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THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE.

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THE

TRAINING OF THE TWELVE;

OR,

PASSAGES OUT OF THE GOSPELS

EXHIBITING THE TWELVE DISCIPLES OF JESUS UNDER DISCIPLINE FOR THE APOSTLESHIP.

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER BALMAIN BRUCE,

BROUGHTY FERRY.

EDINBURGH:
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1871.

σὺν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἦσαν.

PREFACE.

THE subject of this book has occupied my thoughts more or less since the commencement of my ministry, twelve years ago. Turning up a manuscript volume of jottings for the pulpit in my possession, I find its title-page is as follows: "Brief notes of sermons on Christ's intercourse with the twelve disciples, preached in Cardross, begun September 1861." These notes were the rude beginnings of this work; yet not the rudest, for in the previous year I had made the same passages from the Gospels the subjects of lessons in a catechumens' class. I was led to transfer these lessons from the class to the pulpit in the following way. During an autumnal holiday, spent in the country-quarters of dear friends, to whom I have many reasons to be grateful, I was in such a distempered condition of body, that all thought and feeling were dead, and I dreaded the prospect of returning to pastoral duty, being sensible of mental vacuity. At length my perplexities shaped themselves into a prayer that I might be led into green pastures, as the old ones were all nibbled bare. Shortly after my thoughts reverted to the lessons given to the catechumens' class, and I at once resolved to make these the subject of a course of lectures.

The studies on which I entered in pursuance of this resolution, proved to be green pastures to myself at least. After the course was finished, the subject still lingered in my mind, and I felt constrained by an absorbing interest to extend the jottings I had made; not without an idea

that the theme was one capable of being made interesting and instructive to a wider public. Years passed, and I continued to cherish the day-dream, with an increasing sense of the importance of a subject which had been generally overlooked, but also with a deepening sense of the imperfections of my endeavour. Yet, while dreaming, I was not idle; for much of what now appears has been written several times. The wine has been frequently emptied from vessel to vessel, losing in the process the pungency which, when new, made it somewhat unpalatable, and gaining, I trust, some measure of purity and mellowness.

Perhaps it might have been well had I delayed still longer before publishing these essays. But it was the voice of the stern prophet Death that brought me to decision. In the close of last year the Preacher came, and cried in commanding tone, Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. In one brief fortnight I followed to the grave three beloved relatives: my aged godly father, my son, and my brother's wife. When all the mournful duties of that sad season were over, I felt impelled to proceed at once with the publication of this work, and forthwith set myself to prepare it for the press; thankful to find escape from sorrow in hard work, and obtaining the requisite leisure in consequence of the fever which carried off my child making me for a time as a leper, separated from the congregation of the Lord.

Though the work now given to the public does not profess to be an exhaustive abstract treatise on any theological topic, it is hoped that it contains some useful materials on several important themes. Among the subjects to which the contents relate, may be specified the personal characteristics of the disciples, Christian ethics, apologetics, the doctrine of Christian experience, and the doctrine of the atonement. On this last topic I have given, in several chapters, as occasion offered, the results of much thought and laborious reading. Like the disciples, I have been slow to learn the meaning

of Christ's death; and if any one think I have something to learn yet, I am not careful to deny it: for I am very sensible, in connection with that great glorious theme, of the truth of Paul's sayings, "Now we see through a glass, *ἐν αἰνίγματι*," and "now I know in part."

Readers may discern in the following pages, here and there, evidence that the materials have done duty in the pulpit before passing through the press. The form of thought sometimes presupposes an audience, and I have constantly endeavoured to lay the subject under discussion alongside the age in which we live. I do not think these will be deemed grave faults. As regards the former, the public is but a larger audience; and as to the latter, all thoughtful men know that the great need of the present time is to make a new start in Christian belief and practice; and they would not thank any one for writing a book on Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ to His disciples, without applying it as a plumb-line to the Christianity of the nineteenth century, to see how far it is off the perpendicular.

I pray God, that what has been to me a labour of love, and a source of much pleasure and profit, may be in some small measure useful to fellow-Christians, and serviceable to the faith.

A. B. B.

Broughty Ferry, *April* 1871.

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THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE.

CHAPTER I.

BEGINNINGS.

JOHN I. 29–51.

THE section of the gospel history above indicated, possesses the interest peculiar to the beginnings of all things that have grown to greatness. Here are exhibited to our view the infant church in its cradle, the petty sources of the River of Life, the earliest blossoms of Christian faith, the humble origin of the mighty empire of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All beginnings are more or less obscure in appearance, but none were ever more obscure than those of Christianity. What an insignificant event in the history of the church, not to say of the world, this first meeting of Jesus of Nazareth with five humble men, Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and another unnamed! It actually seems almost too trivial to find a place even in the evangelic narrative. For we have here to do not with any formal solemn call to the great office of the apostleship, or even with the commencement of an uninterrupted discipleship, but at the utmost with the beginnings of an acquaintance with and of faith in Jesus, on the part of certain individuals who subsequently became constant attendants on His person, and ultimately apostles of His religion. Accordingly we find no mention made in the three first Gospels of the events here recorded.

Far from being surprised at the silence of the synoptical evangelists, one is rather tempted to wonder how it came to pass that John, the author of the fourth Gospel, after the lapse of so many years, thought it worth while to relate inci-

dents so minute, especially in such close proximity to the sublime sentences with which his Gospel begins. But we are kept from such incredulous wonder by the reflection, that facts objectively insignificant, may be very important to the feelings of those whom they personally concern. What if John was himself one of the five who on the present occasion became acquainted with Jesus? That would make a wide difference between him and the other evangelists, who could know of the incidents here related, if they knew of them at all, only at second hand. In the case supposed, it would not be surprising that to his latest hour John remembered with emotion the first time he saw the Incarnate Word, and deemed the minutest memorials of that time unspeakably precious. First meetings are sacred as well as last ones, especially such as are followed by a momentous history, and accompanied, as is apt to be the case, with omens prophetic of the future.[1] Such omens were not wanting in connection with the first meeting between Jesus and the five disciples. Did not the Baptist then first give to Jesus the name "Lamb of God," so exactly descriptive of His earthly mission and destiny? Was not Nathanael's doubting question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" an ominous indication of a conflict with unbelief awaiting the Messiah? And what a happy omen of an opening era of wonders to be wrought by divine grace and power was contained in the promise of Jesus to the pious, though at first doubting, Israelite: "Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man!"

That John, the writer of the fourth Gospel, really was the fifth unnamed disciple, may be regarded as certain. It is his way throughout his Gospel, when alluding to himself, to use a periphrasis, or to leave, as here, a blank where his name should be. One of the two disciples who heard the Baptist call Jesus the Lamb of God was the evangelist himself; Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, being the other.[2]

The impressions produced on our minds by these little anecdotes of the infancy of the gospel must be feeble, indeed, as compared with the emotions awakened by the memory of

[1] Omina principiis inesse solent.—Ovid. *Fast.* i. 178. [2] Ver. 41.

them in the breast of the aged apostle by whom they are recorded. It would not, however, be creditable either to our intelligence or to our piety if we could peruse this page of the evangelic history unmoved, as if it were utterly devoid of interest. We should address ourselves to the study of the simple story with somewhat of the feeling with which men make pilgrimages to sacred places; for indeed the ground is holy.

The scene of the occurrences in which we are concerned was in the region of Peræa, on the banks of the Jordan, at the lower part of its course. The persons who make their appearance on the scene were all natives of Galilee, and their presence here is due to the fame of the remarkable man whose office it was to be the forerunner of the Christ. John, surnamed the Baptist, who had spent his youth in the desert as a hermit, living on locusts and wild honey, and clad in a garment of camel's hair, had come forth from his retreat and appeared among men as a prophet of God. The burden of his prophecy was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In a short time many were attracted from all quarters to see and hear him. Of those who flocked to his preaching, the greater number went as they came; but not a few were deeply impressed, and, confessing their sins, underwent the rite of baptism in the waters of the Jordan. Of those who were baptized, a select number formed themselves into a circle of disciples around the person of the Baptist, among whom were at least two, and most probably the whole, of the five men mentioned by the evangelist. Previous converse with the Baptist had awakened in these disciples a desire to see Jesus, and prepared them for believing in Him. In his communications to the people around him, John made frequent allusions to One who should come after himself. He spoke of this coming One in language fitted to awaken great expectations. He called himself, with reference to the coming One, a mere voice in the wilderness, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." At another time he said, "I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you whom ye know not: He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." This great One

was none other than the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Such discourses were likely to result, and by the man of God who uttered them they were intended to result, in the disciples of the Baptist leaving him and going over to Jesus. And we see here the process of transition actually commencing. We do not affirm that the persons here named finally quitted the Baptist's company at this time, to become henceforth regular followers of Jesus. But an acquaintance now begins which will end in that. The bride is introduced to the Bridegroom, and the marriage will come in due season; not to the chagrin but to the joy of the Bridegroom's friend.[1]

How easily and artlessly does the mystic bride, as represented by these five disciples, become acquainted with her heavenly Bridegroom! The account of their meeting is idyllic in its simplicity, and would only be spoiled by a commentary. There is no need of formal introduction: they all introduce each other. Even John and Andrew were not formally introduced to Jesus by the Baptist; they rather introduced themselves. The exclamation of the desert prophet on seeing Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" repeated next day in an abbreviated form, was the involuntary utterance of one absorbed in his own thoughts, rather than the deliberate speech of one who was directing his disciples to leave himself and go over to Him of whom he spake. The two disciples, on the other hand, in going away after the personage whose presence had been so impressively announced, were not obeying an order given by their old master, but were simply following the dictates of feelings which had been awakened in their breasts by all they had heard him say of Jesus, both on the present and on former occasions. They needed no injunction to seek the acquaintance of one in whom they felt so keenly interested: all they needed was to know that this was He. They were as anxious to see the Messianic King as the world is to see the face of a secular prince.

It is natural that we should scan the evangelic narrative for indications of character with reference to those who, in

[1] John iii. 29.

the way so quaintly described, for the first time met Jesus. Little is said of the five disciples, but there is enough to show that they were all pious men. What they found in their new friend indicates what they wanted to find. They evidently belonged to the select band who waited for the consolation of Israel, and anxiously looked for Him who should fulfil God's promises and realize the hopes of all devout souls. Besides this general indication of character supplied in their common confession of faith, a few facts are stated respecting these first believers in Jesus tending to make us a little better acquainted with them. Two of them certainly, all of them probably, had been disciples of the Baptist. This fact is decisive as to their moral earnestness. From such a quarter none but spiritually earnest men were likely to come. For if the followers of John were at all like himself, they were men who hungered and thirsted after real righteousness, being sick of the righteousnesses then in vogue; they said Amen in their hearts to the preacher's withering exposure of the hollowness of current religious profession and of the worthlessness of fashionable good works, and sighed for a sanctity other than that of pharisaic superstition and ostentation; their consciences acknowledged the truth of the prophetic oracle, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away;" and they prayed fervently for the reviving of true religion, for the coming of the divine kingdom, for the advent of the Messianic King with fan in His hand to separate chaff from wheat, and to put right all things which were wrong. Such, without doubt, were the sentiments of those who had the honour to be the first disciples of Christ.

Simon, best known of all the twelve under the name of Peter, is introduced to us here, through the prophetic insight of Jesus, on the good side of his character as the man of rock. When this disciple was brought by his brother Andrew into the presence of his future Master, Jesus, we are told, "beheld him and said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas"—Cephas meaning in Syriac, as the evangelist explains, the same which Petros signifies in Greek.

The penetrating glance of Christ discerned in this disciple latent capacities of faith and devotion, the rudiments of ultimate strength and power.

What manner of man Philip was, the evangelist does not directly tell us, but merely whence he came. From the present passage, and from other notices in the Gospels, the conclusion has been drawn, that he was characteristically deliberate, slow in arriving at decision; and for proof of this view, reference has been made to the "phlegmatic circumstantiality"[1] with which he described to Nathanael the person of Him with whom he had just become acquainted.[2] But these words of Philip, and all that we elsewhere read of him, rather suggest to us the idea of the earnest inquirer after truth, who has thoroughly searched the Scriptures and made himself acquainted with the Messiah of promise and prophecy, and to whom the knowledge of God is the *summum bonum*. In the solicitude manifested by this disciple to win his friend Nathanael over to the same faith we recognise that generous sympathetic spirit, characteristic of earnest inquirers, which afterwards revealed itself in him when he became the bearer of the request of devout Greeks for permission to see Jesus.[3]

The notices concerning Nathanael, Philip's acquaintance, are more detailed and more interesting than in the case of any other of the five; and it is not a little surprising that we should be told so much in this place about one, concerning whom we otherwise know almost nothing. It is even not quite certain that he belonged to the circle of the twelve, though the probability is, that he is to be identified with the Bartholomew of the synoptical catalogues,—his full name in that case being Nathanael the son of Tolmai. It is strongly in favour of this supposition, that the name Bartholomew comes immediately after Philip in the lists of the apostles.[4] Be this as it may, we know on the best authority that Nathanael was a man of great moral excellence. No sooner had Jesus seen him than He exclaimed, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" The words suggest the

[1] Luthardt, *Das Johan. Evang.* i. 102. [2] Ver. 45. [3] John xii. 22.
[4] Ewald lays stress on this in proof of the identity of the two, *Geschichte Christus*, p. 327. In Acts i. 13 Thomas comes between Philip and Bartholomew.

idea of one whose heart was pure; in whom was no double-mindedness, impure motive, pride, or unholy passion: a man of gentle meditative spirit, in whose mind heaven lay reflected like the blue sky in a still lake on a calm summer day. He was a man much addicted to habits of devotion: he had been engaged in spiritual exercises under cover of a fig-tree just before he met with Jesus. So we are justified in concluding, from the deep impression made on his mind by the words of Jesus, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Nathanael appears to have understood these words as meaning, "I saw into thy heart, and knew how thou wast occupied, and therefore I pronounced thee an Israelite indeed." He accepted the statement made to him by Jesus as an evidence of preternatural knowledge, and therefore he forthwith made the confession, "Rabbi! Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the *King* of Israel,"—the King of that sacred commonwealth whereof you say I am a citizen.

It is remarkable that this man, so highly endowed with the moral dispositions necessary for seeing God, should have been the only one of all the five disciples who manifested any hesitancy about receiving Jesus as the Christ. When Philip told him that he had found the Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth, he asked incredulously, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" One hardly expects such prejudice in one so meek and amiable; and yet, on reflection, we perceive it to be quite characteristic. Nathanael's prejudice against Nazareth sprung not from pride, as in the case of the people of Judæa who despised the Galileans in general, but from humility. He was a Galilean himself, and as much an object of Jewish contempt as were the Nazarenes. His inward thought was, "Surely the Messiah can never come from among a poor despised people such as we are—from Nazareth or any other Galilean town or village!"[1] He timidly allowed his mind to be biassed by a current opinion originating in feelings with which he had no

[1] Stanley thinks Nathanael meant to single out Nazareth from the rest of Galilee as of specially bad notoriety. In that case the argument would be *a fortiori:* Can any good come out of Galilee, and specially from Nazareth, infamous even there?—*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 366.

sympathy; a fault common to men whose piety, though pure and sincere, defers too much to human authority, and who thus become the slaves of sentiments utterly unworthy of them.

The case of Nathanael simply reminds us of a fact with which everyday experience tends to make us familiar; viz. that good-hearted, pious men are liable to unjust, ungenerous, illiberal prejudices as well as persons of less pure character, insomuch that even the most amiable and saintly may not be regarded as oracles without serious risk. And the suspicious utterance of this disciple stands recorded at the very beginning of the gospel as a warning to all Israelites indeed, which history has proved to be much needed, and, alas! too little heeded. It says to such, "Beware that ye be not too confident in your judgments of others. When with assurance, impatience, or even indignation, ye ask, in reference to any particular church, sect, party, or individual, 'Can any good thing come from such a quarter?' remember that a similar question was asked concerning the place whence Jesus Christ came. 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.'"

While Nathanael was not free from prejudices, he showed his guilelessness in being willing to have them removed. He came and saw. This openness to conviction is the mark of moral integrity. The guileless man dogmatizes not, but investigates, and therefore always comes right in the end. The man of bad, dishonest heart, on the contrary, does not come and see. Deeming it his interest to remain in his present mind, he studiously avoids looking at aught which does not tend to confirm his foregone conclusions. He may, indeed, *profess* a desire for inquiry, like certain Israelites of whom we read in this same Gospel, of another stamp than Nathanael, but sharing with him the prejudice against Galilee. "Search and look," said these Israelites not without guile, in reply to the ingenuous question of the honest but timid Nicodemus: "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" "Search and look," said they, appealing to observation and inviting inquiry; but they added: "For out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,"—a dictum which at once prohibited inquiry in

effect, and intimated that it was unnecessary. "Search and look; but we tell you beforehand you cannot arrive at any other conclusion than ours; nay, we warn you you had better not."[1]

Such were the characters of the men who first believed in Jesus. What, we next ask, was the amount and value of their belief? On first view the faith of the five disciples, leaving out of account the brief hesitation of Nathanael, seems unnaturally sudden and mature. They believe in Jesus on a moment's notice, and they express their faith in terms which seem appropriate only to advanced Christian intelligence. In the present section of John's Gospel we find Jesus called not merely the Christ, the Messiah, the King of Israel, but the Son of God and the Lamb of God,—names expressive of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, the Incarnation and the Atonement.

The haste and maturity which seem to characterize the faith of the five disciples are only superficial appearances. As to the former: these men believed that Messiah was to come some time; and they wished much it might be then, for they felt He was greatly needed. They were men who waited for the consolation of Israel, and they were prepared at any moment to witness the advent of the Comforter. Then the Baptist had told them that the Christ was come, and that He was to be found in the person of Him whom he had baptized, and whose baptism had been accompanied with such remarkable signs from heaven; and what the Baptist said they implicitly believed. Finally, the impression produced on their minds by the bearing of Jesus when they met, tended to confirm John's testimony, being altogether worthy of the Christ.

The appearance of *maturity* in the faith of the five brethren is equally superficial. As to the name Lamb of God, it was given to Jesus by John, not by them. It was, so to speak, the *baptismal* name which the preacher of repentance had learned by reflection, or by special revelation, to give to the Christ. What the name signified he but dimly comprehended, the very repetition of it showing him to be but a learner striving to get up his lesson; and we know that what John

[1] John vii. 45–52.

understood only in part, the men whom he introduced to the acquaintance of Jesus, now and for long after, understood not at all.

The title Son of God was given to Jesus by one of the five disciples as well as by the Baptist; a title which even the apostles in after years found sufficient to express their mature belief respecting the Person of their Lord. But it does not follow that the name was used by them at the beginning with the same fulness of meaning as at the end. It was a name which could be used in a sense coming far short of that which it is capable of conveying, and which it did convey in apostolic preaching,—merely as one of the Old Testament titles of Messiah, a synonym for Christ. It was doubtless in this rudimentary sense that Nathanael applied the designation to Him, whom he also called the King of Israel.

The faith of these brethren was, therefore, just such as we should expect in beginners. In substance it amounted to this, that they recognised in Jesus the Divine Prophet, King, Son of Old Testament prophecy; and its value lay not in its maturity or accuracy, but in this, that however imperfect, it brought them into contact and close fellowship with Him, in whose company they were to see greater things than when they first believed, one truth after another assuming its place in the firmament of their minds, like the stars appearing in the evening sky as daylight fades away.

CHAPTER II.

FISHERS OF MEN.

MATT. IV. 18–22 ; MARK I. 16–20 ; LUKE V. 1–11.

THE twelve arrived at their final intimate relation to Jesus only by degrees : three stages in the history of their fellowship with Him being distinguishable. In the first stage they were simply believers in Him as the Christ, and His occasional companions at convenient, particularly festive, occasions. Of this earliest stage in the intercourse of the disciples with their Master, we have some memorials in the four first chapters of John's Gospel, which tell how some of them first became acquainted with Jesus, and represent them as accompanying Him at a marriage in Cana,[1] at a passover in Jerusalem,[2] on a visit to the scene of the Baptist's ministry,[3] and on the return journey through Samaria from the south to Galilee.[4]

In the second stage, fellowship with Christ assumed the form of an uninterrupted attendance on His person, involving entire, or at least habitual abandonment of secular occupations.[5] The present narratives bring under our view certain of the disciples entering on this second stage of discipleship. Of the four persons here named, we recognise three, Peter, Andrew, and John, as old acquaintances, who have already passed through the first stage of discipleship. One of them, James the brother of John, we meet with for the first time ; a fact which suggests the remark, that in some cases the first and second stages may have been blended together,—pro-

[1] John ii. 1. [2] John ii. 13, 17, 22. [3] John iii. 22.
[4] John iv. 1–27, 31, 43–45.
[5] Entire in Matthew's case, of course ; in the case of the fishers, not necessarily so.

fessions of faith in Jesus as the Christ being immediately followed by the renunciation of secular callings, for the purpose of joining His company. Such cases, however, were probably exceptional and few.

The twelve entered on the last and highest stage of discipleship when they were chosen by their Master from the mass of His followers, and formed into a select band, to be trained for the great work of the apostleship. This important event probably did not take place till all the members of the apostolic circle had been for some time about the person of Jesus.

From the evangelic records it appears that Jesus began at a very early period of His ministry to gather round Him a company of disciples, with a view to the preparation of an agency for carrying on the work of the divine kingdom. The two pairs of brothers received their call at the commencement of the first Galilean ministry, in which the first act was the selection of Capernaum by the sea-side as the centre of operations and ordinary place of abode. And when we think what they were called unto, we see that the call could not come too soon. The twelve were to be Christ's witnesses in the world after He Himself had left it; it was to be their peculiar duty to give to the world a faithful record of their Master's words and deeds, a just image of His character, a true reflection of His spirit. This service obviously could be rendered only by persons who had been, as nearly as possible, eye-witnesses and servants of the Incarnate Word from the beginning. While, therefore, except in the cases of Peter, James, John, Andrew, and Matthew, we have no particulars in the Gospels respecting the calls of those who afterwards became apostles, we must assume that they all occurred in the first year of the Saviour's public ministry.

That these calls were given with conscious reference to an ulterior end, even the apostleship, appears from the remarkable terms in which the earliest of them was expressed. "Follow me," said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, "and I will make you fishers of men." These words (whose originality stamps them as a genuine saying of Jesus) show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples,

but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the net of divine truth into the sea of the world, and to land on the shores of the divine kingdom a great multitude of believing souls. Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the twelve. In the intercessory prayer,[1] *e.g.*, He speaks of the training He had given these men as if it had been the principal part of His own earthly ministry. Such, in one sense, it really was. The careful, painstaking education of the disciples secured that the Teacher's influence on the world should be permanent; that His kingdom should be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of the few, not on the shifting sands of superficial evanescent impressions on the minds of the many. Regarding that kingdom, as our Lord Himself has taught us in one of His parables to do,[2] as a thing introduced into the world like a seed cast into the ground and left to grow according to natural laws, we may say that, but for the twelve, the doctrine, the works, and the image of Jesus might have perished from human remembrance, nothing remaining but a vague mythical tradition, of no historical value, and of little practical influence.

Those on whom so much depended, it plainly behoved to possess very extraordinary qualifications. The mirrors must be finely polished that are designed to reflect the image of Christ! The apostles of the Christian religion must be men of rare spiritual endowment. It is a catholic religion, intended for all nations; therefore its apostles must be free from Jewish narrowness, and have sympathies wide as the world. It is a spiritual religion, destined ere long to antiquate Jewish ceremonialism; therefore its apostles must be emancipated in conscience from the yoke of ordinances. It is a religion, once more, which is to proclaim the Cross, previously an instrument of cruelty and badge of infamy, as the hope of the world's redemption, and the symbol of all that is noble and heroic in conduct; therefore its heralds must be superior to all conventional notions of human and divine dignity, capable of glory-

[1] John xvii. 6. [2] Mark iv. 26.

ing in the cross of Christ, and willing to bear a cross themselves. The apostolic character, in short, must combine freedom of conscience, enlargement of heart, enlightenment of mind, and all in the superlative degree.

The humble fishermen of Galilee had much to learn before they could satisfy these high requirements; so much, that the time of their apprenticeship for their apostolic work, even reckoning it from the very commencement of Christ's ministry, seems all too short. They were indeed godly men, who had already shown the sincerity of their piety by forsaking all for their Master's sake. But at the time of their call they were exceedingly ignorant, narrow-minded, superstitious, full of Jewish prejudices, misconceptions, and animosities. They had much to unlearn of what was bad, as well as much to learn of what was good, and they were slow both to learn and to unlearn. Old beliefs already in possession of their minds made the communication of new religious ideas a difficult task. Men of good honest heart, the soil of their spiritual nature was fitted to produce an abundant harvest; but it was stiff, and needed much laborious tillage before it would yield its fruit. Then, once more, they were poor men, of humble birth, low station, mean occupations, who had never felt the stimulating influence of a liberal education, or of social intercourse with persons of cultivated minds.

We shall meet with abundant evidence of the crude spiritual condition of the twelve, even long after the period when they were called to follow Jesus, as we proceed with the studies on which we have entered. Meantime we may discover significant indications of the religious immaturity of at least one of the disciples,—Simon, son of Jonas,—in Luke's account of the incidents connected with his call. Pressed by the multitude who had assembled on the shore of the lake to hear Him preach, Jesus, we read, entered into a ship (one of two lying near at hand), which happened to be Simon's, and requesting him to thrust out a little from the land, sat down, and taught the people from the vessel. Having finished speaking, Jesus said unto the owner of the boat, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Their previous efforts to catch fish had been unsuccessful; but Simon and his brother

did as Jesus directed, and were rewarded by an extraordinary take, which appeared to them and their fishing companions, James and John, nothing short of miraculous. Simon, the most impressible and the most demonstrative of the four, gave utterance to his feelings of astonishment by characteristic words and gestures. He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

This exclamation opens a window into the inner man of him who uttered it, through which we can see his spiritual state. We observe in Peter at this time that mixture of good and evil, of grace and nature, which so frequently reappears in his character in the subsequent history. Among the good elements discernible are reverential awe in presence of Divine Power, a prompt calling to mind of sin betraying tenderness of conscience, and an unfeigned self-humiliation on account of unmerited favour. Valuable features of character these; but they did not exist in Peter without alloy. Along with them were associated superstitious dread of the supernatural, and a slavish fear of God. The presence of the former element is implied in the reassuring exhortation addressed to the disciple by Jesus, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Slavish fear of God is even more manifest in his own words, "Depart from me, O Lord." Powerfully impressed with the superhuman knowledge revealed in connection with the great draught of fishes, he regards Jesus for the moment as a supernatural being, and as such dreads Him as one whom it is not safe to be near, especially for a poor sinful mortal like himself. This state of mind shows how utterly unfit Peter is, as yet, to be an apostle of a gospel which magnifies the grace of God even to the chief of sinners. His piety, sufficiently strong and decided, is not of a Christian type; it is legal, one might almost say pagan, in spirit.

The truth of the statement just made may be rendered more apparent by a contrast supplied in another incident from the history of Peter, which occurred towards the close of his disciple-life. It was another fishing scene on the same waters, very like, and also very unlike, that here recorded by Luke. On that occasion Peter and his brethren, by direction of a stranger dimly descried on the shore in the grey morning,

caught, as now, a great multitude of fishes. The unusually large draught, taken after a whole night's toil to no purpose, reminded John of what had happened years before, at that ever-memorable period when he and his brethren were called to be fishers of men, and suggested to him the thought that the stranger on the shore must be the risen Jesus. The beloved disciple communicated his discovery to his friend. And mark the difference between Peter's behaviour then and now. He shrinks not this time in fear from the presence of the Lord. He has very good reason to do so; for the confession, "I am a sinful man," would now in his mouth be no pious commonplace, but the feeble inadequate acknowledgment of heinous guilt recently contracted. Yet he has no thought of avoiding or fleeing from Him whom he has personally and grievously injured. On the contrary, it is recorded, that "when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea;"[1] his intent being to swim to the land and embrace his beloved Master. That plunge into the waters reveals a piety now well purged of superstition, and a faith in pardoning grace victorious over guilty fear. Peter now dreads neither divine power nor divine holiness. He can witness a miracle with sobriety and composure, knowing, from long experience, that the wonder-working power of Jesus was ever exercised in intimate alliance with wisdom and love, as a beneficent agent employed to promote the temporal and spiritual well-being of men. And while conscious of being a grievous offender, he fully expects to receive a gracious reception from his injured Master, because he has ever found Him one who overcame evil with good, and forgave not once or seven times, but seventy times seven. He has thus in both respects made a great advance since the time he exclaimed in superstitious terror, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

With all their imperfections, which were both numerous and great, these humble fishermen of Galilee had, at the very outset of their career, one grand distinguishing virtue, which, though it may coexist with many defects, is the certain forerunner of ultimate high attainment. They were animated by

[1] John xxi. 1–7.

a devotion to Jesus and to the divine kingdom which made them capable of any sacrifice. Believing Him who bade them follow Him to be the Christ, come to set up God's kingdom on earth, they "straightway" left their nets and joined His company, to be thenceforth His constant companions in all His wanderings. The act was acknowledged by Jesus Himself to be meritorious; and we cannot, without injustice, seek to disparage it, by ascribing it to idleness, discontent, or ambition as its motive. The Gospel narrative shows that the four brethren were not idle, but hard-working, industrious men. Neither were they discontented, if for no other reason than that they had no cause for discontent. The family of James and John at least seems to have been in circumstances of comfort; for Mark relates that, when called by Jesus, they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after Him. But ambition, had it no place among their motives? Well, we must admit that the twelve, and specially James and John, were by no means free from ambitious passions, as we shall see hereafter. But to whatever extent ambition may have influenced their conduct at a later period, it was not the motive which determined them to leave their nets. Ambition needs a temptation: it does not join a cause which is obscure and struggling, and whose success is doubtful; it strikes in when success is assured, and when the movement it patronizes is on the eve of its glorification. The cause of Jesus had not got to that stage yet.

One charge only can be brought against those men, and it can be brought with truth, and without doing their memory any harm. They were *enthusiasts:* their hearts were fired, and, as an unbelieving world might say, their heads were turned, by a dream about a divine kingdom to be set up in Israel, with Jesus of Nazareth for its king. That dream possessed them and imperiously ruled over their minds, and shaped their destinies, compelling them, like Abraham, to leave their kindred and their country, and go forth on what might well appear beforehand to be a fool's errand. Well for the world that they were possessed by the idea of the Kingdom! For it was no fool's errand on which they went forth, leaving their nets behind. The kingdom they sought turned out to be as

real as the land of Canaan, though not such altogether as they had imagined. The fishermen of Galilee did become fishers of men on a most extensive scale, and, by the help of God, gathered many souls into the church of such as should be saved. In a sense they are casting their nets into the sea of the world still, and, by their testimony to Jesus in Gospel and Epistle, are bringing multitudes to become disciples of Him among whose first followers they had the happiness to be numbered.

The four, the twelve, forsook *all* and followed their Master. Did the "all" in any case include wife and children? It did in at least one instance—that of Peter; for the Gospels tell how Peter's mother-in-law was healed of a fever by the miraculous power of Christ.[1] From a passage in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthian church, it appears that Peter was not the only one among the apostles who was married.[2] From the same passage we further learn, that forsaking of wives for Christ's sake did not mean literal desertion. Peter the apostle led his wife about with him, and Peter the disciple may sometimes have done the same. The likelihood is that the married disciples, like married soldiers, took their wives with them or left them at home, as circumstances might require or admit. Women, even married women, did sometimes follow Jesus; and the wife of Simon, or of any other married disciple, may occasionally have been among the number. At an advanced period in the history, we find the *mother* of James and John in Christ's company far from home; and where mothers were, wives, if they wished, might also be. The infant church, in its original nomadic or itinerant state, seems to have been a motley band of pilgrims, in which all sorts of people as to sex, social position, and moral character were united, the bond of union being ardent attachment to the person of Jesus.

This church itinerant was not a regularly organized society, of which it was necessary to be a constant member in order to true discipleship. Except in the case of the twelve, following Jesus from place to place was optional, not compulsory; and in most cases it was probably also only occasional. It was the natural consequence of faith, when the object of faith, the

[1] Matt. viii. 14; Mark i. 29–31; Luke iv. 38, 39. [2] 1 Cor. ix. 5.

centre of the circle, was Himself in motion. Believers would naturally desire to see as many of Christ's works and hear as many of His words as possible. When the object of faith left the earth, and His presence became spiritual, all occasion for such nomadic discipleship was done away. To be present with Him thereafter, men needed only to forsake their *sins*.

CHAPTER III.

MATTHEW THE PUBLICAN.

MATT. IX. 9–13; MARK II. 15–17; LUKE V. 27–32.

THE call of Matthew signally illustrates a very prominent feature in the public action of Jesus, viz. His utter disregard of the maxims of worldly wisdom. A publican disciple, much more a publican apostle, could not fail to be a stumblingblock to Jewish prejudice, and therefore to be, for the time at least, a source of weakness rather than of strength. Yet, while perfectly aware of this fact, Jesus invited to the intimate fellowship of disciplehood one who had pursued the occupation of a tax-gatherer, and at a later period selected him to be one of the twelve. His procedure in this case is all the more remarkable when contrasted with the manner in which He treated others having outward advantages to recommend them to favourable notice, and who showed their readiness to follow by volunteering to become disciples; of whom we have a sample in the scribe that came and said, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."[1] This man, whose social position and professional attainments seemed to point him out as a very desirable acquisition, the "Master" deliberately scared away by a gloomy picture of His own destitute condition, saying "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

The eye of Jesus was single as well as omniscient: He looked on the heart, and had respect solely to spiritual fitness. He had no faith in any discipleship based on misapprehensions and by-ends; and, on the other hand, He had no fear of

[1] Matt. viii. 18–20.

the drawbacks arising out of the external connections or past history of true believers, but was entirely indifferent to men's antecedents. Confident in the power of truth, He chose the base things of the world in preference to things held in esteem, assured that they would conquer at the last. Aware that both He and His disciples would be despised and rejected of men for a season, He went calmly on His way, choosing for His companions and agents "whom He would," undisturbed by the gainsaying of His generation—like one who knew that His work concerned all nations and all time.

The publican disciple bears two names in the Gospel history. In the first Gospel, from his own hand, he is called Matthew, while in the second and third Gospels he is called Levi. That the same person is intended, may, we think, be regarded as a matter of certainty.[1] It is hardly conceivable that two publicans should have been called to be disciples at the same place and time, and with all accompanying circumstances, and these so remarkable, precisely similar. We need not be surprised that the identity has not been notified, as the fact of the two names belonging to one individual would be so familiar to the first readers of the Gospels as to make such a piece of information superfluous.

It is probable that Levi was the name of this disciple before the time of his call, and that Matthew was his name as a disciple,—the new name thus becoming a symbol and memorial of the more important change in heart and life. Similar emblematic changes of name were of frequent occurrence in the beginning of the gospel. Simon son of Jonas was transformed into Peter, Saul of Tarsus became Paul, and Joses the Cypriot got from the apostles the beautiful Christian name of Barnabas (son of consolation or prophecy),—by his philanthropy, and magnanimity, and spiritual wisdom, well deserved.

Matthew seems to have been employed as a collector of revenue at the time when he was called, in the town of Capernaum, which Jesus had adopted as His place of abode. For it

[1] Ewald (*Christus*, pp. 364, 397) denies the identity, and asserts that Levi was not one of the twelve; yet he admits the far less certain identity of Nathanael and Bartholomew.

was while Jesus was at home "in His own city,"[1] as Capernaum came to be called, that the palsied man was brought to Him to be healed; and from all the evangelists[2] we learn that it was on his way out from the house where that miracle was wrought that He saw Matthew, and spoke to him the word, "Follow me." The inference to be drawn from these facts is plain, and it is also important, as helping to explain the apparent abruptness of the call, and the promptitude with which it was responded to. Jesus and His new disciple being fellow-townsmen, had opportunities of seeing each other before.

