace does not extirpate idiosyncrasy; but while grace does not extirpate our individual peculiarity, it sanctifies it, restrains it, and puts it in its right place.

We read, in the next place, that Jesus, when he saw Martha forgetting her Lord in her guest, and her Saviour in her visitor, rebuked her. But how beautiful, how tender was his rebuke! "Martha, Martha,"—no recrimination, no bitterness; that was impossible in such a case; but it is a precedent for us that we ought to take notice of—"Martha, Martha, thou art careful,"—that is the translation of the same word which occurs in the 5th chapter of St. Matthew, where Jesus says, "Take no thought for the morrow." If you were to understand that in the light that you are not to think how you shall get bread for to-morrow, it would be very stupid, and very unchristian, and very improper. You are bound to exercise forethought; you are bound to make provision for to-morrow; but the expression is, "Feel no carking anxiety;" and the meaning of the Greek word *μέριμνα* is, irritating, perplexing, anxious thought. Well, he says, take thought of the provision; but do not take that distrustful, irritating, perplexing, anxious thought, which can do no good for to-morrow, and which must destroy your peace for to-day. So he says to Martha here, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful about many things." To be careful about a thing is proper; if I were obliged to sweep a crossing, I should feel it a duty to be careful in the sweeping of that crossing; if I were a servant, I should be careful that I attended to the business of my master. But it is sinful to be, as Martha was, excessively careful—irritated, perplexed, fevered, if I might use the expression, about many things. And not only does he say she was careful, but he adds also, "troubled." The word is derived from a Greek word which means disturbed, overwhelmed—undertaking too much in order to make arrangements for the reception of me.

But is there not many a Martha in the year 1854? Are there not some here,—a mother, a daughter, a sister, a brother—who have all Martha's anxious cares, without Martha's redeeming graces to sanctify and to sustain them? Is there not a Martha—if not many, at least one—in this assembly, whose mornings are occupied with preparations for the day, whose evenings are occupied with anxious preparations for to-morrow? To such a one I appeal, Does religion occupy its just place in your heart? Do you think of Jesus—the soul—eternity—heaven—responsibility—duty? Do thoughts of a house not made with hands enter your home sometimes during the day, entertained as angels un-awares?—or, is the day spent without one thought about the furniture of the soul; all thoughts absorbed about the furniture of the body? Is the church never present in your home upon the week-day? And, alas, alas! is your home present in the church upon the Sabbath-day? Martha, Martha, thou art careful about many things, and thou forgettest, amid all these many things, that one thing is essentially needful. But how mild was the rebuke, and yet how instructive: Martha's sin is as instructive to us as Mary's Christian virtue. The record of the one is the record of her failing, that Martha's successors may learn; the holy quiet of the other is the exhibition of a precedent, that other Marys in the world may have grace to imitate.

He concludes with this beautiful and truly instructive remark, "One thing is needful." What does this mean? Many things are useful; many things are ornamental, very many things are desirable; and we should not be human if we were not conscious of these emotions; but the salvation of the soul, the acceptance

of the Saviour, fitness for the kingdom of heaven—in other words, true religion, that is, amid all things, the one thing that is, what other things are not, essentially necessary.

Now some things are accidentally needful, not essential. Medicine for the sick is needful for to-day, but not always. There are many things that are occasionally needful; there are other things that are partially needful: but this is essentially needful, this is always needful, this is universally needful. And why should true religion—using that word as an epitome of all that the Gospel is—why should this be thus essentially needful? First, it replaces man in his lost and forfeited dignity. Sin has degraded man; his intellect is deranged, his heart is turned from God, his affections are spent upon earth; he is far from God, he is in a distant land, living upon the husks that the swine do eat, and a wanderer from his Father's home. True religion—using the word as a comprehensive expression—transforms the sinner into the servant, the servant into the son, the son into the heir—the heir of God, and the joint-heir with Christ. It gives harmony to the powers of his intellect, sanctity to the affections of his heart, peace to his conscience. The presence of that religion must be happiness; in the absence of it earth's best things are but burdens, they never can be satisfactory blessings.

In the second place, this one thing,—true religion, salvation, the knowledge of the Saviour,—is the one thing needful for present happiness. There are many things, I have said, desirable, many things that are ornamental, many things that are positive enjoyments. Lands and houses, and money to spare, are most enjoy-

able things; and that man must be a hypocrite or a stoic who says he has no wish for these things. It does not imply, because they are not the one thing needful, that they are not things in themselves desirable. All that we say of them, however, is what our blessed Lord designs here to teach—that there can be no real and lasting happiness in the heart till the soul has found its Saviour and its rest in God. Man's soul must be unhappy till it knows the way to heaven, and has some dear and bright hope of attaining that blessed goal. I wonder how any man on earth can have one moment's ease who has not some strong foundation on which he can lay the stress of his everlasting prospects. What is the longing of all mankind? Happiness. What explains the excitement of men? Their longing for happiness. The soul in every man feels it has lost its rest, it feels it has lost something that was its peace, and it knows not where to find it. It seeks out every cistern, and appeals to every source; it goes to mammon, and it says, "Make me happy;" it goes to the objects of ambition, and it cries, "Give me happiness;" it goes to trade, or to pleasure, or to dissipation, or to folly, to seek happiness. These are evidences of a restlessness that will not suffer the soul to domesticate itself in this world, and that prove that it belongs originally and really to a higher, if only it knew the way to that higher and better world. But the instant I know that I am restored to my communion with God—that I am a son accepted by my Father—that my sins are forgiven—that my nature is renewed—that I have peace with God—I can take all the things I have mentioned as desirable, enjoyable, ornamental; and when God is pleased to take them away, I can let them go; I have

got that which is a compensation for the loss of all ; I have that which is consecration, when I have the possession of all.

But this one thing is needful ; not only to give us happiness, but it is needful in an hour that comes to most people sooner or later—the hour of affliction. I have often wondered how a mere worldly man, without any religion, can bear the troubles and losses that we experience in this life ; “when the herd in the stall”—to use the language of the prophet—“and the fruit of the vine, and the labour of the olive,” are all that we have, and when the whirlwind sweeps them away, I do not wonder that man becomes a suicide, I only wonder that there are not more suicides. I know nothing that can sustain man in this world amid its vicissitudes, its changes, its bitter losses, its heavy cares, but—true religion, or a sure hope beyond us. I wonder how you men of business get on at all without it ; I wonder how it is possible to have one moment’s peace without the sustaining presence of that fountain of living water that flows through life’s desert places, and freshens them, and makes its very wildernesses rejoice, and blossom like the rose. When all is lost, however, to a Christian—when his riches take wings and flee away ; when the estate is taken from the owner—he can say what the prophet said in a passage I have often quoted, “Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall be fruit in the vines ; though the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold ;” yet, in spite of all this—in spite of catastrophe upon catastrophe, and loss heaped upon loss, I will not commit suicide, I will not become derailed, I will not steal, I will not do injustice, and

I will not be insensible—for a man is a man, not a stoic; he is not granite, but flesh and blood; I will do what a Christian alone can do—"I will rejoice," says the prophet, "in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation," who is a substitute and a compensation for all.

Should there be in this assembly some Martha—should her first-born babe be snatched from her bosom by the hand of death—and there is no sorrow equal to a mother's sorrow over the loss of her first-born and only child—all comfort then is common-place; all that you may say is utterly worthless; but if she be a Christian, you may approach her with hope—you need not hesitate. Draw near and you will see that though she weeps and feels most poignantly, she can say, what a voice from above inspires,—“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” “The cup that my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” To that mother death will be more welcome when he comes to herself, because he has taken the babe that has preceded her, and heaven will be more holy and welcome to her because it is only the distant colony to which her babe has gone to welcome her upon the threshold of glory, when death-divided friends shall meet to part no more. But true religion is not only needed in affliction, but it is needed in that hour that will come to you, and that comes to all—when we must lie down and die. I have often said, what I think is so true, that there is nothing upon earth so horrible as death. There is nothing, I believe, that happens to us so totally humbling as death. The contrast between man in the full vigour of life, the full

play and possession of all his powers, and man dying, breathing out his last gasp in death, is awful.

Depend upon it, God never made us to die; we were never meant to die. Something else explains that: God made us to be immortal—to be holy and happy for ever; but sin entered, and the child of sin—death, entered by it. Saint and sinner must both die. And, my dear friends, you know quite well that under the deep sense of the loss of some truly beloved one, everything in this world seems most worthless. I venture to assert that the proudest peer in England feels his coronet no better than a gilded toy when he takes it into that closet where the ashes of the dear dead lie waiting for a grave. And you yourselves well know that when death comes, all wealth, all property, all honour, all renown,—how light will they weigh at that solemn moment? Now, my dear friends, when that hour comes—and it must come—to you, when physicians can do no good, when beds of down shall have no softness, when the greatest delicacies shall have no sweetness—to feel at that hour the hand of your Father laid upon the feeble, faltering heart,—to see breaking inward from afar the rays of the eternal sun, and to feel that his setting in the west is only to rise in the everlasting and the glorious east—oh! no wonder that Christians have exclaimed in the ecstasy of a dying hour, what they never were able to give expression to in a living one, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Silence to me at a dying hour the beautiful voice of Chris-

tianity, life would be intolerable, death would be utter despair. I should have no taper on earth; I should have no star in the heavens; I should have an avalanche, cold, and heavy, and insufferable, on my heart: but give me this blessed truth—that Jesus bore my sins, that his blood cleanseth from all sin, that death is to me, not extinction, but that it is only change, and I have peace. I visited yesterday a member of this church trembling upon the verge of the tomb, and that person, composed and calm, said, “I have as perfect peace as if I were in heaven.” And what was that perfect peace? Just the knowledge that her sins had been washed away in the blood of Jesus; and that not because of anything she has done, but because of what Jesus has done for her, she has an assured hope of immortality and glory. Give me true religion in my heart, and I am free of heaven and of earth; I have in Christ’s name the password of the very universe, that all angels and archangels, and cherubim and seraphim will respect, and make way for me, the heir of God, for admission to my everlasting rest.

Such, then, is the blessedness of having that one thing. It is needful to replace us in our lost position; it is needful for happiness in this world; it is needful in affliction; and oh! it is needful—the one thing needful—in the hour of dying. In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, blessed Jesus, be thou to us the one thing needful, the one thing we value.

“Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” I will conclude with the beautiful and appropriate collect that we often sing here—that occurs in that collection of beautiful prayers,

the Prayer Book of the Church of England:—" Lord of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of thy holy name,—increase in us true religion,"—the one thing essentially needful,—“ nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

CHAPTER X. 42.

ONE THING NEEDFUL.

I REMARKED on the previous words, "One thing is needful," that Martha was a true Christian, but with too many of the cares of the world, like weights attached to her heart, and preventing that upward, and onward, and speedy progress which became one brought so near and cherished as so dear by our blessed Lord. On this occasion there was much to palliate her conduct, while there was much in her conduct also that was greatly to be blamed. I say there was much to palliate her conduct in this, that her very error arose from the excess of her zeal suitably and with proper dignity to give hospitality to Him whom she felt she was not worthy to receive under her roof. There was much blame, in the fact that she lost her equanimity of temper, interrupted the divine conversation of her blessed Lord, and said rudely, and not as became a Christian, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she come and help me." Jesus then instantly said to her—instruction and rebuke being so blended that the rebuke could not offend, and the instruction could not but profit—"Martha, Martha, thou art careful"—that is, anxious.

It is the same word that our Lord employs when he says, "Take no thought for the morrow"—that is, no perplexing, irritating, harassing thought—"thou art careful and troubled about many things;" but there is only one thing that is essentially needful. Many things are ornamental; many things are desirable; many things are proper in their place; but there is one thing always and everywhere needful, essential in its nature and lasting in its possession. And then he adds what is commendatory of Mary,—Whatever be Mary's fault in your estimate at this moment, she has one excellency, Martha—to the possession of which, Martha, you are not altogether a stranger—for Martha was a Christian—"she hath chosen that good part," which no doubt Martha had also chosen, "which shall not be taken away from her."

Now what is that good part? I think it must be explained as the one thing needful; only it is that one thing needful characterised as a part selected in the great drama of life, and issuing in its natural and blessed results in heaven hereafter, and characterised by the epithet "good,"—as substantially, essentially good; and also distinguished by this blessed feature, that though health shall be taken from the frame, and the bloom of youth shall fade upon the countenance, and the brow become wrinkled and furrowed, like the seasand from which the tide of life is ebbing, yet this good part shall never be taken away from you, nor you ever taken from it. I give unto her, Martha, eternal life; and none shall pluck her out of my hand.

Now there are some things that are thought in this world good, but which are not truly so; and there are other things which are really good, but are not dis-

tinctively that good thing which shall not be taken away. Among some of the things which are thought in this world good, are riches. How many think if they could only have a double income that they should have a double quantity of happiness! The poor man thinks that a little more money is just the good thing that he wants; but nobody ever yet felt it to be that good thing in the possession of it that he anticipated it would be when it was far in the distant horizon. He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; he that thinks he would be happy if he had only a hundred a-year, when he gets it will then think that he can only be happy when he gets two; and when he has got two he will think more intensely than ever that he cannot be happy until he gets four. The servant thinks, "If I were to be master or mistress, then I should be happy." The servant is made master, and does he cease now to have desires? He begins then to say, "Oh, if I could only get more riches, then I should be happy." He becomes rich; is he satisfied now? No; his wish is now, "If I could only get a title, then I should be happy;" and when he gets that title, he says, "If I could only get a higher, then I should be happy." And then, when raised—as some have been raised—to the rank and splendour of a throne, they only echo in succeeding ages the sentiment that came from the heart of a monarch swaying a great sceptre of old, who exclaimed in the agony of disappointment, vexation and grief, while seated on a throne, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest." There is no satisfaction in wealth; it is not a good thing even, in itself, and detached from that which will sweeten it.

Again, others think that fame, reputation, great

genius, an illustrious name, are good things. The poet spends the midnight oil upon it; the painter toils from morning dawn till sunset for it; the painter of old was asked, Why he laboured so assiduously? he answered, that it was for immortality. It has been a consuming thirst, in some an overpowering passion. And what is it worth? What will it matter to me that I may be sounded by a thousand trumpets upon earth when my dead dust is beneath the green sod, and the soul is listening to the anthems of the cherubim and the seraphim? Fame after one is removed from the world is about as worthless as loaves laid upon the stone under which one lies dead and quiet. It is something we cannot taste. Is it worth the pursuit—the painful pursuit—it is found to provoke? We should desire to be remembered when we are gone, not as clever men, nor as talented men, but as good men; to leave in the world behind us a *trail*, not of light, but beneficence, and virtue, and goodness; that is an ambition that angels desire, and that saints may justly pray for. But reputation, or renown, or fame, is not often a good thing.

By others again, great alliances are thought good, and desired, and coveted, and sought after;—and even Christians so far forget their position as to be the victims of ambition of this sort. But these alliances are not always good. David desired to marry the daughter of Saul; thinking that by becoming a king's son it would be well with him. Solomon contracted royal alliances, and he found them only snares, temptations and trials. And we may depend upon it that if we cannot, by grace, be happy in the situation in which God's providence has placed us, we never shall be happier in a higher, a wider, or a more prominent one. It

is not change of place that makes happiness, but change of heart. It is not being lifted horizontally from one part of the earth to another that makes us happier, but it is being drawn vertically to Him in whose presence alone is fulness of joy, at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

There are some things, in the second place, that are good, but yet are not that good thing. For instance, the Bible is a good thing, but yet the Bible, even with all its preciousness and value, is not that good thing. A man may have the Bible, may love the Bible, may admire the faultless character of the Saviour; nay, like some illustrious critics, appreciate its nature, be charmed with its eloquence, store in his memory its beautiful illustrations; but having learned astronomy, and science, and history from it, he may, nevertheless, have failed in discovering Him who is its central object, its glory, its harmony, its beauty—Christ and him crucified. A man may perish with a Bible in his hand; but he never can perish with that good thing which is here spoken of in his heart.

The Church is a very good thing—using the Church in its broadest sense, as the company of all who profess the religion of Christ Jesus. No doubt the Church is a good thing; it is a duty to belong to a visible Church, to be baptized into it, to participate of the Lord's body and blood sacramentally and significantly set forth in it—this is good. But the Church has sometimes been placed in the room of the Saviour, a church has sometimes been settled down in, as if the joining a Church were salvation; instead of personal trust in a living and glorified Lord. And whenever the Church takes this place, a good thing becomes by its abuse and misuse

a pernicious thing. It is possible to have a seat in a Church, a place among its people, a name on the rolls of its beneficence, and yet never to have tasted or possessed that good thing which shall never be taken away.

What is that good thing? Without dwelling upon, or contrasting things any more, I think, in one word, it is the salvation of the soul through faith in Christ Jesus, our only Sacrifice for our sin, our only righteousness by which we are justified in the sight of God. "Mary," Jesus said, "hath chosen to be her righteousness, her wisdom, her sanctification, her complete redemption, Him who is the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel." Now this good thing never shall be taken away. If I am a member of his body, I cannot be separated from him; if I be a living, fruitful branch of that vine, no hurricane can wrench me from the parent stem; if I be in Christ, I never can fall away from him: "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" "I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But this being in Christ is a very different thing from being baptized in his name, admitted into his church, or being acquainted even with his will. That phrase, "in Christ," I have often remarked, is so peculiar as in itself to do violence to ordinary language in order to convey and establish a truth that ordinary phraseology does not reach. We never say a servant is in his master, a pupil in his teacher, a son in his father; but you say, a believer is in Christ. What does this mean? It means that our union to him is something closer and more real than the union which subsists between teacher and

pupil, master and servant, husband and wife, father and son, mother and daughter; it inspired an apostle to say, "I live,"—but, as if that was not all the nature of that life, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live, I live by the power of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Now by being in Christ I have that good part which shall never be taken away; I have a righteousness to present at the judgment-seat, clothed in which I am accepted of God; an atonement, washed in the efficacy of which all my sins are blotted out. I have an interest in Christ, and Christ has an interest in me. Because he suffered the penalty of my sins, I shall never suffer it; because he obeyed the demands of the law, I shall never be condemned for failing to do so. He has borne all that I have deserved as a sinner; he has done all that I owed as a creature. In the former capacity I am forgiven through his blood; in the latter I am justified by his righteousness. In both I have that good part which shall never be taken away.

Mary had chosen that good part—*chosen* it; then it must have been offered to her; and if offered to her, why not to every woman in this assembly? Mary had no more right than you have; she had no more title; she had done nothing to deserve it, she paid nothing to purchase it. She chose it because it was freely, fully, heartily offered. Her choice may by grace be your choice. If you make it, grace has all the glory of your choice; if you do not, you yourselves have all the guilt and the condemnation, and nobody else, of not having made that choice. It implies then that this good part was offered to Mary; and if to Mary, that it is also offered to us. And that word implies an act of will.

It was her deliberate and affectionate judgment that chose Christ to be her salvation. Now many persons would answer, if you were to ask them, "Why are you Protestants?" "My father was so before me;" and that is the only answer they can give you. But you see here that religion was a personal choice of Christ to be her Lord; not a maternal or paternal inheritance, handed down from mother to daughter, or from father to son.

This expression, "chosen," implies freedom of will in its plenary sense; she chose the Saviour to be hers—not by constraint, but by deliberate choice. Some are Christians by constraint—not by the constraint of the Inquisition, which is not here, but by the constraint of an unsanctified conscience, often worse in its tortures than the Spanish Inquisition; and they are religious in order to get rid of the stings of conscience. They do not like religion; they take it as a nauseous medicine. Prayer with them is a penance; reading the Bible is a sort of atonement or satisfaction to a craving conscience, which will not be still unless something religious be offered to it as an opiate. But Mary was not driven to Christ, she was drawn to Christ; she was not constrained by fear, but she chose Christ as her Lord.

In the next place, her choice was not mere impulse. There are persons of that impulsive temperament that they will to-day be all that you could wish, and to-morrow their religion is gone like the morning cloud or the early dew, and left scarcely a memorial of its presence behind.

CHAPTER XI.

PRAYER—FORM—SIMPLICITY—PATERNAL—SOCIAL—ORDER—PERSEVERANCE—PRAYER IS PRIVILEGE RATHER THAN DUTY—CHRIST'S MIRACLES—CONFLICT—RECURRENCE TO EVIL IS HARDENING—MARY—THIS GENERATION, OR THE JEWISH RACE—BAPTISM—WOES.

THE chapter begins with a beautiful form of prayer, which is to be the key-note of all our petitions, the model after which all our supplications at the throne of grace are to be shaped and formed; and, perhaps, less the model than the mere order of petition, and more the spirit in which we should approach God, and pray to him as our Father.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray; and he answered, When ye pray, *say* thus. Some have argued that it is absolutely obligatory to use this prayer on every occasion that we pray; as if it, in preference to any other prayer in use, or in the Old or New Testament Scriptures, had a peculiar and singular virtue or merit. But such an idea would be a misapprehension of prayer. There is no virtue in words, but in Him only in whose name they are presented. The beauty of this prayer is its simplicity, its comprehensiveness, its paternal aspect, and the order in which we are to pray—seeking first that which relates to the glory of our Father, next what contributes to the well-being of ourselves. That it is not absolutely obligatory

in its existing shape is plain from this fact—that in the Gospel according to St. Matthew the form which he gave on one occasion differs in several words from the form which he gives on this occasion. You will notice that in the Gospel of St. Matthew it is, “Give us this day our daily bread;” it is here substantially, but not *verbatim* the same, “Give us day by day our daily bread.” In the Gospel according to St. Matthew it is, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us;” in this instance it is, “Forgive us our sins”—that is, our sins against God—“as we forgive every one that is indebted”—that is, relative obligations—“to us.” And then the doxology in Matthew at the close is here omitted. Now it is singular that in the prayer given in St. Matthew, Jesus says, “After this manner pray;” but in this form he says, “When ye pray *say*.” Now those who most rigidly hold it as an indispensable form, use the form which is not enjoined absolutely, before which he says, “After this manner pray;” and they do not use the form in which there seems something like the obligation of using the form, for he says, “When ye pray, *say*, Our Father which art in heaven.” I do not quote these things as if the prayer were not suitable—far from it; I think it is the most beautiful, the most simple, the most evangelical, the most comprehensive of all the petitions in the Bible; and the oftener I use it, the more expressive and appropriate it seems to me.

In the second place, I wish to notice that all the instances of prayer used by our blessed Lord are generally short and extremely simple. It is not the quantity of words which we employ, but the depth and fervour with which we pray in Christ’s name, that makes true prayer.

It is possible to repeat, like the poor Romanist, a thousand "Pater Nosters," and yet not to pray one "Our Father." On the other hand, it is possible, and I hope frequent, for many a Christian to breathe from the heart this simple "Our Father," and in its once utterance to ask truly and to obtain effectually all it so beautifully and so justly comprehends.

Let me notice, in the next place, that when we pray—I have often felt this, and I do think it is so salutary to remind you—in this Christian dispensation, we are not to go to God as if we were miserable, condemned criminals, standing in the dock, deprecating his wrath, and imploring a fierce tyrant not to destroy us; but we are to go to him as to a loving father. And I have sometimes thought that amid all the excellences and beauties of various Liturgies that are used, there is often too much of the deprecatory of God's wrath, and too little of the paternal and filial feeling that pervades this beautiful prayer. You will notice that when the Christian prays, he goes to God as a son goes to a father; and he begins his prayer with recognising God's paternal relationship, and says, not "Our Judge," not "Our God," but, "Our Father which art in heaven." And do not forget, when you use this prayer, especially when you use it in private, to precede each petition with "Our Father:" "Our Father which art in heaven,"—"Our Father, hallowed be thy name,"—the name of a Father;—"Our Father, thy kingdom"—our Father's kingdom—"come;"—"Our Father, thy will"—a Father's will—"be done on earth as it is in heaven;"—"Our Father, give us"—thy children—"daily bread;"—"Our Father, forgive the sins of thy children, and teach thy children to forgive all their brothers and

sisters of mankind ;"—“ Our Father, deliver us from all evil,” and, “ Our Father, lead us into no temptation.” It is the paternal chord vibrating through every petition ; it is the supplication of a son running through the whole prayer at the throne of grace. And you will notice, too, how little of selfishness is in it. It is not “ *My* Father,”—that would be selfish, or if not selfish, it would be self-love, which is excluded ; but it is “ Our Father,” and therefore when we pray, it is in common with all believers.

It begins, “ Our Father which art in heaven,”—our true home, after which we are seeking ; where a father’s house is there the children’s home is. And when we say, “ Our Father which art in heaven,” we confess that our home is not the frail and perishable tent that must be struck below ; but the everlasting mansions that are prepared above, where our Father and his family are.

It is worthy of notice that the first half of the prayer—the first three petitions, or rather the first four petitions, all relate to God ; the last petitions all relate to man. The first half of the prayer is prayer that God’s name may be hallowed, our Father’s will done, our Father’s kingdom come ; and then the second half of it is, “ Give us daily bread, and forgive us our sins.” How interesting is that ! The Christian prays first that God’s name may be glorified ; next, that his own wants may be satisfied ; and he prays that his wants may be satisfied only through the glorifying of God’s holy name. In other words, in his prayer a Christian, just as in his practice, seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then he expects that all other things will be added unto him. It may also be observed, that when a Christian has done glorifying God, or rather, has thus

glorified God, it is not beneath him to ask daily bread. I believe that it is our privilege. I have often repeated it to you, and it is worth repetition, because it is so true—it is our privilege and our duty to ask of God the least crumb that lies on the table of our temporal enjoyment, as well as the loftiest blessing that God gives from beside the throne. If you are poor, seek that God will give you what is good for you; if you are sick and ill, pray for restoration to health; if you are dying, pray for life; if you are in danger, pray for safety; if you have a relative ill, pray for that relative. And pray frequently; and if any one should say, How do you know it is good that the relative should be restored?—how do you know it is good that you should have health, or obtain money, or be delivered from danger? I answer, That is no business of yours; it is God that will and does judge of that: it is your privilege just to tell him as a child tells his parent what you feel to be needful, and to pray for, what you think, in all honesty, to be good for you, and leave it with God, whose wisdom never errs, whose love never fails, to give or to withhold, as he may think most expedient for you. A Christian is to pray for everything he thinks he wants; it is God's prerogative, not ours, to discriminate what is good for us, and what is not; and we may, therefore, ask for daily bread. But, you say, how can a rich man use this prayer? I can well understand a poor man, striving to obtain a subsistence, asking daily bread; but how, you say, can a rich man, who never knows what it is to want? But, my dear friends, there are two things requisite to get health,—first, the bread that I am to eat; secondly, the powers in my system that shall make that bread nourishment and strength to

me. Now, it happens that the poor man often has plenty of appetite, but no bread; the rich man is often much worse, for he has plenty of food, but no appetite and health to eat it. But we need both; and therefore, when we pray to God to give us daily bread, we ask him not only to give us bread—which in itself has no more nutriment than a stone—but we also ask him to give us health and appetite which may help us to extract from that bread the nutriment that is requisite to keep the fountain of life in strong and vigorous action.

We ask also forgiveness of sin and deliverance from temptation, and all blessings that we need for this life and that which is to come.

Then Jesus argues with them, and he says, “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves,”—that friend may answer, in a very surly manner,—“Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are *in bed*,”—not “with me,” as here rendered, in the same bed, but, my children are in bed, and I am in bed also,—“I cannot rise and give thee.” Well, but the person who applies is very hungry, and he persists in knocking and calling, until his neighbour gets up and gives him bread; it is in our translation, “because of his importunity;” it might have been translated better, because of his impudence—because of his shamelessness, and determination not to go away until he gets what he wants. Now our Lord’s argument is what is called by logicians *à fortiori*. He says, if a human being will do this, not because of the relationship of him who asks, but unwillingly, and because of his importunity, and persistency, and determination, then,

à fortiori, how much more will He who is willing, give all the blessings that you ask ; and still more, surely, will he give to persistent praying that which you persistently and perseveringly ask for. “ Therefore I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Now is this true ? We all know it ; and yet how little impression does it make upon you. If I were to say to you, “ Go to the Bank of England at twelve o’clock to-morrow, and ask as much money as you like, and you will get it,” one thrill of delight would rush through every bosom, and to-morrow Threadneedle Street would be crowded with earnest and anxious applicants. I ask, how is it to be explained that when the Sovereign of the skies says from heaven, “ Ask, and it shall be given unto you ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,”—that we feel it so little a privilege, that we do not trouble ourselves either about what he says, or about what he enjoins ? My dear friends, let it not be so said of us. Let us ask ; it is not a duty to pray—it is a privilege. The question is not, Ought I to pray ? but oh, surely it ought to be, May I pray ?—not surely, “ Is it a duty to pray ?” but surely, surely, “ Is it my privilege to pray ?” And if it be my privilege, and not my duty, I will earnestly ask that I may find, and I will knock that to me it may be opened. Never let the essentially Popish element enter into your thoughts about prayer—that it is a mere duty. The man that prays because it is a duty, has never yet learned to pray. Asking bread of a man that has it, is not your duty—you cannot help it, it is your instinct. And seeking a blessing from God is not a duty—it is our privilege, and we cannot help it. The poor Roman Catholic prays

because it is his duty, because it is a punishment or a penance. He thinks he makes an atonement for his sins; and the more Pater Nosters and Ave Marias he repeats, the more he thinks he prevails with God. It does not matter if he does not understand what he says; he thinks that there is a virtue in every syllable, expiation in every clause, and that God looks less at the feeling of the petitioner, and more at the multitude of words which the petitioner employs.

In the next place, as it is not a mere duty to pray, but a privilege also, let me remind you, never to teach your children so much that it is a duty to pray, but try and teach them that it is their privilege to pray. And never do what some very foolish parents have done—not many, I hope—enjoin upon your children to learn a prayer as a punishment. I have seen it in Scotland, where the parent has said to the child—and a mother, whose instinct is generally most infallible, as her power is greatest—“You have misconducted yourself at church; as a punishment, go and learn a part of a Paraphrase, or commit to memory a hymn.” And in England, too, I have heard, it is not uncommon to say, “You were noisy in church, therefore go and learn the collect for the day.” Now what is the plain nature of that? Just Popery in homœopathic doses; but not the less injurious because it is so; and if you teach your children such Popish practices in the nursery, you must not be surprised when they grow up and adopt them in manhood; and that Puseyism and Popery become so predominant and so general as they are. Never make your child either learn a hymn, a collect, or a prayer as a punishment—never teach your child, in other words, the Popish sacrament of penance; but on the contrary,

if your child has done wrong, far better say, "I will not take you to church on the Sabbath evening, or on the Friday evening," or whatever the week-day service may be; or, "I will not allow you to join at family worship to-day." Always teach your children that not to get access to the Bible is a punishment; that to read the Bible is a privilege: always try to associate with religion all that is bright, and blessed, and beautiful, and happy; and associate with the loss of it all that is painful, punitive, and sad; and by instilling this in the nursery you do what parents think they do when they teach their children, but which they only half do when they teach them—you train your children; and often where there is the least teaching there is the most effective training; and often where there is the most schooling there is the greatest absence of what is the most essential element—true, and Christian, and personal training. Men are made more by what they see than by what they are taught. For one truth that clings to the memory, and moulds the character in after years, ten impressions have entered by the eye that shape that character, and make men, long afterwards, what they become in the providence of God.

Thus we see that the true aspect of prayer is not, Ought I to pray? but, May I pray?

After this our blessed Lord argues—and how condescending in him so to argue!—from the weak to the strong. If your own son ask of you a piece of bread, you will not surely give him that which is not bread, but which will do him no harm, because he will not eat it—a stone. If your son ask you for food, you would not give him that which would sting him—a serpent. Well, then, if when your son asks

what is needful, you do not give him that which is worthless; and if when he asks that which will do him good, you do not give him that which will do him harm, argue from the instincts in a human father's bosom, to the beneficence in a divine Father's heart; and if you, earthly fathers, being imperfect, passionate, apt to lose your tempers, opposed to God—if ye, earthly fathers, being evil, know quite well, notwithstanding all this, how to give good gifts to your children, now come, calculate if you can, how much more will your Father—our Father which is in heaven, always the same Father—who is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? What a justification of prayer is here! what an encouragement to pray! how criminal is the man who does not pray! how certain of heaven and eternal glory is that man who does truly pray!

When our Lord bids his disciples pray, he bids them say, "Our Father which art in heaven." In the original it is *ἐν οὐρανοῖς*, "in the heavens;" but when he says, "How much more will your heavenly Father," or, your Father, it is "from heaven,"—it is *ἀπ' οὐρανῶν*.

When we pray, it is, "Our Father which art in heaven,"—our home; when he gives, it is "our Father from heaven"—the place from which the blessing comes.

After he had thus taught them to pray, and showed them the efficacy of prayer, we read that he cast out an evil spirit, and the people wondered at the miracle which had been done. Now notice, the miracles of our Lord were never questioned as feats that were truly supernatural. They did not say, "This feat can be done by us;" but they said, "It is clearly supernatural; but we allege it is done by satanic power, which is supernatural from beneath, not by divine power, which

is supernatural from above." But the force of this testimony is very remarkable; because it recognises the supernatural nature of the deed, whilst it tries to explain it on a principle which our blessed Lord showed to be altogether inapplicable and impossible; for he says, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" If he help me to punish his own subjects, then how is it possible that his kingdom can hold together? It must come to an end; it would be suicide for Satan to do so. The thing refutes itself; and therefore this deed, which you admit not to be human, cannot be satanic—it must therefore be heavenly and divine. He then states the reason for this; he says to them, "When a strong man armed"—that is, Satan—"keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." A man has a peace, which is properly a quiet, as long as he is the subject of Satan, and the child of this world; and the very first proof that a work of transforming grace has commenced in the human heart is, that that heart becomes henceforth, for a season at least, the region of disquiet, of conflict, and of anxious thought. The "peace, peace," that is no peace, is perilous; but the peace that passeth understanding is more than a compensation for the quiet which it breaks. Satan can give quiet; the amusements of the world may give you a calm; but the Holy Spirit alone can give that peace which will bear the shock of time, survive the ordeal of the judgment morn, and spread its broad bright stream into a broader and a brighter in that rest that remaineth for the people of God.

He speaks of one out of whom an evil spirit had been cast; and then that man, not taking care, but inviting the return of that spirit, the consequence is, that he who is invited back again goes not alone, but with seven others worse than himself. A man that embraces an evil habit,—let it be drunkenness, for instance,—and abstains for a season from the gratification of that evil and pernicious passion, and relapses into the passion again, is a painful but a true illustration of the idea in this passage,—that his last state is worse than the first, and his restoration more hopeless than it ever was before.

“A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee,”—that is, the Virgin Mary. Jesus, as he does wherever Mary is alluded to, conveyed clearly and unequivocally a rebuke to the rising tendency to give her worship, in the declaration that they that hear the word of God and keep it—that is, the humblest Christian—is more blessed than she. In the Church of Rome, they do what is called canonize saints. Now to canonize partly means to bless; which is a minor form, called beatification, or pronouncing blessing. I will take the ecclesiastical phraseology of that church, and the text will read exactly thus: “And a certain woman said, She is worthy to be canonized that bare thee. But Jesus said, Yea, rather, more worthy to be canonized are they that hear the word of God, and keep it;” that is to say, that person who is a true Christian is, in being such, raised to a loftier level, invested with nobler privileges than Mary was, in being the mother according to the flesh of the Lord of glory.

In the language of a Christian, By giving herself to Jesus, Mary was more blessed, than by giving Jesus to be born into the world, our only Saviour. And you will notice that in almost every passage where there is an allusion to Mary, this lesson is always taught us. At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, Mary said, "They have no wine;" Jesus answers, rebuking her, "Woman, what is that to thee?" In another instance, one said to him, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without;" and Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Those that hear the word of God, and keep it."

He then mentions some of the signs that should be given to this generation. Now I wish you to notice here an instance of the word "generation" being used in the sense of a race. You remember in that passage where he says, "This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled;" many persons have said that that denotes that it was the existing thirty years generation of the Jews that should not see death till the destruction of Jerusalem; and they say that the word "generation" is never used in the sense of a people or a race. But in this chapter the word is plainly used in this sense. He says, the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world shall be required of this generation. "Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation," that is plainly, the Jewish race. Now the sign of the prophet Jonah was this. Jonah preached forty days to Nineveh to repent, and it did repent. Jonah said, "In forty days shall Nineveh be overthrown." From the time when Jesus uttered these words till the time that

Jerusalem was overthrown, about forty years (using a day for a year) elapsed; and perhaps it was relative to the time that should precede the fall of Jerusalem as compared with the time prophesied by Jonah that should precede the overthrow of Nineveh, that Jesus identified the sign of Jonah and the sign that was now being given.

We then read, that "a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him; and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner." In this case we would have our Baptist brethren notice an instance, irresistible, of the word βάπτω, or βαπτίζω, the first being the word from which the last is derived, being used not in the sense of immersing, but rather sprinkling, or wetting a part of the body, and not the whole. The literal translation of this passage is, "When the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he was not first baptized before dinner." Well, now, how did a Pharisee baptize before dinner? He dipped his fingers simply in water; and therefore, to put a portion of the body in contact with water is truly baptism. I do not deny that baptism by immersion is true; I only ask those that hold that opinion to confess that baptism by sprinkling is quite as true. But, you say, what warrant is there for it? I answer, here is the Greek word translated "baptism," actually employed, denoting only a part of the body coming into contact with water, and therefore not implying that the whole body must be immersed in order to correspond to the meaning of the word that is here employed. Well now, our Lord instantly said to him, that the Pharisees were more anxious to keep the outside of the platter clean than

the inside. And then he said, "But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and behold, all things are clean unto you;" it is as if he said, You are very anxious to observe all the external forms and ceremonies of religion, but you have utterly neglected to act up to it in deed and in truth; instead of giving alms, you have plundered widows' houses. Begin to exercise the obligations of justice, mercy and love, which ought to be the inner contents of the human vessel; and by doing so you will consecrate the exterior part, and all things will be clean; and so purity will be really developed in the case of him who is morally and spiritually right in the sight of God. He then pronounces a woe upon the Pharisees for being very particular about tithe, mint, and rue, but for being utterly careless about the weightier matters of the Law. He pronounces the same woe upon the lawyers—the ecclesiastical lawyers of the day—and when they asked whether he alluded to them, he at once frankly said that he did so; he warned them that they identified themselves with their fathers by sanctioning and accepting their deeds, walking in their footsteps, and imitating their example; and then he pronounces that very awful judgment, that all the vengeance, or righteous retribution provoked by the Jewish race from the days of Abel down to the last martyr that suffered between the altar and the temple, should fall upon that generation. We have this prophecy fulfilled before our eyes. The Jews are wandering and weary-footed outcasts, the obvious tokens of some dread retribution that has overtaken them; but by their very perpetuity the clear prophecy of a coming restoration, when Israel and Judah shall dwell in safety,

and the root and the offspring of David their king shall be King and Lord in the midst of them. The Jews are cast off for a season, not out off for ever. They will one day look on Him they pierced. The signs of their restoration and conversion multiply on all sides. Their conversion will produce a deep impression on the Gentiles, even life from the dead.

CHAPTER XII.

CAUTION—HYPOCRISY—WORDS HAVE ENDLESS ECHOES—SOUL'S SEPARATE EXISTENCE—SPECIAL PROVIDENCE—SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE CLERGY AND POLITICS—COVETOUSNESS—CHARACTER—THE RICH FOOL—GOD WILL PROVIDE—HEART AND TREASURE—COMING OF CHRIST—DEGREES OF SUFFERING AND JOY—SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THIS long and beautiful lesson is full of great, personal, spiritual, and lasting instruction. It begins first of all with a caution addressed to the disciples, and to all that constituted his immediate auditory, to beware of that which was the great characteristic of the Pharisees; namely, hypocrisy. Hypocrisy means, "wearing a mask;" a hypocrite means a person under a mask. In ancient times the play-actors put on a mask while they acted their parts; and "hypocrite," therefore, means a person that wears a mask—something that makes him look to others different from what he is and looks to himself, and what he knows himself really to be. It is worthy of remark, that the sin which our Lord seems to have branded with his severest denunciations, was the sin of hypocrisy. He selected it for special rebuke; he spoke of it as the greatest offence; and the Pharisees, and scribes, and ecclesiastical rulers of the day, must have felt his searching hand in their consciences, while he so often, and so minutely, and so severely rebuked it. He shows to them the absurdity of hypocrisy, he says, "There is nothing hid that shall not be revealed," the mask must be broken, the features that are under

it must one day be disclosed. The mask may last through the world, but you must leave it behind you at the grave; and just as you are, the Searcher of hearts sees you, and will reveal you at the judgment day. That which is spoken in darkness, you think that the darkness will bury for ever; but the darkness will give up its contents just as truly as the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. This reminds me of a thought I tried to express to you before,—and it is a very solemn one,—that a word that has once passed from my lips, whether good, bad, or indifferent, will not cease to be repeated in reverberations and echoes till the end of this dispensation come. You know well that philosophers have proved, what can be mathematically demonstrated—the infinite divisibility of man; that is, if I divide an inch into two, I can still divide each half inch into two, and each new half into two, and so on without limit; because there cannot be annihilation, there must still remain something to be divided. Well, when I utter a word, that word provokes its echo, and that echo another, and that another, and though the reverberations may be so minute that we do not hear them, that is owing to the deadness of our hearing, not to those echoes ceasing to be repeated,—a sound, like an inch, may be divided *ad infinitum*. So that a word lightly spoken goes round, and round, and round the globe, and God may make it audible at the judgment like thunder in the ear of the hypocrite that uttered it once, and thought the darkness or distance would quench it; but he discovers now that it was only hushed for the time, not suppressed.

Our Lord then warns them whom they were to fear : “ 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. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell.” Notice throughout the chapter, where he speaks of the body and the soul—of treasure in the skies, and of the Lord coming and rewarding his servants—that he assumes throughout the everlasting and separate existence of the soul. Some persons have expressed wonder that the New Testament does not reiterate and repeat in stronger terms the fact that the soul survives the body. But it does what I think is still more instructive—it assumes it in every text. The thing is so plain, so clear, so indubitable, that our Lord assumes it as that which no man in his senses will doubt. And we cannot be surprised at this. What is that which I see, and hear, and touch, and handle, which a fever can reduce to dust, which death will lay in the grave, with which corruption will claim sisterhood, and the worm friendship?—Is that the mighty being who can send his soaring thoughts beyond the stars, that can weigh the everlasting hills, that can mete out the ocean, and estimate its depth, its density, its length, and its breadth—can I suppose that mighty creature a thing of forty—fifty—sixty—seventy years of age? It is impossible ; the body is but the shell, it is but the tabernacle in which I move for a little, till I am translated from this mortal to yon immortal,—from this perishable house, to a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And one knows that when death comes we do not die. I do not believe that there is such

a thing as dying in the literal sense of the word. When the eye closes, and the heart, weary with its beating, stands still, there is no loss of consciousness; I do not believe there is a momentary suspension of complete consciousness in our transition from this life to that life which is to be; there is simply the little struggle of the soul in disentangling itself from the pulleys and the ropes that we call sinews and muscles, and all the roofing and walls of this mortal residence in which it has been sojourning as a stranger for a little; but it never, even *in transitu*, loses its consciousness. No; when the body is nearest dissolution, and friends that stand by in their helplessness weep the sorest, the soul is then unfurling its majestic pinions, taking its loftiest flight, and not pausing in its upward movement till it join in singing the praises of God amid the cherubim and the seraphim of the sky. Fear not, then, that which can dissolve the perishable tabernacle; but love, and fear, and worship Him who receives the sanctified soul to himself, and makes it happy and holy for ever, or can reject it for ever.

In this chapter our Lord pursues a series of illustrations very beautiful. He says, "Five sparrows are so worthless, so cheap, that they are sold for two farthings,"—more money than two farthings mean in our coinage, but still a very small sum. "Well," he says, "if the sparrow which is so worthless a creature,—it does not sing, it is not used for common food, it has not a beautiful plumage,—and apparently so useless to us, upon the housetop, is actually superintended by God,—if it cannot fall, wing-wearied, to the earth without his cognisance, is it possible to conclude that this great creature man, great in his ruins, majestic even in his

degradation, is overlooked and forgotten by that God whose power reaches the highest, whose beneficence comprehends and ministers to the very lowest?" And as if still more strikingly to convince you, he says, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." And what a thought is here! It is literally so; but our Lord means to teach us this, that the least turning of a corner is all foreseen and pre-arranged by God. There is no such thing as a loose screw or a broken pin in the history of the humblest of mankind; there is no such thing as a chance occurrence which God did not foresee, superintend, and evoke, either for his glory, or to your good. The very hairs of our head are numbered. And if our hairs be numbered, can we suppose that our footsteps are not, that our thoughts, our fears, our hopes, our anxieties are not? God is in the whole stream of human life, in its roaring cataracts, in its little eddies; in all in it that is magnificently great, in all in it that is minutely small, God is there. And as I have often said to you—what I think is worth repeating—God takes as great care of that poor orphan as if he had nothing else to do but to look after that orphan in all space and in all time. What a blessed thought is this! it is the greatness of God, it is the glory of God, that so minute a thing, so frail a thing, is so truly the object of his special cognisance. And if this be so, then whilst I am in the way of duty I am in the path of immortality.

He then goes on to explain who shall be confessed by the Son of man; namely those that have the magnanimity to confess—where they have had previously the grace to feel—the glory and excellence of the Son of man before men.

He next speaks of the sin against the Holy Ghost. This occurs without any previous context; but in a parallel passage we have it in its proper context: and there it was when the Pharisees alleged that Jesus did miracles by Beelzebub, or by Satanic power. He said that such was sin against the Holy Ghost, their ascribing miracles clearly from God to Satan the Wicked One, and the Prince of the power of the air. I have known excellent Christians who seem to have an idea that this sin might be still committed by them. I do not believe that such a thing is possible, or that such a thing now occurs. I think it was a special offence that could be perpetrated only then, and I know nothing that corresponds to it now, except final and complete rejection of the Gospel, and refusal of the great salvation provided there. There is no period in the life of the worst of mankind where this text is not applicable in all its efficacy, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

He then makes an incident that occurs, the basis of very valuable instruction on the subject of covetousness. One of the company rudely interrupted him while speaking of divine things, by asking him to interfere in a mere matter of human or of personal dispute. Jesus replied to him, "Man,"—that is a phrase of respect,—“Man, who made me a judge or a divider?” That is a very important lesson. It seems to refer to all, but more especially to ministers of the Gospel. Our blessed Lord came to preach the truth, and through the truth, holiness of life; but he refused to intermeddle with political or national disputes. Now, it seems to me, that the minister of the Gospel must not take the place of the magistrate or the judge, that is not his

place ; it is his duty to preach ; but the instant that he interferes with the party politics of the day, he degrades the pastor of Christ into the partisan of Cæsar, his right hand parts with its cunning, and his greatest efficiency in promoting the blessed Gospel is impaired and diluted to the very utmost. Jesus makes this interruption, however, an occasion for giving instruction ; and he says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness ; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,"—or, as he expresses himself in another passage, "Man doth not live by bread alone." His "life" means here his true life : his real happiness does not consist in abundance. You will not find that the rich man is one whit happier than the poor man. The poor man has great struggles how to make ends meet, but the rich man has many greater struggles, and worse fears how to keep what he has, and guard from the consequences of what he has. There is no such thing as real happiness deducible from earthly possessions. We think so when we have it not ; but the instant that we have got it, we find how mistaken we were when we looked forward to it as happiness ; and how little satisfied we are amid the possession of the things of this life. But to illustrate this, "he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." Then the rains descend and the sun shines upon the just and the unjust. Here was a bad man made rich. You must never, my dear friends, estimate moral and spiritual character by providential occurrences. One man dies in a church ; he is not therefore saved : another man dies in a playhouse ; he is not therefore lost. You must not pronounce judgment from providential occur-

rences, but only on ascertained, carefully ascertained, moral and spiritual character. One man who is very wicked becomes rich, but those riches are not the sign of God's blessing. Another man, who is a saint, dies a sufferer, as he lived a sufferer; but that is not the evidence that God has forsaken him. "Think ye that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?—I tell you, Nay;" instead of judging others, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Well, this rich man instantly thought within himself, What shall I do? One would have thought the answer would have been very obvious. If he had had a liberal heart, he would have said, "There is a poor hungry man in the cottage close by, I will give him food; there is another poor man who wants a blanket, I will give him one; there is a man that wants a Bible, I will give him one." It would have been no great difficulty if he had looked wider than the circumference of himself. "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" I have got more than I can positively take care of. Then he said, "This will I do"—not, I will give to those who have not—"I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow," or store up, "all my fruits and my goods." You see the word "I" is predominant throughout; there is a great deal about what *I* will do; about *my* fruits, and *my* goods—all about *myself*; and, "I will say to my soul," as if he had the future in his hand as well as the past, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." That is just what the world says still, and then it finds what he found,—“Thou

fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Then he teaches his disciples a lesson from this event; and says, "Take no thought for your life." I explained in my remarks on St. Matthew that the word "thought" is the translation, not of the Greek word, which means proper, just thought, but of a Greek word, *μέριμνα*, that means thought that rends and distracts the soul, and tears it asunder with anxiety; that is the literal meaning of it. Well, he says, Do not take such thought as this. You must take thought for to-morrow. A man that on Monday recollects that he has debts to pay on Tuesday, ought to take thought about Tuesday; and the man that has a family to provide for, ought to take thought how he shall provide for his family; but he ought not to take distracting, perplexing, anxious thought about it; for "the life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment;" and if God keep up your life by the continuous touch that he communicates to your heart, how much more will he bestow upon you, whilst you are in the path of duty, the elements of the support and the perpetuity of that life. And therefore he argues with them, God takes care of the ravens in the wood, he takes care of the lilies of the field; he feeds the one, and he clothes the evanescent lily with a glory and a splendour that Solomon never had. If God lavishes so much care in feeding the ravens; if God expends so much of his grace that he tints a lily as exquisitely as if he had been employed from creation in doing nothing else, will he not take care of you, O ye of little faith? Why, such a picture as this is

enough to cheer and electrify the most doubting and trembling heart; and to give peace, and joy, and comfort to the most troubled spirit. And therefore he says, Do not perplex yourselves about these things; but "seek first the kingdom of God," make religion the main thing, and all these, the subordinate things, will be added unto you.