The time of Matthew's call cannot be precisely determined, but there is good reason for placing it before the Sermon on the Mount, of which Matthew's Gospel contains the most complete report. The fact just stated is of itself strong evidence in favour of this chronological arrangement, for so full an account of the sermon was not likely to emanate from one who did not hear it. An examination of the third Gospel converts probability into certainty. Luke prefixes to his abbreviated account of the sermon a notice of the constitution of the apostolic society, and represents Jesus as proceeding "with them"[3]—the twelve, whose names he has just given—to the scene where the sermon was delivered. Of course the act of constitution must have been preceded by the separate acts of calling, and by Matthew's call in particular, which accordingly is related by the third evangelist in an earlier part of his Gospel.[4] It is true the position of the call in Luke's narrative in itself proves nothing, as Matthew relates his own call after the sermon; and as, moreover, neither one nor other systematically adheres to the chronological principle of arrangement in the construction of his story. We base our conclusion on the assumption, that when any of the evangelists professes to give the order of sequence, his statement may be relied on; and on the observations, that Luke does manifestly commit himself to a chronological datum in making the ordination of the twelve antecedent to the preaching of the Sermon on the Mount, and that Matthew's arrangement

[1] Matt. ix. 1.
[2] Matt. ix. 9; Mark ii. 13; Luke v. 27.
[3] Luke vi. 13–17.
[4] Luke v. 27.

in the early part of his Gospel is as manifestly unchronological, his matter being massed on a topical principle,—ch. v.–vii. showing Jesus as a great teacher; ch. viii. and ix. as a worker of miracles; and ch. x. as a master, choosing, instructing, and sending forth on an evangelistic mission the twelve disciples.

Passing from these subordinate points to the call itself, we observe that the narratives of the event are very brief and fragmentary. There is no intimation of any previous acquaintance, such as might prepare Matthew to comply with the invitation addressed to him by Jesus. It is not to be inferred, however, that no such acquaintance existed, as we can see from the case of the four fishermen, whose call is narrated with equal abruptness in the synoptical Gospels, while we know from John's Gospel that three of them at least were previously acquainted with Jesus. The truth is, that, in regard to both calls, the evangelists concerned themselves only about the *crisis*, passing over in silence all preparatory stages, and not deeming it necessary to inform intelligent readers that, of course, neither the publican nor any other disciple blindly followed one of whom he knew nothing, merely because asked or commanded to follow. The fact already ascertained, that Matthew, while a publican, resided in Capernaum, makes it absolutely certain that he knew of Jesus before he was called. No man could live in that town in those days without hearing of "mighty works" done in and around it. Heaven had been opened right above Capernaum, in view of all, and the angels had been thronging down upon the Son of man. Lepers were cleansed and demoniacs dispossessed; blind men received their sight, and palsied men the use of their limbs; one woman was cured of a chronic malady, and another, daughter of a distinguished citizen—Jairus, ruler of the synagogue—was brought back to life from the dead. These things were done publicly, made a great noise, and were much remarked on. The evangelists relate how the people "were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him;"[1]

[1] Mark i. 27.

how they glorified God, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion,"[1] or, "We have seen strange things to-day."[2] Matthew himself concludes his account of the raising of Jairus' daughter with the remark: "The fame hereof went abroad into all that land."[3]

We do not affirm that all these miracles were wrought before the time of the publican's call, but some of them certainly were. Comparing one Gospel with another, to determine the historical sequence,[4] we conclude that the greatest of all these mighty works, the last mentioned, though narrated by Matthew after his call, really occurred before it. Think, then, what a powerful effect that marvellous deed would have in preparing the tax-gatherer for recognising, in the solemnly uttered word, "Follow me," the command of One who was Lord both of the dead and of the living, and for yielding to His bidding, prompt, unhesitating obedience!

In crediting Matthew with some previous knowledge of Christ, we make his conversion to discipleship appear reasonable without diminishing its moral value. It was not a matter of course that he should become a follower of Jesus merely because he had heard of, or even seen, His wonderful works. Miracles of themselves could make no man a believer, otherwise all the people of Capernaum should have believed. How different was the actual fact, we learn from the complaints afterwards made by Jesus concerning those towns along the shores of the Lake of Gennesareth, wherein most of His mighty works were done, and *of Capernaum in particular*. Of this city He said bitterly: "Thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."[5] Christ's complaint against the inhabitants of these favoured cities was that they did not *repent*. They wondered sufficiently at His miracles, and talked abundantly of them, and ran after Him to see more works of the same kind, and enjoy anew the sensation of amazement; but after a while they

[1] Mark ii. 12. [2] Luke v. 26. [3] Matt. ix. 26.
[4] See Ebrard, *Gospel History*, on the subject of sequence.
[5] Matt. xi. 23.

relapsed into their old stupidity and listlessness, and remained morally as they had been before He came among them.

It was not so with the collector of customs. He not merely wondered and talked, but he "repented." Whether he had more to repent of than his neighbours we cannot tell. It is true that he belonged to a class of men who, seen through the coloured medium of popular prejudice, were all bad alike, and many of whom were really guilty of fraud and extortion; but he may have been an exception. His farewell feast shows that he possessed means, but we must not take for granted that they were dishonestly earned. This only we may safely say, that if the publican disciple had been covetous, the spirit of greed was now exorcised; if he had ever been guilty of oppressing the poor, he was now sick of such work. He had grown weary of collecting revenue from a reluctant population, and was glad to follow One who had come to take burdens off instead of laying them on, to remit debts instead of exacting them with rigour. And so it came to pass that the voice of Jesus acted on his heart like a spell: "He left all, rose up, and followed Him."

This great decision, according to the account of all the evangelists, was followed shortly after by a feast in Matthew's house at which Jesus was present.[1] From Luke we learn that this entertainment had all the character of a great occasion, and that it was given in honour of Jesus. The honour, however, was such as few would value, for the other guests were peculiar. "There was a great company of publicans, and of others that sat down with them;"[2] and among the "others" were some who either were or were esteemed in a superlative degree "sinners."[3]

This feast was, as we judge, not less rich in moral significance than in the viands set on the board. For the host himself it was, without doubt, a jubilee feast commemorative of his emancipation from drudgery and uncongenial society and sin, or, at all events, temptation to sin, and of his entrance on the free, blessed life of fellowship with Jesus. It was a kind

[1] Matthew says modestly, "in *the* house," ix. 10.
[2] Luke v. 29.
[3] Matt. ix. 10.

of poem, saying for Matthew what Doddridge's familiar lines say for many another, perhaps not so well:

"Oh happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad!
'Tis done; the great transaction's done:
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Glad to confess the voice divine."

The feast was also, as already said, an act of homage to Jesus. Matthew made his splendid feast in honour of his new master, as Mary of Bethany shed her precious ointment. It is the way of those to whom much grace is shown and given, to manifest their grateful love in deeds bearing the stamp of what the Greek philosopher called magnificence, and churls call extravagance; and whoever might blame such acts of devotion, Jesus always accepted them with pleasure.

The ex-publican's feast seems further to have had the character of a farewell entertainment to his fellow-publicans. He and they were to go different ways henceforth, and, Christian-like, he would part with his old comrades in peace.

Once more: we can believe that Matthew meant his feast to be the means of introducing his friends and neighbours to the acquaintance of Jesus, seeking with the characteristic zeal of a young disciple to induce others to take the step which he had resolved on himself, or at least hoping that some sinners present might be drawn from evil ways into the paths of righteousness. And who can tell but it was at this very festive gathering, or on some similar occasion, that the gracious impressions were produced whose final outcome was that affecting display of gratitude unutterable at that other feast in Simon's house, to which neither publicans nor sinners were admitted?

Matthew's feast was thus, looked at from within, a very joyous, innocent, and even edifying one. But, alas, looked at from without, like stained windows, it wore a different aspect: it was, indeed, nothing short of scandalous. Certain Pharisees observed the company assemble or disperse, noted their character, and made, after their wont, sinister reflections. Oppor-

tunity offering itself, they asked the disciples of Jesus the at once complimentary and censorious question: "Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?" The interrogants were for the most part local members of the pharisaic sect, for Luke calls them "their scribes and Pharisees,"[1] which implies that Capernaum was important enough to be honoured with the presence of men representing that religious party. It is by no means unlikely, however, that among the unfriendly spectators were some Pharisees all the way from Jerusalem, the seat of ecclesiastical government, already on the track of the Prophet of Nazareth, watching His doings, as they watched those of the Baptist before Him. The news of Christ's wondrous works soon spread over all the land, and attracted spectators from all quarters—from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judæa, and Peræa, as well as Galilee;[2] and we may be sure that the scribes and Pharisees of the holy city were not the last to go and see, for we must own they performed the duty of religious espionage with exemplary diligence.

The presence of ill-affected men belonging to the pharisaic order was a standing feature in Christ's public ministry. But it never disconcerted Him. He went calmly on His way doing His work; and when His conduct was called in question, He was ever ready with a conclusive answer. Among the most striking of His answers or apologies to them who examined Him, were those in which He vindicated Himself for mixing with publicans and sinners. They are three in number, spoken on as many occasions: the first in connection with Matthew's feast; the second in the house of Simon the Pharisee;[3] and the third on an occasion not minutely defined, when certain scribes and Pharisees brought against Him the grave charge, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."[4] These apologies for loving the unloved and the morally unlovely are full of truth and grace, and poetry and pathos, and not without a touch of quiet, quaint satire directed against the sanctimonious fault-finders. The first may be distinguished as the *professional* argument, and is to this effect: "I frequent the haunts of sinners because I am a *physician*,

[1] Luke v. 30.
[2] Matt. iv. 25.
[3] Luke vii. 36.
[4] Luke xv.

and they are sick and need healing. Where should a physician be but among his patients? where oftenest, but among those most grievously afflicted?" The second argument may be described as the *political*, its drift being this: "It is good policy to be the friend of sinners who have much to be forgiven; for when they are restored to the paths of virtue and piety, how great is their love! See that penitent woman, weeping for sorrow and also for joy, and bathing her Saviour's feet with her tears. Those tears are refreshing to my heart, as a spring of water in the arid desert of pharisaic frigidity and formalism." The third argument may be denominated the argument from natural instinct, and runs thus: "I receive sinners, and eat with them, and seek by these means their moral restoration, for the same reason which moves the shepherd to go after a lost sheep, leaving his unstrayed flock in the wilderness, viz. because it is natural to seek the lost, and to have more joy in finding things lost than in possessing things which never have been lost. Men who understand not this feeling are solitary in the universe; for angels in heaven, fathers, housewives, shepherds, all who have human hearts on earth, understand it well, and act on it every day."

In all these reasonings Jesus argued with His accusers on their own premises, accepting their estimate of themselves, and of the class with whom they deemed it discreditable to associate, as righteous and sinful respectively. But He took care, at the same time, to let it appear that His judgment concerning the two parties did not coincide with that of His interrogators. This He did on the occasion of Matthew's feast, by bidding them go study the text, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" meaning by the quotation to insinuate, that while very religious, the Pharisees were also very inhuman, full of pride, prejudice, harshness, and hatred; and to proclaim the truth, that this character was in God's sight far more detestable than that of those who were addicted to the coarse vices of the multitude, not to speak of those who were "sinners" mainly in the pharisaic imagination, and within inverted commas.

Our Lord's last words to the persons who called His conduct in question at this time were not merely apologetic, but judicial. "I came not," He said, "to call the righteous, but

sinners ;"[1] intimating a purpose to let the self-righteous alone, and to call to repentance and to the joys of the kingdom those who were not too self-satisfied to care for the benefits offered, and to whom the gospel feast would be a real entertainment. And He kept His word ; and so the last became first, and the first last : the " publicans and sinners " got into the kingdom, and the " righteous " were shut out.

[1] εἰς μετάνοιαν seems to be genuine only in Luke, and the words express only a part of Christ's meaning.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWELVE.

Matt. x. 1–4 ; Mark iii. 13–19 ; Luke vi. 12–16 ; Acts i. 13.

THE selection by Jesus of the twelve from the band of disciples who had gradually gathered around His person, is an important landmark in the Gospel history. It divides the ministry of our Lord into two portions, nearly equal probably as to duration, but unequal as to the extent and importance of the work done in each respectively. In the earlier period Jesus laboured single-handed ; His miraculous deeds were confined for the most part to a limited area ; and His teaching was in the main of an elementary character. But by the time when the twelve were chosen, the work of the gospel had assumed such dimensions as to require organization and division of labour ; and the teaching of Jesus was beginning to be of a deeper and more elaborate nature, and His gracious activities were taking an ever-widening range.

It is probable that the selection of a limited number to be His close and constant companions had become a necessity to Christ, in consequence of His very success in gaining disciples. His followers, we imagine, had grown so numerous as to be an incumbrance and an impediment to His movements, especially in the long journeys which mark the later period of His ministry. It was impossible that all who believed could continue henceforth to follow Him, in the literal sense, whithersoever He might go : the greater number could now only be occasional followers. But it was His wish that certain selected men should be with Him at all times and in all places, — His travelling companions in all His wanderings, witnessing all His work, and ministering to His daily needs. And so, in the quaint words of Mark, " Jesus calleth unto

Him whom He would, and they came unto Him. And He made twelve, that they should be with Him."[1]

These twelve, however, as we know, were to be something more than travelling companions or menial servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to be, in the meantime, students of Christian doctrine, and occasional fellow-labourers in the work of the kingdom, and eventually Christ's chosen trained agents for propagating the faith after He Himself had left the earth. From the time of their being chosen, indeed, the twelve entered on a regular apprenticeship for the great office of the apostleship, in the course of which they were to learn, in the privacy of an intimate daily fellowship with their Master, what they should be, do, believe, and teach, as His witnesses and ambassadors to the world. Henceforth the training of these men was to be a constant and prominent part of Christ's personal work. He was to make it His business to tell them in darkness what they should afterwards speak in the daylight, and to whisper in their ear what in after years they should preach upon the house-tops.[2]

The time when this election was made, though not absolutely determined, is fixed relatively to certain leading events in the Gospel history. John speaks of the twelve as an organized company at the period of the feeding of the five thousand, and of the discourse on the bread of life in the synagogue of Capernaum, delivered shortly after that miracle. From this fact we learn that the twelve were chosen at least one year before the crucifixion; for the miracle of the feeding took place, according to the fourth evangelist, shortly before a passover season.[3] From the words spoken by Jesus to the men whom He had chosen, in justification of His seeming doubt of their fidelity after the multitude had deserted Him, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" we guess that the choice was then not quite a recent event. The twelve had been long enough together to give the false disciple opportunity to show his real character.

Turning now to the synoptical evangelists, we find them fixing the position of the election with reference to two other most important events. Matthew speaks for the first time of

[1] Mark iii. 13. [2] Matt. x. 27. [3] John vi. 4.

the twelve as a distinct body, in connection with their *mission in Galilee.* He does not, however, say that they were chosen immediately before, and with direct reference to, that mission. He speaks rather as if the apostolic fraternity had been previously in existence, his words being, "When He had called unto Him His twelve disciples." Luke, on the other hand, gives a formal record of the election, as a preface to his account of the *Sermon on the Mount,* so speaking as to create the impression that the one event immediately preceded the other.[1] Finally, Mark's narrative confirms the view suggested by these observations on Matthew and Luke, viz. that the twelve were called just before the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, and some considerable time before they were sent forth on their preaching and healing mission. There we read: "Jesus goeth up into the mountain (τὸ ὄρος),[2] and calleth unto Him whom He would,"—the ascent referred to evidently being that which Jesus made just before preaching His great discourse. Mark continues: "And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils." Here allusion is made to an *intention* on Christ's part to send forth His disciples on a mission, but the intention is not represented as immediately realized. Nor can it be said that immediate realization is implied, though not expressed; for the evangelist gives an account of the mission as actually carried out several chapters further on in his Gospel, commencing with the words, "And He calleth unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth."[3]

It may be regarded, then, as ascertained, that the calling of the twelve was a prelude to the preaching of the great sermon on the kingdom, in the founding of which they were afterwards to take so distinguished a part. At what precise period in the ministry of our Lord the sermon itself is to be placed, we cannot so confidently determine. Our opinion, however, is,

[1] Luke vi. 13 compared with 17, where note that Luke represents the name "apostle" as originating with Christ: "whom also He named apostles" (ver. 13).

[2] This expression is used by all the Synoptics. It seems to signify a mountain district rather than a particular hill.

[3] Mark vi. 7.

that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered towards the close of Christ's first lengthened ministry in Galilee, during the time which intervened between the two visits to Jerusalem on festive occasions, mentioned in the second and fifth chapters of John's Gospel.[1]

The *number* of the apostolic company is significant, and was doubtless a matter of choice, not less than was the composition of the selected band. A larger number of eligible men could easily have been found in a circle of disciples, which afterwards supplied not fewer than seventy auxiliaries for evangelistic work; and a smaller number might have served all the present or prospective purposes of the apostleship. The number twelve was recommended by obvious symbolic reasons. It happily expressed in figures what Jesus claimed to be, and what He had come to do, and thus furnished a support to the faith and a stimulus to the devotion of His followers. It significantly hinted that Jesus was the divine Messianic King of Israel, come to set up the kingdom whose advent was foretold by prophets in glowing language, suggested by the palmy days of Israel's history, when the theocratic community existed in its integrity, and all the tribes of the chosen nation were united under the royal house of David. That the number twelve was designed to bear such a mystic meaning, we know from Christ's own words to the apostles on a later occasion, when, describing to them the rewards awaiting them in the kingdom for past services and sacrifices, He said, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." [2]

It is possible that the apostles were only too well aware of the mystic significance of their number, and found in it an encouragement for the fond delusive hope, that the coming kingdom should be not only a spiritual realization of the promises, but a literal restoration of Israel to political integrity and independence. The risk of such misapprehension was one of the drawbacks connected with the particular number

[1] So Ebrard, *Gosp. Hist.* Ewald places the election after the feast of John v.
[2] Matt. xix. 28.

twelve; but it was not deemed by Jesus a sufficient reason for fixing on another. His method of procedure in this, as in all things, was to abide by that which in itself was true and right, and then to correct misapprehensions as they arose.

From the number of the apostolic band, we pass now to the persons composing it. Seven of the twelve—the first seven in the catalogues of Mark and Luke, assuming the identity of Bartholomew and Nathanael—are persons already known to us. With two of the remaining five—the first and the last—we shall become well acquainted as we proceed in the history. Thomas called Didymus, or the Twin, will come before us as a man of warm heart but melancholy temperament, ready to die with his Lord, but slow to believe in His resurrection. Judas Iscariot is known to all the world as the Traitor. He appears for the first time, in these catalogues of the apostles, with the infamous title branded on his brow, "Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him." The presence of a man capable of treachery among the elect disciples is a mystery which we shall not now attempt to penetrate. We merely make this historical remark about Judas here, that he seems to have been the only one among the twelve who was not a Galilean. He is surnamed, from his native place apparently, the man of Kerioth; and from the book of Joshua we learn that there was a town of that name in the southern border of the tribe of Judah.[1]

The three names which remain are exceedingly obscure. On grounds familiar to Bible scholars, it has often been attempted to identify James of Alphæus with James the brother or kinsman of the Lord. The next on the lists of Matthew and Mark has been supposed by many to have been a brother of this James, and therefore another brother of Jesus. This opinion is based on the fact, that in place of the Lebbæus or Thaddæus of the two first Gospels, we find in Luke's catalogues the name Judas "of James." The ellipsis in this designation has been filled up with the word brother,

[1] Josh. xv. 24. See Renan, *Vie de Jesus*, p. 153. Ewald (*Christus*, p. 398) thinks Kerioth is Kartah, in the tribe of Zebulun (Josh. xxi. 34). If Judas was a Judæan, he may have become a disciple at the time of Christ's visit to the Jordan, mentioned in John iii. 22.

and it is assumed that the James alluded to is James the son of Alphæus. However tempting these results may be, we must decline to regard them as ascertained, and content ourselves with stating that among the twelve was a second James, besides the brother of John and son of Zebedee, and also a second Judas, who appears again as an interlocutor in the farewell conversation between Jesus and His disciples on the night before His crucifixion, carefully distinguished by the evangelist from the traitor by the parenthetical remark "not Iscariot."[1] This Judas, being the same with Lebbæus Thaddæus, has been called the three-named disciple.[2]

The disciple whom we have reserved to the last place, like the one who stands at the head of all the lists, was a Simon. This second Simon is as obscure as the first is celebrated, for he is nowhere mentioned in the Gospel history, except in the catalogues; yet, little known as he is, the epithet attached to his name conveys a piece of curious and interesting information. He is called the Kananite (not Canaanite), which is a political, not a geographical designation, as appears from the Greek word substituted in the place of this Hebrew one by Luke, who calls the disciple we now speak of Simon Zelotes; that is, in English, Simon the Zealot. This epithet Zelotes connects Simon unmistakeably with the famous party which rose in rebellion under Judas in the days of the taxing,[3] some twenty years before Christ's ministry began, when Judæa and Samaria were brought under the direct government of Rome, and a census of the population was taken with a view to subsequent taxation. How singular a phenomenon is this ex-zealot among the disciples of Jesus! No two men could differ more widely in their spirit, ends, and means, than Judas of Galilee and Jesus of Nazareth. The one was a political malcontent; the other would have the conquered bow to the yoke, and give to Cæsar Cæsar's due. The former aimed at restoring the kingdom to Israel, adopting for his watchword,

[1] John xiv. 22.

[2] Ewald (*Christus*, p. 399) thinks Lebbæus and Judas different persons, and supposes that the former had died in Christ's lifetime, and that Judas had been chosen in his place.

[3] Acts v. 37.

"We have no Lord or Master but God;" the latter aimed at founding a kingdom not national, but universal, not "of this world," but purely spiritual. The means employed by the two actors were as diverse as their ends. One had recourse to the carnal weapons of war, the sword and the dagger; the other relied solely on the gentle but omnipotent force of truth.

What led Simon to leave Judas for Jesus we know not; but he made a happy exchange for himself, as the party he forsook were destined in after years to bring ruin on themselves and on their country by their fanatical, reckless, and unavailing patriotism. Though the insurrection of Judas was crushed, the fire of discontent still smouldered in the breasts of his adherents; and at length it burst out into the blaze of a new rebellion, which brought on a death-struggle with the gigantic power of Rome, and ended in the destruction of the Jewish capital, and the dispersion of the Jewish people.

The choice of this disciple to be an apostle supplies another illustration of Christ's disregard of prudential wisdom. An ex-zealot was not a safe man to make an apostle of, for he might be the means of rendering Jesus and His followers objects of political suspicion. But the Author of our faith was willing to take the risk. He expected to gain many disciples from the dangerous classes as well as from the despised, and He would have them, too, represented among the twelve.

It gives one a pleasant surprise to think of Simon the zealot and Matthew the publican, men coming from so opposite quarters, meeting together in close fellowship in the little band of twelve. In the persons of these two disciples extremes meet—the tax-gatherer and the tax-hater: the unpatriotic Jew, who degraded himself by becoming a servant of the alien ruler; and the Jewish patriot, who chafed under the foreign yoke, and sighed for emancipation. This union of opposites was not accidental, but was designed by Jesus as a prophecy of the future. He wished the twelve to be the church in miniature or germ; and therefore He chose them so as to intimate that, as among them distinctions of publican and zealot were unknown, so in the church of the future there should be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free, but only Christ,—all to each, and in each of the all.

These were the names of the twelve as given in the catalogues. As to the order in which they are arranged, on closely inspecting the lists, we observe that they contain three groups of four, in each of which the same names are always found, though the order of arrangement varies. The first group includes those best known, the second the next best, and the third those least known of all, or, in the case of the traitor, known only too well. Peter, the most prominent character among the twelve, stands at the head of all the lists, and Judas Iscariot at the foot, carefully designated, as already observed, the traitor. The apostolic roll, taking the order given in Matthew, and borrowing characteristic epithets from the Gospel history at large, is as follows:—

FIRST GROUP.

Simon Peter,	The man of rock.
Andrew,	Peter's brother.
James and John,	Sons of Zebedee, and sons of thunder.

SECOND GROUP.

Philip,	The earnest inquirer.
Bartholomew, or Nathanael,	The guileless Israelite.
Thomas,	The melancholy.
Matthew,	The publican (so called by himself only).

THIRD GROUP.

James (the son) of Alphæus,	(James the Less? Mark xv. 40.)
Lebbæus, Thaddæus, Judas of James,	The three-named disciple.
Simon,	The Zealot.
Judas, the man of Kerioth,	The traitor.

Such were the men whom Jesus chose to be with Him while He was on this earth, and to carry on His work after He left it. Such were the men whom the church celebrates as the "glorious company of the apostles." The praise is merited; but the glory of the twelve was not of this world. In a worldly point of view they were a very insignificant company indeed,—a band of poor illiterate Galilean provincials, utterly devoid of social consequence, not likely to be chosen by one having supreme regard to prudential considera-

tions. Why did Jesus choose such men? Was He guided by feelings of antagonism to those possessing social advantages, or of partiality for men of His own class? No; His choice was made in true wisdom. If He chose Galileans mainly, it was not from provincial prejudice against those of the south; if, as some think, He chose two or even four[1] of His own kindred, it was not from nepotism; if He chose rude, unlearned, humble men, it was not because He was animated by any petty jealousy of knowledge, culture, or good birth. If any rabbi, rich man, or ruler had been willing to yield himself unreservedly to the service of the kingdom, no objection would have been taken to him on account of his acquirements, possessions, or titles. The case of Saul of Tarsus, the pupil of Gamaliel, proves the truth of this statement. Even Gamaliel himself would not have been objected to, could he have stooped to become a disciple of the unlearned Nazarene. But, alas! neither he nor any of his order would condescend so far, and therefore the despised One did not get an opportunity of showing His willingness to accept as disciples and choose for apostles such as they were.

The truth is, that Jesus was obliged to be content with fishermen, and publicans, and quondam zealots, for apostles. They were the best that could be had. Those who deemed themselves better were too proud to become disciples, and thereby they excluded themselves from what all the world now sees to be the high honour of being the chosen princes of the kingdom. The civil and religious aristocracy boasted of their unbelief.[2] The citizens of Jerusalem did feel for a moment interested in the zealous youth who had purged the temple with a whip of small cords; but their faith was superficial, and their attitude patronizing, and therefore Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew what was in them.[3] A few of good position were sincere sympathizers, but they were not so decided in their attachment as to be eligible for apostles. Nicodemus was barely able to speak a timid apologetic word in Christ's behalf, and Joseph of

[1] Matthew or Levi, being a son of Alphæus, has been supposed to be a brother of James, and Simon the Zealot to be the Simon mentioned in Matt. xiii. 55.

[2] John vii. 48. [3] John ii. 23–25.

Arimathea was a disciple "secretly," for fear of the Jews. These were hardly the persons to send forth as missionaries of the cross—men so fettered by social ties and party connections, and so enslaved by the fear of man. The apostles of Christianity must be made of sterner stuff.

And so Jesus was obliged to fall back on the rustic, but simple, sincere, and energetic men of Galilee. And He was quite content with His choice, and devoutly thanked His Father for giving Him even such as they. Learning, rank, wealth, refinement, freely given up to His service, He would not have despised; but He preferred devoted men who had none of these advantages, to undevoted men who had them all. And with good reason; for it mattered little, except in the eyes of contemporary prejudice, what the social position or even the previous history of the twelve had been, provided they were spiritually qualified for the work to which they were called. What tells ultimately is, not what is without a man, but what is within. John Bunyan was a man of low birth, low occupation, and, up till his conversion, of low habits; but he was by nature a man of genius, and by grace a man of God, and he would have made—he was, in fact—a most effective apostle.

But it may be objected that all the twelve were by no means gifted like Bunyan; some of them, if one may judge from the obscurity which envelopes their names, and the silence of history regarding them, having been undistinguished either by high endowment or by a great career, and in fact, to speak plainly, all but useless. As this objection virtually impugns the wisdom of Christ's choice, it is necessary to examine how far it is according to truth. We submit the following considerations with this view:—

1. That some of the apostles were comparatively obscure, inferior men, cannot be denied; but even the obscurest of them may have been most useful as *witnesses* for Him with whom they had companied from the beginning. It does not take a *great* man to make a good witness, and to be witnesses of Christian facts was the main business of the apostles. That even the humblest of them rendered important service in that capacity we need not doubt, though nothing is said of

them in the apostolic annals. It was not to be expected that a history so fragmentary and so brief as that given by Luke should mention any but the principal actors, especially when we reflect how few of the characters that appear on the stage at any particular crisis in human affairs are prominently noticed even in histories which go elaborately into detail. The purpose of history is served by recording the words and deeds of the representative men, and many are allowed to drop into oblivion who did nobly in their day. The less distinguished members of the apostolic band are entitled to the benefit of this reflection.

2. Three eminent men, or even two (Peter and John), out of twelve, is a good proportion; there being few societies in which superior excellence bears such a high ratio to respectable mediocrity. Perhaps the number of pillars was as great as was desirable. Far from regretting that all were not Peters and Johns, it is rather a matter to be thankful for, that there were diversities of gifts among the first preachers of the gospel. As a general rule, it is not good when all are leaders. Little men are needed as well as great men; for human nature is one-sided, and little men have their peculiar virtues and gifts, and can do some things better than their more celebrated brethren.

3. We must remember how little we know concerning any of the apostles. It is the fashion of biographers in our day, writing for a morbidly or idly curious public, to enter into the minutest particulars of outward event or personal peculiarity regarding their heroes. Of this fond idolatrous minuteness there is no trace in the evangelic histories. The writers of the Gospels were not afflicted with the biographic mania. Moreover, the apostles were not their theme. Christ was their hero; and their sole desire was to tell what they knew of Him. They gazed stedfastly at the Sun of righteousness, and in His effulgence they lost sight of the attendant stars. Whether they were stars of the first magnitude, or of the second, or of the third, made little difference.

CHAPTER V.

HEARING AND SEEING.

Luke i. 1–4; Matt. xiii. 16, 17; Luke x. 23, 24; Matt. v.–vii.; Luke vi. 17–49; Matt. xiii. 1–52 et parall.; Matt. viii. 16, 17; Mark iv. 33, 34.

IN the training of the twelve for the work of the apostleship, hearing and seeing the words and works of Christ necessarily occupied an important place. Eye and ear witnessing of the facts of an unparalleled life was an indispensable preparation for future witness-bearing. The apostles could secure credence for their wondrous tale only by being able to preface it with the protestation: "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you." None would believe their report, save those who, at the very least, were satisfied that it emanated from men who had been with Jesus. Hence the third evangelist, himself not an apostle, but only a companion of apostles, presents His Gospel with all confidence to his friend Theophilus as a genuine history, and no mere collection of fables, because its contents were attested by men who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word."

In the early period of their discipleship, hearing and seeing seem to have been the main occupation of the twelve. They were then like children born into a new world, whose first and by no means least important course of lessons consists in the use of their senses in observing the wonderful objects by which they are surrounded.

The things which the twelve saw and heard were wonderful enough. The great Actor in the stupendous drama was careful to impress on His followers the magnitude of their privilege. "Blessed," said He to them on one occasion, "are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you,

that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."[1] Yet certain generations of Israel had seen very remarkable things: one had seen the wonders of the Exodus, and the sublimities connected with the lawgiving at Sinai; another, the miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisha; and successive generations had been privileged to listen to the not less wonderful oracles of God, spoken by David, Solomon, Isaiah, and the rest of the prophets. But the things witnessed by the twelve eclipsed the wonders of all bygone ages; for a greater than Moses, or Elijah, or David, or Solomon, or Isaiah, was here, and the promise to Nathanael was being fulfilled. Heaven had been opened, and the angels of God—the spirits of wisdom, and power, and love—were ascending and descending on the Son of man.

We mean here to make a rapid survey of the *mirabilia* which it was the peculiar privilege of the twelve to see and hear, more or less during the whole period of their discipleship, and specially just after their election. These may be comprehended under two heads: the Doctrine of the Kingdom; and the Philanthropic Work of the Kingdom.

1. Before the ministry of Jesus commenced, His forerunner had appeared in the wilderness of Judæa, preaching, and saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and some time after their election, the twelve disciples were sent forth among the towns and villages of Galilee to repeat the Baptist's message. But Jesus Himself did something more than proclaim the advent of the kingdom. He expounded the nature of the divine kingdom, described the character of its citizens, and discriminated between genuine and spurious members of the holy commonwealth. This He did partly in what is familiarly called the Sermon on the Mount, preached shortly after the election of the apostles; and partly in certain parables uttered about the same period.[2]

[1] Luke x. 23, 24.

[2] That the election of the twelve preceded the utterance of the parables is plain from Mark iv. 10, "They that were about Him *with the twelve* asked of Him the parable."

In the great discourse delivered on the mountain-top, the qualifications for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven were set forth, first positively, and then comparatively. The positive truth was summed up in seven golden sentences called the Beatitudes, in which the felicity of the kingdom was represented as altogether independent of the outward conditions with which worldly happiness is associated. The blessed, according to the preacher, were the poor, the mournful, the hungerers after righteousness, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peaceable, the sufferers for righteousness' sake. Such were blessed themselves, and a source of blessing to the human race: the salt of the earth, the light of the world raised above others in spirit and character, to draw them upwards, and lead them to glorify God.

Next, with more detail, Jesus exhibited the righteousness of the kingdom, and of its true citizens, in contrast to that which prevailed. "Except your righteousness," He went on to say with solemn emphasis, "shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and then He illustrated and enforced the general proposition by a detailed description of the counterfeit in its moral and religious aspects: in its mode of interpreting the moral law, and its manner of performing the duties of piety, such as prayer, alms, and fasting. In the one aspect He characterized pharisaic righteousness as superficial and technical; in the other as ostentatious, self-complacent, and censorious. In contrast thereto, He described the *ethics* of the kingdom as a pure stream of life, having charity for its fountainhead; a morality of the heart, not merely of outward conduct; a morality also broad and catholic, o'erleaping all arbitrary barriers erected by legal pedantry and natural selfishness. The *religion* of the kingdom He set forth as humble, retiring, devoted in singleness of heart to God and things supernal; having faith in God as a benignant gracious Father for its root, and contentment, cheerfulness, and freedom from secular cares for its fruits; and, finally, as reserved in its bearing towards the profane, yet averse to severity in judging, yea, to judging at all, leaving men to be judged by God.

The discourse, of which we have given a hasty outline, made a powerful impression on the audience. "The people," we read, "were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority (the authority of wisdom and truth), and not as the scribes," who had merely the authority of office. It is not probable that either the multitude or the twelve understood the sermon; for it was both deep and lofty, and their minds were preoccupied with very different ideas of the coming kingdom. Yet the drift of all that had been said was clear and simple. The kingdom whereof Jesus was both King and Lawgiver was not to be a kingdom of this world: it was not to be here or there in space, but within the heart of man; it was not to be the monopoly of any class or nation, but open to all possessed of the requisite spiritual endowments.

The weighty truths thus taught first in the didactic form of an ethical discourse, Jesus sought at other times to popularize by means of *parables*. In the course of His ministry He uttered many parabolic sayings, the parable being with Him a favourite form of instruction. Of the thirty parables preserved in the Gospels, the larger number were of an occasional character, and are best understood when viewed in connection with the circumstances which called them forth. But there is a special group of eight which appear to have been spoken about the same time, and to have been designed to serve one object, viz. to exhibit in simple pictures the outstanding features of the kingdom of heaven in its nature and progress, and in its relations to diverse classes of men. One of these, the parable of the sower, shows the different reception given to the word of the kingdom by various classes of hearers, and the varied issues in their life. Two—the parables of the tares and of the net cast into the sea—describe the mixture of good and evil that should exist in the kingdom till the end, when the grand final separation would take place. Another pair of short parables—those of the treasure hid in a field and of the precious pearl—set forth the incomparable importance of the kingdom, and of citizenship therein. Other two—the grain of mustard seed, and the leaven hid in three measures of meal—explain how the kingdom advances from

small beginnings to a great ending. An eighth parable, found in Mark's Gospel only, teaches that growth in the divine kingdom proceeds by stages, analogous to the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, in the growth of grain.[1]

These parables, or the greater number of them, were spoken in the hearing of a miscellaneous audience; and from a reply of Jesus to a question put by the disciples, it might appear that they were intended mainly for the ignorant populace. The question was, "Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" and the reply, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given;" which seems to imply, that in the case of the twelve, such elementary views of truth—such children's sermons, so to speak—might be dispensed with. Jesus meant no more, however, than that for them the parables were not so important as for common hearers, being only one of several means of grace through which they were to become eventually scribes instructed in the kingdom, acquainted with all its mysteries, and able, like a wise householder, to bring out of their treasures things new and old;[2] while for the multitude the parables were indispensable, as affording their only chance of getting a little glimpse into the mysteries of the kingdom.

That the twelve were not *above* parables yet, appears from the fact that they asked and received explanations of them in private from their Master: of all, probably, though the interpretations of two only, the parables of the sower and the tares, are preserved in the Gospels.[3] They were still only children: the parables were pretty pictures to them, but of what they could not tell. Even after they had received private expositions of their meaning, they were probably not much wiser than before, though they professed to be satisfied.[4] Their profession was doubtless sincere: they spake as they felt; but they spake as children, they understood as children, they thought as children, and they had much to learn yet of these divine mysteries.

When the children had grown to spiritual manhood, and fully understood these mysteries, they highly valued the happiness they had enjoyed in former years, in being privileged

[1] Mark iv. 26. [2] Matt. xiii. 52. [3] Mark iv. 34. [4] Matt. xiii. 51.

to hear the parables of Jesus. We have an interesting memorial of the deep impression produced on their minds by these simple pictures of the kingdom, in the reflection with which the first evangelist closes his account of Christ's parabolic teaching. "All these things," he remarks, "spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables, . . . that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."[1] The quotation (from the seventy-eighth Psalm) significantly diverges both from the Hebrew original and from the Septuagint version.[2] Matthew has consciously adapted the words, so as to express the absolute originality of the teaching in which he found their fulfilment. While the Psalmist uttered dark sayings from the ancient times of Israel's history, Jesus in the parables had spoken things that had been hidden from the creation. Nor was this an exaggeration on the part of the evangelist. Even the use of the parable as a vehicle of instruction was all but new, and the truths expressed in the parables were altogether new. They were indeed the eternal verities of the divine kingdom, but till the days of Jesus they had remained unannounced. Earthly things had always been fit to emblem forth heavenly things; but, till the great Teacher appeared, no one had ever thought of linking them together, so that the one should become a mirror of the other, revealing the deep things of God to the common eye: even as no one before Isaac Newton had thought of connecting the fall of an apple with the revolution of the heavenly bodies, though apples had fallen to the ground from the creation of the world.

2. The things which the disciples had the happiness to see were, if possible, still more marvellous than those which they heard in Christ's company. They were eye-witnesses of the events which Jesus bade the messengers of John report to their master in prison as unquestionable evidence that He was the Christ who should come.[3] In their presence, as spectators,

[1] Matt. xiii. 34, 35.

[2] ἐρεύξομαι κεκρυμμένα ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (Matt.); אַבִּיעָה חִידוֹת מִנִּי־קֶדֶם (Hebrew); φθέγξομαι προβλήματα ἀπ' ἀρχῆς (Sept.).

[3] Matt. xi. 2.

blind men received their sight, lame men walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf recovered hearing, dead persons were raised to life again. The performance of such wonderful works was for a time Christ's daily occupation. He went about in Galilee and other districts, "doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."[1] The "miracles," recorded in detail in the Gospels, give no idea whatever of the extent to which these wondrous operations were carried on. The leper cleansed on the descent from the mountain, when the great sermon was preached, the palsied servant of the Roman centurion restored to health and strength, Peter's mother-in-law cured of a fever, the demoniac dispossessed in the synagogue of Capernaum, the widow's son brought back to life while he was being carried out to burial,—these, and the like, are but a few samples selected out of an innumerable multitude of deeds not less remarkable, whether regarded as mere miracles or as acts of kindness. The truth of this statement appears from paragraphs of frequent recurrence in the Gospels, which relate not individual miracles, but an indefinite number of them taken *en masse*. Of such paragraphs take as an example the following, cursorily rehearsing the works done by Jesus at the close of a busy day: "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils; and all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils."[2] This was what happened on a single Sabbath evening in Capernaum, shortly after the Sermon on the Mount was preached; and such scenes appear to have been common at this time: for we read a little further on in the same Gospel, that "Jesus spake unto His disciples, that a small ship should wait on Him because of the multitude, lest they should throng Him; for He had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon Him for to touch Him, as many as had plagues."[3] And yet again Mark tells how "they went into an house, and the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread."[4]

The inference suggested by such passages as to the vast

[1] Acts xi. 38. [2] Mark i. 32–34. [3] Mark iii. 9. [4] Mark iii. 19, 20.

extent of Christ's labours among the suffering, is borne out by the impressions these made on the minds both of friends and foes. The ill-affected were so struck by what they saw, that they found it necessary to get up a theory to account for the mighty influence exerted by Jesus in curing physical, and especially psychical maladies. "This fellow," they said, "doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils." It was a lame theory, as Jesus showed; but it was at least conclusive evidence that devils were cast out, and in great numbers.

The thoughts of the well-affected concerning the works of Jesus were various, but all which have been recorded involve a testimony to His vast activity and extraordinary zeal. Some, apparently relatives, deemed Him mad, fancying that enthusiasm had disturbed His mind, and compassionately sought to save Him from doing Himself harm, through excessive solicitude to do good to others.[1] The sentiments of the people who received benefit were more devout. "They marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men;"[2] and they were naturally not inclined to criticise an "enthusiasm of humanity" whereof they were themselves the objects.

The contemporaneous impressions of the twelve concerning their Master's deeds are not recorded; but of their subsequent reflections as apostles we have an interesting sample in the observations appended by the first evangelist to his account of the transactions of that Sabbath evening in Capernaum already alluded to. The devout Matthew, according to his custom, saw in these wondrous works Old Testament Scripture fulfilled; and the passage whose fulfilment he found therein was that touching oracle of Isaiah, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;" which, departing from the Septuagint, he made apt to his purpose by rendering, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."[3] The Greek translators interpreted the text as referring to men's spiritual maladies—their sins;[4] but Matthew deemed it neither a misapplication nor a degradation of the words to find in them a prophecy of Messiah's deep sympathy with such as suffered from any disease, whether spiritual or mental, or merely

[1] Mark iii. 21.
[2] Matt. ix. 8.
[3] Matt. viii. 17.
[4] οὗτος τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει.

physical. He knew not how better to express the intense compassion of his Lord towards all sufferers, than by representing Him in prophetic language as taking their sicknesses on Himself. Nor did he wrong the prophet's thought by this application of it. He but laid the foundation of an *à fortiori* inference to a still more intense sympathy on the Saviour's part with the spiritually diseased. For surely He who so cared for men's bodies, would care yet more for their souls. Surely it might safely be anticipated, that He who was so conspicuous as a healer of bodily disease, would become yet more famous as a Saviour from sin.

The works which the twelve were privileged to see were verily worth seeing, and altogether worthy of the Messianic King. They served to demonstrate that the King and the kingdom were not only coming, but come; for what could more certainly betoken their presence, than mercy dropping like the "gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath?" John, indeed, seems to have thought otherwise, when he sent to inquire at Jesus if He were the Christ who was to come. He desiderated, we imagine, a work of judgment on the impenitent as a more reliable proof of Messiah's advent than these miracles of mercy. The prophetic infirmity of querulousness and the prison air had got the better of his judgment and his heart, and he was in the truculent humour of Jonah, who was displeased with God, not because He was too stern, but rather because He was too gracious, too ready to forgive.

The least in the kingdom of heaven is incapable now of being offended with these works of our Lord on account of their mercifulness. The offence in our day lies in a different direction. Men stumble at the miraculousness of the things seen by the disciples and recorded by the evangelists. Mercy, say they, is God-like, but miracles are impossible; and they think they do well to be sceptical. Yet ought they not rather to say: Mercy is God-like, therefore such works as those wrought by Jesus were matters of course? So they appeared to the writers of the Gospels. What they wondered at was not the supernaturalness of Christ's healing operations, but the unfathomable depth of divine compassion which they revealed. There is no trace of the love of the marvellous

either in the Gospels or in the Epistles. The disciples may have experienced such a feeling when the era of wonders first burst on their astonished view; but they had lost it entirely by the time the New Testament books began to be written.[1] They had seen too many miracles while with Jesus, to be excited about them. Their sense of wonder had been deadened by being sated. But though they ceased to marvel at the power of their Lord, they never ceased to wonder at His grace. The love of Christ remained for them throughout life a thing passing knowledge; and the longer they lived, the more cordially did they acknowledge the truth of their Master's words: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."

[1] Isaac Taylor, in *The Restoration of Belief*, founds on this fact an argument for the reality of miracles, contending that the calm, matter-of-fact tone in which miracles are spoken of in the Epistles, can be accounted for only by their being a great outstanding fact of that age (*vide* pp. 128–211).

CHAPTER VI.

TEACH US TO PRAY.

MATT. VI. 5–13; LUKE XI. 1–13; LUKE XVIII. 1–5.

IT would have been matter for surprise, if, among the manifold subjects on which Jesus gave instruction to His disciples, prayer had not occupied a prominent place. Prayer is a necessity of spiritual life, and all who earnestly try to pray soon feel the need of teaching how to do it. And what theme more likely to engage the thoughts of a Master who was Himself emphatically a man of prayer, spending occasionally whole nights in prayerful communion with His heavenly Father?[1]

We find, accordingly, that prayer was a subject on which Jesus often spoke in the hearing of His disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, he devoted a paragraph to that topic, in which He cautioned His hearers against pharisaic ostentation and heathenish repetition, and recited a form of devotion as a model of simplicity, comprehensiveness, and brevity.[2] At other times He directed attention to the necessity, in order to acceptable and prevailing prayer, of perseverance,[3] concord,[4] strong faith,[5] and large expectation.[6]

The passage cited from the eleventh chapter of Luke's Gospel gives an account of what may be regarded as the most complete and comprehensive of all the lessons communicated by Jesus to His disciples on the important subject to which it relates. The circumstances in which this lesson was given are interesting. The lesson on prayer was itself an answer to prayer. A disciple, in all probability one of the twelve,[7] after

[1] Mark i. 35; Luke vi. 12; Matt. xiv. 23.
[2] Matt. vi. 5–13.
[3] Luke xi. 1–13, xviii. 1–5.
[4] Matt. xviii. 19.
[5] Matt. xxi. 22.
[6] John xvi. 23, 24.
[7] The twelve are not named; but the lesson must, from its nature, have been given to a close circle of disciples.

hearing Jesus pray, made the request: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The request and its occasion taken together convey to us incidentally two pieces of information. From the latter we learn that Jesus, besides praying much alone, also prayed in company with His disciples; practising family prayer as the head of a household, as well as secret prayer in personal fellowship with God His Father. From the former we learn that the social prayers of Jesus were most impressive. Disciples hearing them were made painfully conscious of their own incapacity, and after the Amen were ready instinctively to proffer the request, "Lord, teach us to pray," as if ashamed any more to attempt the exercise in their own feeble, vague, stammering words.

When this lesson was given we know not, for Luke introduces his narrative of it in the most indefinite manner, without noting either time or place. The reference to John, in the past tense, might seem to indicate a date subsequent to his death; but the mode of expression would be sufficiently explained by the supposition that the disciple who made the request had previously been a disciple of the Baptist.[1] Nor can any certain inference be drawn from the contents of the lesson. It is a lesson which might have been given to the twelve at any time during their discipleshood, so far as their spiritual necessities were concerned. It is a lesson for children, for spiritual minors, for Christians in the crude stage of the divine life, afflicted with confusion of mind, dumbness, dejection, unable to pray for want of clear thought, apt words, and above all, of faith, that knows how to wait in hope; and it meets the wants of such by suggesting topics, supplying forms of language, and furnishing their weak faith with the props of cogent arguments for perseverance. Now such was the state of the twelve during all the time they were with Jesus; till He ascended to heaven, and power descended from heaven on them, bringing with it a loosed tongue and an enlarged heart. During the whole period of their discipleship they needed prompting in prayer, such as a mother gives

[1] The request in that case might be paraphrased: "Lord, teach (Thou also) us to pray, as John taught us when we were *his* disciples."

her child, and exhortations to perseverance in the habit of praying, even as do the humblest followers of Christ. Far from being exempt from such infirmities, the twelve may even have experienced them in a superlative degree. The heights correspond to the depths in religious experience. Men who are destined to be apostles must, as disciples, know more than most of the chaotic, speechless condition, and of the great, irksome, but most salutary business of waiting on God for light, and truth, and grace, earnestly desired but long withheld.

It was well for the church that her first ministers needed this lesson on prayer; for the time comes in the case of most, if not all, who are spiritually earnest, when its teaching is very seasonable. In the spring of the divine life, the beautiful blossom time of piety, Christians may be able to pray with fluency and fervour, unembarrassed by want of words, thoughts, and feelings of a sort. But that happy stage soon passes, and is succeeded by one in which prayer often becomes a helpless struggle, an inarticulate groan, a silent, distressed, despondent waiting on God, on the part of men who are tempted to doubt whether God be indeed the hearer of prayer, whether prayer be not altogether idle and useless. The three wants contemplated and provided for in this lesson—the want of ideas, of words, and of faith—are as common as they are grievous. How long it takes most to fill even the simple petitions of the Lord's prayer with definite meanings! the second petition, *e.g.*, "Thy kingdom come," which can be presented with perfect intelligence only by such as have formed for themselves a clear conception of the ideal spiritual republic or commonwealth. How difficult, and therefore how rare, to find out acceptable words for precious thoughts slowly reached! How many, who have never got anything on which their hearts were set without needing to ask for it often, and to wait for it long (no uncommon experience), have been tempted by the delay to give up asking in despair! And no wonder; for delay is hard to bear in all cases, especially in connection with spiritual blessings, which are in fact, and are by Christ here assumed to be, the principal object of a Christian man's desires. Devout souls would not be utterly con-

founded by delay, or even refusal, in connection with mere temporal goods; for they know that such things as health, wealth, wife, children, home, position, are not unconditionally good, and that it may be well sometimes not to obtain them, or not easily and too soon. But it is most confounding to desire with all one's heart the Holy Ghost, and yet seem to be denied the priceless boon; to pray for light, and to get instead deeper darkness; for faith, and to be tormented with doubts which shake cherished convictions to their foundations; for sanctity, and to have the mud of corruption stirred up by temptation from the bottom of the well of eternal life in the heart. Yet all this, as every experienced Christian knows, is part of the discipline through which scholars in Christ's school have to pass ere the desire of their heart be fulfilled.[1]

The lesson on prayer taught by Christ, in answer to request, consists of two parts, in one of which thoughts and words are put into the mouths of immature disciples, while the other provides aids to faith in God as the answerer of prayer. There is first a form of prayer, and then an argument enforcing perseverance in prayer.

The form of prayer commonly called the Lord's prayer, which appears in the Sermon on the Mount as a sample of the right kind of prayer, is given here as a summary of the general heads under which all special petitions may be comprehended. We may call this form the *alphabet* of all possible prayer. It embraces the elements of all spiritual desire, summed up in a few choice sentences, for the benefit of those who may not be able to bring their struggling aspirations to birth in articulate language. It contains in all six petitions, of which three—the first three, as was meet—refer to God's glory, and the remaining three to man's good. We are taught to pray, first for the advent of the divine kingdom, in the form of universal reverence for the divine name, and universal obedience to the divine will; and then, in the second place, for daily bread, pardon, and protection from evil for ourselves.

[1] Readers may be reminded here of the well-known hymn of Newton, beginning:

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace."

The whole is addressed to God as Father, and is supposed to proceed from such as realize their fellowship one with another as members of a divine family, and therefore say, "Our Father." The prayer does not end, as our prayers now commonly do, with the formula, "for Christ's sake;" nor could it, consistently with the supposition that it proceeded from Jesus. No prayer given by Him for the present use of His disciples, before His death, could have such an ending, because the plea it contains was not intelligible to them previous to that event. The twelve did not yet know what Christ's sake (*sache*) meant, nor would they till after their Lord had ascended, and the Spirit had descended, and revealed to them the true meaning of the facts of Christ's earthly history. Hence we find Jesus, on the eve of His passion, telling His disciples that up to that time they had asked nothing in His name, and representing the use of His name as a plea to be heard, as one of the privileges awaiting them in the future. "Hitherto," He said, "have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."[1] And in another part of His discourse: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."[2]

To what extent the disciples afterwards made use of this beautifully simple yet profoundly significant form, we do not know; but it may be assumed that they were in the habit of repeating it, as the disciples of the Baptist might repeat the forms taught them by *their* master. There is, however, no reason to think that the "Lord's prayer," though of permanent value as a part of Christ's teaching, was designed to be a stereotyped binding method of addressing the Father in heaven. It was meant to be an aid to inexperienced disciples, not a rule imposed upon apostles.[3] Even after they had attained to spiritual maturity, the twelve might use this form if they pleased, and possibly they did occasionally use it; but Jesus expected that, by the time they came to be teachers in the

[1] John xvi. 24. [2] John xiv. 13.

[3] Jeremy Taylor, in his *Apology for Authorized and Set Forms of Liturgy*, makes no distinction between disciples and apostles. When the distinction is attended to, much of his argument falls to the ground. *Vid.* §§ 86–112.

church, they should have outgrown the need of it as an aid to devotion. Filled with the Spirit, enlarged in heart, mature in spiritual understanding, they should then be able to pray as their Lord had prayed when He was with them; and while the six petitions of the model prayer would still enter into all their supplications at the throne of grace, they would do so only as the alphabet of a language enters into the most extended and eloquent utterances of a speaker, who never thinks of the letters of which the words he utters are composed.

In maintaining the provisional, *pro tempore* character of the Lord's prayer, so far as the twelve were concerned, we lay no stress on the fact already adverted to, that it does not end with the phrase, "for Christ's sake." That defect could easily be supplied afterwards mentally or orally, and therefore was no valid reason for disuse. The same remark applies to our use of the prayer in question. To allow this form to fall into desuetude merely because the customary concluding plea is wanting, is as foolish on one side as the frequent repetition of it is on the other. The Lord's prayer is neither a piece of Deism unworthy of a Christian, nor a magic charm like the "Paternoster" of Roman Catholic devotion. The most advanced believer will often find relief and rest to his spirit in falling back on its simple, sublime sentences, while mentally realizing the manifold particulars which each of them includes; and he is but a tyro in the art of praying, and in the divine life generally, whose devotions consist exclusively, or even mainly, in repeating the words which Jesus put into the mouths of immature disciples.

The view now advocated regarding the purpose of the Lord's prayer is in harmony with the spirit of Christ's whole teaching. Liturgical forms and religious methodism in general were much more congenial to the strict ascetic school of the Baptist than to the free school of Jesus. Our Lord evidently attached little importance to forms of prayer, any more than to fixed periodic fasts, else He would not have waited till He was asked for a form, but would have made systematic provision for the wants of His followers, even as the Baptist did, by, so to speak, compiling a book of devotion or composing a liturgy.

It is evident even from the present instructions on the subject of praying, that Jesus considered the form He supplied of quite subordinate importance: a mere temporary remedy for a minor evil, the want of utterance, till the greater evil, the want of faith, should be cured; for the larger portion of the lesson is devoted to the purpose of supplying an antidote to unbelief.

From the design of the Lord's prayer as now explained, we may determine the proper place and use of all fixed forms of devotion. Liturgical forms are for private rather than for public use; for those who are in the dumb, arid stage of the spiritual life, rather than for those who have attained the power and utterance of spiritual maturity. To the private use of such forms by persons who desire to pray, yet cannot do it, no reasonable objection can be taken. Advantage justifies use. The less experienced Christian may ask the more experienced to teach him to pray; and the more experienced may reply, "After this manner pray ye." If we may read and repeat the sacred songs of Christian poets to find expression for emotions which are common to us and them, but which we cannot, like them, adequately express, why may we not read and repeat the prayer of the saints for a similar purpose? The superficial, who have not earnestness and sincerity enough to know what it is to stammer, may despise such aids as suited only for children; and those who are yet in the first flush of religious fervour may turn away from written forms as cold and dead, however classical. Well, let all do without such aids who can; only the time may come, even for the fervent, when, forsaken of emotion, deficient in experience, discouraged by failure, disappointed in ardent youthful hopes, tormented by speculative doubts concerning the utility and the reasonableness of prayer coming over the soul like chill east winds in the winter of its religious history, they may be very glad to read over forms of devotion which, by their simplicity and dignity, serve to inspire a sense of reality, and to produce a soothing, sedative effect on their diseased, restless spirits. For all in such a plight, we plead that they shall not be required to remain prayerless, because they cannot for the time pray without book.

When we pass from the closet to the church, the case is

altered. There we should find pastors capable of doing, each one for his fellow-worshippers, what Christ did for His disciples, and of praying with the freedom and force to which the disciples themselves afterwards attained. It may be asserted, indeed, that this, though the desirable, is not the actual state of matters. A recent writer, in advocating the introduction of written forms of prayer into the Presbyterian Church, says: "I feel persuaded that a *verbatim* report of all the public prayers uttered in Scotland any one Sunday in the year would settle the question for ever in the mind of every person who was capable of forming a rational judgment on such a matter."[1] It is to be hoped that this is an exaggerated view of existing ministerial incapacity; but even granting its accuracy, it is a question whether the remedy proposed would not be worse than the evil, and the gain in propriety more than counterbalanced by a loss in the more important quality of fervour. This much we may say, even if not disposed to take up high ground of principle in opposition to liturgical forms, but rather to concur in the moderate sentiments of Richard Baxter, when he says: "I cannot be of their opinion who think God will not accept him that prayeth by the common Prayer-book, and that such forms are a self-invented worship which God rejecteth; nor yet can I be of their mind that say the like of extemporary prayers."[2] In Baxter's time religious controversy ran very high, and opposed views were stated in extreme form. The Churchman derided the extempore effusions of the Puritan; the Puritan went so far in his opposition to liturgical prayer, as even to maintain that the Lord's prayer itself should never be repeated. Baxter, not being a partisan, but a lover of truth, sympathized with neither party, but regarded the question at issue as one of policy rather than of principle, to be settled not by abstract reasoning, but by a calm consideration of what on the whole was most conducive to edification; in which point of view his judgment and his practice were both on the side of extempore prayer.

Looking at the question, with Baxter, as one of policy, we are fully persuaded that the existing practice of Presbyterian

[1] *The Reform of the Church of Scotland*, by Robert Lee, D.D., p. 76.

[2] Baxter's Life, from his own original MS., lib. i. part i. § 213.

and other churches can be justified on such good grounds as should make them contented, to say the least, with their own way, and indisposed to imitate those whose way is different in this matter. The ministers of religion, like the apostles, ought to be able to dispense with liturgical forms; and the best way to secure that they shall possess such ability, is to throw them on their own resources, and on God, and so convert the ideal into a requirement applicable to all, making no provision for exceptions. The full benefit of a system cannot be reached unless it is rigidly enforced; and while such enforcement may involve occasional disadvantages, the relaxation of the rule would produce far greater damage to the church. Allowance made for timidity, inexperience, or extraordinary incapacity, would be abused by the indolent and the careless; and many would remain permanently in a state similar to that of the disciples, who, if compelled to stir up the gift of God which is in them, or to seek earnestly gifts and graces not possessed, might ere long attain to apostolic freedom and power!

The same remarks might be applied to preaching. In individual instances, congregations might benefit by the preacher being allowed to use foreign materials of instruction; but under such a permission, how many would content themselves with reading sermons out of books, or from manuscripts purchased at so much per dozen, who, under a system aiming at turning to the utmost account individual talent, and therefore requiring all teachers of truth to give their hearers the benefit of their own thoughts, would through practice attain to a fair measure of preaching power.

On the whole, therefore, the Presbyterian Church has every reason to be satisfied with its existing system of public worship. The aim and effect of the liturgical system is to make the mass of worshippers as independent as possible of the individual minister; the aim and effect of our system is to make individual ministers as valuable as possible to the worshippers, for their instruction and edification. The one system may secure a uniform solemnity and decency; but the other system tends to secure the more important qualities of fervour, energy, and life; and we believe, whatever fastidious

critics may allege, it does in the main secure them. At lowest, the non-liturgical method secures that the worship of the church shall be a true reflection of her life, and therefore, however beggarly, at least sincere. Men who preach their own sermons, and pray their own prayers, are more likely to preach and pray as they believe and live, than those who merely read compositions provided to their hand.

The second part of this lesson on prayer is intended to convey the same moral as that which is prefixed to the parable of the unjust judge,—"that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." The supposed cause of fainting is also the same, even delay on the part of God in answering our prayers. This is not, indeed, made so obvious in the earlier lesson as in the later. The parable of the ungenerous neighbour is not adapted to convey the idea of long delay; for the favour asked, if granted at all, must be granted in a very few minutes. But the lapse of time between the presenting and the granting of our requests is implied and presupposed as a matter of course. It is by delay that God seems to say to us what the ungenerous neighbour said to his friend, and that we are tempted to think that we pray to no purpose.

Both the parables spoken by Christ to inculcate perseverance in prayer seek to effect their purpose by showing the power of importunity in the most unpromising circumstances. The characters appealed to are both bad—one is ungenerous, and the other unjust; and from neither is anything to be gained, except by working on his selfishness. And the point of the parable in either case is, that importunity has a power of annoyance, which enables it to gain its object.

It is important again to observe what is supposed to be the leading subject of prayer in connection with the argument now to be considered. The thing upon which Christ assumes His disciples to have set their hearts is personal sanctification.[1] This appears from the concluding sentence of the discourse: "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!" Jesus takes for granted that

[1] The supposed subject of prayer in Luke xviii. is the general interest of the divine kingdom on the earth.

the persons to whom He addresses Himself here seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Therefore, though He inserted a petition for daily bread in the form of prayer, He drops that object out of view in the latter part of His discourse; both because it is by hypothesis not the chief object of desire, and also because, for all who truly give God's kingdom the first place in their regards, food and raiment are thrown into the bargain.

To such as do not desire the Holy Spirit above all things, Jesus has nothing to say. He does not encourage them to hope that they shall receive anything of the Lord; least of all, the righteousness of the kingdom, personal sanctification. He regards the prayers of a double-minded man, who has two chief ends in view, as a hollow mockery:—mere words, which never reach Heaven's ear.

The supposed cause of fainting being delay, and the supposed object of desire being the Holy Spirit, the spiritual situation contemplated in the argument is definitely determined. The Teacher's aim is to succour and encourage those who feel that the work of grace goes slowly on within them, and wonder why it does so, and sadly sigh because it does so. Such we conceive to have been the state of the twelve when this lesson was given them. They had been made painfully conscious of incapacity to perform aright their devotional duties, and they took that incapacity to be an index of their general spiritual condition, and were much depressed in consequence.

The argument by which Jesus sought to inspire His discouraged disciples with hope and confidence as to the ultimate fulfilment of their desires, is characterized by boldness, geniality, wisdom, and logical force. Its boldness is evinced in the choice of illustrations. Jesus has such confidence in the goodness of His cause, that He states the case as disadvantageously for Himself as possible, by selecting for illustration not good samples of men, but persons rather below than above the ordinary standard of human virtue. A man who, on being applied to at any hour of the night by a neighbour for help in a real emergency, such as that supposed in the parable, or in a case of sudden sickness, should put him off with such

an answer as this, "Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I cannot rise and give thee," would justly incur the contempt of his acquaintances, and become a byword among them for all that is ungenerous and heartless. The same readiness to take an extreme case is observable in the second argument, drawn from the conduct of fathers towards their children. "If a son shall ask bread of *any* of you"—so it begins. Jesus does not care what father may be selected; He is willing to take any one they please; He will take the very worst as readily as the best; nay, more readily, for the argument turns not on the goodness of the parent, but rather on his want of goodness, as it aims to show that no special goodness is required to keep all parents from doing what would be an outrage on natural affection, and revolting to the feelings of all mankind.

The genial, kindly character of the argument is manifest, from the insight and sympathy displayed therein. Jesus divines what hard thoughts men think of God under the burden of unfulfilled desire; how they doubt His goodness, and deem Him indifferent, heartless, unjust. He shows His intimate knowledge of their secret imaginations by the cases He puts; for the unkind friend and unnatural father, and we may add, the unjust judge, are pictures not indeed of what God is, or of what He would have us believe God to be, but certainly of what even pious men sometimes think Him to be.[1] And He can not only divine, but sympathize. He does not, like Job's friends, find fault with those who harbour doubting and apparently profane thoughts, nor chide them for impatience, distrust, and despondency. He deals with them as men compassed with infirmity, and needing sympathy, counsel, and help. And in supplying these, He comes down to their level of feeling, and tries to show that, even if things were as they seem, there is no cause for despair. He argues from their own thoughts of God, that they should still hope in Him. "Suppose," He says in effect, "God to be what you fancy, indifferent and heartless, still pray on: see, in the case I put, what perseverance can effect. Ask as the man who wanted loaves asked, and ye also shall receive from Him who seems at present

[1] See the book of Job, *passim*, and Ps. lxxiii., lxxvii., etc.

deaf to your petitions. Appearances, I grant, may be very unfavourable, but they cannot be more so in your case than in that of the petitioner in the parable; and yet you observe how he fared, through not being too easily disheartened."

Jesus succours the tempted in this argument with such deep fellow-feeling as among other men is attainable only by those who have themselves experienced temptation. Can He, too, have been tempted like as we are with doubts concerning the hearing of His prayers? Yes; here, as in so many other respects, He was like unto His brethren. He had to live by faith as other men, and He knew what it was to wait; and in the days of His flesh, when He was passing through His curriculum of temptation and suffering, He prayed as one whose patience was sorely tried, even with strong crying and tears.

Jesus displays His wisdom in dealing with the doubts of His disciples, by avoiding all elaborate explanations of the causes or reasons of delay in the answering of prayer, and using only arguments adapted to the capacity of persons weak in faith and in spiritual understanding. He does not attempt to show why sanctification is a slow, tedious work, not a momentary act: why the Spirit is given gradually and in limited measure, not at once and without measure. He simply urges His hearers to persevere in seeking the Holy Spirit, assuring them, in spite of trying delay, their desires will be fulfilled in the end. He teaches them no philosophy of waiting on God, but only tells them that they shall not wait in vain.

This method the Teacher followed not from necessity, but from choice. For though no attempt was made at explaining divine delays in providence and grace, it was not because explanation was impossible. There were many things which Christ might have said to His disciples at this time, if they could have borne them; some of which they afterwards said themselves, when the Spirit of Truth had come, and guided them into all truth, and made them acquainted with the secret of God's way. He might have pointed out to them, *e.g.*, that the delays of which they complained were according to the analogy of nature, in which gradual growth is the universal law; that time was needed for the production of the ripe

fruits of the Spirit, just in the same way as for the production of the ripe fruits of the field or of the orchard; that it was not to be wondered at if the spiritual fruits were peculiarly slow in ripening, as it was a law of growth, that the higher the product in the scale of being, the slower the process by which it is produced;[1] that a momentary sanctification, though not impossible, would be as much a miracle in the sense of a departure from law, as was the immediate transformation of water into wine at the marriage in Cana; that if instantaneous sanctification were the rule instead of the rare exception, the kingdom of grace would become too like the imaginary worlds of children's dreams, in which trees, fruits, and palaces spring into being full-grown, ripe, and furnished, in a moment as by enchantment, and too unlike the real actual world with which men are conversant, in which delay, growth, and fixed law are invariable characteristics.

Jesus might further have sought to reconcile His disciples to delay by descanting on the virtue of patience. Much could be said on that topic. It could be shown that a character cannot be perfect in which the virtue of patience has no place, and that the gradual method of sanctification is best adapted for its development, as affording abundant scope for its exercise. It might be pointed out how much the ultimate enjoyment of any good thing is enhanced by its having to be waited for; how in proportion to the trial is the triumph of faith; how, in the quaint words of one who was taught wisdom in this matter by his own experience, and by the times in which he lived, "It is fit we see and feel the shaping and sewing of every piece of the wedding garment, and the framing and moulding and fitting of the crown of glory for the head of the citizen of heaven;" how "the repeated sense and frequent experience of grace in the ups and downs in the way, the falls and risings again of the traveller, the revolutions and changes of the spiritual condition, the new moon, the darkened moon, the full moon in the Spirit's ebbing and flowing, raiseth in the heart of saints on their way to the country a sweet smell of the fairest rose and lily of Sharon;" how, "as

[1] This idea is well worked out in a sermon by H. W. Beecher on "Waiting for the Lord." *Sermons*, vol. i.

travellers at night talk of their foul ways, and of the praises of their guide, and battle being ended, soldiers number their wounds, extol the valour, skill, and courage of their leader and captain," so "it is meet that the glorified soldiers may take loads of experience of free grace to heaven with them, and there speak of their way and their country, and the praises of Him that hath redeemed them out of all nations, tongues, and languages."[1]

Such considerations, however just, would have been wasted on men in the spiritual condition of the disciples. Children have no sympathy with growth in any world, whether of nature or of grace. Nothing pleases them but that an acorn should become an oak at once, and that immediately after the blossom should come the ripe fruit. Then it is idle to speak of the uses of patience to the inexperienced; for the moral value of the discipline of trial cannot be appreciated till the trial is past. Therefore, as before stated, Jesus abstained entirely from reflections of the kind suggested, and adopted a simple, popular style of reasoning, which even a child could understand.

The reasoning of Jesus, while very simple, is very cogent and conclusive. The first argument—that contained in the parable of the ungenerous neighbour—is fitted to inspire hope in God even in the darkest hour, when He appears indifferent to our cry, or positively unwilling to help; and so to induce us to persevere in asking. "As the man who wanted the loaves knocked on louder and louder, with an importunity that knew no shame[2] and would take no refusal, and thereby gained his object, the selfish friend being glad at last to get up and serve him out of sheer regard to his own comfort, it being simply impossible to sleep with such a noise; *so* (such is the drift of the argument), so continue thou knocking at the door of heaven, and thou shalt obtain thy desire if it were only to be rid of thee. See in this parable what a power importunity has, even at a most unpromising time—midnight—and with a most unpromising person, who prefers his own comfort to a neighbour's good: ask, therefore, persist-

[1] Samuel Rutherford, *Trial and Triumph of Faith*, Sermon xviii.

[2] The Greek word is ἀναίδειαν = shamelessness.

ently, and it shall be given unto you also ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

At one point, indeed, this most pathetic and sympathetic argument seems to be weak. The petitioner in the parable had the selfish friend in his power, by being able to annoy him and keep him from sleeping. Now the tried desponding disciple whom Jesus would comfort may rejoin : " What power have I to annoy *God*, who dwelleth on high, far beyond my reach, in imperturbable felicity ? ' Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat ! But, behold, I go forward, but He is not there ; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him : on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him : He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him.' "

The objection is one which can hardly fail to occur to the subtle spirit of despondency, and it must be admitted that it is not frivolous. There is really a failure of the analogy at this point. We can annoy a man, like the ungenerous neighbour in bed, or the unjust judge, but we cannot annoy God. The parable does not suggest the true explanation of divine delay, or of the ultimate success of importunity. It merely proves, by a homely instance, that delay, apparent refusal, from whatever cause it may arise, is not necessarily final, and therefore can be no good reason for giving up asking.

This is a real if not a great service rendered. But the doubting disciple, besides discovering with characteristic acuteness what the parable fails to prove, may not be able to extract any comfort from what it does prove. What is he to do then ? Fall back on the strong asseveration with which Jesus follows up the parable : " And *I* say unto you." Here, O doubter, thou hast an oracular dictum from One who can speak with authority ; One who has been in the bosom of the eternal God, and has come forth to reveal His inmost heart to men groping in the darkness of nature after Him, if haply they might find Him. When He addresses us in such emphatic, solemn terms as these, " I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," we may take the matter on His word, at least *pro tempore*. Even philosophers who doubt the reason-

ableness of prayer, because of the constancy of nature's laws and the unchangeableness of divine purposes, might, without compromising their dignity, take Christ's word for it that prayer is not vain, until they arrive at greater certainty on the subject than they can at present pretend to. They may, if they choose, despise the parable as childish, or as conveying crude anthropopathic ideas of the Divine Being, but they cannot despise the deliberate declarations of One whom even they regard as the wisest and best of men.