Jesus seeks throughout to inspire implicit and unsuspecting confidence in his paternal love, in his omniscience, in his omnipresence, in his faithfulness to all his promises towards his people. If God so take care of a lily that springs up beautiful for a day or two, and decorates it so beautifully that it looks as if he had spent years in doing it, will he altogether neglect or overlook creatures intellectually so magnificent, and morally occupying so responsible a position as his intelligent, dependent and believing family? The thing is impossible; therefore do not perplex your minds about the fears of to-morrow, or about the troubles of next year, but act upon this principle—seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all the rest will be added; that is, set your hearts supremely upon divine things, and human things will be ordered better than you expect: look first of all to what is duty, in reference to God; and leave to him the management and control of all that is before you. You cannot produce in to-morrow's sky a single cloud; you cannot to-morrow guarantee one ray of sunshine; no anxiety to-day about what will be to-morrow will have the least effect upon to-morrow, and it will have a very injurious effect upon yourselves; therefore cease to have anxious, irritating thoughts about the future, which we know nothing of; and fulfil all the responsi-

bilities and duties of the present which is before us; and thus you, minding God's part, will find by all experience that he will mind and take care of your well-being. He then tells them that where their treasure is, there the heart will be also. That is the best test and criterion of what a man is. Where his heart is, his treasure is; and the converse is true, where his treasure is, his heart is. Some have their hearts in their houses of business, others in politics, others in literature, others in some other elegant accomplishment; but if the heart be there wholly, it is in a wrong place. The treasure is in heaven; the heart should be, not exclusively, but supremely there also.

He then gives an illustration of what will be said at the end, when the Lord returns at the wedding-feast, and finds some—his friends—waiting and watching, and receives them to himself, and makes them happy. He bids believers still, "Be ready; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." That does not mean, as it is too often used to denote, the hour of death. It may be quite true that we know not when death comes; but this is not the meaning of this text; and it is not fair to take texts that clearly allude to one thing, and to force them into an application to a thing perfectly different. What is spoken of here is a master returning from the feast during one of the watches into which the night was divided; they not knowing whether he would come at the second, third, or fourth watch. So he says; "Be ye ready; for ye know not whether the Son of man will come this year, next year, or twenty years hence." The constant attitude of the Church of Christ is that of expectancy; the bride waiting for the bridegroom, knowing not when he will

come; waiting and longing for the return of Him who has promised to come again, in like manner as they saw him go. I presume, therefore, that this text, "Be ye ready," relates to the coming of our Lord. And it is remarkable enough, that death is not more than once, if once, used as a motive in the New Testament. You are never told to be Christians because you die, but to be Christians because the Lord cometh, or because the coming of the Lord draweth near. These words do not mean death; they mean the advent of Christ. Death ought to be annihilated in a Christian's fears, just as its sting has been taken away in historic fact; and we ought to look beyond the valley, which is all dark, and see only the sunlit mountain crag that shines in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness far beyond it. A Christian has nothing to do with death, except as he has to do with tribulation, or affliction, or distress; and he is to look beyond it and above it, and brave it when it does come for the sake of the bright shores and happy lands that lie beyond it.

Our Lord then speaks of the treatment of those who had much light, but hid that light, or were actually unworthy of it. If one shall say, "My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken," then such a servant shall be specially punished. "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." This denotes that there are degrees of penalty in the world to come; just as there are degrees of chastisement in this. There are degrees of penalty

in the future, and there are degrees of glory; only not in proportion to the degrees of merit, but in proportion to the capacity of each individual that enters into heaven.

Place in the ocean twenty vessels of different size; each vessel submerged in the sea will be full, but one vessel will contain ten times the amount of another. And so of twenty individuals placed in heaven; each will be full, each will be perfectly happy up to the amount of his capacity; but one will be capable of more enjoyment than another; capacity perhaps produced on earth of different degrees; and therefore there will be degrees of glory in heaven.

He then warns them of the signs of the times; and he says, "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower." That is so perfectly natural that one can see it was spoken in Palestine. If you place yourself in Palestine, at Jerusalem, and look to the hills of Lebanon, that is, the north, you will find that to the eastward, on your right, there is land; and to the westward, on your left, there is the sea-coast, against which breaks the Mediterranean sea. Now, therefore, when our Lord says, "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west,—that is, from the sea-side of Palestine, from whence clouds were generated,—“ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow”—which comes over the Dead sea, and overland,—“ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.” Well then, he argues, if you thus judge of physical events by physical phenomena, why should you not judge of moral and spiritual events by moral and spiritual signs? Warranting us, therefore, to study

unfulfilled prophecy, to watch its unfolding in historic facts, and to gather humbly and reverently indications where we are by the signs that we see in connexion with God's word. For instance, Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, knew quite well the time in which they lived by reading God's prophetic word in the Old Testament in connexion with the signs of the times about them. So the Jews, many of them, believed that the Messiah was at hand, by comparing signs and prophecies. And so we may gather that we are drawing near to the end, it may be the dark and the gloomy end, of this world, or rather of this dispensation, but an eve that will be a short night, and issue in the twilight of an everlasting and a blessed morn. He thus teaches us that we may judge of where we are and what we may look for by the phenomena that are taking place around us. You will recollect that I explained to you some years ago, when I lectured in Exeter Hall,* that in the sixth vial the great river Euphrates was to be dried up; that it began in 1820 to be dried up; and more than one student of prophecy predicted, more than a hundred years ago, that the Turkish empire would begin its gradual decay in 1819 or 1820. Another very enlightened and very Christian person stated more than ten or twelve years ago that he thought, judging from the wording of that prophecy, that the Turkish empire would cease to be an empire at all very soon after 1849. And now the present aspect of it shows that its destruction is inevitable; peace will extinguish it, war will extinguish it; and whether it be peace or war—whether it be its own Asiatic hordes in the midst of it, or the

* See "Apocalyptic Sketches."

Russian autocrat, its doom is equally fixed, its decay is certain; and all the statesmen of the world may prop it as they like, they cannot arrest or prevent what God has decreed,—the utter waning of the crescent, to be followed by the utter downfall of Babylon, the return of God's ancient people the Jews, and the covering of the whole earth with the light and glory of the Gospel of Christ. Yet our knowledge of prophecy is not to affect our duties. Prophecy is difficult—duty is plain.

Never certainly were the multiplying signs of the times so startling and suggestive as at the present moment. All Europe seems aroused. Ancient land-marks and bound-lines are threatened with extinction. Whatever the nations of the earth do or forbear to do, Christians have a clear course before them. We know who reigns. We know what must be the ultimate issue. The true Church is everywhere and always safe. But it becomes us to pray for mankind—for Christians—for the oppressed and the oppressor; to send out that religion which gives peace on earth and glory to God—to multiply our missions—circulate the Bible, and so bring God's people out of bondage into freedom and everlasting light. In our worst troubles, this is our song:—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her;

she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."—
Ps. xlvi.

CHAPTER XII. 51—53.

DIVISION IN THIS DISPENSATION—REASONS OF—CAUSES OF—FALLEN RACE—SIN—ENMITY OF NATURAL MAN—PRESENCE OF SATAN—FAMILIES.

THERE is one truth in this chapter worthy, because difficult, of special exposition. It is in these words:—
“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Luke xii. 51—53.

Our Lord expressed the same sentiment in a previous Gospel, when he said, in Matthew x. 34, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” I have selected these words for special study, because they seem to contradict many texts alluding to the peace that Christ came into the world to establish over all the earth. You will ask, naturally, after reading such words, how it is possible to harmonize it with such a passage as this: “Glory to God in the highest: on earth peace, goodwill to men,” as being the very characteristic, and the

substance, and the end of the Saviour's advent and birth. Or, it may be asked, how can we harmonize it with such a passage as this: "In me," says the Saviour, "ye shall have peace: in the world ye shall have tribulation?" Or, with his own definition, when he says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?"

I answer, that suppose we were unable to harmonize the one text with the other, it would not prove that they are incapable of harmony, or that the one is really antagonistic to the other. We must not think that texts that we cannot now see the harmony of, have no harmony; but rather, when we are sure that each text is inspired by the same God, if we cannot see its coincidence with another, we should take both as true, because both are equally inspired; and wait for that blessed and approaching day, when those things that seem contrary, shall be found to be one; and texts that sound to our ears discordant, shall be seen from a loftier point of view, and in a brighter light, and in happier circumstances, to be all part and parcel of the same grand and blessed harmony. But, in this instance, it is not difficult to harmonize; not by paring down the one that it may dovetail with the other, but by looking at each text in its own light, and in the light of those spiritual and christian considerations in which every one must, when he undertakes to study the Bible, look at them.

It is necessary to define before proceeding to explain, that many things are confounded with peace, which really are not peace. Silence is not peace; quiet is not; insensibility is not; indifference is not. On the contrary, these are often intense elements of discord. The

disturbance of a quiet that is not based upon truth, is duty ; and the maintenance of insensibility or indifference would be sin. Neither penance, nor sackcloth, nor any ceremony prescribed by man, either is, or can give that peace which the Saviour says in one text he came to establish ; and which he says, with equal truth, in another text, he came not to send, but a sword and division upon earth. Now the two texts are easily explained if we will only distinguish. Christ came, not to send immediate, but ultimate and eternal peace ; his purpose is ultimate and everlasting peace, his prophecy is present and temporary disturbance. Disturbance is the present inevitable incident, peace is the ultimate and everlasting issue. The disturbance or disquiet is the incidental ; the peace that will follow is what he came to establish. It is peace through controversy, not peace where there is no peace at all.

The reason of this will appear perfectly obvious, when we remember that this world is a corrupt and a fallen one ; and whatever comes into the world contrary to the world's greatest preferences and predilections, is sure to meet with the world's stern and unsparing opposition. Jesus came into the world to his own, and we are told, his own received him not. The light coming into darkness, creates a struggle which of the two shall have the mastery ; holiness coming down upon a heart that is un sanctified, and, by nature, enmity to God, provokes controversy : and only when the controversy is laid, will the peace that passeth understanding enter and abide for ever. It is a law of our economy, "No cross, no crown." Our journey is across a stormy and tempestuous ocean, to a haven of perpetual peace. The quiet flame of peace can only be kindled from the

coals of stern and earnest discussion ; truly it is a sad world—a sad and a sorrowful world—in which the arrival of mercy to forgive it, love to lighten it, and peace to keep it, awakes only hostility and opposition.

Peace is the great purpose of God ; but conflict is incidental in the pursuit of it. The sword is not what Christ sends, but what the world unsheathes when he sends peace. The sword is not the direct purpose of Christ, but the incidental consequence of Christ coming into the world. You can understand the distinction between that which is a direct effect and issue of a thing, and that which is the incidental occurrence in prosecuting that thing. You endow an hospital, you appoint workmen to build it : in the course of its erection, a scaffolding gives way, and several workmen lose their lives. The curing of disease is the object of the hospital ; the destruction of life in the erection of it, was the incidental occurrence in promoting the beneficent and the ultimate issue. So peace is the end of the Gospel ; Christ came to establish it ; but war, conflict, dispute, discussion, are the incidental occurrences, not part and parcel of the ultimate design, but results which are waked in a world that hates God, by God coming down to promote that which will glorify him, and give happiness to mankind. We shall see still further, how this must be the necessary accompaniment of Christ's march to establish peace over all the earth : for you will recollect, first, that before this peace can be predominant, error must be rooted up. Peace will not grow upon the branches of error—a corrupt tree. Peace blossoms in its amaranthine beauty only upon the stem of precious truth. Now the world loves error, and it hates the truth. It loves the error, be-

cause, like the false prophet, it prophesies only good about it : it hates the truth, because the truth rebukes its practices, and warns it of the terrible issue of those practices. Hence, when truth comes into the world, laying bare the roots of its error, telling that world it must renounce the error before it can ever be guided as by a sure light and lamp to everlasting joy ; the world loving the error that is congenial to its fallen nature, and hating the truth that provokes by rebuking it, awakes that conflict which has been waged from age to age, and will continue from century to century ; till the Prince of Peace come and wave the sceptre of peace over a fallen and a rebellious world.

In the next place, before peace can be established upon earth, sin has also to be swept away : the cause of the disturbance is sin determined to keep its footing. If this orb were a *tabula rasa*, not invaded by sin, then the advent of truth would provoke no collision whatever ; but the world is tainted by sin to its very core ; the trail of the serpent is on its loveliest panoramas, on its most beautiful gardens, over all the aspects of life ; and when God comes into this world to destroy the works of the devil, and to put away sin by his own glorious presence, sin, determined to hold fast, antagonistic to the holiness that would dislodge it, and man, loving sin, because dead to his duties and his responsibilities, and hating holiness, because he cannot yet appreciate its excellence, will rise up and resist the only process by which peace can be established in the world. The sins of the world are not like loose stones and rubbish lying upon its surface, that can easily be swept away ; but they are like the roots of a primeval forest, gnarled, interwoven with the rocks ; and that cannot

be utterly extirpated from the earth until after terrible struggle and violent conflict. The sword, division, first; peace the next, and only next.

In another point of view, this world itself, in all its parts, resists the introduction of a religion whose ultimate issue is peace, but whose present effect is disturbance wherever it first strikes. The world does not like anything from the future to intrude upon its present enjoyment. The thorough worldling always feels that religion would disturb his gaiety; it would blight his brightest joys if its breath were for one instant to touch them. His canon is, "Eat, drink; for to-morrow we die." God's truth, God's love, the future, eternity, are thoughts that cost him a good deal of trouble to keep down; and that he cannot always and everywhere get rid of. I believe it costs a man a great deal more trouble to go to everlasting misery than to get to heaven; he is having daily a fight with conscience, with his convictions, practising one sin to keep down a former; like a bankrupt, running deeper into debt; staving off the evil day, till the end comes, when he is lost, and his soul required of him. Well, the world hates the very thought of anything that would disturb its enjoyment, and therefore resists the introduction of religion. Speak to a thorough gay worldling, about such vulgar things as a Bible, the soul, God, he would be shocked, he would be amazed; he would accuse you of a breach of all the courtesies and of all the politeness of life. Now, my dear friends, you may take it as a grand guiding maxim,—Wherever you are where the thought of God would be a disturbance, the intrusion of religion, the soul, death, eternity, a doing violence to your heart, you ought not to be there; it is a wrong place. Where-

ever religion is out of place, you are out of place first. Religion ought to be every where, and, with a Christian, it will be in harmony with every incident in his life, in unison with all the duties and employments in which he takes a part. But you know quite well, that when God comes to you, he will not consent to compromise. He will not take up a place in company with idols. The love of God will not *bivouac* with the lust of the eye, the pride of life, and the love of this world; the truth of God will not sit by dumb and silent while you sin; the holiness of God will not connive at crime, and associate with wickedness; and you know this,—the worldling knows this; and therefore his maxim is, “On with the dance,” “eat, drink, and be merry;” and his wish is,—he may not say it with his lips, but he feels it with his heart,—“No God.” Therefore, before there can be peace, in his case, there must be previous conflict; a sword that shall pierce and divide the thoughts and the imaginations of the heart, before there can play upon that heart the peace that passeth understanding.

In the next place, superstition will resist the introduction of truth, and kindle conflict before peace can be established on the earth. Superstition in this world is not only a solitary recluse, a lonely monk; it has become a manifest apostasy, a consolidated, powerful ecclesiastical organization: and its great design and scheme is, to take the place of Christ, and keep truth, and righteousness, and peace, out of the world. I have told you often, what I dare say you are not ignorant of, that Antichrist does not mean one who is opposed to Christ. If you were to say to a member of the Church of Rome, “Your Pope is Antichrist,” as I believe him to be; his answer would be, “What! Antichrist! Pio

None opposed to Christ! Why, he wears his cross; he worships him; his creed is called *Christian*; he offers up a sacrifice every Sunday morning on the altar, and he prays to him. He opposed to Christ! The thing is absurd." I answer, the word Antichrist does not mean one opposed to Christ; the preposition *ἀντί*, in conjunction with a noun of office, does not mean opposition to, but taking the place of. For instance, the word *ἀνθύπατος*, or *pro-consul*, does not mean one opposed to the consul, but one appointed to fulfil the duties of the consul. So *ἀντιβασιλεύς* is *pro-rex*, in room of the king; so *Antipope*, in the middle ages, was not one opposed to the Pope, but one that was the representative of the Pope; he tried to succeed, or take his place. So Antichrist does not mean one literally opposed to Christ, but one that dislodges Christ, takes Christ's place; or, in the language of the Apostle, "sits in the temple of God, shewing himself as if he were God;" taking the place of Christ, and so showing himself as if the great head of the Church. Now, wherever this great superstition, this Antichristian system is concentrated, there must be conflict, before the religion of error can be extinguished, and the peace that passeth understanding float and wave like a banner—for instance, over the beautiful, but sadly depraved and prostrate realms of Italy. Hence, every martyrology, and the recent persecutions of Florence, perpetuated still in its prisons, show that there can be no peace between Christ and Antichrist, between truth and error; and all the evil passions of that system that raises inquisitions, that evangelises with the sword, that has made the earth drunk with the blood of saints,—all the passions of that system, however repudiated by laymen, who are more

of Englishmen than Ultramontanes, are really not quenched; and its persecutions will become intenser, as the hour of its dethronement and its dissolution draws near. Dagon must fall when the ark of the Lord comes near; the idols must be swept from their niches when the Proprietor and Lord of the temple comes. But there must be conflict before there can be peace. The temple must be cleansed; the strong man must be thrust out, at any price, by the stronger man, before the Prince of Peace can claim the temple as his own, and the children of peace can have quiet, and happy, and lasting possession.

And, finally, Satan will not give up his place in this world without a struggle. He is the usurper; he is the prince of the power of the air; and as the time of his deposition comes nearer, his efforts will be more desperate. You remember the devils besought Jesus—I think it is the most awful expression in the New Testament—that they might not be sent to their own place and tormented before the time. The time is fixed when Satan shall be thrust out of this world, and shall be put in his own dungeon, wherever that may be, and go forth to deceive the nations no more upon the earth. But, before that takes place, he will try to hold fast his position; he will dispute every inch of ground; he will try and keep one foothold in an orb over which he has gained so disastrous a usurpation in days that are passed; but his head will be bruised, his position and tenure will close: for He who is the truth has said, that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and for ever.

You can see, therefore, that unless God were, by the

force of omnipotent power, physically to right the world, there cannot be peace yet : but God is carrying out a glorious scheme, a magnificent conception, not of force, but love, that is, the Gospel ; and he is doing it not for us only, but that the lessons therein taught may be legible on earth by the inhabitants of distant worlds : and I have no doubt that this earth on which it is our privilege to tread, is the most intensely interesting and stirring page in God's infinite universe ; and that immortal and glorious beings from afar gaze with thrilled and agitated hearts upon a world in which a drama draws to its close, in comparison of which, creation and providence are absolutely as nothing.

Thus, there must be conflict before there can be peace ; and our Lord's prophesying a sword and division before peace, is fulfilling already before our eyes. That all this conflict will become worse before the Prince of Peace comes, there is no doubt. My impression is, that that advent is not very distant. I told you in 1847, when I lectured in the large room in Exeter Hall, that the seventh vial was then either suspended or pouring out in the air. Everything gives evidence of it. Why, all over the world, at this moment, the fruits are perishing ; the vines are gone in France and in other parts ; the serial crops in England are damaged ; there is a taint in the air that no one can explain, no physician can alleviate. The pestilence that has swept the world is still amongst us ; I believe it will come again and again. All these things are, to me, the clearest evidence that we are on the verge of stupendous results ; and that some may be here who shall not see death till the Lord come. There is nothing improbable, still less impossible, in this supposition.

We can see, too, that all Europe is like a volcano at the present moment. You recollect that I told you that at the close of the sixth vial, the great river Euphrates should begin to be dried up. What is the case now? The Turkish empire, of which that river is the symbol, from 1820 downward to the present moment, has been gradually exhausting itself. I scarcely expect that Russia will strike it down by a blow. It is God's prophecy that it is to be gradually exhausted: and if you will read the newspapers, which I always think the best commentators upon prophecy, you will find that peace will be more disastrous to Turkey than war: that the fanaticism that is kindled will consume it more effectually than if Russia were to cannonade it, and destroy it by an exterminating war. It being so, we see that the extinction of that empire is certain. The crescent will wane, the river Euphrates will be dried up. And then, what is to take place? The kings from the sunrising, the ancient Jews, shall set their faces to Jerusalem and Sion-ward, to go to their own land, unconverted, to build the beautiful temple that the last chapter of Ezekiel describes; and there and then to see Christ revealed to them, and to look upon him whom they have pierced, and see and believe that he is indeed the Messiah—the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. Nearer every day comes the last great conflict, prior to the Millennium; for which, all Europe is making preparation. Europe, at this moment, is a volcano, and nations stand upon the hardened *lava* in dread suspense; not knowing when the mass may explode: every man is standing with his hand upon his sword: literally and truly, the hearts of kings, and prime ministers, and statesmen, failing

them for fear of the things that are coming on the earth. It is very easy, in leading articles of newspapers, to attack statesmen; but, depend upon it, statesmen have a terrible task. Far better pray for them, that they may be so guided and governed by the good Spirit of God, that they shall do their utmost to weaken the struggle that is coming; and to hasten, through the truth, the peace that shall rise beautiful and glorious from the chaos, like a rainbow after the hurricane and the storm, girdling the earth with its beautiful zone—the commencement of a peace that never shall be disturbed again.

What a world is this, in which Christ's advent excites war. One would think the first ray of heaven would be hailed by a world groping in the darkness of sin. It shows that the carnal heart is enmity to God.

In the second place, Christianity is not to blame for the storms, the controversies, and the battles that have raged in her path. Her march is directly to peace, and if her footsteps startle the slumbering passions of the depraved, it is not because Christianity is controversial, but because mankind is corrupt.

We see, in the third place, how clearly Jesus saw the future from the past. He predicted what would be the effect of his Gospel; he foresaw the trouble, dispute, and controversy, that would take place before peace could be established on the earth.

We learn, also, another lesson; that truth is necessary to peace. There can be no peace except upon the foundation of truth. The peace that you have, which is maintained without truth, is a quiet that will soon explode; not a peace that will survive death, and judgment, and eternity. Truth is the stem; peace is the

blossom: and if there be no right stem, there can be no beautiful and fragrant blossom. It may be ours to sow the seeds of truth, and to water them with the tears of weeping eyes; and, in the case of some, with the blood of warm hearts; and it may be the happiness of others to reap the peace, the seeds of which we have painfully and laboriously sown. You must not complain, that one soweth and another reapeth. Ours may be the pain and toil of sowing; another's may be the privilege of reaping; but, at the last day, he that sowed, and they that reaped, shall rejoice together.

In the next place, we see what is to be the character of this present dispensation—a dispensation where conflict is the way to peace; where the wisdom that is from above, must be first pure, before it can be peaceable.

Do you, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men? Do you seek peace? and if, in doing so, you incidentally provoke discord, controversy, dispute, is it not for dispute's sake, but for peace's sake? Napoleon warred for conquest; Wellington warred for peace. The distinction is important. If controversy must be before peace can be, let us not shrink from it; but let us not love it for its own sake. Peace is the last effect of the Prince of Peace; and if we are friends of him, we shall seek peace, and earnestly ensue it.

Let us rejoice in the blessed thought, that this Prince of Peace shall reign over all the earth; that the prejudices and the passions of man, like the waves of the sea, beneath his holy feet, shall be calmed; the sword shall be sheathed, division healed, and peace, the ultimate and the everlasting issue, shall prevail over all the earth.

Now our Lord further explains the effect of this by

stating that one member of a family shall be set in opposition to another; that not only will this Gospel preached be the occasion of division in the midst of the world, but it will be the occasion of what is far more distressing and not less disastrous—of divisions and disputes in families. He takes the family circle, and he says, that true religion introduced into a family, heathen in itself, unbelieving in fact, will instantly disturb and rend and split that family, and set the son against the father, and the daughter against the mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law. Now how does it do so? Just by the same way that it occasions division when it comes into the world. The natural man hates anything that reminds him of God, of judgment, of eternity. The man who has made up his mind to give himself wholly to the world does not like to be disturbed while he does so. He shuts his ears and his eyes too from heavenly, spiritual, and future impressions; and enjoys thus an opiate in the world, very different in its nature, and still more different in its results, from the peace that passeth understanding. In families often there are divisions which are inevitable. As members of a family grow up, they have different tastes, embrace different professions, form different connexions. And certain divisions in a family are, therefore, inevitable, and they are in themselves desirable. But when religion introduces differences into a family, then those differences are far more serious—some of them deeply to be lamented. Certainly union and unity are most desirable in a family. They have wrongs, and sorrows, and griefs, and weaknesses, and wants that need reciprocal communion, assistance, strength. And it is a pity that a section of

the human race so small should be rent and torn by intestine religious feuds. One of the ends of a family, too, is mutual help under common suffering, in the entertainment of common hopes and in the enjoyment of common blessings. And anything that disturbs that union, provided that disturbance is not necessary to secure a better and a more permanent peace, is deeply to be deprecated: and where religious differences are merely on the surface, and do not touch the heart of religion, but only its clothing, they are absolutely sinful; they ought to be hushed and repressed altogether, or taken as mere ripples on the surface, that do not disturb the serene and placid depths that are far down below. But when you see persons in a family fall into violent and furious antagonism because one chooses to go to the parish church and another chooses to go to a dissenting chapel, however undesirable such division may be, yet quarrels about it are not religion, but sectarianism, which is quite a different, nay an altogether distinct thing from real religion. But there is a difference in families which is produced by religion—not that religion necessarily does so, but that religion by its introduction becomes the occasion of such disputes and divisions. One, for instance, in a family sees the folly and vanity of temporal things; urges attention to those things upon the rest of that family. The very urging religion upon a man whose heart is instinctively hostile to it will awake all the passions—all the inveterate passions of a carnal and corrupt nature. And hence in a family when one is brought to feel the influence of this religion, and others have not felt it, or are positively opposed to it, there will be two of conflicting sentiments under the same roof. When-

ever contact takes place, there will be division; and it will furnish an illustration of our Lord's prophecy, that he is come to set the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law, and the son against the father—to send division, and not peace.

Again, if you will look at the effect of religion introduced into a family, still further, you will find that when one has come under the influence of real, evangelical and living religion, and another remains under the influence of the world that lieth in sin, they go in opposite directions. One goes to the play-house, and the other goes to the week-evening service. One goes on Sunday to the house of God, the other stops at home to read the newspaper. One expresses grief that the other does not attend to the things that belong to our everlasting peace; the remonstrance is replied to by witticism, by sarcasm and contempt. Thus division is introduced. A worldly man would say it is the effect of religion; but the real fact is that it is the effect of the opposite of religion. All was perfectly calm as long as the strong man held his property, but the stronger man having come in, and snatched a victim from his fangs, division is introduced; not because religion creates it, but because religion, having come with the olive branch of peace in its hand, irreligion stands up and resolves to wither its fairest leaves and destroy all its vitality.

Again, when religion is introduced into a family you will find again a distinction at another stage. One goes to the communion table, another does not go. That may not be antagonism, but it is division; it may not be dispute, but it is distinction and separation.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUDDEN DEATH—INFERENCES FROM SIN AND SUFFERING—DEGREES OF SUFFERING NOT ALWAYS EVIDENCE OF SIN—PATERNAL AND PENAL JUDGMENT NOT MAN'S PART—REPENTANCE AND PENANCE—PRACTICAL RELIGION—BARREN FIG-TREE—INFIRM WOMAN—A CARPING ECCLESIASTIC—CURIOUS QUESTIONS RIGHTLY ANSWERED—FALSE HOPES—LAST FESTIVAL.

THE two severe retributions recorded at the beginning of this chapter,—the one, the blood of the sacrificers mingled with the blood of the sacrifices; and the other, eighteen men crushed below the falling stones and ruins of the tower of Siloam,—were repeated to our Lord by the same hearers; who, in all probability, made the comments upon it that they thought justly to arise from these severe retributions. They concluded, as far as we can see, that these victims were sinners, signally so, above all the sinners that were in the rest of Jerusalem, because they had been so signally visited with a severe and deplorable retribution. Now this thought creeps into the minds of all when we hear of great calamities. One will say, Those that fell very lately from the Crystal Palace, and were killed, must surely have done something wrong to be overtaken by so crushing a catastrophe; others will say, Those that have been struck down by plague or pestilence, or those mowed down by artillery in war, or those whose city has been laid in ruins, and their property consigned to their conquerors,—surely, if peculiarly punished,

must have been no doubt peculiarly guilty. Let us just look at such reasoning, wherever it may appear, and see how much of truth there is in it, and how much there is of gross misapprehension.

First of all, our Lord corrects their reasoning, and teaches us by his correction of it that we do not always in spiritual things reason logically from just and true elements. Very many construct great heresy upon the ground of precious texts; Satan could quote a text, and reason from it; but when you analyse his reasoning, you will find a lie in it. So many texts have been wrenched from the context, and perverted from their real meaning. For instance, there is a text, "The time is short." The ascetic, the monk, would say, "Therefore let us mind nothing; but retreat from the world, and its cares and trials, and give ourselves up to penitential suffering." The epicurean would say, "The time is short; therefore let us eat, and drink, and be merry; for we must soon die." But the Christian who is inspired by grace says, "I will neither, with the monk, abandon the world, lest I fall into its snares; nor with the suicide, leave life because I cannot bear its burdens; nor will I, with the epicurean, the sensualist, and the worldling, eat, drink, and be merry, and forget God; but I will draw far more just conclusions from this: I will weep as though I wept not; I will rejoice as though I rejoiced not; I will use the world as not abusing it, because the fashion of it passeth away."

You see, then, how we need to have our reasoning corrected, as our Lord corrects their reasoning upon this occasion.

Now in what they said in thinking that these Galileans were sinners above all—which evidently was their

thought—there were certain great truths in their conclusion, as well as certain great falsehoods. The first great truth in their conclusion was this—that suffering is the result of sin. They connected suffering most justly with sin. If there had never been sin in the world, never had a single creature, from the human creation downward to the lowest reptile, have known what pain or suffering is. Wherever there is suffering, there you have the rebound of sin. Sin and suffering are as inseparable as mother and child, as sound and echo, as body and shadow, as cause and effect. In hell, where there is nothing but sin, there is nothing but undiluted suffering; in heaven, where there is nothing but holiness, there is nothing but undiluted and progressive happiness.

Learn again, when you see suffering, not to blame God for it, but sin. Where you see health, thank God for it, and do not take the credit to yourself: but if a calamity has come upon you, if plague, pestilence, war, it is not so much God's hand, as it is man's wickedness—either the primal sin in Paradise, or since committed. And when, on the other hand, you have sunshine and prosperity, and the funds not below, but above *par*, then do not say it is your talent, your tact, your management; this prime minister's plan, or that financier's skill; but say, "This is God." Try more to associate God with the sunshine, and with health and happiness; and to associate sin and self with suffering and misery, that you may be humbled, and seek pardon and forgiveness. They did right in associating suffering with sin, and so far our Lord commended them.

And in the next place, they did right in saying that sin and suffering are not only associated, but that they

make manifest that God reigns. God is in the world—ever operating, ever starting every event in it; and he makes known to man the fact that sin and suffering are ever connected with each other. And they were right, in the second place, in this idea, that corresponding degrees of sin are deserving of corresponding degrees of punishment. The whole Bible teaches us this, that he that hath done many sins shall be beaten with many stripes, but that he that hath done few shall be beaten with few stripes. It shall be more tolerable “for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you,”—that is, you will be more signally punished than they. Just as in the world of bliss there are successive sunlit table-lands of glory, so in the world of misery there is a ceaseless descent, and successively descending ledges of misery and suffering and woe.

These three parts, therefore, of their inferences, were perfectly correct; but there were also great defects in their inferences—defects so palpable that our Lord said, “Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay.” You are utterly mistaken. While there is truth in what you say, there is great error in what you say.

First of all, they judged of inner personal character by outer providential visitations. Now this is contrary to all that God’s word commands, warrants or authorizes. You are not to judge a man to be signally sinful because he has been unsuccessful in business, or because he has lost his wife or his children, or his property; you are not to say, “This man thus suffers very signally because this man has been signally guilty.” Job was an unprecedented sufferer, yet an illustrious

saint. Abel was the great sufferer, Cain the one that lived; yet Cain was a sinner, and Abel was a saint. In short, it is not by their sufferings nor by their prosperity, but it is by their fruits that ye shall know them. You are not to judge of what men are by what they experience in God's providential economy, but you are to judge of what they are by how they feel, and speak, and think, and act, and live in the world. In fact, you are to reverse the process; you are to judge not by what befalls men what men are; but you are to judge of what befalls them by what men are. You are not to reason from their providential sufferings to their moral character; but you are to reason from their moral character to the nature of their providential sufferings. If they be good men, the suffering is chastisement; if they be bad men, the suffering is punishment. But not certainly are you to conclude what they are by what they encounter; but you are to construe what they encounter by what their heart and their character are. This was the first defect in their reasoning.

The second defect in their reasoning was, that they judged that so sad and so awful a catastrophe must have been the punishment of some very signal and very marked sin. Now this does not follow. It may be that there was great guilt in those that perished, but it may be that there was guilt as great, if not greater, in those that remained. God does not always punish by cutting down; he sometimes punishes far more severely by letting alone; and probably Pharaoh was more punished by being left to the hardening influence of his own heart than if he had been cut off after he had witnessed the first proof of God's power, and perished for ever. To leave the tree blighted and withered in

the soil may be as great a punishment as to cut down the tree at once as a cumberer of the ground. But at all events it is our place to leave judgment of character to God, and to take home to ourselves the personal and practical duty that Jesus enjoins,—“ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” When an affliction comes—be it war, or plague, or pestilence, or famine, or earthquake—let us learn from it our common sinfulness; but do not let us try to deduce comparative sinfulness. Let us learn from it, I say, our common sinfulness; but do not let us try to deduce from it comparative sinfulness.

In the next place, these hearers of our Lord erred in this respect,—that they concluded that in this life punishment is meted out exactly to sin, and reward, of course, meted out exactly to righteousness. Now that is not the fact. If in this world sin were always visited with its just penalty, it would not be a day of grace, it would be a day of judgment; and if righteousness were always visited with its just reward, it would be heaven, it would not be earth at all. There is in this world enough of connexion between sin and suffering to let us see that the one is the parent of the other; and there is enough of confusion to make us long for the judgment-day, when all shall be adjusted. You are not to infer that a man that dies in a church is necessarily saved; and you may not conclude that a man that dies in a playhouse is necessarily lost. Where you are not sure, leave retribution to God; take home personal and practical responsibilities to yourself—“ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

And in the next place, these hearers of our Lord evidently erred in another respect,—they concluded that

suffering in all cases is necessarily penal. They imagined that the falling tower, that the indiscriminate slaughter, were necessarily penal. It may, or it may not have been so; but they assumed that it always and everywhere is so. Now that does not follow. One man may suffer for years the severest pain; another man may suffer not so acute a pain. In the former case it may be a Father's chastisement; in the latter it may be a Judge's penal infliction. We are not always to suppose that suffering is penal. In the case of Christians, it is never penal, but always paternal: and therefore to assume that where there is great suffering there must be great guilt, is not always safe reasoning; because it very often happens that where there is great suffering—it seems strange to us—there there may be great love. For what does God say? "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." And you remember that the sisters went to Jesus, and said to him, "He whom thou lovest is sick." That seems strange language; but they might have made it more intense, and said, "He is sick just because thou lovest him." If then it be true that great suffering in this world is not always the punishment of great sin; if it be true, in the second place, that great suffering is not always penal; but, in the case of true Christians always paternal; then we should never infer that those who are the victims of war, of plague, or of famine, are sinners above all men. The moment we do this we try to take God's place and judge, instead of taking home to ourselves the dutiful obligation, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." The fact is, we are not fit to be judges at all; the less we judge the better. Speak of error, and what error leads to; but do not say the

errorist is lost for ever. Speak of sin, and what sin leads to, but do not say, "Thou, A, or B, or C, the sinner, art inevitably lost." The fact is, it is our place to kneel at the throne of grace and pray for the worst; it is God's place to mount the judgment throne and pronounce upon all. Let us not try to take God's place, lest we lose the blessing that belongs to our own, and incur the woe denounced upon him that tries to take from God his glory, but finds that he takes into his bosom an unexpected curse.

Let us, in the next place, see this other lesson to which I have alluded several times before—that we are always so prone to see God, as these hearers of our Lord saw him, in calamities, but not to see God in blessings, in privileges, and in mercies. It is a strange thing, and indicates the shadow of our primal sin, that anything terrible, awful, destructive, we associate with God; but anything prosperous and happy we associate too much with ourselves. "It has pleased God to afflict me,"—"It has pleased God to deprive me of a relative,"—"It has pleased God to take away my property." These are very common expressions; and are they not very much more common than these,—“It has pleased God to give me large property,”—"It has pleased God to keep me in health for the last ten years,—to give me many blessings?" I do not say that some Christians do not so speak; but is it not too true that the mass of mankind see God in overwhelming judgments, and therefore think of God only as a terrible judge and exacter; and they see themselves in great mercies, and therefore think, "How good, how sagacious, how wise are we!" My dear friends, let us learn to see God in the sunshine, and to praise him; to see

sin and self in the shadow, and be humbled for it. Nature hears the voice of God in judgments only, because she is conscious of something wrong between her and God; grace hears God's footfall in mercy rather, because she is reinstated in her true place of friendship and communion with God.

But let us learn this lesson from the whole of it, and a very just one it is—that whether we perish with the Galileans, whose blood was mingled with the blood of their sacrificial victims, or are crushed by the falling tower of Siloam, or fall in battle, or pine in disease, or die in our beds, it is no less true that by some mode or another I must escape from this living organism, this earthly habitation in which I have sojourned, a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth. "All must die," is an aphorism so common that it has become a proverb; but alas! so common that men think all men mortal but themselves. If then it be true that we, as well as the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, must also die, have we ever anticipated that event—not dying, but what succeeds it? What is it that invests death with its importance? Simply this; it is the fixture of the soul in its everlasting orbit of joy or of sorrow, of happiness or of misery. It is the closing of the gate that shuts out all the unsanctified, and lets in all the holy and the happy. Its importance lies there, and in that light we ought to look at it. He that is unjust at his death is unjust for ever. Our transit through the grave does not transform our moral character. All that death does is to fix and determine and make permanent for ever what we were when death found us. The spring-tide of change is gone, the harvest-time of reaping what we have become has now commenced.

Except, then, you repent, you shall not only perish, as all do, but you shall perish for ever.

And this leads me to ask, What is repentance? In the Roman Catholic version of the Bible it is, "Except ye do penance, ye shall all perish." Well, if that is all, it is very easily done. Nothing is more easy than to do penance; nothing more difficult than to repent. The fact is, Romanism is the most popular religion of all. It is a religion that so suits the natural man that he will join it; but it is so hateful to the spiritual man that he shrinks from it. I could prevail upon any young man living in the practice of any known sin, to go from London to Edinburgh with bare feet, or to climb the loftiest mountain on his knees, and to come back again and get absolution, if he can only start afresh in his sin, rather than repent in the sight of God. Man will suffer anything that priest can invent, if you will only let him enjoy the darling passion; but to repent, to hate the sin, to return to the contrary practice, to love God, and serve and honour him—it needs the Holy Spirit of God to do that. It is easy to do penance, it is difficult to repent. It is easy to mortify the flesh—very difficult to mortify the lusts of the flesh. It is delightful to confess to a sympathising priest; it is a very different thing to confess to God. The former is very popular, very easy; the latter is repentance—the work of the Holy Spirit of God. In other words, in the one religion you are saved by what you can do, and what you are to do is so accommodated to your fallen and corrupt nature that you have no difficulty in doing it; in the other religion you are saved by grace—what man cannot do, what the Holy Spirit alone must bestow. Repentance, therefore, is not a physical and an out-

ward work, but an inner and moral change of heart, of life, and of nature. It is not the cause of faith, but the result and fruit of faith in Christ Jesus. Repentance is used in the Bible just to express the inner revolution of the whole man. It means seeing sin as you never saw it before, seeing Christ as you never saw him before, seeing God as you never saw him before; feeling the weight and importance of eternal things as you never did before. It is a comprehensive word for saving grace, regeneration of heart, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and entrance into glory through your connexion with him. To repent, therefore, is just to be a Christian; and that is produced by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It will enable us to overcome everything that is wrong, and to engage in every work that is right, and to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

Have we repentance? or, translated into plainer language, are we Christians? Do we trust in the Saviour alone for pardon? Do we look to him alone for access to God? do we see God no more a Judge condemning, but a Father loving; no more a King exacting, but a Father ever giving, ever enriching? Do we see in the Bible, not a dull book, but an interesting book—in the sanctuary not a wearisome and gloomy place, in the sermon not something that makes us sleep sound, or think of the counting-house we have left behind us, but something that wakes within us our better life, that makes us more joyful, more happy, more devoted, and thanking God that we have it? Are all things become new,—old things passed away? Do we hate what we once loved? do we love what we once hated? Are we, in short, Christians? Do we prefer the Bible

to the novel? do we prefer the sanctuary to the play-house? Can we give up the chief thing that we love to God, if he demands it? And can we engage in the earnest duty that devolves upon us because God bids us—feeling his yoke easy, and his burden to be light? If so, you have seen Christ; he has looked upon you; he is exalted to give repentance—“they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn.” Happy are ye: let, not the tower of Siloam fall, but the pillars of the universe crash; let sky and earth collapse; let the Czar and his soldiers, let the continent with all its forces, let plague, let pestilence, let famine, let battle, let murder, let even death overtake us—they cannot strike that which is myself. They may break open the casket, they cannot even touch the precious jewel that is within. They may rend the tent, but it will only let the inhabitant exchange the tent for a shining temple. They may end this life,—and even that they cannot do unless God permit,—but they cannot interrupt my entrance into heaven, and my enjoyment of those pleasures that are at God’s right hand, and of those joys that are for ever and for ever.

The great thought that is inculcated here is a very obvious one—that we should withdraw our speculations about the probable fate of others, and concentrate our anxieties and thoughts upon the personal safety of ourselves. You must often have noticed in reading God’s holy word, how he withdraws men’s thoughts from mere speculative discussions, that can end in no practical good, and brings home and fixes those thoughts upon personal responsibilities, of which they themselves are the immediate subjects. And, in order to illustrate this truth that he taught to these persons, he recites

a parable of a fig-tree, planted in a vineyard; the owner seeking fruit, and finding none during three years' expectation, and at the end disappointed. Then some one interceding, who had the use of the vineyard, or the possession of it, asking him to spare it another year; and if it should bear fruit, well; if not, then to cut it down. The fig-tree, it is remarkable enough, is used in Scripture almost invariably in an objectionable sense; the vine frequently used in a good sense: and there is something strange in this—perhaps we need light to explain it—that in all nations, with the exception of ourselves, the fig-tree has always had a bad sense. For instance, the very name “sycophant,” which we apply to a person that flatters in order to promote his own purposes, means, literally translated, “a person that shows figs;” and it has been supposed by some of the Rabbis, that the fig-tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that was placed in the midst of Paradise, and its fruit the forbidden fruit of which Adam and Eve ate. And, if so, of course it would contradict the common impression that it was the apple-tree. Not that there was anything in the fig, or in the fig-tree, itself; for God might have said to Adam and Eve, “You must not touch that pebble,” or, “You must not drink of that stream.” It was merely an outward sign of their allegiance to God; the breach of which was the breach of their allegiance and loyalty to their King. It is a very miserable apprehension that infidels continually fling at Christians when they say, How could it be that eating a fig or eating an apple could be the cause of all the misery that has come into the world? The true secret of the offence lay, not in eating a thousand figs, or a thou-

sand apples; but, without excuse, without temptation, violating that which was the symbol and the sign to the whole universe, that God was Lord, and that Adam and Eve were his creatures. Whatever the thing was, the sin was in the violation of it: and, if you say, It is a very little act; I answer, The less the act, the less excuse for perpetrating it. There is less excuse for stealing a pin than there is for stealing a pound. The guilt is not in the quantity of the thing stolen; the guilt lies in the stealing at all; and the less the temptation—or, in other words, the less the necessity—the less the palliation and the excuse for the offence.

However, this is departing from the parable which is immediately before us. This fig-tree, then, brought forth no fruit. The Owner of the garden of fig-trees was our blessed Lord; and not, as most commentators seem to have supposed, God the Father. The Intercessor would seem to me to be the Holy Spirit of God, who intercedes within the vineyard, or within the garden, as Christ intercedes outside. This is only in keeping with what is stated of the antediluvians. "My Spirit will not always strive with man"—taking their part, pleading with them, urging them to obey Him who is always represented as the great Proprietor. And, therefore, I would rather understand that our Lord is the Owner of the vineyard, and that the Dresser of the vineyard, he that makes it fruitful, and gives birth to blossom and to fruit, is the Holy Spirit of God; and that Jesus, the Great Proprietor, coming and asking for the fruit that may be expected from a garden so watered and so sunned, and finding none, says, "Cut it down"—it exhausts the nutriment that is in the earth,

and prevents other trees bearing fruit and blossom. Then one within—not outside—intercedes, and says, Spare it yet another year; I will dig about the roots, put fresh manure round about it, and spare no effort to make it fruitful; and then, if after this it should bear no fruit, cut it down: but if it bear fruit, it will have had another year of mercy, and thou wilt have in the end all the honour and the glory.”

This parable teaches us, however, that wherever Christ has given a privilege, there he justly watches for the fruit of it. He is not an unconcerned spectator, but one deeply interested in your fruitfulness. He comes one year, the second year, the third year, still waiting, still inquiring; and then, when there is still failure, he issues the command, “Cut it down;” and the heart, like Pharaoh’s, is hardened; or, the soul, like the rich man who had laid up much goods for many days, is summoned to the judgment-seat of Christ.

The next incident is that of a woman who had “a spirit of infirmity eighteen years” that comes to him. And now you will notice here, that the cause of this infirmity is expressly said by our Lord to be Satan—“Satan hath bound her these eighteen years.” And in reading the Gospels, you will almost invariably find Satan represented as the author of disease, of misfortune, of calamity; and Jesus as the great Physician that heals the one, or the great Sin-Pardoner that forgives the other. In other words, we are taught constantly in the Bible that all that is good is from God, all that is evil is from the creature; our natural state is a state of entire suffering, despair, death, misery. We all have the idea that we ought to be healthy, and that to be healthy is our natural and reasonable condition. But it is not so, for

the instant sin entered, that instant disorganization, disease, death, destruction, became our normal and our natural condition. And if, therefore, you have a single day's health, if you have a single week's sunshine, you are to attribute the last to God, who restrains the disease that would otherwise destroy you, and gives you the blessing that you forfeited, but that in his grace he bestows. You are to see sin in all the ills and evils that overtake you; and you are to see God in all the blessings and the benefits that descend upon you. Do not always, as most men do, associate God with all that is calamitous in your lives, and associate yourselves with all that is good and prosperous in your lives; but, on the contrary, give God all the glory of the good and happiness that overtakes you, take to yourselves all the shame and the sin of all the misfortunes and all the sorrows that overwhelm you. When Jesus cured this woman, then we find that a carping and cavilling ecclesiastic—called in those days a Pharisee; that would be called in the present day a high churchman—objected that he had broken in upon the rubric, in venturing to cure a woman who had been eighteen years ill, because it happened to be the Sabbath day. Now he objected, not that he really loved the Sabbath more, but that he hated Jesus, and was anxious to find some pretext for accusing him to the governor of the country, or bringing him in guilty of a breach of the laws of the country. But our Lord's reply was most striking, like all his replies. I have often felt in reading this Gospel, that it is impossible to suppose that He, the subject of them, belonged to that age, or was part and parcel of the age in which he lived at all.

We are so accustomed to this Gospel, and our own position is so much brought up towards it, though still far below it, that we do not see the prodigious contrast between what this book contains and anything that existed 1850 years ago. It is not comparison; it is absolute contrast. And, if Jesus was not God, the four Gospels are four of the most stupendous miracles that ever were wrought in the world. Jesus replied to him very strikingly: "Thou hypocrite." Now this is not a precedent for us. If I could search a man's heart, and see that he was a pretender, I should be justified in telling him just what he is; and in doing so, I should do much better than some, who do not tell you to your face what you are, but inform others behind your back. It is one thing to say to a brother, "You are so and so"—this may be Christian, if you are quite sure of it; but it is a totally different thing to tell others behind his back that he is so. But our blessed Lord tells him to his face that he was a hypocrite, because he had the omniscient eye that penetrated into the hidden recesses of his heart, and saw what was there; and therefore he said, "Thou hypocrite," you profess to honour the Sabbath-day, whilst you really wish to injure me. Your language and your thoughts are not in unison. A hypocrite means a person who wears a mask; literally translated it is "a play-actor." And you know that a very common man upon the stage assumes one to be a king, another to be something else; he wears a mask that looks like royalty, while underneath that mask there is concealed a face as far removed from royalty as plebeianism can possibly make it. Well now, that phrase, a man wearing a mask, or a hypocrite, applied to

moral character, means a person covering the heart, which is his real character, with a countenance which represents a false and assumed character. It does not need a mask of pasteboard to conceal character; the countenance can itself be twisted into any shape men please. It may express friendship when hostility may be lurking underneath. Now, our Lord says to this Pharisee, "Thou hypocrite"—thou pretender—you say that I have broken the Sabbath: well now, if you yourself would go and give a bucket of water to the ass or to the ox in the stall on the Sabbath-day, because a work of necessity, do you mean to say that I am not to restore to health a human being, and more than that, an immortal being; and to minister, not only to a sufferer, but to a daughter of Abraham, one in covenant with God? Do you mean to say that if you would relieve an ox, you would not relieve a human being,—a Christian? Therefore out of your own mouth I condemn you. When this proud ecclesiastic heard this eloquent rebuke, he was silent; but the common people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done. What a sad fact it is, how painful is it to one's mind, that the ecclesiastics of the day—the priests, the presbyters, or whatever you like to call them—opposed Jesus; while the common people on one occasion heard him gladly, and the rest of the people, on other occasions, rejoiced at those things that he said. It is a fact in the history of Christianity that almost all—and this is a thing you ought not to forget; and I speak very advisedly—the errors that have been introduced into the Christian church have come from the presbyters, or the bishops, or the ministers of Christianity, or ecclesiastics; and that when the

whole priesthood has become degraded, the mass of the people have continued more or less orthodox and Christian. I fear far more the domination of the priest than I fear the domination of the people. Not that there is any infallible guarantee in priest or in people; but in the presence of Him who has promised to be with his people to the end of the world, and to give them all things whatsoever they need.

After thus rebuking the Pharisee, he likens the kingdom of God, that is, the Christian church, to two different things: first, a mustard seed planted, and growing up into a large tree, and birds resting on it; secondly, to leaven cast into meal, fermenting, or saturating the whole mass with its influence. The first parable is the outer progress of the Church, where it becomes outwardly great, and men find shelter in it; the second parable is the inner life of the Church, where it has a truth deposited in its heart, and becomes saturated with it.