The second argument employed by Jesus to urge perseverance in prayer is of the nature of a *reductio ad absurdum*, ending with a conclusion *à fortiori*. "If," it is reasoned, "God refused to hear His children's prayers, or, worse still, if He mocked them by giving them something bearing a superficial resemblance to the things asked, only to cause bitter disappointment when the deception was discovered, then were He not only as bad as, but far worse than, even the most depraved of mankind. For, take fathers at random, which of them, if a son were to ask bread, would give him a stone? or if he asked a fish, would give him a serpent? or if he asked an egg, would offer him a scorpion? The very supposition is monstrous. Human nature is largely vitiated by moral evil: there is, in particular, an evil spirit of selfishness in the heart which comes into conflict with the generous affections, and leads men ofttimes to do base and unnatural things. But men taken at the average are not diabolic; and nothing short of a diabolic spirit of mischief could prompt a father to mock a child's misery, or deliberately to give him things fraught with deadly harm. If, then, earthly parents, though evil in many of their dispositions, give good, and, so far as they know, only good gifts to their children, and would shrink with horror from any other mode of treatment, is it to be credited that the Divine Being, that Providence, can do what only devils would think of doing? On the contrary, what is only barely possible for man, is for God altogether impossible; and what all but monsters of iniquity will not fail to do, God will do much more. He will most surely give good gifts, and only good gifts, to His asking children; most especially will He give His best gift, which His true children desire above all things,

even the Holy Spirit, the enlightener and the sanctifier. Therefore again I say unto you: Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened."

Yet it is implied in the very fact that Christ puts such cases as a stone given for bread, a serpent for a fish, or a scorpion for an egg, that God seems at least sometimes so to treat His children. The time came when the twelve thought they had been so treated in reference to the very subject in which they were most deeply interested, after their own personal sanctification, viz. the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. But their experience illustrates the general truth, that when the Hearer of prayer seems to deal unnaturally with His servants, it is because they have made a mistake about the nature of good, and have not known what they asked. They have asked for a stone, thinking it bread, and hence the true bread seems a stone; for a shadow, thinking it a substance, and hence the substance seems a shadow. The kingdom for which the twelve prayed was a shadow, hence their disappointment and despair when Jesus was put to death: the egg of hope, which their fond imagination had been hatching, brought forth the scorpion of the cross, and they fancied that God had mocked and deceived them. But they lived to see that God was true and good, and that they had deceived themselves, and that all which Christ had told them had been fulfilled. And all who wait on God ultimately make a similar discovery, and unite in testifying that "the Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."

For these reasons should all men pray, and not faint. Prayer is rational, even if the Divine Being were like men in the average, not indisposed to do good, when self-interest does not stand in the way,—the creed of heathenism. It is still more manifestly rational if, as Christ taught and Christians believe, God be better than the best of men—the one supremely good Being—the *Father* in heaven. Only in either of two cases would prayer really be irrational: if God were no living being at all,—the creed of atheists, with whom Christ holds no argument; or if He were a being capable of doing things from which even bad men would start back in horror, *i.e.* a being of diabolic nature,—the creed, it is to be hoped, of no human being.

CHAPTER VII.

LESSONS IN HOLY LIVING.

SECTION I.—*Fasting.*

MATT. IX. 14–17; MARK II. 16–22; LUKE V. 33–39.

WE have learnt in the last chapter how Jesus taught His disciples to pray, and we are now to learn in the present chapter how He taught them to live.

Christ's *ratio vivendi* was characteristically simple; its main features being a disregard of minute mechanical rules, and a habit of falling back in all things on the great principles of morality and piety.

The practical carrying out of this rule of life led to considerable divergence from prevailing custom. In three respects especially, according to the Gospel records, were our Lord and His disciples chargeable, and actually charged, with the offence of nonconformity. They departed from existing practice in the matters of fasting, ceremonial purifications as prescribed by the elders, and Sabbath sanctification. The first they neglected for the most part, the second altogether; the third they did not neglect, but their mode of observing the weekly rest was in spirit totally, and in detail widely, diverse from that which was in vogue.

These divergences from established custom are historically interesting, as the small beginnings of a great moral and religious revolution. For in teaching His disciples these new habits, Jesus was inaugurating a process of spiritual emancipation which was to issue in the complete deliverance of the apostles, and through them of the Christian church, from the burdensome yoke of Mosaic ordinances, and from the still more galling bondage of a "vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers."

The divergences in question have much biographical interest also in connection with the religious experience of the twelve. For it is a solemn crisis in any man's life when he first departs in the most minute particulars from the religious opinions and practices of his age. The first steps in the process of change are generally the most difficult, the most perilous, and the most decisive. In these respects, learning spiritual freedom is like learning to swim. Every expert in the aquatic art remembers the troubles he experienced in connection with his first attempts: how hard he found it to make arms and legs keep stroke; how he floundered and plunged; how fearful he was, lest he should go beyond his depth and sink to the bottom. At these early fears he may now smile, yet were they not altogether groundless; for the tyro does run some risk of drowning, though the bathing-place be but a small pool or dam built by schoolboys on a burn flowing through an inland dell, remote from broad rivers and the great sea.

It is well both for young swimmers and for apprentices in religious freedom, that they make their first essays in the company of an experienced friend, who can rescue them should they be in danger. Such a friend the twelve had in Christ, whose presence was not only a safeguard against all inward spiritual risks, but a shield from all assaults which might come upon them from without. Such assaults were to be expected. Nonconformity invariably gives offence to many, and exposes the offending party to interrogation at least, and often to something more serious. Custom is a god to the multitude, and no one can withhold homage from the idol with impunity. The twelve accordingly did in fact incur the usual penalties connected with singularity. Their conduct was called in question, and censured, in every instance of departure from use and wont. Had they been left to themselves, they would have made a poor defence of the actions impugned; for they did not understand the principles on which the new practice was based, but simply did as they were directed. But in Jesus they had a friend who did understand those principles, and who was ever ready to assign good reasons for all He did Himself, and for all He taught

His followers to do. The reasons with which He defended the twelve against the upholders of prevailing usage were specially good and telling; and they constitute, taken together, an apology for nonconformity not less remarkable than that which He made for graciously receiving publicans and sinners, consisting, like it, of three lines of defence, corresponding to the charges which had to be met. That apology we propose to consider in the present chapter under three divisions, in the first of which we take up the subject of *fasting*.

From Matthew's account we learn that the conduct of Christ's disciples in neglecting fasting was animadverted on by the disciples of John the Baptist. "Then," we read, "came to Him the disciples of John"—those, that is, who happened to be in the neighbourhood—"saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?"[1] From this question we learn incidentally, that in the matter of fasting the school of the Baptist and the sect of the Pharisees were agreed in their general practice. It was a case of extremes meeting; for no two religious parties could be more remote in some respects than the two just named. But the difference lay rather in the motives than in the external acts of their religious life. Both did the same things—fasted, practised ceremonial ablutions, made many prayers—only they did them with a different mind. John and his disciples performed their religious duties in simplicity, godly sincerity, and moral earnestness; the Pharisees, as a class, did all their works ostentatiously, hypocritically, and as matters of mechanical routine.

From the same question we further learn that the disciples of John, as well as the Pharisees, were very zealous in the practice of fasting. They fasted *oft, much* (πυκνὰ, Luke; πολλὰ, Matthew). This statement we otherwise know to be strictly true of such Pharisees as made great pretensions to piety. Besides the annual fast on the great day of atonement appointed by the law of Moses, and the four fasts which had become customary in the time of the prophet Zechariah,

[1] Matt. ix. 14. From Mark and Luke it might be inferred that some Pharisees were joint-interrogators; but it is not asserted, neither is it likely.

in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months of the Jewish year, the stricter sort of Jews fasted twice every week, viz. on Mondays and Thursdays.[1] This bi-weekly fast is alluded to in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.[2] It is not to be assumed, of course, that the practice of the Baptist's disciples coincided in this respect with that of the strictest sect of the pharisaic party. Their system of fasting may have been organized on an independent plan, involving different arrangements as to times and occasions. The one fact known, which rests on the certain basis of their own testimony, is that, like the Pharisees, John's disciples fasted often, if not on precisely the same days and for the same reasons.

It does not clearly appear what feelings prompted the question put by John's disciples to Jesus. It is not impossible that party spirit was at work, for rivalry and jealousy were not unknown even in the environment of the forerunner.[3] In that case, the reference to pharisaic practice might be explained by a desire to overwhelm the disciples of Jesus by numbers, and put them, as it were, in a hopeless minority on the question. It is more likely, however, that the uppermost feeling in the mind of the interrogators was one of surprise, that in respect of fasting they should approach nearer to a sect whose adherents were stigmatized by their own master as a "generation of vipers," than to the followers of One for whom that master cherished and expressed the deepest veneration. In that case, the object of the question was to obtain information and instruction. It accords with this view that the query was addressed to Jesus. Had disputation been aimed at, the questioners would have applied to the disciples.

If John's followers came seeking instruction, they were not disappointed. Jesus made a reply to their question, remarkable at once for originality, point, and pathos, setting forth in lively parabolic style the great principles by which the conduct of His disciples could be vindicated, and by which He desired the conduct of all who bore His name to be regulated. Would that the church thoroughly understood and habitually

[1] See Buxtorf, *de Synagoga Judaica*, c. xxx.; also Zech. viii. 19.
[2] Luke xviii. 12. [3] John iii. 26.

acted on the deep truths to which her Lord at this time gave utterance!

Of this reply it is to be observed, in the first place, that it is of a purely defensive character. Jesus does not blame John's disciples for fasting, but contents Himself with defending His own disciples for abstaining from fasting. He does not feel called on to disparage the one party in order to justify the other, but takes up the position of one who virtually says: "To fast may be right for you, O ye followers of John; not to fast is equally right for my followers." How grateful to Christ's feelings it must have been, that He could assume this tolerant attitude on a question in which the name of John was mixed up! For He had a deep respect for the forerunner and his work, and ever spake of him in most generous terms of appreciation; now calling him a burning and a shining lamp,[1] and at another time declaring him not only a prophet, but something more.[2] And we may remark in passing, that John reciprocated these kindly feelings, and had no sympathy with the petty jealousies in which his disciples sometimes indulged. The two great ones, both of them censured for different reasons by their degenerate contemporaries, ever spoke of each other to their disciples and to the public in terms of affectionate respect; the lesser light magnanimously confessing his inferiority, the greater magnifying the worth of His humble fellow-servant. What a refreshing contrast have we here to the mean passions of envy, prejudice, and detraction so prevalent in other quarters, under whose malign influence men, of whom better things might have been expected, spoke of John as a madman, and of Jesus as immoral and profane![3]

Passing from the manner to the matter of the reply, we notice that, for the purpose of vindicating His disciples, Jesus availed Himself of a metaphor suggested by certain memorable words uttered concerning Himself at an earlier period by the master of those who now examined Him. To certain disciples who complained that men were leaving him and going to Jesus, John had said in effect: "Jesus is the Bridegroom, I am but the Bridegroom's friend; therefore it is right that men should leave me and join Jesus."[4] Jesus now takes

[1] John v. 35. [2] Matt. xi. 7–15. [3] Matt. xi. 16, 19. [4] John iii. 29.

up the Baptist's words, and turns them to account for the purpose of defending the way of life pursued by His disciples. His reply, freely paraphrased, is to this effect: "I *am* the Bridegroom, as your master said; it is right that the children of the bride-chamber come to me; and it is also right that, when they have come, they should adapt their mode of life to their altered circumstances. Therefore they do well not to fast, for fasting is the expression of sadness, and how should they be sad in my company? As well might men be sad at a marriage festival. The days *will* come when the children of the bride-chamber shall be sad, for the Bridegroom will not always be with them; and at the dark hour of His departure it will be natural and seasonable for them to fast, for then they shall be in a fasting mood—weeping, lamenting, sorrowful, and disconsolate."

The principle underlying this graphic representation is, that fasting should not be a matter of fixed mechanical rule, but should have reference to the state of mind; or more definitely, that men should fast when they are sad, or in a state of mind akin to sadness—absorbed, preoccupied—as at some great solemn crisis in the life of an individual or a community, such as that in the history of Peter, when he was exercised on the great question of the admission of the Gentiles to the church, or such as that in the history of the Christian community at Antioch, when they were about to ordain the first missionaries to the heathen world. Christ's doctrine, clearly and distinctly indicated here, is that fasting in any other circumstances is forced, unnatural, unreal; a thing which men may be made to do as a matter of form, but which they do not with their heart and soul. "Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?"[1] He asked, virtually asserting that it was impossible.

By this rule the disciples of our Lord were justified, and yet John's were not condemned. It was natural for them to fast, for they were mournful, melancholy, unsatisfied. They had not found Him who was the Desire of all nations, the Hope of the future, the Bridegroom of the soul. They only knew that all was wrong; and in their querulous, despairing

[1] Luke v. 34: μὴ δύνασθε . . . ποιῆσαι νηστεύειν.

mood, they took pleasure in fasting, and wearing coarse raiment, and frequenting lonely, desolate regions, living as hermits, a practical protest against an ungodly age. Men in such a mood could not do otherwise than fast; though whether they did well to *continue* in that mood after the Bridegroom had come, and had been announced to them as such by their own master, is another matter. Their grief was wilful, idle, causeless, when He had appeared who was to take away the sin of the world.

Jesus had yet more to say in reply to the questions addressed to Him. Things new and unusual need manifold apology, and therefore to the beautiful similitude of the children of the bride-chamber He added two other equally suggestive parables: those, viz., of the *new patch on the old garment*, and the *new wine in old bottles*. The design of these parables is much the same with that of the first part of His reply, viz. to enforce the *law of congruity* in relation to fasting and similar matters; that is, to show that in all *voluntary* religious service, where we are free to regulate our own conduct, the outward act should be made to correspond with the inward condition of mind, and that no attempt should be made to force particular acts or habits on men without reference to that correspondence. "In natural things," Jesus would say, "we observe this law of congruity. No man putteth a piece of unfulled cloth[1] on an old garment. Neither do men put new wine into old skins, and that not merely out of regard to propriety, but to avoid bad consequences. For if the rule of congruity be neglected, the patched garment will be torn by the contraction of the new cloth;[2] and the old skin bottles will burst under the fermenting force of the new liquor, and the wine will be spilled and lost."

The old cloth and old bottles in these metaphors represent old ascetic fashions in religion; the new cloth and the new

[1] Matt. ix. 16, *ῥάκους ἀγνάφου*.

[2] Luke v. 36 gives the thought a different turn. The cloth is merely new (*καινὸν*), and two objections to patching are hinted at. *First*, good cloth is wasted in patching, which would have been better employed in making a new garment. *Second*, the patchwork is unseemly and unsatisfactory. The old and the new don't *agree* (*οὐ συμφωνεῖ*).

wine represent the new joyful life in Christ, not possessed by those who tenaciously adhered to the old fashions. The parables were applied primarily to Christ's own age, but they admit of application to all transition epochs; indeed, they find new illustration in almost every generation.

The force of these homely parables as arguments in vindication of departure from current usage in matters of religion, may be evaded in either of two ways. First, their relevancy may be denied; *i.e.* it may be denied that religious beliefs are of such a nature as to demand congenial modes of expression, with penalties if the demand is not complied with. This position is usually assumed virtually or openly by the patrons of use and wont. Conservative minds have for the most part a very inadequate conception of the vital force of belief. Their own belief, their spiritual life altogether, is often a feeble thing, and they imagine tameness or pliancy must be an attribute of other men's faith also. Nothing but dire experience will convince them that they are mistaken; and when the proof comes in the shape of an irrepressible revolutionary outburst, they are stupefied with amazement. Such men learn nothing from the history of previous generations; for they persist in thinking that their own case will be an exception. Hence the *vis inertiæ* of established custom evermore insists on adherence to what is old, till the new wine proves its power by producing an explosion needlessly wasteful, by which both wine and bottles often perish, and energies which might have quietly wrought out a beneficent reformation are perverted into blind powers of indiscriminate destruction.

Or, in the second place, the relevancy of these metaphors being admitted in general terms, it may be denied that a new wine (to borrow the form of expression from the second, more suggestive metaphor) has come into existence. This was virtually the attitude assumed by the Pharisees towards Christ. "What have you brought," they asked Him in effect, "to your disciples, that they cannot live as others do, but must needs invent new religious habits for themselves? This new life of which you boast is either a vain pretence, or an illegitimate, spurious thing, not worthy of toleration, and the waste of which would be no matter for regret." Similar was the

attitude assumed towards Luther by the opponents of the Reformation. They said to him in effect: "If this new revelation of yours, that sinners are justified by faith alone, were true, we admit that it would involve very considerable modification in religious opinion, and many alterations in religious practice. But we deny the truth of your doctrine, we regard the peace and comfort you find in it as a hallucination; and therefore we insist that you return to the time-honoured faith, and then you will have no difficulty in acquiescing in the long-established practice." The same thing happens to a greater or less extent every generation; for new wine is always in course of being produced by the eternal vine of truth, demanding in some particulars of belief and practice new bottles for its preservation, and receiving for answer an order to be content with the old ones.

Without going the length of denunciation or direct attempt at suppression, those who stand by the old often oppose the new by the milder method of disparagement. They eulogize the venerable past, and contrast it with the present, to the disadvantage of the latter. "The old wine," say they, "is vastly superior to the new wine: how mellow, mild, fragrant, wholesome, the one! how harsh and fiery the other!" Those who say so are not the worst of men: they are often the best; the men of taste and feeling, the gentle, the reverent, and the good, who are themselves excellent samples of the old vintage. Their opposition forms by far the most formidable obstacle to the public recognition and toleration of what is new in religious life; for it naturally creates a strong prejudice against any cause when the saintly disapprove of it.

Observe, then, how Christ answers the honest admirers of the old wine. He concedes the point: He admits that their preference is natural. "No man," Luke represents Him as saying, in the conclusion of His reply to the disciples of the Baptist, "no man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth the new; for he saith, The old is better." This striking sentiment exhibits rare candour in stating the case of opponents, and not less rare modesty and tact in stating the case of friends. It is as if Jesus had said: "I do not wonder that you love the old wine of Jewish piety, fruit of a very

ancient vintage; or even that you dote upon the very bottles which contain it, covered over with the dust and cobwebs of ages. But what then? Do men object to the existence of new wine, or refuse to have it in their possession, because the old is superior in flavour? No; they drink the old, but they carefully preserve the new, knowing that the old will get exhausted, and that the new, however harsh, will mend with age, and may ultimately be superior even in flavour to that which is in present use. Even so should you deal with the new wine of my kingdom. You may not straightway desire it, because it is strange and novel; but surely you might act more wisely with it than merely to spurn it, or spill and destroy it!"

Oh that patrons of old ways understood Christ's wisdom, and that patrons of new ways sympathized with His charity! A celebrated historian has remarked: "It must make a man wretched, if, when on the threshold of old age, he looks on the rising generation with uneasiness, and does not rather rejoice in beholding it; and yet this is very common with old men. Fabius would rather have seen Hannibal unconquered, than see his own fame obscured by Scipio."[1] There are always too many Fabii in the world, who are annoyed because things will not remain stationary, and because new ways and new men are ever rising up to take the place of the old.

How rare, on the other hand, is Christ's charity among the advocates of progress! Those who affect freedom despise the stricter sort as fanatics and bigots, and drive on changes without regard to their scruples, and without any appreciation of the excellent qualities of the "old wine." When will young men and old men, liberals and conservatives, broad Christians and narrow, learn to bear with one another; yea, to recognise each in the other the necessary complement of his own one-sidedness?

[1] Niebuhr, *Lectures on Roman History*, vol. ii. pp. 77, 78.

SECTION II.—*Ritual Ablutions.*

MATT. XV. 1–20; MARK VII. 1–23; LUKE XI. 37–41.

The happy free society of Jesus, which kept bridal high-tide when others fasted, was in this further respect singular in its manners, that its members took their meals unconcerned about existing usages of purification. They ate bread with "defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands." Such was their custom, it may be assumed, from the beginning, though the practice does not appear to have become the subject of animadversion till an advanced period in the ministry of our Lord,[1] at least in a way that gave rise to incidents worthy of notice in the Gospel records. Even at the marriage in Cana, where were set six water-pots of stone for the purposes of purifying, Christ and His disciples are to be conceived as distinguished from the other guests by a certain inattention to ritual ablutions. This we infer from the reasons by which the neglect was defended when it was impugned, which virtually take up the position, that the practice condemned was not only lawful, but incumbent,—a positive duty in the actual circumstances of Jewish society, and therefore, of course, a duty which could at no time be neglected by those who desired to please God rather than men. But indeed it needs no proof that one of such grave earnest spirit as Jesus could never have paid any regard to the trifling regulations about washing before eating, invented by the "elders."

These regulations were no trifles in the eyes of the Pharisees; and therefore we are not surprised to learn, that the indifference with which they were treated by Jesus and the twelve provoked the censure of that zealous sect of religionists on at least two occasions, both adverted to in the Gospel narratives. On one of these occasions, certain Pharisees and scribes, who had followed Christ from Jerusalem to the north, seeing some of His disciples eat without previously going through the customary ceremonial ablutions, came to Him, and asked, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradi-

[1] During the last stay in Galilee, within six months of the crucifixion.

tions of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?"[1] In the other instance, Jesus Himself was the direct object of censure. "A certain Pharisee," Luke relates, "besought Jesus to dine with him; and He went in, and sat (directly) down to meat: and when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner."[2] Whether the host expressed his surprise by words or by looks only, is not stated; but it was observed by his guest, and was made an occasion for exposing the vices of the pharisaic character. "Now," said the accused, in holy zeal for true purity, "now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without, make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you."[3] That is to say, the offending guest charged His scandalized host, and the sect he belonged to, with sacrificing inward to outward purity; and at the same time taught the important truth, that to the pure all things are pure, and showed the way by which inward real purity was to be reached, viz. by the practice of that sadly neglected virtue, humanity or charity.

The Lord's reply in the other encounter with pharisaic adversaries on the subject of washings was similar in its principle, but different in form. He told the zealots for purifications, without periphrasis, that they were guilty of the grave offence of sacrificing the commandments of God to the commandments of men,—to these pet traditions of the elders. The statement was no libel, but a simple melancholy fact, though its truth does not quite lie on the surface. This we hope to show in the following remarks; but before we proceed to that task, we must force ourselves, however reluctantly, to acquire a little better acquaintance with the miserable senilities, whose neglect once seemed so heinous a sin to persons deeming themselves holy.

The aim of the rabbinical prescriptions respecting washings was not physical cleanliness, but something thought to be far higher and more sacred. Their object was to secure, not

[1] Mark vii. 1, 2, 5. [2] Luke xi. 37.
[3] Luke xi. 39–41. *Vide*, for a similar passage, Matt. xxiii. 25, 26.

physical, but ceremonial purity; that is, to cleanse the person from such impurity as might be contracted by contact with a Gentile, or with a Jew in a ceremonially unclean state, or with an unclean animal, or with a dead body or any part thereof. To the regulations in the law of Moses respecting such uncleanness, the rabbis added a vast number of additional rules on their own responsibility, in a self-willed zeal for the scrupulous observance of the Mosaic precepts. They issued *their* commandments, as the Church of Rome has issued hers, under the pretext that they were necessary as means towards the great end of fulfilling strictly the commandments of God.

The burdens laid on men's shoulders by the scribes on this plausible ground were, by all accounts, indeed most grievous. Not content with purifications prescribed in the law for uncleanness actually contracted, they made provision for merely possible cases. If a man did not remain at home all day, but went out to market, he must wash his hands on his return, because it was *possible* that he might have touched some person or thing ceremonially unclean. Great care, it appears, had also to be taken that the water used in the process of ablution was itself perfectly pure; and it was necessary even to apply the water in a particular manner to the hands, in order to secure the desired result. Without travelling beyond the sacred record, we find, in the items of information supplied by Mark respecting prevailing Jewish customs of purification, enough to show to what ridiculous lengths this momentous business of washing was carried. "Many other things," remarks he quaintly, and not without a touch of quiet satire, "there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables."[1] All things, in short, used in connection with food—in cooking it, or in placing it on the table—had to be washed, not merely as people might wash them now to remove actual impurity, but to deliver them from the more serious uncleanness which they might possibly have contracted since last used, by touching some person or thing not technically clean. A kind and measure of purity, in fact, were aimed at incompatible with life in this world. The very air of heaven was not clean enough for the doting patrons

[1] Mark vii. 4.

of patristic traditions; for, not to speak of other more real sources of contamination, the breeze, in blowing over *Gentile* lands to the sacred land of Jewry, had contracted defilement which made it unfit to pass into ritualistic lungs till it had been sifted by a respirator possessing the magic power to cleanse it from its pollution.

The extravagant fanatical zeal of the Jews in these matters is illustrated in the Talmud by stories which, although belonging to a later age, may be regarded as a faithful reflection of the spirit which animated the Pharisees in the time of our Lord. Of these stories the following is a sample: "Rabbi Akiba was thrown by the Christians into prison, and Rabbi Joshua brought him every day as much water as sufficed both for washing and for drinking. But on one occasion it happened that the keeper of the prison got the water to take in, and spilled the half of it. Akiba saw that there was too little water, but nevertheless said, Give me the water for my hands. His brother rabbi replied, My master, you have not enough for drinking. But Akiba replied, He who eats with unwashed hands perpetrates a crime that ought to be punished with death. Better for me to die of thirst, than to transgress the traditions of my ancestors."[1] Rabbi Akiba would rather break the sixth commandment, and be guilty of self-murder, than depart from the least punctilio of a fantastic ceremonialism; illustrating the truth of the declaration made by Christ in His reply to the Pharisees, which we now proceed to consider.

It was not to be expected that, in defending His disciples from the frivolous charge of neglecting the washing of hands, Jesus would show much respect for their accusers. Accordingly, we observe a marked difference between the tone of His reply in the present case, and that of His answer to John's disciples. Towards them the attitude assumed was respectfully defensive and apologetic; towards the present interrogants the attitude assumed is offensive and denunciatory. To John's disciples Jesus said, "Fasting is right for you; not to fast is equally right for my disciples." To the Pharisees He

[1] Buxtorf, *De Syn. Jud.* pp. 236–7. This author quotes the following saying of another rabbi: Qui illotis manibus panem comedit, idem est ac si scorto accubaret (p. 236).

replies by a retort which at once condemns their conduct, and justifies the behaviour which they challenged. "Why," asked they, "do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?" "Why," asked He in answer, "do ye also transgress the commandments of God by your traditions?" as if to say: "It becomes not you to judge; you, who see the imaginary mote in the eye of a brother, have a beam in your own."

This spirited answer was something more than a mere retort or *et tu quoque* argument. Under an interrogative form it enunciated a great principle, viz. that the scrupulous observance of human traditions in matters of practice leads by a sure path to a corresponding negligence and unscrupulousness in reference to the eternal laws of God. Hence Christ's defence of His disciples was in substance this: "I and my followers despise and neglect those customs, because we desire to keep the moral law. Those washings, indeed, may not seem seriously to conflict with the great matters of the law, but to be at worst only trifling and contemptible. But the case is not so. To treat trifles as serious matters, as matters of conscience, which ye do, is degrading and demoralizing. No man can do that without being or becoming a moral imbecile, or a hypocrite: either one who is incapable of discerning between what is vital and what not in morals; or one who finds his interest in getting trifles, such as washing of hands, or paying tithe of herbs, to be accepted as the important matters, and the truly great things of the law—justice, mercy, and faith—quietly pushed aside as if they were of no moment whatever."

The whole history of religion proves the truth of these views. A ceremony and tradition ridden time is infallibly a morally corrupt time. Hypocrites ostensibly zealots, secretly atheists; profligates taking out their revenge in licentiousness for having been compelled, by tyrannous custom or intolerant ecclesiastical authorities, to conform outwardly to practices for which they have no respect; priests of the type of the sons of Eli, gluttonous, covetous, wanton: such are the black omens of an age in which ceremonies are everything, and godliness and virtue nothing. Ritualistic practices, artificial duties of all kinds, whether originating with Jewish rabbis or with doctors of the Christian church, are utterly to be

abjured. Recommended by their zealous advocates, often sincerely, as eminently fitted to promote the culture of morality and piety, they ever prove, in the long run, fatal to both. Well are they called in the Epistle to the Hebrews "dead works." They are not only dead, but death-producing; for, like all dead things, they tend to putrefy, and to breed a spiritual pestilence which sweeps thousands of souls into perdition. If they have any life at all, it is life feeding on death, the life of *fungi* growing on dead trees; if they have any beauty, it is the beauty of decay, of autumnal leaves sere and yellow, when the sap is descending down to the earth, and the woods are about to pass into their winter state of nakedness and desolation. Ritualism at its best is but the shortlived after-summer of the spiritual year: very fascinating it may be; but when it cometh, be sure winter is at the doors. "We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Having brought a grave counter-charge against the Pharisees, that of sacrificing morality to ceremonies, the commandments of God to the traditions of men, Jesus proceeded forthwith to substantiate it by a striking example and a Scripture quotation. The example selected was the evasion of the duties arising out of the fifth commandment, under pretence of a previous religious obligation. God said, "Honour thy father and mother," and attached to a breach of the commandment the penalty of death. The Jewish scribes said, "Call a thing *Corban*, and you will be exempt from all obligation to give it away, even for the purpose of assisting needy parents." The word Corban in the Mosaic law signifies a gift or offering to God, of any kind, bloody or bloodless, presented on any occasion, as in the fulfilment of a vow.[1] In rabbinical dialect, it signified a thing devoted to sacred purposes, and therefore not available for private or secular use. The traditional doctrine on the subject of Corban was mischievous in two ways. It encouraged men to make religion an excuse for neglecting morality, and it opened a wide door to knavery and hypocrisy. It taught that a man might not only by a vow deny *himself* the use of things lawful, but that he might,

[1] Num. vi. 14.

by devoting a thing to God, relieve himself of all obligation to give to *others* what, but for the vow, it would have been his duty to give them. Then, according to the pernicious system of the rabbis, it was not necessary really to give the thing to God, in order to be free of obligation to give it to man. It was enough to *call* it Corban. Only pronounce that magic word over anything, and forthwith it was sealed over to God, and sacred from the use of others at least, if not from your own use. Thus self-willed zeal for the honour of God led to the dishonouring of God, by taking His name in vain; and practices which at best were chargeable with setting the first table of the law over against the second, proved eventually to be destructive of both tables. They made the whole law of God of none effect by their traditions. The disannulling of the fifth commandment was but a sample of the mischief the zealots for the commandments of men had wrought; as is implied in Christ's concluding words, "Many such like things do ye."[1]

The Scripture quotation[2] made by our Lord in replying to the Pharisees was not less apt than the example was illustrative as pointing out their characteristic vices, hypocrisy and superstition. They were near to God with their mouth, they honoured Him with their lips, but they were far from Him in their hearts. Their religion was all on the outside. They scrupulously washed their hands and their cups, but they took no care to cleanse their polluted souls. Then, in the second place, their fear of God was taught by the precept of men. Human prescriptions and traditions were their guide in religion, which they followed blindly, heedless how far these commandments of men might lead them from the paths of righteousness and true godliness.

The prophetic word quoted by Jesus was quick, powerful, sharp, searching, and conclusive. Nothing more was needed to confound the Pharisees, and nothing more was said to them at this time. The sacred oracle was the fitting conclusion of an unanswerable argument against the patrons of tradition. But Jesus had compassion on the poor multitude who were being misled to their ruin by their blind spiritual guides, and

[1] Mark vii. 13. [2] Isa. xxix. 13.

therefore He took the opportunity of addressing a word to those who stood around on the subject of dispute. What He had to say to them, He expressed in the terse, pointed form of a proverb: "Hear and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." This was a riddle to be solved, a secret of wisdom to be searched out, a lesson in religion to be conned. Its meaning, though probably understood by few at the moment, was very plain. It was simply this: "Pay most attention to the cleansing of the heart, not, like the Pharisees, to the cleansing of the hands. When the heart is pure, all is pure; when the heart is impure, all outward purification is vain. The defilement to be dreaded is not that from meat ceremonially unclean, but that which springs from a carnal mind, the defilement of evil thoughts, evil passions, evil habits."

This passing word to the bystanders became the subject of a subsequent conversation between Jesus and His disciples, in which He took occasion to justify Himself for uttering it, and explained to them its meaning. The Pharisees had heard the remark, and were naturally offended by it, as tending to weaken their authority over the popular conscience. The twelve observed their displeasure, perhaps they overheard their comments; and fearing evil consequences, they came and informed their Master, probably with a tone which implied a secret regret that the speaker had not been less outspoken. Be that as it may, Jesus gave them to understand that it was not a case for forbearance, compromise, or timid, time-serving, prudential policy; the ritualistic tendency being an evil plant which must be uprooted, no matter with what offence to its patrons. He pled, in defence of His plainness of speech, His concern for the souls of the ignorant people whose guides the Pharisees claimed to be. "Let them alone, what would follow? Why, the blind leaders and the blindly led would fall together into the ditch. Therefore if the leaders be so hopelessly wedded to their errors that they cannot be turned from them, let us at least try to save their comparatively ignorant victims."

The explanation of the proverbial word spoken to the

people, Jesus gave to His disciples by request of Peter.[1] It needs no detailed comment. It is rudely plain and particular, because addressed to rudely ignorant hearers. It says over again, in the strongest possible language, that to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man, because nothing entering the mouth can come near the soul; that the defilement to be dreaded, the only defilement worth speaking of, is that of an evil, unrenewed heart, out of which proceed thoughts, words, and acts which are offences against the holy, pure law of God.

We conclude this section with a remark of a general kind. We observe that our Lord is here silent concerning the ceremonial law of Moses (to which the traditions of the elders were a supplement), and speaks only of the commandments of God, *i.e.* the precepts of the decalogue. The fact is significant, as showing in what direction He had come to destroy, and in what to fulfil. Ceremonialism was to be abolished, and the eternal laws of morality were to become all in all. Men's consciences were to be delivered from the burden of outward positive ordinances, that they might be free to serve the living God, by keeping His ten words, or the one royal law of love. And it is the duty of the church to stand fast in the liberty Christ designed and purchased for her. She should be jealous of all human traditions, out of holy zeal for the divine will; shunning superstition on the one side, and the licentious freedom of godless libertinism on the other. Christ's true followers wish to be free, but not to do as they like; rather to do what God requires of them. So minded, they reject unceremoniously all human authority in religion, thereby separating themselves from the devotees to tradition; and at the same time, as God's servants, they reverence His word and His law, thereby putting a wide gulf between them and the lawless and disobedient, who side with movements of religious reform, not in order to get something better in the place of what is rejected, but to get rid of all moral restraint in matters human or divine.

[1] Matt. xv. 17–20; Mark vii. 18–23.

Section III.—*Sabbath Observance.*

Matt. xii. 1–14 ; Mark ii. 23–iii. 1–6 ; Luke vi. 1–11, xiii. 10–16, xiv. 1–6 ; John v. 1–18, ix. 13–17.

In no part of their conduct were Jesus and His disciples more frequently found fault with than in respect to their mode of observing the Sabbath. Six distinct instances of offence given or taken on this score are recorded in the Gospel history ; in five of which Jesus Himself was the offender, while in the remaining instance His disciples were at least the ostensible objects of censure.

The offences of Jesus were all of one sort : His crime was, that on the Sabbath-day He wrought works of healing on the persons of men afflicted respectively with palsy, a withered hand, blindness, dropsy, and on the body of a poor woman " bowed together " by an infirmity of eighteen years' standing. The offence of the disciples, on the other hand, was that, while walking along a way which lay through a corn-field, they stepped aside and plucked some ears of grain for the purpose of satisfying their hunger. This was not theft, for it was permitted by the law of Moses ;[1] but nevertheless it was, in the judgment of the Pharisees, Sabbath-breaking. It was contrary to the command, " Thou shalt not work ;" for to pluck some ears was reaping on a small scale, and to rub them was a species of threshing !

These offences, deemed so grave when committed, seem very small at this distance. All the transgressions of the Sabbath law charged against Jesus were works of mercy ; and the one transgression of the disciples was for them a work of necessity, and the toleration of it was for others a duty of mercy, so that in condemning them the Pharisees had forgotten that divine word : " I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." It is, indeed, hard for us now to conceive how any one could be serious in regarding such actions as breaches of the Sabbath, especially the harmless act of the twelve. There is a slight show of plausibility in the objection taken by the ruler of the synagogue to miraculous cures wrought on the seventh day :

[1] Deut. xxiii. 24, 25.