One then came to him, while he was preaching in the cities, and said, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" What a strange question to ask! and yet it is a question that frequently occurs to us. We do not like to conclude that a great majority will be lost; we are sometimes anxious to know how many will be saved; and like this man, we ask, if not in words, at least in anxious thought, the question. Now mark our Lord's reply: he did not say, "There are few;" nor did he say, "There are many;" but he substantially said, "This can do you no good; it is a mere matter of curious inquiry: instead of troubling your mind about a question that can make you no wiser, no happier, no holier, take upon you a personal and instant duty;

strive to enter in at the strait gate." It is another illustration of a striking feature in the teaching of our Lord, that he withdraws the mind from every curious and wandering speculation, and fixes it upon present and upon lasting duties. And I must notice here, what I am sure you must have seen in reading the Bible, how much there is in it to sanctify, how much to comfort, how much to strengthen, but how little to gratify an anxious and an itching curiosity. Now if I wanted to make a book extremely popular, what would I do? I would try to gratify the curiosity of mankind; and if I wanted to write a book extremely unpopular, I would try to sanctify the hearts, and correct the sins and the vices, of mankind. It is a striking trait in our fallen nature that we are more curious to know an interesting speculation than we are anxious to feel the force of a sanctifying and saving truth.

Our Lord then tells them that the reason why they should strive is just this; that a day will come when the gate will be shut. That does not mean that the gate is shut this day to any one that wishes to enter in; but that a day will come—either by your death, or by the advent of the Lord and the close of this dispensation, when that gate, now so wide that the greatest sinner may enter, and yet so narrow that the least sin cannot be admitted with him, will be closed; and then, when the gate is closed, you may knock as long as you like; the day of grace is ended, the day of judgment is begun; you must remain outside for ever, there can be no more access to the presence of God. If you should make it a reason for entering, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets"—that is to say, translated

into modern language—"We have been regularly baptized;" or, as some may say, "We have been sprinkled in infancy, and immersed in adult life;" or, as others might say, "We have been baptized by one who had the true and legitimate apostolical succession:" "We have been regarded as most consistent Churchmen;" or, "We have been most decided Dissenters; we have been numbered with the congregation;" or, "We have ministered to the wants of the poor,—are we to be cast out?" The answer is, The evidence of grace is not connexion with a church, or conforming to a mere outward ceremony; but doing justly, loving mercy, walking humbly with God. "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity: I never knew you."

And then he describes the last festival that shall be. He says, "And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God;" or, as it is in another Gospel, "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob;" and as it is also said here, in the previous verse, "Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Now here we have evidence of recognition in the age to come. The beings on the left of the judgment-seat will recognise upon the right hand the beings who are saved. "Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." And so I believe, in the holy and happy realms that are to be entered after death before the resurrection of the body, that we shall recognise each other. I could not only recognise men by their outward countenances, which of course are expressive enough; but I could know certain individuals if their

countenance was hidden, by their peculiarity of taste, their peculiarity of temperament, their way of thinking, their association of ideas—all that constitutes that peculiar idiosyncrasy which every individual has, and of which he cannot divest himself. But then, when this body, or the tent in which I live, shall be struck, my soul, that is myself, does not die. I have often told you that that which I see is not you, and that that which you see is not I. If my body were placed in the tomb, I do not die, I do not cease to be, my recollections, my associations, my love, my joys, my hopes, my sympathies, my feelings, myself—that which constitutes myself, my soul, is immortal and lasting for ever and ever. When we lay aside those tents or tabernacles in which we are now living, and enter into the realms of glory, can I suppose that a person with whom I have been associated in life, with whom I have taken sweet counsel, who has conversed with me, and reciprocated my joys, my sorrows, my fears, my hopes—that I shall not recognise that person? Is memory to be destroyed in heaven—is the future to be a blank—will all mankind be staring on vacancy? Let us take care lest we so etherialise the future that we fail to recollect that it is not a place where each is in his niche, like an idol in the Pantheon, separate and alone. Let us recollect that heaven is not a hermitage, nor a monk's cell, but the company and converse of the blessed; where we shall rejoice together, and celebrate the praises of Him who hath kept us from falling, and presented us before his presence in glory. I believe, therefore, that in heaven before the resurrection there will be perfect recognition of each other; and if at the

resurrection we were to get new bodies, then recognition might not be possible,—I might fail to recognise a brother in a new body; but it is not new bodies that we are to have, but these very bodies. We do not need, in order to be glorified, a new body, altogether new, constructed from the earth; this very body, that fell and was reduced to dust, shall be raised and reconstructed in more than its pristine glory and beauty; and the very features that we now recognise, we shall recognise then as the features of a brother.

After this we read that some came to him and said, "Herod will kill thee"—a mere attempt to awake his fear. Our blessed Lord perhaps then used the only severe expression which is recorded of him in the Gospels:—"Go ye, and tell that fox,"—yet that simply means, "tell that cunning person, that astute and cunning person,"—"I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected"—after I have done all that devolves upon me to do, then I shall be complete. He then turns round and says, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." And then the most touching, the most penetrating appeal was made to Jerusalem:—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings"—what a beautiful simile! how exquisitely poetical! how fitted to suggest every touching recollection!—"and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"—so it is: the most desolate land in all the world at this moment, having any inhabitants in it, is Palestine; and though the signs of its returning vitality are multiplying on every hand, yet it will remain desolate

until the Jew in it, on it, in the midst of the temple he will seek to raise in order to carry on his economy, shall see above it and beyond it, and recognise Jesus as blessed, and say, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

NOTE.—[28, 29.] The verses occur here in a different connexion: "Ye Jews, who neglect the earnest endeavour to enter now, shall weep and gnash your teeth when ye see all the saints, Jews and Gentiles, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves excluded." (See chap. xvi. 23.) In these two verses is the real answer to the question of verse 23 given: "they shall be many—but what is that to you, if you be not among them?"

[30.] As the words here stand—somewhat different from those Matt. xx. 16—they seem to be a prophetic declaration of what shall be in the course of the ingathering of these guests:—viz. that some who were the first or among the first to believe, shall fall from their high place, and *vice versa*. This former has, as Stier notices, (iii. 200,) been remarkably the case with the Oriental churches, which were the first founded and flourishing; and we may add, with the mother church of Jerusalem, which has declined, while her Gentile offsets have flourished.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER XIV.

DINING ON THE SABBATH DAY—HEALING ON SABBATH DAY—PARABLE
—SOCIAL ENTERTAINMENTS—FESTIVAL AND GUESTS—UNITY IN
ERROR AND EVIL—EXCUSES—RELATIVE DUTIES—SALT—LIGHTS—
LOSS OF CHARACTER.

THE expression used in the opening part of the chapter, "the chief Pharisees," is not the correct rendering of the original word, which means strictly and properly the Pharisees that were rulers in the midst of the synagogue, or exercised jurisdiction and authority there.

Some have asked, Why did Jesus on the Sunday, as we should call the day, or the Sabbath day, as it was called then, accept an invitation to dine with a powerful and a proud ecclesiastic, when, as we should think, such invitations should not be given that day? I answer, Jesus had no home of his own; he availed himself of every avenue to good; he lost no opportunity of doing what was beneficent wherever those opportunities offered. It is no more sinful to dine on the Sabbath day than it is upon the week-day. It is sinful to go to a party on the Sabbath day; but if you go to the house of a friend upon that day after duty of any sort, or to accept of his hospitality, and therein to advance directly or indirectly the things of the kingdom of heaven, then to dine with a friend on the Sabbath day may be a Christian duty, and not necessarily a profane and worldly thing.

In the next place, we read that whilst he was thus dining, one came in who had a disease incurable by

human skill. Jesus seeing him, and knowing the habits and customs of the Pharisees, who made the Sabbath not a day beautiful and welcome, but a day of irreligious austerity; a penance, not a privilege; a pain, not a pleasure,—knowing their perversion of a divine institution, their real desecration of it, their seeming rigid consecration of it,—said, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?”—if to heal the body, to heal the soul is no less an act of beneficence; that is always seasonable—no, it is always duty where you have the power and the ability to do it. And they could not answer him. If he had asked some ceremonial question, they could have answered him. They could not say No; because that would have been to assert that cruelty and unkindness were in their theology canonized: they dared not say Yes; for that would have condemned their own practices; and therefore they were silent. Jesus at once solves the difficulty, answers his own question by restoring the sick man to perfect health; and then he says to them, If you have an ox, and if that ox falls into a pit, and cannot get out, and must there perish if left alone, would it be sin to take the ox out of the pit, even if it should be the Sabbath day? If this be so, *a fortiori*, to drive disease out of a body that it brings to destruction, to heal a sick man, and to rescue him from the jaws of death, cannot be less, it must, if possible, be more a present duty. “And they could not answer him again to these things.”

He then put forth what is called “a parable,” but which was really a sort of illustration,—“to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms, saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding” *feast*, not to a wed-

ding merely, but to a wedding feast, "sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden." There is underlying this rebuke the fact that one ought to observe the courtesies of social life. Jesus recognises here social and deferential precedence. He says to those that were bidden, Do not as you Pharisees in your ecclesiastical pride do, seize upon the loftiest and the most honourable place; and do not—for he teaches that as well—go down into an exceedingly low place, for there is an affectation of humility that is really the worst and most intolerable pride of all; but take that place which seems fairly and justly to belong to you; neither going higher nor descending lower; and the master of the feast will always take care that you shall occupy or be seated in that place which becomes your position, your dignity, and your relationship in social life. Now these Pharisees always chose the loftiest places, and Jesus gives this parable in order to rebuke that ecclesiastical pride which supposes nothing more exalted than itself, and which looks upon every place beneath it as fit only for the laity, or those that were not invested with the same dignified privileges. And then Jesus tells them, "Whoever exalteth himself," as you Pharisees do, "shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

He next illustrates another great truth by another beautiful parable. Before doing so, however, he says, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." Does this forbid hospitality? Does it forbid entertaining

friends? His own practice shows that it does not. If it did forbid it, his own practice would be the refutation of his own prescription. Our blessed Lord very often speaks absolutely, as it seems to us, when really he speaks relatively. For instance, he says, "Labour not for the bread that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." He does not mean that a man should not labour for his bread; but evidently, "Labour less for the bread that perisheth; more for that which endures unto eternal life." So again in this chapter, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and his mother." He does not mean that a Christian is to indulge in a breach of the fifth commandment: but that if any man come to him, and love him not more than his father and mother, and sister and brother, he cannot be his disciple. So when he says here, "When thou makest a dinner, call not thy friends;" he is evidently speaking relatively. He says, If you wish recompense, as you Pharisees do; for you give entertainments that you may get others in return; you give dinners in order that you may gain power, and advance yourselves in the synagogue and in the temple;—well, if you really want a substantial reward, worthy of the name, do not give dinners to your rich friends, who can give dinners to you; but if a reward be your object, call the poor, and the blind, and the maimed; and then you will get a recompense in the resurrection of the just, because you cannot have a recompense from these—the maimed, the poor, and the blind,—whom you have invited to your festival. The meaning, therefore, is, that all hospitality shown to your equals should be postponed to beneficence shown to the poor. The obligations that

you owe to the naked and the hungry should take precedence of the hospitality that you give to the rich, the great, and those that are your friends, and brethren, or equals in social life. Be hospitable, but still more, be generous; entertain your friends, but still more, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and relieve those that are in distress.

Our Lord adds also a parable illustrative of the nature of the kingdom of heaven. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready." The whole of this parable is illustrative of the Gospel; and the successive invitations issued, first by prophets, next by the Baptist, then by our Lord, and lastly by the apostles and evangelists, onward to the end of the world. Christianity with all its blessings, is compared to a feast of rich things. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" So here, he likens the Gospel to a feast, a provision for the soul, corresponding, only on a higher level, to a provision made for the taste, the appetites, and the pleasures of the body.

He sent his servant then, and he told, not a few, elect; but the *οἱ πολλοὶ*, the great mass of mankind. The invitation of the Gospel is, in its first aspect, directly addressed not to man as a Christian, or to man as elect, but to man simply as a sinner. Jesus came into the world, not to save the elect, but to save sinners;

and you are to apply to him for acceptance, not on the ground of your election, which you cannot discover, but on the ground of your guilt, which in your conscience you feel to be real.

He bade this servant say, "Come, for all things are now ready." Now what is the Gospel? Not something that you bring in exchange for something that you get; not a contribution on the part of the invited to the festival of which they are invited to partake; but it is coming hungry, just as you are, to eat of a festival to which you contribute nothing, but from which you get all that is good, and nourishing, and healthy. "Come, for all things are ready." The Gospel is not something that you are to elaborate, but something that you are to accept; not something that you are to do, but something that you are simply to take: and I believe that thousands stumble at the threshold of Christianity by a latent and lurking idea that they must do something, or lay aside something, before they close with its beneficent and its blessed overtures. Whereas the very essence of it is, that just as the worst sinner is, he is to come to Jesus as Jesus is, and to receive freely pardon of all the sins that are past, and grace to sanctify him for all the duties that are to come.

"All things are now ready." A perfect sacrifice, a perfect righteousness, a willing Father, a waiting Saviour, a mighty Spirit—all things requisite are prepared, and nothing remains to be done, but all are prepared for you, and waiting for your acceptance.

One would have thought that, invited to such a feast, nobody would ever have dreamed of refusing; one would have thought that all would have been

anxious to show respect to a friend who invited them to partake of so rich and generous a festival, especially as this festival was a royal one. But strange enough, "they all with one consent began to make excuse." It is so with reference to the Gospel; men make excuses for not being Christians. The very fact that any person makes an excuse for not being a Christian, implies that he thinks there is something in Christianity that is very nauseous, something in religion that is very painful, and that he would naturally rather be rid of, if decently and conveniently he could. But it is all the other way; when you hesitate, you offer an excuse for not being happy; you make an excuse for refusing to have peace; you get up reasons for hesitating to be a son of God instead of being an heir of wrath and of hopeless and irretrievable misery. One would think that everybody that hears the Gospel would, like Abraham, leap for joy when he hears it, and be too ready to welcome it. But it is just the other way. The Gospel invites you, and you all make excuse for rejecting it, and standing aside.

And we have here a very remarkable instance of another kind. "They all began with one consent to make excuse." Now you know the Church of Rome says that one of the grand proofs of a true church is unity. But here is unity on the part of those that have nothing to do with the Gospel. There is a unity that is conspiracy, as well as a unity that is Christian concord. You may with one consent reject the Gospel, as well as with one consent accept it. The mere fact of being united in a transaction does not prove that transaction to be good, or the parties combined to be personally holy. When unity is associated with truth, it is

beautiful ; but when associated with sin, it is conspiracy and condemnation, not the concord of the Gospel.

Notice now the three excuses they made. The first was the excuse of the agriculturist ; the second the excuse of the tradesman, or of the merchant ; and the third the excuse of the father, or the husband, or the domestic excuse.

The first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused." Now this was a lie, no question about it ; and like all lies, it needs but to be looked at in order to see that it is so. Is it likely that a sagacious man, whose heart seems to have been wholly in the world, would have bought a piece of land without first looking at it? And yet he says that he had bought a piece of land, and that he must go to see it ; whereas he must have seen it before, and measured it, and estimated its productive powers, and given a price, you may depend upon it, not larger than, per acre, it would fetch in any market at that day.

The second said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them ; I pray thee have me excused." Can you suppose that any man would buy an ox that he never saw, that he knew nothing of, whose strength he had never tested? It was just a falsehood ; it was a pretext ; and when men want an excuse, it is, alas ! too common—for not doing what they ought to do—to invent excuses where they do not really exist.

And the third said, "I have married a wife,"—and he did not say why that should be a pretext, as if that would be obvious to every one,—“and therefore I cannot come.” Well, if he had married a wife, he could have brought his wife with him.

But if the objector had married a wife who differed from him in vital things, he ought not to have married such a wife. In either case the excuse was merely a pretext. These three excuses are all clearly absurd, and only seemed to those who made them strong and proper, because they did not like the feast to which they were invited.

The servant, we read, when he heard all this, "came and shewed his lord these things," that is, his master, not "lord." "Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind:" that is, "Bring any that you can find. I have asked those whom I thought ought to come, and to whom it would be a treat to come; they have declined the invitation; I cannot have the feast ready without guests to eat it; therefore descend into a lower stratum. Leave those in aristocratic life, and go down to those lower strata that are in every great and populous capital—go and bring them." "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room,"—room for plenty more. Then what did he say? "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Does this mean, force them whether they like it or not? This is quoted by a very distinguished Romish controversialist as a proof of the Inquisition, the treatment of the Madiais, or the imprisonment of Miss Cunninghame, not merely being according to Romish law, but, also most scriptural, because it says in this passage, "Compel them to come in." But just look at the merits of the case. Here was one solitary servant commanded by his master to go out into the

highways and hedges, where the gypsies, and thieves, and beggars consorted, and to compel them to come in. Now, if physical force was meant here, how could one single servant compel them to come in by the dozen? The thing confutes itself. How can a single domestic compel thieves, and beggars, and highwaymen, and robbers to come in by force? It is obvious it was not force; and therefore the meaning of the word must be persuasion. Use such arguments as are holy, and proper, and just,—persuade them to come in, induce them to come in. And how very solemn is this passage that is added: “For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

And then he draws the conclusion: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple;” that is, “if he love his father or mother more than me, he cannot be my disciple.” If the order of a parent clearly and unmistakeably come into collision, not with the order of a priest, but with the command of God in his holy word, then you are to postpone the command of the parent to the command of God. The duty that you owe to the lower must be laid aside, when brought into opposition to the duty that you owe to the higher. But a very great mistake is often made. Ecclesiastics say, “This is right;” a priest or a prelate says, “That is your duty;” and very often young persons say, “Very well, then I must renounce the duty that I owe to my parents, and obey the command of my ecclesiastical superior.” That is not the text, nor is it duty. I would obey my parent a thousand times before the command of priest, or prelate, or cardinal, or pope. But it is when a duty is clearly indicated in the Bible

—so clearly indicated that there can be no mistake, misapprehension, or misconception about it—and that duty runs cross to what you owe a parent, as expressed by parental command, you are to have no hesitation in postponing obedience to the earthly parent to that higher and loftier allegiance that you owe to the Great Parent of us all.

He says, in the next place, that you ought to be like salt; for he says, “Salt is good; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” Some have cavilled at this, and they say that salt cannot lose its savour. There are two explanations; either of them is good; the last, I think, is the best. Some say the salt referred to is an aromatic salt, something like ammonia, and when all its flavour and its pungent properties have evaporated, then it is of no more use; it has lost the only value for which it was kept. Others, however, think, and in my opinion with much more probability, that this is the common salt, or that combination of muriatic acid and soda which constitutes what we call culinary salt, or what chemists call “muriate of soda.” Now, they say that salt cannot lose its savour. But there are instances; and, I believe, it is said by a traveller, that he saw near the Dead Sea immense masses of muriate of soda that had lost its peculiar property; or, as expressed here, salt that had lost its savour. Our Lord says, Ye are the lights of the world; if you cease to be luminous, you are worthless: ye are the salt of the earth; if you part with your savour, or fail to extend your beneficent influence to those that are around you, you are like the salt that has lost its peculiar and characteristic savour; it is not fit to be used, for it has lost the property that

made it valuable; it is not fit for manure, for it has lost its peculiar adaptation for it; it is only fit to be cast out, and trodden under the feet of men. So is it with those that profess the truth, but have it not; that seem to be salt, but have no savour; that live for themselves, and not for God, and for the benefit of all mankind.

CHAPTER XIV. 18.

APOLOGIES—SPIRITUAL TASTE—THEY THAT ARE WELL—MISTAKEN
FEARS—INCONSISTENCIES—WANT OF TIME—INABILITY—PROCRAS-
TINATION.

It seems strange that persons invited to a festival, which was one of the most joyous in ancient or in eastern times, should feel it their duty or their disposition to get up excuses for stopping away. One would think that the treat would have been so great to the multitude—bread, and a wedding raiment, and wine, and all the good things that might be provided by the master of a great house and a large estate—that every one invited to be present, and participate of the feast, would have rejoiced in the opportunity, and thankfully have availed himself of it. But it is said of this festival, made by an earthly lord, meant to represent a higher festival made by a Heavenly One, that they all, with unanimity most remarkable, with singular unity of mind, feeling, purpose, and practice, began to make excuse. Now, our Lord says that the blessings provided in the Gospel, described in the Bible, arranged by the Spirit, purchased by Christ himself, are to the soul precisely what the richest provision spread upon an earthly table is to the most exquisite or fastidious taste; that is, perfect and complete gratification. Then how is it, if the feast be so pleasant, that the people

invited to the earthly one excused themselves? Or how is it now that such a blessing, provided in the Gospel, freely offered to all, to which all are invited, is so regarded by men that they still (for our Lord uses the parable to represent the practices of men still) excuse themselves—begin with one consent to make excuse? The real reason is just this, that our earthly taste is not so vitiated by the fall that it cannot be delighted with a feast or a festival fitted to gratify it; but our spiritual taste is so vitiated by the original fall, and the influence of that fall projecting still its shadow over us, that it is not pleased with what once pleased it; it is not delighted with what once delighted it. The carnal heart is enmity to God, and to all that bears the stamp, the character, and the likeness of God; and therefore we do not like spiritual things, however choice, because it needs a new taste, a new nature, raised to the level of the new and blessed provision, in order that we may thankfully and delightedly enjoy them. The reason, therefore, of the excuse, is no doubt radically in the heart. The heart is wrong, and therefore, it likes not what is right. The spiritual taste is vitiated, therefore it is not refreshed by what once refreshed it.

But there are specific reasons why men make excuse for not embracing and accepting the blessings of the Gospel, that may be worthy of a moment's consideration. Some have the idea that however good these things may be, however good religion may be, however excellent the Saviour may be, they really do not need it, that they are well enough as they are, and they want to let well alone; that there is really nothing that they require done for them; they are good mem-

bers of society; they owe no man anything; they have paid all their debts; they have good hearts, if they have not very great minds; and, therefore, they cannot see why they should trouble themselves about this visitant from heaven called Christianity, demanding supremacy over their hearts, and offering to them that like it a rich treat, called in Scripture "a feast of fat things." Now, as long, then, if we are satisfied with ourselves, of course we shall never think of going out of ourselves to seek satisfaction elsewhere. The well, the whole, do not need a physician, and they do not seek after one; they do not trouble themselves about the existence of such a character; they are quite well, they do not want him. But when they are sick, and need a physician, they begin to make inquiry after him. So, the moment that you begin to be convinced of sin, and to feel that you are alienated from God, your whole disposition is altered; you can see that there is not in yourself that which will satisfy, that there is not in your own life that which will bear the ordeal through which you must pass at a judgment-seat. You feel a hunger that nothing earthly can remove, a thirst that earth's cisterns cannot satisfy. Then you hear the invitation, "Come,"—the poor, the maim, the halt, the blind, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, (spiritually so,) are all invited to come. Hungry, then, you will come where bread is; naked, you will come where raiment may be found; feeling dissatisfaction within, you will respond to the invitation, and go to that festival where the peace that passeth understanding is freely given, and may by you be fully realised.

There is another reason why some do not accept

religion. I am speaking of coming to the feast as equivalent to accepting Christianity—I use a very comprehensive phrase—accepting Christianity, believing on Christ, desiring to attain what this book calls the full stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Now the feeling of some, and a reason why they stand aloof from Christianity, why they do not decide as they are here invited to decide, is this. They think that if they become Christians, if they should make a profession of religion, above all, if they should come to the Lord's table, then, farewell to all their joys and their pleasures, all the bright and sunny things of this world,—they must give them all up; and that to become Christians is very much in their estimate to become monks; to embrace Christianity is equivalent very much in their minds to going into a convent. They think that the least enjoyment in this world is incompatible with the full supremacy of the things of the world to come. It is not so; Christianity forbids no joy upon earth that is not sin; and joys that are not sinful it limits, it does not banish. It insists that there shall not be the excessive enjoyment of this world; but it permits the lawful use and enjoyment of every happiness of every kind that is in itself right in the sight of God. It extinguishes no lights that are lighted from on high; it casts no shadow where there is otherwise sunshine; it only takes that which is deceiving, that which ultimately must pain, and lifts your affections, your sympathies, your hopes to a purer realm, to nobler objects—a house not made with hands, and happiness that is a fountain ever full and ever flowing, instead of being a broken cistern, that can hold no water. And the best way to put it to the

test is this: do you find that Christian people are more sorrowful, more gloomy, more melancholy than worldly people? I venture to say that, if you could now see laid bare the thoughts of a Christian who has returned from a Communion-sabbath to the world on Monday, and the thoughts of the worldling who has returned from the opera at one or two o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, or any other morning in the week; if you could see the thoughts of the one after his attendance in the sanctuary, and the thoughts of the other after his or her enjoyment in the opera, you would find that the remains of the feelings kindled at the opera are misery, a sense of disquietude and want, that must take another evening at the opera to remove, or some other indulgence or excitement to propitiate; but in the case of the other there will be perfect peace—the calm equator of Christian feeling—resulting from communion with God, from obedience to his will, from reliance on the provisions of his grace, and from confidence in his government of the heart, of the world, and of mankind. In other words, you will find the pleasures of the world, even when they may be blameless, like the crackling thorns; the pleasures of the truth, the pleasures of peace, the pleasures of Christianity, are like the shining light that shineth more and more to the perfect day. I do not speak of pleasures that are positively sinful contrasted with pleasures that are positively Christian; but pleasures that are worldly compared with the enjoyments that are positively Christian; I assert the latter are weighty and real, the former are unsatisfactory, and often irritant. And you do not find, therefore, that a Christian is a more gloomy man than the worldling; you do not

find that a man who goes to his church regularly on a Sunday, reads his Bible, and lives accordingly, is more miserable than the man that lives wholly to make money, never opens a Bible, or spends his Sunday in the Crystal Palace, or in reading the newspaper. You do not find that a Christian is more gloomy than a worldling, but the very reverse: and, therefore, I allege that your acceptance of the truth, your profession of it, your full acquiescence in it, will not make you more unhappy, but less unhappy. It would be strange if it were otherwise. Could we expect that God will give in this life all the unhappiness to his friends, and all the enjoyment to his enemies? We cannot expect such a thing; we must expect—no, we are sure—that to his friends he will increase their joy, and to those that are his enemies there can be no real joy, or even peace at all, but trouble, and grief, and anxiety, and sense of want that cannot be removed.

But another reason why some refuse to accept the truth, and to profess the Gospel, (I do not say a real reason, but an alleged reason,) is the inconsistency of those that profess Christianity. Ask the worldly man, a sceptic, or one that rejects the Bible, “Why do you not accept the Bible?” He will not enter into an argument with you, nor sift the evidence on which a decision depends; but he will say, “Look at such a one; I saw him at the communion-table on Sunday; and on Monday he was so greedy of gain, that he cheated one, and deceived another, and seems to live only for making money. Look at that other individual; I saw him at the communion-table on Sunday, and yet he is one of the most unsociable and disagreeable men in existence. I cannot see that Christianity

makes people better." Well, now, suppose he has stated what is perfectly true, and I dare say it is true in many cases, that is no reason why he should not accept the truth; and his detection of the inconsistency shows that he himself knows that Christianity produces a very different conduct, and inspires a very opposite tone, and temperament, and character; and instead of making the inconsistency of others a reason for the unbelief of himself, he ought rather to accept the truth, and show that it makes him a very superior character, by walking before God and the world in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. It is therefore no real excuse, but a pretended or alleged one, to calm the checks and remonstrances of conscience in renouncing Christianity itself.

Others will allege that they would like to be Christians—they could wish that they were so; but that really they are so employed in the world that they have no time for it at all. So far this is true, they have no time for it; but why? They have no time for it just because they are in their hearts not persuaded that eternity is the main thing, and time the subordinate thing. They have criminally and culpably no time. The morning is for business, the afternoon for dinner, the evening for amusement, the night for bed; and not a minute for the Bible, for religion, for the soul, for God. But what is their duty? Not to plead their having no time as an excuse for their being no Christians, but to seize a portion of the time that they have devoted to other purposes; to snatch from Mammon's hands the days or the hours that Mammon has robbed them of; and to consecrate those to the service of God, the study of their own eternal and spiritual interests. And as to

the main thing in religion, how long did it take the jailor of Philippi to believe? He came ignorant of Christianity; he came a hardened reprobate; he asked, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer was conclusive—all the religion of a Christian—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What was the result? Within at least a few hours, he professed that he believed; he was baptized; he rejoiced in Christ with all his household. Now, it is quite plain it does not take a long time to believe. It may take a long time to grow to the stature of the full man in Christ, but it does not take a very long time to believe.

Others will say, "We are not Christians, because we cannot be so. We have no ability," they will say; "we have heard you preach, but we are without strength. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Now that is quite true; but if you feel the preciousness of being a Christian, and feel truly what you say—that you have no ability—what should be your course? Simply to ask for one that has ability to give you the ability that you need. If I am hungry; if you ask, "Why do you not satisfy that hunger?" and I answer, "I have no bread," it would surely follow that I should try to get bread from anybody who can give it me. So if you feel that you have no strength to believe, no strength to accept the Gospel, what is your course? To ask strength of Him that has it. We are told, "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened to you." "My strength is made perfect in weakness." The man who says from his heart, and who believes while he says it, "I have no strength," has already crossed the threshold of the Christian

temple, and is already a Christian. The consciousness—the lamented consciousness—of no strength, is the dawn of Christianity; but when it is used as an excuse, “I have no strength,” or as a mere momentary calm for conscience, then it is a worthless pretence; it is like the excuse of the man in the parable—unfounded and false.

Another excuse that others give is, that they intend to take up religion as soon as they can find a little time,—as Felix said, a convenient season. “Procrastination,” some one has said, “is the thief of time.” Now, what is really the meaning of putting off till to-morrow the duty of to-day? Remember, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is a duty this very moment obligatory; the person that puts it off till to-morrow just says, “God declares this is my duty to-day; but I say it is not my duty to-day; it is only my duty to-morrow.” God has given you his declaration that it is duty to-day. The instancy of duty is of the very essence of duty; and your putting it off till to-morrow is only a softer way of saying, “I will not do what God expressly commauds.” My dear friends, to-morrow is not yours; you may never see it; the only moment that is at your own disposal is the moment that is now passing; and to determine to do something to-morrow—as if to-morrow were your subject—is to assume a power and a dignity that do not belong to you.

There are several other excuses, some of them deceitful, others of them false; none of them, I add in conclusion, possessed of the least truth or reality. Where there is a valid excuse, there is complete justification. I say, if there be a valid excuse, then at a judgment-seat you will not be condemned. If, when you appear

at the judgment-seat, you can present an excuse for not being a Christian which is thoroughly valid, you will not be condemned, you will not be lost because you had the excuse that you were not sure Christianity was true; therefore you will be saved because you believed that you were not so depraved as it turns out that you were; you will be saved because you had too much to do in looking after your farm, your cattle, and your merchandise, and could not attend to religion. If these excuses be valid, they will be valid at a judgment-seat, and they will be good and substantial reasons why you should not be condemned then, if they be reasons that are now tenable in the light of Scripture and in the presence of God. But you know, and we all know, they are false. There is no good reason why every one here should not be a Christian; there is every good reason why you should; and if any one be not a Christian, it is not because there is not grace in God, because there is not atoning and expiatory virtue in the cross, because there is not ability to sanctify and regenerate the heart; but just because the heart likes its own way, and will persist in walking in one way—the broad way that leads to ruin—instead of looking up and seeking that grace that makes all things new.

CHAPTER XIV. 28—32.

FORETHOUGHT—TOWER-BUILDING—OFTEN CASTLE-BUILDING IN THE AIR—WAR—RELIGION OF OUR FAITH—THE RELIGION OF THE CROWN—THE RELIGION OF PERSONAL FEELING—THE RELIGION OF THE ARTS—THE RELIGION OF FORM—OF INTELLECT—OF CONSCIENCE—OF NATURAL AFFECTION—TRUE RELIGION.

OUR Lord asks, in words deeply suggestive of thought, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." (Luke xiv. 28—32.)

Some embrace the Gospel from reasons that are not conclusive; and when stronger reasons, as they appear to them, arise in their intercourse with social life, they lightly renounce a religion they lightly adopted. In accepting Christianity as ours, in making a profession of discipleship of Christ, we ought to do it on intelligent and conclusive grounds, for such grounds there unquestionably are: and when we have adopted it on grounds that are adequate to bear the stress and pressure

of the superstructure, then when testing and trying times come, the edifice will not fall, our religion will not be renounced, we shall continue stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work and word of the Lord.

He says, a tower may be undertaken to be built, by parties who do not calculate what may be the expense, how long time it may require, how many men may be requisite, what ought to be the thickness of the walls and the depth of the foundations; and having not made previous accurate and just estimate and calculation, their money fails them, and they must stop; hands strike, and they are unable to go on; the foundation is not deep enough, and it sinks, or what is called settles; or all these evils together, and the tower is left unfinished, to crumble in the winds and rains of heaven, a memorial of the folly of him who undertook it, and a lesson to all that are within its shadow not to undertake what they cannot see a clear, a plain, and a reasonable conclusion to.

So, in the same manner, a nation plunges rashly into war. It takes offence at something that occurs in the conduct of another nation; it does not estimate the length, and breadth, and depth of its own exchequer as it should; it does not calculate how many more taxes the people can pay, or whether the taxes be not too many and too heavy already; it does not estimate the number and expense of manning its ships, or the number of bayonets and muskets it can bring into the field; but rashly plunges into war, takes up the cause of some other dynasty; and the consequence is, that having broken peace, having rushed into war, with an exchequer almost exhausted, with a people bowed down with taxes,

it finds it has made a Quixotic crusade,—worse than that, a foolish one,—and it is obliged to make dishonourable terms in order peaceably to retire from a war into which it ought never to have plunged; whereas if it had estimated all the contingencies of the case, it had remained at honourable peace, instead of being precipitated into a dishonourable and impracticable war. So our Lord says, Those persons that embrace the Gospel ought to count the cost; they ought to look Christianity full in the face. You ought not to subscribe your name to a blank cheque; you ought not to put your name to a promise or a pledge, the amount, the meaning, and the contingencies of which you know nothing of; but with open eyes, with free and unshackled mind, after protracted and careful investigation of all, you ought to accept what is proved to be true, what is demonstrated to be from God; and having done so, you may expect that the Lord that sends you a warfare will not send you at your own charges, but will perfect his strength in your weakness, and make his grace sufficient for you.

Let me show how some persons accept Christianity, or, translated into other phrase, make the profession of religion, upon grounds that are not adequate to sustain the wear and tear of this world, and to keep them stedfast and immoveable even to the end. First, there are those who elect religion merely upon impulse. They are constitutionally the creatures of impulse. One man is the creature of feeling, another man is more the creature of intellectual conviction; another is borne away or decided in his course by facts. The Scotchman must have strong argument, the Irishman must have eloquent appeal, the Englishman must have

hard matter of fact. Each nation has its idiosyncrasy; each individual his peculiar temperament; and many who are the creatures of strong emotion subscribe a creed, if I may use the expression, on the spur of the moment; and because they feel powerfully, they think they are convinced, and that the creed they adopt is demonstrably and necessarily true. This will not be sufficient to keep them steadfast. This is commencing the tower before they have laid a just foundation; this is plunging into a conflict while they have not the weapons that will enable them to conquer. Feeling in religion is good; but feeling must not be all; an eloquent appeal may move you, but it ought not to decide you. When feeling is the fountain of our religion, then faith floats when feeling flows; but it ebbs also when feeling evaporates from its channel. We shall work with enthusiasm whilst the enthusiasm lasts, but that enthusiasm, being a stream made by a summer shower, will soon run dry, and then the creed, the conviction that depends upon it will perish with it. Smiles and tears, showers and sunshine, do not make the one religion, or the other the summer; true religion, a profession that will stand the wear and tear of this life, must be based upon something stronger, deeper, firmer than mere impulse.

In the second place, religion, in the case of many, is that of the crowd. Many persons are religious in a crowd who are most irreligious alone. They can be Christians in the mass, but not Christians when insulated from it. Many a soldier is a coward when alone; but becomes a hero in his place in the battalion. Many a man is no Christian at all when he is alone, but put him on the platform, mix him up with a

crowd of enthusiastic Christian professors, and it seems as if the combined feeling of all kindled his cold heart, and he seems a Christian in the crowd, a professor where there are many professors with him ; but left, like Peter, to meet a servant-maid alone, and he would deny his blessed Master, and show he was either not a Christian or a very weak one. The religion of the crowd, therefore, is only another form of beginning to build a tower without calculating what will be the labour and the means requisite to complete it.

There is a third sort of religion—the religion of mere circumstance. Many a person professes the Christian religion, not from personal investigation of its claims, nor from experimental acquaintance with its truths, nor from its intrinsic merits, but because he has been thrown into the society of one he loves and admires ; and he accepts the religion of the man that he loves, he believes the creed of the benefactor he is deeply indebted to ; and his conviction of the truth, and his attachment to Christianity, not being built upon the ascertained intrinsic merit of Christianity, but upon the reflected lustre of him who professes it, and whom he admires and loves, his convictions waver with the consistency of him on whom they were originally founded, and when that individual falters, or fails, or falls away, his religion, based not upon personal investigation or intrinsic merit, will falter, and fail, and give way with him.

There are others whose religion is simply the religion of tradition. Ask many a Protestant, Why are you so ? and he will answer, My good father was so before me, and his father before him ; and therefore I am a Protestant. Now that man is no more a Protestant

than he is a Roman Catholic,—he is neither. He accepts his religion precisely as he accepts his name,—by birth. His religion is an outside robe, not an inner life; and therefore, when the winds blow and the rains beat, and the tower is about to be finished, he finds the basis on which his conclusion depended is hollow; all must fall to the ground, or he must leave what he commenced unfinished and incomplete.

There is another religion, which may be called the religion of sentiment. This religion is nourished by all the beautiful and the romantic. It is the religion of Athens rather than the religion of Jerusalem; the religion of painters and of poets, rather than the religion of thinking and of intellectual men. It abounds in tender feelings; it covers the awful in God's character with poetic similes and picturesque thoughts; it shrinks from the more stern and awful attributes of Deity. But such a religion will not last. Individuals change: the romance of twenty becomes the reality of forty. Sentiment gives way to solemnity; and this religion of sentiment, of poetry, and of picturesqueness—so beautiful in the sunshine, so fair in soft and sunny scenery—will not stand the rough ordeal of the world; it will not tread the thorny paths; it refuses to walk in flinty roads; it furnishes no martyrs, it can stand no trials; it shrinks from a cloud as a Christian would not shrink from the stake; it is the beginning of a tower upon a wrong foundation; it is soon left unfinished, or it falls, and great must be the fall thereof.

There is another religion which is equally false,—the religion of form. Mind you, all these varied religions, or rather, these varied grounds on which persons accept the true religion, are all proofs and illus-

trations of commencing a superstructure on a wrong foundation—of attempting that which must fail, because we have not counted the cost or estimated the expense of it. There is another religion, then,—the religion of mere form. It reads the outer aspect of things, not the inner life; beautiful paintings, glorious music, gorgeous and sacerdotal robes,—these charm it, and constitute in its judgment the reason why it accepts Christianity. The altar takes the place of God; the sign of the cross, the place of Christ crucified; rood screens, holy places, beautiful cathedrals are the kingdom of God; which really is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It baptizes a Pagan, and calls that Pagan therefore a Christian; it looks at the outer symbol more than at the inner reality; its conversion is a transference of creed, not the transformation of the heart. It is the enrolment of a man's baptismal name in an ecclesiastical register, not the reconciliation of a sinner to God, and the regeneration of a heart that is dead in trespasses and in sins. Now this religion will last as long as cathedrals, and processions, and splendour lasts; but in the days of persecution, when catacombs take the place of cathedrals, and dens the place of basilicas, and the desert, and the morass, and the mountain-side the room of mediæval cathedrals; then, its nutriment being gone, its religion goes with it, and shows how truly it was the building of a tower without the means of finishing or maintaining it. The eyes may be ravished, yet the soul not saved; the senses may be charmed, yet the affections not sanctified. A country may be full of beautiful churches, and yet empty of Christian men. Thousands may be expended in stones wherewith Christian temples

are built; and the poor of the land—the living stones of Christ—may pine and perish for want of daily bread. This is not the religion that will stand.

And in the next place, let me add, what will seem to you, perhaps, more startling—there is the religion of intellect, which will no more stand. If some profess Christianity from sentimental sympathy with its beautiful parts, and others profess Christianity from admiration of its ritual, or its forms; there are others still that profess Christianity from deep intellectual apprehension of it; and yet theirs is a religion that will not stand. The English religion is very much the religion of evidence, the result of matter-of-fact; the Irish religion—when real, the most genuine, I believe, and the most lasting of all—is the religion of deep, inward emotion and feeling; the Scotch religion is often in the head—often very, very cold, though always most clear. But even this religion—the religion of intellect—when it is clearest, may not be that deep, inward, real religion which will outlast the ordeal of the world in which it must live, and be crowned with benedictions at the judgment-seat of God. One may repeat the Shorter Catechism, and yet not be a Christian; one may subscribe to the Nicene Creed, the Confession of Faith, and the Thirty-nine Articles, and yet not be a Christian. One may battle for Justification by Faith, and yet may never have felt its power; one may be an opponent of Socinianism, an antagonist of Romanism, and yet not be experimentally acquainted with the living, regenerative, transforming power of true and living religion. Orthodoxy is not regeneration of heart: the devils believe—the devils know every article of the creed to be true; but whilst they know and believe, they tremble. It is

possible, therefore, to have a clear head, and yet not to have a regenerated heart; it is possible to be an enthusiastic admirer of beautiful music, of ceremonies, of paintings, and all the poetry of religion, and yet not to be a Christian; it is possible to be sentimentally attached to religion from admiration of the sufferings of its saints, the devotedness of its martyrs, the beauty of its sentiments, the poetry of its compositions, and yet not to be a Christian at all.

And lastly, there is another religion, that will still more surprise you, when I say, that it also may not be a religion that will stand—there is the religion of conscience. It is possible for conscience to be in your religion, and yet your heart not to be the subject of living and experimental Christianity. Of all the organs in the human soul, the conscience is perhaps the most important; and that it should be touched, that it should respond to every duty, that it should sensitively shrink from every sin, is socially most important, it may personally be salvation. Wherever there is the mere religion of conscience, what will be its effect? You will pray because conscience drives you to it, and your prayer will be a penance, not a pleasure. You will read God's word, and you dare not cease to do so, because your conscience would scourge you with scorpion lash if you were to omit it. You go to the house of God because your conscience would trouble you if you were not to do so. But is this the beautiful, the happy, the blessed religion of Jesus? Such service is slavery, such duties are drudgery, such a religion is a ceaseless and perpetual penance, not righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Thus,—intellect, conscience, sentiment, poetry, form,

ceremony—all may be involved in religion, and yet there may be no living personal effect produced upon the heart and the conscience.

There is another form of religion which is equally precarious—there is the religion of natural affection. Your home may be its sanctuary, your fireside its shrine; the subject of it a husband, a wife, a son, or a daughter. Every reciprocal duty under the domestic roof may be beautifully rendered, but the cement of that home may not be religion, the light of that fireside may not be from Calvary; the constraining motives of the hearts that are there may not be taken from the word of God. Many a one is beautiful and faultless in all the relationships of social life, who is utterly destitute of that great relationship that should control all, govern all, and be stronger than all—the tie that binds the son to his heavenly Father; the child of humanity to his God. And when such a father, mother, son, daughter appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, the answer given them will be something such as this:—"Most obedient have you been as sons, most dutiful as daughters, most spotless as parents, most faultless as husband and wife; but where have I been in your thoughts? What place have I occupied in your hearts? Is it not true that you would have been so if the Bible never had been written, if God did not exist, if Christ had never died? These things you ought to be, and such things Christians will be; but the other, and the higher, and the more precious things you ought never to have left undone."

Thus I have shown on how many grounds religion may be accepted—the true religion—and yet these grounds may fail. These grounds may enter into your acceptance as auxiliaries, but they ought not to be

—any of them, or all of them—the sole and the only ground. Religion appeals to man's judgment, conscience, affections, heart; it asks your intelligent acceptance, it speaks as to reasonable men, and it says, "Judge ye what I say." But this religion, so precious itself, must be accepted by me on ground so strong that it shall not waver with the beating of my pulse, that it shall not fail when churches perish, and loud professors break down; it must be based on some ground that shall be strong and lasting as itself; so that resting on it I can bear all the shocks of time, and pursue and finish my course with victory, and with a blessing. There are so many prejudices to be laid, so many passions to be purified, so much opposition to be overcome, so many enemies to be conquered, that I must not only have a strong religion, but I must have that religion upon strong grounds—strong as itself is strong. Now this religion is, first, the religion of conviction. The intellect must be satisfied; that must not be all, while it must be a part of the ground on which you accept it. The whole of our religion is addressed to reasonable men. An apostle says, "Judge ye;" and I believe that for no one thing upon earth is there such overwhelming evidence as there is for the authenticity and the inspiration of this Book. The man that can prove that the Bible is not inspired, and be satisfied that he has proved it, may also be persuaded, I think, with much less argument, that Napoleon Buonaparte never existed, that Shakespeare was a pure literary myth, and that Alexander the Great never overran the world with his victorious arms. If, then, we may be possessed of all these, as I have said, and yet not have the religion that will stand, there must, therefore, be not only the religion of principle, based

upon conviction, upon forethought, upon calculation of all contingencies, but there must be also the religion of the heart, the conscience, and the affections; and still more, it must be inspired and taught by the Holy Spirit of God. The promise is, "All thy children shall be taught of thee;" and unless Christianity be incorporated into my heart by Him who inspires it, unless the intellect, the conscience, and the affections be taught and inspired, and purified, and impressed by the Spirit of God, our religion will not stand, intellect will let go its hold, conscience will let go its influence, the affections—however tenacious—will let go their earliest love.

But if this religion be taught us by the Holy Spirit of God—if it be not a mere cold conviction on the threshold, but a living lodger receiving hospitality in the intellect, the conscience, the heart—if it be not something outside of me that I may admire, approve, welcome so far, but something inside of me, that guides me, sustains me, strengthens me; that enables me to say, I am a Christian, not because I have proved Christianity to be from God, not because I admire the beautiful in it, not because I am sentimental, and can appreciate its fine sentiment, but because I know in whom I have believed, and have felt in my heart that this Gospel is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and have been taught by Him that inspired it;—such a religion will not be the commencement of a tower that will not be finished, the beginning of a warfare that will not result in victory; it will be love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And so real is this, that there is many a Christian who never read a book on the evidence—though I think he ought to read it—who

never read anything except his Bible and the Pilgrim's Progress ; and who has yet a grasp of living religion as indestructible, and more so, as life itself. Ask the peasant on his native hills, Why do you believe Christianity is true? On what ground do you accept the Bible as God's book? He will ask you, not with scorn, but with amazement, " Ask me why I believe that the winds blow, why these streams rush onward to the ocean; why the heather bell blooms in August, and the grass grows green in April; ask me how I know that I live; and then may you ask me how I know that the Bible is true. It has comforted me in sorrow; it has gladdened with its sunshine the cares and the duties of every-day life; it has opened up for me a home beyond the stars; it has filled my heart with bright hopes, it has taught me blessed lessons; and I have known from that religion, and received from the Author of it, peace, and joy, and hope, and trust, and light, and life. Show me that my heart does not beat, and then you may prove to me that this religion is not from God, and that Jesus is not my Saviour." Such a religion is too deeply rooted in the heart ever to be torn up; and it is the only religion that will stand. Often have I said to you, I never wonder that so many become Roman Catholics; but often do I wonder that every unconverted man does not become a Roman Catholic. If the question is whether Romanism or Protestantism be most delightful to the natural man, Romanism unquestionably has it. It has more of the beauty, the pomp, the splendour, the circumstance, the pretension than true religion has; and it has that easy, ever accessible absolution, and sin playing at see-saw, in which the natural man must ever delight: so much more easy

is it to do penance than to repent; so much more congenial to mortify the flesh than the lusts of the flesh; so much easier to confess at that box in the cathedral and to get absolution for a small consideration than to disburthen the conscience before God, and seek pardon for the past, and crucifixion of nature for the future. Romanism is a religion, with all its forms, its pomp, its splendour, and its circumstance, that is most beautifully conceived; it is a masterly conception. A religion so magnificent in its conception is Romanism that it did not come from man—he has not wisdom enough to conceive it; it never came from God, it is too wicked for that; it bears on its brow the image and the superscription of the archangel fallen—all his wisdom and all his wickedness combined.

In the day into which we are plunging, I believe intellectual religion will give way, the mere religion of conscience will give way, the mere religion of sentiment will give way; but that religion that is rooted in the heart, that the Holy Spirit has taught, that has become part and parcel of myself, so that I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,—that religion, like the gigantic and the glorious oak, its roots deep in the soil, and its towering branches sparkling in the sunshine, or making music in the hurricane, but strong and indestructible in both—that religion shall never fail; and they that are thus taught, neither life nor death, nor height nor depth, nor principalities nor powers, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus the Lord.

CHAPTER XV.

PRACTICE OF JESUS—OBJECTION OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES—THE LOST SHEEP—ANSWER TO SCEPTIC AND ROMISH OBJECTIONS—LOST CORN—ITS RECOVERY—THE PRODIGAL SON—HIS APOSTASY—REPENTANCE AND RETURN—RECEPTION—ELDER SON—INSPIRATION OF THE PARABLES.

THIS chapter contains three of those beautiful and touching portraits which one dreads almost to approach, lest comment should only spoil the simplicity and the grandeur of the beautiful original. But yet there are points and traits which may not strike the mere superficial reader, which appear to those who have devoted their time and their attention more thoroughly to its analysis; and some of those latent links of connexion, if I may so speak, or hidden traits, I would desire to draw forth and to exhibit in more prominent, and I trust instructive as well as impressive relief before your minds.

Let us first of all notice the occasion of these three beautiful parables being spoken. We find that the publicans—the tax-gatherers employed by the Roman government—the most depraved, avaricious and dishonest of the land; “and the sinners,”—that is, the most abandoned men and women in the streets,—came near to Jesus to hear him. The original is more than “came near;” our version would imply that they came only once for all, and left; but the original is in the imperfect tense, and means, “they kept constantly coming near to him;” they were in the habit of gather-

ing round him : it is the imperfect tense ; and the imperfect tense conveys the idea of continuity, and not an act once done and complete for ever. It, therefore, reveals to us the fact that Jesus was in the habit of receiving sinners to be instructed; not to be patronised or encouraged in the practice of their sins, but to be instructed in the knowledge of the issues of their wickedness, and in the way of pardon, reconciliation, and peace. One would think that this spectacle was so beautiful that all would have rejoiced when they saw it ; and that such an act of disinterested benevolence would have commanded the homage, the admiration, and the sympathy of all ; and above all, that they that were the great teachers of the people would have been the last to complain, that while they were preaching as they preferred to the higher classes of the land, one should descend to the unpenetrated *strata*, the lowest dregs of the human race, and preach to the rude crowd the glad tidings of everlasting life. But we read that the Pharisees and Scribes—they that had the true apostolical succession of the day, —they that sat in Moses' chair; and were the accredited teachers of the land, and who ought, therefore, to have been the very last to object, were actually the first to murmur ; and the ground of their murmuring was, "This man receiveth sinners." What they upbraided him with, as his crime, however, was the brightest gem in his diadem ; the ground of their accusation was the evidence of his mission : if he had not received sinners he would not have had the essential credentials of the Messiah. The fact that his enemies admitted that he received sinners was no slight evidence that he was the fulfilment of the promise that One should come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Now our blessed Lord did not rebuke them by a stern and recriminating rebuke, as man would do, and as they richly deserved, but he told them three parables—so simple, so instructive, so pertinent to the question before them, that they could see at once the justice of his conduct, and the iniquity of their own objection.

The first parable describes man ignorant and stupid, a stranger to God, and alienated and helpless; a sheep: not the dog that finds his way home again to his kennel; but the sheep that, having strayed, is devoured by the wolf, or carried away by the roaring cataract, and rarely or never of itself finds its way home again to the fold. The second is the unconsciously lost; the coin, without sensibility, without knowledge; but a mere coin, and incapable of retrieving itself: and the last, the deliberate and wilful apostate, going from a father's house, setting up on his own account, and reaping all the results of his imprudence, his disobedience, and his sinful apostasy.

Our first is the picture of the lost sheep; and Jesus argues with the Scribes and Pharisees thus: Suppose that you—you, the Scribes and Pharisees—be the ninety-and-nine; suppose there be two classes; suppose one hundred persons divided into two classes; and suppose there be ninety-and-nine that need no repentance—such as you think yourselves to be. He does not say, that there is any one upon earth that needs no repentance; but he assumes, for argument's sake, that, as they thought, they need no repentance: "suppose it," he says; "I do not now stop to discuss it." Very well; ninety-and-nine need no repentance; but one is a sinner. Suppose one of you have a hundred sheep; if you lose one of them, do you not leave the ninety-and-nine

which are safe in the fold, and go after that one sheep that is lost; and do you not feel more regret—whether it be just or not, that is not the question,—but do you not feel more regret and sorrow about the one lost sheep than you feel of satisfaction and of joy about the ninety-and-nine that remain? Is it not true, that you feel not so much thankful for the ninety-and-nine that remain, and that you think only of the one that has gone astray? And if this be so, do you not go after this lost one, and search till you find it, and bring it home? Then, is it not very like human nature, he says, when the Great Shepherd of the sheep has lost one out of a hundred, that he goes after that lost sheep that never can recover itself, and seeks it successfully: he finds it; and when he has found it, he does not beat it, nor does he punish it at all; but he lays it on his shoulder; and so pleased is he with the recovery of this one lost sheep, that instead of complaining that it was permitted to go astray, he is too happy to find it out; and when he gets home he is so delighted that he goes to his neighbours—the human heart, having good news, is incapable of having a monopoly of them—and tells them, “Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Now this picture is so plain, so beautiful, so directly to the point, that every Pharisee’s heart must have felt it, his conscience must have been convinced, though his conduct may not have been altered by it.

Let us see, in another view, the force of this. First, Christ notices one single sinner who has gone astray. When one sheep has left the fold, he sees that wandering sheep. There is not a sinner that has gone astray from God that he does not see. Christ sets out to seek a lost soul, nor does he fail till he find it.

In the next place, when he has found it, he tells all; and there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Does this prove that the saints and angels that are in glory see the repentance of one sinner, and as they see it rejoice? The members of the Church of Rome say it does; this is their favourite controversial text to prove that angels pray for us, and that we may pray to them. They must surely be in great want of Scripture proof to argue from such a text as this, that angels and saints in heaven pray for us, when really it says nothing about it; and surely the conclusion is still more extravagant that we may pray to them, when nothing is said about it. But instead of proving it, the text would seem to me the most triumphant disproof of the pretension altogether. I do not say whether angels or saints in heaven know or not; I simply assert, that this text does not prove it. For mark what it says,—The shepherd finds the sheep; he goes and tells his friends, who did not otherwise know it till he told them; and when he tells them, then there is joy among them—that is, as soon as Christ has recovered the lost soul, he tells the angels; they and all that hear of it “rejoice,” and there is joy in heaven. Now, instead of proving that angels in heaven know directly a single transaction upon earth, it proves that they need to be told what takes place upon earth. And then such is their joy that they rejoice more over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons, which need no repentance.

This parable, in the next place, is an admirable reply to the sceptic. The very first objection of a sceptic to Christianity is, “How can you suppose that God, who has thousands and millions of orbs more vast, mag-

nificent, and glorious than this, would have taken so much trouble about this paltry speck in the universe, which he might have expunged by a word, and replaced by an orb more beautiful and more blessed than Eden itself? How can you suppose that God would be at the trouble to send his Son to be crucified upon this little orb,—that he should, having so many that are holy and pure, have taken such trouble, and expended tears, and agony, and blood, borne Gethsemane, the cross, and all their sufferings, to recover what, if expunged, would not have lost one atom of his glory, and would not diminish in the least degree his happiness?” The answer is, our own conduct. Just as the shepherd leaves the ninety-and-nine that are safe in the fold, and goes after the one that is lost, so God has left the ninety-and-nine orbs that shine in their pristine effulgence; and according to the analogy of nature, that we ourselves in our inmost hearts respond to, he has come after this lost and strayed orb; and when this orb shall be reinstated—as it is not yet—in its ancient orbit, and no longer a broken off fragment of the great continent of heaven, surrounded with darkness, and washed by the waves of sorrow and of sin, but reknit to the grand continent, and constituting part of the happy land,—when this orb, thus reunited, thus reflecting the splendour of its Creator, is seen by angels and by other orbs, its holy sisterhood, there will be a richer song, a grander praise, a louder triumph over this one orb returned than over ninety-and-nine grander worlds that need no repentance. Instead, therefore, of the sceptic’s idea being founded on human nature, it is contrary to the very deepest and holiest instincts of the human heart; and instead of God’s expending so much on this orb being

at all improbable, it was, on the contrary, the most natural thing, the most probable thing, and our own experience says so. Let a mother have seven children; let one be a prodigal in a far distant country; when the winds blow, and the sea waves rise, and bad tidings come from abroad, she will think more of the one son that has gone astray than of the six that remain at her own fireside. It is an instinct in our nature; and that instinct speaks from the depths of the human heart, and rebukes the infidel objection that God could not take so much trouble to reclaim and restore this lost orb.

The next parable is that of a lost coin. The coin has the image and superscription of its proprietor, as a shilling or a sovereign has the superscription of our Queen. That coin has been lost, the superscription is worn off, the image is destroyed; but the woman—representing here, I think, the Holy Spirit in the church or in the world—missing this coin, though she has a great many, yet missing that one, instantly goes after it, searches every nook and corner until she has found it; and when she has got it, she bids all her neighbours rejoice that it is found. So the lost sinner, once created in the image of his God, but having that image altogether effaced, and the growing lineaments of the great usurper beginning to appear upon the coin, and to occupy the place of the image and superscription of Him that made it—lost, and rusted, and decayed, the great and original Proprietor searches out, hunts it through all its obscurity, penetrates every nook, searches every corner, sweeps with hurricane, and plague, and war, and pestilence, and famine, every corner of the earth, if peradventure he may reveal this coin, lurking in its hidden

place, where it will be consumed with the world if left alone; and having detected it, he seizes it, polishes it, stamps it with its original impression, and gives it currency in heaven, not the least beautiful and precious of the whole.

The last parable that he gives is perhaps the most touching and striking one of all. A father had two sons. I do not think the elder is the Jew; I think here that he assumes that the elder is the Scribe and the Pharisee. You will observe, the Scribes and Pharisees murmured because he received sinners; and he says, "I will take it for granted that you are blameless, that you have never gone astray, never played the prodigal; that you are all that you profess to be." And then he says, "This father had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." The elder son had three-fourths, the younger son one-fourth; and he said, Give me that one-fourth. And his father did so. "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together." He wished to be independent. The spirit of independence is the spirit of folly and of sin. There is an independence that is beautiful, that is, the desire not to be dependent on others for our bread, when our own heads or hands can earn it; but there is a spirit of independence or insulation from the mass that is in itself most sinful. Well, this younger son was determined to be independent; and he gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there, instead of working, as he meant perhaps originally to do, he wasted his substance in riotous living; and the result of it all was, "when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land." He could not

help that; he could not foresee that; but he ought instead of spending all to have been prepared to meet the famine; and he began for the first time in his life to be in want. Well now, in this dilemma, he must either lie down and starve, or go and seek employment. He goes and joins himself to a citizen of that far distant country, and that citizen sent him to do what of all things was most distasteful to a Jew, to feed swine. His hunger was so great, his occupation so menial, that "he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat." That does not mean the husks or shells of beans or of peas, but really a distinct fruit. The tree is called in Greek by the name of Carob-tree. It was a distinct sort of fruit, something like the bean; it is a very wild product, found in the hedges, not very nutritive, and not very agreeable to the taste. Well, he would fain have filled his belly with these husks, and he could not find enough to satisfy his hunger; and he found no man to pity him or to give him anything. But hunger, destitution, and misery made him contrast the far country in which he sojourned with the beloved home, the roof-tree, and the fireside he had left, and he recollected, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." Well, he instantly resolved, This must not be,—I will make a desperate experiment; "I will arise and go to my father." As long as that relationship endured, and he had the sense of its existence, so long will he have repentance and restoration. "I will arise, and go to my father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned"—I did wrong in leaving home, I did wrong in wasting my substance in riotous living—"I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Now there was the evidence of real repent-

ance. As long as a man sees sin to be sin against a brother, and no more, there is no repentance; but when he sees it to be sin against a brother, and also sin against God, then there is the germ and the element of repentance. Though David had sinned grievously against man, yet he said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." And that is a very important distinction; and upsets in the world the whole dogma of man, whether priest or Pope, having power to forgive sins. If I were to steal from another man, I should do two things. I should injure the man by taking his property, and he can forgive this; but in addition there would be the sin against God, whose law I have broken; and God alone can forgive that. Man forgives the injury done to him, but God alone can forgive the sin; because it is not against man, but it is against God. The prodigal therefore says, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Well, he arose; he was not satisfied with resolving, as many people, or as Felix did, anticipating a convenient season; but he carried into practice the resolution of his heart; and he arose and came. It does not say he ran; I dare say he went with slow, hesitating, staggering footstep, sometimes thinking, "He will welcome me;" at other times thinking, "If he refuse to receive me, he will only treat me as I deserve." He arose, and came towards his father. "But," mark, "when he was yet a great way off," some miles distant, "his father saw him." Now, what does this teach us? That the father was on the roof of his house, sitting like Orientals in eastern lands, and looking not for the rising cloud, nor the setting sun, but for that one about whom he thought more than about the elder son that was at

home, and needed no restoration. That is an exquisite touch. It shows that the father was looking for the prodigal, before the prodigal ever thought of returning to the father. And then we read—When the father saw him “a great way off.” At first he seemed a speck in the distant horizon; gradually that speck assumed the aspect and the shape of a man; by-and-by there was something in his gait and walk, (for you can distinguish man, so remarkable a creature is he, by his walk, or by the very movement of his arm; there is an idiosyncrasy, an identity, that can be detected ever from the walk or gait of any person with whom you are acquainted,)—he saw the figure of a man; he then saw something in his gait—lingering and loitering; sometimes turning round, determined not to risk the experiment of going to his father’s home, but mustering heart again to persevere and hope, and hope and persevere; and the father at last was convinced that it was doubtless his own prodigal son, after whom he had looked at morning dawn and at evening twilight, beginning to find his way home. In opposition to the son who came, the father, it is said, “ran.” “When he was a great way off, he had compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him.” The son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” But he saw in the paternal heart such compassion; in the father’s reception such love, that he stopped short in his resolution. His original resolution was, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.” But when he found in his father more than he anticipated, he leaves out the last clause, as if

there were no necessity for it; and says, "I am not worthy to be called thy son." Or the father stops him in the midst of his confession; too thankful that the prodigal son had returned; and says to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son"—the language of adoption—"was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And," very properly, "they began to be merry."

Let me now tell the most profligate prodigal that reads or hears these things, that God is far more interested in his return than any language of mine can express; that at this moment God is looking out for him to arise, and come to his father's house; and this very night there is for the worst and the vilest, all the shelter and reception of a Father's bosom, all the sympathy of a Father's heart, the complete forgiveness of sin—so complete that it will be mentioned no more against you. The forgiveness was so instant, that the father does not stop to pronounce it; but bids all rejoice with him that he has come back.

The Scribes and Pharisees, that is, the elder son was in the field; "and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing." These were the ancient expressions of joy; and there was no sin in these; sin is not necessarily in music; it is not inevitable in dancing. But the excitement, the envy, the jealousy, that balls originate, the dissipation, the frivolity, and the destruction of every serious and solemn thought, are, I fear, so common, as to be nearly inseparable. There is no more sin in moving the foot than in

moving the tongue; the sin lies in the dissipation of mind to which indulgence in dancing leads. Dancing and music were ancient expressions of joy, and they are here mentioned without being condemned by our Blessed Lord. We read in the Book of Proverbs, "There is a time to dance." I have not yet been able to find out the time; but perhaps some one can. It is a very proper inquiry. I find there are so many more solemn and important things to attend to, that I never yet discovered the time to which Solomon certainly does refer—"There is a time to dance." When the elder son heard it, "he called one of the servants." Why did he not go into his father's house? Because he knew what had taken place; and instead of going into his father's house, and asking in a manly way, "What has happened that has made you all so merry?" he calls secretly one of the servants, and asks in a surly temper what these things meant. Then the servant, knowing nothing of the higher import of the thing, but only judging of what the eyes could see, said, "Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound,"—he has no wounds, his body is not diseased, he is restored "safe and sound." He could not see the inner spiritual import of the story, he could only see the outer fact that the son was safe and sound, and that the father was very happy to receive him back again. One would have thought the elder brother would have gone in, and congratulated his father; but instead of that, he is filled with envy, and hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness; and this is your case and my case, and you all know it; there have been instances in your history, however much you may deplore them, that are

exact illustrations and examples of the elder brother being angry. "He would not go in," and enjoy the good music and the excellent feast, to which he was cordially welcome: "Therefore came his father out,"—how beautiful! The elder son would not go in; "therefore came his father out, and intreated him;" as if he had said, Why be so angry? it is your own brother that has come back. "And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment,"—this probably was false:—"and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son"—just mark the wickedness that breaks out: he does not say, "my brother," but "this thy son." You know that in the Latin language the word *ille* is used in the sense of respect, and *iste* to express contempt;—"as soon as this thy son," thy unworthy son, "was come, which hath devoured thy living"—he did no such thing—"with harlots"—of which there is no account,—"thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." But how beautifully and meekly the father answers him! as if he had said, Son, why should you complain? You have got still three-fourths of the property; he got the other fourth, which he chose to squander; you say you have not done so; well, I am not disputing that. Besides, my son, thou art ever with me, "and all that I have is thine." There is nothing that you have to complain of in my treatment of you, and surely "it was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for *this thy brother*,"—not "my son;" but "this thy brother,"—no rebukes are so sharp as those that are gentle; the arrow that is feathered with love penetrates the deepest; and those

rebukes that are couched in soft words always strike hardest,—“for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.”

Who could have written these exquisite tales? Show me now any passage in ancient or in modern writings that come within a thousand miles of this sublime, this simple, this magnificent, this instructive chapter. Visibly, it bears the impress of its Author. It is the inspiration of God.

CHAPTER XV. 32.

MEET REJOICING—OUR NATURAL STATE—INTELLECT ECLIPSED—
INFLUENCE OF DEPRAVITY ON MIND—CONSCIENCE—SPIRITUAL DEATH
—GOOD NEWS FROM THE NORTH POLE—THE LOST FOUND—DEAD
ALIVE—JOY ABOVE AND BELOW.

THE father very justly adds, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." It was meet that we should be merry; it was according to all the analogies of nature; it is based upon the finest instincts of the heart, that on such a glad and happy occasion as the recovery of the lost, the re-quickening of the dead, we should make merry; and when that dead one quickened, that lost one found, was a brother, surely it was not unreasonable to expect that your voice should ring loudest and merriest of all, and that the common home should resound with your congratulations; that a brother, your own, was lost, and is found; was dead, and is alive.

But the passage is a just portrait of man's state by nature—lost and dead; man's state, the obverse, by grace—recovered and alive; and then the truths that are naturally suggested by so remarkable a contrast. First, then, we see man's state by nature. The first characteristic of it is, that he is lost. This is applied to the loss of character, the loss of property, the loss of friends. The salt has lost its savour, and it is worth-

less; the sheep has lost its way home to the fold, and it will be destroyed. The prodigal has lost his home, and all its shelter, and the approval of his father; and is a lost character in the midst of a strange and a famished land. All this is the picture of man—a lost soul; lost in this world; born so, not subsequently made so; for Adam left his home, and we left it with him: as long as the lost soul is in this world, so long it is within the reach of recovery; but as soon as it passes the boundary line that separates the world of means from the great world of results, lost there, it is lost for ever—irretrievably, without hope of restoration. Now this is the picture of us all by nature, and in this loss every faculty of man has shared. One needs not Scripture to tell us that we have suffered some terrible disaster. You judge of the history of a house that has been shattered by the lightning, by seeing its ruins; you can be under no mistake that it has been thus demolished and destroyed. You judge of the wreck by the torn and the shattered timbers washed ashore; and we naturally judge that man has undergone some great disaster, from the dilapidated, devastated, and dismantled condition in which you find all the faculties of his mind, all the affections of his heart, his inner and his outer nature. Let us view man's intellect, for instance. Powerful as it is, it is not what it once was. There are remaining traits of its original greatness, that are unmistakeable; but these are too often the warning and memorials also of its terrible eclipse. The intellect of man is powerful in discussing a mathematical problem, in counting up a sum in arithmetic, especially when the result will be the individual's own profit; but that same intellect seems to lose its power the instant that it comes within the limits

of the moral or the spiritual. Where, for instance, is there an intellect so capable of appreciating logic up to a certain point as that of the mathematician; but if you try to convince him of the folly and the wickedness of his sins, his intellect then ceases to reason rightly, and goes wrong; the philosopher reasons rightly enough up to a certain point, but when the subject of his reasoning is the condemnation of his sin, and the necessity for his abjuration of it, his intellect then seems shorn of its strength, and to have lost its original and its primal greatness; but especially when his intellect concludes in one way, and all his passions rise like rebellious subjects, and insist upon his disobedience to the soul, which is pressing the opposite way. Intellect, in such a conflict, proves it has lost its power, for instead of being the sovereign that sways the sceptre within, it presents itself the miserable citizen king put up and put down by the puppet passions, when it pleases them to enthrone or to depose him. The heart and the moral faculty have also much to do with the vigour or weakness of the intellect. I do not believe that an intellect originally powerful will long continue so if it be surrounded by the fogs, and damps, and miasma of a depraved and degenerate heart. There have been brilliant wits who have been intensely depraved; but a powerful intellect, striking out grand results, has rarely been accompanied by a depraved, an abandoned, and a corrupt life. Byron's genius, originally so great, declined precisely as his profligacy increased. You will still find as a general rule that notwithstanding apparent exceptions, it is only in the atmosphere of a pure heart that the lamp of genius can burn most brilliantly. It is only in the soil of a sanctified nature that genius can

attain its greatest ripeness, and bear its most beautiful and most perfect fruits. And if this may have exceptions in the case of individuals; it has none in the case of nations. The instant that Rome became depraved in its morals under the last of the Cæsars, that moment it ceased to create magnificent warriors, or to achieve great conquests, or to take a leading place amidst the nations of the earth, for intellectual pre-eminence and national attainments. And at this moment we shall find that the genius of a nation is displayed precisely in the ratio of the purity of the national creed. In Tuscany, for instance, in Sardinia, in Italy, in Spain, the people that are above the soil, are in intellect scarcely superior to the dead that slumber beneath it; whereas, in America, in Great Britain, and Germany, and in every country wherever there is cherished a pure faith, and breathed the air of true freedom, the result of that faith, the necessary effect of an open Bible, genius attains its culminating greatness, its noblest trophies may be gathered, and man, intellectually and morally, seems most to approximate to what he once was, and is meant to be, in the promises and purposes of God.

In the next place, man not only gives evidence of injury in his intellect, but also in his conscience. Man's conscience has suffered a grievous collapse. I know no faculty in man that more distinguishes him from the brute creation than conscience. Intellect does not so much distinguish him. Some of the instincts of the dog, the elephant, and the horse, approximate to intellect; but in none of these creatures does there seem to be that sublime and awful power—the moral faculty and the conscience; reasoning in a monarch's bosom and under a peasant's rags, of righteousness, and tem-

perance, and judgment. But that conscience, though it still lasts and lives, is shorn of its primitive greatness. In some cases it casts its dark shadow over all the joys and happiness of the transgressor, but it has not power to repress his transgression; in the other case it is silenced, or overpowered, by the passions, and shorn of its ancient reality; and like a precious jewel is trodden under the feet of those swine, unable to recover itself. In another case conscience is perverted to a side, and becomes the patron and ally of the very sins and crimes it was intended to rebuke; in another case it forces men to plunge into infidelity, the one extreme, or to rush into superstition, the other extreme; feebly protesting, at last laid prostrate, and left without splendour, without sovereignty—a drudge, a serf—an intoxicated slave—until the hour of death comes, when its sensibilities are restored, its dead powers are quickened, and it reasons, with piercing and agonizing terror, of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come. Man has lost his friendship with God, and has become his foe; he has lost his companionship with God, and he has become a stranger. He has lost the glorious image of God, and he is altogether desolate. He is the stray sheep, he is the lost coin; he is the prodigal who has wasted his grand faculties, his noble feelings, his sublime nature, in riotous living; feeding upon the very husks that the swine do eat, and still more terrible, coming to the conclusion, as some have done—that man was made to feed on husks, that there is no better home than a swine sty, and no nobler employment than feeding swine, no better food than the husks that swine do eat. But human nature will not long believe this even in its greatest degeneracy; it has within it strong and

irrepressible presentiments that there is a home, and a Father, and a welcome there, if it will arise, and go to its Father's house, and seek bread to eat, raiment to put on, and a shelter from the winds and rains of heaven.

Such is the first characteristic of man—lost.

Secondly, he is described as also dead. A lost thing may be recovered by man; a dead thing cannot be re-quickened by man. The lost sinner would only convey the idea of something that might turn up again; but a dead sinner conveys the idea of a fatal collapse, of utter extinction, of a condition irrecoverable by human means or by human power. And is not death just the picture of the sinner, living in a strange land, without God and without hope: dead to the hopes of heaven, dead to the fears of hell, dead to the joys of true religion, dead to every remonstrance of Providence, of conscience, of the Bible, and of God. Eloquent sermons do not stir him; fervid appeals do not awaken him. What music is to the ear of a deaf man, what a splendid panorama is to the eyes of a blind man, that heaven, the soul, God, Christ, eternity, are all to him who is dead in trespasses and in sins. He cannot appreciate them, he does not study them; he needs a breath to pass over him—the breath of life—before he can arise, and feel, and be made again a living and a reasonable man.

These two epithets are the two characteristic expressions—differing not in kind, but in degree—of man in his lost and dead condition. And who is this creature, thus lost, thus dead? Child, he may be thy parent; parent, he may be thy child; neighbour, he is next to thee. It is not the ocean that separates thee from the dead, but a thin partition wall. That ragged,

wretched, miserable outcast once had engraved upon his brow the impress of a God; he is now lost—dead; he is thy brother, notwithstanding; and in his heart there are the hopes and affections of a son; and thou art—not surely a Cain, asking, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” or a miserable Pharisee—“This thy son”—but, I trust, a Christian, quickened thyself, and rejoicing; and longing to see quickened and recovered also the most wicked and the worst of mankind, as “this thy brother.”

But see the obverse of the picture. He was lost, he is now found; he was dead, he is now alive; God so loved that creature in his ruin, so pitied that poor prodigal in his apostasy, that he resolved to do whatever justice, love, truth, mercy, omnipotence could do in order to restore and to recover him in spite of his sins, that he sent his only-begotten Son to ransom him by his blood: he so loves him still that he sends to him apostles, evangelists, missionaries, ministers, all constituting God’s embassy, in pursuit of the lost—pointing to the Saviour that will kindle again the extinct embers of life in the bosom of the dead in trespasses and in sins. And wherever there is the least response, wherever there is the least pulse of life, that is evidence of an influence first from above. The first movement is from heaven. The poor prodigal would probably have never reached his father’s house if the father had not run out while he was yet a great way off, and embraced him, and bade him welcome home. The least pulse at the wrist is the evidence of a heart in the background; the least proof of love, of light, of life in the soul, is the evidence of its connexion and communion with the Fountain of life, and light, and power—that is, God.

No obscurity in which the coin may be placed will conceal it from God's eye; no aberration to which the soul can go, will prevent God going after it. Nay—as recently discovered—those lost, almost forsaken outposts of humanity whose region is the Polar realms, the haunt of the white bear, the whale, and the seal—these have just been discovered in answer to the pursuit of two hundred years, in order that the day at last may come when this prophecy shall be literally fulfilled—“This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all nations, and then shall the end come.” Do you think that two hundred years' pursuit of the North Pole was merely the inspiration of a crotchet of man? It was an inspiration from God; it was the Shepherd making the road smooth for his ministers to go after the lost sheep that are there; it was the Father looking out for his frozen prodigals shivering there; it was the woman seeking the coin buried amid perpetual snow; to show that there is no aberration to which man can travel, Christ will not enter; no depth into which man can sink, that love will not descend to. And, perhaps, when quoting that case, you will pardon me if I mention an instance that was to me most gratifying. One who has been in those regions, successfully pursuing what has now been discovered, writes me a note which is most gratifying to me; I received it only this morning, in the vestry. He belongs to H.M. ship “Phoenix,” the ship which brought her despatches from the “Investigator,” announcing the discovery of the north-west passage. The officer who writes me tells me that he read the various volumes I have published, during the long Polar nights, to the assembled crew—in which crew was the late Lieut. Bellot, so justly commemorated by our nation—and that to

many a soul in that crew the truths and words you have heard from this pulpit, were signally blessed. How interesting that voices uttered in London, have been breaking in glad music around the Pole.

It is to me intensely interesting and encouraging to find that some simple truths that have been preached, have found their way to the realms of perpetual snow; and that while preaching to you in this more favoured latitude, some of those sermons have been preached, unknown to me, to those who had no other truths to hear equally interesting or instructive; and they, amid the regions of snow, have proved that God the Spirit is at the North Pole as well as the Equator, and can bless the words spoken there as truly as under the roof of grand cathedrals, or in the midst of crowded and interested congregations.

We have seen man lost and man found, man dead and man alive—alive to God. The intellect is emancipated by grace; the heart, renewed, loves what once it hated; and all things become new and beautiful without, when this change is produced upon the sinner within.

Now, says the father, with great good sense, at seeing such a transformation, it is meet that we should be merry. If even we have no personal interest in the knowledge, rejoice surely we should. A soul saved, rescued from ruin, is a recovery so magnificent that the triumphs of Waterloo and of Trafalgar sink into insignificance in comparison of the bloodless victory of a soul snatched from death, and introduced into everlasting life.

We should rejoice, for it is a soul rescued from ruin, introduced into heaven. One soul added to the realms

of glory is abundant reason for all heaven-rejoicing; surely it is enough for us. Satan has lost a victim; we hate Satan, he is not our neighbour, we may desire his destruction. We love our God, we love our neighbour; Satan and sin, and his triumphs and his success, we do right to deprecate, to resist, and to deplore. Every soul that is saved is an earnest of that day when all shall know the Lord, when Jesus shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied; and therefore it is well we should be merry.

If you rejoice at a nation rescued from destruction, at a city saved from the sword, at a people delivered from pestilence, at a family rescued from death—oh! surely it is meet, it is duty, it is nature, it is grace, that we should rejoice and be glad when a lost soul is found, and a dead one is made alive; for there is joy in heaven—strange if there should be none on earth.

NOTE.—*Δύο υιοίς*. Not, in any direct sense of the parable, the Jews and the Gentiles. That there may be a partial application to this effect, is only owing to the parable grasping the great central truths, of which the Jew and Gentile were, in their relation, illustrations,—and of which such illustrations are furnished wherever such differences occur. The two parties standing in the foreground of the parabolic mirror are the Scribes and Pharisees, as the elder son; the publicans and sinners, as the younger—all Jews, all belonging to God's family. The mystery of the admission of the Gentiles into God's church was not yet made known in any such manner as that they should be represented as of one family with the Jews: not to mention that this interpretation fails in the very root of the parable—for in strictness the

Gentile should be the elder, the Jew not being constituted in his superiority till 2000 years after the creation. The upholders of this interpretation forget that when we speak of the Jew as elder, and the Gentile as younger, it is in respect, not of truth, but of this very return to, and reception into the Father's house, which is not to be considered; yet the relations of elder and younger have a peculiar fitness for the characters to be filled by them, and are, I believe, chosen on that account.

We may remark that the difficulties which have been found in the latter part of the parable, from the uncontradicted assertion in verse 29, if the Pharisees are meant, and the great pride and uncharitableness shown, if really righteous persons are meant, are considerably lightened by the consideration, that the contradiction of that assertion would have been beside the purpose of the parable,—that it was the very thing on which the Pharisees prided themselves,—that besides, it is sufficiently contradicted, in fact, by the spirit and words of the elder son. He was breaking his father's commandment even when he made the assertion; and the making it is a part of his hypoerisy. (See Trench, Par. pp. 374—376.) The result of the father's entreaty is left purposely uncertain: is it possible that this should have been the case had the Jewish nation been meant by the elder brother? But now as he typifies a set of individuals who might themselves be (and many of them were) won by repentance, it is thus brcken off to be closed by each individual for himself; for we are all in turn examples of the cases of both these brothers, containing the seeds of both evil courses in our hearts; but, thanks be to God, under that grace which is suffieient and willing to seek and save us both.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE UNJUST STEWARD—THE CHILDREN OF THIS AGE—THE MAIN THING—USE OF MANMON—RECEPTION IN GLORY—TWO MASTERS—THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS—RICH AND POOR—THEIR DUTIES—PRAYER TO SAINTS—MIRACLES—THEIR EFFECT.

THE first parable recorded in the chapter we have read, is called by the name of the parable of the unjust steward; one that has given rise to great misapprehension, and to some misinterpretation. You need only have it fairly and impartially set before you, in order to see that it is as clearly consistent with moral duty as it is instructive in the practices and duties that we owe to God and to mankind.

It appears that a certain rich landlord, or the possessor of large property, had a steward, to whom was committed the management of his estates, and whose place and duty it was to render his master statedly an account of all the monies that he had received, on the one hand, and of all the disbursements that he had justly and dutifully made, upon the other. Rumours reached the ear of the master—and not mere rumours, but information based upon truth—that the steward had been living inconsistently with his position, wasting his master's property, and acting dishonestly. Whenever you see a man living above the position that justly becomes him in the providence of God, and is consistent with his station, you will be tempted to infer

(and it is not always uncharitable to do so) that the means that enable him to do this are not justly and legitimately come by. Wherever one lives and acts honestly, he will always live consistently. To live too much below your position is often the conduct of a miser; to live beyond it is the practice of a dishonest man; to live in that state in which God has placed us—discharging all its duties, fulfilling all its responsibilities, liberal to the poor, and responding to the claims of true religion—is what becomes a Christian man in the sight of God, and of the rest of mankind.

This steward, as soon as he was detected, like most rogues, showed he was possessed of very great cunning; and he turned this cunning to very effective account; he said to himself, "I cannot dig"—I have not been accustomed to labour, my muscles would not stand it; I am not a skilled labourer, so as to be able to earn what others can earn—it is quite plain, therefore, I cannot dig, or work with my hands. There was also a little mixture in his reasoning of "I would not like to dig;" and, in the next place, "to beg," also, "I am ashamed." I do not like to descend from a high pinnacle at once, and to become a public and notorious beggar. Well, he set his wits to work, and, Satan helping him, he struck out a plan stamped by great ingenuity, though, like most plans that rogues and thieves attempt, not characterized by any very great honesty. He says to himself, "This is what I will do:—in order that I may be received by others, as soon as I am turned out of my situation, and feasted, and kept in comfortable circumstances; I will make friends by turning all I can scrape together of my master's property to my own selfish purposes;" and therefore the plan he adopted was

this: "He called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?" I dare say he said with regret, "An hundred measures of oil; I shall have very great difficulty in paying it; I wish I did not owe so much; but I must pay it." "Well," the steward said, "I will manage it for you; you take the document, and write down fifty, and then you will have to give the master fifty, and I do not ask you to give me the other; but you understand, if I am in want you will relieve my necessities." "Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? and he said, An hundred measures of wheat; and he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore;" and the second was very glad to close with the proposal, and he did as he was told. And so by this way the steward made provision for his reception among rogues, after he himself had played the rogue to his just and honourable master.

It is added, "The lord commended the unjust steward." I have actually heard Christians say that this means that Jesus applauded such conduct. How they could come to such an inference, I do not know; it is not the Lord Jesus that commended him, but the steward's master—the steward's *δεσπότης*—the steward's ruler. The master of the servant commended the unjust steward because he had done—what? Because he had done justly? No; that he could not have done; but because the steward acted cleverly—because he acted cunningly; his master applauded the ingenuity of the steward, while he reprobated the moral conduct by which he was branded. It does not mean that Christ approved it, nor does it mean that his own master praised his dishonesty, but that his own master praised

the ingenuity with which he had acted, while he reprobated the dishonesty by which it was inspired.

Jesus adds—how true it is!—"The children of this world are wiser in their generation"—wiser in their way, after their manner, and on the supposition that there is nothing beyond it—"than the children of light." And you will see it in this. What is the main thing that ought to be before the children of light? Heaven, the safety of the soul, the honour of God. And grant that to be the main thing, then all others ought to be subordinate to it. Do they do so? No. But look at the children of this world; watch the man who seems to look upon money as the main thing of life; he is up early, and goes to bed late, and he saves pennies that he may not waste pounds, calculates every contingency, hoards every farthing, gives away as little as possible, and makes as large profits as possible, in order to accomplish what he thinks the main thing—the becoming a rich man. Well, if the children of this world thus subordinate all things to what they regard as the main chance, how is it that the children of light do not subordinate all things to their grandest and noblest end—the safety of the soul, and the honour and glory of God?

Our Lord draws instructions from this parable, not commendatory of the acts of the steward, but recording them as facts, and drawing from the history its proper lesson. If you open a history of Europe, or a history of England, you read, and quote, and use its facts; it does not follow that you will praise them; many of them you condemn; but from each and all you draw the incidental lessons that they naturally suggest. So our Lord draws from this parable the incidental lessons

it suggests, and he says, "He that is faithful in that which is least"—in the management of an earthly stewardship—"is faithful also in much"—the management of a heavenly stewardship. If you would not trust a man that robs you, with the use of a small sum, you would not trust him with a large sum. When once the great barrier that separates the unjust from the just is passed and broken down, it is felt that the basis of confidence is gone.

"Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." What is meant by this? Take what you have in this world—money, influence, wealth, station, rank,—whatever element of power is yours, make a friend of it. How make a friend of it? Consecrate it, turn it to a heavenly purpose, and then, when you die, those who have been blessed and benefited by your sacrifices, will welcome you with shouts of joy and gratitude, into those many mansions that Christ has purchased and gone to prepare for you. It means, as it is said, "There is joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth." So there will be joy among the blessed over your entrance into glory, who have benefited those blessed when they were pilgrims and strangers upon earth. It is a very beautiful thought, and I think a most sacred one, that those whom you have blessed with your contributions, that the distant heathen you have enlightened by your efforts, that the mourners you have comforted by your sympathies, and who have preceded you to glory, will stand at the gate and vestibule of heaven, and welcome you with their applause, recognising the grace in you that did them good, while they give to God all the glory

and the honour of your possessing it. It shows that recipients upon earth, though they may be ungrateful here, will not be ungrateful hereafter, and that when we ourselves leave this world, we shall be recollected by those that have preceded us, and have received of our benefits while they were on earth.

“No servant can serve two masters.” This means two masters of different schools, of different and conflicting principles. For instance, one physician is what is called the regular and proper, or, as some say, allopathic physician, another is what is called a homœopathic or hydropathic physician : well, if I become the patient of one of these, I cannot be the patient of the other ; I cannot take the prescriptions of both, because they are contrary to each other. So no man can serve two conflicting masters, who act on different principles, pursue different plans, even if they contemplate not very different objects. If, therefore, you will have Satan to be your master, that is, the making of a fortune to be your end, do so, and take the consequences ; but if you will have the Lord Jesus to be your master, and the soul and eternity to be the grand things, elect it, and you will find how happy and blessed are the consequences.

Then he reprobates the conduct of the Pharisees who heard these things, and derided him ; he recapitulates some of the laws that he had alluded to before ; and he gives one of the most instructive, suggestive, and interesting parables recorded in the whole word of God. He says, “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple”—which was the dress of princes—“and fine linen,”—regarded as the greatest ornament of ancient times,—“and fared sumptuously every day.” Well, there

was no sin in his faring sumptuously, or having the best food, the best meat, and the best wine every day, provided he defrauded no tradesman, and gave liberally of what he could spare to the sick and the poor. This is not stated as a flaw in the rich man's character. Do not go away with the notion that there is any sin in being rich; and do not go away with the other notion, that there is any virtue in being poor. Many a man who has thousands, is very often benevolent and humble; and many a man that earns twenty shillings a-week, is proud, conceited, and forgets God. It is not circumstances that constitute the man; it is man that consecrates and adorns the circumstances. A good man sweeping a crossing is a great man; a bad man swaying a sceptre is a bad man still. We read, then, that "there was a certain beggar named Lazarus,"—whose misfortune it was to be a beggar, not his sin. Poverty is not sin; it ought not to be shame, unless it be caused by our own extravagance, indiscretion, and want of ordinary forethought. His name was Lazarus. How singular that that name, which means "The help of God," has gone into every language! A *lazaretto* is a name still used on the continent of Europe; a *lazar* is a name descriptive of beggars. Lazarus is merely the synonym for a very miserable pauper; I need scarcely add, he is not the Lazarus that was the brother of Mary and Martha, but a totally distinct and different character. He was not only poor and destitute, but also—what aggravated his poverty—diseased; and disease not the consequence of his indiscretion, but a visitation in the providence of God. He was often so hungry that he would fain have eaten the very crumbs—that is, the excess—that fell from the rich man's table. It is here that the sin

of the rich man comes out—that he could see hunger crouching at his gate or near his richly-spread table, and yet not feed it; that he could gratify his own appetite with all the luxuries of the East and the West, while a poor beggar, made by the same God, redeemed by precious blood, with whom he ought to have sympathized, literally starved for hunger. But could such a picture occur now? I have no doubt it does occur. You will see in the splendid districts of the west, a magnificent palace, full of all that can add to the joys, the comforts, and excitement—not to say dissipation—of life. Under its shadow you will find a miserable cellar—seven or eight living in it, and beneath a fearful accumulation of all the elements of disease—without the light of the sun, or fresh air, or decent food. In that splendid palace you have the rich man faring sumptuously every day; and you have under its shadow the poor man, that would eat of the crumbs that fall from it, and cannot get them. And while that poor man is not to start an *émeute* in order to destroy the palace, yet the rich man should be told in tones of thunder by every one that has access to his ear, that his palace would not look the less splendid if it did not cast its shadow upon such misery. What is the true way, my dear friends, to save a revolution? Just a reformation. There is no calamity so disastrous as when all society is split into two classes—they that have abundantly, and they that have nothing at all. The true way to make the one class happy—for it is happiness to them—and the other class content, is, for them that fare sumptuously every day to spare, not only the crumbs, which are superfluities, but something even of their necessities, for the poor that are beside them.

It came to pass, that is, it happened to the poor man as it happens to all—"the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died," and, it is added, "was buried." There is contrast here: the beggar died—not a word of a burial—he was likely cast into the nearest ditch, or into some city churchyard, because the parish would not be at the expense to take him too far, or to make the parishioners pay too heavy rates. The rich man, however, when he died, was buried amid pomp, and splendour, and nodding plumes, and all those absurd exhibitions, which, in order to please the taste of undertakers, accompany a modern funeral. "He died, and was buried."

Singular enough, the poor man died first. That shows that early death is not judgment, and long life is not necessarily mercy. It was the poor man that died first; it was the rich man that died last. Well, then, it is added, "the rich man died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." You ask, How, when he was buried, when the body was consigned to the grave, and slumbered beneath the marble monument or the splendid mausoleum—for dust goes to dust under marble and bronze just as soon as under a green sod; there is a wonderful level in the realities of life and of death, though there may appear heights and depths in living society—how, you ask, when his body was buried, and put into the grave, could he open his eyes in the place of separate spirits? I answer, I believe the soul that is separated from the body will carry with it into the world of spirits all the feelings that it had whilst a sojourner in the body. I am told by physicians, that a man who has lost his arm will feel for six months afterwards as if he had pain in his little

finger, and that the arm seems from his sensations still attached; and I have no doubt, to carry the analogy further, that when the body is separated from the soul, just as when a bit of it, the arm, is separated from the body, there may remain in the soul behind all the sensibilities, without the substance, of its terrestrial and mundane existence. So here it is said that he lift up his eyes—though it was the soul—in hell, being in torments; “and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” This is just lifting the curtain, and letting us see some glimpses of the world to come. It is a picture of realities couched in the imagery that we can understand. It is said, “he seeth Abraham afar off;” and he sees also, what he must have seen with horror, the beggar that he kicked from his threshold, to whom he denied the crumbs that fell from his table, to whom his dogs were more merciful than their master—he seeth this beggar in the bosom of Abraham; and being a Jew, and professing to be one of Abraham’s children, the shock must have been terrible. He felt, if not said, “I have got your succession, I am one of the children of Abraham—I am descended from you—I am a Jew strictly and rigidly.” And, therefore, he appeals to him, and to his relationship to him:—“Father Abraham,—I am thy son,—have mercy on me,—a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Jew of the Jews; with no admixture of vile Gentile blood—have mercy upon me, and do send Lazarus—whom I treated with such scorn, but whom now I would hail as a messenger of mercy—that he may only do me this little favour, though I would not give him a crumb of my bread—that he may dip his little finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

What a contrast is here between the present world and that which is hereafter! Abraham replied, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." Abraham replies with all the courtesy of true Christianity. "Remember;" and what an awful remembrance! If the lost in hell could expunge their memories, half their torture would cease; but the recollection of opportunities that we lost that we might have used, the recollection of mercies that we abused, the recollection of lessons that we learned and purposely forgot, the recollection of opportunities of doing good which we passed by, because we wished to become a little richer, or to deposit a little more in the funds—all these recollections will rush upon the lost, and "Remember," will be the most stirring word that can possibly be spoken to the miserable and the unhappy. "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." All the good that you esteemed upon earth was what you should eat, and what you should drink, and wherewithal you should be clothed. Such was the height of your ambition; such was the good—the only good—that you sought, and you have had it. Now Lazarus, he had evil things—what you call evil; but he lifted his heart above the things that perish in the using, and saw eternal things; "now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." What a poor defence is here of the Roman Catholic's belief of saint-worship! The only instance of prayer addressed to a saint in the Bible is this; and the petitioner was refused. It is certainly no precedent, nor authority to pray to departed saints.

But Abraham adds, "Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which

would pass from hence to you cannot." How completely does this refute the notion of the Universalists! There is a class of men sprung up in America, which I regret to say, while it produces some of the most magnificent theology, and some of the greatest intellects of the day, is also like a fertile soil, very full of strange and extravagant notions, from Universalism to Mormonism, and even below that;—well, these Universalists say there is no hell; or if there be, it is a sort of Roman Catholic purgatory, where sufferings and tears will wash out sins, and then all will rise to heaven. But how does that notion square with what Abraham states, and our Lord authenticates?—that there is a great gulf fixed, so that they that would go from heaven to hell cannot, and they that would go from hell to heaven cannot; or, translated into the language of the Apocalypse, the doors are shut—indicating that there is no transference from the lost to the saved; no degradation of the saved to the realms of the lost. There is a great gulf fixed between the two; so that transference, transition—even intercourse in reciprocal benefits—is altogether impossible.

He says, "Very well, since nothing can be done for me, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Was this a lingering sympathy of beneficence that survived the condition of the lost in the rich man's bosom? I think not. He may have felt for his brethren upon earth; but he knew that the presence of those that shared with him in his crimes, would only aggravate the torment that was the penalty of those crimes

in the region of the lost. Solitude was his only chance of peace; insulation from those he ever had intercourse with upon earth was his only hope of lightening his load and mitigating his torment. I fear, therefore, it was selfishness that dreaded aggravation of its torment, not the beneficent sympathy that would save the five brethren that were left behind. But this, of course, is only a conjecture that rests with you, to judge from the whole parable, whether it fully exhausts the case.

Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." What a striking truth is that! "They have Moses and the prophets." He said, "I want to save my five brothers—I want them not to come where I am." What did Abraham reply? "They have got the Old Testament Scriptures." He did not say, "They have got tradition;" nor did he say, "They have got the Church;" nor did he say, "The Rabbis that sit in Moses' seat;" but he referred them to the law and to the testimony—"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And again, you learn by this that if Moses and the prophets—that is, the Old Testament—was sufficient to make wise unto salvation in those days, *à fortiori*, the Old and New Testament together are able to make us wise unto salvation now. I cannot conceive how pope, or cardinal, or priest, or council, can answer this; it asserts the sufficiency of the Bible to salvation to all that read it.

Then he argues with Abraham—for if they have lost character in the state of the lost, they have not lost the power of reasoning—"Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." That is, if they only see a miracle, then they will repent

This was wrong. What effect would a miracle produce? You might be awed, you might be struck dumb, you might be almost struck dead; but this would not make you repent. Suppose a miracle were to occur once only in a generation, the first generation would be struck by it, but the second and the third would not have so great impression produced upon their minds by it; and a miracle always repeated would cease to be a miracle at all, and would be set down in the books of philosophy as one of the regular phenomena of nature; so that the ceaseless occurrence of what is called a miracle would cease to have any effect at all—at all events it would have no moral effect—because the miracle could only confirm to the intellect some great truth, but it would not touch the heart. “They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn;” “Christ is exalted to give repentance.” And then Abraham said to him, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded.” Mark the contrast; it is perfectly complete. The rich man said, “They will repent;” the answer he gives is, “They would not even be persuaded.” The rich man said, “They will repent if one were to come from the dead,” Abraham says—evidently allusive to the resurrection of Christ—“They will not even be persuaded though one,” not *came* from the dead, the place of separate spirits, but *rose* from the dead, as Christ now has done. Now Jesus is risen from the dead, and the same Jews that denied him then, deny him now, even when he has risen from the dead.

CHAPTER XVI. 10.

FAITHFULNESS IN SMALL THINGS—LIFE MADE UP OF LITTLE THINGS
—ANALOGIES—GOD'S CARE OF LITTLE THINGS—LIFE OF JESUS—
ST. PAUL—TOIL—PREACHING—NATIONAL GREATNESS.

OUR blessed Lord records in this chapter a great and weighty truth:—"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

Naaman the Syrian is not without successors in the age in which we live. It was said to him, in language that illustrates the text, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, thou wouldst have done it. How much more, when he bids thee only go, and wash, and be clean." We are disposed at times to think that faithfulness in that which is much is an atonement, or at least a relieving, for unfaithfulness in that which is least. I do not say we express it in words to that effect: but we feel often, and show by our practice that we do feel, that if we are only faithful in transactions of pounds, we need not trouble ourselves much that we have been unjust and uncharitable in transactions about pence and farthings.

The maxim of our Lord is, that he that has the principle of honesty within him—not a principle only, but a spiritual passion—will just be as faithful in his dealings that relate to small affairs, as he is in those higher

dealings on the outward platform of the world that involve the largest transferences, and sums of the largest amount. The reason is simply this—that principle carries us through little things, and fails us not in great things: and if we are honest we may, by mistake, or weakness, or forgetfulness, fail in little things, but we shall not do so deliberately and designedly; but faithful in much, we shall be faithful in the least also.

You will see the force of such a maxim as this when I state that the whole of human life, in its ultimate and everlasting issue, is made up of small and trivial things. It is not grand and startling anniversaries in succession that constitute a man's life—but it is the accumulation of the common-place days, and weeks, and months, and years, with their common-place deeds, that compose the most of men's lives. What those days are determines what futurity will be; the past gives its colouring to the present, the present gives its tone and colouring to the future; and if you will only take care to fulfil well life's little days, you need not be afraid that you will fail justly to discharge life's great and stirring duties. It is on great occasions that the whole character is braced for the conflict; it is on little occasions, just because of their littleness, that we fail, because we fancy that a little thing can have very little influence; whereas life is made up of a series of little things, which together constitute great and lasting results.

We shall see the importance of attending to very little things in order to accomplish very great results from this simple fact—that very little things do, as matter of fact, issue in very momentous results. It is a number of tiny acorns, it may be scattered by the meanest animals upon the field, that are shaped into

those gigantic sea-homes and camps, our ships, the bulwarks and the defences of our country. It is a number of tiny insects that form coral reefs, which again grow up above the sea, are covered with seeds borne by birds in their flight, and ultimately become the abodes and habitations of great and accomplished nations. It is tiny drops falling on the heather that form themselves into tiny streamlets, that accumulate into larger rivers, that at last become great tidal streams that bear the navies of the earth on their bosom, and mingle their mighty currents with the illimitable main: and thus little, very little—seemingly very little things, end in very great results. It is the ceaseless revolution of a paddle-wheel that carries the great ship across the Atlantic Ocean; it is the combination of successive little things that forms a series, mighty, momentous, and startling in its results. And so a trivial habit, indulged in every day, becomes at last our very nature. A year does not leap to its end by a bound; it does so by beginning upon seconds, then moving upon minutes, then days, then weeks, then months; and thus, by a succession of minute steps, the year reaches its own accomplishment and completion.

We thus see, that great things—common-place as the remark may appear to you—are made up of little things; and you cannot but admit, what seems common sense, that if you will attend to the little things, you may calculate upon attaining the great things. If you will take care of the pence, you need not be alarmed about the pounds: if you will be faithful in little things, you will soon discover yourselves—unconsciously but truly—faithful in the great and important things.