"There are six days on which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day."[1] The remark was specially plausible with reference to the case which had provoked the ire of the dignitary of the synagogue. A woman who had been a sufferer for eighteen years might surely bear her trouble one day more, and come and be healed on the morrow! But on what pretence could the disciples be blamed as Sabbath-breakers, for helping themselves to a few ears of corn? To call such an act working was too ridiculous. Men who found a Sabbatic offence here must have been very anxious to catch the disciples of Jesus in a fault.

On the outlook for faults we have no doubt the Pharisees were; and yet we must admit that, in condemning the act referred to, they were acting faithfully in accordance with their theoretical views and habitual tendencies. Their judgment on the conduct of the twelve was in keeping with their traditions concerning washings, and their tithing of mint and other garden herbs, and their straining of gnats out of their wine-cup. Their habit, in all things, was to degrade God's law by framing innumerable petty rules for its better observance, which, instead of securing that end, only made the law appear base and contemptible. In no case was this miserable micrology carried greater lengths than in connection with the fourth commandment. With a most perverse ingenuity, the most insignificant actions were brought within the scope of the prohibition against labour. Even in the case put by our Lord, that of an animal fallen into a pit, it was deemed lawful to lift it out—so at least those learned in rabbinical lore tell us—only when to leave it there till Sabbath was past would involve risk to life. When delay was not dangerous, the rule was to give the beast food sufficient for the day; and if there was water in the bottom of the pit, to place straw and bolsters below it, that it might not be drowned.[2]

Yet, with all their strictness in abstaining from everything

[1] Luke xiii. 14.

[2] Buxtorf, *De Syn. Jud.* pp. 352–6. The same author states that it was a breach of the law to let a cock wear a piece of ribbon round its leg on Sabbath: it was making it bear something. It was also forbidden to walk through a stream on stilts, because, though the stilts appear to bear you, you really carry the stilts. These were probably later refinements.

bearing the faintest resemblance to work, the Jews were curiously lax in another direction. While scrupulously observing the law which prohibited the cooking of food on Sabbath,[1] they did not make the holy day by any means a day of fasting. On the contrary, they considered it their duty to make the Sabbath a day of feasting and good cheer.[2] In fact, it was at a Sabbath feast, given by a chief man among the Pharisees, that one of the Sabbath miracles was wrought, for which Jesus was put upon His defence.[3] At this feast were numerous guests, Jesus Himself being one,—invited, it is to be feared, with no friendly feelings, but rather in the hope of finding something against Him concerning the Sabbatic law. "It came to pass," we read in Luke, "as He (Jesus) went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath-day, that they watched Him." They set a trap, and hoped to catch in it Him whom they hated without cause; and they got for their pains such searching, humbling table-talk as they had probably never heard before.[4] This habit of feasting, in the days of Augustine, had grown to a great abuse, as appears from the description he gives of the mode in which contemporary Jews celebrated their weekly holiday. "To-day," he writes, "is the Sabbath, which the Jews at the present time keep in loose luxurious ease, for they occupy their leisure in frivolity; and whereas God commanded a Sabbath, they spend it in those things which God forbids. Our rest is from evil works, theirs is from good works, for it is better to plough than to dance. They rest from good work, they rest not from idle work."[5]

From the folly and pedantry of scribes and Pharisees we gladly turn to the wisdom of Jesus, as revealed in the animated, deep, and yet sublimely simple replies made by Him to the various charges of Sabbath-breaking brought against Himself and His disciples. Before considering these replies in detail, we premise one general remark concerning them all. In none of these apologies or defences does Jesus call in ques-

[1] Ex. xvi. 23.
[2] They appealed, in justification of this practice, to Neh. viii. 10.
[3] Luke xiv. 1. [4] Luke xiv. 7–24.
[5] *Enarratio in Psalmum* xci. (xcii.) 2.

tion the obligation of the Sabbath law. On that point He had no quarrel with His accusers. His argument in this instance is entirely different from the line of defence adopted in reference to fasting and purifications. In regard to fasting, the position He took up was: Fasting is a voluntary matter, and men may fast or not as they are disposed. In regard to purification His position was: Ceremonial ablutions at best are of secondary moment, being mere types of inward purity; and as practised now, lead inevitably to the utter ignoring of spiritual purity, and therefore must be neglected by all who are concerned for the great interests of morality. But in reference to the alleged breaches of the Sabbath, the position Jesus took up was this: These acts which you condemn are not transgressions of the law, rightly apprehended, in its spirit and principle. The importance of the law was conceded, but the pharisaic interpretation of its meaning was rejected. An appeal was made from their pedantic code of regulations about Sabbath observance to the grand design and principle of the law; and the right was asserted to examine all rules in the light of the principle, and to reject or disregard those in which the principle had either been mistakenly applied, or, as was for the most part the case with the Pharisees, lost sight of altogether.

The key to all Christ's teaching on the Sabbath, therefore, lies in His conception of the *original design* of that divine institution. This conception we find expressed with epigrammatic point and conciseness, in contrast to the pharisaic idea of the Sabbath, in words uttered by Jesus on the occasion when He was defending His disciples. "The Sabbath," said He, "was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." In other words, His doctrine was this: The Sabbath was meant to be a *boon* to man, not a *burden;* it was not a day taken from man by God in an exacting spirit, but a day given by God in mercy to man—God's holiday to His subjects; all legislation enforcing its observance having for its end to ensure that all should really get the benefit of the boon—that no man should rob himself, and still less his fellow-creatures, of the gracious boon.

This difference between Christ's mode of conceiving of the

Sabbath, and the pharisaic, involves of necessity a corresponding difference in the spirit and the details of its observance. Take Christ's view, and your principle becomes: That is the best way of observing the Sabbath which is most conducive to man's physical and spiritual well-being,—in other words, which is best for his body and for his soul; and in the light of this principle, you will keep the holy day in a spirit of intelligent joy and thankfulness to God the Creator for His gracious consideration towards His creatures. Take the pharisaic view, and your principle of observance becomes: He best keeps the Sabbath who goes greatest lengths in mere abstinence from anything that can be construed into labour, irrespective of the effect of this abstinence either on his own well-being or on that of others. In short, we land in the silly, senseless minuteness of a rabbinical legislation, which sees in such an act as that of the disciples plucking and rubbing the ears of corn, or that of the healed man who carried his bed home on his shoulders,[1] or that of one who should walk a greater distance than two thousand cubits or three-fourths of a mile[2] on a Sabbath, a heinous offence against the fourth commandment and its Author.

A Sabbath observance regulated by the principle that the institution was made for man's good, obviously involves two great general uses: rest for the body, and worship as the solace of the spirit. We should rest from servile labour on the divinely given holiday, and we should lift up our hearts in devout thought to Him who made all things at the first; who "worketh hitherto," preserving the creation in being and well-being, and whose tender compassion towards sinful men is great, passing knowledge. These things are both necessary to man's true good, and therefore must enter as essential elements of a worthy Sabbath observance.

But, on the other hand, the Sabbath being made for man, the two general requirements of rest and worship may not be

[1] John v. 10.

[2] This was the limit of a Sabbath-day journey according to the scribes. It was fixed by the distance between the wall of a Levitical city and the outside boundary of its suburb. See Num. xxxv. 5; and Buxtorf, *De Syn. Jud.* c. xvi.

so pressed that they shall become hostile to man's well-being, and in effect self-destructive, or mutually destructive. The rule, "Thou shalt rest," must not be so applied as to exclude *all* action and all work; for absolute inaction is *not* rest, and entire abstinence from work of every description would oftentimes be detrimental both to private and to public well-being. Room must be left for acts of "necessity and mercy;" and too peremptory as well as too minute legislation as to what are and what are not acts of either description must be avoided, as these may vary for different persons, times, and circumstances; and men may honestly differ in opinion in such details who are perfectly loyal to the great broad principles of Sabbath sanctification. In like manner, the rule, "Thou shalt worship," must not be so enforced as to make religious duties irksome and burdensome—a mere mechanical, legal service; or so as to involve the sacrifice of the other great practical end of the Sabbath, viz. rest to the animal nature of man. Nor may men dictate to each other as to the means of worship any more than as to the amount; for one may find helps to devotion in means which to another would prove a hindrance and a distraction.

It was only in regard to cessation from work that pharisaic legislation and practice anent Sabbath observance were carried to superstitious and vexatious excess. The Sabbatic mania was a *monomania;* those affected thereby being mad simply on one point, the stringent enforcement of *rest.* Hence the peculiar character of all the charges brought against Christ and His disciples, and also of His replies. The offences committed were all works deemed unlawful; and the defences all went to show that the works done were not contrary to law, when the law was interpreted in the light of the principle that the Sabbath was made for man. They were works of necessity or of mercy, and therefore lawful on the Sabbath-day.

Jesus drew His proofs of this position from three sources: Scripture history, the every-day practice of the Pharisees themselves, and the providence of God. In defence of His disciples, He referred to the case of David eating the shew-bread when he fled to the house of God from the court of

King Saul,[1] and to the constant practice of the priests in doing work for the service of the temple on Sabbath-days, such as offering double burnt-offerings, and removing the stale shew-bread from the holy place, and replacing it by hot loaves. David's case proved the general principle that necessity has no law; hunger justifying his act, as it should also have justified the act of the disciples even in pharisaic eyes. The practice of the priests showed that work merely as work is not contrary to the law of the Sabbath, some works being not only lawful, but incumbent on that day.

The argument drawn by Jesus from common practice was well fitted to silence captious critics, and to suggest the principle by which His own conduct could be defended. It was to this effect: "You would lift an ox or an ass out of a pit on Sabbath, would you not? Why? To save life? Why then should not I heal a sick person for the same reason? Or is a beast's life of more importance than that of a human being? Or again: would you scruple to loose your ox or your ass from the stall on the day of rest, and lead him away to watering?[2] If not, why object to me when on the Sabbath-day I release a poor human victim from a bondage of eighteen years' duration, that she may draw water out of the wells of salvation?" The argument is irresistible, the conclusion inevitable: that it is lawful, dutiful, most seasonable, *to do well* on the Sabbath-day. How blind they must have been to whom so obvious a proposition needed to be proved! how oblivious of the fact that love is the foundation and fulfilment of all law, and that therefore no particular precept could ever be meant to suspend the operation of that divine principle!

The argument from providence used by Jesus on another occasion[3] was designed to serve the same purpose with the others, viz. to show the lawfulness of certain kinds of work on the day of rest. "My Father worketh hitherto," said He to His accusers, "and I work." The Son claimed the right to work *because* and *as* the Father worked, on all days of the

[1] 1 Sam. xxi. 6. This occurred on Sabbath, for the old shew-bread was replaced by new on that day (hot loaves baked on Sabbath). But this is not the point insisted on by Christ.

[2] Luke xiii. 14, 15.

[3] John v. 17.

week. The Father worked incessantly for beneficent, conservative ends, most holily, wisely, and powerfully preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions; keeping the planets in their orbits; causing the sun to rise and shine, and the winds to circulate in their courses, and the tides to ebb and flow on the seventh day as on all the other six. So Jesus Christ, the Son of God, claimed the right to work, and did work: saving, restoring, healing; as far as might be bringing fallen nature back to its pristine state, when God the Creator pronounced all things good, and rested, satisfied with the world He had brought into being. Such works of beneficence, by the doctrine of Christ, may always be done on the Sabbath-day: works of humanity, like those of the physician, or of the teacher of neglected children, or of the philanthropist going his rounds among the poor and needy, or of the Christian minister preaching the gospel of peace, and many others, of which men filled with love will readily bethink themselves, but whereof too many, in the coldness of their heart, do not so much as dream. Against such works there is no law, save that of churlish, ungenial, pharisaic custom.

One other saying our Lord uttered on the present subject, which carries great weight for Christians, though it can have had no apologetic value in the opinion of the Pharisees, but must rather have appeared an aggravation of the offence it was meant to excuse. We refer to the word, "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day," uttered by Jesus on the occasion when He defended His disciples against the charge of Sabbath-breaking. This statement, remarkable, like the claim made at the same time to be greater than the temple, as an assertion of superhuman dignity on the part of the meek and lowly One, was not meant as a pretension to the right to break the law of rest without cause, or to abrogate it altogether. This is evident from Mark's account,[1] where the words come in as an inference from the proposition that the Sabbath was made for man; which could not logically be made the foundation for a repeal of the statute, seeing it is the most powerful argument for the perpetuity of the weekly rest. Had the Sabbath been a mere burdensome restriction imposed on

[1] Mark ii. 27, 28.

men, we should have expected its abrogation from Him who came to redeem men from all sorts of bondage. But was the Sabbath made *for* man—for man's good? Then should we expect Christ's function to be not that of a repealer, but that of a universal philanthropic legislator, making what had previously been the peculiar privilege of Israel a common blessing to all mankind. For the Father sent His Son into the world to deliver men indeed from the yoke of ordinances, but not to cancel any of His gifts, which are all "without repentance," and once given can never be withdrawn.

What, then, does the lordship of Christ over the Sabbath signify? Simply this: that an institution which is of the nature of a boon to man, properly falls under the control of Him who is the King of grace, and the administrator of divine mercy. He is the best judge how such an institution should be observed; and He has a right to see that it shall not be perverted from a boon into a burden, and so put in antagonism to the royal imperial law of love. The Son of man hath authority to cancel all regulations tending in this direction emanating from men, and even all bye-laws of the Mosaic code savouring of legal rigour, and tending to veil the beneficent design of the fourth commandment of the decalogue.[1] He may, in the exercise of His mediatorial prerogative, give the old institution a new name, alter the day of its celebration, so as to invest it with distinctively Christian associations congenial to the hearts of believers, and make it in all

[1] The position of the Sabbath in the decalogue (where nothing is placed which was of merely Jewish concern, and which was not of fundamental importance) is a presumption of perpetuity for every candid mind. The much disputed question of the ethical nature of the Sabbath law is not of so great moment as has been imagined. Moral or not, the weekly rest is to all men, and at all times, of vital importance; therefore practically, if not philosophically, of ethical value. The fourth commandment certainly differs from the others in this respect, that it is not written on the natural conscience. The utmost length reason could go, would be to determine that rest is needful. Whether rest should be periodical or at irregular intervals, on the seventh day or on the tenth, as in revolutionary France, with its mania for the decimal system, the light of nature could not teach. But the decalogue settles that point, and settles it for ever, for all who believe in the divine origin of the Mosaic legislation. The fourth commandment is a revelation for all time of God's mind on the universally important question of the proper relation between labour and rest.

the details of its observance subservient to the great ends of His incarnation.

To such effect did the Son of man claim to be Lord of the Sabbath-day; and His claim, so understood, was acknowledged by the church, when, following the traces of apostolic usage, she changed the weekly rest from the seventh day to the first,[1] that it might commemorate the joyful event of the resurrection of the Saviour, which lay nearer the heart of a believer than the old event of the creation, and called the first day by His name, *Dies Dominicus,* the Lord's day. That claim all Christians acknowledge who, looking at the day in the light of God's original design, and of Christ's teaching, example, and work, so observe it as to keep the golden mean between the two extremes of pharisaic rigour and of Sadducaic laxity; recognising on the one hand the beneficent ends served by the institution, and doing their utmost to secure that these ends shall be fully realized; and, on the other hand, avoiding the petty scrupulosity of a cheerless legalism, which causes many, especially among the young, to stumble at the law, as a statute of unreasonable arbitrary restriction; avoiding also the bad pharisaic habit of indulging in over-confident judgments on difficult points of detail, and on the conduct of those who in such points do not think and act as they do themselves.

We must not close this chapter, in which we have been

[1] How this change was brought about we do not well know. Probably it was accomplished by degrees, and without full consciousness of the transition which was being made, or of its import. From the beginning believers seem to have met for worship on the first day of the week; but there is no evidence that they rested entirely from work on that day. In many cases they could not have done so if they wished, *e.g.* in the case of slaves of heathen masters. Hence, probably, we may account for the church in Troas meeting in the evening, and worshipping till midnight. The likelihood is, that the first Christians rested on the seventh day as Jews, and as Christians worshipped on the morning or evening of the first day, before or after their daily toil. In course of time, as Jewish believers became more weaned from Judaism, and Gentile worshippers multiplied, so as to have a preponderating influence on the customs of the church, the seventh-day rest would disappear, and the first-day rest, the Lord's day, would take its place. To prevent misapprehension, it is necessary to explain that the seventh day continued to be observed as a fast-day or a festival, with religious services, long after it had ceased to be regarded as a day on which men ought entirely to rest from labour. *Vid.* on this, Bingham, *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, B. xx. c. iii.

studying the lessons in holy living given by our Lord to His disciples, without adding a reflection applicable to all the three. By these lessons the twelve were taught a virtue very necessary for the apostles of a religion in many respects new: the power to bear isolation and its consequences. When Peter and John appeared before the Sanhedrim, the rulers marvelled at their boldness, till they recognised in them companions of Jesus the Nazarene. They seem to have imagined that His followers were fit for anything requiring audacity. They were right. The apostles had strong nerves, and were not easily daunted; and the lessons which we have been considering help us to understand whence they got their rare moral courage. They had been accustomed for years to stand alone, and to disregard the fashion of the world; till at length they could do what was right, heedless of human criticism, without effort, almost without thought.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST ATTEMPTS AT EVANGELISM.

SECTION I.—*The Mission.*

MATT. X.; MARK VI. 7–13, 30–32; LUKE IX. 1–11.

THE twelve are now to come before us as active agents in advancing the kingdom of God. Having been for some time in Christ's company, witnessing His miraculous works, hearing His doctrine concerning the kingdom, and learning how to pray and how to live, they are at length sent forth to evangelize the towns and villages of their native province, and to heal the sick in their Master's name, and by His power. This mission of the disciples as evangelists or miniature apostles was partly, without doubt, an educational experiment for their own benefit; but its direct design was to meet the spiritual necessities of the people, whose neglected condition lay heavy on Christ's heart. The compassionate Son of man, in the course of His wanderings, had observed how the masses of the population were, like a shepherdless flock of sheep, scattered and *torn*;[1] and it was His desire that all should know that a good Shepherd had come to care for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The multitudes were ready enough to welcome the good news; the difficulty was to meet the pressing demand of the hour. The harvest, the grain ready for reaping, was plenteous, but the labourers were few.[2]

In connection with this mission, these things call for special notice: The sphere assigned for the work, the nature of the work, the instructions for carrying it on, the results of the

[1] ἐσκυλμένοι, Matt. ix. 36, the reading preferred by critics = flayed, harassed. The idea suggested is that of sheep whose fleeces are torn by thorns.

[2] Matt. ix. 37.

mission, and the return of the missionaries. These points we shall consider in their order, except that, for convenience, we shall reserve Christ's instructions to His disciples for the last place, and give them a section to themselves.

1. The sphere of the mission, as described in general terms, was the whole land of Israel. "Go," said Jesus to the twelve, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and further on, in Matthew's narrative, He speaks to them as if the plan of the mission involved a visit to all the cities of Israel.[1] Practically, however, the operations of the disciples seem to have been restricted to their native province of Galilee; and even within its narrow limits to have been carried on rather among the villages and hamlets, than in considerable towns or cities like Tiberias. The former of these statements is supported by the fact that the doings of the disciples attracted the attention of Herod the tetrarch of Galilee,[2] which implies that they took place in his neighbourhood;[3] while the latter is proved by the words of the third evangelist in giving a summary account of the mission: "They departed and went through the villages (towns, Eng. Ver.), preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere."[4]

While the apprentice missionaries were permitted by their instructions to go to any of the lost sheep of Israel, to all if practicable, they were expressly forbidden to extend their labours beyond these limits. They were not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor enter into any city or town of the Samaritans.[5] This prohibition arose in part out of the general plan which Christ had formed for founding the kingdom of God on the earth. His ultimate aim was the conquest of the world; but in order to that, He deemed it necessary first to secure a strong base of operations in the Holy Land and among the chosen people. Therefore He ever regarded Himself personally as a Messenger of God to the Jewish nation, seriously giving that as a reason why He should not work among the heathen,[6] and departing occasionally from the rule only in order to supply in His own ministry prophetic intima-

[1] Matt. x. 6, 23.
[2] Mark vi. 14; Luke ix. 7.
[3] Herod resided at Tiberias.
[4] Luke ix. 6—κατὰ τὰς κώμας.
[5] Matt. x. 5.
[6] Matt. xv. 24.

tions of an approaching time, when Jew and Samaritan and Gentile should be united on equal terms in one divine commonwealth.[1]

But the principal reason of the prohibition lay in the present spiritual condition of the disciples themselves. The time would come when Jesus might say to His chosen ones, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;"[2] but that time was not yet. The twelve, at the period of their first trial mission, were not fit to preach the gospel, or to do good works, either among Samaritans or Gentiles. Their hearts were too narrow, their prejudices too strong; there was too much of the Jew, too little of the Christian, in their character. For the catholic work of the apostleship they needed a new divine illumination, and a copious baptism with the benignant spirit of love. Suppose these raw evangelists had gone into a Samaritan village, what would have happened? In all probability they would have been drawn into disputes on the religious differences between Samaritans and Jews, in which of course they would have lost their temper; so that, instead of seeking the salvation of the people among whom they had come, they would rather be in a mood to call down fire from heaven to consume them, as they actually proposed to do at a subsequent period.[3]

2. The work entrusted to the twelve was in one department very extensive, and in the other very limited. They were endowed with unlimited powers of healing, but their commission was very restricted so far as preaching was concerned. In regard to the former their instructions were: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give;" in regard to the latter: "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."[4] The commission in the one case seems too wide, in the other too narrow; but in both the wisdom of Jesus is apparent to a deeper consideration. In so far as miraculous works were concerned there was no need for restriction, unless it were to avoid the risk of producing elation and vanity in those who wielded such wonderful power; a risk which was certainly not imaginary, but which could be remedied when it

[1] John iv. 7–24. [2] Mark xvi. 15. [3] Luke ix. 54. [4] Matt. x. 7, 8.

assumed tangible form. All the miracles wrought by the twelve were really wrought by Jesus Himself, their sole function consisting in making a believing use of His name. This seems to have been perfectly understood by all; for the works done by the apostles did not lead the people of Galilee to wonder who *they* were, but only who and what He was in whose name all these things were done.[1] Therefore, it being Christ's will that such miracles should be wrought through the instrumentality of His disciples, it was just as easy for them to do the greatest works as to do the smaller; if, indeed, there be any sense in speaking of degrees of difficulty in connection with miracles, which is more than doubtful.

As regards the preaching, on the other hand, there was not only reason, but necessity, for restriction. The disciples could do no more than proclaim the fact that the kingdom was at hand, and bid men everywhere repent, by way of a preparation for its advent. This was really all they knew themselves. They did not as yet understand, in the least degree, the doctrine of the cross; they did not even know the nature of the kingdom. They had, indeed, heard their Master discourse profoundly thereon, but they had not comprehended His words. Their ideas respecting the coming kingdom were nearly as crude and carnal as were those of other Jews, who looked for the restoration of Israel's political independence and temporal prosperity as in the glorious days of old. In one point only were they in advance of current notions. They had learned from John and from Jesus that repentance was necessary in order to citizenship in this kingdom. In all other respects they and their hearers were pretty much on a level.

Far from wondering that the preaching programme of the disciples was so limited, we are rather tempted to wonder how Christ could trust them to open their mouths at all, even on the one topic of the kingdom. Was there not a danger that men with such crude ideas might foster delusive hopes, and give rise to political excitement? Nay, may we not discover actual traces of such excitement in the notice taken of their movements at Herod's court, and in the proposal of the

[1] Mark vi. 14, "His name was spread abroad" (*φανερὸν ἐγένετο*).

multitude not long after, to take Jesus by force to make Him a king?[1]

Doubtless there was danger in this direction; and therefore, while He could not, to avoid it, leave the poor perishing people uncared for, Jesus took all possible precautions to obviate mischief as far as might be, by in effect prohibiting His messengers from entering into detail on the subject of the kingdom, and by putting a sound form of words into their mouths. They were instructed to announce the kingdom as a kingdom of *heaven;* a thing which some might deem a lovely vision, but which all worldly men would guess to be quite another thing from what they desired. A kingdom of heaven! What was that to them? What they wanted was a kingdom of earth, in which they might live peaceably and happily under just government, and, above all, with plenty to eat and drink. A kingdom of heaven! That was only for such as had no earthly hope; a refuge from despair, a melancholy consolation in absence of any better comfort. Even so, ye worldlings! Only for such as ye deem miserable was the message meant. To the poor the kingdom was to be preached. To the labouring and heavy laden was the invitation "Come to me" addressed, and the promise of rest made; of rest from ambition and discontent, and scheming, carking care, in the blessed hope of the supernal and the eternal.

3. The impression produced by the labours of the twelve seems to have been very considerable. The fame of their doings, as already remarked, reached the ears of Herod, and great crowds appear to have accompanied them as they moved from place to place. On their return, *e.g.* from the mission to rejoin the company of their Master, they were thronged by an eager, admiring multitude who had witnessed or experienced the benefits of their work; so that it was necessary for them to withdraw into a desert place in order to obtain a quiet interval of rest. "There were many," the second evangelist informs us, "coming and going, and they had no time so much as to eat. And they departed unto a desert place by ship privately."[2] Even in the desert solitudes

[1] John vi. 15.

[2] Mark vi. 31, 32.

on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee they failed to secure the desired privacy. "The people saw them departing, and ran afoot thither (round the end of the sea) out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him."[1]

In quality, the results of the mission appear to have been much less satisfactory than in their extent. The religious impressions produced seem to have been in a great measure superficial and evanescent. There were many blossoms, so to speak, on the apple tree in the spring-tide of this Galilean revival; but only a comparatively small number of them set in fruit, while of these a still smaller number ever reached the stage of ripe fruit. This we learn from what took place shortly after, in connection with Christ's discourse on the bread of life in the synagogue of Capernaum. Then the same men who, after the miraculous feeding in the desert, would have made Christ a king, deserted Him in a body, scandalized by His mysterious doctrine; and those who did this were, for the most part, just the men who had listened to the twelve while they preached repentance.[2]

Such an issue to a benevolent undertaking must have been deeply disappointing to the heart of Jesus. Yet it is remarkable that the comparative abortiveness of the first evangelistic movement did not prevent Him from repeating the experiment some time after on a still more extensive scale. "After these things," writes the third evangelist, "the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face, into every city and place whither He Himself would come."[3] The motive of this second mission was the same as in the case of the first, as were also the instructions to the missionaries. Jesus still felt deep compassion for the perishing multitude, and, hoping against hope, made a new attempt to save the lost sheep. He would have all men *called* at least to the fellowship of the kingdom, even though few should be chosen to it. And when the immediate results were promising He was gratified, albeit knowing, from past experience as well as by divine insight, that the faith and repentance of many were only too likely to be evanescent

[1] Mark vi. 33.
[2] Compare Mark vi. 30–35 with John vi. 22–25.
[3] Luke x. 1.

as the early dew. When the seventy returned from their mission, and reported their great success, He hailed it as an omen of the downfall of Satan's kingdom; and, rejoicing in spirit, gave thanks to the Supreme Ruler in heaven and earth, His Father, that while the things of the kingdom were hid from the wise and the prudent, the people of intelligence and discretion, they were by His grace revealed unto babes—the rude, the poor, the ignorant.[1]

The reference in the thanksgiving prayer of Jesus to the "wise and prudent" suggests the thought that these evangelistic efforts were regarded with disfavour by the refined, fastidious classes of Jewish religious society. This is in itself probable. There are always men in the church, intelligent, wise, and even good, to whom popular religious movements are distasteful. The noise, the excitement, the extravagances, the delusions, the misdirection of zeal, the rudeness of the agents, the instability of the converts,—all these things offend them. The same class of minds would have taken offence at the evangelistic work of the twelve and the seventy, for undoubtedly it was accompanied with the same drawbacks. The agents were ignorant; they had few ideas in their heads; they understood little of divine truth; their sole qualification was, that they were earnest and could preach repentance well. Doubtless, also, there was plenty of noise and excitement among the multitudes who heard them preach; and we certainly know that their zeal was both ill-informed and short-lived. These things, in fact, are standing features of all popular movements. Jonathan Edwards, speaking with reference to the "revival" of religion which took place in America in his day, says truly: "A great deal of noise and tumult, confusion and uproar, darkness mixed with light, and evil with good, is always to be expected in the beginning of something very glorious in the state of things in human society or the church of God. After nature has long been shut up in a cold, dead state, when the sun returns in the spring, there is, together with the increase of the light and heat of the sun, very tempestuous weather before all is settled, calm, and serene, and all nature rejoices in its bloom and beauty."[2]

[1] Luke x. 17–21. [2] *Thoughts on the Revival*, Part i. sec. iii.

None of the "wise and prudent" knew half so well as Jesus what evil would be mixed with the good in the work of the kingdom. But He was not so easily offended as they. The Friend of sinners was ever like Himself. He sympathized with the multitude, and could not, like the Pharisees, contentedly resign them to a permanent condition of ignorance and depravity. He rejoiced greatly over even one lost sheep restored; and He was, one might say, overjoyed, when not one, but a whole flock, even *began* to return to the fold. It pleased Him to see men repenting even for a season, and pressing into the kingdom even rudely and violently: for His love was strong; and where strong love is, even wisdom and refinement will not be fastidious.

Before passing from this topic, let us observe that there is another class of Christians, quite distinct from the wise and prudent, in whose eyes such evangelistic labours as those of the twelve stand in no need of vindication. Their tendency, on the contrary, is to regard such labours as the whole work of the kingdom. Revival of religion among the neglected masses is for them the sum of all good-doing. Of the more still, less observable work of instruction going on in the church they take no account. Where there is no obvious excitement, the church in their view is dead, and her ministry inefficient. Such need to be reminded that there were *two* religious movements going on in the days of the Lord Jesus. One consisted in rousing the mass out of the stupor of indifference; the other consisted in the careful, exact training of men already in earnest, in the principles and truths of the divine kingdom. Of the one movement the disciples, that is, both the twelve and the seventy, were the agents; of the other movement they were the subjects. And the latter movement, though less noticeable, and much more limited in extent, was by far more important than the former; for it was destined to bring forth fruit that would remain: to tell not merely on the present time, but on the whole history of the world. The deep truths which the great Teacher was now quietly and unobservedly, as in the dark, instilling into the minds of a select band, the recipients of His confidential teaching would speak in the broad daylight ere long; and the

sound of their voice would not stop till it had gone through all the earth. It would have been a poor outlook for the kingdom of heaven if Christ had neglected this work, and given Himself up entirely to vague evangelism among the masses.

4. When the twelve had finished their mission, they returned and told their Master all that they had done and taught. Of their report, or of His remarks thereon, no details are recorded. Such details we do find, however, in connection with the later mission of the seventy. "The seventy," we read, "returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name."[1] The same evangelist from whom these words are quoted informs us that, after congratulating the disciples on their success, and expressing His own satisfaction with the facts reported, Jesus spoke to them the warning word: "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven."[2] It was a timely caution against elation and vanity.

It is very probable that a similar word of caution was addressed to the twelve also after their return. Such a word would certainly not have been unseasonable in their case. They had been engaged in the same exciting work, they had wielded the same miraculous powers, they had been equally successful, they were equally immature in character, and therefore it was equally difficult for them to bear success. It is most probable, therefore, that when Jesus said to them on their return, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile,"[3] He was not caring for their bodies alone, but was prudently seeking to provide repose for their heated minds as well as for their jaded frames.

The admonition to the seventy is a word in season to all who are very zealous in the work of evangelism, especially such as are crude in knowledge and grace. It hints at the possibility of their own spiritual health being injured by their very zeal in seeking the salvation of others. This may happen in many ways. Success may make them vain, and they may begin to sacrifice unto their own net. They may fall under the dominion of the devil, through their very joy that he is

[1] Luke x. 17. [2] Luke x. 20. [3] Mark vi. 31.

subject unto them. They may despise those who have been less successful, or denounce them as deficient in zeal. The eminent divine already quoted gives a lamentable account of the pride, presumption, arrogance, conceit, and censoriousness which characterized many of the more active promoters of religious revival in his day.[1] Once more, they may fall into carnal security respecting their own spiritual state, deeming it impossible that anything can go wrong with those who are so devoted, and whom God has so greatly owned. A dangerous mistake; for, observe, Judas took part in this Galilean mission, and, for aught we know to the contrary, was as successful as his fellow-disciples in casting out devils. Graceless men may for a season be employed as agents in promoting the work of grace in the hearts of others. Usefulness does not necessarily imply goodness, according to the teaching of Christ Himself. "Many," He declares in the Sermon on the Mount, "will say unto me on that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" And mark the answer which He says He will give such. It is not: I call in question the correctness of your statement; that is tacitly admitted. It is: "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."[2]

These solemn words suggest the need of watchfulness and self-examination; but they are not designed to discourage or discountenance zeal. We must not interpret them as if they meant: "Never mind doing good, only be good;" or, "Care not for the salvation of others: look to your own salvation." Jesus Christ did not teach a listless or a selfish religion. He inculcated on His disciples a large-hearted generous concern for the spiritual well-being of men. To foster such a spirit He sent the twelve on this trial mission, even when they were comparatively unfitted for the work, and notwithstanding the risk of spiritual harm to which it exposed them. At all hazards He would have His apostles be filled with enthusiasm for the advancement of the kingdom; only taking due care, when the

[1] *Thoughts on Revival*, Part iv.

[2] Matt. vii. 22. See, for views similar to those above stated, Edwards' *Thoughts on Revival*, Part ii. sec. ii.

vices to which young enthusiasts are liable began to appear, to check them by a warning word and a timely retreat into solitude.

SECTION II.—*The Instructions.*

The instructions given by Jesus to the twelve in sending them forth on their first mission are obviously divisible into two parts. The first, shorter part, common to the narratives of all the three first evangelists, relates to the present; the second and much the longer part, peculiar to Matthew's narrative, relates mainly to the distant future. In the former, Christ tells His disciples what to do now, in their apprentice apostleship; in the latter, what they must do and endure when they have become apostles on the great scale, preaching the gospel, not to Jews only, but to all nations.

It has been doubted whether the discourse included in the second part of the apostolic or missionary instructions, as given by Matthew, was really uttered by Jesus on this occasion. Stress has been laid by those who take the negative view of this question, on the facts that the first evangelist alone gives the discourse in connection with the trial mission, and that the larger portion of its contents are given by the other evangelists in other connections. Reference has also been made, in support of this view, to the statement made by Jesus to His disciples, in His farewell address to them before the crucifixion, that He had not till then spoken to them of coming persecutions, and for this reason, that while He was with them it was unnecessary.[1] Finally, it has been deemed unlikely that Jesus would frighten His inexperienced disciples, by alluding to dangers not imminent at the time of their mission in Galilee.

These doubts, though plausible, vanish on deeper consideration. It was natural that Jesus should signalize the first missionary enterprise of the twelve chosen men by some such discourse as Matthew records, setting forth the duties, perils, encouragements, and rewards of the apostolic vocation. It was His way, on solemn occasions, to speak as a prophet, who

[1] John xvi. 4.

in the present saw the future, and from small beginnings looked forward to great ultimate issues. And this Galilean mission, though humble and limited compared with the great undertaking of after years, was really a solemn event. It was the beginning of that vast work for which the twelve had been chosen, which embraced the world in its scope, and aimed at setting up on the earth the kingdom of God. If the Sermon on the Mount was appropriately delivered on the occasion when the apostolic company was formed, this discourse on the apostolic vocation was not less appropriate when the members of that company first put their hands to the work unto which they had been called.

Even the allusions to distant dangers contained in that discourse appear on reflection natural and seasonable, and calculated to reassure rather than to frighten the disciples. It must be remembered that the execution of the Baptist had recently occurred, and that the twelve were about to commence their missionary labours within the dominions of the tyrant by whose command the barbarous murder had been committed. Doubtless these humble men who were to take up and repeat the Baptist's message, "Repent," ran no present risk of his fate; but it was natural that they should fear, and it was also natural that their Master should think of their future, when such fears would be anything but imaginary; and on both accounts it was seasonable to say to them in effect: Dangers are coming, but fear not.