We may see this illustrated further from God's own conduct and character. I think it is one of the most interesting features in the world that we live in, that God in it—both in creation and in providence—seems to have had as great a care, and as deep, tender, and ceaseless an interest in the very least molecules of matter, as he has in the largest and most massive orbs in the sky. If you will only take a bee's wing and examine it through a microscope, after you have examined the finest lace from the looms of Valenciennes or Brussels with the same microscope, you will be struck with the contrast between the coarse, rugged texture of the loom, and the exquisite, infinitely exquisite texture of a bee's wing; so much so, that you will say, God has been as careful, as minutely careful, in weaving that bee's wing, as if he had not another thing to make or to manage in the whole of his own beautiful universe. Or if you will take a flower: all the tints that chemists can produce, all the chemical tints or colours they can create, never can reach the exquisite tints of the flowers that grow in the humblest garden. Why is it, then, that God has been at the trouble so beautifully to tint that petal that is no sooner blown than blasted; or delicately to weave that wing that scarcely bears its possessor through the air than it crumbles into dust again; if we cannot see the ultimate end, we can see this—that if God is as careful in taking care of minute things as he is in conducting and creating magnificent things, we may think that he that is faithful in the least will be faithful in that which is much; and he that is unjust by being inattentive to the least, will be unjust also in that which is great.

There is another illustration of the same lesson in

the life of our blessed Lord. We have seen it in the works of the Father; let me notice it also in the works of the Son. Take the whole of that remarkable biography—a biography that was consummated by so painful a death upon the cross on Calvary; and you will find in it nothing of glare or of pomp, nothing done for effect, no adjustment of robes, no arrangement of circumstances, no calculating upon results, but everything intensely simple,—I might almost say, intensely common-place. In life's lonely places you will find him oftenest, in the homesteads of the poor, at the table of the despised outcast, preaching to a woman at a well, who came, as some would say, accidentally to draw water; addressing the crowd from the hill-side, or seated in a boat, or upon the road-side. All this is intensely simple. But all great men are simple, and all good men are simple. There is nothing so contrary to the word of God, in my mind, as the habit that some have of always using religious phraseology. They seem in many cases to use it as other men use profane swearing—neither the one nor the other meaning anything whatever by what they say. There was nothing of pretence, nothing indicating assumption or religious pretension, but everything in that beautiful character simple to the vulgar eye, so common-place, that it cannot see or be struck with anything remarkable in it. And when he hangs upon the cross in his last agony, what does he do? So faithful was he in the least, that in that agony on which was suspended the safety of countless millions of souls, he stops to take care of a weeping mother. And when he rose from the dead—that stupendous act, the first-fruits of them that slept—so faithful was he to little things, that he laid aside the

clothes and the raiment in which he was wrapped, folded them, and put them in a corner; so that while engaged in rising from the dead, the first-fruits of a risen world, he descended to fold and lay aside in their nook the clothes in which he was wrapped, when he was put in that tomb wherein never man lay; and thus, combined with dignity that no language of mine can express, there was a minuteness, an attention to details, very common-place, the world would call it, but very truly in accordance with what God shows in creation, where he attends to little things as minutely as he does to the things that are greatest.

Another illustration is found in the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart: there it is, the same process. And these inquiries, I may remind you, are extremely instructive. They indicate—in creation, redemption, regeneration—grand points of coincidence that prove they are all connected with the same Great Author. In regeneration the Holy Spirit changes the heart; but he does it, not by a startling stroke, as our Puseyite brethren would by a drop of water sprinkled on the brow, but by a long, laborious process. I do not believe in what are called "sudden conversions," in the common sense of that expression. I know persons aroused by a sermon, really and truly converted to God; but that sermon was not the whole cause, it merely put the last atom in the scale that made it go down; it merely put the last drop in the cup that made it run over. What are called "sudden conversions," are merely the results of a series of minute influences that the Spirit has been exercising upon the heart; meaning, in his own time and in his own way, to bless to the conversion of the soul. The whole of

man's life is a preparation for heaven, and a series of minute influences in their aggregate and their combination, forming, preparing, and ripening the soul for God and for heaven.

If I leave the higher sphere, and descend to any of God's great servants, you will find the very same thing. In the life of the Apostle Paul, you will notice invariable great purpose, but that mingled with invariable attention to minute details. I could take many instances out of his; life I will give only one. If you have read the story of his shipwreck, you will see that his eye one moment was in the heavens, reading God's grand purposes, and that the very next his eye was upon the humblest voyager, telling them what they must do to save life; and thereby setting a precedent to every Christian minister not to be satisfied merely with preaching the gospel, but also to minister to the well-being of his fellow-men, and try to make the world altogether happier, and wiser, and more beautiful, because it has been his privilege to pass through it. So, in our attainment of Christian character, we shall find that the true way to be the most eminent Christian is to be most attentive to all the component details that make up Christian character. The man that desires, for instance, to attain perfection in a trade, well knows that during his apprenticeship he must pay attention to the very minutest details; and he that sets out to be rich will always take care of the smallest sums as well as of the largest. And I have often been struck, on coming into contact with men of business, that in all their accounts, they are as careful about a penny put down in their account-book or in their ledger, as if bankruptcy itself were contingent upon the loss of it.

Why that? Because they know that by attention to such details as these they attained their present position. So in the army: why is there such stress laid upon compliance with a superior officer's minutest orders? It is not because the polishing of a sword or the taking a little rust off a spur is in itself of any very great moment; but because the soldier gets that habit of instant obedience to orders by being accustomed to it in little things, that makes him neither falter nor flinch in the greatest and most trying things. And it is this attention to details that makes up the grand result of human life. It is the to-days and yesterdays that build up to-morrow. It is the unseen parts of life that need the greatest attention. I read in some house-maid's book, "Be sure to sweep and clean well the nooks and unseen parts; and do the rest of the house as you please." So with human life; attend to the unseen parts of it, and you may depend upon it the rest will all adjust itself rightly; and what often will seem to you a mere ornament that may be dispensed with, will often be found, on minuter inspection, to be essential to the safety and stability of the whole. It is much easier to shine on great occasions than to do well on small; it is much easier to make a fine speech from the platform, than it is to say to some poor beggar woman a truly comforting and Christian word. Peter could draw his sword to smite the enemies of Jesus, like a hero, and yet he could go out and deny his Master in the presence of a servant-maid. You see how easy it is to draw Peter's sword, but how difficult it is to learn, from Peter's conduct, to be consistent in life's lowliest and humblest places.

And so in a successful ministry; this text reminds

one of the secret of its success. Whenever you see a minister of the gospel—and I speak generally—become suddenly an object of admiration and applause, you may be sure there is something wrong; for I do not believe that any ministry will become suddenly popular that will really last long. I think the real secret of success in a merchant's counting-house, of success at the counter, of success in trade, of success at the bar, of success as a Christian minister—without speaking of the grandest element of all, the moral and spiritual one—for I am speaking only in the region of the human—is persistent drudgery and patient labour. I believe genius means capacity of labour and persistency rather than anything else. Make up your mind that a thing is good, and then stand by it at all hazards. Take your course: persevere with all your might, and you will find that is the way to succeed in it. Do not listen to praise on the right; do not be afraid of censure on the left; pay not the least attention to what people say, praising or blaming; and by so doing you will find that, by God's blessing, success will attend you whether you make shoes or preach sermons; occupy life's low, or stand upon life's high and slippery places. It is by this persistent drudgery that, humanly speaking, success anywhere will be attained; and the minister of the Gospel cannot expect success in a way different from what other people take. God does not canonize indolence; he does not give success to neglected duty. You are not to depend upon your own efforts as if they were all, but you are still to use them. What is the promise? "My grace is sufficient for you." Some indolent Christians read it thus: "My grace is a *substitute* for you;" and that would be very

delightful news to them, but it is not to a Christian. God's word says, "My grace is" not a substitute for you; but it is "sufficient for you." A poet has very beautifully expressed my meaning; and I always rejoice when one can get a fragment of true poetry; it is so instructive:—

"The mighty pyramids of stone
That wedge-like cleave the desert air,
When nearer seen and better known,
Are but gigantic flights of stair.

"The distant mountains that uprear
Their frowning foreheads to the skies,
Are cross'd by pathways that appear
As we to higher levels rise.

"The heights by great men reach'd and kept
Were not attain'd by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upwards in the night."

How justly, as well as beautifully, has the poet written those instructive words. And when you hear what the world would call in its language a very eloquent sermon, you go away with the idea that the minister preached it by inspiration. I have often been interrupted and delayed hours by people visiting me, and when I have ventured to say, "I must study," they have said, "Oh, you can easily preach; it will not cost you any trouble." If I were to preach from this pulpit every Sunday what cost me no trouble, you would very soon disappear, and go elsewhere; and you would do right well to do so. I do not believe in extemporaneous sermons at all; and what seems to you a magnificent result, struck out at a blow, has been the fruit of long, patient, persistent, laborious preparation. It was

drudgery as well as genius that made the Duke of Wellington ; it is drudgery as well as genius that makes the greatest men of the day ; and if you want to be good tradesmen, good merchants, good lawyers, good physicians, you must go through much drudgery. Why should you expect to be good Christians, good theologians, well acquainted with the Bible, strong and steadfast in every good and holy work, without ever having been at the trouble to study, to pray, to labour, and to persevere in doing so ? I am not excluding the highest source of excellence and success ; I am only showing these subordinate ones, that we must never overlook or even undervalue.

We may gather from the whole of this, that not only they who have great talents, but they who have little talents, may be useful. If you be salt at all, you will have the savour ; if you be light at all, you will be luminous. If you cannot preach Christ, you can love Christ. You are not accountable for the magnitude of your gifts and graces ; but you are for the use that you make of the gifts and graces that you have.

In the second place, let us learn from the whole of this the value of ceaseless and continuous attendance on a Christian ministry. Wherever you find a ministry that does instruct you, you should make it a rule, even at some sacrifice, constantly to attend it. I can say so with the greater freedom, because I have the very reverse of any reason to complain. If you wish to be benefited, your true way is not to come to the house of God by fits and starts, or to roam here, and there, and everywhere ; but try regularly and constantly to attend on one ministry ; and as character is the creation not of a blow, but of a series of truths dropped one here

and one there, of touches communicated one here and one there, of influences here a little and there a little, you can see that by thus attending constantly, consistently, and regularly, you are within the reach of those blessed influences that may by God's grace build you up till you become a man of full stature in Christ Jesus. I wish that within these walls we had more room; I have often regretted much to see so many obliged constantly to stand in the passages; but it cannot be otherwise; it would be otherwise if it could be altered; and I only trust that those who so sacrifice to hear God's blessed word, will not go away without receiving that rich blessing which God gives to them who are faithful in the least, as he gives to them provided they are faithful in much.

The importance of this truth may be seen not only in individual cases, but in countries. You must not expect that a nation is built up in perfection by a sudden burst of light or of life. There are great epochs in a nation's history, but its character as a mass is composed of innumerable little influences. You may depend upon it, it is not a splendid speech in parliament, nor a grand measure agreed to at a cabinet, that makes our country truly great. Those influences that are forming, and shaping, and moulding this country, are unseen to the world, but just from their multiplicity and their persistency they are making deep and lasting impressions. The tract distributors and city missionaries are like the coral insects in the mighty ocean—they are gradually building up a noble structure, that may last till the millennial day; and while great soldiers, great sailors, great statesmen, get the reward that they are often contented

with—the world's applause—they seek, and as devoted missionaries are getting, nothing of this world's *éclat*, but what they seek—the praise that cometh from God only. A revolution is the creation of a day; a reformation is the result of a century. A spark struck out by the heel of the furious democrat may burn a throne and reduce a country to ashes: but only the silent, persistent salt and light of Christian character and of Christian effort can slowly but surely accomplish the permanent results, which are glory to God and salvation to sinners, and a blessing to our land.

NOTE.—And we are all to use this mammon of unrighteousness; to make ourselves, not palaces, nor barns, nor estates, nor treasures, but friends; *i. e.* to bestow it on the poor and needy, —(see ch. xii. 33, which is the most striking parallel to our text: compare *ὅταν ἐκλείπητε*, with *θησαυρὸν ἀνέκλειπτον* there)—that when we fail (die), or, according to the reading *ἐκλείπη*, when it fails, they, *i. e.* the *φίλοι*,—(compare the joy in heaven, ch. xv., and Baxter's remark cited there by Stier, "Is there joy in heaven at thy conversion, and will there be none at thy glorification?")—may receive you into the (or their) everlasting tabernacles. See also ch. xiv. 13, 14. God repays in their name. They receive us there with joy, if they are gone before us; they receive us there by making us partakers of their prayers, which "move the Hand that moves the world," even during this life. Deeds of charity and mercy are then to be our spiritual shrewdness, by which we may turn to our account the *ἄδικον μαμῶνα*, providing ourselves with friends out of it;—and the debtors are here perhaps to be taken in their literal, not parabolic sense;—we are to lighten our burdens by timely relief, the only way in which a son of light can change the hundred into fifty or fourscore, see Isa. lviii. 6, 8, 10, 12.

No pre-eminence is signified, as in John xiii. 23; all the blessed are spoken of as in Abraham's bosom. See also John i. 18.

The death of the rich man last should be remarked; Lazarus was taken soon from his sufferings; Dives was left longer, that he might have time to repent.—*κ' ἐτάφη*. There is no doubt that the funeral was mentioned as being congruous to his station in life, and, as Trench observes, “in a sublime irony,” implying that he had all things properly cared for—the purple and fine linen which he wore in life not spared at his obsequies.

See Meyer's interpretation. [23.] *ἐν τ. ᾗδην*. Hades, *ἡνσιψ* is the abode of all disembodied spirits till the resurrection; not the place of torment, much less hell, as understood commonly in the E. V. Lazarus was also in Hades, but separate from Dives,—one on the blissful, the other on the reprobate side. It is the gates of Hades, the imprisonment of death, which shall not prevail against the church (Matt. xvi. 18); the Lord holds the key of Hades (Rev. i. 18); himself went into the same Hades, of which paradise is a part.

Observe, Abraham does not say, “they will not repent,” but, “they will not believe, be persuaded,” which is another and a deeper thing. Luther does not seem to conclude rightly that this disproves the possibility of appearances of the dead. It only says, that such appearances will not bring about faith in the human soul; but that they may not serve other ends in God's dealings with men, it does not assert. There is no gulf between the earth and Hades; and the very form of Abraham's answer—setting forth no impossibility in this second case, as in the former—would seem to imply its possibility if requisite. We can hardly pass over the identity of the name Lazarus with that of him who was actually recalled from the dead, but whose return, far from persuading the Pharisees, was the immediate exciting cause of their crowning act of unbelief.

CHAPTER XVII.

OFFENCES—PRAYER FOR FAITH—MIRACLES—DUTY AND MERIT—TEN
LEPERS CURED—ABSOLUTION—GRATITUDE—JESUS IS GOD—ACTIVE
DUTY IS GRATITUDE—THE KINGDOM—ITS INNER AND ITS OUTER
ASPECT—CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT—LOU'S WIFE.

Our Lord states that as long as this dispensation lasts, it is morally, not physically, impossible that offences of some sort shall not come among mankind. As long as the tares are mingled with the wheat, and the depraved mingled with the good, so long there shall be obstruction to the advancement of the good, and there shall be developments, more or less painful and offensive, of the principles of evil. But whilst these offences shall come, God is not to be blamed for permitting them; it is man who is really guilty, by whom these offences are committed. And therefore he says, Better suffer the greatest temporal calamity than obstruct the spread of this blessed kingdom, or in any way prevent the influx into it of those who are the heirs and the people of God. He shows that moral evil is far greater than physical suffering; and that the greatest physical suffering, even martyrdom itself, had better be borne, than the least discredit or dishonour inflicted upon that cause of which Christ is the author and the finisher, and whose name shall receive the glory. And in order to nip all disputes in the bud, to anticipate offences that will come, "If thy

brother trespass against thee, rebuke him,"—that is, tell him that it is an offence, tell him distinctly and clearly, and without any equivocation, "It is wrong," and if after you have told him of his evil, he repent, then forgive him. The way of the world is,—If thy brother offend thee, cease ever to see him, or to have intercourse with him; injure his character before others, and let him feel the effects of that sin, by others knowing of it. The Christian way is,—Go to thy brother in private, tell him his fault, and if he repent, then forgive him; and if seven times a day he sin against you, and say, "I repent," forgive him—that is, you are to forgive as far as it is injury against you, whilst at the same time this does not prevent you using every precaution that is consistent with duty and with Christian principle, that the offence shall not again be committed. It does not mean that you are to open your doors, and let a thief enter seven times, and seven times steal, and seven times repent; but it is, when he has done so, you are to forgive him, but to shut the door afterwards, and take every precaution, not only for your own sake, but for his, that he does not commit the same offence again.

When the Apostles heard this so plainly set before them, so contrary to what the world teaches, and recognising faith in Christ as the great source and root of moral duty, they said, not, "Increase our joy," which of course he did, nor "Increase our love," nor "Increase our benevolence," but, "Increase our faith." Why? Because faith worketh by love, purifieth the heart, overcometh the world. It is a parent grace, and all the rest are the offspring; and what the uncharitable man needs is not first increase of charity, which, without faith, would not be true charity, but increase of faith,

or confidence in God, from which shall spring the love, and preference, and pursuit of whatsoever things are pure, and just, and honest, and lovely, and of good report.

Our Lord, in the fifth verse, seems to allude to what is called miraculous faith. "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed,"—that is, the least quantity,—“ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea.” Now it is quite plain that miracles performed by faith were restricted to a season; knowledge, as far as it was inspired, has ceased; faith, as far as it was miraculous, has ceased; but the apostle says, “Love endureth” or abideth “for ever.” God does not now give the miraculous response, because he has not given previously miraculous faith. He may give it, but we must always judge of a miracle by our senses; and if the miracle be not done, then we must infer that faith was not given. Those, therefore, that say there ought to be miracles in the Church now, must either conclude that there are no Christians at all if miracles are to be a perpetual thing, or they must contradict the express declaration of God himself. When miracles are needed, miracles will be given; and when miracles are given, the faith that can do them will be given also. But after all, what would be the worth of a ceaseless miracle? it would cease to have any effect at all. The miracle is now, not that the sun rises in the east, to use the popular phraseology, describes a semicircle in the south, and sets in the west; but if the sun, at the bidding of some one possessed of faith vouchsafed by God, were to rise in the west, and describe a semicircle in the north, and set in the east for one day, that would be a miracle. But if the sun

were always, ever afterwards, to rise in the west, it would cease to be regarded as a miracle calling attention to a certain moral truth—it would come to be regarded as one of the ordinary and every day laws or occurrences of nature. It is quite plain, therefore, that by the very order of things, there cannot be miracles always. A miracle is so, because it is a startling suspension of the ordinary course of events, calling attention to some great truth. Miracles are done, not to show that there is great power, but to illustrate some grand truth; and a miracle that is not the pedestal of a great truth, is not a miracle from God at all.

Our Lord gives next a description of what was their duty, and their obligation to him. He illustrates their duty by a very common reference. A servant is paid for doing his work; the servant does that work. He has not thereby incurred any claim for extra reward, he has done just what he was paid to do, and what it was his duty to do. So the law is that you should love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself; and when you have done all, you have no claim upon God for a reward, you have only done what was your duty. And how completely does that put a stop to all ideas about making up to-day for our moral defects of yesterday. Some men think, Well, if I was bad in the past, I shall be good in the future, and that will be a sufficient atonement. But when you have acted without fault from this day onward, when you act without flaw or blemish from this moment forward, you have only done what it was your duty to do; and no exactitude in discharging the duties of the future can be any compensation for your having neglected any of your duties in the past. You are, when you have done all, unprofitable servants.

We come to a very striking miracle performed by our Lord upon ten lepers. There were ten men that were lepers; there was one Samaritan, and nine were Jews. Great calamities make enemies crowd together; a heavy shower makes friend and foe run to the nearest tree or roof for shelter; a common calamity makes friends of men that naturally are foes. These ten—a Samaritan and nine Jews—involved in a common catastrophe, ceased to quarrel with each other. The ten lepers stood afar off—that was a law of the leprosy, as we shall see in our reading of the book of Leviticus, in the course of our morning services; these ten lepers were unclean, and they had to stand at a distance, with their hands upon their mouths, marked and known to be lepers, and to call, "Unclean, unclean." They might not touch any, and none might touch them. It was the great typical disease that set forth the nature of sin, and the estranging power of sin from the presence of a holy God. These ten lepers saw Jesus pass by, and they cried, "Have mercy on us." The mercy that they wanted was the cure of the disease that they felt; and if under temporal disease we ask for cure, may we not, should we not, under spiritual disease no less earnestly beseech it? "When Jesus saw them, he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves unto the priests." What does that mean? It is this. The priest in the ancient economy did not cure leprosy. Certain divines pretend that the priests, or rather those they call priests, the ministers of the present economy, have the power to forgive sin. They say that the priest of old had power to cleanse from leprosy, and by parity of reasoning, the priest now should have power to forgive sin. But the priest of old had no power to cleanse

from leprosy; it was a disease that God alone could cure, and all that the priest did was to inspect the person, and pronounce him clean, or pronounce him unclean, as symptoms indicated. And therefore, every one who was labouring under that disease in ancient times, incurable by human means, went to the priest, and showed himself as our Lord here prescribed; and then the priest said, You are either clean, or you are still unclean, and must stand aloof and separate from the rest of the people. And that phraseology that occurs in the Old Testament—if the priest see that there are certain marks he shall pronounce him unclean; but if the priest see there are not certain marks, he shall pronounce him clean—in the Hebrew it is not “pronounce clean,” though our translators have very properly rendered it so, but it is, “the priest shall uncleanse him,” and “the priest shall cleanse him.” So our blessed Lord used the phrase “forgiving sins,” “Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; whose sins ye retain, they are retained.” That is Levitical language taken from the treatment of the lepers, and evidently implies, “Whose sins ye pronounce to be forgiven, by evidence submitted that they are so, and whose sins ye pronounce to be retained, on the ground of evidence that they are retained; then in the one case they are forgiven, and in the other case they are retained.”

Now these ten lepers might have said to Jesus, “What is the use of showing ourselves to the priest? We know that we are not cured,—we know that we are afflicted with leprosy.” But he said, You do what I command you, and leave the issue to me; and they had the good sense to do this little thing—to go and show themselves to the priest; and “as they went, they were

cleansed." In the way of duty we may expect a blessing. Do what God bids you, and ask and leave him to help you and bless you in doing it. Many people say, "I cannot come to the Lord's Supper, because I am afraid I am not fit." The command is, "Do this in remembrance of me;" and in doing it from the heart you will get the blessing you need from Him that bids you. "And as they went they were cleansed." Well, one of them, when he saw that "he was healed," felt his heart too loaded with gratitude to go to the priest to ascertain from him that which he felt within himself; he therefore returned to Jesus, "and with a loud voice glorified God,"—evidently recognising Christ as God, for he "fell down on his face at his feet," it is said, "giving him thanks." And why did he do so? Because the leprosy was regarded as a disease that God alone could cure; it was incurable by human means; and this poor Samaritan, recognising in his own case a cure effected by the voice of Jesus, recognised in the Man of Nazareth the majesty of God, and praised and glorified him accordingly. But the other nine were so delighted with their cure that they forgot the great Physician that cured them; like the nine still, alas! who receive blessings from God, but are so enamoured of the blessings, that instead of being a reflection of the Giver, the gift becomes a blind that conceals him. It is a very sad and a very humbling thought, that when men get mercies, instead of hearing the mercies preaching the God that bestows them, they see only the mercy, and rest forgetful of and unthankful to the Giver. Jesus said, "There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Strange to say, this one who returned was not a Jew; he had not had such

great privileges—he was a Samaritan, a stranger. Jesus comforted him still further; and said, “Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.” He fell down at his feet thanking him, and thought that he ought to cleave to so great a benefactor; but Jesus said, “There are duties that are left for you to discharge. You are a tradesman; you are a physician, or a soldier, or a sailor; you have a business in the world. By becoming a Christian it is not necessary that you should renounce this world’s duties, but only this world’s sins; and you will show best your Christianity by going down to the least duties with a new heart to discharge them.” Many persons when they become Christians, think, “I ought to forsake the old paths in which I walked before, and strike out new ones.” But this is not what is wanted. We do not want new duties, new pursuits, new professions, but new grace to fulfil the obligations of the old; and when we have a new heart, all things around us, shining in its light and sanctified by its presence, will become new also.

He then illustrates the nature of his second advent in language very plain and beautiful; but very solemn, and much of it very awful. “When he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” To whom was he speaking here? He was speaking, not to his own, but to the Pharisees. These Pharisees looked for a kingdom in majesty and glory,—that will come; but they overlooked a kingdom of an inner description that must precede it. Never forget that the kingdom of God has one aspect—righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost within; and another aspect—that is, Christ’s own

personal triumphant reign over a world regenerated, requickened and restored. These Pharisees looked for the last, but the first they did not like. So Christ says, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It is a gradual expansion. "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!"—as if this kingdom were a sudden burst upon the earth; but on the contrary, he says, "the kingdom of God is within you." That does not mean that it was in the hearts of these Pharisees; for they hated it; but "the kingdom of God is among you,"—that is, the component elements of it. But what are these elements? The apostle well defines them when he says, "The kingdom of God is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Now that kingdom, he says to the Pharisees, is among you; and instead of looking for the lightning that one day shall burst upon the world, look, ye Pharisees, for the shining light that enlightens the mind, and wakens within you the hopes of happiness and heaven.

But he tells them that while this is true, there shall be also another revelation of himself; and that men shall be as they were in the days of Lot and in the days of Noah, engaged and absorbed in the pursuits of the world; and then he says, the Son of man shall be revealed as the lightning from heaven. "As the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." Now the light comes gradually—shining more and more to the perfect day; but the lightning comes with speed and splendour; it is no sooner seen than its blow or its effects are felt. Well now, he says, the kingdom of God within you will be like the light shining to noonday; but the coming

of the King of glory will be in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, when you expect not—like the lightning that bursts with sudden splendour upon a world not expecting it.

Then he tells them what shall be the consequence. “In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.” But, you ask, what can be the sin of that? At present every man is bound to take care of the stuff that is in his house; or the flock that is in the field; that is, while the light shines; but when the lightning comes—that is, when Christ shall be revealed, then let go the thoughts of a world whose day is gone, and whose drama is finished; and set your hearts on a higher that has come, when Christ shall be revealed the second time without sin unto salvation. And he says, “Remember Lot’s wife.” Why remember her? Not that there was anything in her peculiarly instructive, except the great sin that ruined her. What was that? She left Sodom, you recollect, at God’s bidding, and she was told not to look back; but when she had retired a few feet from it, or a few yards from it, she began to think of it. “My friends are there, my relations are there; my house is there, my property is there. Am I quite sure that God said so? Am I not a fanatic to leave it thus?” And she disobeyed God’s command, and looked back, and became, it is called in Scripture, “a pillar of salt.” I do not say that she was made literally a pillar of muriate of soda—that is, the common salt—but that she was made an everlasting monument of God’s judgment. It is singular enough however, in opposition to this, that some Americans,—I do not vouch for the truth of it,—who have been

engaged in sounding the Dead Sea, say that they have discovered a lofty pillar of this description; and that they believe this to be literally the pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was turned when she looked back on Sodom. At all events, they have found a very remarkable monument which they believe to be so.

The great sin of Lot's wife was, that whilst her body had escaped from Sodom, she had left her heart and her soul in it. There are people in this church to-night whose bodies are here, but whose minds are in their counting-house, or on the distant ocean, after that cargo sent off to America, or to Australia, or India. Others, again, who are listening to me with the outward ear, have the greatest possible difficulty in taking their heart, their mind, their memory from the things of this world, and devoting them to the things that belong to the next. I know there is a difficulty in it. If your minds, your affections, your sympathies were entirely in the sanctuary, you would not be in this world, but in the future world. But improvement is possible. The habit of attention—the habit of constant attention, and whenever the mind begins to wander arresting the wavering thoughts, calling in the heart that goes back to Sodom, and fixing the attention on the Zoar that is before you, is a great blessing. Then he tells them of the suddenness of his arrival: "Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left,"—the one saved, the other a sinner. And when they asked, "Where, Lord?" he says, "Wherever sin is, there judgment comes; wherever guilt is, there vengeance will be; according to the proverb, that wherever the carrion, or the body is, there the eagles will descend to feed.

CHAPTER XVII. 20, 21.

CARNAL EXPECTATIONS—THE COMING KINGDOM—NOT NOW WITH OBSERVATION—NO VISIBLE THRONE YET—GROWTH OF THE INNER KINGDOM—ITS WEAPONS—APPROACH — FORMS — TRUST — BADGE— ONE DAY THE KINGDOM WILL COME WITHOUT OBSERVATION.

WHEN our Lord “was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Our Lord’s words show that the Scribes and Pharisees expected a temporal dynasty as the result of the advent of the Messiah, and the deliverance of their land from the yoke of bondage inflicted upon it by the Roman people. When, therefore, they asked of Jesus when the kingdom of God should come, they neither understood by the expression Christ’s spiritual ascendancy in the heart, or Christ’s terrestrial reign and triumph over all his enemies, at the end of the age; but a carnal, a material, a political dynasty, which they supposed, according to the traditions of the elders, and in their perversion of God’s Holy Word, the Messiah should come to establish at Jerusalem and in the midst of Palestine. The only emancipation they coveted was from the tax that they paid to the Romans; the only ascendancy they desired was the ascendancy of Jerusalem, their capital, as the mistress of all the capitals and

cities of the globe; and therefore when they asked of Christ, "When shall this kingdom of God come?" they had an idea of that kingdom utterly incompatible with its militant state. Jesus therefore answers them in the way that was fitted to impress upon them a salutary lesson. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,"—or, as it is more justly translated in the margin, "with outward show," and pomp, and splendour, and military grandeur, and imperial circumstance, as you suppose; neither shall they say of it as a visible manifestation, "Lo here!" or a second group, "Lo there!" so invisible is it, though real, that it is in the midst of you now, though you cannot perceive it. For you will observe the expression, "the kingdom of God is within you," is translated more justly in the margin, "the kingdom of God is *among* you," not within your hearts, Pharisees, for you are strangers to it; but among your people where you rule; though you cannot see it, it is no less on that account a reality.

Thus, there are two aspects of the kingdom of Christ; and you will find both laid down in this chapter. First, there is its present militant aspect, where our life is hid with Christ in God; and there is its future triumphant aspect, when the sons of God shall no more be hid, but shall be visibly manifested as the heirs of God, when the bride shall be ready, when the Church shall be presented to Christ a glorious church, without spot or blemish; when every eye shall see him, and all shall bless him and be blessed in him. But in the meantime it is a kingdom that comes not with observation; at a future time it will come with observation. It is not here taught us that because the kingdom cometh not with outward pomp now, it

never will come with outward splendour. And in fact, to say so is to contradict the passage; for you will perceive that after he has told them that the kingdom of God cometh not with outward show, and that the kingdom is already among them, he adds that one day it shall come with outward show, "for as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day." Now it cometh not with outward show; then it shall come with the unexpected speed and the dazzling splendour of the lightning, that illuminates the whole canopy of heaven; and no eye shall fail to discern it, and no heart fail to feel the approach of him who cometh in the clouds of heaven, accompanied by angels, with power and great glory, whose presence is everlasting, and whose name endureth for ever. But at present we have to deal with this kingdom in its coming not with outward show, or with outward pomp. Let us see why this is.

First, there is the kingdom of God composed of constituent elements. "The kingdom of God is not meat nor drink; but righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost." Secondly, there is the kingdom of God composed of living subjects, who are the servants of the Master, the subjects of the great King. In neither sense does it come now with outward show and pomp. Let me explain how it does not come with outward show.

First, its seat is not a visible throne, amid the splendour and the circumstance of a visible palace; its seat and presence is in the lowly and in the individual heart. It may be within, and no counterpart that makes it visible without. The countenance may be calm, the

face composed, and yet within the individual there may be transacted a weightier concern than that which relates to dynasties that are forming, or to kingdoms that are asserting their power. Its seat at present is not an outward throne, but the inward heart; its influence is not the lightning that flashes and startles by its splendour, but the quiet, silent, persistent light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Then, in the second place, we can see that this kingdom comes not with observation, from the nature of its growth. It is not something that appears full grown, and bursts in its maturity upon a world that did not expect it; it is a living seed cast into the receptive soil of a living heart; there, watered by the dews of heaven, warmed by the sunshine of heaven, it germinates, it grows up, it buds, it gives birth to the leaf, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear—all this a silent, a secret, but persistent and triumphant process. The progress of this kingdom is like all the great processes of nature—silent, but sure. There is no noise in the growing corn, there is no sign given of the budding of the grass. All these great processes are in quiet. So this kingdom—these constituent elements—righteousness, peace, and joy, planted like seeds in the human heart, germinate and grow up in secrecy, in silence; but are sure to scent the wide earth by their blossoms and benefit mankind by its beautiful fruits.

The weapons with which this kingdom is promoted, come not with observation. Its weapons are not battalions, nor floating banners, nor glittering spears, nor beating drums. Its weapons are not carnal, that is, not visible, not material, not something that strikes the senses; and because they are not carnal, the Apostle

logically reasons, they are mighty. These weapons are prayer, persistent, but secret; reading the Scriptures, meditation, patience, love, truth. These are silent forces; the world can take no notice of them. It can hear the whirlwind, but the still small voice of love, and peace, and truth the world has no ear for.

The symbols by which the progress of this kingdom is set forth in Scripture, all indicate its quiet. It is likened to the leaven put into a barrel of meal, gradually but surely pursuing its course, propagating itself, until the whole mass is saturated and pervaded by it. As the light that first gilds the eastern hill top, and spreads and increases till heaven and earth are all bathed in its glory; so the truth, accepted into the understanding, illuminating the mind; love, admitted into the heart, spreading its warmth through every affection, till the whole man is brought under its beneficent and its blessed influence. It is the wind blowing where it listeth; thou hearest the sound thereof, but thou knowest not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. So is this kingdom—so is every one that is born of the Spirit. It cometh not with observation; it is in silence, in secret, but with power.

This kingdom erects where it comes no throne, establishes no royal hierarchy, constitutes no outward organization. It does not change governments, nor propose to raise armies or to equip navies; it sends no trumpet before it, wears no broad phylactery, does not stand in the streets and corners of the town making long prayers, shrinks from pomp, hates pretension, speaks simply, lets the world judge of it by its quiet and peaceable fruits, not by its pomp, its parade, and its pretension.

The forms and ceremonies that accompany it are all simple, and make no impression upon the senses. A great evidence that the Romish Church is not a pure one is that it comes with observation. You cannot mistake the approach of a Cardinal to a continental city; he comes with trumpets and with drums, and with all the pomp and splendour of a military conqueror. You cannot say that the kingdom does not come with observation when the Pope is attended by emperors, and the highest holds the bridle of his horse, and the most illustrious wait upon his bidding. All this is observation. You cannot say that this is the kingdom here described. And when the host is consecrated, banners are waved and cannon sound; all this is quite alien to that definition of the kingdom of God: it cometh not with outward show: its simple sacrament is baptism, a little water sprinkled on a babe's brow, not to make regeneration, but to teach that it is necessary; the Lord's Supper is a little bread and wine eaten by humble Christian men and women at the Lord's board or the communion-table. There is no pomp, or splendour, or circumstance that either impresses the senses or indicates the approach of a kingdom with outward show. We have no gorgeous robes, no grand processions, no ascending incense, no waving banners—in short, we have a kingdom that cometh not with observation and with outward show.

The force that this kingdom depends upon is not the patronage of the great, or the riches of the wealthy, or the learning of the wise. It was true at its first dawn what is very extensively true still, "Not many great men, not many mighty men, not many noble men are called; but God hath chosen the weak things of the

world to confound the mighty; and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are." It depends upon the inward influence of heavenly truth, upon the constraining power of irresistible love, upon the sway of moral and spiritual truth in the conscience of man, the true holy of holies, the consecrated realm of right and wrong. The kingdom of God is among you.

Its effects upon outward society show that in its most triumphant march it comes not with outward show. It does not pull down kings to set up a republic; it does not try to disorganize a republic in order to set up a king. If a Christian goes to America he conforms to all its laws, and prays for the republic—the powers that be; if he goes to Turkey, he conforms to its laws, and prays for the sultan—the powers that be; and if he comes to Britain he conforms to all its laws, and prays for our gracious Queen—the powers that be: in short, Christianity does not propose revolutions, which can be done at a random blow; but it attempts a reformation, which is a slow, a gradual, but a sure and triumphant process. It benefits nations by sanctifying individuals; it purifies the nations by regenerating individual hearts; it transforms a continent by translating its individuals one by one from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It seeks to improve, elevate, ennoble the whole mass of society by implanting patiently, laboriously, prayerfully the seeds of righteousness and truth in each individual and single heart. It makes the forest to have good trees and to bear much fruit, by beginning with each tree in succession. It makes the streams of national well-being pure, by making the fountain of individual homes happy. It begins within, it drives outward until the whole mass

is assimilated to him whose commission it executes, in seeking to comfort and to bring to the knowledge of the truth all that are in darkness and in the shadow of death.

In the next place, to show that it does not come with outward observance, or with outward show, its badge is not a magnificent robe, nor pharisaic phylactery, nor is it a shibboleth pronounced by one and repeated by another, nor is it a monk's cowl, nor a noble's coronet, nor a bishop's mitre; nor is it a Romanist's crucifix. These are all things of observation. But the badge of this kingdom is something more beautiful than any, more splendid than them all. What is that badge? "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." That is its badge; an inner, but a real one; it comes not with observation; it belongs to the heart, it is traceable only by its fruits. "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Its constituent elements are also evidences that it cometh not with observation. These are "righteousness"—an inner, not an outward thing—"peace, joy in the Holy Ghost." It is not fasting, which may be seen, nor feasting, which can be understood; but righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost.

Thus we see that this kingdom, or religion, that is, Christ's influence, comes not with outward show, but is an inward, spiritual power, touching and transforming by its touch the individual heart, till families become Christians, and the congregation of families make nations Christians, and nations make continents Christians, and whole masses of mankind are brought under the sanctifying and ennobling influence of a kingdom which comes not with observation, but changes hearts, that thus it may elevate and ennoble realms.

But let me not fail to add that this kingdom will one day come with observation. Our Lord speaks of it in the present tense, it cometh not now with observation; but he states, in the 24th verse, that one day it will come with observation. A day will be, then, when it ceases to be the light that gradually brightens to the perfect day, and flashes like the lightning that comes unexpectedly upon the careless and thoughtless wanderer. His reign now is in the hearts of saints; his presence now is at the door of sinners, pleading as a suppliant for admission. But when he comes like the lightning he will be no more the suppliant seeking admission to the heart, but the sovereign asserting his supremacy, and distinguishing his subjects from those that are rebellious, when he comes to be glorified in all them that believe. His second coming is described plainly as a coming with observation. "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven"—that is, with observation—"then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." And the Apostle says, "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord,

and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

It will thus come one day with great, irresistible observation, with outward show, with unexpected glory. But let us know that if we belong to the kingdom that cometh not with observation, we shall hail with shouts of welcome that kingdom when it comes in power and great glory. Are we the subjects of this inner kingdom now—are our hearts changed by its touch—are our affections consecrated by its presence—are we truly regenerate—are we made the sons of God, the subjects of the Great King, the heirs of Christ? If we be so, if we make sure of the influence of the kingdom in our inner life, we shall not be alarmed or surprised at that day when He that came in lowliness to suffer, and now seeks admission to every heart, shall come again in power and great glory to reign; for to them that look for him he will come the second time without sin unto salvation.

NOTE.—The example of the days of Lot is added here; and thereby the sanction of the Lord of truth given to another part of the sacred record, on which modern criticism has laid its unhallowed hands. [34] indicates a closer relationship than that of mere fellow-workmen, and sets forth the division of even families in that day. [37.] *ποῦ*, not "how?" (Kinnoel); but literal, "where shall this happen?" The disciples know not the universality of this which the Lord is announcing to them, and which his dark and awful saying proclaims. Observe, there is not a word, except so far as the greater coming includes the lesser, in all this, of the destruction of Jerusalem. The future *παρουσία* of the Lord is the only subject, and thus it is an entirely distinct discourse from that in Matt. xxiv., or our chap. xxi.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE IMPORTUNATE WIDOW—FAITH AT THE ADVENT—THE PHARISEE
AND PUBLICAN—INFANTS BROUGHT TO JESUS—THE YOUNG RULER—
WEALTH—FORSAKING ALL.

THE first parable recorded in the chapter I have read is commonly called the parable of the importunate widow, or of her that would not be satisfied without having granted to her those things which she so persistently, so earnestly and so successfully sought. The object of it is to illustrate the value of persistency in prayer, it is an argument from the less to the greater: if a human judge could thus be moved by the persistency of a petitioner he despised, how much more will God accept the prayers of a persistent petitioner whom he loves, and for whom he gave his own Son to die? We are not to suppose that God is to be overcome simply by importunity, or that much speaking is much eloquence in prayer. It does not teach this. All that the parable teaches us is, that we are not to be satisfied with asking once or twice, but to ask until we obtain. God's promise is absolute that he will hear prayer, but how often you shall pray he has not revealed to you. He asks your ceaseless dependence on him, your ceaseless prayer to him; and sooner or later—not too soon, to make you proud, nor too late, to let you despair—he will grant you those things which you earnestly and importunately asked of him.

Now this unjust judge said, "Though I fear not God"—have no religion—"nor regard man,"—care not for justice, but simply look for my stipend for the duties that I am appointed to discharge; yet because this widow, to whom I have no liking, but the reverse, troubles me day after day, "I will avenge her,"—that is, I will judge that cause that she submits to me,— "lest by her continual coming she weary me;" it is literally, "lest she smite me on the face,"—it is the strongest expression for intolerable importunity. Jesus said, "Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge"—that is, right the wrongs, defend the cause, and grant the requests of—"his own elect"—or Christian people—"which cry day and night unto him," though he seem to us, who are no judges of the times and the seasons, to bear very long with them? "I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh,"—that is, his second advent,— "shall he find faith on the earth?" There are two interpretations of this text. One is, Shall he find faith—that is, Christianity—upon the earth at all? Will not the earth be exhausted of its religion—the fruit become sere, and dry, and dead? And the other interpretation, which looks the more probable, is, Shall he find faith in this the efficacy of prayer, when he comes again to judge the earth? Men, fearing that God has forgotten them, will cease to pray; and ceasing to pray they will fail to obtain the blessings and the mercies that they need. But certainly, in whatever light you regard it, every prophecy of the close of this dispensation and the dawn of the commencement of another, leads us to suppose that whilst God's people will exist upon the earth, they will be

reduced to very small numbers, and the great and overwhelming majority of mankind will be asking in scorn, "Where is the promise of his advent? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were. Let us eat, drink, and be merry." Just as if there were no God in heaven, and no judgment known upon the earth.

He then spoke "this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves." I do not think that this was spoken to the Pharisees: if it had been spoken to them it would have exasperated them, and we should have had their reply to it; but it was spoken to men that justified themselves, and thought they were really righteous, because of their ceremonial exactitude, when they were not so at all. "Two men went up into the temple to pray." That was good; their going to church was a good thing, but not all. Their going to church to pray was still better than to go to church to hear sermons. A Romanist says—"I go to mass;" some Protestant Christians say, "We are going to pray;" and a great many others say, "We are going to hear a sermon." Now it ought neither to be the second nor the last. We ought neither to be a praying Church exclusively nor a preaching Church exclusively; but prayer and preaching, the one the nutriment and the refreshment of the other. We go to church, therefore, not simply to hear a minister preach, but to bow the knee and seek blessings from the God who has them to bestow. We ought not so much, therefore, to let *sittings* in the church as to let *kneelings* in the church: there should be places for the knee to kneel, there are necessities and wants that every heart has to ask of Him who has promised graciously to bestow them.

Of these two men one was a Pharisee,—of a proud and contemptuous sect; and the other was a Publican, or a tax-gatherer appointed by the Romans to collect the tribute. The expression used to denote the difference between the two is very remarkable. It is said that “the Pharisee stood and prayed;” and that “the Publican, standing afar off.” I have not the slightest doubt that the strict meaning of this expression is that the Pharisee *sat* and prayed, and that the Publican stood and prayed. The Greek word descriptive of the Pharisee means properly, composing himself—arranging and composing his posture, as a painter would make a person sitting for his likeness compose himself, in order to sketch him truly; or as a person wishing to be admired would adjust his robes, and take up the most elegant and impressive position. That is the meaning of the Greek word,—the Pharisee composed himself into a position of dignity, of grandeur, of pretence. But it is a totally different word that is used for the Publican. The Publican standing, literally standing, on his feet; the attitude of one that felt his great unworthiness, and sought mercy and grace to forgive him.

Well now, the Pharisee, after having adjusted himself to pray as became a great ecclesiastic, as we might say, a cardinal in the church, said, “God, I thank thee.” He begins, not like a sinner, first seeking mercy; but like one who had need of none, first giving thanks. It was right to thank God; it was wrong to omit to pray to God. He gave a eucharistic offering like Cain, without previously pleading the expiatory sacrifice, like Abel. “God, I thank thee”—but then his thanks were mingled with the most contemptuous pride—“I thank thee,” not that thou hast enriched me, that thou hast blessed

me; but "I thank thee that I am not as other men are,"—as if he were a choice specimen of humanity; one not polluted by its taint, or precipitated into its ruin,—“I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers,”—and all this might be quite true,—“or even as *this* Publican,”—*i. e.* as this contemptible, mean, ungodly Publican. How true is it that they that regard themselves as righteous despise others—“Stand aside; I am holier than thou!” And secondly, he says, I am not only free from flagrant wickedness; which was so far good, and a Pharisee may be that; but I also attend to every ceremonial observance, “I fast twice in the week,”—which was once more than the Law required. I give tithes, too, not of certain things, as the Law requires—but, “I give tithes of all that I possess.” And therefore the inference is, What a beautiful specimen am I of a Jew! What a noble ecclesiastic am I! How worthy are Pharisees that sit in Moses’ seat; how justly should they make broad their phylacteries; how truly should they refuse to descend and stand upon the same dead level with these coarse, vulgar Publicans! He was a thorough high Churchman; the Publican was a poor, mean contemptible creature that he could not think would be accepted of the same God, or admitted into the same heaven.

The Publican, however, true to his character, stood afar off; no composure of his robes, but at a great distance from the altar and from the holy place; and he “would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven,” because conscious of his sins, “but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful”—be merciful by the medium of atonement—“God be merciful to me a

sinner." If that Pharisee be a righteous man, I do not venture to judge him; but I am sure that of the two I am sinful—be merciful to me the sinful one. Our Lord says, "I tell you, this man"—the Publican—"went down to his house justified." The word *rather* which follows is in italics in the Bible, and is not in the original—went down justified, and the other not justified at all. The one sought pardon by Christ, justification by his righteousness, and he got it: the other sought justification by his own merits, and an entrance into heaven in virtue of his own doings, and he did not get it. And therefore "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The next incident in this combination of incidents is that parents—in all probability the mothers, who always feel deepest for the well-being of their offspring; and I know not a more touching or beautiful spectacle than this—brought their children, literally translated, their infants. It is not the word which we render "little boys;" but which means "babes at the breast," nursed in the bosom. They brought their infants to Jesus, asking him that he would only touch them; that thus, not their physical diseases, of which they had none, might be removed; but that they might have the stamp and impress of his image, and be thus the heirs of glory. "And when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them." How much less merciful is man than the blessed Master; how justly,—“Let me not fall into the hands even of an apostle, but into the hands of Christ.” If Christ had no more mercy than his people are disposed to have to their brethren of mankind, it would fare very ill with the best of us. "Jesus called them unto him, and

said, Suffer little children,"—that is, I command that little children come unto me, and on no account dare to forbid them; for to do so is to violate the very law of my heavenly kingdom; for such infants constitute the majority of the heavenly inhabitants that praise my Father beside the throne for ever and for ever. I think I have noticed before, that I never can admit the idea that this means, of such like character. This he does say, and he says it in the next verse; but he does not say so here. The Greek word means, "for of such very persons, of such very infants, is the kingdom of heaven,"—that is, the majority. I need not tell you how easy it is to explain this. The fact is notorious that half the human race die before seven years of age. It is a very melancholy fact; we never can suppose that God meant this to have been so—that half the buds that burst into birth should be blasted in the course of a very few years; that another large section of the remaining half should perish from the great English disease, pining consumption, by one-and-twenty, or four-and-twenty; that only one here and one there should reach seventy, and that so very few should arrive at the proper limit of life—one hundred and twenty. I say, this is strange; it is only explicable upon the hypothesis that a great wasting curse has fallen upon the world, and that an atmosphere once serene, pure, bright, and full of vitality, is tainted and corrupted by man's transgressions. If then it be true that half the human family die in infancy; and if it be also true, as I have proved, (and I have published what I proved,) that all infants, baptized or unbaptized, Churchmen or Dissenters' infants, unbelievers' or heathen's infants, infidels' or atheists' infants—that all children dying in

infancy, before seven, eight, or nine years of age—that is, before responsibility—are admitted instantly into glory,—if that be true, then half the human race is saved every day; and the grandest choirs in the realms of glory will be babes that were gathered from earth before they were largely contaminated with its pollution, washed in atoning blood, clothed in the righteousness of the Lamb, and now in the full majority of everlasting youth, praising him that redeemed them, and waiting for the day when that most painful and sorrowful of all spectacles, a dead infant's dust, shall hear the sound of the last trumpet, and so shall soul and body be for ever with the Lord. I know nothing, therefore, more comforting to a parent than this—that her dead infants have been specially favoured; they have been spared a long life of trial, of tears, of temptation and of sorrow; and they have been admitted to the crown without the martyrdom, to the reward without the struggle, to the victory without the fight. Of such infants consist a majority of the inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven! Blessed thought! thanks be to God that where sin has made its greatest havoc grace is reaping its noblest and its most majestic trophies. And while I am upon this subject, I may ask, as I have done before, not in the spirit of controversy, of our Baptist brethren, if such be present, If babes are thus admitted by Christ into heaven, does it seem very wrong, very unnatural, very inconsistent to your honest judgments, that they should be presented at the baptismal font to be blessed by the prayers, and consecrated by the thanksgivings of a Christian congregation? It seems to me that if babes were not to be baptized, a positive prohibition would have been given; but the

fact that there is no such prohibition is to my mind the strongest presumption that it is right. If these babes be fit for the Master's presence, why unfit for the minister's? If these babes have, when they die, their regeneration that fits them for heaven, why may they not receive in the flesh the sprinkling with water that makes them outward members of the visible Church of the Lord Jesus Christ? And here I may make a very useful remark. Parents whose babes are dying have sometimes said to me, "Will you come and baptize my child?" I rejoice to go; but I take care to explain this; "If the babe be dying, it has got a better baptism than I can give it. If it live, baptism is the proper thing; for baptism presupposes life, never presupposes death. Baptism is for the church militant; the inner baptism is for the church triumphant; and if your babe be dying it needs not baptism; it is not going to enter the church militant; it has undergone the inward regeneration, to fit it for the church triumphant." But, at the same time, if it can give peace to a parent's mind, it is quite right, it is very beautiful, it is very proper that the babe who has been accepted of God should, by God's own ordinance, be signed and sealed upon earth by the rite of baptism.

We read next, that "a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "There is none good but God." That does not mean that Jesus repudiated being God; but the very reverse. This ruler had evidently a wrong impression of good; he did not understand what it was. He said, "All these"—the commandments—"have I kept from my youth up." Then Christ said, If I be God, why do you not recognise me as the Son of God,

and the Lord of glory? When he had said that he had kept all, Jesus said, Then I will put you to the test; if I be God—if I have the authority that you recognise, then this is my commandment—"Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." That tested his adhesion. The meaning of obedience to a law is not so much obedience to certain rescripts, but recognition of a sovereign and royal authority. We obey the law not because it is right, but because it is God's authority expressed in words. So Jesus said to this young man, "Follow me,"—because I am the Lawgiver. You say you have kept all the law from your youth up. Then take the law in what it should be—recognition of the Lawgiver. Here is my law—"Follow me." And he would not do it; for the obvious reason, that he was very rich.

Then Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?" Jesus answered, It is quite possible; for "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." But you say, Is wealth a sin? Not at all; it is no more sin to be rich than to be poor. The sin lies in the tenacity with which you hold it, and the amount of space that what you have occupies in your mind.

Hence a man with a hundred pounds in a savings bank may be in the moral sense of the word a richer man than he who has ten thousand pounds in the funds or in the Bank of England. It is not the amount that makes the wealth, but the amount of influence that the wealth which you have exercises upon you.

Peter then said, boasting—human nature, ever prone thus to break out—“Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.” Jesus said, Well, if it be so, “there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

CHAPTER XVIII. 35—43.

THE BLIND BEGGAR HEARS OF CHRIST'S APPROACH—HIS APPEAL—
CHRIST HEARS—QUESTIONS THE BLIND MAN—THE CURE, AND ITS
TEACHINGS—SPIRITUAL DARKNESS.

A VERY beautiful incident closes this chapter. "And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

The man that sat by the wayside, called by another evangelist Bartimæus, was plainly blind. Jesus, when he saw him, or rather when his attention was called to him, explained nothing about the origin of his blindness, alluded not even in word to the cause of that blindness—whether it had been moral or otherwise—

but regarding his blindness as his misfortune, he addressed himself, immediately he was asked, to his cure. The blindness of this poor man was aggravated by his poverty: he sat, it is said, by the wayside, begging. However sanctified to a Christian, one affliction is often the parent of another. It is a proverb almost, "Trouble never comes single." He was not only blind, but poor. His blindness necessitated his begging. There was no sin in his blindness; there was no shame in his begging. The one was the visitation of God; the other was his misfortune: both to be pitied, and for neither was the poor man to be blamed.

That morning he took his accustomed seat by the wayside, where he had sat probably many a year, not expecting any extraordinary blessing,—not certain that he should obtain the ordinary alms. He had often asked aid of the crowd—he had often begged them to relieve his personal necessities; he never thought of asking the most illustrious Pharisee or the most gifted Rabbis of Israel to open his blind eyes, and pour upon the eyeballs even present, still less celestial light. But this day he hears the tread of many feet,—shouts upon the streets as of a mighty crowd; some speaking in praise, others probably in censure of Jesus of Nazareth, who assumed to be what the blind man really believed him to be,—the Messiah, the Light to lighten the Gentiles, the great Prophet that should come into the world.

The ears of the blind are often most acute. It is one of those beautiful incidental traits of God's beneficence to man, that when one sense is destroyed, another sense seems to supply the defect by becoming extraordinarily acute and sensitive. Hence you will

find that blind men have generally an exquisite sense of hearing; and those that have been both deaf and blind have had some compensatory gift in the exquisite sensibility of their touch. This blind man heard the tramp of many feet, listened to the voices that rose from the tumultuous assembly; and he thought that there might be in him, whom having not seen he loved, and in whom, though he saw him not, yet, believing, he rejoiced—he thought that in him there might be an echo to his appeal, in his heart sympathy with his misfortune; and he determined, though he had no merit, or claim upon his sympathy, that if he lost the benefit he needed, it should not be lost for want of earnest and strenuous asking; he therefore called out as he heard Jesus pass by, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” The crowd, we read, and probably the disciples themselves, protested against his rude and boisterous appeal to their beloved Master. Perhaps they thought he was too contemptible to deserve notice; or, to take a more charitable view of their conduct, perhaps they thought that Jesus had too many burdens upon his spirit, too many loads upon his shoulders, to have added to these any others; and therefore, to spare the Master that they loved, they rebuked the blind man as he cried, and insisted that he should hold his peace. But he felt the opportunity was too precious; if lost that moment, it might be lost for ever; he felt, if he lost the tide, he could not set sail; if he lost the opportunity, he could have no means of restoration; and therefore, though he had lost his sight, he gave good evidence that he had not lost his tongue,—he cried the more, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”

It is a remarkable fact, that the Master is always more sympathetic than the disciple. How often have the disciples repelled the want that the blessed Master forthwith supplied! How true is it that man feels less for the wrongs and sympathises less with the sufferings of man than God does! Jesus, whose ear heard that loud voice,—so earnest, so fervent,—was arrested by it, turned round, and stood still, it is said. Prayer once arrested the sun in the valley of Ajalon in his meridian march; and this blind man's petition, by its fervour, arrested the Sun of Righteousness, who stood still in Palestine, with healing under his wings. The miracle that Joshua did was an expression of mighty power; the miracle that was wrought in answer to fervent prayer was greater still; for it was the evidence of mighty mercy, yea, infinite compassion. Jesus stood still; and then, without passing a censure upon the disciples that rebuked the blind man, he told those very disciples to bring the blind man to him. How gently does Christ rebuke—without harsh words he conveys the most penetrating, and gives in gentle words the most salutary rebuke. He bids the very men that rebuked the blind man for his importunity bring that blind man to him! His making the objectors to the cure the very instruments of accomplishing it, was at once the evidence of the presence of the wisdom of God, by conveying a rebuke that was sanctified to those who had tried to interpose their shadow, their influence, and their persons between the victim of deep misery and the Giver of all good things.

Jesus, when he was brought to him, asks him, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Jesus did not need to know for we are told in another Gospel that

he needed not to be told what was in man; he knew what that blind man wanted just as well as the blind man knew himself. Then why should he ask the question? Just to let him hear the blind man express his want in his own language. "Behold! he prays," is a spectacle the brightest that flashes from earth to heaven. He knows what you and I want far better than we know ourselves; and yet he bids us tell him what we want. He will give to prayer what he will not give without prayer; and though he knows our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking, yet it is a law just as fixed as rising and setting suns, as spring and summer, and seed-time and winter, that you must ask in order to obtain, that you must seek in order to find, that you must knock in order that it may be opened. The very asking humbles, not degrades the petitioner, and exalts him to whom the petition is addressed.

The blind man immediately asked him to supply that which he felt to be his greatest calamity. And here we have an instance of temporal blessings sought, and temporal blessings instantly bestowed. The fact is, prayer means, not first trying to find out what is best for us, or most conducive to the glory of God; but prayer means seeking the removal of the load that is heaviest, supply for the want that is deepest, begging mercy where mercy can be best and most effectually applied. It was proper for him, therefore, and it is dutiful and right for all to go to the Lord and tell him the want that you feel the most, whatever that want may be, and ask God to supply it; and he has promised that he will do so. It is his prerogative to give when, where, and how he pleases; it is your privilege to unbosom your own deep wants, and tell him all you feel, and ask him to supply all you need.

The blind man, therefore, with the instinctive sagacity of human nature, called out, "My want—the one I feel most—the one that makes me beg, that unfits me for all that I would do—is, that I am blind. My prayer is therefore, Lord, that I may receive my sight." The petition was no sooner addressed than Jesus answered, "Receive thy sight,"—not thine earnestness hath saved thee, not thy love hath saved thee, not thy persistence hath saved thee; but that faith which recognised in the Man of sorrow the Messiah of Israel—"thy faith hath saved thee."

The blind man instantly arose, we are told, and "followed Jesus, glorifying God." The sense of gratitude he felt for the transcendent mercy he had received, bound him to the Giver with cords that could not be broken. He rose and followed Jesus, conscious of a perfect cure; and giving glory, not to some lucky incident, not to some medicine, but to Jesus, who had said, "Receive thy sight," and instantly his eyes were opened.

Now mark the nature of this miracle that we have read. First, the miracle bears upon it all the impress of a Divine character. The object on whom it was performed was not some recluse, some fanatic nun, or macerated and miserable monk, in a convent, whom only a few could see; but it was a wayside beggar. Everybody knew him to be a blind man for years; every tradesman going to his shop, every merchant to his counting-house, every rabbi to his synagogue, every priest to his temple, had seen the blind man, knew that he was blind. There was the most extensive proof of his misfortune; and every man could now see that this public and well-known character had recovered the use of his sight, and been delivered from darkness to light.

There could have been no collusion. I am only showing how impossible it is to account for this except on the ground that it was a divine act. There could have been no collusion—Jesus did not know the blind man; he had never observed him before. Jesus was passing by on his errands of mercy and beneficence, when a loud voice arrested his attention, and, as the world would say, accidentally, but it was really not an accident, he heard the blind man's voice amid the tumult of the crowd. And thus it is clear that there could have been no preconcerted arrangement, no plan by which he could pretend the miracle was done when no such thing had been performed.

And, in the next place, the miracle was done in the midst, not of friends, ready to believe very little to be very splendid; but in the midst of his foes—some that scoffed at it, others that derided him, others that regarded him as an impostor. This miracle was done in the view of all; his friends and his foes equally attested the exercise of his power, and the accomplishment of the great result for which that power was put forth.

You will notice, in the next place, another very striking proof of its divine origin is that, as in all the miracles of Jesus, we know not which most to admire—the great power, or the great beneficence. If Satan were permitted to do a supernatural thing upon the earth, there would be one brand on it unmistakeable—it would not be beneficent; it would be no contribution to the moral, the physical, the present or the everlasting well-being of man. Out of a bad fountain good waters cannot flow; on a bad tree good fruit cannot grow; Satan's kingdom never will be divided against

itself. It is, therefore, one of the tests of a miracle that comes from above, that the great power of omnipotence embosoms in it the benevolence and beneficence of infinite love. You will see, therefore, that all the miracles of Jesus, while the evidence of omnipotent power in the hand that wrought them, were also proofs of inexhaustible beneficence in the heart that originated them.

And, in the last place, you will notice in this miracle, what is also in all the miracles of Jesus—its redemptive character. Every miracle of Jesus was putting nature back again, or, if you like, forward, to its true and original condition. All his miracles were the removal of blindness, or deliverance from leprosy or demoniac possession or death, or unstopping the ears of the deaf, or turning water into wine, or hushing the raging waves; every miracle that he did was corrective of the wrongs that sin had superinduced, and in its place a foretaste of that restoration of all things to their primal glory, beauty, and perfection, when a second Paradise shall close the world, nobler and grander than that with which it opened. Hence all the miracles of Christ were essentially restorative of man to his former condition, or rather to that new condition in which he will be when this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. All these then are the signs and the characteristics of miracles from God. If Satan shall be permitted, as I think he will before this dispensation closes, to do *super*, or rather *infra*-natural deeds upon the earth, they will not be fabulous or absurd—something like the pretensions of spirit rapping and table turning, than which I cannot conceive any greater nonsense upon earth—but they will

have such evidences of the malignancy of the demon, that there will be no mistake as to their origin. But a miracle must be so plain that there can be no mistake about it, or it is no miracle at all; unless it is demonstrably a miracle, it is a natural phenomenon. The miracles that Jesus did were difficulties to those that beheld them in one respect. They said, They are either from God or they are from the devil; but it is quite evident that they are not from man. But many of the modern miracles are so childish, so absurd, that the difficulty is, not whether they be from God or from the devil, but whether they be miracles at all. And, therefore, I have wondered that people should perplex their heads so much about tables—that clergymen should be guilty of such absurdities as I have read in pamphlets, trying to make that a miracle which is simply curious—for I have no doubt that what many think to be a miracle is merely the result of natural causes; we may be on the eve of a scientific discovery, something like electricity; but I do protest that all I have seen relative to this subject only makes me amazed at that thirst for miracles which makes men call that a miracle which seems to me to be excelled by the feats of jugglers done to amuse children in a public assembly.

But the miracles in the Bible are so palpable, so irresistibly splendid, that you cannot deny that they are miracles. You may say they are from Satan or from God; but you cannot deny that they are miracles, for to assert this is to deny the plain testimony of your senses.

Now, having seen the miracle performed upon the blind man, let me notice, first, we are the victims of a blindness worse than his. His was physical, and of

temporary duration; ours is moral, and unless removed will last for ever. This is surely not an empty form of speech, without meaning—"whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded." And again, "They need to be turned from darkness unto light." Our horizon was lessened physically when we fell; our horizon was lessened morally also when we fell. Man in Paradise had a larger horizon, and his eye could take in a wider and a broader scope; and man's moral eye before it fell could see beauty where it can now see none, and wisdom where it now sees only foolishness; and God in all, where man can see no trace of his presence now. The first thing that we need is that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened. And, secondly, this blind man's earnest cry brought him relief from Him who is able to give it. Why should we doubt, with all the promises and encouragements of Scripture, that our cry, equally earnest and persistent, addressed to the same mighty Saviour, will also end in his giving what he has to give, and has promised to give—his Holy Spirit to lead us to the knowledge and the enjoyment of all truth?

When we have our blindness removed, the eyes of our understanding opened, and light poured into the chambers of our mind, let us, like this blind man, rise up and give the glory to God, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Let us give the glory to the great Physician, let us praise the Sun of light and life.

If we have received such blessings, let us do, as I doubt not the blind man did, though there is no record of it here—go and tell others. We cannot open blind minds, but we can tell them by whom they can be opened. We cannot change the heart, but we can tell

them by whom it can be changed. We cannot give grace, but we can show the Fountain of grace. We cannot of ourselves bestow the righteousness, but we can lead others to ask with anxious hearts, "How shall I be just before God?" The Saviour is nearer to us than he was to Bartimæus; as much on our streets as he was upon the streets of Jerusalem; as accessible to the worst, to the vilest, to the most wicked, as he was to that blind man. We may tell all that he is near—his ear ever open, his heart ever overflowing with sympathy, and his hand never weary in doing good.

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

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

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

Ye that have eyes and cannot see,
In darkness and in misery,
Recal those mighty voices three—
Ἰησοῦ, ἐλέησόν με
Θάρσει, ἐγείραι Ἰταγε,
Ἢ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε.

NOTE.—[9—14.] This parable is not spoken to the Pharisees, (for the Lord would not in their presence have chosen a Pharisee as an example,) nor concerning the Pharisees, (for then it would have been no parable,) but to the people; and some among them (then and always) who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised other men. This parable describes an everyday occurrence; the parabolic character is given by the concurrence and grouping of the two, and by the fact that each of these represents psychologically a class of persons. [9.] $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma$, "to," not "concerning:" it was concerning them, it is true; but this word expresses that it was spoken to them. The usage of $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma$ in ver. 1 is no example for the sense "concerning," for it is not there so used of persons, but with a neuter article and infinitive; $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\pi\epsilon\ \pi\rho\delta\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \pi\alpha\rho.$ is too general a phrase to allow of any other interpretation than the ordinary one where the context will bear it. $\pi\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\theta.$ $\epsilon\phi'$ $\epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau.$ not "were persuaded of themselves," as Crosswell renders; but as E. V.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER XIX.

ZACCHEUS' ANXIETY TO SEE CHRIST—PHARISEES' INVECTIVE AGAINST JESUS—HOSPITALITY—THE CONFESSION OF ZACCHEUS—THE PARABLE OF THE NOBLEMAN AND HIS SERVANTS—RESPONSIBILITY—JESUS SEATED ON A COLT—JESUS WEEPS—JERUSALEM—ITS FALL—ITS RELICS.

It occurred, in the commencement of the chapter we have read, that Jesus, in the course of his wanderings and errands of mercy and beneficence, passed through the town of Jericho; and there it happened, as the world would say, a chief Publican—for that is the proper rendering—or a distinguished Publican, one celebrated for his position—named Zaccheus, who was very rich, having heard of the fame of Jesus, wished to see him. He sought to see Jesus in order to discern what sort of a man he was, rather than for a nobler end; his fame having preceded him to Jericho. But because he was a very diminutive person, of very little stature, and was unable to see in consequence of the vast crowd that had gathered round the Saviour,—some thinking of the miracles that he did, others, like Zaccheus himself, full of curiosity to see one who had made so deep and powerful an impression upon the public mind,—he climbed up a tree in order to see him. The whole desire of Zaccheus was to gratify his curiosity; for no other reason he was anxious to see Jesus. Better come

on any ground than not at all. We are rejoiced to see that one that came from curiosity went away in possession of the kingdom of heaven. Many a one comes to the house of God out of curiosity who goes away from it impressed with the things that belong to his everlasting peace. One is glad if persons come to the house of prayer and listen to the preaching of the Gospel from good motives; but one should also not be unthankful if others come from any motives. Some that come to scoff may go away to pray. Some that come to gratify a mere itching curiosity may go away not only impressed themselves, but, like the woman of Samaria, to bid others, "Come and see one who told me all things—is not this the Christ that should come into the world?"

When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him. The little Zaccheus could not see Christ, but Christ could see him. Jesus sees them that see not him; looks upon us before we look up to him; calls us first, and then we answer; moves towards us, and responsively, by his grace, we move towards him. He then said unto him, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down"—from the sycamore or the fig-tree, up which he had climbed in order, from that elevated position, to get a view of the Lord of glory—"come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." How startling to the Publican! I, the Lord of glory, but the despised Nazarene among mankind—I, whom you have come to see, so strong in your curiosity, am come this day for the very purpose of, not indeed gratifying your curiosity, but consecrating your household; for I am come to abide at thy house. How often does God do more for us than we ask, always vastly more than we expect, exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think!

“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.” It was too good to put off. He did not say, “I dare not entertain so illustrious a visitor.” “It is of thy goodness that thou hast offered; it is my duty to accept; and, therefore, I receive thee joyfully.”

But how did the people look upon this? The Publican was the Roman tax-gatherer. Zaccheus, however, who was a chief one, was a Jew; the majority were Gentiles or Romans; and Zaccheus, being a Publican, was hated and detested, and held in very great disrepute by not the more excellent, but the more sanctimonious Pharisees. For the Pharisees were worse than the Publicans, inasmuch as the Publicans made no profession of religion—which, of course, is bad enough; but the Pharisees made a profession of religion in order to conceal the crimes they perpetrated—the plunder of the widow and the orphan, in which they indulged, and the unjust and evil habits by which they were almost universally branded. When they saw it, they were shocked; in fact they were far more shocked at violating a rubric than breaking a moral law. They were far more pleased—at least, they professed it—with Jesus for observing some ceremonial rite, than at his exercising goodness and mercy. And, therefore, they exclaimed in indignation — they murmured—saying, “That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.” Jesus did eat and drink with Publicans and sinners; but why? He did not go to enjoy their hospitality only, but to enlighten their minds and save their souls. It is right to accept hospitality from any when that hospitality is needed; it is wrong to say to the worst, “Stand aside; I am holier than thou.” But it is our duty, wherever we go, not to conceal our character; not to shrink from responsibility; but to remember that everywhere

and at all times, we are a royal priesthood, the children of Abraham, the representatives of Christ, by whose conduct the world will judge what Christ is, and what Christianity means. Let us therefore, by all means, accept the hospitality of all; but let us never merge in the least degree our Christian character. I do not think it would be right if Christians were to retire completely from the world. Those that cannot bear its trials ought to retreat from it; but those who have the grace to remain steadfast and strong ought, to the utmost of their ability, to meet the world, but in meeting it to show themselves blessings and benefactors to it.

“Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” These were not probably the first words that he used; the Bible does not give the whole dialogue, it gives snatches of it, the more pointed, excellent, and suggestive. These words of Zaccheus would seem to have been the result of an impression made upon his heart by the words of Jesus; and nothing could be more decisive evidence of the influence of God’s grace than this renunciation of the evil, and resolution to do what was good. Suppose that Zaccheus had five hundred pounds; then he says, “The half I give to the poor”—that is, two hundred and fifty. Suppose he had taken fifty pounds in the course of his extortions,—not at all unlikely, for the Publicans were extortioners and unjust,—from some man by false accusation, then he says, “I restore him fourfold:” that would be two hundred. Two hundred and fifty that he gives to the poor, and two hundred he restores to him he had unjustly treated, would make in all four hundred and fifty pounds: he had thus fifty

pounds left for himself. In other words, he was prepared to sacrifice all that he had in order to do what became him as a witness before God, and as just towards his fellow-men. Wherever there is the grace of God, there will be an instinctive desire to do what is just. If you owe anything to any man, you are to do the utmost to pay it; if you can pay and do not, it is criminal; if you cannot pay, it is your misfortune. In the first case it is guilt, in the second case it is reason for penitence, for regret, and humility.

“Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house”—that is, the knowledge of it, the enjoyment of it, the offer of it, to you and to all that are within your house. And then he says, “Forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham,”—a son by faith, a son by lineal descent, being a Jew,—“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Then he speaks a parable to them. Certain persons, as he came near to Jerusalem, thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear; that is, they expected that the kingdom of God, in its future glory, should then and at that time appear upon the earth. The expectation of the Jew that the kingdom of God should be in glory was a right one; but he overlooked the prior phasis of that kingdom—that it should be first in sorrow, with a cross; then in glory, with a crown. The Jew at this day looks for Christ's glorious kingdom, but he cannot accept Christ in his humility. The true Christian accepts Christ on the cross, the ground of his faith; and prays for Christ with the crown, the object of his hope. Now, these Pharisees and Jews very justly expected that the kingdom should appear, but they expected, from chronological error, that it would

appear at that time. Jesus, therefore, shows them that there was to be a long intervening period, during which duties were to be done, improvements to be made, responsibility to be felt; and at the coming of the Son of man in glory all should be finished and complete. He therefore says, "A certain nobleman went into a far country"—that is, heaven,—“to receive for himself a kingdom”—that is, the inheritance of this world,—“and to return.” Christ is to come again in his kingdom and glory. Now then, “he called his ten servants”—ten, a mere arbitrary number,—and delivered to them ten sums of money, called in our version pounds—or twelve and a half ounces of silver, equal to somewhere about three or four pounds. “And he said unto them, Occupy”—make the best use of this—“till I come.” There is not an individual I address that has not a talent of some sort committed to him; and that talent not to be used for his own aggrandisement only, but for the glory of the Giver, and the moral and spiritual well-being of all with whom he is connected. It is said to every one, “Occupy till I come;” and he that makes not use of the gift that he has, would make a worse use if possible of the gifts that he desires. God will not give great gifts to those that make not good use of the little gifts that they have. We are accountable to him, not for what we have not, but for that which we have. “But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us,”—we will not obey his laws; we prefer our own prejudices, passions, appetites, indulgences, and desires, and we will not obey him.

“It came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these ser-

vants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds,"—that is, I have made use of it, I have turned it to account. Not, *I have* gained ten pounds—for mark how completely each detaches from himself the idea of merit; but, "*Thy* pound hath gained ten pounds." If it has increased, it has not been owing to my industry, though it may be real, but owing to thy gracious blessing. "And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities." The first had opportunities that the second had not; but the second used the opportunities he had, just as diligently as the first used the opportunities that he had. We are not accountable for discharging duties that belong to a loftier sphere, or the ten pound sphere; but we are responsible for discharging the duties that belong to the sphere in which we live, whether it be the five pound or the one pound.

"And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow;" and, therefore, I present it to thee just as it was, neither increased nor diminished. And his master said to him, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." If you knew that I was so strict, why did you not turn that which I entrusted to you to the best account? If you knew that

I was such an exactor, why did you not put it into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury—that I might thus get the proper interest for it, and have it restored to me double, or treble, or perhaps tenfold? He had no answer to give; and therefore “the Lord said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound,”—take away the little gift that I gave him, and leave him naked, desolate, without one atom of merit or excellence of any sort; take from him all with which I originally invested him in Eden—all his pristine excellence, and glory, and perfection; increase the happiness of those that have appreciated my gifts; consign to the depths of misery, and poverty, and woe, those that have, not abused them, but have misused them, or left them without the profit that they were fitted to produce. The whole guilt of this man was, not that he spent the pound in riotous living—that would have been bad,—it was not that he had used this pound for wicked and profane purposes; but it was that he just presented it as it was. What does that teach us? That a man who is a blank in the world is guilty—not so much, it is true, but still guilty—as he that is a bane in the world. The fact is, God will call to account the blanks as well as the banes; and men that have made no progress as well as those that have made a retrograde progress. Let us ask, then, “What are we doing with the gifts of his providence, with the grace of his Spirit? Are we really doing anything to promote his cause, to unfold his glory, to help to the knowledge of salvation those that are perishing for want of it? Are we building up ourselves on his name, increasing the means of our instruction, progress, and conformity to his image? Are we laying out a tithe

upon spiritual things of what we lay out upon the lust of the eye, the pride of life, and the love of this present world?" Recollect, the non-use of a gift, whatever that gift be, is criminal, as well as the abuse and the desecration of it.

We read next, that "when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany"—the town of Mary and her sister Martha—"at the mount called the mount of Olives," he called two of his disciples, and told them to go and find a colt that they should see, and bring it to him, that he might be seated on it, and ride to Jerusalem in majesty and triumph. There is an ancient prophecy, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." This was literally prophesied—it was literally fulfilled. "And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying," in the language of Psalm cxviii. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." The carping, cavilling, envious Pharisees began to murmur because the multitude, in a burst of tumultuous feeling, gave expression to the emotions of their hearts; but Jesus rebuked them, "and answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Nature would recognise her Maker, and the very stones of the earth become eloquent, if rational and responsible mankind should in their guilt be dumb.

But in the midst of all this majesty he wept. "When he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace;" literally,

“the vision of peace.” If thou, Jerusalem—the vision of peace—hadst only known the gift of peace, then it would have been well with thee. But thy sun is set, thine hour is passed away—they are hid from thine eyes; and the days are rapidly approaching when Titus and Vespasian will surround thee with their ramparts, and level thee to the ground, and leave not one stone upon another.” How literally has this prophecy been fulfilled! Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem forty years before that fall took place; and after the forty years had expired, it was literally ploughed up with the ploughshare—literally one stone was not left upon another; and when a subsequent attempt was made to rebuild it, it is recorded by heathen writers,—and sceptics prefer such authority generally to Christian evidence,—that subterranean fires burst forth from every part of the foundations, and arrested the workmen that the heathen and apostate Roman emperor had employed to raise Jerusalem, in order to frustrate the prediction of the crucified Nazarene, and to show that what Christ predicted could not, and should not, and would not come to pass. But what is the fact? The prediction was plain—it shall be trodden under foot till the times of the Gentiles come; and the modern Jerusalem is now no more like the ancient Jerusalem than the city in which we now dwell. There is not a building existing in Jerusalem that can be traced back seven or eight hundred years; and the only traces of its ancient magnificence and glory are a few huge stones, like those described by our Lord, or by the apostles, when they called his attention to the gigantic stones of the temple; a few, covered with names, and worn one of them with the kisses of pilgrim Rabbies who come from the ends

of the earth to see Jerusalem : this, the remaining stone, supposed to be the foundation of its majestic Temple, and thus fulfilling the beautiful sentiment of the Psalmist—"Her dust is dear ; thy saints take pleasure in her stones." Her dust to them is dear. And it will so remain ; Jerusalem will so remain till the Jews return—a majestic *exodus*, more glorious than that from Egypt to Canaan—rebuild Jerusalem, restore the Temple after the model of Ezekiel, and in the midst of its restoration see the King in his glory, look upon Him whom their sins pierced, and mourn every tribe apart, as one mourneth for his only-begotten. I believe that period is just at hand. The events of history, the movements of Europe, the tumults of the nations, the excitement of cabinets, the agitation of rulers, the mustering of armies, the drying up of the Euphrates, the interest felt in Palestine, the sympathy expressed and felt with the Jews,—all tell us that, within some few years, we shall see events that will startle the wide world. Who knows but it may be the very close of the dispensation that now is?

CHAPTER XIX. 10.

THE BLESSED ERRAND—EVIL CONSCIENCE INTERPRETS EVILLY—PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS—OBJECT OF HIS MISSION—PECULIARITY OF HIS OBJECT—ELECTION—MAN LOST AND RUINED—EVIDENCES ENDLESS SUFFERING.

In this chapter occurs a pregnant inference: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The errand on which the Saviour came into our world is almost the reverse of what we might have anticipated from a celestial visitant, if we went by what our own consciences suggested, or our fears would have predicted. Conscience is often the prophecy, it is always the interpreter of events. The tidings of a visitor from heaven heard by guilty humanity ought to have made, and no doubt it did make, thousands anticipate an avenger of the crimes of one against another, and of the sins of all against God. When men heard that one was coming from heaven to visit earth, all must have felt in some such way as the disciples in the storm did. Christ walked upon the waves to save them; but their guilty consciences interpreted his act into coming to overwhelm and to destroy them. But it says here—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save"—the opposite of what might have been expected. He is not come to condemn the world, but that the

world through him may be saved. He came into our world, not like the lightning, to scathe it; but like the gentle and expanding light of morn, to make it burst into green verdure, into beautiful blossom and fragrance. He came into our world, we are told, not the avenger of the Holy One, but our Advocate with the Father; not to hold an assize upon the guilty, to condemn them, but to open a healing spring of mercy, to which the worst were welcome, in which the vilest might be healed, and the guiltiest forgiven; for the Son of man is come into the world to seek and to save the lost, bringing with him a cross on which to die for our sins, not a sword wherewith to smite us.

We have here, first of all, clearly stated the pre-existence of the Son of God. To other texts we have recourse for proofs of his Deity; to this only we may have recourse for irresistible evidence of his pre-existence. "He is come into the world." This cannot be said except of one who existed before the world. He is come *into* the world to seek and to save that which was lost. He is not come from one country to another; but from the presence of God into the presence of man. God sent him, God gave him—the Son of man is *come*. Now let the Socinian explain as he may—he must admit, if such phraseology have any meaning at all, that Christ existed before he was born; and if he admit this, it remains with him to show what he was before he was born. The lowest section of that creed—or the strict Unitarians—hold that Christ was a mere human being, the same as we are; but the higher class, headed by Dr. Channing, seem to hold that he was pre-existent, or a glorious spirit beside the throne becoming incarnate. But I submit that the far more rational estimate—not

only more rational, but clearly Scriptural—is that he was not an angel incarnate in the flesh; for an angel had done nothing to deserve such punishment; and he could not make an expiation for us, who had no more “oil” or grace than he needed for himself. The more rational, because the Scriptural solution, is, that he was not an angel, but God manifest in the flesh, by whom the worlds were made, and without whom nothing was made that was made.

Observe, next, what was the object of his mission. Christ, pre-existing before the world was, is come into the world, we are told, to seek and to save that which is lost. Notice the vast difference between Christ’s aim as the Saviour of mankind, and the aim of most reformers when they undertake crusades for reforming the human race. The Saviour came, not to improve, as they propose; nor simply to ameliorate, as they conceive; but to regenerate, to renovate, to sanctify. The reformers of this world will bid the Pagan lay aside his ugly gods, and take more beautiful ones; and the drunkard lay aside his drunkenness, and become sober; and the thief his habits, and become honest; and so far they do well. Nobody doubts that such changes are boons to society. A drunkard made sober, a thief become honest, are unquestionably contributions to the happiness and well-being of society; and whenever persons profess the one or the other, it ought not to be caricatured, but to be hailed, and we ourselves thankful for it. But when Christ came, it was not to improve externally, or to beautify humanity in its outward developments; but to change the heart, and thus to ameliorate the condition; to cast into the spring the clement of healing; and thus to make pure its minutest

currents; to make the tree good at its core, and thus to guarantee that its blossoms should be fragrant, and its fruit should be good. Man stops with his reforming at the circumference, and tries to work inwards; Christ begins with his revolution at the centre, and works outwards. Man's plan is to give to man something that man has not; Christ's plan is to make man something that man is not. The first changes the bed, the other heals the patient. The first removes to a better climate, the latter gives man the life that enables him to live in any climate upon earth. Christ is come to seek and to save that which is lost.

How beautiful, too, and how suggestive is the expression, he is *come* to do it! Not *fetched* to do it, as if he himself never thought about it; not forced to do it, as if he had been reluctant; but he is *come*—the language of spontaneous and cheerful sacrifice. He is come from a height of glory to which human imagination never rose, to a depth of woe, misery, degradation, exhaustion of himself, which human imagination cannot conceive. He made the first movement towards us, or we had never made any movement towards him. It is folly, it is childish, to quibble and quarrel about election. If election means that God chose us before we chose him, then it is one of the plainest truths of the Bible. Christ came to us first, for we made no attempt to go to him; God chooses us first, before we ever think of choosing him. God loves us first, before we ever think of loving him. Grant me grace—the doctrine of grace, or God's gracious dispensation in calling us before we go to him,—and I have no quarrel about the word election. The fact is, election in the way we explain it is almost absurd. We call it election before the world began. But

with God there is no past, there is no present, there is no future. It is merely clothing a grand and magnificent thought in the imperfect drapery of human speech, and trying to make intelligible to man that which is the sovereign act of God.

We have next described in this verse the condition of man. He is come, first, to seek the lost; and secondly, to save the ruined. The first description of us is that we are lost. Our blessed Lord has given the imagery which exhausts the idea of loss. They are likened to lost sheep. The sheep has wandered from the fold; it has gone into the distant, bleak, inhospitable desert; it is exposed to the ravening wolf; liable, from its simplicity, or ignorance, or stupidity if you like, to fall over the edge of the precipice, and to be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. The dog finds his way back again to the kennel, the stranger may find his way again to his home; but the sheep that has wandered from the fold wanders further and further, till it perishes of hunger, or is devoured by the wolf—it never finds its way back to the fold. Such is lost humanity; such am I, such are you, by nature!

Or, it is like the lost coin, and is buried amid the dust; it is hidden by other rubbish; it is covered by the things of this world. Jesus lights the lamp, searches for it, finds it, restamps the impress and the image of its Maker, and restores it again to the currency of heaven. Or, we are like the lost prodigal; he has lost his home, he has taken with him all his share of his father's goods; he is gone into the far distant orphan land,—a land that has broken loose from its attraction to God, and its connexion with the great continent of heaven. He spends in that distant land all that he

received from his father; wastes it, not on his own comfort, but in riotous living; he begins to be in want. He is hungry, he feeds on husks; he concludes that man was made to live upon husks, and that he need not expect any better food. But these are insufficient; he asks his master to give him, and his master will not. But ancient reminiscences awake in his bosom; the dim shadows of his home flit before his eyes; he comes to the resolution, and, inspired by grace, and directed by the wisdom that inspired it, he resolves,—“I will arise, and go to my father.” He goes, weeping, wayworn, ragged, destitute, miserable; and would perish midway were it not that the father, seeing him afar off, rushes forth to meet him, falls upon his neck and kisses him, and bids him welcome home.

These are the three types under which your condition, however civilized, your souls, however intellectual and enlightened, are by nature—they are lost. There are various degrees of loss, various distances from God. Some are plunged in the jungles of heathenism; others are weltering in the lurid light of the Mahometan crescent; others again are groaning under the dark and overwhelming despotism of the Papacy; others are burying themselves under mere nominal religion; but all without exception, by nature, whatever be their gift, whatever their intellectual enlightenment, are morally and spiritually, and in reference to their ultimate condition before God, lost—lost irretrievably, hopelessly lost, as far as any movement is concerned that they themselves can make, or any interposition that man can originate. They are lost to earth—blanks and banes, not its blessings; they are lost to God, obstructions to his cause, shadows on his glory, silent when they should be eloquent,

and speaking when they should be silent. They are lost to heaven; there are mansions there that wait for them; there are choirs there that seek them; there is a hospitality there that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob partake of, and to which they would welcome them. And they are lost to themselves; wrecks floating on the waters, sources of misery to themselves, no real or beneficent blessing to their neighbours, their country, and their God. The language—"lost"—is most expressive; it is the description of our state, and the more closely we analyse it, the more thoroughly we shall see it is the just portrait of ourselves before grace has retouched and restored it. Let us ascertain the meaning of this word by comparison. What is man's original duty? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." Is this your case? Do you love God at all? Do you think of him? is he in your thoughts? Was he in your thoughts first this morning, latest last night? Was God in your thoughts behind the counter, in the counting-house, in the transactions of the world? I do not say that the evidence of your Christianity is, that you speak texts, or endorse texts upon your bills, or preach sermons in your shops, or talk theology in your counting-houses, or bid the world "Come, see a Christian;" but in your silence, in the tone, the temper, the attitude, the aspect, the inner experience of your hearts—that which stamps you before God, is it suggested to mankind that there is one here who has a spring of purity, of truth, of holiness, of generosity, of self-sacrifice, which the world is altogether stranger to?

But, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart. Can any of us say that we have done so for

a day—can we say that we have done so for a single hour? And if so, what evidence that we are lost?

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Read the history of nations. The most eloquent chapters of every history speak of war. “Happy,” said some one, “is that nation whose annals are dull,”—but the dulness of a nation’s annals is its peacefulness and its quiet. Read the history of any nation upon earth—the most enlightened or the most barbarous,—and war, and battle, and intestine feud, and royal quarrels, and plebeian passion are the too sure evidence that man is not what he should be. Shut the coloured and exaggerated page of romance; lay aside the beautiful but artificial novel; leave the scenes that are the results of the indirect and reflected lights of Christianity; visit the dens of infamy, the retreats of misery, the felons’ prison, the hospital of the sick, the scenes of sorrow that has no tears, and of suffering that has no hope; and then say if some great catastrophe has not overtaken humanity, and if Scripture be not below the mark, and not above it, when it describes our world as a lost and a ruined world. Who can believe that God originally made man to live as we find him in this great city? Who can believe that God made us to be sick, to be tempted, to be pained, to be bereaved, to be cold, and naked, and miserable? God never originally made us to be so; he did not mean us to be so: the evidence of this is not my conjecture, but the inspired record in Genesis. There we learn that he made man holy, happy, in his own image, the lord and the monarch of all the bright and beautiful things that he surveyed; and then this, the subsequent record of misery, and nakedness, and cold, and all the ills and aches that betide humanity, is

evidence of what has come by sin. Sin entered, and death by sin; and so death has passed upon all men. Is then the language of my text exaggerated when it describes humanity as "lost?"

Christ is come to seek such lost ones—to seek by his providence, and by his grace; and when he finds you, to lay the lost sheep on his shoulder, and carry it home rejoicing; to receive the lost prodigal to his bosom, and to bless him and make him happy again. Here we find what explains all that befalls us. That gnawing and corroding illness, wasting your frame like a moth, which no physician can prescribe a cure for, and time seems to aggravate, rather than to mitigate or allay—is Christ seeking you, a lost sinner. That exhaustion of means, that loss of property, that deprivation of all you look forward to as the beauty and the illumination of your latter days, and disappearing like a vision, leaving scarce a wreck behind it—is Christ seeking you, a lost one. That bereavement of the babe from its mother,—of the head of the house from the home,—that quenching of a star that alone was bright and beautiful in your horizon,—that bitter bereavement for which nature had no substitute, and that has made the threshold dark that was once so bright, and a voice silent that was once so eloquent, is—Christ seeking a lost one; waiting and saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if ye will open I will come in and sup with you, and you shall sup with me." There are no random blows in Providence, any more than accidental texts in the Bible. All that betides us is beneficent; what man calls accidents, God consecrates as missionaries. The accidents of man are the emissaries of Heaven; and everything that comes to us (and if we

could feel this we should derive much comfort or much instruction from it), everything that occurs to us has a meaning. There are no dead and dumb facts in God's providence; there are no dead, and dumb, and unmeaning emissaries in God's dealings. Everything that happens has a meaning. The loss you sustain, the blessing you receive, the friend you lose, the friend you have, the wealth you acquire, the estate that is snatched from you, the loss of health, or the gain of it—all speak, and it needs you only to have the circumcised ear and the understanding heart to hear all reasoning, in silent but persuasive eloquence, about the things that pertain to your eternal peace. It is not the Bible only, but creation that speaks Christianity. All nature to a Christian mind is eloquent, all providence significant; and everything, from the leaf that drops from the tree to the monarch that is stricken from his throne, are providential ministries from God; each saying, "Christ is come to seek and to save the lost." "Believe on him, and thou shalt be saved."

But this is not all. We are ruined as well as lost. We are not simply the ship that has lost her way upon the main, but the ship battered by the waves, stranded on the sea-shore, every day becoming drift-wood, and leaving scarce a memorial of its former magnificence and beauty. We are not simply lost, but wrecked. The castle is in ruins, the beautiful habitation is broken up;—man, once in the image of God, has lost it; he is not simply a lost sinner, that needs to be sought by Christ, but he is a ruined sinner, that needs to be saved and restored by Christ. We have seen how he saves the lost; let us show briefly how he saves the ruined. First, he does so

by humbling himself. "Being in the form of God, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God"—if Christ is not God, that is blasphemy—"thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the fashion of a man, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." This was Christ's first step to save us, in addition to the many steps that I have mentioned in order to seek us. He laid aside the robes of celestial majesty for the mock purple of Pilate, the diadem of heaven for a wreath of thorns about his bleeding brow,—he gave up the adoration of angels in that temple which is all space, and he took the reproaches of mankind in a nook of a small capital of a small country upon earth. He came to his own, and his own received him not. But specially is he come to save us by his cross and passion, and agony, and bloody sweat. It is the Atonement that is the secret spring of the salvation of a world. Give up that truth, and you take the heart from Christianity; hold fast that magnificent and central truth—that he who knew no sin was clothed with my sins and suffered, that I, who have done nothing but sin, may be clothed with his righteousness, and rejoice. Give up that truth, and all is gone; hold it fast, and you may be very wrong in your notions of church government, you may be very wrong in your views about baptism, you may be undecided in a thousand and one particulars of ceremony; but you hold that which is Christianity, namely, Christ crucified,—and holding this, we can forgive the microscopic jots on which we must agree to differ, rejoicing in the magnificent central truth, the presence of which is salvation to mankind and glory to that God that

redeemed us. Jesus, then, our Sacrifice, is the source of our salvation. He was spared not, that we might be spared; he was given by the Father that we might never be given up to everlasting death. His soul became sorrowful unto death that our souls might never taste the bitterness of eternal death. He was forsaken of God that we might never be forsaken. Through him, the crucified, we shall be glorified; by his stripes we are healed. He seeks us in his providence as lost, he saves us by his grace as ruined. Found we never can be unless he seeks us; saved we never can be unless through his atoning death; his precious blood is a propitiation not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

Let me ask, then, my dear friends, are you found in him when he seeks you in his providence?—are you found of him by being forgiven through his death, washed in his blood, and accepted for his righteousness' sake? There is no mystery in the simple tidings of the Gospel; it is, "Believe, and live;" it is, "Look, and live." The brazen serpent is lifted up; look, and be healed; the atonement is made—not, to be made; rest on it, and be saved. The great stumbling-block of thousands is that they cannot conceive the simplicity of Christianity. All man's things are cumbersome, vast, prodigious; but all God's great plans are simple. Out of a little carbon and oxygen he makes all the flowers of the field, all the stars of the sky, all the mineral contents of the globe. Out of Christ upon the cross originates the salvation of thousands upon thousands to the end of the world. And the process by which you are interested in it is not some laborious, scientific process, nor some metaphysical discourse which only clever metaphysicians can understand; but the process

of salvation is simply looking up to God, and saying—
“I am a poor lost sinner, oh! find me; I am a poor ruined sinner, oh! forgive me; for I have learned that thou canst be just whilst thou justifiest and forgivest me; that thou canst remain true to all thy Law, and all thy glory, when thou lettest forth the expressions of thy mercy to the thief upon the cross, to Saul, to the very chiefest and the worst of sinners.”

This truth, “Christ is come to seek and to save the lost,” is just at this moment as fresh, as applicable, as when it was first spoken. We do not say so—we are ashamed to do that,—but there is a little feeling that sometimes comes into our minds, leading us to think that the Bible is a sort of old almanac—something that refers to the exciting scenes of the past, but that it has a very limited reference to us indeed. It is not so; the Bible is just as fresh in the year 1854 as if yesterday the air had echoed with the sound, “It is finished;” or as if yesterday the joyous news reverberated through Christendom, “Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep.”

My dear brother, Christ is come to seek and to save thee, just as if he had no other errand from his throne to his cross, and nothing else to do in the wide universe. What a grand thought is that,—and that the very thought that is really appropriate, and that becomes us,—that Christ is come as ready to seek and save me as if I were the only inhabitant upon earth, as if he had nothing else to do in heaven, and as if the salvation of me were so precious to him that he will not give me up till I am found and saved. But if that be so, oh! what responsibility,—what a guilt cleaves to that man, like a corrosive

curse, who rescues himself from the grasp of Christ; who cries, "I will not have this man to rule over me;" who flees from him that pursues him, and will not be saved in spite of all his efforts. Oh! justly might an apostle exclaim,—an exclamation proving the painful error of a learned professor,—“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Professor Maurice will tell you that you need not be alarmed, there will be a Saviour in hell, you will not be there for ever. But an apostle says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” My dear friends, I cannot believe that anything short of our exposure to an infinite ruin, warrants the interposition of an infinite God to save us; and the necessary rebound of a limited hell is a Saviour who is not God. It is a very painful thing, a most undesirable thing, to speak of ceaseless suffering; and I have often said, what I feel, that the only thing in the Bible that often puzzles and perplexes me, is, that when this earth shall be reinstated amid the happy sisterhood of stars, and its *regensis* shall make it grander than at first, there should be in any one nook of God's universe a spot where there shall be ceaseless sin, ceaseless sorrow, and ceaseless suffering. I could not believe it if God had not said it, but he has said it, and he knows what is true; and because he has said it, and this book settles all controversies and ends all disputes, I am satisfied it is true.

I do not see that the endless duration of heaven is described in stronger terms than the endless duration of hell. But what is the use of trying to dilute hell, when every soul is welcome to go to heaven? If any were doomed by God's decree to go to hell, then I would try at all risks to soften his prospect, and to show, if

I could only get a peg to hang an argument on, that hell is not for ever,—I would try to soften and mitigate the prospect to the very utmost; but there is not a soul within hearing of the Gospel that goes to hell, except by his own deliberate, wilful, criminal rejection of the hand that would snatch him like a brand from the burning, and make him a tree in the Paradise of our God. There is no predestination dragging you to hell, there is no curse, like an ocean-load, pressing you to ruin. All that hear are welcome, every soul without exception, to have peace with God for ever. The gates of heaven are so open, the road is so plain, the way so clear, that all my energy I must expend in showing how welcome you are to heaven. I have no time to spare in trying to dilute the miseries of the lost, or proving by metaphysical crotchets that they do not suffer for ever.

Lift your eyes to the hills; look to the outstretched arm of him who is mighty to save; remember that salvation is now for the worst and the oldest; fear only lest a day will come, “Because I have called, and have stretched out my hand, and ye refused, and regarded not; when your fear will come as desolation, and your destruction as the whirlwind, when distress and anguish shall come upon you; and when ye will call upon me, but I will not answer; and they shall seek me, but they shall not find me.” That time is not come; it need not come: Christ has come to us, we have not to go to him; we have but to believe, receive, rejoice in his salvation, by his Holy Spirit, and, as said of Jacob, lift up our feet, and go on our way rejoicing.

NOTE.—The giving the $\mu\nu\hat{\alpha}$ to each is a totally different thing from giving to one five, to another two, and to a third one talent. The sums given are here all the same, and all very small. The (Attic) mina is $\frac{1}{60}$ of a talent, and equal to about 3*l.* of our money. In Matthew the man gives his whole property to his servants; here he makes trial of them with these small sums ($\epsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\chi\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\nu$, see ver. 17); $\pi\rho\alpha\gamma\mu.$ (= $\epsilon\rho\gamma\acute{\alpha}\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon$, Matt. $\epsilon\nu.$ ϕ $\xi\rho\chi.$) “while I go and return, till I come.” [14.] The nobleman, son of a king, is the Lord Jesus; the kingdom is that over his own citizens, the Jews. They sent a message after him; their cry went up to heaven, in the persecutions of his servants, &c., “We will not have this man to reign over us.”

[43.] $\theta\tau\iota$ declares, not “the things hidden from thine eyes,” so that it should be rendered, “namely, that the days shall come,” &c., but the awful reason which there was for the fervent wish just expressed—“for,” or “because.” [$\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\alpha\kappa\alpha$] A mound with palisades. The account of its being built is in Joseph. (B. J. v. 6. 2.) When the Jews destroyed this, Titus built a wall round them (Ib. 12. 2)—see Is. xxix. 2, 3, 4—to which the Lord here tacitly refers. [44.] $\epsilon\delta\alpha\phi.$ is used in two meanings: “shall level thy buildings to the foundation, and dash thy children against the ground.” $\tau\grave{\alpha}$ $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\nu\alpha$ is not “infants,” but “thy children,” in general. [$\omicron\upsilon\kappa$ $\acute{\alpha}\phi\acute{\eta}\sigma.$] See Matt. xxiv. 2, and note— $\acute{\alpha}\nu\theta' \acute{\omega}\nu$. . . not “because of thy sins and rebellions;” those might be all blotted out, hadst thou known—recognised—the time of thy visiting by me. $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\kappa.$ is a word of ambiguous meaning—visitation, either for good or for evil. It brings at once here before us the coming seeking fruit (ch. xiii. 7), and the returning of the Lord of the vineyard (ch. xx. 16). It is, however, the first or favourable meaning of $\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\eta$ that is here prominent.—*Alford.*

CHAPTER XX.

AUTHORITY IN SCRIPTURE—QUESTION OF JESUS SILENCES THE PRIESTS—
THE VINEYARD—THE LABOURERS MALTREAT THE SERVANTS OF THE
LORD OF THE VINEYARD—JUDGMENT ON THE GUILTY—THE RE-
JECTED HEAD-STONE—MALIGNANT ATTEMPTS TO ENSNARE JESUS—
CÆSAR AND HIS CURRENCY—THE RESURRECTION—STRANGE SUPPO-
SITION—DAVID'S SON.