Such, in substance, is the burthen of the second part of Christ's instructions to the twelve. Of the first part, on the other hand, the burthen is, *Care not.* These two words, Care not, Fear not, are the soul and marrow of all that was said by way of prelude to the first missionary enterprise, and we may add, to all which might follow. For here Jesus speaks to all ages and to all times, telling the church in what spirit all her missionary enterprises must be undertaken and carried on, that they may have His blessing.

1. The duty of entering on their mission without carefulness, relying on Providence for the necessaries of life, was inculcated on the twelve by their Master in very strong and lively terms. They were instructed to procure nothing for the

journey, but just to go as they were. They must provide neither gold nor silver, nor even so much as brass coin in their purses, no scrip or wallet to carry food, no change of raiment; not even sandals for their feet, or a staff for their hands. If they had the last-mentioned articles, good and well; if not, they could do without them. They might go on their errand of love barefooted, and without the aid even of a staff to help them on their weary way, having their feet shod only with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and leaning their weight upon God's words of promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."[1]

In these directions for the way, it is the spirit, and not the mere letter, which is of intrinsic and permanent value. The truth of this statement is evident from the very variations of the evangelists in reporting Christ's words. One, for example (Mark), makes Him say to His disciples in effect: "If you have a staff in your hand, and sandals on your feet, and one coat on your back, let that suffice." Another (Matthew) represents Jesus as saying: "Provide nothing for this journey, neither coat, shoes, nor staff."[2] In spirit the two versions come to the same thing; but if we insist on the letter of the injunctions with legal strictness, there is an obvious contradiction between them. What Jesus meant to say, in whatever form of language He expressed Himself, was this: Go at once, and go as you are, and trouble not yourselves about food or raiment, or any bodily want; trust in God for these.

So understood, the words of our Lord are of permanent validity, and to be kept in mind by all who would serve Him in His kingdom. And though the circumstances of the church have greatly altered since these words were first spoken, they have not been lost sight of. Many a minister and missionary has obeyed those instructions almost in their letter, and many more have kept them in their spirit. Nay, has not every poor student fulfilled these injunctions, who has gone forth from the humble roof of his parents to be trained for the ministry of the gospel, without money in his pocket either to buy food or

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 25.

[2] The first evangelist may be reconciled with the second, by laying stress on the word "provide" (*μὴ κτήσησθε*). See Alford, *in loco*.

to pay fees, only with simple faith and youthful hope in his heart; knowing as little how he is to find his way to the pastoral office as Abraham knew how to find his way to the promised land when he left his native abode, but, with Abraham, trusting that He who said to him, "Leave thy father's house," will be his guide, his shield, and his provider? And if those who thus started on their career do at length arrive at a wealthy place, in which their wants are abundantly supplied, what is that but an endorsement by Providence of the law enunciated by the Master: "The workman is worthy of his meat?"[1]

The directions given to the twelve, with respect to temporalities, in connection with their first mission, were meant to be an education for their future work. On entering on the duties of the apostolate, they should have to live literally by faith, and Jesus mercifully sought to inure them to the habit while He was with them on earth. Therefore, in sending them out to preach in Galilee, He said to them in effect: "Go and learn to seek the kingdom of God with a single heart, unconcerned about food or raiment; for till ye can do that ye are not fit to be my apostles." They had indeed been learning to do that ever since they began to follow Him; for those who belonged to His company literally lived from day to day, taking no thought for the morrow. But there was a difference between their past state and that on which they were about to enter. Hitherto Jesus had been with them; now they were to be left for a season to themselves. Hitherto they had been like young children in a family under the care of their parents, or like young birds in a nest sheltered by their mother's wing, and needing only to open their mouths wide in order to get them filled. Now they were to become like boys leaving their father's house to serve an apprenticeship, or like fledglings leaving the warm nest in which they were nursed, to exercise their wings and seek food for themselves.

While requiring His disciples to walk by faith, Jesus gave their faith something to rest on, by encouraging them to hope that what they provided not for themselves God would provide for them through the instrumentality of His people. "Into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is

[1] Matt. x. 10.

worthy, and there abide till ye go thence."[1] He took for granted, we observe, that there would always be found at every place at least one good man with a warm heart, who would welcome the messengers of the kingdom to his house and table for the pure love of God and of the truth. Surely no unreasonable assumption. It were a wretched hamlet, not to say town, that had not a single worthy person in it. Even wicked Sodom had a Lot within its walls who could entertain angels unawares.

To ensure good treatment for His servants in all ages wherever the gospel might be preached, Jesus made it known that He put a high premium on all acts of kindness done towards them. This advertisement we find at the close of the address delivered to the twelve at this time: "He that receiveth you," He said to them, "receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward." And then, with increased pathos and solemnity, He added: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."[2] How easy to go forth into Galilee, yea, into all the world, serving such a sympathetic Master on such terms!

But while thus encouraging the young evangelists, Jesus did not allow them to go away with the idea that all things would be pleasant in their experience. He gave them to understand that they should be ill received as well as kindly received. They should meet with churls who would refuse them hospitality, and with stupid, careless people who would reject their message; but even in such cases, He assured them, they should not be without consolation. If their peaceful salutation were not reciprocated, they should at all events get the benefit of their own spirit of good-will: their peace would return to themselves. If their words were not welcomed by any to whom they preached, they should at least be free from blame; they might shake off the dust from their feet, and say:

[1] Matt. x. 11. [2] Matt. x. 40–42.

"Your blood be upon your own heads, we are clean; we leave you to your doom, and go elsewhere."[1] Solemn words, not to be uttered, as they are too apt to be, especially by young and inexperienced disciples, in pride, impatience, or anger, but humbly, calmly, deliberately, as a part of God's message to men. When uttered in any other spirit, it is a sign that the preacher has been as much to blame as the hearer for the rejection of his message. Few have any right to utter such words at all; for it requires rare preaching, indeed, to make the fault of unbelieving hearers so great, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for them. But such preaching has been. Christ's own preaching was such, and hence the fearful doom He pronounced on those who rejected His words. Such also the preaching of the apostles was to be; and therefore, to uphold their authority, Jesus solemnly declared that the penalty for despising their word would be not less than for neglecting His own.[2]

2. The remaining instructions, referring to the future rather than to the present, while much more copious, do not call for lengthened explanation. The burthen of them all, as we have said, is "Fear not." This exhortation, like the refrain of a song, is repeated again and again in the course of the address.[3] From that fact, the twelve might have inferred that their future lot was to be of a kind fitted to inspire fear. But Jesus did not leave them to learn this by inference; He told them of it plainly. "Behold," He said, with the whole history of the church in His view, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Then He went on to explain in detail, and with appalling vividness, the various forms of danger which awaited the messengers of truth; how they should be delivered up to councils, scourged in synagogues, brought before governors and kings (like Felix, and Festus, and Herod), and hated of all for His name's sake.[4] He explained to them, at the same time, that this strange treatment was inevitable in the nature of things, being the necessary consequence of divine truth acting in the world like a chemical solvent, and separating men into parties, according to the spirit which ruled

[1] Matt. x. 13, 14.
[2] Matt. x. 15.
[3] Matt. x. 26, 28, 31.
[4] Matt. x. 16, 17, 18.

in them. The truth would divide even members of the same family, and make them bitterly hostile to each other;[1] and however deplorable the result might be, it was one for which there was no remedy. Offences must come: "Think not," He said to His disciples, horrified at the dark picture, and perhaps secretly hoping that their Master had painted it in too sombre colours, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."[2]

Amid such dangers, two virtues are specially needful: caution and fidelity; the one, that God's servants may not be cut off prematurely or unnecessarily, the other, that while they live, they may really do God's work, and fight for the truth. In such times Christ's disciples must not fear, but be brave and true; and yet, while fearless, they must not be foolhardy. These qualities it is not easy to combine; for conscientious men are apt to be rash, and prudent men are apt to be unfaithful. Yet the combination is not impossible, else it would not be required, as it is in this discourse. For it was just the importance of cultivating the apparently incompatible virtues of caution and fidelity that Jesus meant to teach by the remarkable proverb-precept: "Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves."[3] The serpent is the emblem of cunning, the dove of simplicity. No creatures can be more unlike; yet Jesus requires of His disciples to be at once serpents in cautiousness, and doves in simplicity of aim and purity of heart. Happy they who can be both; but if we cannot, let us at least be doves. The dove must come before the serpent in our esteem, and in the development of our character. This order is observable in the history of all true disciples. They begin with spotless sincerity; and after being betrayed by a generous enthusiasm into some acts of rashness, they learn betimes the serpent's virtues. If we invert the order, as too many do, and begin by being prudent and judicious to admiration, the effect will be, that the higher virtue will not only be postponed, but sacrificed. The dove will be devoured by the serpent:

[1] Matt. x. 21. [2] Matt. x. 34–36. [3] Matt. x. 16.

the cause of truth and righteousness will be betrayed out of a base regard to self-preservation and worldly advantage.

On hearing a general maxim of morals announced, one naturally wishes to know how it applies to particular cases. Christ met this wish in connection with the deep, pregnant maxim, "Be wise as serpents, harmless as doves," by giving examples of its application. The first case supposed is that of the messengers of truth being brought up before civil or ecclesiastical tribunals to answer for themselves. Here the dictate of wisdom is, "Beware of men."[1] "Do not be so simple as to imagine all men good, honest, fair, tolerant. Remember there are wolves in the world:—men full of malice, falsehood, and unscrupulousness, capable of inventing the most atrocious charges against you, and of supporting them by the most unblushing mendacity. Keep out of their clutches if you can; and when you fall into their hands, expect neither candour, justice, nor generosity." But how are such men to be answered? Must craft be met with craft, lies with lies? No: here is the place for the simplicity of the dove. Cunning and craft boot not at such an hour; safety lies in trusting to Heaven's guidance, and telling the truth. "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."[2] The counsel given to the apostles has been justified by experience. What a noble book the speeches uttered by confessors of the truth under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit, collected together, would make!

Jesus next puts the case of the heralds of His gospel being exposed to popular persecutions, and shows the bearing of the maxim upon it likewise. Such persecutions, as distinct from judicial proceedings, were common in apostolic experience; and they are a matter of course in all critical eras. The ignorant, superstitious populace, filled with prejudice and passion, and instigated by designing men, play the part of obstructives to the cause of truth, mobbing, mocking, and assaulting the messengers of God. How, then, are the subjects of this ill-treatment to act? On the one hand, they are to show the

[1] Matt. x. 17. [2] Matt. x. 19, 20.

wisdom of the serpent, by avoiding the storm of popular ill-will when it arises; and on the other hand, they are to exhibit the simplicity of the dove, by giving the utmost publicity to their message, though conscious of the risk they run. "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another;"[1] yet, undaunted by clamour, calumny, and violence, "what I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops."[2]

To each of these injunctions a reason is annexed. Flight is justified by the remark, "Verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come."[3] The coming alluded to is the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation; and the meaning is, that the apostles would barely have time, before the catastrophe came, to go over all the land, warning the people to save themselves from the doom of an untoward generation, so that they could not well afford to tarry in any locality after its inhabitants had heard and rejected the message. The souls of all were alike precious; and if one city did not receive the word, perhaps another would.[4]

The reason annexed to the injunction to give the utmost publicity to the truth, in spite of all possible dangers, is: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."[5] That is to say: To be evil entreated by the ignorant and violent multitude is hard to bear, but not harder for you than for me, who already, as ye know, have had experience of popular malice at Nazareth, and am destined, as ye know not, to have yet more bitter experience of it at Jerusalem. Therefore see that ye hide not your light under a bushel, to escape the rage of wolfish men.

The disciples are supposed, lastly, to be in peril not merely of trial, mocking, and violence, but even of their life, and are instructed how to act in that extremity. Here also the maxim, "Wise as serpents, harmless as doves," comes into play in both its parts. In this case the wisdom of the serpent lies in

[1] Matt. x. 23. [2] Matt. x. 27. [3] Matt. x. 23.

[4] Paul and Barnabas acted on this principle at Antioch of Pisidia. Acts xiii. 46.

[5] Matt. x. 24, 25.

knowing what to fear. Jesus reminds His disciples that there are two kinds of deaths, one caused by the sword, the other by unfaithfulness to duty; and tells them in effect, that while both are evils to be avoided, if possible, yet if a choice must be made, the latter death is most to be dreaded. "Fear not," He said, "them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell,"—the tempter, that is, who, when one is in danger, whispers: Save thyself at any sacrifice of principle or conscience.[1]

The simplicity of the dove in presence of the extreme peril consists in child-like trust in the watchful providence of the Father in heaven. Such trust Jesus exhorted His disciples to cherish in charmingly simple and pathetic language. He told them that God cared even for sparrows, and reminded them that, however insignificant they might seem to themselves, they were at least of more value than many sparrows, not to say than two, whose money value was just one farthing. If God neglected not even a pair of sparrows, but provided for them a place in His world where they might build their nest and safely bring forth their young, would He not care for them as they went forth two and two preaching the doctrine of the kingdom? Yea! He would; the very hairs of their head were numbered. Therefore they might go forth without fear, trusting their lives to His care; remembering also that, at worst, death was no great evil, seeing that for the faithful was reserved a crown of life, and, for those who confessed the Son of man, the honour of being confessed by Him in turn before His Father in heaven.[2]

Such were the instructions of the Lord Jesus to the twelve when He sent them forth to preach and to heal. Rare, unexampled discourse, strange to the ears of us moderns, who can hardly imagine such stern requirements being seriously made, not to say exactly complied with. Reader! hast thou ever looked up at Mont Blanc from Courmayeur, Chamounix,

[1] Matt. x. 28. It has been much disputed who is referred to here—God or Satan. It may be either: God as Judge; Satan as tempter. We prefer the latter.

[2] Matt. x. 32, 33.

or St. Gervais? Such is our attitude towards this first missionary sermon. It is a mountain at which we gaze in wonder from a position far below, hardly dreaming of climbing to its summit. Some, however, have made the arduous ascent; and among these the first place of honour must be assigned to the Twelve Apostles.

CHAPTER IX.

A CRISIS.

SECTION I.—*The Miracle.*

JOHN VI. 1–15; MATT. XIV. 13–21; MARK VI. 33–44; LUKE IX. 11–17.

THE sixth chapter of John's Gospel is full of marvels. It tells of a great miracle, a great enthusiasm, a great storm, a great sermon, a great apostasy, and a great trial of faith and fidelity endured by the twelve. It contains, indeed, the history of an important crisis in the ministry of Jesus and the religious experience of His disciples,—a crisis in many respects foreshadowing the great final one, which happened little more than a year afterwards,[1] when a more famous miracle still was followed by a greater popularity, to be succeeded in turn by a more complete desertion, and to end in the crucifixion, by which the riddle of the Capernaum discourse was solved, and its prophecy fulfilled.

The facts recorded by John in this chapter of his Gospel may all be comprehended under these four heads: the miracle in the wilderness, the storm on the lake, the sermon in the synagogue, and the subsequent sifting of Christ's disciples. These, in their order, we propose to consider in four distinct sections.

The scene of the miracle was on the eastern shore of the Galilean Sea. Luke fixes the precise locality, in the neighbourhood of a city called Bethsaida.[2] This, of course, could not be the Bethsaida on the western shore, the city of Andrew and Peter. But there was, it appears, another city of the same name at the north-eastern extremity of the lake, called,

[1] John vi. 4: "The passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh."
[2] Luke ix. 10.

by way of distinction, Bethsaida Julias.[1] The site of this city, we are informed by an eye-witness, "is discernible on the lower slope of the hill which overhangs the rich plain at the mouth of the Jordan" (that is, at the place where the waters of the Upper Jordan join the Sea of Galilee). "The 'desert place,'" the same author goes on to say, by way of proving the suitableness of the locality to be the scene of this miracle, "was either the green table-land which lies half-way up the hill immediately above Bethsaida, or else in the parts of the plain not cultivated by the hand of man would be found the 'much green grass,' still fresh in the spring of the year when this event occurred, before it had faded away in the summer sun: the tall grass which, broken down by the feet of the thousands then gathered together, would make, as it were, 'couches' for them to recline upon."[2]

To this place Jesus and the twelve had retired after the return of the latter from their mission, seeking rest and privacy. But what they sought they did not find. Their movements were observed, and the people flocked along the shore toward the place whither they had sailed, running all the way, as if fearful that they might escape, and so arriving at the landing-place before them.[3] The multitude which thus gathered around Jesus was very great. All the evangelists agree in stating it at five thousand; and as the arrangement of the people at the miraculous repast in groups of hundreds and fifties[4] made it easy to ascertain their number, we must accept this statement not as a rough estimate, but as an exact calculation.

Such an immense assemblage testifies to the presence of a great excitement among the populations living by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A fervid enthusiasm, a hero-worship whereof Jesus was the object, was at work in their minds. Jesus was the idol of the hour: they could not endure His absence; they could not see enough of His work, nor hear enough of His teaching. The infection seems to have spread as far south as

[1] Rebuilt by Philip the tetrarch, and referred to by Josephus.

[2] Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 382. The "desert place" is spoken of in Luke ix. 10, the "much green grass" in Mark vi. 39 and John vi. 10 combined.

[3] Mark vi. 33.

[4] Mark vi. 40.

Tiberias; for John relates that boats came from that city "to the place where they did eat bread."[1] Those who were in these boats came too late to witness the miracle and share in the feast, but this does not prove that their errand was not the same as that of the rest; for, owing to their greater distance from the scene, the news would be longer in reaching them, and it would take them longer to go thither.

The great miracle wrought in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida Julias consisted in the feeding of this vast assemblage of human beings with the utterly inadequate means of "five barley loaves and two small fishes."[2] It was truly a stupendous transaction, of which we can form no conception; but no event in the Gospel history is more satisfactorily attested. All the evangelists relate the miracle with much minuteness, with little even apparent discrepancy, and with such graphic detail as none but eye-witnesses could have supplied. Even John, who records so few of Christ's miracles, describes this one with as careful a hand as any of his brother evangelists, albeit introducing it into his narrative merely as a preface to the sermon on the Bread of Life found in his Gospel only.

This wonderful work, so unexceptionably attested, seems open to exception on another ground. It *appears* to be a miracle without a sufficient reason. It cannot be said to have been urgently called for by the necessities of the multitude. Doubtless they were hungry, and had brought no victuals with them to supply their bodily wants. But the miracle was wrought on the afternoon of the day on which they left their homes, and most of them might have returned within a few hours. It would, indeed, have been somewhat hard to have undertaken such a journey at the end of the day without food; but the hardship, even if necessary, was far within the limits of human endurance. But it was not necessary; for food could have been got on the way, without going far, in the neighbouring towns and villages, so that to disperse them as they were would have involved no considerable inconvenience. This is evident from the terms in which the disciples made the suggestion that the multitude should be sent away. We read: "When the day began to wear away, then came the

[1] John vi. 23. [2] John vi. 9.

twelve, and said unto Him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge and get victuals."[1]

In these respects there is an obvious difference between the *first* miraculous feeding, and the *second*, which occurred at a somewhat later period at the south-eastern extremity of the lake. On that occasion, the people who had assembled around Jesus had been three days in the wilderness without aught to eat, and there were no facilities for procuring food, so that the miracle was demanded by considerations of humanity.[2] Accordingly we find that compassion is assigned as the motive for that miracle: "Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far."[3]

If our object were merely to get rid of the difficulty of assigning a sufficient motive for the great miracle of feeding, we might content ourselves with saying that Jesus did not need any very urgent occasion to induce Him to use His power for the benefit of others. For His own benefit He would not use it in case even of extreme need, not even after a fast of forty days. But when the *well-being* (not to say the *being*) of others was concerned, He dispensed miraculous blessings with a liberal hand. He did not ask Himself: Is this a grave enough occasion for the use of divine power? Is this man ill enough to justify a miraculous interference with the laws of nature, by healing him? Are these people here assembled hungry enough to be fed, like their fathers in the wilderness, with bread from heaven?

But we do not insist on this, because we believe that something else and higher was aimed at in this miracle than to satisfy physical appetite. It was a symbolic, didactic, *critical* miracle. It was meant to teach, and also to test; to supply a text for the subsequent sermon, and a touchstone to try the character of those who had followed Jesus with such enthusiasm. The miraculous feast in the wilderness was meant to say to the multitude just what our sacramental feast

[1] Luke ix. 12. [2] Mark viii. 3, 4. [3] Mark viii. 1–3.

says to us: "I, Jesus the Son of God Incarnate, am the bread of life. What this bread is to your bodies, I myself am to your souls." And the communicants in that feast were to be tested by the way in which they regarded the transaction. The spiritual would see in it a sign of Christ's divine dignity, and a seal of His saving grace; the carnal would rest simply in the outward fact that they had eaten of the loaves and were filled, and would take occasion from what had happened to indulge in high hopes of temporal felicity under the benign reign of the Prophet and King who had made His appearance among them.

The miracle in the desert was in this view not merely an act of mercy, but an act of judgment. Jesus mercifully fed the hungry multitude in order that He might sift it, and separate the true from the spurious disciples. There was a much more urgent demand for such a sifting, than for food to satisfy merely physical cravings. If those thousands were all genuine disciples, it was well; but if not—if the greater number were following Christ under misapprehension — the sooner that became apparent the better. To allow so large a mixed multitude to follow Himself any longer without sifting, would have been on Christ's part to encourage false hopes, and to give rise to serious misapprehensions as to the nature of His kingdom and His earthly mission. And no better method of separating the chaff from the wheat in that large company of professed disciples could have been devised, than first to work a miracle which would bring to the surface the latent carnality of the greater number, and then to preach a sermon which could not fail to be offensive to the carnal mind.

That Jesus freely chose, for a reason of His own, the miraculous method of meeting the difficulty that had arisen, appears to be not obscurely hinted at in the Gospel narratives. Consider, for example, in this connection, John's note of time, "The passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh." Is this a merely chronological statement? We think not. What further purpose, then, is it intended to serve? To explain how so great a crowd came to be gathered around Jesus?— Such an explanation was not required, for the true cause of the great gathering was the enthusiasm which had been

awakened among the people by the preaching and healing work of Jesus and the twelve. The evangelist refers to the approaching passover, it would seem, not to explain the movement of the people, but rather to explain the acts and words of his Lord about to be related. "The passover was nigh, and"—so may we bring out John's meaning—"Jesus was thinking of it, though He went not up to the feast that season. He thought of the paschal lamb, and how He, the true Paschal Lamb, would ere long be slain for the life of the world; and He gave expression to the deep thoughts of His heart in the symbolic miracle I am about to relate, and in the mystic discourse which followed."[1]

The view we advocate respecting the motive of the miracle in the wilderness seems borne out also by the tone adopted by Jesus in the conversation which took place between Himself and the twelve as to how the wants of the multitude might be supplied. In the course of that conversation, of which fragments have been preserved by the different evangelists, two suggestions were made by the disciples. One was to dismiss the multitude that they might procure supplies for themselves; the other, that they (the disciples) should go to the nearest town (say Bethsaida Julias, probably not far off) and purchase as much bread as they could get for two hundred denarii, which would suffice to alleviate hunger at least, if not to satisfy appetite.[2] Both these proposals were feasible, otherwise they would not have been made; for the twelve had not spoken thoughtlessly, but after consideration, as appears from the fact that one of their number, Andrew, had already ascertained how much provision could be got on the spot. The question how the multitude could be provided for had evidently been exercising the minds of the disciples, and the two proposals were the result of their deliberations. Now, what we wish to point out is, that Jesus does not appear to have given any serious heed to these proposals. He listened to them, not displeased to see the generous concern of His disciples for the hungry

[1] For the view of John vi. 4 above given, see Luthardt, *Das Johan. Evangelium*, i. 80, ii. 41.

[2] Mark vi. 37; John vi. 7. A denarius (Eng. ver. a penny) seems to have been a day's wages (Matt. xx. 9), and was about the eighth part of an ounce of silver.

people, yet with the air of one who meant from the first to pursue a different line of action from any they might suggest. He behaved like a general in a council of war whose own mind is made up, but who is not unwilling to hear what his subordinates will say. This is no mere inference of ours, for John actually explains that such was the manner in which our Lord acted on the occasion. After relating that Jesus addressed to Philip the question, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? he adds the parenthetical remark, "This He said to prove him, for He Himself knew what He would do."[1]

Such, then, was the design of the miracle: what now was its result? It raised the swelling tide of enthusiasm to its full height, and induced the multitude to form a foolish and dangerous purpose—even to crown the wonder-working Jesus, and make Him their king instead of the licentious despot Herod. They said, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world;" and they were on the point of coming and taking Jesus by force to make Him a king, insomuch that it was necessary that He should make His escape from them, and depart into a mountain Himself alone.[2] Such are the express statements of the fourth Gospel, and what is there stated is obscurely implied in the narratives of Matthew and Mark. They tell how, after the miracle in the desert, Jesus *straightway constrained* His disciples to get into a ship and to go to the other side.[3] Why such haste, and why such urgency? Doubtless it was late, and there was no time to lose, if they wished to get home to Capernaum that night. But why go home at all, when the people, or at least a part of them, were to pass the night in the wilderness? Should they not rather have remained with them, to keep them in heart and take a charge of them? Nay, was it dutiful in disciples to leave their Master alone in such a situation? Doubtless the reluctance of the twelve to depart sprang from their asking themselves these very questions; and, as a feeling having such an origin was most becoming, the constraint put on them

[1] John vi. 6.
[2] John vi. 14, 15. The prophet meant was one like Moses (Deut. xviii. 15).
[3] Matt. xiv. 22; Mark vi. 45.

presupposes the existence of unusual circumstances, such as those recorded by John. In other words, the most natural explanation of the fact recorded by the synoptical evangelists is, that Jesus wished to extricate both Himself and His disciples from the foolish enthusiasm of the multitude, and for that purpose arranged that they should sail away in the dusk across the lake, while He retired into the solitude of the mountains.[1]

What a melancholy result of a hopeful movement have we here! The kingdom has been proclaimed, and the good news has been extensively welcomed. Jesus, the Messianic King, is become the object of most ardent devotion to an enthusiastic population. But, alas! their ideas of the kingdom are radically mistaken. Acted out, they would mean rebellion and ultimate ruin. Therefore it is necessary that Jesus should save Himself from His own friends, and hide Himself from His own followers. How certainly do Satan's tares get sown among God's wheat! How easily does enthusiasm run into folly and mischief!

The result of the miracle did not take Jesus by surprise. It was what He expected; nay, in a sense, it was what He aimed at. It was time that the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed; and the certainty that the miracle would help to reveal them was one reason at least for its being worked. Jesus furnished for the people a table in the wilderness, and gave them of the corn of heaven, and sent them meat to the full,[2] that He might prove them and know what was in their heart,[3]—whether they loved Him for His own sake, or only for the sake of expected worldly advantage. That many followed Him from by-ends He knew beforehand, but He desired to bring the fact home to their own consciences. The miracle put that in His power, and enabled Him to say, without fear of contradiction, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled."[4] It was a searching word which might well put all His professed followers, not only then, but now, on self-examining thoughts, and lead each man to ask himself, Why do I profess Christianity? Is it from sincere faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, or from thoughtless

[1] John vi. 15, 16.
[2] Ps. lxxiii. 19, 24, 25.
[3] Deut. viii. 2.
[4] John vi. 26.

compliance with custom, from a regard to reputation, or from considerations of worldly advantage? That many are "Christians," now as then, from by-ends is certain. Who they are, no man may attempt to declare; but the Lord knows.

Section II.—*The Storm.*

Matt. xiv. 24–33; Mark vi. 45–52; John vi. 16–21.

"In perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea," wrote Paul, describing the varied hardships encountered by himself in the prosecution of his great work as the apostle of the Gentiles. Such perils meet together in this crisis in the life of Jesus. He has just saved Himself from the dangerous enthusiasm manifested by the thoughtless multitude after the miraculous repast in the desert; and now, a few hours later, a still greater disaster threatens to befall Him. His twelve chosen disciples, whom He had hurriedly sent off in a boat, that they might not encourage the people in their foolish project, have been overtaken in a storm while He is alone on the mountain praying, and are in imminent danger of being drowned. His contrivance for escaping one evil has involved Him in a worse; and it seems as if, by a combination of mischances, He were to be suddenly deprived of all His followers, both true and false, at once, and left utterly alone, as in the last great crisis. The Messianic King watching on those heights, like a general on the day of battle, is indeed hard pressed, and the battle is going against Him. But the Captain of salvation is equal to the emergency; and however sorely perplexed He may be for a season, He will be victorious in the end.

The Sea of Galilee, though but a small sheet of water, some thirteen miles long by six broad, is liable to be visited by sharp, sudden squalls, probably due to its situation. It lies in a deep hollow of volcanic origin, bounded on either side by steep ranges of hills rising above the water-level from one to two thousand feet. The difference of temperature at the top and bottom of these hills is very considerable. Up

on the table-lands above, the air is cool and bracing; down at the margin of the lake, which lies seven hundred feet below the level of the ocean, the climate is tropical. The storms caused by this inequality of temperature are tropical in violence. They come sweeping down the ravines upon the water; and in a moment the lake, calm as glass before, becomes from end to end white with foam, whilst the waves rise into the air in columns of spray.[1]

Two such storms of wind were encountered by the twelve after they had become disciples, probably within the same year; the one with which we are concerned at present, and an earlier one on the occasion of a visit to Gadara.[2] Both happened by night, and both were exceedingly violent. In the first storm, we are told, the ship was covered with the waves, and filled almost to sinking, so that the disciples feared they should perish. The second storm was equally violent, and was of much longer duration. It caught the twelve apparently when they were half-way across, and after the grey of dusk had deepened into the darkness of night. From that time the wind blew with unabated force till day-break, in the fourth watch, between the hours of three and six in the morning. Some idea of the fury of the blast may be gathered from the fact recorded, that even then they were still little more than half-way over the sea. They had rowed in all only a distance of twenty-five or thirty furlongs;[3] the whole distance in a slanting direction, from the eastern to the western shore, being probably about fifty. During all those weary hours they had done little more, pulling with all their might, than hold their own against wind and waves.

All this while what was Jesus doing? In the first storm He had been with His disciples in the ship, sweetly sleeping after the fatigues of the day, "rocked in cradle of the imperious surge." This time He was absent, and not sleeping; but away up among the mountains alone, watching unto prayer. For He, too, had His own struggle on that tempestuous night; not with the howling winds, but with sorrowful

[1] Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 380.
[2] Matt. viii. 23; Mark iv. 35; Luke viii. 22.
[3] John vi. 19.

thoughts. That night He, as it were, rehearsed the agony in Gethsemane, and with earnest prayer and absorbing meditation studied the passion sermon which He preached on the morrow. So engrossed was His mind with His own sad thoughts, that the poor disciples were for a season as if forgotten; till at length, at early dawn, looking seawards,[1] He saw them toiling in rowing against the contrary wind, and without a moment's further delay made haste to their rescue.

This storm on the Sea of Galilee, besides being important as a historical fact, possesses also the significance of an emblem. When we consider the time at which it occurred, it is impossible not to connect it in our thoughts with the untoward events of the next day. For the literal storm on the water was succeeded by a spiritual storm on the land, equally sudden and violent, and not less perilous to the souls of the twelve than the other had been to their bodies. The bark containing the precious freight of Christ's true discipleship was then overtaken by a sudden gust of unpopularity, coming down on it like a squall on a highland loch, and all but upsetting it. The fickle crowd that but the day before would have made Jesus their king, turned away abruptly from Him in disappointment and disgust; and it was not without an effort, as we shall see,[2] that the twelve maintained their stedfastness. They had to pull hard against wind and waves, that they might not be carried headlong to ruin by the tornado of apostasy.

There can be little doubt that the two storms—on the lake and on the shore—coming so close one on the other, would become associated in the memory of the apostles; and that the literal storm would be stereotyped in their minds as an expressive emblem of the spiritual one, and of all similar trials of faith. The incidents of that fearful night—the watching, the wet, the toil without result, the fatigue, the terror and despair—would abide indelibly in their recollection, the symbolic representation of all the perils and tribulations through which believers must pass on their way to the kingdom of heaven; and especially of those that come upon them while they are yet immature in the faith.

The storm on the lake is an apt emblem of the inward

[1] Mark vi. 48.

[2] See Section IV. of the present chapter.

trials of immature disciples in three respects particularly. First, because it took place by night. A storm is a serious thing at any time, but darkness adds greatly to the danger, and still more to the terror. Imagination becomes active, and adds visionary to real evils. Horrid spectres rise to view, and the very deliverer, as he approaches, seems to a disordered fancy but the spirit of the storm coming to destroy.

Storms at sea may happen at all hours of the day, but trials of faith happen always in the night. The task appointed to the tried soul is to wait patiently through the darkness for the dawn. Were there no darkness, there could be no trial. In the light we walk not by faith, but by sight, without difficulty. Had the twelve understood Christ's discourse in Capernaum, the apostasy of the multitude would have been less of a temptation. But they did not understand it: they were in the dark as to its meaning as much as the others, and hence the solicitude of their Master lest they too might forsake Him. So with all whose faith is being tried. They fear the Lord, and walk in darkness, and have no light; or at least want light in the quarter whence the trial comes. And as they walk in the dark, they are liable, like the disciples, to see ghosts, and be tormented with imaginary fears. Every bush seems a thief or a robber; and ghastly bugbears, hideous hobgoblins, "do greatly them affear," as they walk forlorn through the valley of the shadow of death. Blasphemous thoughts of God, despairing thoughts of themselves, infest their minds. Conscience charges them with horrible offences, and the intellect is preternaturally acute in interpreting Scripture in the manner most unfavourable to their prospects of salvation; yea, it may be, in suggesting doubts whether there be such a thing as salvation, whether religion be not a dream, and revelation a delusion. What a blessed deliverance when the day dawns, and the shadows flee away! How pleasant to look back on such passages of one's life, and remember God from the land of Jordan, and the Sea of Galilee, when the waves and billows went over us!

A second point in the symbolism of the storm is the absence of Jesus. In the first storm encountered by the twelve, Jesus was present, though asleep; but in the second He was not

with them at all, sleeping or waking. Now, in like manner, the absence of the Lord to feeling at least is one painful feature of inward trials. Christ is not in the ship while the storm rages by night, and we toil on in rowing unaided, as we think, by His grace, uncheered by His spiritual presence. It was so even with the twelve next day on the shore. Their Master, though present to their eyes, had vanished out of sight to their understanding. While they clung to Him as one who had the words of eternal life, they had not the comfort of comprehending His meaning. They were faithful to Him *in spite* of the incomprehensibility of His doctrine.

When Jesus is missed, He is apt to be reflected on. Disciples are prone to ask (the twelve, no doubt, did ask), How can He leave us in such a plight? nay, why did He allow us to get into it? Why did He push our boat off into the sea, and not let us remain with Him on shore, as we wished? Such questions always admit of satisfactory answer. There were good reasons for the arrangement by which the disciples were required to sail away alone; and there are equally good reasons for all analogous experiences in the spiritual life. It is good for believers that Christ should go away for a season, and that they should know what it is to battle with temptation, as it were, single-handed. This, however, they never see till the trial is past; and hence complaints, doubting questions, severe reflections, are almost invariably indulged in at a season of desertion. However much the Divine Master may intend the good of His disciples at such times, He must be content to do without their confidence, and to bear patiently their misunderstandings and hard thoughts. And He is content: He does what is right, and trusts to the future for His justification, when the children shall have become grown men, capable of appreciating the discipline to which they have been subjected.

The third respect in which the storm has symbolic significance, is the arrestment of all progress while it lasted. The disciples, with all their efforts, made no headway: the utmost they effected was to hold their own; their toil but helped them to stand still in midst of the sea. In like manner, there is an absence of all sensible progress in the divine life in seasons of spiritual trial. The tempest-tossed seem to

remain throughout just where they were: that at best, for often there is back-going.[1]

This standing still is very discouraging. No one loves to labour hard, and all in vain. But the tried must beware of being too much discouraged, and remember that if they *do* stand still at such a season, their labour is *not* in vain. It is a great thing to hold your own then. Surely it was better far to stick fast in the midst of the sea, than to be driven back on the rocky shore! If the disciples did not get nearer the port whither they were bound while the storm lasted, they at all events escaped shipwreck and drowning: a matter surely to be thankful for!