IN the chapter which we have previously read you will recollect that Jesus came into the temple, and began to cast out those that sold doves, telling them that they had made his Father's house a den of thieves, instead of regarding it, what it had been written to be, a house of prayer for all people. When the Scribes and Pharisees saw this act, and how the temple was purified of those that thus polluted it, they asked him the question, "By what authority doest thou these things?" They did not examine the merit or the demerit of the act, but they wished to trace back the actor to the source of his authority, under which, and by which, he felt commissioned to do these things.

You will notice our Lord gave them his authority—not a commission from heaven, as he might have done, but a text from the Bible, as he always did. He said, "It is written, My house is the house of prayer;" that is my authority, and you know that the authority is conclusive. But they, like true ecclesiastics, anxious

to get rid of the Bible, which was too conclusive and too transparent to be met, resolved to conceal it from their minds, and to bring forward a question of mere genealogical succession: "By what authority doest thou these things?" Jesus, knowing that he had given a text as the warrant of his conduct, quoted Scripture as a precedent for the course that he had pursued, and, aware that they were avoiding the real question that was at issue, said to them: "Very well; if you want me to give you the authority by which I do these things"—assuming, for argument's sake, that he had not given what he really had given, a text from the Bible—"I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? As you are diverting me from the real subject, the conclusive text that I have quoted, I will turn your attention from such a carping and cavilling question, to something that you are called upon in the presence of the people decidedly and plainly to answer. I ask you, Scribes and Pharisees: John's baptism, was it from heaven,—had it a heavenly commission,—or of men?" calling by the name of baptism the mission, the authority, and discipleship of John the Baptist. They were cunning enough to reason within themselves in this way: "If we say, From heaven; then we know that Jesus will reply to us, Then, why did you not submit to be baptized? Why did you not confess your sins to God, and look forward for me, the Messiah, of whom John was the herald?" On the other hand, they argued, "If we shall say that he was a mere human enthusiast, then we fear the people;" for the people were persuaded that John was a celestial messenger. "We fear, first of all, a confutation of ourselves before

the people if we answer one way; and we fear an insurrection against us by the people if we answer the other way. We cannot accept the one or the other without being impaled on one horn of a dilemma: our best way, therefore, and indeed the only way, and the safest, is to be silent, and to refuse to give him any answer at all." The consequence was that, as they would not answer this plain question, which involved their own criminality, he would not answer a question which there was no need to reply to, because he had already given a text as an authority for his conduct: "Neither tell I you"—not, I cannot tell—but, I do not tell you—"by what authority I do these things."

And then, in order to follow up this remark with a practical lesson, he produces the figure or imagery of a vineyard, the common imagery under which the Jewish nation and economy were set forth: "A certain man planted a vineyard," and, in the language of Isaiah, "hedged it round"—walled it in, paid particular attention to it—"and let it forth to husbandmen," who were no doubt the Jewish people, "and went into a far country," that is, heaven, "for a long time," meaning to return. And at the proper time he sent a servant to these leaseholders of the vineyard, that they should give him—what it was right to expect—either payment in cash, or payment in kind; he was willing to accept for their convenience payment in kind, and, therefore, that "they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard." But the husbandmen, instead of paying their debts, instead of paying their rent, which they were bound to do, and had promised to do, "sent him away empty," without paying anything. He then sent a second servant, that they might have no excuse. But they

treated him even worse; for they not only sent him away empty, but "they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully," and sent him away empty like the first. He was determined not to leave them without doing their duty—for to permit a man to omit duty is the next thing to tempting a man to commit sin. If you see a man omitting to do duty, you ought to tell him, just as truly as when you see a man committing what is sin. It is not at all a Christian sentiment to say, "It is his own business;" "It is no business of mine to meddle." The Bible, the best authority it is possible to have, says, upon this subject, "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother;" that is, if you see what is sin, tell him of it; do not tell it behind his back, but go and tell him first at his house: do not tell him rudely; do not tell him as if you were far better than he; but with the utmost courtesy, but uncompromising faithfulness, say, That is wrong, or, This you ought to do; and by doing so, you show yourself to be the children of the Father who is in heaven. Well, this lord of the vineyard would not suffer them to live in the neglect of a duty that rightly devolved upon them, and therefore he sent a third person; but, instead of that third person meeting with greater success, they wounded him also, maimed him, crippled him, and sent him away empty also. When men are determined to have their own way, there is no extreme to which they will not have recourse. The man that owes you money, if he does not mean to pay you, will first try to cross the street and pass you on the other side; if you be very pertinacious in asking for the payment of his money, he will insult you; and if you still persist, he will have recourse to more desperate and violent means. So it

was in this parable. Then he determined to send his own son; and he argues very truly, Surely they will respect him, because he is a higher personage; and he may expect a better treatment. But, instead of that, they cast the heir out of the vineyard. They said, If we can only kill him, then no more rent will be demanded; we shall no more have a leasehold, but a freehold; the inheritance of the vineyard will then be ours—let us kill him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

Well, now, the question is asked, the appeal is made to the conscience of humanity, "What, therefore, shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?" It is impossible to come to any other conclusion than this: If there be justice upon earth, "he shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others." And the common people saw the application of the parable to the Jewish nation, and they said, "God forbid."

But all this has happened. Palestine is no more the seat of the vineyard, its walls are broken down, its fanes are levelled with the dust, its glory is departed, all its fragrance and its beauty are desolate, and the husbandmen, that is, the Jews, are refugees, exiles, wandering over all the earth, a people without a nation, children without a home; only retaining in their most desperate circumstances the inextinguishable hope of what shall be the case—their restoration when the fulness of the Gentiles is come, and their pre-eminence as the chief and most favoured people of God.

We then read, that he added, what is so just and so natural a consequence of it, that "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." If this parable has not already

shown you, what do you understand by the prophecy, that the chief stone will be rejected by the builders? I have come to you—the great Light in Zion, and it follows, rejected by you, that you are the guilty people, and to you the parable applies, and I tell you by another form, and under another imagery, that this stone will fall upon you, because you have rejected it, and it will grind you to pieces. The chief priests and scribes, we read, sought to lay hands upon him; and the only reason why these ecclesiastics, that sat in Moses' seat, and professed to teach Moses' law, did not lay hold upon the Prophet of whom Moses spake, was, not that they loved him, or dreaded his power, or hated him less, but that they dreaded a popular insurrection; for throughout the whole of the Gospels it is very remarkable to notice that priests rejected Christ; kings consented to crucify him; but the common people always heard him gladly. And many a time the Son of man escaped the fangs of the Pharisees under the shelter and protection of the tumultuous crowd assembled in the streets to hear him. And that has been the history of the Christian Church throughout: the last retreat of true religion has been amid the masses; the first corrupters of it have been the priests. It is very singular, but it is very true, that the history of Christendom is just the continuance of the same fact that occurs in the Gospels: the humble and the lowly retaining and loving the truth; the exalted and the dignified crucifying the Lord of glory afresh, and putting him to an open shame. Well, these scribes and ecclesiastics, since they could not destroy him, tried to waylay, or ensnare, or entrap him; and the plan they adopted was this. Recollect, Judea had become

a Roman province: nothing was so detestable to the Jews as the government of Cæsar, the sceptre of the Roman emperor, and yet, though detestable to their feelings, they were compelled to pay tribute to a government that they could not escape, whether they liked it or not, and the Publicans were appointed to collect that tribute. The Pharisees thought they would fairly entangle him. They said to him, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no?" If Jesus had replied, "It is not lawful to give tribute to Cæsar," then the governing power, namely, Cæsar and his tribunals, would punish him as a rebel, refusing to pay the taxes that belonged to Cæsar. If he had said, on the other hand, "It is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar," then the Jews, the people, instead of taking his part, would have risen up against him as an advocate of the supremacy of Cæsar, of God's heritage being subjected to Roman government. Can this be the Messiah, the Great Deliverer? You can see, therefore, how difficult it was to answer this question, either in the affirmative or the negative. Jesus, therefore, wise as the serpent, and still harmless as the dove, and giving lessons in the very replies that he made to their carping and cavilling questions, asked them, "Show me a penny,"—a *denarius*, equal to about sevenpence halfpenny in our money. It is implied they showed him a penny. He then saw an image on it; just as the image of Queen Victoria is on our coins, so the image of Cæsar was upon the Roman coins then in currency throughout the land of Judea. Jesus said, therefore, "Whose image and superscription hath it?" The answer they were constrained to give, was, "This is Cæsar's image." And that coin which you take from your purse is the very money with which

you buy your bread, you recognise it as the currency of the realm: then plainly that is the recognition of Cæsar as the actual governor. This is Cæsar's coin; give you unto Cæsar that which you yourselves must admit to be Cæsar's; the very currency of your realm; and render to God those duties from which you are shrinking, and from which you have apostatized. How beautiful the reply! how deep the wisdom that is in it! how instructive the lessons which it contains! teaching the Christian that all that is fairly due to Cæsar he is to render. The Cæsar is the governing power of the realm you live in. If I were in Turkey, my Cæsar would be the Sultan; if I were in Russia, my Cæsar would be the Czar—which is the corruption of "Cæsar;" if I were in America, it would be the Republic of the United States; if I were in Tuscany, it would be the Grand Duke of Tuscany; however much I might dislike these Cæsars, and their past and actual conduct; still it would be my duty to pray for the powers that be; but to obey and delight in, beyond and above them all, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

After this, when they, marvelling at his answer, it is said, "held their peace," the Sadducees, another sect, brought another question to him, and it was a very strange one, and probably one that had no truth in it. The Sadducees, you are aware, denied the resurrection from the dead. And very many persons deny a doctrine just because they do not understand it. Many persons say, "We cannot believe in justification by faith alone in the righteousness of Christ," because they think it leads to sin. But the fact is, that they do not understand the doctrine, or its tendency, or its nature, or its proper effects and consequences. So these

Sadducees did not know what the resurrection really was, or the nature of the risen body; and therefore they supposed a case—for I do not believe that this was an actual case; I do not believe that there was any woman that had seven husbands in succession. But to make the case as impossible as they could, and to puzzle the Lord of glory to the very utmost, they supposed a woman who had seven husbands in succession—then whose wife should she be in the resurrection? They supposed that the resurrection was not the resurrection of the body in the likeness of Christ, in all its beauty, spirituality, and excellence; but that it would just be the resurrection of what they saw; of the same society, of the same social relationships, the same condition in all respects. Our Lord's answer was decisive; In the resurrection "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage." That ended the controversy; and, therefore, your idea about the existence of those relationships in the resurrection is an absurd one; and if you knew what the resurrection really means, you would not entertain so absurd, so extravagant and impossible a thought.

At the close of the chapter we have the statement, that "they durst not ask him any more questions at all." But he, following up the victories he had gained—and it is very beautiful to see the vein of connexion that runs through the chapter—felt within himself, that as they tried to puzzle him, and he had only puzzled them, he would now, in conclusion, put a question to them that should set their minds a-working, and necessitate a consideration to which they had not been accustomed. He said, "How say they that Christ is David's son?" You will not understand this question

properly, except you will recollect that "Christ" is the word equivalent to "Messiah." "How do the scribes say that the Messiah"—whoever he be, without saying he was the Messiah—"how do the scribes say that the Messiah, when he appears, will be David's son, whereas David expressly says that he is David's Lord, or David's God? How can you explain this?" They could not answer; they were unable to do so; and there was no answer on their principles—the Socinian can give no answer; the Christian can: He is David's son according to the flesh, because descended of David's family; but he is David's Lord, because he is also God—the Root of David as well as the Offspring—God manifest in the flesh.

When he had silenced them all, he presses home a practical duty on the people, not to be the tools of the scribes and Pharisees. Many would have said to him, "Why, this is preaching against the ecclesiastical authority." They might have said, "This is the established Church, and you ought not to say a word against it." But because a church is established, it is not, therefore, infallible; and if a Church do wrong, whether it be Established or Dissenting, it is the duty of every man to try to set it right; it is rendering unto God the things that are God's to do so. Therefore, Jesus says, "Beware of these very scribes;" though they have the true succession, though they sit in Moses' chair, though they are really the lawful officers by lawful appointment, yet they have so completely renounced the spirit and the teaching of Moses, that I tell you to beware of them. They walk about the streets in long robes—something like the priests on the Continent of Europe, that people may see them to be persons of authority

and influence: "they love greetings in the markets"—that people should bow to them, defer to them, make way to them,—“and the highest seats in the synagogues,”—ecclesiastical distinction amid the chief rulers of the earth, the *tiara* still claiming superiority to crowns and diadems,—“the chief rooms at feasts”—to be placed at the right hand of the chairman at every public dinner or meeting. And, alas, alas! whilst they are assuming these dignities, and seeking this post of power and pre-eminence, they are “devouring widows’ houses,” and for an atonement make long prayers in the corners of the streets and in the synagogues, to be heard of men. And the result of it is, that their ambition will not be always disguised; they shall receive the greater condemnation.

NOTE.—[34.] *οἱ υἱοὶ* . . . Peculiar to Luke, and important for this present state of men. Marriage is an ordained and natural thing; but in *τῷ αἰῶνι ἐκείνῳ*, which is by the context the state of the first resurrection, (nothing being said of the rest of the dead, though the bare fact might be predicated of them also,) they who are found worthy to obtain that state of life, and the resurrection from the dead, are no longer under the ordinance, for neither can they any more die; *i. e.* they will have no need of a succession and renewal, which is the main purpose of marriage.

The *ἰσαγγ. γὰρ εἰσι* is alleged not as showing them to be *ἀθάθεις κ. ἀφιλήθοι* (Euthym.), but as setting forth their immortality. *υἱοὶ τ. θ.* is here used, not in its ethical sense, as applied to believers in this world, but its metaphysical sense, as denoting the essential state of the blessed after the resurrection,—“they are, by their resurrection, essentially partakers of the Divine nature, and so cannot die.” When Meyer says that the Lord only speaks of the risen, and has not then in his view the “quick,” at the time of his coming, there must be remembered the “change” which shall pass on them (1 Cor. xv. 51).

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LIBERALITY OF RICH AND POOR—COMPARATIVE VALUE—A LIVING STONE—PROPHECY AND JOSEPHUS—ESCAPE OF CHRISTIANS—DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE—LITERAL FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY—MAHOMETANISM—MISSIONS—JEWS.

THOSE great and startling phenomena previous to the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, which marked the downfall of the Jewish polity, are all described at greater length, and in terms if possible more emphatic, in the 24th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. The chapter begins with a very beautiful and instructive incident. Jesus saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. The temple was maintained by the offerings of the people; and accordingly each gave according as he believed that God had prospered him. But amidst the crowd of those that rushed in and gave munificently he saw a poor widow, who, without ostentation or display, gave two mites; a very minute sum; but the excellency of the two mites was not the smallness of the sum, but the largeness of the heart of her that gave it. We notice here, how Jesus selected in the group the giver of the least as the best and most expressive exponent of true Christian liberality. It is not what the hand gives, but what the heart would give if it could, that Jesus looks at. The penny that is given by one is a far more expressive proof of true Christian liberality than the pounds that are given by others. God expects all

he has called in his grace to feel liberality in the heart; but in his providence he has enabled one to express it by pennies, another to express it by shillings, and another by pounds, and another by hundreds and thousands of pounds. To him all hearts are open, all desires known; and he judges of what man is, not by what the hand puts into the plate, but by what the heart feels it would if it had in providence the power to bestow.

How very interesting too, that whilst the disciples were speaking of the temple, of the magnificent stones and gems with which it was filled and adorned, he selected as the most magnificent of all, not a great stone, not the golden roof or gates that Herod had made a present of; but what the Pharisee and scribe did not and would not notice—a living stone; a poor widow, who cast into the treasury all that she had: teaching us that when Christ looks down at churches, he does not estimate the height of their spires, the beauty of their stones, the exquisite nature of their carving; but he regards as truly a church where two or three true Christians are met in his name; and thousands met for any other purpose he regards as no church or congregation at all.

The disciples ask him, "When shall these things be?" That is the first question; and the second question, "What signs will there be when these things come to pass?" In Matthew it is differently expressed; "When shall these things be?"—relating to the downfall of the Jewish polity; and, "What shall be the sign of thy personal appearance?"—two events perfectly distinct; and to each our Lord gives an answer both in Matthew xxiv. and in the chapter we have read. His answer to the first question, "When shall be the destruction

or the downfall of Jerusalem?" is conveyed, first, in warnings to themselves,—“Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.” Persons will appear just before the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, professing to be Christ returned again from heaven, gathering infatuated crowds of fanatics around them, and goading them to insurrections against the Roman government, thereby exciting the fury of the Romans, and aggravating their own sufferings and misery. But Jesus warns them; “When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by-and-by,”—the end of your polity is not yet. He also tells them, that before the destruction of Jerusalem there should be earthquakes, that is, convulsions or shakings of the earth in divers places; that there should be famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights. These actually occurred, and in order to know the fulfilment of these prophecies, we should read Josephus, who was a Jew, serving under Titus and Vespasian in the Roman army, a disbeliever in Christ, who never heard the discourse preached in this chapter, and certainly never read it; and if he had read it, did not believe it. Just read the sceptic Jew; and you will find in his history that every prediction in this chapter relating to the downfall of Jerusalem was literally and *verbatim* fulfilled.

He then says, that the apostles, or those that professed his name, should be taken in the synagogues, should be cast into prison, should be hated of all men for his name's sake. But he tells them in patience to possess their souls, for not a hair of their head should perish.

Then he tells them that when they should see Jerusalem "compassed with armies"—Titus and Vespasian surrounding it with the Roman forces—"then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains." Now it is recorded by an historian who did not know of these words, that all the Christians who were found in the midst of Jerusalem, during a respite of the besieging forces, and of the showers of arrows that were hurled against them, escaped from one of the gates of the city, rushed to a neighbouring village called Pella; and there they were preserved, not a hair of their heads touched, during the awful destruction that followed on their retreat from that devoted and ruined city. Josephus records that upwards of a million of Jews were slaughtered in the midst of Jerusalem; Titus implored his soldiers to spare the temple; he was so struck with its awful and unearthly magnificence that he offered the richest rewards to the chief captains of his army if they would prevent the infuriate soldiers from destroying its sacred shrines and its magnificent and august altars. Josephus, himself a Jew, and a soldier or captain of the Roman army, was sent by Titus to dissuade the Romans from touching it, and to persuade the Jews if possible, to flee from it. But such was the fury of the Roman soldiery, owing to the fanatic and exasperated passions of the Jews, that one soldier rushed into the holy place, cast into the midst of its carved work a burning brand; and in the course of a very few hours all the glory and magnificence of that temple, that was the joy of a Jew's heart, and the admiration of the earth, was reduced to ashes, leaving scarce a wreck or a trace behind it. All this is recorded by Josephus himself, a most impartial and credible

witness on that subject. Our Lord says, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword,"—that is, the Jews,—“and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Then from the 24th verse to the close of the chapter is the answer; not relating to the downfall of Jerusalem, but relating, evidently, to Christ's second coming.

It seems to me that at whatever point of the compass we look, those signs of the end given by evangelists loom and gather in the horizon. All men seem struck with the peculiarity, and the emphasis of the times in which we live. "There shall be signs in the sun"—these are not yet come—"and in the moon, and in the stars." They will come literally, I believe, and they will come morally; because every prophecy in the Bible, you will easily perceive, has first a physical, and then it has, and coterminously, a moral fulfilment. I have already explained, that "a star should come out of Jacob," is the prophecy; at the advent of Christ there was a literal star, or rather a literal celestial sign like a star, that went before the shepherds, and showed them the place where Christ lay; and while the star signified Christ morally, it stood over the manger literally. And you will find that all the prophecies of the future in the Apocalypse will be literally and also morally fulfilled. "There will be signs in the sun." Why should there not? We often think, How can this be? But recollect, the sun is but another world, bigger than our own, I admit; his use to us—not his absolute, but his relative use—is to reflect light to us. And there may be a miracle to suspend that light; there may be signs in the sun before his advent, just as Josephus states there

were unearthly signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, before the destruction of Jerusalem. "And there shall be on earth distress of nations." Why, what is the state of the earth just now? If we could look into the hearts of statesmen, if we knew all that is discoursed and discussed in all the European cabinets at this time, I have no doubt we should see the beginning of the distress of nations, and what Matthew calls, "men's hearts failing them for fear of the things that are coming on the earth." All Europe is at this moment a smouldering volcano; statesmen are trying to stave off what must come, and will come; they are patching up the old machinery, putting in a peg here, and adding a link there—doing all that may keep the machinery a going for a little longer: but decreed it is—I do not say that Russia is to take the place of Turkey, and overwhelm us—but that Mahometanism will be utterly destroyed. There may rise and occupy its place a magnificent Christian empire; I think there will; composed of true Christians. We do not want the Sultan to be hanged, or to be shot; but what we want, and what we predict from God's word, is, that Mahometanism, or that of which he is the head, will be gradually destroyed.

People come and say, "Where is your prophecy about the downfall of Mahometanism? The Turks are showing that they are stronger and braver than you ever dreamed. I answer, Whether peace or war, Turkey will be destroyed. I do not believe that Mahometanism will be struck down by a blow; the prophecy is, that it is to be dried up—gradually to be evaporated. And peace at this moment would be more destructive for Mahometanism than war; and come war, come peace, its exchequer will be bankrupt. Its last resources—its last penny—are now

being expended in the machinery of war; and in a very short time you will hear that the Crescent has waned, and not the Russian autocrat necessarily in its place, but it may be the Cross floating on the banners of a people that glory in that cross, and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

So in the next place we read, that after this—and this shows that the prediction here relates to the second advent of Christ,—“men’s hearts will be failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” And then what takes place? Is it, “Then they shall see”—the Millennium? No. “Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” And, therefore, I do not expect the Millennium before Christ comes, any more than I expect sunshine before the sun rises. It is most irrational to anticipate sunshine before the sun has got above the horizon, and it seems to me equally irrational to expect that there will be millennial rest, and peace, and joy over all the earth before the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings. In fact, we have this text illustrated very expressly when the angels said to the apostles in the Acts, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” How did they see him go? It is said that “when he had spoken these things he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.” Now then, just as he ascended in the cloud,—probably the *shechinah*, the pillar of cloud that marched through the desert,—so he will come in the very same cloud: “in like manner shall ye see him come,”—that is, with power and great glory. I believe it is

doing utter violence to expect that all the efforts of Bible Societies, all the exertions of our noble Christian missionary institutions, will usher in the millennium. I subscribe, and you subscribe to the Bible Society, and we have given rightly. Mr. James made a proposition to send a million New Testaments to the Chinese; and I think we have sent from this congregation between four and five thousand without a special collection; we have received sufficient, I think, to purchase 5,000 Chinese New Testaments; and therefore, our share in seizing the opening to that gigantic empire—an opening that may evolve the Ten Tribes of Israel,—and helping to preach the glad tidings of the Gospel of Christ, is not a very small one. And the “London Missionary Society” has come forward in a very noble manner,—and if any of you can aid it, do so by all means,—and has resolved to send ten missionaries to that land; to seize an opening wherever they can find it, and to guide aright the religious impressions of the Chinese. I would support all these institutions, and support them munificently; but I do not believe that they are to end in the millennium—I do not believe that they will contribute one whit to it. The preacher of the Gospel, till Christ come, is bringing a people out of the world for Christ, an election according to grace;—and when all Christ’s people have been gathered to himself; when all that is vital and living has been separated out of the mass, then the Lord shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. But, because I believe that our missionary societies are not to hasten or to constitute a millennium, it does not follow that I am not to help them. On the contrary, believing that souls are perishing, and that, humanly

speaking, it depends upon our vigour and our effort whether the unconverted shall perish, whether souls shall be lost or saved, I help these missionary institutions, in order to promote the salvation of eternal souls; and the nearer that the night comes, the busier we should be; the closer that we are to the coming of Christ, the more munificent should our contributions be.

Well then, our Lord says to them, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up,"—instead of Christians being afraid,—“lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.” He then gives them a parable of the fig-tree. You will recollect, that the fig-tree is constantly used in the Gospels as the great symbol and representative of Judea, and of the children of Israel. The sign, therefore, the strongest and most prominent sign of the nearness of the advent of Christ, and the coming of all these things upon the earth, will be the budding of the fig-tree. When it begins to bud, then, says the Saviour, the millennium is at hand. Now at this moment, I believe, the fig-tree is budding; at this moment the Jews are startling, by their nationality, wide Christendom, occupying a place, making an impression unprecedented since they were scattered into all nations, and became a by-word and a scoff amid all mankind. And so certain is this, he says, “This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.” I explained to you the meaning of this in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Some commentators, most commentators, I believe, argue that all that precedes this 32d verse must relate to Jerusalem, and cannot relate to the second coming of Christ; because it says, “This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.” Now the very first reply to that would be, Did the

Son of man come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory before Jerusalem fell? No such thing, nor anything approaching to it. But then, when we look at the meaning of the original words, we see at once the idea. The Greek word for "generation" is γενεά. I venture to assert that the interpretation of many commentators is most unwarranted and most unfounded; γενεά, they suppose to mean a generation of thirty years; and they say, This generation—the men living now—shall not be defunct till all these things come to pass. But we reply, that it has only been since Insurance Offices and the statistics of life, or what are called "vital statistics," were established, that the idea of thirty years being a generation has been dreamed of; and when we open Greek writers, we find that the word means almost invariably a race, a people; the γενεά, or race of the Greeks; the γενεά, or race of the Romans, or of the Saxon; meaning the world. And when our Lord says, "This generation shall not pass away," the meaning is, this race: this race shall be scattered and persecuted,—wanderers and exiles, and suffer in every shape among all nations till Christ come. He says, "Woe, ye generation of vipers,"—meaning a race, a people. Homer speaks again of the race of men being as γενεά φύλλων—"the race of leaves."

And now this prophecy is literally fulfilled; the race still lives. Go to Houndsditch, and you will find them in thousands; go to the west end, and you will find them in tens; go into any country upon earth, and you will find a Jew, breathing every air, drinking of every stream; lending money to poor nations; having all their money, not in lands like our English noblemen, not in fixtures, but loose, so that they can put it in their pocket, or

carry it in the shape of a bill of exchange, any day it may please them. Now, how is it that they are nearly the only race preserved in that way? The Greeks are a mere fragment of what they once were; there are more Romans this day in England than there are in Italy; nearly every other race, as far as its nationality is concerned, has become mixed and incorporated with the masses of mankind. But the Jew is insulated, separate. The ancient prophecy is, "They shall not be numbered with the nations;" and they are not at this day. Now, why thus preserved, why thus distinct, insulated and peculiar? Not because their condition is an honourable one, or their superiority to material comfort cheerfully accepted, for they are a scoff and a by-word—"Avaricious as a Jew," has become a proverb; he is not respected as a Jew in any part of the earth. His very name is the synonym of avarice. Then, why this distinct nationality? and why is their property not as ours is, a fixture, but floating, ready to be laid hold of, and turned into currency, and carried with them the instant that they want it? The answer is, that they are reserved for a grand destiny; and some morning you will wake, and find in the *Times* newspaper, that the Jews are off to Jerusalem, like doves to their windows, settled in their own land, to praise Christ whom their fathers crucified.

Those very wars that now agitate the earth are preparing the way of this mysterious race. Every year brings out some new feature, some striking fact in their national history. They are cast down, but not cast off. They are the men of destiny—the subjects of many prophecies—the objects of the special notice of the Most High. The fig-tree blasted eighteen hundred

years ago, begins to bud, and the anxious and waiting students of prophecy are patiently and prayerfully waiting for another and yet more glorious Exodus.

NOTE.—[22.] ἐκδικ.—a hint perhaps at chap. xviii. 8. The latter part of the verse alludes probably to the prophecy of Daniel, which Luke has omitted, but referred to in ἡ ἐρῆμωσις αὐρῆς, ver. 20. [23.] ἐπ. τ. γ., general; τῷ λ. τοῦτω, particular. The distress on all the earth is not so distinctly the result of the Divine anger, as that which shall befall this nation. [24.] A most important addition, serving to fix the meaning of the other two evangelists, and carrying on the prophetic announcement; past our own times, even close to the days of the end.

The καιρ. ἐθν., or times of the Gentiles, are the end of the Gentile dispensation; the rejection of the Lord by the Gentile world, answering to its type, his rejection by the Jews, being finished, the καιρὸς shall come, of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a type.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHRISTMAS DAY—PROBABLE DATE OF—THE PASSOVER—THE UPPER ROOM—THE SUPPER—MEANING OF WORDS—TITLES—PETER'S TRIAL AND CHRIST'S PRAYER—SWORD FOR DEFENCE — GETHSEMANE—MENTAL EMOTION—SLEEPING—SORROW.

How striking and remarkable is the contrast between the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke, recording the birth, the lowly birth, though with attendant and sublime accompaniments, of the Son of God, and the striking, we had almost said the awful, chapter which we have just read! In the first, we saw the babe born in Bethlehem, with all the helplessness of infant humanity; in this, we have the sufferer in the midst of his agony in Gethsemane; the former only the preparation for the latter, both setting forth One who was born not for himself, who lived not for himself, who suffered not for himself, and died not for himself. What we call Christmas day all Christendom regards as the anniversary of the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. I need scarcely tell those who have looked into this question as a matter of chronology, that Christmas day is not really the anniversary of the birth of Christ; it is demonstrably proved that Christ was born in April, and not in December. The anniversaries of his birth and his agony are near to each other—April and Good Friday being far nearer than what we call Christmas and Good

Friday now. But while it has been proved in the most conclusive manner, I think, that the birth of our Lord was in April, yet it is of no moral and spiritual importance. Christmas day is a human institution, indeed originally a Romish one: I doubt if the primitive Church regarded it. Easter Sunday was noticed, and venerated, and observed from the very earliest times; Good Friday very soon after was in all probability celebrated; but Christmas was a later introduction. And indeed, the name it bears with us is a name one is sorry for—Christmas, Christ's mass. We have no mass now. An article in the Church of England Prayer Book very justly, and not more strongly than it demands, says, "The mass is a blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit;" and we have no mass, therefore, now; and though the name be retained, yet it does not convey to us the meaning associated with it in Romish superstition. But neither Good Friday nor Christmas day are of divine obligation; though at the same time I see nothing but propriety in the observance of them. I do not like saints' days; I do not see the use of consecrating days to the memory of saints, however excellent; but I do see great practical utility, and no infraction of divine commandment, in observing those days that bring clearly before us the death of Christ, as Good Friday; the resurrection of Christ, as Easter Sunday; and the ascension of Christ, and the giving of the Holy Ghost. All these are days and hours associated with the very essence, with the very substance of our redemption; and the commemoration of great truths, and the calling of the people's attention to such truths on such days, must be productive of good, and cannot necessarily be productive of harm.

In this chapter we have the sufferings and the agony of the Son of man, the Saviour of sinners. We read, that "Satan entered into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve." Every clause seems to have emphasis. Let us read that verse—"Then entered Satan into Judas, being of the number of the twelve." What an expressive and suggestive clause is that single one—"Being of the number of the twelve!" Satan entered into Paradise; he entered into the college of apostles, he corrupted one apostle to betray, another to deny:—"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Our Lord then directed Peter and John to go and prepare the Passover—the last Passover that he should celebrate on earth, and the last Passover that should be legitimately celebrated by any. He was now to merge the Passover lamb in the true Sacrifice, and the Passover feast in the Lord's Supper,—the more simple commemorative rite of the Christian Church. He then tells them that when they had entered into the city they should meet a man—that is, a slave—with a pitcher of water. The evening was the time for drawing water, and this would indicate that it was eventide. Follow this slave, the water-carrier, and he will take you to his master; and say to the master of the house, "The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" And with prophetic accuracy he tells them, "And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready." It has been often noticed that the apostles met in an upper room—and that the Lord's Supper was celebrated in an upper room: it has been thought that this was a very lowly, humble, and

mean place; but the truth is, the upper room was the best room in the house; and it does not, therefore, mean the same as our word "garret," the topmost floor of the house; but really the chiefest and the best chamber in the whole house.

"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve disciples with him." He tells them, "With desire I have desired"—that is, I have earnestly desired—"to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof,"—that is, I will never eat of it again—"till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God"—that is, in the Christian economy, by the more beautiful rite which we now celebrate to commemorate that death. He then "took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." The words, as I mentioned in a previous Gospel, "Do this in remembrance of me," must necessarily imply that Christ could not be bodily present. Memory refers to the absent; consciousness, sense and sight relate to the present. If, therefore, we celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ, it is evident that Transubstantiation is not true, that the bread is not turned into flesh, that the wine is not turned into blood, that Christ is not bodily present. For how can we remember a present being? We can only remember one who was, or one who is absent. As long, therefore, as these words, "Do this in remembrance of me," are retained, so long there is a protest in the very bosom of the institution against the monstrous dogma of Transubstantiation. Besides, the words are very remarkable—"Do this." If Christ had meant that the Lord's Supper was to be an atoning sacrifice, then he

would have said, "Do or offer this as a sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead." In the Creed of Pius IV. and in the Canons of the Council of Trent, it is said, that the Mass, or the Lord's Supper, is a sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. Well then, if that be its meaning, Jesus would have said, "Do this as a sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead." But it is all the reverse; it is, "Do this in remembrance of me." And what a striking proof too in that very reference to that institution upon which it was grafted! In the ancient Passover there were two parts; there was the sacrificial part, when the lamb was slain and its blood shed as the deliverance and safety of Israel; then there was the festal part, when the people met, and ate the flesh that had been roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. So now we have the two parts; only Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us 1800 years ago, and the virtue of his sacrifice lasts for ever; and when we surround the communion-table we take the festal part, or the feast that follows the sacrifice, commemorative of the sacrifice once made and concluded for us.

He then took the cup and said, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which was shed for you. But, behold," he said, "the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." What a striking announcement! And what an awful expression is that, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" or, as in a parallel Gospel, "It had been better for that man that he had never been born." Now, what must be the bitter agony of that man of whom it may be said with justice, "It would be better for him he never had been born!" It indicates a terrible penalty as the retribution for so terrible a crime. And how very sad, too, that at that solemn moment the apostles should be raising a strife

among themselves as to which should be greatest! How awful, that when Jesus was celebrating by anticipation his agony, and when he announced the awful statement, that one apostle should betray him, the poor apostles, instead of being solemnized, and awed, should be quarrelling with each other which of them should be the greatest! And yet is it one whit worse than what takes place amongst Christian denominations at the present day, who quarrel with each other which shall be the greatest when souls are rushing to the judgment-seat, and vast masses of mankind know not if there be a God, a Saviour, a heaven, or a hell?

He then rebuked them very gently, but very justly: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors." That is a very perplexing text; but it will be explained to you by the fact that the Greek word *εὐεργέτης*, which means a benefactor, was applied to ancient princes much in the same way as "Her Majesty" is applied to our queen, or "His Grace" applied to a duke, or "Lord" applied to a nobleman. Now our Lord says, Princes in this world according to usage are called benefactors—they that exercise authority—but it should not be so among you. You must feel yourselves in the Christian economy on one great level, each *benefacting* the other, without assuming superiority one over the other. It is very interesting that most of the words which we apply to rank, originally meant goodness. For instance, "lord" or "lady" means a person that gives away bread—a bread-distributor; that is the meaning of it: so all titles of dignity and rank were originally significant of benevolence and goodness, though they have come now to be mere empty sounds, or sounds only of dignity and greatness. They,

however, act worthy of their rank who make that rank most useful and beneficent to mankind.

He then tells them that he has appointed unto them a kingdom ; that they shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, when he shall come in his kingdom and his glory, and all nations shall be gathered before him. He then addresses Simon apart: he did not address Judas, he seems to have been a hopeless reprobate: but he did address Peter; for though Peter would sin grievously, fall deeply, he was not to sin finally and fall for ever. He therefore says, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat,"—that is, you will go through a process of temptation and of bitter trial as if you were sifted,—every part of you, as it were, sifted,—and yourself laid open to yourself to an extent that you do not now anticipate. "But"—how interesting is that—"while Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, I have prayed for thee." "I have prayed for thee;"—Christ's intercession precedes, in the case of a believer, Satan's assault. Our safety is not that Christ prays for us after Satan assaults us; but that his intercession in heaven precedes our temptation upon earth. And how beautiful it is too that this is personal! He spoke to Simon individually; and what was true of him as an individual is true of all real believers to the end;—"that thy faith fail not." You say, Did not Simon's faith fail when he denied him? The Greek word here means more than "fail"—"that thy faith do not finally and for ever and totally forsake thee." That is the meaning of it; and therefore, though Simon's faith failed him in the hour that he denied his Lord, yet it was the weakness of the flesh, it was not the deliberate purpose and resolution of the man.

Then Peter said, rashly enough—just like him on all occasions,—“Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.” He was ever prepared to go with him; and he spoke truly what he felt; but Peter was one of those enthusiastic, warm individuals, who do not calculate the cost before they begin to expend what they have, or who build without thinking of the foundations. He was first to protest, first to deny; what was uppermost in his mind he gave ready and often thoughtless expression to; till by grace he came forth a changed character after the day of Pentecost. And it is a very remarkable fact, if you will read Peter’s discourses in the Acts, or Peter’s Epistles, you will find language relating to his own sin, and Christ’s words about it, constantly repeated; and when he wants to state in his sermons the greatest sin that man can be guilty of, he says, “Ye denied the Holy One and the Just;” as if the thoughts of his own great transgression were constantly in his mind, and, in the language of David, “his sin was ever before him.” Then Jesus says to Peter, “I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me,”—so little are your words to be depended upon. “And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.” Now I cannot put any figurative interpretation upon that; I believe it was literal—“Let the apostle that hath not a sword get one.” But get a sword for what? Not for aggression, but for defence. It seems, therefore, as if Jesus sanctioned the use of defensive weapons in a country and in an age where

such weapons of defence were essential for a single day's safety. And at this day if you were to travel in the East, amidst the hordes of Arab banditti, or where there are Ishmaelites, whose hand is against every man, it would be your duty to take a sword or some weapon of defence. And therefore, I think, the opinion of the Friends is untenable—that in no circumstances are weapons of defence or offence legitimate to a Christian. However, the apostles plainly misunderstood it; and they said, We do not want to take a sword,—“behold, here are two swords;” as if he meant that they were to use them, and strike his enemies. Now the answer of Jesus is very often misinterpreted. “And he said unto them, It is enough.” Now some think that that means, “Well, two swords are plenty—these will be quite sufficient, you do not want more.” But that is not the meaning. If it had been, he would not have said, Ἰκανόν ἐστι, “It is enough;” but, They are enough,—referring to the swords that he had spoken of. But instead of that, he says, “It is enough;” and the literal meaning is, “I do not want two swords, we have plenty without these; we are armed enough. This is not the time or the place to use swords; we have other weapons, other defence—great purposes to be fulfilled, great duties to transact—we do not need the swords.”

After this “he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him; and when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” Now occurs that sublime and awful scene in the garden of Gethsemane, where he seems to have realized in a moment all his bloody sweat, his coming passion, his agony, his tears, as he said, “Father, if thou be willing,

remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." That is a precedent for us. If any one fears a coming trial, or a probable loss, or bereavement, or bitter sorrow, he may pray, "Remove this cup far from me." It is human to do so, it is Christian to do so; but there should always be added, "Nevertheless, if thou, who knowest best, seest it not to be expedient for me, then, not my will, but thine, be done."

And what an awful expression—"His sweat was as it were great drops of blood!" It does not mean it was so; but as if it were. And it is very remarkable, that intense agony has been followed by extravasation of vital blood from the system as is here spoken of, in other cases than that of our blessed Lord. And what a strange power must the mind have over the body, when that body thus responds to the pressure of mental emotion! So constituted are we that there is in the human mind that mighty susceptibility of impression that a mental stroke can be followed and has been followed by corporeal death. Now, does not that show that the soul is separate from the body, and spiritual? How is it that a postman's knock has made a person faint, and fall down upon the earth? How is it that a mere simple thought can have such an effect upon the body? It proves that, while the soul is separate from the body, it is of other substance. And as moral things affect only a moral, or a mental, or a spiritual power, and through that power affect the body, so *miasmas* and physical poisons affect the body, and through the body affect the mind. If taking a physical poison, and thereby injuring the body, proves that its medium of action, the body, is material; taking a dose of moral poison—if I may

use the word—affecting the mind, thereby proves that the mind is immaterial and separate from the body.

How expressive is that fact, that he found them sleeping for sorrow! How true is that to nature, that the deepest and the greatest sorrow, the sorrow that cannot find tears, blessed be God! often finds sleep; as if God had provided compensatory powers in the human economy to prevent its utter destruction by excess of joy or excess of sorrow.

NOTE.—The sudden address to Simon may perhaps have been occasioned by some remark of his, or, which I think more probable, may have been made after a slight pause, in consequence of some part taken by him in the preceding strife for precedence. Such sudden and earnest addresses spring forth from deep love and concern awakened for another. [ἐξήγη.] Not only “hath desired to have you,” (E. V.) but “hath obtained you;” his desire is granted. *ὕμᾱς*, all. This must include Judas, though it does not follow that he was present. The sifting separated the chaff from the wheat, which chaff he was. See Amos ix. 9—32. ἐγὼ δὲ ἔδ. π. σοῦ. As Peter was the foremost (the rest are here addressed through him), so he was in the greatest danger. It must not be supposed that the Lord’s prayer was not heard, because Peter’s faith did fail in his denial; ἐκλείπη implies a total extinction, which Peter’s faith did not suffer. Though the *ὕμᾱς* included Judas, he is not included in the prayer. See John xvii. 6—12. We may notice here, that the Lord speaks of the total failure of even an apostle’s faith as possible. [ἐπιστρέψας.] There can, I think, be little doubt that this word is here used in the general New Testament sense of returning as a penitent after sin—turning to God—and not in the almost expletive meaning which it has in such passages as Ps. lxxxiv. 6, ὁ Θεὸς, σὺ ἐπιστρέψας ζωώσεις ἡμᾶς (although even here it may have a somewhat similar sense to the above. See Acts vii. 42). [στήριξον.] The use of this word thrice by Peter in his two Epistles, and in the first passage in connexion with the mention of Satan’s temptations, is remarkable.—*Alford*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PILATE'S RELUCTANCE TO CRUCIFY JESUS—HIS SENDING HIM TO HEROD
—HEROD'S MOCKERY—PILATE'S VACILLATION—THE CRUELTY AND
FURY OF THE MOB—JESUS GIVEN UP—THE WEeping RETINUE—
CHRIST CRUCIFIED—DARKNESS AT NOON—THE RENT VAIL—THE
CHAPTER A TRANSCRIPT FROM AN ORIGINAL.

THERE are in the chapter I have read three very striking and impressive portraits. I do not know one more strange, or significant, or instructive, than that of Pilate; and I do not know one, on the other hand, more impressive to us than the picture sketched of the two criminals—the one a believer, and the other an unbeliever; and the last and most awful of all, is that of the infuriated crowd, who forgot every lesson they had learned, trampled upon every miracle they had seen, and shouted, "Not this man"—the Lord of glory—"but release Barabbas," a thief and a robber, in his stead.

There is a portrait given of Pilate, and a very remarkable one it is. He was a king, but a king without the majesty, the dignity, and the authority that should belong to a royal character. He was in all respects a citizen king—the puppet of the mob—anxious to conciliate their smiles, afraid lest he should provoke their hate; his own conscience telling him that Jesus was a holy and an innocent man; his crown and his throne in jeopardy, as he thought, because of the bigoted

violence of the mob, and the malignant hatred of the Pharisees, the scribes and the priests, making him, on the other hand, hesitate to do what his conscience told him was right. We have an instance here of a vacillating ruler, that had lost his sceptre, and without the respect that was due to him; and we have an instance, too, of democracy in its worst and most terrible shape, where it treads down all beauty, truth, and justice beneath its iron hoof, and claims the canonization of a thief, and the crucifixion of the Lord of glory! There is no government—monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, or republic—that is perfect; all have great truths and excellences; all have the elements of evil also in them; we accept them as approximations to what should be, and wait for that blessed day when a King shall reign in justice, and a people, his subjects, shall do righteously.

First of all, when the multitude came to Pilate, "they began to accuse him," that is, Jesus, alleging against him falsehoods which his whole life contradicted. "We found this fellow perverting the nation,"—every lesson that he taught was fitted to instruct, to sanctify, and to elevate the nation,—"forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar." The very reverse was fact; for they brought to him a penny; they asked him if they should give tribute to Cæsar? and he said, "Whose superscription is this on it?" They answered him, "Cæsar's." His answer then was, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." There was no crime really; malignity invented what truth and fact could not supply. Pilate then asked him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" And Jesus answered, in language the most solemn and

the most emphatic, "I am;" or according to the idiom which amongst the Jews was the most decided affirmation, "Thou sayest it,"—that is, "Thou sayest that which I claim to be, and which I really and truly am." "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man." He was evidently anxious to let him go; he was afraid lest he should imbrue his hands in innocent blood if he gave him up to be crucified. But instead of Pilate's answer falling like oil upon the troubled waves of the democracy, it only exasperated them the more,—"they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place." Then Pilate, always anxious to find a crevice for escape, evidently a man struggling between what his conscience told him was his duty, and what his interests and his convenience told him would be his safety—gave way to the dictates of expediency to save his crown, and he lost it. Principle is the path to success; what seems expedient, if it be contrary to principle, never is so. What is principle, though it seem inexpedient, always in the long run necessarily is expedient. Pilate, anxious to find a crevice of escape, when he "heard of Galilee, asked whether the man were a Galilean." And when they said he was so, he then thought, "Now I can get rid of all trouble; I shall be able to save my conscience and to save my throne,—two things, neither of which I will resign without a struggle. But if I come to the point, when I am forced to take my choice, then I will give up my conscience rather than give up my crown." When he heard he was of Galilee, which "belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod." Herod was exceedingly glad of this. He and

Pilate had been at war with each other. He was very glad of this; for he was desirous to see a man of some notoriety as he supposed; "and he hoped to have seen some miracles done by him,"—as fine phenomena, as a sort of aurora borealis, or an eclipse of the sun or the moon, or as a fine chemical experiment, and not as the proofs of a glorious truth, which all Christ's miracles were. "He hoped," therefore, "to have seen some miracle done by him," as a gratification to his taste, and which he would enjoy as a very splendid pyrotechnical display. But in this desire he was disappointed; for Jesus was silent. "He questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing." Then Herod, probably exasperated at this, thinking that Christ did not show towards monarchy the deference that was due—when it would have been a violation of all truth, and all duty, and all principle for Christ to have done in the way that Herod wished—when he saw that Christ was not thus to be made to give up where giving up would have been sacrifice, "Herod with his men of war set him at nought,"—that is, made an amusement of him,—“and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe. “The Roman emperors wore purple robes, the Jewish kings wore white ones; but in both cases, and especially in the latter, they wore magnificent tissues of silver; and you will recollect reading in Scripture of Herod arrayed in his robes on a festive day, when the sheen or the splendour of the sun striking against the silver in his robes made him appear in all the splendour of a god; and the people bowed the knee, and gave him idolatrous worship. Now he put upon Christ the robe that should indicate to the people his crimes, and that should make him an object for their ridicule or their scorn, and expose him as the

most detested and hateful in the group of criminals, among whom he was then to suffer. It is then stated that the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they "were at enmity between themselves." I have often heard this text quoted very inappropriately; I have heard it said that Infidelity and Popery can coalesce when truth is to be crucified. That is perfectly true; but the illustration given is not true,—"Just as Pilate and Herod were made friends, when Christ was to be crucified." Now the fact is, their friendship was restored, not by their conjoint determination to crucify the Lord of glory; but Herod felt Pilate's courtesy and kindness so great in giving him a sight of this man Jesus, that he forgave the quarrel of the past, and in return for the courtesy that Pilate had shown him, Herod restored him to friendship and communion with himself. Let us quote even illustrations correctly if we can, and not illustrate what in itself is most true, by a precedent that really does not bear upon the subject at all.

Then Pilate, when he found that Jesus was returned to him, and that Herod would have nothing to do with him, "called together the chief priests, and the rulers, and the people." Mark how reluctant Pilate is to crucify Jesus. He felt it to be the most painful act in his life; he would have given all that he had, short of his sovereignty and his popularity with the people; but he could not find an excuse for letting Christ go. There was a great deal about Pilate in this respect which indicates that he was a humane man, and that nothing but the selfish desire to maintain what he subsequently lost made him give up Christ to the fury, the merciless fury of the exasperated chief

priests, and scribes, and people. He then said to them again, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him." "Now then," beseechingly a ruler says to his subjects, "I will therefore chastise him, and release him." "Let us have done with this business; it is evident there is something wrong in your condemnation. I would not venture to say that you, my subjects, are capable of doing wrong; but I will just chastise him, which is punishment enough for what he has done, and then I will let him go." "For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast." And they cried out all at once, saying, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas,"—a murderer and a robber, then in prison. "Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus,"—still anxious to release him,—"spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him." Then he tried it a third time; every effort he exhausted in order to let Jesus go. "Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." But "they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified." And then the ruler's conscience was placed in abeyance, in deference to the maintenance of his crown; and the people's voice, whose regards he was bent at all hazards on conciliating as the supposed true safety and strength of his throne, prevailed, and he "gave sentence that it should be as they required." You see in Pilate much that was humane, you see in his conduct much that was extremely vacillating;

you see a man balancing his interests, his apparent interests, against his obvious duty, losing all the respect that was due to a ruler, and giving way where firmness might have been martyrdom, but when it would have been peace in his conscience more precious than a crown, and the reflection that at least he had tried to do his duty.

After this, Jesus was led away to be crucified. "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him." Then he turned round to them, and in most touching and prophetic accents he said, "Daughters of Jerusalem,"—that is, women of Jerusalem,—“weep not for me,”—I am really not to be wept for,—“but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they that have no children will feel thankful to God,”—days when the mother shall devour her child, as Josephus records in the horrors of famine at that terrible scene, and when the poor refugees, who have now conspired with a miserable and a vacillating prince in crucifying in their ignorance the Lord of glory, “will,” as Josephus relates, “rush into the sewers, and dens, and cellars of Jerusalem, and pray that the mountains would fall upon them, and hide them from the terrible sufferings which seemed still further to await them.” All this was literally fulfilled at the siege and downfall of Jerusalem. And Jesus says, “If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?”—that is, if a fire be so intense that it makes fuel of a green branch just cut from the parent trunk, what tremendous and speedy havoc will it make of a tree dry and just ready for the burning! If they do this to me, who am innocent, what will they do to

them that are guilty? "If the righteous scarcely be saved," to apply it to another case, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

They then crucified him, it is said, between two thieves: and the prayer of Jesus as a priest arose, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Their ignorance palliated their crime, but did not exculpate them. "Had they known," says the apostle, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." I believe it was most true that numbers of those who were engaged in this awful tragedy did not know that he was the Messiah. They believed that he was an impostor; but there was evidence enough to convince them, if they had examined it, that he was the Messiah. For instance, the sceptic will not be condemned at the judgment-seat for his scepticism, but he will be condemned for not having applied to the investigation of truth, the impartiality, the candour, the research which a naturalist expends on the petal of a flower, or the mineralogist on a mineral, or the astronomer on the investigation of the orbit of a comet, or a planet, or the sun. The great crime is not in the conclusion, but in the steps that lead to that conclusion. And I must say, I respect the sceptic who says, "I have searched and thought, and with pain I come to the conclusion that Christianity is untrue." But whenever the sceptic triumphs in his scepticism, and rejoices in the conclusion to which he has come, I always suspect that man's heart, as well as am amazed at the man's head. But if a man were to come to me, and say, "I am a sceptic, and I have come to that conclusion with great research," then he is much nearer the kingdom of heaven than many a man that cries, "Lord, Lord," while in his deeds he actually denies him. Not

that I believe scepticism is a logical conclusion: for no fact in the whole annals of the past is there more triumphant, broad, and cumulative proof than for this—that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners; the Bible the reflection of his character, and the revelation of his holy and his blessed will.