It is a pious commonplace, that there is no standing still in the divine life, and that if one is not going forward he is going backward. This saying may hold good in fair weather, but it does not apply in a time of storm. Then to stand still is all one can do; nor is that at such a season a small thing, but everything. Is it a small thing to weather the tempest—to keep off the rocks, the sands, and the breakers? Vex not the soul of him who is already vexed enough by the buffeting winds, by retailing wise saws about progress and backsliding, indiscriminately applied. Play not the part of a Job's friend, telling the tried one he is not getting any nearer the haven with all his efforts (which he knows too well himself), and drawing hence unfavourable inferences respecting his spiritual state. Rather remind him that the great thing for him at present is to endure, to be immoveable, to hold fast his moral integrity and his profession of faith, and to keep off the dangerous coast of immorality and infidelity; and for his encouragement assure him, that if he will but persevere pulling a little longer at the oar, however weary his arm, God will come and calm the wind, when, inspired with new life and vigour, he shall move with great speed, and forthwith reach the land.

The storm on the lake, besides being an apt emblem of the trial of faith, was for the twelve an important lesson in faith, helping to prepare them for the future which awaited them. The temporary absence of their Master was a preparation for His perpetual absence. The miraculous interposition of Jesus

[1] John vi. 66.

at the crisis of their peril was fitted to impress on their minds the conviction, that even after He had ascended He would still be with them in the hour of danger. From the ultimate happy issue of a plan which threatened for a time to miscarry, they might further learn to cherish a calm confidence in the government of their exalted Lord, even in midst of most untoward events. As we remarked before, they probably concluded, when the storm came on, that Jesus had made a mistake in ordering them to sail away across the lake while He remained behind to dismiss the multitude. The event, however, rebuked this hasty judgment, all ending happily. Their experience in this instance was fitted to teach a lesson for life: not rashly to infer mismanagement or neglect on Christ's part from temporary mishaps, but to have firm faith in His wise and loving care for His cause and people, and to anticipate a happy issue out of all perplexities; yea, to glory in tribulation, because of the great deliverance which would surely follow.

The disciples were far enough from possessing such strong faith at the time of the storm. They had no expectation that Jesus would come to their rescue; for when He did come, they thought He was a spirit flitting over the water, and cried out in an agony of superstitious terror. Here also we note, in passing, a curious correspondence between the incidents of this crisis and those connected with the final one. The disciples had then as little expectation of seeing their Lord return from the dead as they had now of seeing Him come to them over the sea; and therefore His reappearance at first frightened rather than comforted them. "They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."[1] Good, unlooked for in either case, was turned into evil; and what to faith would have been a source of intense joy, became, through unbelief, only a new cause of alarm.

The fact of His not being expected seems to have imposed on Jesus the necessity of using artifice in His manner of approaching His storm-tossed disciples. Mark relates that "He would have passed by them,"[2] affecting strangeness, as we understand it, out of delicate consideration for their weakness. He knew what He would be taken for when first observed;

[1] Luke xxiv. 37. [2] Mark vi. 48.

and therefore He wished to attract their attention at a safe distance, fearing lest, by appearing among them at once, He might drive them distracted. He found it needful to be as cautious in announcing His advent to save, as men are wont to be in communicating evil tidings: first appearing, as the spectre, as far away as He could be seen; then revealing Himself by His familiar voice uttering the words of comfort, "It is I; be not afraid;" and so obtaining at length a willing reception into the ship.[1]

The effects which followed the admission of Jesus into the vessel betrayed the twelve into a new manifestation of the weakness of their faith. "The wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered."[2] They ought not to have wondered so greatly, after what had happened once before on these same waters, and especially after such a miracle as had been wrought in the wilderness on the previous day. But the storm had blown all thoughts of such things out of their mind, and driven them utterly stupid. "They reflected not on the loaves (nor on the rebuking of the winds), for their heart was hardened."[3]

But the most interesting revelation of the mental state of the disciples at the time when Jesus came to their relief, is to be found in the episode concerning Peter related in Matthew's Gospel. When that disciple understood that the supposed spectre was his beloved Master, he cried, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water;"[4] and on receiving permission, he forthwith stepped out of the ship into the sea. This was not faith, but simple rashness. It was the rebound of an impetuous, headlong nature, from one extreme of utter despair, to the opposite extreme of extravagant, reckless joy. What in the other disciples took the tame form of a willingness to receive Jesus into the ship after they were satisfied it was He who walked on the waters,[5] took, in the case of Peter, the form of a romantic, adventurous wish to go out to Jesus where He was, to welcome Him back among them again. The proposal was altogether like the man: generous, enthusiastic, and well-meant, but inconsiderate.

[1] John vi. 21. [2] Mark vi. 51. [3] Mark vi. 52.
[4] Matt. xiv. 28. [5] John vi. 21.

Such a proposal, of course, could not meet with Christ's approval, and yet He did not negative it. He rather thought good to humour the impulsive disciple so far, by inviting him to come, and then to allow him, while in the water, to feel his own weakness. Thus would He teach him a little self-knowledge, and, if possible, save him from the effects of his rash, self-confident temper. But Peter was not to be made wise by one lesson, nor even by several. He would go on blundering and erring, in spite of rebuke and warning, till at length he fell into grievous sin, denying the Master whom he loved so well. The denial at the final crisis was just what might be looked for from one who so behaved at the minor crisis preceding it. The man who said, "Bid me come to Thee," was just the man to say, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death." He who was so courageous on deck, and so timid amid the waves, was the one of all the disciples most likely to talk boldly when danger was not at hand, and then play the coward when the hour of trial actually arrived. The scene on the lake was but a foreshadowing or rehearsal of Peter's fall.

And yet that scene showed something more than the weakness of that disciple's faith. It showed also what is possible to those who believe. If the tendency of weak faith be to sink, the triumph of strong faith is to walk on the waves, glorying in tribulation, and counting it all joy when exposed to divers temptations. It is the privilege of those who are weak in faith, and the duty of all, mindful of human frailty, to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." But when storms come not of their inviting, and when their ship is upset in midst of the sea, then may Christians trust to the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;" and if only they have faith, they shall be enabled to tread the rolling billows as if walking on firm land.

"He bids me come; His voice I know,
And boldly on the waters go,
And brave the tempest's shock.
O'er rude temptations now I bound;
The billows yield a solid ground,
The wave is firm as rock."

SECTION III.—*The Sermon.*

JOHN VI. 32–58.

The task now before us is to study that memorable address delivered by Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum on the bread of life, which gave so great offence at the time, and which has ever since been a stone of stumbling, a subject of controversy, and a cause of division in the visible church, and, so far as one can judge from present appearances, will be to the world's end. On a question so vexed as that which relates to the meaning of this discourse, one might well shrink from entering. But the very confusion which prevails here points it out as our plain duty to disregard the din of conflicting interpretations, and, humbly praying to be taught of God, to search for and set forth Christ's own mind.

The sermon on the bread of life, however strangely it sounds, was appropriate both in matter and manner to the circumstances in which it was delivered. It was natural and seasonable that Jesus should speak to the people of the meat that endureth unto everlasting life after miraculously providing perishable food to supply their physical wants. It was even natural and seasonable that He should speak of this high topic in the startling, apparently gross, harsh style which He adopted on the occasion. The form of thought suited the situation. Passover time was approaching, when the paschal lamb was slain and eaten; and if Jesus desired to say in effect, without saying it in so many words, "I am the true Paschal Lamb," what more suitable form of language could He employ than this: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world?" The style was also adapted to the peculiar complexion of the speaker's feelings at the moment. Jesus was in a sad, austere mood of mind when He preached this sermon. The foolish enthusiasm of the multitude had saddened Him. Their wish to force a crown on His head made Him think of His cross; for He knew that this idolatrous devotion to a political Messiah meant death sooner or later to one who declined such carnal homage. He spoke, therefore, in the synagogue of Caper-

naum with Calvary in view, setting Himself forth as the life of the world in terms applicable to a sacrificial victim, whose blood is shed, and whose flesh is eaten by those presenting the offering; not mincing His words, but saying everything in the strongest and intensest manner possible.

The theme of this memorable address was very naturally introduced by the preceding conversation between Jesus and the people who came from the other side of the lake, hoping to find Him at Capernaum, His usual place of abode.[1] To their warm inquiries as to how He came thither, He replied by a chilling observation concerning the true motive of their zeal, and an exhortation to set their hearts on a higher food than that which perisheth.[2] Understanding the exhortation as a counsel to cultivate piety, the persons to whom it was addressed inquired what they should do that they might work the works of God, *i.e.* please God.[3] Jesus replied by declaring that the great testing work of the hour was to receive Himself as one whom God had sent.[4] This led to a demand on their part for evidence in support of this high claim to be the divinely missioned Messiah. The miracle just wrought on the other side of the lake was great, but not great enough, they thought, to justify such lofty pretensions. In ancient times a whole nation had been fed for many years by bread brought down from heaven by Moses. What was the recent miracle compared to that? He must show a sign on a far grander scale, if He wished them to believe that a greater than Moses was here.[5] Jesus took up the challenge, and boldly declared that the manna, wonderful as it was, was not the true heavenly bread. There was another bread, of which the manna was but the type: like it, coming down from heaven;[6] but unlike it, giving life not to a nation, but to a world, and not life merely for a few short years, but life for eternity. This announcement, like the similar one concerning the wonderful water of life, made to the woman of Samaria,

[1] John vi. 24. Luthardt very properly points out that the fact of the people expecting to find Jesus in Capernaum implies such a residence there as the synoptical Gospels inform us of. *Das Joh. Evang.* ii. 50.

[2] Vers. 26, 27. [3] Ver. 28. [4] Ver. 29.

[5] Vers. 30, 31. Moses is not named, but he is in their thoughts.

[6] ὁ καταβαίνων, ver. 33, refers to ἄρτος, not the speaker directly.

provoked desire in the hearts of the hearers, and they exclaimed, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Then said Jesus unto them, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh unto me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."[1]

In these words Jesus briefly enunciated the doctrine of the true bread, which He expounded and inculcated in His memorable Capernaum discourse. The doctrine, as stated, sets forth what the true bread is, what it does, and how it is appropriated.

1. The true bread is He who here speaks of it—Jesus Christ. "I am the bread." The assertion implies, on the speaker's part, a claim to have descended from heaven; for such a descent is one of the properties by which the true bread is defined.[2] Accordingly we find Jesus, in the sequel of His discourse, expressly asserting that He had come down from heaven.[3] This declaration, understood in a supernatural sense, was the first thing in His discourse with which His hearers found fault. "The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread *which came down from heaven.* And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"[4] It was natural they should murmur, if they did not know or believe that there was anything out of course in the way in which Jesus came into the world. For such language as He here employs could not be used without blasphemy by a mere man born after the fashion of other men. It is language proper only in the mouth of a Divine Being who, for a purpose, hath assumed human nature.

In setting Himself forth, therefore, as the bread which came down from heaven, Jesus virtually taught the doctrine of the incarnation. The solemn assertion, "I am the bread of life," is equivalent in import to that made by the evangelist respecting Him who spoke these words: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."[5]

It is, however, not *merely* as incarnate that the Son of God is the bread of eternal life. Bread must be broken in order

[1] John vi. 32–35. [2] Ver. 33. [3] Vers. 38, 51, 58, 62.
[4] Vers. 41, 42. [5] John i. 14.

to be eaten. The Incarnate One must die as a sacrificial victim, that men may truly feed upon Him. The Word become flesh, and crucified in the flesh, is the life of the world. This special truth Jesus went on to declare, after having stated the general truth, that the heavenly bread was to be found in Himself. "The bread," said He, "that I will give is my flesh, (which I will give) for the life of the world."[1] The language here becomes modified to suit the new turn of thought. "I am" passes into "I will give," and "bread" is transformed into "flesh."

Jesus evidently refers here to His death. His hearers did not so understand Him; but we can have no doubt on the matter. The verb "give," suggesting a sacrificial act, and the future tense both point that way. In words dark and mysterious before the event, clear as day after it, the speaker declares the great truth, that His death is to be the life of men; that His broken body and shed blood are to be as meat and drink to a perishing world, conferring on all who shall partake of them the gift of immortality. How He is to die, and why His death shall possess such virtue, He doth not here explain. The Capernaum discourse makes no mention of the cross; it contains no theory of atonement, it speaks not of satisfaction, substitution, vicarious suffering: the time is not come for such details; it simply asserts in broad, strong terms, that the flesh and blood of the incarnate Son of God, severed as in death, are the source of eternal life.

This mention by Jesus of His flesh as the bread from heaven gave rise to a new outburst of murmuring among His hearers. "They strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"[2] Jesus had not yet said that His flesh must be eaten, but they took for granted that such was His meaning. They were right; and accordingly He went on to say, with the greatest solemnity and emphasis, that they must even eat His flesh and drink His blood. Unless they did that, they should have no life in

[1] John vi. 51. The words in the original, represented by those within brackets, are of doubtful authority; but the sense is the same whether they be erased or retained. The first δώσω contains the idea.

[2] John vi. 52.

them; if they did that, they should have life in all its fulness—life eternal both in body and in soul. For His flesh was the true food, and His blood was the true drink. They who partook of these would share in His own life. He should dwell in them, incorporated with their very being; and they should dwell in Him as the ground of their being. They should live as secure against death by Him, as He lived from everlasting to everlasting by the Father. "This, therefore," said the speaker, reverting in conclusion to the proposition with which He started, "this (even my flesh) is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."[1]

A third expression of disapprobation ensuing, led Jesus to put the copestone on His high doctrine of the bread of life, by making a concluding declaration, which must have appeared at the time the most mysterious and unintelligible of all: that the bread which descended from heaven must ascend up thither again, in order to be to the full extent the bread of everlasting life. Doth this offend you? asked He at His hearers: this which I have just said about your eating my flesh and blood; what will ye say "if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?"[2] The question was in effect an affirmation, and it was also a prophetic hint, that only after He had left the world would He become on an extensive scale and conspicuously a source of life to men; because then the manna of grace would begin to descend not only on the wilderness of Israel, but on all the barren places of the earth; and the truth in Him, the doctrine of His life, death, and resurrection, would become meat indeed and drink indeed unto a multitude, not of murmuring hearers, but of devout, enlightened, thankful believers; and no one would need any longer to ask for a sign, when he could find in the Christian church, continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread and in prayers,

[1] John vi. 53–58. In ver. 55 the reading vibrates between ἀληθῶς and ἀληθής. Ver. 57, διὰ τὸν πατέρα means literally "on account of," but "by" gives the practical sense. So with δι' ἐμέ.

[2] John vi. 61, 62.

the best evidence that He had spoken truth who said, "I am the bread of life."

2. This, then, is the heavenly bread: even the God-man incarnate, crucified, and glorified. Let us now consider more attentively the marvellous virtue of this bread. It is the bread of *life*. It is the office of all bread to sustain life, but it is the peculiarity of this divine bread to give eternal life. "He that cometh to me," said the speaker, "shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."[1] With reference to this life-giving power, He called the bread of which He spake "living bread," and meat indeed, and declared that he who ate thereof should not die, but should live for ever.[2]

In commending this miraculous bread to His hearers, Jesus, we observe, laid special stress on its power to give eternal life even to the body of man. Four times over He declared in express terms, that all who partook of this bread of life should be raised again at the last day.[3] The prominence thus given to the resurrection of the body is due in part to the fact, that throughout His discourse Jesus was drawing a contrast between the manna which fed the Israelites in the desert, and the true bread of which it was the type. The contrast was most striking just at this point. The manna was merely a substitute for ordinary food; it had no power to ward off death: the generation which had been so miraculously supported passed away from the earth, like all other generations of mankind. Therefore, argued Jesus, it could not be the true bread from heaven; for the true bread must be capable of destroying death, and endowing the recipients with the power of an endless existence. A man who eats thereof must not die; or dying, must rise again. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die."[4]

But the prominence given to the resurrection of the body is due mainly to its intrinsic importance. For if the dead rise not, then is our faith vain; and the bread of life degenerates into a mere quack nostrum, pretending to virtues which

[1] John vi. 35.
[2] John vi. 51, 55, 50.
[3] John vi. 39, 40, 44, 54.
[4] John vi. 49, 50.

it does not possess. True, it may still give spiritual life to those who eat thereof, but what is that without the hope of a life hereafter? Not much, according to Paul, who says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."[1] Many, indeed, in our day do not concur in the apostle's judgment. They think that the doctrine of the life everlasting may be left out of the creed, without loss, nay, even with positive advantage, to the Christian faith. The life of a Christian seems to them so much nobler when all thought of future reward or punishment is dismissed from the mind. How grand, to pass through the wilderness of this world feeding on the manna supplied in the high, pure teaching of Jesus, without caring whether there be a land of Canaan on the other side of Jordan! Very sublime indeed! but why, in that case, come into the wilderness at all? why not remain in Egypt, feeding on more substantial and palatable viands? The children of Israel would not have left the house of bondage unless they had hoped to reach the promised land. An immortal hope is equally necessary to the Christian. He must believe in a world to come, in order to live above the present evil world. If Christ cannot redeem the body from the power of the grave, then it is in vain that He promises to redeem us from guilt and sin. The bread of life is unworthy of the name, unless it hath power to cope with physical as well as with moral corruption.

Hence the prominence given by Jesus in this discourse to the resurrection of the body. He knew that here lay the crucial experiment by which the value and virtue of the bread He offered to His hearers must be tested. "You call this bread the bread of life, in contrast to the manna of ancient times:—do you mean to say that, like the tree of life in the garden of Eden, it will confer on those who eat thereof the gift of a blessed immortality?" "Yes, I do," replied the Preacher in effect to this imaginary question: "this bread I offer you will not merely quicken the soul to a higher, purer life; it will even revivify your bodies, and make the corruptible put on incorruption, and the mortal put on immortality."

3. And how, then, is this wondrous bread to be appro-

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 19.

priated, that one may experience its vitalizing influences? Bread of course is eaten, but what does eating in this case mean? It means, in one word, *faith*. "He that *cometh* to me shall never hunger, and he that *believeth* in me shall never thirst."[1] Eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood, and we may add, drinking the water of which He spake to the woman by the well, all signify believing in Him as He is offered to men in the gospel: the Son of God manifested in the flesh, crucified, raised from the dead, ascended into glory; the Prophet, the Priest, the King, and the Mediator between God and man. Throughout the Capernaum discourse, eating and believing are used interchangeably as equivalents. Thus, in one sentence, we find Jesus saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that *believeth* on me hath everlasting life: I am that bread of life;"[2] and shortly after remarking, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man *eat* of this bread, he shall live for ever."[3] If any further argument were necessary to justify the identifying of eating with believing, it might be found in the instruction given by the Preacher to His hearers before He began to speak of the bread of life: "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."[4] That sentence furnishes the key to the interpretation of the whole subsequent discourse. "Believe," said Jesus, with reference to the foregoing inquiry, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?—"Believe, and thou hast done God's work." "Believe," we may understand Him as saying with reference to an inquiry, How shall we eat this bread of life?—"Believe, and thou hast eaten."

Believe, and thou hast eaten: such was the formula in which Augustine expressed his view of Christ's meaning in the Capernaum discourse.[5] The saying is not only terse, but true, in our judgment; but it has not been accepted by all interpreters. Many hold that eating and faith are something distinct, and would express the relation between them thus: Believe, and thou shalt eat. Even Calvin objected to the Augustinian formula. Distinguishing his own views from those held by the followers of Zwingle, he says: "To them to

[1] John vi. 35. [2] Vers. 47, 48. [3] Ver. 51. [4] Ver. 29.
[5] Crede et manducasti.

eat is simply to believe. I say that Christ's flesh is eaten in believing, because it is made ours by faith, and that that eating is the fruit and effect of faith. Or more clearly: To them eating is faith, to me it seems rather to follow from faith."[1]

The distinction taken by Calvin between eating and believing seems to have been verbal rather than real. With many other theologians, however, it is far otherwise. All upholders of the magical doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation contend for the literal interpretation of the Capernaum discourse even in its strongest statements. Eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood are, for such, acts of the mouth, *accompanied* perhaps with acts of faith, but not *merely* acts of faith. It is assumed for the most part as a matter of course, that the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel has reference to the sacrament of the Supper, and that only on the hypothesis of such a reference can the peculiar phraseology of the discourse be explained. Christ spoke then of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, so we are given to understand, because He had in His mind that mystic rite ere long to be instituted, in which bread and wine should not merely represent, but become, the constituent elements of His crucified body.

While the sermon on the bread of life continues to be mixed up with sacramentarian controversies, agreement in its interpretation is altogether hopeless. Meantime, till a better day dawn on the divided and distracted church, every man must endeavour to be fully persuaded in his own mind. Three things are clear to our mind. First, it is incorrect to say that the sermon delivered in Capernaum synagogue refers to the sacrament of the Supper. The true state of the case is, that both refer to a third thing, viz. the death of Christ, and both declare, in different ways, the same thing concerning it. The sermon says in symbolic words what the Supper says in a symbolic act: that Christ crucified is the life of men, the world's hope of salvation. The sermon says more than this, for it speaks of Christ's ascension as well as of His death; but it says this for one thing.

[1] Calv. *Institutio* IV. xvii. 5.

A second point on which we are clear is, that it is quite unnecessary to assume a mental reference by anticipation to the Holy Supper, in order to account for the peculiarity of Christ's language in this famous discourse. As we saw at the beginning, the whole discourse rose naturally out of the present situation. The mention by the people of the manna naturally led Jesus to speak of the bread of life; and from the bread He passed on as naturally to speak of the flesh and the blood, because He could not really be bread until He had become flesh and blood dissevered, *i.e.* until He had endured death. All that we find here might have been said, in fact, although the sacrament of the Supper had never existed.

The third truth which shines clear as a star to our eye is,—that through faith alone we may attain all the blessings of salvation. Sacraments are very useful, but they are not necessary. If it had pleased Christ not to institute them, we could have got to heaven notwithstanding. Because He has instituted them, it is our duty to celebrate them, and we may expect benefit from their celebration. But the benefit we receive is simply an aid to faith, and nothing which cannot be received by *faith*. Christians eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man at all times, not merely at communion times, simply by believing in Him. They eat His flesh and drink His blood at His table in the same sense as at other times; only perchance in a livelier manner, their hearts being stirred up to devotion by remembrance of His dying love, and their faith aided by seeing, handling, and tasting the bread and the wine.

Section iv.—*The Sifting.*

John vi. 66–71.

The sermon on the bread of life produced decisive effects. It converted popular enthusiasm for Jesus into disgust; like a fan, it separated true from false disciples; and like a winnowing breeze, it blew the chaff away, leaving a small residuum of wheat behind. "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

This result did not take Jesus by surprise. He expected it; in a sense He wished it, though He was deeply grieved by it. For while His large, loving human heart yearned for the salvation of all, and desired that all should come and get life, He wanted none to come to Him under misapprehension, or to follow Him from by-ends. He sought disciples God-given,[1] God-drawn,[2] God-taught,[3] knowing that such alone would continue in His word.[4] He was aware that in the large mass of people who had recently followed Him were many disciples of quite another description; and He was not unwilling that the mixed multitude should be sifted. Therefore He preached that mystic discourse, fitted to be a savour of life or of death according to the spiritual state of the hearer. Therefore, also, when offence was taken at the doctrine taught, He plainly declared the true cause,[5] and expressed His assurance that only those whom His Father taught and drew would or could really come unto Him.[6] These things He said not with a view to irritate, but He deemed it right to say them though they should give rise to irritation; reckoning that true believers would take all in good part, and that those who took umbrage would thereby reveal their true character.

The apostatizing disciples doubtless thought themselves fully justified in withdrawing from the society of Jesus. They turned their back on Him, we fancy, in most virtuous indignation, saying in their hearts, nay, probably saying aloud to one another: "Who ever heard the like of that? how absurd! how revolting! The man who can speak thus is either a fool, or is trying to make fools of his hearers." And yet the hardness of His doctrine was not the real reason which led so many to forsake Him; it was simply the pretext, the most plausible and respectable reason that they could assign for conduct springing from other motives. The grand offence of Jesus was this: He was not the man they had taken Him for; He was not going to be at their service to promote the ends they had in view. Whatever He meant by the bread of life, or by eating His flesh, it was plain that He was not going to be a bread-king, making it His business to furnish supplies

[1] John vi. 37. [2] John vi. 44. [3] John vi. 45.
[4] John viii. 31. [5] John vi. 36, 37. [6] John vi. 44.

for their physical appetites, ushering in a golden age of idleness and plenty. That ascertained, it was all over with Him so far as they were concerned: He might offer His heavenly food to whom He pleased; they wanted none of it.

Deeply affected by the melancholy sight of so many human beings deliberately preferring material good to eternal life, Jesus turned to the twelve, and said, "Will ye also go away?" or more exactly, "You do not wish to go away too, do you?"[1] The question may be understood as a virtual expression of confidence in the persons to whom it was addressed, and as an appeal to them for sympathy at a discouraging crisis. And yet, while a negative answer was expected to the question, it was not expected as a matter of course. Jesus was not without solicitude concerning the fidelity even of the twelve. He interrogated them, as conscious that they were placed in trying circumstances, and that if they did not actually forsake Him now, as at the great final crisis, they were at least *tempted* to be offended in Him.

A little reflection suffices to satisfy us that the twelve were indeed placed in a position at this time calculated to try their faith most severely. For one thing, the mere fact of their Master being deserted wholesale by the crowd of *quondam* admirers and followers, involved for the chosen band a temptation to apostasy. How mighty is the power of sympathy! how ready are we all to follow the multitude, regardless of the way they are going! and how much moral courage it requires to stand alone! How difficult to witness the spectacle of thousands, or even hundreds, going off in sullen disaffection, without feeling an impulse to imitate their bad example! how hard to keep oneself from being carried along with the powerful tide of adverse popular opinion! Especially hard it must have been for the twelve to resist the tendency to apostatize, if, as is more than probable, they sympathized with the project entertained by the multitude when their enthusiasm for Jesus was at full-tide. If it would have gratified them to have seen their beloved Master made king by popular acclamation, how their spirits must have

[1] John vi. 67. The particle μή implies that a negative answer is looked for. See Winer, *Neutest. Grammatik*, § 57; Moulton's Translation, p. 641.

sunk when the bubble burst, and the would-be subjects of the Messianic Prince were dispersed like an idle mob, and the kingdom which had seemed so near vanished like a cloud-land!

Another circumstance trying to the faith of the twelve, was the strange, mysterious character of their Master's discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum. That discourse contained hard, repulsive, unintelligible sayings for them quite as much as for the rest of the audience. Of this we can have no doubt, when we consider the repugnance with which some time afterward they received the announcement that Jesus was destined to be put to death.[1] If they objected even to the fact of His death, how could they understand its meaning, especially when both fact and meaning were spoken of in such a veiled and mystic style as that which pervades the sermon on the bread of life? While, therefore, they believed that their Master had the words of eternal life, and perceived that His late discourse bore on that high theme, it may be regarded as certain that the twelve did not understand the words spoken any more than the multitude, however much they might try to do so. They knew not what connection existed between Christ's flesh and eternal life, how eating that flesh could confer any benefit, or even what eating it might mean. They had quite lost sight of the Speaker in His eagle flight of thought; and they must have looked on in distress as the people melted away, painfully conscious that they could not altogether blame them.

Yet, however greatly tempted to forsake their Master, the twelve did abide faithfully by His side. They did come safely through the spiritual storm. What was the secret of their stedfastness? what were the anchors that preserved them from shipwreck? These questions are of practical interest to all who, like the apostles at this crisis, are tempted to apostasy by evil example or by religious doubt; by the fashion of the world they live in, whether scientific or illiterate, refined or rustic; or by the deep things of God, whether these be the mysteries of providence, the mysteries of revelation, or the mysteries of religious experience: we may say, indeed, to all

[1] Matt. xvi. 22.

genuine Christians, for what Christian has not been tempted in one or other of these ways at some period in his history ?

Sufficient materials for answering these questions are supplied in the words of Simon Peter's response to Jesus. As spokesman for the whole company, that disciple promptly said : " Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and know that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God;"[1] or, according to the reading preferred by most critics, " that Thou art the Holy One of God." [2]

Three anchors, we infer from these words, helped the twelve to ride out the storm : Religious earnestness or sincerity ; a clear perception of the alternatives before them ; and implicit confidence in the character, and attachment to the person of their Master.

1. The twelve, as a body, were sincere and thoroughly in earnest in religion. Their supreme desire was to know " the words of eternal life," and actually to gain possession of that life. Their concern was not about the meat that perisheth, but about the higher heavenly food of the soul, which Christ had in vain exhorted the majority of His hearers to labour for. As yet they knew not clearly wherein that food consisted, but according to their light they sincerely prayed, " Lord, evermore give us *this* bread." Hence it was no disappointment to them that Jesus declined to become a purveyor of mere material food: they had never expected or wished Him to do so ; they had joined His company with entirely different expectations. A certain element of error might be mingled with truth in their conceptions of His Mission, but the gross carnal hopes of the multitude had no place in their breasts. They became not disciples to better their worldly circumstances, but to obtain a portion which the world could neither give them nor take from them.

What we have now stated was true of all the twelve save *one ;* and the crisis we are at present considering is memorable

[1] John vi. 68, 69.

[2] See Alford, *in loc.* The confession of Christ's holiness was appropriate, as meeting an implied charge of having uttered language shocking to the moral feelings.

for this, among other things, that it was the first occasion on which Jesus gave a hint that there was a false disciple among the men whom He had chosen. To justify Himself for asking a question which seemed to cast a doubt upon their fidelity, he replied to Peter's protestation by the startling remark : " Have not I chosen you the twelve, and one of you is a devil ?"[1] as if to say : " It is painful to me to have to use this language of suspicion, but I have good cause : there is one among you who has had *thoughts* of desertion, and who is capable even of treachery." With what sadness of spirit must He have made such an intimation at this crisis ! To be forsaken by the fickle crowd of shallow, thoughtless followers had been a small matter, could He have reckoned all the members of the select band good men and true friends. But to have an enemy in one's own house, a *diabolus* capable of playing Satan's part in one's small circle of intimate companions :—it was hard indeed !

But how could a man destined to be a traitor, and deserving to be stigmatized as a devil, manage to pass creditably through the present crisis ? Does not the fact seem to imply that, after all, it is possible to be stedfast without being single-minded ? Not so ; the only legitimate inference is, that the crisis was not searching enough to bring out the true character of Judas. Wait till you see the end. A little religion will carry a man through many trials, but there is an *experimentum crucis* which nothing but sincerity can stand. If the mind be double, or the heart divided, a time comes that compels men to act according to the motives that are deepest and strongest in them. This remark applies especially to creative, revolutionary, or transition epochs. In quiet times a hypocrite may pass respectably through this world, and never be detected till he get to the next, whither his sins follow him to judgment. But in critical eras the sins of the double-minded find them out in this life. True, even then some double-minded men can stand more temptation than others, and are not to be bought so cheaply as the common herd. But all of them have their price, and those who fall less easily than others fall in the end most deeply and tragically.

[1] John vi. 70.

Of the character and fall of Judas we shall have another opportunity to speak. Our present object is simply to point out that from such as he Jesus did not expect constancy. By referring to that disciple as He did, He intimated His conviction that no one in whom the love of God and truth was not the deepest principle of his being would continue faithful to the end. In effect He inculcated the necessity, in order to stedfastness in faith, of moral integrity, or godly sincerity.

2. The second anchor by which the disciples were kept from shipwreck at this season was a clear perception of the alternatives. "To whom shall we go?" asked Peter, as one who saw that, for men having in view the aim pursued by himself and his brethren, there was no course open but to remain where they were. He had gone over rapidly in his mind all the possible alternatives, and this was the conclusion at which he had arrived. "To whom *shall* we go—we who seek eternal life? John, our former master, is dead; and even were he alive, he would send us back to Thee. Or shall we go to the scribes and Pharisees? We have been too long with Thee for that; for Thou hast taught us the superficiality, the hypocrisy, the ostentatiousness, the essential ungodliness of their religious system. Or shall we follow the fickle multitude there, and relapse into stupidity and indifference? It is not to be thought of. Or, finally, shall we go to the Sadducees, the idolaters of the material and the temporal, who say there is no resurrection, neither any angels or spirits? God forbid! That were to renounce a hope dearer than life, without which life to an earnest mind were a riddle, a contradiction, and an intolerable burden."

All tempted to apostatize will find it profitable in like manner to realize the alternatives. Has any one, *e.g.*, been disappointed in his religious experience: all things turning out so differently to what he had expected when he began his spiritual career; sanctification a slow, irksome process; the word of God, at first sweet in the mouth, turned to bitterness in the inward parts; the bright bloom of piety replaced by green, unpalatable fruit, more like the work of Satan than of the Holy Spirit? 'Tis hard enough to bear, but consider if it were not still harder to return to folly! Or take a case

analogous to that of the twelve, and fitted to illustrate their position,—that of one tempted by dogmatic difficulties to renounce Christianity. It will make such an one pause when he understands that the alternatives open to him are to abide with Christ, or to become an atheist, ignoring God and the world to come ; that when he leaves Christ, he must go to school to Hume, Voltaire, Comte, Strauss, Renan, or some other of the great masters of thoroughgoing unbelief. In the works of a well-known German author is a dream, which portrays with appalling vividness the consequences that would ensue throughout the universe should the Creator cease to exist. The dream was invented, so the gifted writer tells us, for the purpose of frightening those who discussed the being of God as coolly as if the question respected the existence of the Kraken or the unicorn, and also to check all atheistic thoughts which might arise in his own bosom. " If ever," he says, " my heart should be so unhappy and deadened as to have all those feelings which affirm the being of a God destroyed, I would use this dream to frighten myself, and so heal my heart, and restore its lost feelings." [1] Such benefit as Richter expected from the perusal of his own dream, would any one, tempted to renounce Christianity, derive from a clear perception that in ceasing to be a Christian he must make up his mind to accept a creed which acknowledges no God, no soul, no hereafter.

That these really are the alternatives before us, there can be no doubt.[2] We do not assert that a belief in a Deity, in the existence of spirit, and in a future world, cannot be entertained, except by those who hold the catholic faith concerning Jesus. There is such a thing as Deism, which accepts the moral teaching of Christianity, and its general doctrine about God and the future life, yet rejects all the supernatural facts and mysterious truths of our holy faith. We assert, nevertheless, that the ultimate terminus of unbelief in Christ as the Son of God, born, crucified, and risen in the flesh, is atheism. All paths of thought leading away from the catholic faith tend thither as their goal, the intermediate stages occupied by Deists and Socinians being merely temporary halting-places in a

[1] Jean Paul Richter, *Siebenkäs*, Kap. viii. Erstes Blumenstück.

[2] See Isaac Taylor's *Restoration of Belief*, p. 248.

mental pilgrimage towards the apostles' creed, or towards the dismal creed of the secularists and the Positive philosophers. Christianity pure and undiluted, and sheer atheism, are the two great rival creeds presently contending for sovereignty over the human mind, at least in the nominally Christian world; and sooner or later all intermediate parties must join one side or the other. Logic, like a stern policeman, says to them, "Move on." The argument used by the midway men, the advocates of "Christianity independent of dogma," against the catholic faith, may be used with equal power against themselves. They complain of the mysteriousness of our supernatural dogmas and miraculous facts, and desiderate a rational religion, unencumbered with supernaturalism and miracle. But they forget that the very being of a God is a supernatural dogma; and that the Socinian Christ, a Perfect Man, is a supernatural or miraculous fact, more difficult to believe in even than the Christ of the catholic faith, whose sinlessness is explained by the presence of a divine nature, while the sinlessness of the Socinian Christ has neither an efficient nor a final cause of existence.

Those who turn their backs on the eternal Son, must understand, then, that they are on their way to a creed which denies an eternal Father, and puts in His place an unconscious, impersonal soul of nature, a dead central force, of which all the forces in the universe are manifestations, or an unknown, unknowable Cause, remaining to be postulated after the series of physical causes has been traced as far back as science can go; and which robs mortal man of the hope that the seed sown in the churchyard shall one day be reaped in the harvest of the resurrection. Many are unwilling to believe this. Deceived by the consciousness of their own spirituality, they flatter themselves that Christianity is independent of the creed, and would continue to exist though the latter were discarded. But this is a hallucination. As well might you imagine that daylight is independent of the sun, because the atmosphere continues to be illuminated for a time after the sun has set. Your so-called Christianity independent of dogmas is but the evening twilight of faith, the light which lingers in the spiritual atmosphere after the sun of truth has gone down. For

a space it may seem as clear as the light of day, but ere long it must fade into darkness.