We then read, that they put an inscription upon the cross, "This is the King of the Jews." And here occurs the remarkable and touching instance of the two thieves, crucified the one upon the left, and the other upon the right of Jesus; one convinced and converted, and the other unbelieving, and dying in his unbelief. We read, "it was about the sixth hour;" that is, twelve o'clock; and from twelve to three, the ninth hour, when he died; and then we are told there was darkness over all the earth. Several heathen writers refer to a preternatural darkness that took place at that time; the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was "rent,"—to indicate that the Levitical economy was at an end, the holy of holies was laid bare; there is to be none in the Christian church, but all are priests, all have equal access to God in Christ, and to stand before him in his holy temple. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." "Having said thus, he gave up the ghost,"—literally translated, "he dismissed his spirit." The death of Christ was voluntary. He gave up his spirit in the full strength and vigour of his life; he poured out his soul unto death, breathing forth his victory in those last accents recorded by the Evangelist John, "It is finished;"—"he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion"—a Roman soldier looking on—"saw what was done," he exclaimed, from the force of proof and conviction, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

The whole spectacle proves that he was so. We have then the instance of Joseph of Arimathea, evidently a believer, like Simeon waiting for the consolation of Israel, providing a tomb for Him for whom the world had provided only a cross; and fulfilling what the ancient prophet had said, "that he was with the wicked in his death, and with the rich in his grave."

Now, did you ever read a chapter in romance, ancient or modern, a division in a poem, ancient or modern, that can approach to this in awful magnificence and grandeur? Never was such a story written, never was there such evidence that the painter of it sketched from a living original, never such proof that this is no cunningly devised fable, never such demonstration underlying the whole portrait that He who was here, was and is what he professed to be, and what we glory in worshipping him as, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners.

CHAPTER XXIII. 50, 51.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA—GENEROUS—MONEY NOT NECESSARY TO
GENEROSITY—JUST—A CHRISTIAN—A PROTESTANT—GENERAL
COUNCILS—RICHES.

THERE is a character in this chapter not unworthy of special analysis. It is stated in ver. 50: "And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and just: (the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: which also himself waited for the kingdom of God."

In the course of my explanatory remarks on this chapter I was not able to enter as I could desire on the beautiful portrait that is here sketched, of a distinguished senator, or chief of the Sanhedrim among the Jews; who was faithful amid the faithful few, when Christ was placed at the bar of his country, and tried as a malefactor, though the Son of God, the Prince of the kings of the earth. We find here then a character, rare, unhappily, in that day, drawn by the pen of inspiration, possessed of some traits so singularly beautiful, and contrasting with those that were around it, that it is worthy of our study, as a miniature amid the many that are contained in this blessed volume,—this record of holy character, of responsibility and of duty.

First of all, we have the personal character of this distinguished protestor in the midst of the Sanhedrim. The Sanhedrim, I have said before, was the council, or senate, or parliament, if you like, of the Jews. It was presided over by the high-priest; the chief priests and certain laymen were its constituent and component members; and one of them was Joseph of Arimathea. "He was a good man, and a just man, and he waited for the kingdom of God." The word "good," in the original, means more frequently generous than simply free from vice or wickedness of any sort. It denotes, therefore, that this Joseph of Arimathea was a liberal and generous man; one that gave with an open hand, freely from the heart, that which God had previously given him. This is a trait worthy of our imitation. Are we made rich? It is that some of the poor may benefit by our excess. Are we learned? It is that the ignorant may be enlightened by our learning. Have we influence of any sort, or power, or authority? It is, that those subject to us and connected with us, and needing what we have, and they have not, may derive from us blessings temporal and spiritual, and it may be eternal. Solomon was never made wise only for himself; the rich man in the parable, though he thought otherwise, was not made rich for himself. One man who is stronger than his fellows, is strong that he may aid the weak; one who is richer than his neighbour, is richer that he may benefit the poor. It is the great law of the economy under which we live, that no man shall live for himself; and singularly enough, he will find that the less he lives for himself, the more he does so in the right sense of the word; and that no man so enjoys himself as he that sacrifices himself for the benefit and advantage of others.

But all that I have said supposes that you have something to give. But it is announced in almost every page of the Bible that you may be rich without riches, you may be generous without the power of making that generosity known. There may be in the heart a perfect mine of generosity when there is nothing in the hand to express that generosity to the world and to mankind. If you have no wealth on which you can draw, if you have no social influence which you can wield for the benefit of others, still there is the inexhaustible capital of a liberal, a gracious, a sanctified heart that may pour forth its expressions in looks of love, in words of sympathy, in wishes that we could do what we would do; and very often a kind word is to a poor man as weighty as gold, and an affectionate look as comforting as warm raiment. Not that you are to make the look a substitute for the warm raiment; but where there is no means of giving from your liberality, you have what you can give instead of means that you have not—words of kindness, looks of love, expressions of sympathy; and, above all, when you have nothing that you can spare for others, you can pray to him who is the Husband of the widow, and the Father of the orphan, that he would put it into the heart of them that have, to give more liberally to them that have not. Thus we may be good without the expression of goodness; liberal, though in providence we may have nothing to give. God sees the heart; and judges what we are, not by what we give, but by what we feel; and classes us, according as he sees a truly sympathising and gracious heart, with Joseph of Arimathea, a good or a generous man.

But, in the second place, in this character it is stated

that he was not only generous, but he was also a *just* man. Now very often the aphorism is quoted, "We must just be before we are generous." I think that is wrong; even as it would be wrong to say, we ought to be generous before we are just. We ought not to put the two in antagonism; we ought to be both just and generous, generous and just: and if we be Christians we shall be so. Of course we must pay our debts before we give away in liberality, or in charity; we must be just in order to have a basis on which to be generous. No man can be generous who is not just; and let me add, though it may seem almost a contradiction, no man can be just who is not generous. We owe generosity; we may owe no man anything, yet we owe to love one another—and the man that does not love, and, as the expression of that love, do what he can to help them that are needy, is not just. It is therefore absurd to put justice and generosity in antagonism; the two must go together; God has joined them, and what God has joined man may not put asunder. Hence the Christian is defined as one that does justly, therefore loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God.

But there is a third trait in this good man. He was not only generous, he was not only just, but he was what is the true spring, and source, and fountain of both—a Christian. It was the grace of God in his heart that made him a just man and a generous man; for, it is added, "he waited for the kingdom of God,"—that is, he was a Christian. We read, that Simeon waited for the "consolation of Israel." So we read again, "there were those that looked for redemption in Israel;" Joseph was one that looked for the kingdom of God. Therefore, he had read the Old Testament Scriptures;

therefore, he had believed what he read. He accordingly looked for a Saviour; the Christian of his day looked forward to a coming Saviour, just as the Christian of our day looks backward and upward to a Saviour that has come. It is an expression of true and lively faith in Christ as the only Redeemer. He was a Christian, and gave evidence of it by resting upon Christ. What is a Christian? One that looks to, leans on Christ. Christ—Christian; one that belongs to Christ, anointed with him, united to him. And because he was a Christian, he was just and generous. And the proof of this is such a passage as the following: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation teacheth us to live soberly,”—that is, to do our duty to ourselves; secondly, “justly,”—that is, to do our duty to our neighbour; and lastly, “godly,”—that is, to fulfil our obligations to our God: or, to do “justly,” the duty to ourselves; “to love mercy,” the duty to our neighbour; “and to walk humbly with our God,”—our obligations to our God. But the spring of it all is defined to be grace; and therefore, it was the Christianity of this man that overflowed his character, gave it its bright tints, its holy tones, its onward and its upward progress, and made him stand up for Christ where so few were disposed or willing to do so.

Having seen then his character, fulfilling the three obligations of duty to himself, duty to his neighbour, and duty to his God, up to the measure of his opportunity and the grace that was given him, let me now notice how he carried his Christian character into his official life. You will observe it stated here in very few words, but words that are extremely significant. “The same”—that is, Joseph—“had not consented to

the counsel and deed of them,"—that is, those that denied Christ, who condemned him, and regarded him as a malefactor. He did not consent to it. In the Bible a negative of this description is very often the most expressive positive. I have not the least doubt, that, if time permitted, I might show that this implies that he stood up and boldly protested against the conduct of them who condemned Christ at the judgment of the Sanhedrim as a malefactor, guilty of blasphemy, and that ought to be punished with death. Now Joseph of Arimathea was not contented with being a Christian in his closet; he was a Christian in the parliament. That man, you may depend upon it, whose Christianity is restricted to his own bosom or to his own closet, and who, when he enters the House of Commons, or the House of Lords, forgets that he is a Christian, and consents to laws that are heathen, or gives votes that are atheistic, may think himself a Christian; but I cannot see how it is possible to discover it. It seems to me that a man's Christianity is not like his cloak—something that he is to wear in its place, and hang up and leave behind him when he goes into a drawing-room, or into a parliament, or into an office; but that it is part and parcel of himself; the very texture of his soul, that he is not to lay aside here, and put on there; but that he is to have always governing, controlling, sanctifying, inspiring every thought he thinks, every word he speaks, and every act that he does. I fear that such Christianity is rare. Some do not act in public as Christians because they think Christianity is a personal thing. It is a personal thing, and it is supremely a personal thing; but it is not exclusively a personal

thing. There is the distinction—it is supremely a personal thing, but not exclusively a personal thing. Do you think the queen of Tahiti did wrong, when she became a Christian, to tell her subjects, “Here is a chapel I have built for your use, and here are missionaries I will maintain for your instruction? I do not drive you to chapel by the sword—that would be persecution—I will not interfere with your conscience—that would be intolerance—but I have provided for you a chapel, and the means of knowing and worshipping God.” I think that was Christianity; or doing as a queen that which she is requested to do in the second Psalm,—“Kiss the Son, ye kings of the earth, lest ye perish from the way.” I know that others will feel this difficulty; that they are afraid lest if they should profess to be Christians in the House of Commons, in the House of Lords, in a public assembly of any sort, it should be supposed that it is ostentation. I think you misconceive me if you come to that conclusion. I do not mean that a member of parliament should stand up in the House of Commons, and say, “Now I am a Christian, and I will prove it by texts from the Bible.” That would be absurd, and would not show much real Christianity. But what he is to do should be, so to speak, that all he is speaking be governed by Christian principle. It is not quoting texts that make Christianity. I have heard speeches full of texts that were most unchristian, I have heard speeches without a text in them that were Christian from beginning to end. We are to show that we are Christians, not by quoting texts, but by doing acts and speaking words that are the echoes of Christianity, and indicate

its inspiration, its presence, and its power. So Joseph of Arimathea did. I dare say he was one of the most courteous members of the Sanhedrim; one of the most quiet, the least bustling, the least of an aristocrat, the least of a democrat; but when a crisis came, when it must be shown on whose side he was, he consented not to the counsel of them that gave up Christ as a malefactor.

Joseph of Arimathea was obviously a Protestant. What is a Protestant? It is derived from the word *protestor*—"I witness for," or, "I protest." And the Christians at the Diet of Spires called themselves "Protestants," because they protested against a decision that was inconsistent with truth and scriptural Christianity; and they became, as I showed you, the successors of the witnesses that prophesied in sackcloth. Here, then, was Joseph of Arimathea standing up in the midst of the Sanhedrim, and showing himself a Protestant; standing for Christ when all beside and around him were apostates, denying Christ, crucifying the Lord, and putting him to an open shame.

Joseph of Arimathea stood alone in the midst of the Sanhedrim. I do not know a position that is more difficult, or one in this world more trying, than to stand alone when the cause of truth and of righteousness is in peril. One does not like to be separated from the crowd, to be scoffed at; one would rather be without it; but when duty demands that you shall take up the position that must pay the penalty of being abused, then you must court and welcome abuse as a bride, and rejoice in it for Christ's sake. Now Joseph of Arimathea remained alone, standing for truth when all the Sanhedrim besides voted against him.

“Truth crush'd to earth will rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers ;
But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,
And dies amid her worshippers.”

Let me notice, in the next place, that we have in this fact of the Jewish Sanhedrim giving up Christ, and one only standing up for Christ, that general councils were not infallible in the days of the Jewish Church, and I cannot see from their future history, that they have shown themselves infallible in the days and during the experience of the Christian Church. Now here was a Sanhedrim in which the vast majority were clergy; and the only one in it that said a word for Christ was a Christian layman, and not a rabbi, or a chief priest, or a chief Pharisee, or even a scribe at all.

Riches do not necessarily and always corrupt those that have them. Joseph of Arimathea was not only a counsellor or senator, not only a just man, a good man, a Christian man, but we read also in the Gospel of St. Matthew, where he is described, that he was also a rich man.

In the very worst state into which the Church may have sunk, there are bright and beautiful exceptions. The Jewish Church at this day had become almost universally apostate; yet here was a Simeon, there was an Anna, there was a Joseph of Arimathea, and there again was a Nicodemus,—Christians, in it, but not of it; flowerets in the bleak desert that the sirocco had not blasted; sweet springs in the midst of the wilderness that had not exhausted all their riches; faithful amid the faithless, lights in the universal eclipse, protesting against the corruption, and preserving their robes

unspotted by it. Just as in the Church of Rome in its worst days, they were not all Hildebrands.

Are we thus on Christ's side? Who is on the Lord's side? Should we have joined with Joseph the counsellor of Arimathea in the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem? That we cannot say; but I can put it in another shape. Do we imitate Joseph by standing for truth, speaking for it, living for it, giving for it, in the midst of a world that disowns and denies him?

NOTE.—[34.] Spoken apparently during the act of the crucifixion, or immediately that the crosses were set up. Now first in the fullest sense, from the wounds in his feet and hands, is his blood shed, *εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν* (Matt. xxvi. 28), and he inaugurates his intercessional office by a prayer for his murderers,—*ἄφες αὐτοῖς*. This also is a fulfilment of Scripture (Isa. liii. 12), where the contents of our verses 33, 34, are remarkably pointed out. His teaching ended at verse 31. His high priesthood is now begun. His first three sayings on the cross are for others, see ver. 43; John xix. 26, 27. *Πάτερ*. He is the Son of God, and he speaks in the fulness of this covenant relation,—*ἐγὼ ᾄδω ὅτι πάντοτέ μου ἀκούεις*. It is not merely a prayer, but the prayer of the Great Intercessor, which is always heard. Notice, that though on the cross, there is no alienation, no wrath of condemnation, between the Father and the Son. *ἄφες αὐτοῖς*. Who are here intended? Doubtless, first and directly, the four soldiers, whose work it had been to crucify him. The *ποιῶσι* points directly at this; and it is surely a mistake to suppose that they wanted no forgiveness, because they were only doing their duty. Stier remarks, "This is only a misleading fallacy, for they were sinners even as others, and their obedient and formal performance of their duty was not without a sinful pleasure in doing it, or at all events formed part of their entire standing as sinners, included in that sin of the world to which the Lord here ascribes his crucifixion."—vi. 501. But not only to them, but to them as the representatives of that sin of the world, does this prayer apply.

The nominative to ποιῶσι is οἱ ἄνθρωποι,—mankind—the Jewish nation, as the next moving agent in his death—but all of us, inasmuch as for our sins he was bruised. οὐ γὰρ οἶδασι τί ποιῶσι. Primarily, as before, spoken of the soldiers, then of the council who delivered him up, (see John xi. 49, ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε οὐδέν), then of all whose sin is from lack of knowledge of the truths,—of what sin is, and what it has done, even the crucifixion of the Lord. But certainly, from this intercession is excluded that one sin,—strikingly brought out by the passage just cited as committed by him who said it, viz. Caiaphas, and hinted at again by the Lord (John xix. 11), and perhaps also by the awful answer (Matt. xxvi. 64, Σὺ εἶπας), “Thou hast said it,” viz. in prophecy, John xi. 49; see also Matt. xii. 31; 1 John v. 16. Observe, that between the two members of this prayer lies the work of the Spirit leading to repentance,—the prayer that they may have their eyes opened, and know what they have done; which is the necessary subjective condition of forgiveness of sins.

It is remarkable how, in three following sayings, the Lord appears as Prophet, Priest, and King: as Prophet, to the daughters of Jerusalem—Priest, interceding for forgiveness—King, acknowledged by the penitent thief, and answering his prayer.—*Alford.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

EARLY VISIT TO THE TOMB—NO EXPECTATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS—IMPOSSIBILITY OF INFIDEL OBJECTIONS—ANGEL APPEARANCES—CHRIST'S BODY AS OURS—FEMALE DEVOTEDNESS—THE MEANING OF THE THIRD DAY—DISCIPLES GOING TO EMMAUS—CHRIST PREACHES HIMSELF—BREAKING OF BREAD NOT COMMUNION—BODY AFTER RESURRECTION—JESUS ASCENDS AND IS WORSHIPPED.

THIS is the last, and not the least instructive chapter of that interesting Gospel which we have read and pondered together. It crowns the toils, the sufferings, and the sacrifice of the Son of God, and reveals to us the magnificent close to so martyr-like and striking a biography. We are told that "upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning"—literally translated, "in the deep dawn"—"they came unto the sepulchre;" that is, certain women, as it appears; bringing with them sweet spices, which were used in ancient times, as they are found in the mummies in the pyramids of Egypt, to preserve, by their antiseptic powers, the body from corruption, and keep it apparently living as long as possible. The very embalming of their dead by the ancient Egyptians was only a struggling presentiment of immortality, or a thirst which human nature in its agony exhibits for that existence hereafter, and reluctance to give way to death, which is one of the deepest instincts of our common nature. These women, therefore, brought spices in order to embalm that body which was now taken from them, without expecting that he was really

to rise again. It is one of the most powerful proofs of the reality of the Resurrection, and of the credibility of its witnesses, that there was not one of them that expected it. They had heard Jesus dimly intimate the fact, but neither an apostle, a disciple, nor a friend of Jesus, clearly comprehended or really expected that he would rise again from that sepulchre in which he was laid—the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, hewn out of the rock, in which no man was ever laid before. When they came to this deep cave in the rock, they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. Let us recollect that the stone was ordered to be placed there by the Pharisees, because a rumour went abroad that his disciples would steal the body, and say that he had risen from the dead; they therefore ordered a large stone—it may have been of a ton weight—a very large and massive stone, to be put at the sepulchre, and sealed and made secure; and they appointed a guard—a Roman guard—to watch the tomb; and it was a moonlight night. Now, you have often heard explained the utter impossibility that eleven apostles, men that possessed no resources, could have come, caught a Roman guard all asleep with singular unanimity at the same moment, (when a Roman sentinel found sleeping at his post was punished with instant death,) and these eleven men rolled away a stone of a ton weight, after unsealing it, took out this body in the moonlight, when Jerusalem had at least a million of people in it, and of that million vast numbers bivouacked upon the streets, because it was a high festival, and there was not room enough in the houses. Is it credible that these eleven men carried this body through the streets, and so secreted it that the organized police of Rome were

unable to find it, and never found it to this day? Who is the credulous man? It is the sceptic, not the Christian. It needs an immense mass of credulity, of stupid credulity, to be a sceptic; it needs but common sense and a candid mind, to accept of the truths of Christianity.

We read that after this, when they came to the tomb and found not Jesus, they were afraid, and bowed their faces to the ground. And two angels, called here "men," stood by them in shining garments, and said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" How like is that to the passage in the Book of Revelation: "I am Alpha and Omega; I was dead and am alive, and live for ever." And then these two angel ministrants appealed to them and said, "Do not you recollect what he said to you, how he spoke to you, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again?" How beautiful is that! that these angels should not proclaim something from their own minds, but should appeal to that written testimony which Christ had given, and which the Old Testament Scriptures contained. We may just notice here, too, how remarkable these words are, "He is not here, but is risen." The members of the Church of Rome allege that the body of Christ can be upon ten thousand altars at one and the same moment, by a special property that belongs to it. But here is the assertion that his body—as God he fills all space—can only be in one place at a time. "He is not here, but risen." He cannot be here and there at one and the same moment; a decisive proof that he was true man, in all points like as we are, sin excepted. Now when these women—Mary Magdalene,

and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James—heard these things, they came and told them to the apostles. How completely does woman seem to have recovered the position that she lost in Paradise! She was first deceived; she was first the deceiver of Adam, and she was therefore the first, and chiefest, and guiltiest criminal of the twain; but at the crucifixion we find traits come out that cannot be mere accident. Amid all the clamour of tongues that yelled through the streets of Jerusalem against the blessed Redeemer, not one female voice was heard. In every instance where a woman appears in the Gospel, it is to shelter and give a home and hospitality to the houseless Son of man. When he hung upon the cross they were the last to abandon him; and when he rose from the tomb they were the first to visit the grave, and carry the glad tidings of great joy. Thus it seems as if it were designed in the great economy of heaven that she who was first in the fall should be first also in the grand restoration. Peter and the rest of the apostles thought it was an idle tale: "Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves." This seems one of the most trivial remarks that could possibly be made. An ordinary historian striking out a story would never have thought of putting in what would be thought so trivial a thing as that the linen clothes that were wrapped about his head were rolled up and laid aside, or, as it is here, laid by themselves. This is, however, most instructive; for what does it show? That when Christ rose, the body could not have been removed by others; because, if others had come to do it by stealth, they would have left everything in confusion. If you have ever been

in a shop that has been robbed, or a house that has been broken into, you will find that the thieves have carried away the wealth, but they have left everything in confusion in every place into which they have penetrated. They have no time to arrange or lay aside the parcels that they have disturbed. But here you find that the clothes were rolled up, and carefully laid aside. The Resurrection was not a thing done violently and in alarm, but composedly and calmly, as a thing previously arranged, and perfectly and quietly completed.

After this we have an exquisite gem—the more beautiful for its setting—that of the two disciples that were journeying to Emmaus, about threescore furlongs from Jerusalem; and these two disciples, on the Sunday—for it was our Sunday—talked together about the things which had happened. I may here, in speaking of the Sunday, show you how there were three days between the crucifixion and resurrection. Our Lord was crucified between the evenings, that is, about three o'clock on the Friday, and he rose from the dead in the deep dawn, or in the morning of what we call Sunday. Now recollect, it was not three complete days, in the sense that they were three times twenty-four hours. The Jewish days, as you are aware, begin always at sunset. If you walk along the streets of London you will see every Jew put to shame many Christians; I have seen the shutters up, and on some of the Jewish shops bills stating that their shops closed at such an hour on Friday, they will open at such an hour on Saturday. The Jew's Sunday begins at sunset on Friday; his shop would close at four o'clock in winter, then at five, then at seven, as sunset is later,

and lastly towards nine. That is the beginning of his Sunday; and Saturday at sunset ends his Sunday. Now if Christ was crucified on Friday, from Thursday night till Friday night was the first day. He was crucified three or four hours before the end of the first day. From Friday night till Saturday night at six o'clock was the second day; and from Saturday night at six o'clock till Sunday night at six o'clock P.M. was the third day; so that Jesus plainly rose about the middle of the third day after his crucifixion. We thus see how exact and strict the words are, "He rose again from the dead on the third day."

Now these disciples were journeying to Emmaus, and they talked together about the things that had happened. These things had made a very deep and solemn impression, and they were themselves believers, though unenlightened believers, in the doctrine of the cross. While they were doing so, Jesus drew near and went with them. That was constituting them a church. What is a church? The radical definition is, "Wheresoever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now, here is a specimen of a movable church; it was a church journeying from Jerusalem towards the village of Emmaus; and a truer church than is often met with in mediæval cathedrals, amidst all the pomp and splendour of gorgeous rites. Jesus drew near, "but their eyes were holden that they should not know him." It was not that he was altered, but that their eyes were withheld, or rendered unable to see him; not their sight taken away, but their cognisance of his individuality darkened. "And he said unto them"—now here is a specimen of not revealing oneself, and yet not stating what is untrue—

“And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?” He knew quite well, but he asked in order to get the answer; and in another part, where they spoke of these things, he asked, “What things?”—simply, not revealing himself. “And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem,”—literally, “Hast thou been lodging in Jerusalem?” meaning that at that great festival from all parts of the empire many were met in Jerusalem,—“Hast thou been lodging in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?” And when he said, “What things?” they answered, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet.” The word “was” there is in the imperfect tense, “which continued to be and showed himself to be a prophet, mighty in deed”—his miracles—“and word”—“Never man spake like this man”—“before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted”—and they thought their trust had given way—“that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done,” and we fear Israel is not yet delivered. But they added,—what had startled them and made them think there was something more in it than met the eye,—that certain women came who had seen a vision of angels, and they said he was alive, and that the sepulchre was empty, and, when they looked in, they saw him not. Then Jesus said to them, “O fools, and slow of heart!” It is a pity that the word is translated “fools”—it is a most improper translation.

The Greek word is ἀνόητοι, which means men without perception. "O persons," as it were, "inconsiderate, unthinking, without justly examining the truths and facts that have come before you." And then he says, "If you believe these prophets, ought not the Messiah—the Messiah spoken of in prophecy—ought he not to have suffered these very things that you are so startled at?" And then after that he preached a sermon that we wish we had, but that no doubt it is better that we have not, for if it had been good for us it had been given; beginning at Moses, and the Psalms, and the Prophets, he showed them all the things concerning himself. Thus it is quite true that Moses and the prophets wrote about Christ. And then "they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went." They must have taken some seven or eight hours to walk the long distance. "And he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and gave unto them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." Now this was not the Lord's Supper. In the first place, there is no proof whatever that the Lord's Supper was celebrated a second time till after the ascension of Christ, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit of God: at least till after the ascension. It was celebrated first by himself, and there were present only twelve apostles; and these two disciples journeying to Emmaus could have known nothing about the institution at all; at least in all probability they did not; and it is absurd to suppose that they that doubted the meaning

and the end of the institution of the Lord's Supper could have celebrated it without some instruction or information about its meaning. It is plain, therefore, that it was simply an act of hospitality. Protestants have rarely supposed it was the Lord's Supper. But the Roman Catholics have an omission in their mass: they do not give the cup to the laity, though Christ said of the bread, "Take, eat," but of the cup especially—as if a prophetic anticipation of its omission—"Drink ye *all* of it." Now the Roman Catholics are ill off for texts to vindicate the practice they have introduced in later years, of withholding the cup; and in this instance they apply to the Lord's Supper this passage, because there is no mention about the cup. But it is clear that it does not relate to the Lord's Supper; and not relating to it, they cannot prove that it is an authority for the omitting of the cup in the administration of it.

How beautiful is that passage, "Did not our hearts burn within us"—what joy, what delight, what ecstasy did we feel when he, the Inspirer of the Bible, eloquently expounded that Bible, and showed us what we thought dim shadows, to be lights which show his own glory and brightness! And then when he disappeared from them, the selfsame hour they returned to Jerusalem, and said to the eleven, "The Lord is risen indeed;" that is to say, there is no doubt about it any more; and, in order to put an end to it, "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them." We read that the two disciples knew Jesus "in breaking of bread." How is it that Christ could have been known by his breaking of bread? These two disciples journeying to Emmaus did not know him by his speech; their eyes were holden that they did not comprehend him. How is it that

they knew him by his breaking of bread? One explanation is, that the veil or mist was withdrawn from their eyes; the other explanation, and not the less probable, is, that when he took the bread in his holy hand to distribute, they saw the mark of the nails that had been there, just as he showed them afterwards the mark of the nails on his hands and his feet; and by the mark, or scar, that was left, they knew that it was the Lord indeed. We then find that some of them were troubled, and in another gospel we learn that especially Thomas was so. And Jesus said to them, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And we read that he ate "a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb."

There were three stages, if you will allow the expression, in our Lord's personality. First, as he was from his birth to his crucifixion; and secondly, during the period that he was on the earth after his resurrection and prior to his ascension; and, thirdly, as he now is in his ascended state. There is some reason for believing that our bodies, in the millennial reign when Christ comes again, raised from the dead, will just be like his risen body during its forty days' sojourn upon the earth; and that after the millennial reign our bodies will be like his ascension body, something more glorious still.

He again explains the Scriptures respecting himself; and gave their commission to the apostles, and said, "I send you the promise of my Father"—that is, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, as expressed at greater length in John's Gospel. And they were to tarry at Jerusalem, as we find, in the Acts of the

Apostles, they actually did. And then "he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," which is a brief account of his ascension; and we are told that in like manner as he ascended into heaven, so will he come again. In the 52d verse we have the evident assertion of his deity; for "they *worshipped* him." I admit that the word translated here "worship," is sometimes used in the sense of deference or respect to a superior person. But here he was received out of sight, was lifted into heaven; and therefore the word is evidently used in the strictest sense—they gave him divine worship and adoration. And they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and," as became the recipients of such good news, "they were continually in the temple," while the temple stood, "praising and blessing God. Amen."

CHAPTER XXIV. 44—47.

CHRIST THE PREACHER AND THE SUBJECT—CHRIST'S REVERENCE OF THE BIBLE—THE OLD TESTAMENT INSPIRED—PORTRAIT OF JESUS—A DIVINE TEACHER—SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE—PREACHING THE CROSS—AMBASSADOR AND PRIEST—THE JEW FIRST.

I MUST touch for a little on one very interesting part of the chapter: "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

We have dwelt so long on the exposition of the chapter, from its singular beauty, as well as its being the last of this Gospel, that I shall not say much in exhibiting this expressive though brief epitome of the distinguishing truths of Christianity. It was a deeply interesting scene, a highly favoured congregation, when Christ himself, risen from the dead, appeared in the midst of the wondering group, and himself became the preacher

of the great salvation which he had effected upon the cross, and commissioned them now to proclaim to mankind. There are certain truths, however, in this small portion of the chapter that are extremely instructive and suggestive. The first is, that when Jesus preached to them, the book that he appealed to for the confirmation of the doctrines that he taught was the word of God, the Bible, and that alone,—“the things written in the law, in Moses and the prophets, concerning me.” He appealed to no other standard, he quoted no other authority; he accepted the Bible as the exponent of the mind and will of God; and by that he set the precedent it becomes us to imitate, by appealing for the confirmation of every doctrine to this volume. How great must be the glory of that perfect book, seeing the Inspirer of the book sets the precedent of appealing to the book! He might have superseded it by his own declaration; he might have ignored it—Moses, the law, and the prophets—altogether, just as we disregard the taper of earth and the stars of the sky amid the blazing splendour of meridian day. But the Sun of Righteousness present in the midst of them, instead of putting out the ancient lights he had kindled, put these lights forward in greater splendour, and appealed to what was written in the law and in the prophets respecting the truths that related to himself. I do not know a higher testimony to the greatness of the book than that the Author of the book should constantly appeal to it. If we read Christ’s controversies with the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, we find in every instance that he says to them, “Have ye not read?”—is it not written?—what say the Scriptures?—“Search the

Scriptures, for these are they which testify of me." What makes this book still more precious, is the fact that when he expressed the innermost experiences of his heart, he did so not in words struck out for the moment, as he might have done, but in the very words provided for him in the Psalms some hundred years before—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." I cannot therefore think that such a book, having such an *imprimatur*, ought to be lightly spoken of; and what shall we think then of one who in this land has been sent to represent the sovereign of the Roman States, and who, writing concerning this book, says that the Bible is a book unintelligible, that it has turned pious and good heathens into a pack of lazy infidels and sceptics! What a contrast between a cardinal speaking of the Bible, and the Lord of Glory!—the one appealing to it for all, the other denouncing it as unfit for the perusal and perilous to the interests of mankind!

We have here evidence that the Old Testament Scriptures are full of Jesus Christ: "The things written in Moses and the prophets concerning me." Now in what respect is Christ thus written of in the Old Testament Scriptures? We have him in types,—the rock that was rent, the pillar of cloud by day, the brazen serpent; and those types, like a network of silver containing apples of gold, exhibit within their tiny dimensions something of the greatness and the glory of him who inspired Moses to record them. Then we have promises sounding along the centuries like sweet voices along the corridors of a majestic temple, and breathing forth Christ that was about to come; then we have the

ancient prophets, august and impressive ambassadors, saying, "We are not that Christ; we are not that prophet; he cometh after us whose shoe latchet we are not worthy to unloose: behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

In the next place, we learn from this appeal that the Old Testament Scriptures were inspired of God. Jesus appeals to Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, as being an inspired exposition of the things concerning himself. Now if these prophets, some of them living a thousand years before, wrote respecting Christ, they must have been inspired to do so, or in some instances they would have been mistaken. Read all the prophets previous to Isaiah, beginning with Moses and with Job, and ending with Malachi; in different centuries, in different circumstances, in different styles, they all prophesy respecting a personage who was to come into the world in the fulness of the times. Isaiah says he is a sufferer, crucified, dead; Malachi says he is the Mighty God; and another says, "whose goings forth have been of old, even for ever." One says he is to come in glory; another says he is to come in humility. One says he is to bear a cross; another, he is to wear a crown. Now how can you—supposing the New Testament extinct, or supposing its non-existence—apply these seemingly distinctive sketches to one grand and living original? You cannot till you see him; but when Christ comes, you find he is not a person that may by a little adaptation fit the prophecy, but that he is the only person that starts upon the floor of the world in whom all the promises find their fulfilment, and all prophecies their complete and perfect exhaustion. The answer then must be what

is given in Scripture itself—"Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

In the next place, we learn from this passage to be truly thankful for what is stated here,—that the Scriptures are genuine: "All that is written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me." Every specimen we have of traditional opinion leads us more and more to the conclusion that tradition is not a trustworthy guide to Christ, to truth, or to heaven. Many instances are given in the Bible: here is one instance very remarkable, and it has been frequently alluded to. It occurs where Jesus spoke of John in terms of special approbation. Peter said, "What shall this man do? Jesus said, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Now mark what is added: here is a tradition; here is one of the very purest, earliest, primitive traditions. If any traditions are likely to be good, the primitive ones are likely to be so. "Then went this saying abroad, that that disciple should not die." That is a tradition. Now mark how Scripture steps in and beautifully quenches it; "Jesus said not unto them, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" What an evidence to us that traditions are to be corrected by Scripture, not Scripture explained by tradition! If this text had only been read in any one of the sessions of the Council of Trent, they would not have talked so much nonsense, and canonized so large a mass of heresy, as they have had the misfortune to do. We have, therefore, the Scriptures spoken of here as written, and because written they are to us on that account the more precious, and the more accessible to us and our children.

Traditions of ancient truths were distorted into all the monstrous practices of heathendom. The Jews had the written Scriptures; and those written Scriptures constantly the corrective of every attempt on the part of Scribe and Pharisee to put tradition in their place: and Protestant Christianity is pure because it leans on the written word; Romish Christianity is corrupt because it draws its inspiration from oral and transmitted tradition.

Let me notice another very important lesson here. When Jesus wished his disciples to understand the Scriptures, what did he do? You will be told by Tractarian divines and by priests of the Church of Rome, that what we need is the opinion of the priest to explain the writings of the apostles, the traditions of the Church to illustrate the truths of the Bible! But you do not find this to be the case in the Bible itself. When Jesus wished these apostles, previously enlightened, to understand the Bible, he did not cast more light upon the written book, but he cast more light upon the understanding of the readers of the book. He did not give them an addition to the Bible, but he gave them additional light to their understandings; and what we want now is not a new Bible, but new understanding with which to read the old Bible. What we need now is not more Scripture, but more understanding within of the Scripture. The book is perfect, the reader of the book is fallen. We do not want the perfect book made more so, which is impossible; but the imperfect reader sanctified and enlightened, which ought to be the subject of our constant prayer. What would be the use of giving the blind man a more powerful magnifying glass, or a page with larger and more beautiful typography?

What the man wants is not a more convex lens, or a larger type on the page, but his eyes opened; and what we want, to understand the Bible, is not the Bible improved—(though explanation is auxiliary, and comment is in itself precious)—not the Bible improved or illuminated, but our hearts renewed, that in the light of this precious book we may understand its glorious truths, and be saved thereby.

Let us learn another lesson from this,—that the Old and New Testaments both proclaim the same blessed Gospel. The Jew was a Christian as truly, though not as fully and perfectly, as we are. The Jew had the Old Testament Scripture, which was full of Christ in the type; we have the New Testament Scripture, which reveals Christ as he is in person. The one is not a religion that is Jewish, and the other a religion that is Christian; but both are the same religion under different developments: the one, full of outline not filled up; the other, the outline filled up and brilliantly illuminated. The Old Testament is Christ in promise, the New Testament is Christ in performance; the Old Testament is Christ in prophecy, the New Testament is Christ in history; but both, like the twin lips of an oracle, utter one grand truth, preach one blessed gospel; and Levi, and Moses, and Aaron were saved by the same Saviour and through the same blood by which Matthew, and Peter, and James, and John were saved. There never has been but one true religion from the first promise in Paradise to the present hour. There have been many false, but always and everywhere one true. And now, mark the inference: if the Old Testament Scriptures were sufficient to teach Christ, (and by Jesus appealing to them for that purpose, they were so,)

then *à fortiori* the Old and the New Testaments together are sufficient to teach Christ. If moonlight can enable me to see an exquisite crystal or a beautiful flower, still more will sunlight enable me to do so. If in the dim and misty deep dawn of the ancient Levitical economy, Christ could be seen, believed on, and men be saved by him, much more may we see Christ and learn Christ, and trust in him, as he is revealed in the New Testament economy, and by the writings of the apostles and evangelists themselves.

But it will be argued by some one, who is a little hankering after traditional and ecclesiastical interpretation, that those apostles in that day had a Teacher in the midst of them that we have not; for here it was the Old Testament indeed sufficient, but it was the Old Testament explained, expounded, and unfolded by Christ himself who inspired it. My answer to that is, that there is the declaration,—that if they are blessed who have seen and believe, much more blessed are they who, having not seen, yet have believed. Besides, what are we told by that very Saviour who explained the Old Testament on this occasion? “It is expedient for you that I go away; but when the Comforter is come, whom I will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,” he will take my place. Now, you may have—and it is not fanaticism, it is not superstition, it is not a fevered fancy, it is sober and spiritual fact—teaching you as really, as truly, the Holy Spirit of God, Christ’s substitute till he come again, as these apostles had Christ in the midst of them, explaining, in Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets, the things concerning himself. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is a reality; it is not a fancy it is not a mere imagination: no man ever honestly and

from the depth of his heart sought the guidance of that divine Teacher who was left to grope in final and in total darkness. That blessed Teacher will not settle questions of ecclesiastical economy; he will not interfere with those disputes that vex and convulse every section of the Church. What he has promised to do, is, to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to his people. He will take of the things of Christ,—he will not take of the things of John Knox, nor yet of Ridley, nor of Cranmer, nor of Martin Luther, nor of Wesley. He will not take these things; these are the shells, the husks that perish in the using; but he will take, and he does take, the things that relate to Christ,—vital, saving, and precious truth. And there is not a believer in Christendom, however humble, however unlearned, who asks, and, in the name of Christ, seeks this great Teacher, who shall be allowed to grope in darkness, or perish without the knowledge of Christ and of him crucified.

Now recollect this: that the grand difference, probably, between the Protestant Church and the Romish, would just be this,—that we say it was expedient that Christ should go away; expedient, because as long as Christ was a mere man he could only be in one place at a time. It was a lamp, a brilliant lamp, but it was only in Jerusalem; but that brilliant lamp, by his going away, was set in the bright firmament, and the Spirit that he has sent fills all space, can illuminate all minds, and sanctify all hearts. But, in the Church of Rome, they say it was not expedient that Christ should go away; and hence, they have got his “vicar,” his substitute,—one who sits in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God. They insist that they must

see Christ, or they cannot live; and as they cannot see the grand and blessed original, they have struck out a human substitute or image, and call him the vicar or substitute of Christ. Our vicar of Christ is the Holy Spirit; and every Protestant should look as intensely for the infallible teaching of the infallible Spirit, as the poor deluded victim of the Church of Rome looks to the fallible pope for his most fallible and equivocal teaching.

In the next place, our blessed Lord tells them, after he had thus vindicated the Scriptures, what was to be the great subject of their preaching. After he had explained all the things that were written "in the law of Moses,"—that means, the five books of the Pentateuch,— "and in the Prophets,"—that is, all the prophets, the greater and the minor,— "and in the Psalms,"—comprehending in this title the Book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon,— "concerning me," he then opened their minds, and said, "Thus it is written"—in these Scriptures—"and thus it behoved," or became, "Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:" as much as to say, Lest you should be startled that Christ was a sufferer; still more, lest you should be startled by Christ having risen again from the dead, you will find it in your own Prophets, in Moses, and in the Psalms, that the Messiah was to be a sufferer. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is proof that he was to suffer; the sixteenth Psalm is proof that he was to rise from the dead, and never to see corruption. And when he suffered, for what purpose did he suffer? Not as a martyr, to show how faithfully he believed what he taught; not as an example simply to us; but as a propitiatory Sacrifice and an Atonement for the sins of

all that believe. We have been told by some, that this great truth ought to be a doctrine of reserve; that men should not be taught the atonement first, but only the efficacy of sacraments. But you must have been struck, in reading your Bible, with this fact,—that the truth that rises prominent like a mountain alp, amid all the sister alps that are around it, is just the great doctrine of the Atonement or Sacrifice of Christ—that the very first truth that an apostle preaches is, that Christ died for our sins; for Paul himself says, “I declared unto you first of all that Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” It is not an *esoteric* doctrine,—not a truth for the initiated; but it is the truth that is to attract, to enlighten, and to win the uninitiated. And to believe in the atonement is not to carry a crucifix in the hand, nor is it merely to repeat our creed day by day; but it is to rest upon it, to have it incorporated with our innermost experience; to see in it the great plan by which God can come to us, and by which we can rise to God, and in it and through it God be just, whilst he justifies the guiltiest that believe on Jesus. And therefore, this doctrine of the atonement is only equalled, if it be equalled, by the second doctrine that he unfolded to them,—that Christ was to rise from the dead on the third day. “If Christ be not risen,” says the apostle, “we are still in our sins.” If he be not risen, the atonement is not completed, or God did not accept the atonement; but because he rose again from the dead on the third day, it shows that the penalty of sin was exhausted on his cross, and the power of death was dissolved in his grave. By the first, our sins are forgiven; by the second,

— “Every atom of our dust
Rests in hope again to rise.”

And because he rose from the dead, he entered into the true holy place, to bestow from the throne what he purchased on the cross, to make good from heaven what he earned by his blood upon the earth, ever living to make intercession for us. These are the two cardinal truths of the Gospel. You may err about many things; you may be imperfectly enlightened about many things; but if you hold fast these two great pillars of the evangelical system, you have what will stand you in stead at that day. And hence the apostles were sent forth to preach that Christ died, that Christ rose; and, as the consequence, “repentance,”—the gift of Christ as a King; “remission of sins,”—the gift of Christ as a Priest: that is, repentance from his throne, remission of sins from his cross. “Beginning at Jerusalem,” the guiltiest capital of all; giving the first offer where there was the greatest sin, and therefore the deepest need. And the office of the minister of the Gospel is indicated in the very commission. What is a minister’s function? To go and preach repentance and remission of sins. Not to sell repentance, not to give repentance or remission of sins, but to preach it. In other words, we are ambassadors from Christ. And if there be such an officer as a priest in the existing ministry of the Gospel, then such a person is not a Christian pastor at all. You cannot be a priest and be an ambassador at the same time, for this obvious reason,—a priest is one that goes to God and transacts with God on my behalf; an ambassador is just the reverse,—one that comes down from God, and deals with me on God’s behalf. If, therefore, any will assert that he is a sacrificing priest,

the logical inference must be, "Then you are not an ambassador of Christ at all." But if you will rather take the latter position, and assert that he is what if governed by the Spirit of God he must be, then the logical inference is equally correct,—he is not what he does not pretend to be if he be a true minister—a sacrificing priest. And here, too, we have the order of the preaching of the Gospel,—“beginning at Jerusalem.” The apostle Paul repeats the sentiment when he says, “To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile;” and the Christian Church cannot do better than copy the precedent that is here set,—have first its missionaries to the Jews, and second, always second, their missionaries also to the Gentile. We admit that there is little encouragement to preach to the Jews; very few have been converted. If immense masses of the Jews had been converted, we should say, prophecy cannot be true. I believe that the Jews will be converted, as a nation, by the special pouring out of the Spirit of God. But God will give us here one, there another, just to comfort us with this blessed conviction, that he has not forgotten them, that he has not finally cast them off; and that we may patiently and prayerfully wait till that day when all Israel will be saved, and homewards from the snows of Russia, and from the burning plains of India, the ancient people of the desert shall march in more majestic procession than when the pillar of cloud headed them by day, and the pillar of fire went before them by night.

May we be found in that blessed Saviour at that day, having in our hearts repentance, and on us, through his blood, remission of sins. Amen.

NOTE.—The reason why they did not know him, was (ver. 16) that their eyes were supernaturally influenced, so that they could not. (See also ver. 31.) No change took place in him, nor apparently in them, beyond a power upon them, which prevented the recognition, just so much as to delay it till aroused by the well-known action and manner of his breaking the bread. The cause of this was the will of the Lord himself, who would not be seen by them till the time when he saw fit.—*ἐγγίστας*, from behind; see ver. 18, where they take him for an inhabitant of Jerusalem. [17.] He had apparently been walking with them some little time before this was said. *ἀντιβάλλειν λόγους* implies, to dispute with some earnestness; but there is no blame implied in the words. Possibly, though both were sad, they may have taken different views; and in the answer of Cleopas we have that of the one who was most disposed to abandon all hope.

But I take the *τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ* to mean something very different from mere prophetic passages. The whole Scriptures are a testimony to him; the whole history of the chosen people, with its types, and its law, and its prophecies, is a showing forth of him; and it was here the whole—*πάσαι αἱ γρ.*—that he laid out before them. This general leading into the meaning of the whole, as a whole fulfilled in him, would be much more opportune to the place and time occupied, than a direct exposition of selected passages. “The things concerning himself” (E.V.) is right, not “the parts concerning himself.” Observe the testimony which this verse gives to the divine authority and the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures; so that the denial of the references to Christ’s death and glory in the Old Testament is henceforth nothing but a denial of his own teaching.

The Lord himself foretold his ascension (John vi. 62; xx. 17); it was, immediately after his disappearance from the earth, expressly announced by the Apostles (Acts ii. 33, 34; v. 31); continued to be an article of their teaching and preaching (1 Pet. iii. 22; Eph. ii. 6; iv. 10; 1 Tim. iii. 16). So far should we be assured of it had we not possessed the testimonies of Luke, here and in the Acts; for the fragment superadded to the Gospel of Mark merely states the fact, not the manner of it. But, to take first the *à priori* view: is it probable that the Lord would have left so weighty a fact in his history on earth without witnesses? And might we not have concluded, from the wording of John vi.

62, that the Lord must have intended an ascension in the sight of some of those to whom he spoke, and that the Evangelist himself gives that hint, by recording those words without comment, that he had seen it? Then, again, is there anything in the bodily state of the Lord after his resurrection which raises any, even the least, difficulty here? He appeared suddenly, and vanished suddenly, when he pleased. When it pleased him, he ate, he spoke, he walked; but his body was the body of the resurrection, only not yet his *σῶμα τῆς δόξης* (Phil. iii. 21), because he had not yet assumed that glory; but that he could assume it, and did assume it at his ascension, will be granted by all who believe in him as the Son of God.—*Alford.*

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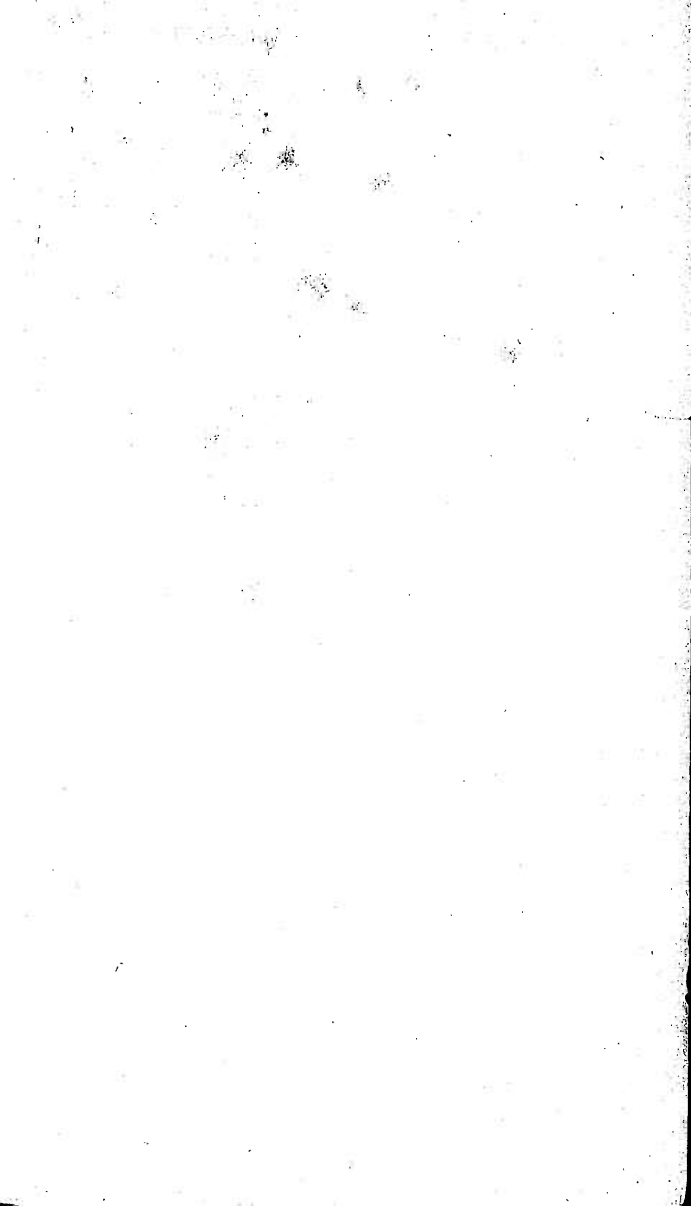
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