3. The third anchor whereby the twelve were enabled to ride out the storm, was confidence in the character of their Master. They believed, yea, they knew, that He was the Holy One of God. They had been with Jesus long enough to have come to very decided conclusions respecting Him. They had seen Him work many miracles ; they had heard Him discourse with marvellous wisdom, in parable and sermon, on the divine kingdom ; they had observed His wondrously tender, gracious concern for the low and the lost ; they had been present at His various encounters with Pharisees, and had noted His holy abhorrence of their falsehood, pride, vanity, and tyranny. All this blessed fellowship had begotten a confidence in, and reverence for, their beloved Master, too strong to be shaken by a single address, containing some statements of an incomprehensible character couched in questionable or even offensive language. Their intellect might be perplexed, but their heart remained true ; and hence, while others who knew not Jesus well went off in disgust, they continued by His side, feeling that such a friend and guide was not to be parted with for a trifle.

" We believe and know," said Peter. They believed because they knew. Such implicit confidence as the twelve had in Jesus is possible only through intimate knowledge ; for one cannot thus trust a stranger. All, therefore, who desire to get the benefit of this trust, must be willing to spend time and take trouble to get into the heart of the Gospel story, and of its great subject. The sure anchorage is not attainable by a listless, random reading of the evangelic narratives, but by a close, careful, prayerful study, pursued it may be for years. Those who grudge the trouble are in imminent danger of the fate which befell the ignorant multitude, being liable to be thrown into panic by every new infidel book, or to be scandalized by every strange utterance of the Object of faith.

Does any one ask : Is Jesus Christ worthy to be the subject of such careful inquiry, or the object of such implicit confidence as the twelve reposed in Him ? We shall leave the prophets of unbelief to reply. Our modern Balaams all confess that Jesus is well worth knowing and loving : that He is at

least the holiest of men, if not the absolutely Holy One. They cannot curse Him, though logic and philosophy require this service at their hands. They are constrained to bless the man of Nazareth. They are spell-bound by the Star of Bethlehem, as was the Eastern soothsayer by the star of Jacob, and are forced to say in effect: "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it."[1]

Jesus Christ, who is thus supremely worth knowing, His enemies themselves being judges, can even at this date be intimately known. And intimate knowledge of Him, being attainable, should be sought by all. It is a precious possession. Not to speak of its uses for eternity, or of the deep well of joy that it causes to spring up in the heart of the confirmed believer even in this life, think only of the aid it affords in the day of trial, when the mind is clouded with doubt, and the doctrines seem unintelligible and irrational, and long-cherished convictions are rudely shaken! Possessing such knowledge of Christ as Peter and his brethren had by this time attained, a Christian in darkness is able to wait for the dawn, and to eschew the mistake of those who kindle fires of unbelief, superstition, and immorality in the night, seeking in their short-lived glare a transient comfort, destined to end in a deeper darkness. Knowing Christ as Peter knew Him, one can take things on His word, even when they exceed comprehension, and follow Him along untrodden, unexplored paths. Those who do this have their reward. The storm-tossed disciple at length reaches the harbour of a creed which is no miserable compromise between infidelity and scriptural Christianity, but embraces all the cardinal facts and truths of the faith, as taught by Jesus in the Capernaum discourse, and as afterwards taught by the men who passed safely through the Capernaum crisis.

May God in His mercy guide all souls now out in the tempestuous sea of doubt into that haven of rest!

[1] Num. xxiii. 8, 20.

CHAPTER X.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES.

MATT. XVI. 1–12 ; MARK VIII. 10–21.

THIS new collision between Jesus and His opponents took place shortly after a second miracle of feeding similar to that performed in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida Julias. What interval of time elapsed between the two miracles cannot be ascertained ;[1] but it was long enough to admit of an extended journey on the part of our Lord and His disciples to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the scene of the pathetic meeting with the Syrophenician woman, and round from thence through the region of the ten cities, on the eastern border of the Galilean Lake. It was long enough also to allow the cause and the fame of Jesus to recover from the low state to which they sank after the sifting sermon in the synagogue of Capernaum. The unpopular One had again become popular, so that on arriving at the south-eastern shore of the lake He found Himself attended by thousands, so intent on hearing Him preach, and experiencing His healing power, that they remained with Him three days, almost, if not entirely, without food, thus creating a necessity for the second miraculous repast.

After the miracle on the south-eastern shore, Jesus, we read, sent away the multitude ; and taking ship, came into the coasts of Magdala, on the western side of the sea.[2] It was on His arrival there that He encountered the party who came seeking of Him a sign from heaven. These persons had

[1] The chronological relation of the events recorded in Matt. xv. and xvi. to the feast of tabernacles spoken of in John vii. is an important question. It is one, however, on which the learned differ, and certainty is unattainable.

[2] Matt. xv. 39.

probably heard of the recent miracle, as of many others wrought by Him; but, unwilling to accept the conclusion to which these wondrous works plainly led, they affected to regard them as insufficient evidence of His Messiahship, and demanded still more unequivocal proof before giving in their adherence to His claim. "Show us a sign from heaven," said they; meaning thereby, something like the manna brought down from heaven by Moses, or the fire called down by Elijah, or the thunder and rain called down by Samuel;[1] it being assumed that such signs could be wrought only by the power of God, whilst the signs on earth, such as Jesus supplied in His miracles of healing, might be wrought by the power of the devil![2] It was a demand of a sort often addressed to Jesus in good faith or in bad;[3] for the Jews sought after such signs—miracles of a singular and startling character, fitted to gratify a superstitious curiosity, and astonish a wonder-loving mind—miracles that were merely signs, serving no other purpose than to display divine power; like the rod of Moses, converted into a serpent, and reconverted into its original form.

These demands of the sign-seekers Jesus uniformly met with a direct refusal. He would not condescend to work miracles of any description merely as certificates of His own Messiahship, or to furnish food for a superstitious appetite, or materials of amusement to sceptics. He knew that such as remained unbelievers in presence of His ordinary miracles, which were not naked signs, but also works of beneficence, could not be brought to faith by any means; nay, that the more evidence they got, the more hardened they should become in unbelief. He regarded the very demand for these signs as the indication of a fixed determination not to believe in Him, even if, in order to rid themselves of the disagreeable obligation, it should be necessary to put Him to death. Therefore, in refusing the signs sought after, He was wont to accompany the refusal with a word of rebuke or of sad foreboding; as when He said, at a very early period of His

[1] See Alford. Stier refers to the apocryphal books to explain the nature of the signs demanded.

[2] Matt. xii. 24 et par.

[3] John ii. 18, vi. 30; Matt. xii. 38.

ministry, on His first visit to Jerusalem, after His baptism: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."[1]

On the present occasion the soul of Jesus was much perturbed by the renewed demands of the sign-seekers. "He sighed deeply in His spirit," knowing full well what these demands meant, with respect both to those who made them and to Himself; and He addressed the parties who came tempting Him in excessively severe and bitter terms,—reproaching them with spiritual blindness, calling them a wicked and adulterous generation, and ironically referring them now, as He had once done before,[2] to the sign of the prophet Jonas. He told them, that while they knew the weather signs, and understood what a red sky in the morning or evening meant, they were blind to the manifest signs of the times, which showed at once that the Sun of righteousness had arisen, and that a dreadful storm of judgment was coming on apostate Israel for her iniquity. He applied to them, and the whole generation they represented, the epithet "wicked," to characterize their false-hearted, malevolent, and spiteful behaviour towards Himself; and He employed the term "adulterous," to describe them, in relation to God, as guilty of breaking their marriage covenant, pretending great love and zeal with their lip, but in their heart and life turning away from the living God to idols—forms, ceremonies, signs. He gave them the story of Jonah the prophet for a sign, in mystic allusion to His death; meaning to say, that one of the most reliable evidences that He was God's servant indeed, was just the fact that He was rejected, and ignominiously and barbarously treated by such as those to whom He spake: that there could be no worse sign of a man than to be well received by them—that he could be no true Christ who was so received.

Having thus freely uttered His mind, Jesus left the sign-seekers; and entering into the ship in which He had just crossed from the other side, departed again to the same eastern shore, anxious to be rid of their unwelcome presence. On arriving at the land, He made the encounter which had just taken place the subject of instruction to the twelve. "Take

[1] John ii. 19. [2] Matt. xii. 40.

heed," He said as they walked along the way, "and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The word was spoken abruptly, as the utterance of one waking out of a reverie. Jesus, we imagine, had been brooding over what had occurred, while His disciples rowed Him across the lake, sadly musing on prevailing unbelief, and the dark, lowering weather-signs, portentous of evil to Him and to the whole Jewish people. And now, recollecting the presence of the disciples, He communicates His thoughts to them in the form of a warning, and cautions them against the deadly influences of an evil time, as a parent might bid his child beware of a poisonous plant whose garish flowers attracted its eye.

In this warning, it will be observed, pharisaic and sadducaic tendencies are identified. Jesus speaks not of two leavens, but of one common to both sects, as if they were two species of one genus, two branches from one stem. And such indeed they were. Superficially, the two parties were very diverse. The one was excessively zealous, the other was "moderate" in religion; the one was strict, the other easy in morals; the one was exclusively and intensely Jewish in feeling, the other was open to the influence of pagan civilisation. Each party had a leaven peculiar to itself: that of the Pharisees being, as Christ was wont to declare, hypocrisy;[1] that of the Sadducees, an engrossing interest in merely material and temporal concerns, assuming in some a political form, as in the case of the partisans of the Herod family, called in the Gospel Herodians, in others wearing the guise of a philosophy which denied the existence of spirit and the reality of the future life, and made that denial an excuse for exclusive devotion to the interests of time. But here, as elsewhere, extremes met. Phariseeism, Sadduceeism, Herodianism, though distinguished by minor differences, were radically one. The religionists, the philosophers, the politicians, were all members of one great party, which was inveterately hostile to the divine kingdom. All alike were worldly-minded (of the Pharisees it is expressly remarked that they were covetous[2]); all were opposed to Christ for fundamentally the same reason, viz. because He was not of this world; all united fraternally at this time

[1] Luke xii. 1. [2] Luke xvi. 14.

in the attempt to vex Him by unbelieving, unreasonable demands;[1] and they all had a hand in His death at the last.

It thus appears that, to be a Christian, it is not enough to differ superficially from either Pharisees or Sadducees, but that it is necessary to differ radically from both. A weighty truth, not yet well understood: for it is fancied by many that orthodoxy and right living consist in going to the opposite extreme from any tendency whose evil influence is apparent. To avoid pharisaic strictness and superstition, grown odious, men run into sadducaic scepticism and licence; or, frightened by the excesses of infidelity and secularity, they seek salvation in ritualism, infallible churches, and the revival of mediæval monkery. Thus the two tendencies continue ever propagating each other on the principle of action and reaction; one generation or school going all lengths in one direction, and another making a point of being as unlike its predecessor or its neighbour as possible, and both being equally far from the truth.

What the common leaven of Phariseeism and Sadduceeism was, Jesus did not deem it necessary to state. He had already indicated its nature with sufficient plainness in His severe reply to the sign-seekers. The radical vice of both sects was just ungodliness: blindness, and deadness of heart to the divine. They did not know the true and the good when they saw it; and when they knew it, they did not love it. All around them were the evidences that the King and the kingdom of grace were among them; yet here were they asking for arbitrary outward signs that He who spake as never man spake, and worked wonders of mercy such as had never before been witnessed, was no impostor, but a man wise and good, a prophet, and the Son of God. Verily the natural man, religious or irreligious, is blind and dead! What these seekers after a sign needed was not a new sign, but a new heart; not mere evidence, but a spirit willing to obey the truth.

The spirit of unbelief which ruled in Jewish society Jesus described as a leaven, with special reference to its diffusiveness; and most fitly, for it passes from sire to son, from rich

[1] In Mark (viii. 15) the "leaven of Herod" is mentioned.

to poor, from learned to unlearned, till a whole generation has been vitiated by its malign influence. Such was the state of things in Israel as it came under His eye. Spiritual blindness and deadness, with the outward symptom of the inward malady—a constant craving for evidence—met Him on every side. The common people, the leaders of society, the religious, the sceptics, the courtiers, and the rustics, were all blind, and yet apparently most anxious to see; ever renewing the demand, "What sign showest thou, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work?"

Vexed an hour ago by the sinister movements of foes, Jesus next found new matter for annoyance in the stupidity of friends. The disciples utterly, even ludicrously, misunderstood the warning word addressed to them. In conversation by themselves, while their Master walked apart, they discussed the question, what the strange words, so abruptly and earnestly spoken, might mean; and they came to the sapient conclusion that they were intended to caution them against buying bread from parties belonging to either of the offensive sects. It was an absurd mistake, and yet, all things considered, it was not so very unnatural: for, in the first place, as already remarked, Jesus had introduced the subject very abruptly; and, secondly, some time had elapsed since the meeting with the seekers of a sign, during which no allusion seems to have been made to that matter. How were they to know that during all that time their Master's thoughts had been occupied with what took place on the western shore of the lake? In any case, such a supposition was not likely to occur to their mind; for the demand for a sign had not appeared to them an event of much consequence, and it was probably forgotten as soon as their backs were turned upon the men who made it. And then, finally, it so happened that, just before Jesus began to speak, they remembered that in the hurry of a sudden departure they had forgotten to provide themselves with a stock of provisions for the journey. That was what *they* were thinking about when *He* began to say, "Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The momentous circumstance that they had with them but one loaf was causing them so much concern, that when they heard the caution

against a particular kind of leaven, they jumped at once to the conclusion, "It is because we have no bread."

Yet the misunderstanding of the disciples, though simple and natural in its origin, was blameworthy. They could not have fallen into the mistake had the interest they took in spiritual and temporal things respectively been proportional to their relative importance. They had treated the incident on the other side of the lake too lightly, and they had treated their neglect to provide bread too gravely. They should have taken more to heart the ominous demand for a sign, and the solemn words spoken by their Master in reference thereto; and they should not have been troubled about the want of loaves in the company of Him who had twice miraculously fed the hungry multitude in the desert. Their thoughtlessness in one direction, and their over-thoughtfulness in another, showed that food and raiment occupied a larger place in their minds than the kingdom of God and its interests. Had they possessed more faith and more spirituality, they would not have exposed themselves to the reproachful question of their Master: "How is it that ye do not understand, that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?"[1]

The misunderstanding thus gently yet faithfully rebuked, serves to demonstrate how vain is all discourse concerning divine things to men whose minds are preoccupied with earthly cares. Such men have no ears for the lofty lessons of spiritual wisdom; they hear only words which convey not the ideas they were designed to express, but suggest thoughts of the most diverse nature. "Leaven" makes them think of loaves; and the mention of "synagogues, magistrates, and powers" brings up to their recollection legal disputes with kinsfolk concerning inheritances.[2] Verily, the cares of life are thorns which choke the word, and render the hearer unfruitful.

[1] Matt. xvi. 11. [2] Luke xii. 11–15.

CHAPTER XI.

CURRENT OPINION AND ETERNAL TRUTH.

MATT. XVI. 13–20 ; MARK VIII. 27–30 ; LUKE IX. 18–21.

FROM the eastern shore of the lake Jesus directed His course northwards along the banks of the Upper Jordan, passing Bethsaida Julias, where, as Mark informs us, He restored eyesight to a blind man. Pursuing his journey, He arrived at length in the neighbourhood of a town of some importance, beautifully situated near the springs of the Jordan, at the southern base of Mount Hermon. This was Cæsarea Philippi, formerly called Paneas, from the heathen god Pan, who was worshipped by the Syrian Greeks in the limestone cavern near by, in which Jordan's fountains bubble forth to light. Its present name was given to it by Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, in honour of Cæsar Augustus ; his own name being appended (Cæsarea *Philippi,* or Philip's Cæsarea), to distinguish it from the other town of the same name on the Mediterranean coast. The town so named could boast of a temple of white marble, built by Herod the Great to the first Roman Emperor, besides villas and palaces, built by Philip, Herod's son, in whose territories it lay, and who, as we have just stated, gave it its new name.

Away in that remote secluded region, Jesus occupied Himself for a season in secret prayer, and in confidential conversations with His disciples on topics of deepest interest. One of these conversations had reference to His own Person. He introduced the subject by asking the twelve the question, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am ?" This question He asked, not as one needing to be informed, still less from any morbid sensitiveness, such as vain men feel

respecting the opinions entertained of them by their fellow-creatures. He desired of His disciples a recital of current opinions, merely by way of preface to a profession of their own faith in the eternal truth concerning Himself. He deemed it good to draw forth from them such a profession at this time, because He was about to make communications to them on another subject, viz. His sufferings, which He knew would sorely try their faith. He wished them to be fairly committed to the doctrine of His *Messiahship* before proceeding to speak in plain terms on the unwelcome theme of His *death*.

From the reply of the disciples, it appears that their Master had been the subject of much talk among the people. This is only what we should have expected. Jesus was a very public and a very extraordinary person, and to be much talked about is one of the inevitable penalties of prominence. The merits and the claims of the Son of man were accordingly freely and widely canvassed in those days, with gravity or with levity, with prejudice or with candour, with decision or with indecision, intelligently or ignorantly, as is the way of men in all ages. As they mingled with the people, it was the lot of the twelve to hear many opinions concerning their Lord which never reached His ear: sometimes kind and favourable, making them glad; at other times unkind and unfavourable, making them sad.

The opinions prevalent among the masses concerning Jesus—for it was with reference to these that He interrogated His disciples[1]—seem to have been mainly favourable. All agreed in regarding Him as a prophet of the highest rank, differing only as to which of the great prophets of Israel He most nearly resembled or personated. Some said He was John the Baptist revived, others Elias, while others again identified Him with one or other of the great prophets, as Jeremiah. These opinions are explained in part by an expectation then commonly entertained, that the advent of the Messiah would be preceded by the return of one of the prophets by whom God had spoken to the fathers, partly by the perception of real or supposed resemblances between Jesus and this or that prophet; His tenderness reminding one hearer of the author of the Lamen-

[1] Luke ix. 18, *οἱ ὄχλοι*.

tations, His sternness in denouncing hypocrisy and tyranny reminding another of the prophet of fire, while perhaps His parabolic discourses led a third to think of Ezekiel or of Daniel.

When we reflect on the high veneration in which the ancient prophets were held, we cannot fail to see that these diverse opinions current among the Jewish people concerning Jesus imply a very high sense of His greatness and excellence. To us, who regard Him as the Sun, while the prophets were at best but lamps of greater or less brightness, such comparisons may well seem not only inadequate, but dishonouring. Yet we must not despise them, as the testimonies of open-minded but imperfectly informed contemporaries to the worth of Him whom we worship as the Lord. Taken separately, they show that in the judgment of candid observers Jesus was a man of surpassing greatness; taken together, they show the many-sidedness of His character, and its superiority to that of any one of the prophets; for He could not have reminded those who witnessed His works, and heard Him preach, of all the prophets in turn, unless He had comprehended them all in His one person. The very diversity of opinion respecting Him, therefore, showed that a greater than Elias, or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, or Daniel, had appeared.

These opinions, valuable still as testimonials to the excellence of Christ, must be admitted further to be indicative, so far, of good dispositions on the part of those who cherished and expressed them. At a time when those who deemed themselves in every respect immeasurably superior to the multitude could find no better names for the Son of man than Samaritan, devil, blasphemer, glutton and drunkard, companion of publicans and sinners, it was something considerable to believe that the calumniated One was a prophet as worthy of honour as any of those whose sepulchres the professors of piety carefully varnished, while depreciating, and even putting to death, their living successors. The multitude who held this opinion might come short of true discipleship; but they were at least far in advance of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came in tempting mood to ask a sign from heaven, and whom no sign, whether in heaven or in earth, would conciliate or convince.

How, then, did Jesus receive the report of His disciples? Was He satisfied with these favourable, and in the circumstances really gratifying, opinions current among the people? *He was not.* He was not content to be put on a level with even the greatest of the prophets. He did not indeed express any displeasure against those who assigned Him such a rank, and He may even have been pleased to hear that public opinion had advanced so far on the way to the true faith. Nevertheless He declined to accept the position accorded. The meek and lowly Son of man claimed to be something more than a great prophet. Therefore He turned to His chosen disciples, as to men from whom He expected a more satisfactory statement of the truth, and pointedly asked what they thought of Him. "But you—whom say ye that I am?"

In this case, as in many others, Simon son of Jonas answered for the company. His prompt, definite, memorable reply to his Master's question was this: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

With this view of His person Jesus *was* satisfied. He did not charge Peter with extravagance, in going so far beyond the opinion of the populace. On the contrary, He entirely approved of what the ardent disciple had said, and expressed His satisfaction in no cold or measured terms. Never, perhaps, did He speak in more animated language, or with greater appearance of deep emotion. He solemnly pronounced Peter "blessed" on account of his faith; He spake for the first time of a church which should be founded, professing Peter's faith as its creed; He promised that disciple great power in that church, as if grateful to him for being the first to put the momentous truth into words, and for uttering it so boldly amid prevailing unbelief, and crude, defective belief; and He expressed, in the strongest possible terms, His confidence that the church yet to be founded would stand to all ages proof against all the assaults of the powers of darkness.

Simon's confession, fairly interpreted, seems to contain these two propositions,—that Jesus was the *Messiah*, and that He was *divine*. "Thou art the Christ," said he in the first place, with conscious reference to the reported opinions of the people,

—"Thou art the Christ," and not merely a prophet come to prepare Christ's way. Then he added: "the Son of God," to explain what he understood by the term Christ. The Messiah looked for by the Jews in general was merely a man, though a very superior one, the ideal man endowed with extraordinary gifts. The Christ of Peter's creed was more than man—a superhuman, a divine being. This truth he sought to express in the second part of his confession. He called Jesus Son of God, with obvious reference to the name His Master had just given Himself—Son of man. "Thou," he meant to say, "art not only what Thou hast now called Thyself, and what, in lowliness of mind, Thou art wont to call Thyself—the Son of man; Thou art also Son of God, partaking of the divine nature not less really than of the human." Finally, he prefixed the epithet "living" to the divine name, to express his consciousness that he was making a very momentous declaration, and to give that declaration a solemn, deliberate character. It was as if he said: "I know it is no light matter to call any one, even Thee, Son of God, of the One living eternal Jehovah. But I shrink not from the assertion, however bold, startling, or even blasphemous it may seem. I cannot by any other expression do justice to all I know and feel concerning Thee, or convey the impression left on my mind by what I have witnessed during the time I have followed Thee as a disciple."

That the famous confession, uttered in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, really contains *in germ*[1] the doctrine of Christ's divinity, might be inferred from the simple fact that Jesus was satisfied with it; for He certainly claimed to be Son of God in a sense predicable of no mere man. But when we consider the peculiar terms in which He expressed Himself respecting Peter's faith, we are still further confirmed in this conclusion. "Flesh and blood," said He to the disciple, "hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." These words evidently imply that the person addressed had said something very extraordinary; something he could not have learned from the traditional established belief of his generation respecting Messiah; something new even for himself and his fellow-disciples, if not in words, at least in

[1] Of course all that was implied was not yet present to Peter's mind.

meaning,[1] to which he could not have attained by the unaided effort of his own mind. The confession is virtually represented as an inspiration, a revelation, a flash of light from heaven,—the utterance not of the rude fisherman, but of the Divine Spirit speaking, through his mouth, a truth hitherto hidden, and yet but dimly comprehended by him to whom it hath been revealed. All this agrees well with the supposition that the confession contains not merely an acknowledgment of the Messiahship of Jesus in the ordinary sense, but a proclamation of the true doctrine concerning Messiah's person—viz. that He was a divine being manifest in the flesh.

The remaining portion of our Lord's address to Simon shows that He assigned to the doctrine confessed by that disciple the place of fundamental importance in the Christian faith. The object of these remarkable statements[2] is not to assert the supremacy of Peter, as Romanists contend, but to declare the supremely important nature of the truth he has confessed. In spite of all difficulties of interpretation, this remains clear and certain to us. Who or what the "rock" is, we deem doubtful; it may be Peter, or it may be his confession: it is a point on which scholars equally sound in the faith, and equally innocent of all sympathy with Popish dogmas, are divided in opinion, and on which it would ill become us to dogmatize. Of this only we are sure, that not Peter's person, but Peter's faith, is the fundamental matter in Christ's mind. When He says to that disciple, "Thou art Petros," He means, "Thou art a man of rock, worthy of the name I gave thee by anticipation the first time I met thee, because thou hast at length got thy foot planted on the rock of the eternal truth." He speaks of the church that is to be, for the first time, in connection with Simon's confession, because that church is to consist of men adopting that confession as their own, and acknowledging Him to be the Christ, the Son of God.[3] He alludes to the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the same connection, because none but those who homologate the doctrine

[1] The words, with exception of the epithet "living," are found in John i. 49.

[2] Matt. xvi. 18, 19.

[3] This was the usual formula by which converts confessed their faith in the apostolic age.

first solemnly enunciated by Simon shall be admitted within its gates. He promises Peter the power of the keys, not because it is to belong to him alone, or to him more than others, but by way of honourable mention, in recompense for the joy he has given his Lord by the superior energy and decision of his faith. He is grateful to Peter, because he has believed most emphatically that He came out from God;[1] and He shows His gratitude by promising first to him individually a power which He afterwards conferred on all His chosen disciples.[2] Finally, if it be true that Peter is here called the rock on which the church shall be built, this is to be understood in the same way as the promise of the keys. Peter is called the foundation of the church only in the same sense as all the apostles are called the foundation by the Apostle Paul,[3] viz. as the first preachers of the true faith concerning Jesus as the Christ and Son of God; and if the man who *first* professed that faith be honoured by being called individually the rock, that only shows that the *faith*, and not the man, is after all the true foundation. That which makes Simon a *Petros*, a rock-like man, fit to build on, is the real *Petra* on which the Ecclesia is to be built.

After these remarks, we deem it superfluous to enter minutely into the question to what the term "rock" refers in the sentence, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." At the same time, we must say that it is by no means so clear to us that the rock must be Peter, and can be nothing else, as it is the fashion of modern commentators to assert. To the rendering, "Thou art Petros, a man of rock; and on *thee*, as on a rock, I will build my church," it is possible, as already admitted, to assign an intelligible scriptural meaning. But we confess our preference for the old Protestant interpretation, according to which our Lord's words to His disciple should be thus paraphrased: "Thou, Simon Barjonas, art Petros, a man of rock, worthy of thy name Peter, because thou hast made that bold, good confession; and on the truth thou hast now confessed, as on a rock, will I build my church; and so long as it abides on that foundation, it will stand firm and unassailable against all the powers of hell." So render-

[1] John xvi. 27. [2] Matt. xviii. 18; John xx. 23. [3] Eph. ii. 20.

ing, we make Jesus say not only what He really thought, but what was most worthy to be said. For divine truth is the sure foundation. Believers, even Peters, may fail, and prove anything but stable ; but truth is eternal, and faileth never.

We cannot pass from these memorable words of Christ, without adverting, with a certain solemn awe, to the strange fate which has befallen them in the history of the church. This text, in which the church's Lord declares that the powers of darkness shall not prevail against her, has been used by these powers as an instrument of assault, and with only too much success. What a gigantic system of spiritual despotism and blasphemous assumption has been built on these two sentences concerning the rock and the keys ! How nearly, by their aid, have men and devils turned the kingdom of God into a kingdom of Satan ! One is tempted to wish that Jesus, knowing beforehand what was to happen, had so framed His words as to obviate the mischief. But the wish were vain. No forms of expression, however carefully selected, could prevent human ignorance from falling into misconception, or hinder men who had a purpose to serve from finding in Scripture what suited that purpose. Nor can any Christian, on reflection, think it desirable that the Author of our faith had adopted a studied prudential style of speech, intended not so much to give faithful expression to the actual thoughts of His mind and feelings of His heart, as to avoid giving occasion of stumbling to honest stupidity, or an excuse for perversion to dishonest knavery. The spoken word in that case had been no longer a true reflection of the Word incarnate. All the poetry and passion and genuine human feeling, which form the charm of Christ's sayings, would have been lost, and nothing would have remained but prosaic platitudes, like those of the scribes and of theological pedants. No ; let us have the precious words of our Master in all their characteristic intensity and vehemence of unqualified assertion ; and if prosaic or disingenuous men will manufacture out of them incredible dogmas, let them answer for it. Why should the children be deprived of their bread, and only the dogs be cared for ?

And now, changing the scene from Cæsarea Philippi to Christendom, and the time from the first to the nineteenth

century, what do we find? The world still discussing the question, Who is this Son of man? and propounding the most diverse theories concerning Him. Of these theories we cannot now give the meagrest account; but we simply remark, that the view in favour with many is just that of the Jewish multitude, viz. that the Son of man is only a man, but a very good and very great man. This is now the opinion not of the populace, but of the philosophers, who will not allow Jesus to be more than man, but strenuously maintain that He is the best of men. It is well they go so far, though their position is by no means unassailable, inasmuch as, if Jesus be not more than man, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that He must be less than a good man. It is well that they are disposed to bless, whose speculative views, rigorously carried out, would require them to curse. Yet their view of the person of Christ, however complimentary, is manifestly one with which He Himself would not have been satisfied, judging from the incident at Cæsarea Philippi, which is no myth, but bears the unmistakeable stamp of genuine history. Were our Lord here on earth to-day, He would turn away from the philosophers, in quest of men who believe as Peter believed, and with somewhat of Peter's emphasis confess His divinity, not only on the authority of a venerable creed, but as taught by the Father in heaven. In such Christians alone, at once orthodox and original in their faith, would His heart find rest. In such Christians, let us add, as distinct not only from the philosophers, but from the traditionally orthodox, lies the strength of the church against her spiritual foes — superstition, unbelief, worldliness, Satanic malice. For it is not mere abstract orthodoxy expressed in confessions that is the source of security and stability. It is truth believed by living souls. Orthodoxy will not save the church any more than ecclesiastical dignitaries—priests, bishops, cardinals, popes. The temple which endures for ever is founded on Christ, the Rock of ages, and built up of "lively stones."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CROSS.

SECTION I.—*First Announcement of Christ's Death.*

MATT. XVI. 21–28 ; MARK VIII. 31–38 ; LUKE IX. 22–27.

NOT till an advanced period in His public ministry—not, in fact, till it was drawing to a close—did Jesus speak in plain, unmistakeable terms of His *death*. The solemn event was foreknown by Him from the first; and He betrayed His consciousness of what was awaiting Him by a variety of occasional allusions. These earlier utterances, however, were all couched in mystic language. They were of the nature of riddles, whose meaning became clear after the event, but which before, none could or at least did read. Jesus spake now of a temple, which, if destroyed, He should raise again in three days ;[1] at another time of a lifting up of the Son of man, like unto that of the brazen serpent in the wilderness ;[2] and on yet other occasions, of a sad separation of the bridegroom from the children of the bride-chamber,[3] of the giving of His flesh for the life of the world,[4] and of a sign like that of the prophet Jonas, which should be given in His own person to an evil and adulterous generation.[5]

At length, after the conversation in Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus changed His style of speaking on the subject of His sufferings ; substituting for dark, hidden allusions, plain, literal, matter-of-fact statements.[6] This change was naturally adapted to the altered circumstances in which He was placed. The signs of

[1] John ii. 19. [2] John iii. 14. [3] Matt. ix. 15.
[4] John vi. [5] Matt. xvi. 4.
[6] "He spake that saying openly" (παῤῥησίᾳ), Mark viii. 32.

the times were growing ominous; storm-clouds were gathering in the air; all things were beginning to point towards Calvary. His work in Galilee and the provinces was nearly done: it remained for Him to bear witness to the truth in and around the holy city; and from the present mood of the ecclesiastical authorities and the leaders of religious society, as manifested by captious question and unreasonable demand,[1] and a constant espionage on His movements, it was not difficult to foresee that it would not require many more offences, or much longer time, to ripen dislike and jealousy into murderous hatred. Such plain speaking, therefore, concerning what was soon to happen, was natural and seasonable. Jesus was now entering the valley of the shadow of death; and in so speaking, He was but adapting His talk to the situation.

Plain-speaking regarding His death was now not only natural on Christ's part, but at once necessary and safe in reference to His disciples. It was necessary, in order that they might be prepared for the approaching event, as far as that was possible in the case of men who, to the last, persisted in hoping that the issue would be different from what their Master anticipated. It was safe; for now the subject might be spoken of plainly without serious risk to their faith. Before the disciples were established in the doctrine of Christ's person, the doctrine of the cross might have scared them away altogether. Premature preaching of a Christ to be crucified might have made them unbelievers in the *fundamental* truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Therefore, in consideration of their weakness, Jesus maintained a certain reserve respecting His sufferings, till their faith in Him as the Christ should have become sufficiently rooted to stand the strain of the storm soon to be raised by a most unexpected, unwelcome, and incomprehensible announcement. Only after hearing Peter's confession was He satisfied that the strength necessary for enduring the trial had been attained.

Wherefore, "from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

[1] Matt. xv. 1 sqq., xvi. 1 sqq.

Every clause in this solemn announcement demands our reverent scrutiny.

Jesus showed unto His disciples:

1. "That He must go unto Jerusalem." Yes! there the tragedy must be enacted: that was the fitting scene for the stupendous events that were about to take place. It was dramatically proper that the Son of man should die in that holy, unholy city, which had earned a most unenviable notoriety as the murderess of the prophets, the stoner of them whom God sent unto her. "It cannot be"—it were incongruous—"that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."[1] It was due also to the dignity of Jesus, and to the design of His death, that He should suffer there. Not in an obscure corner or in an obscure way must He die, but in the most public place, and in a formal, judicial manner. He must be lifted up in view of the whole Jewish nation, so that all might see Him whom they had pierced, and by whose stripes also they might yet be healed. The "Lamb of God" must be slain in the place where all the legal sacrifices were offered.

2. "And suffer many things." Too many to enumerate, too painful to speak of in detail, and better passed over in silence for the present. The bare fact that their beloved Master was to be put to death, without any accompanying indignities, would be sufficiently dreadful to the disciples; and Jesus mercifully drew a veil over much that was present to His own thoughts. In a subsequent conversation on the same sad theme, when His passion was near at hand, He drew aside the veil a little, and showed them some of the "many things." But even then He was very sparing in His allusions, hinting only by a passing word that He should be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon.[2] He took no delight in expatiating on such harrowing scenes. He was willing to bear those indignities, but He cared not to speak of them more than was absolutely necessary.

3. Jesus next told His disciples that He should suffer those things "of the elders and chief priests and scribes." Not of them alone, for Gentile rulers and the people of Israel were to have a hand in evil-entreating the Son of man as well as

[1] Luke xiii. 33. [2] Mark x. 34; Luke xviii. 32.

Jewish ecclesiastics. But the parties named were to be the prime movers and most guilty agents in the nefarious transaction. The men who ought to have taught the people to recognise in Jesus the Lord's Anointed, would hound them on to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," and by importunities and threats urge heathen authorities to perpetrate a crime for which they had no heart. Grey-haired elders sitting in council would solemnly decide that He was worthy of death; high priests would utter oracles, that one man must die for the people, that the whole nation perish not; scribes learned in the law would use their legal knowledge to invent plausible grounds for an accusation involving capital punishment. Jesus had suffered many petty annoyances from such persons already; but the time was approaching when nothing would satisfy them but getting the object of their dislike cast forth out of the world. Alas for Israel, when her wise men, and her holy men, and her learned men, knew of no better use to make of the stone chosen of God, and precious, than thus contemptuously and wantonly to fling it away!

4. "And be killed." Yea; and for blessed ends preordained of God. But of these Jesus speaks not now. He simply states, in general terms, the fact, in this first lesson on the doctrine of the cross.[1] Anything more at this stage had been wasted words. To what purpose speak of the theology of the cross, of God's great design in the death which was to be brought about by man's guilty instrumentality, to disciples unwilling to receive even the matter of fact? The rude shock of an unwelcome announcement must first be over, before anything can be profitably said on these higher themes. Therefore not a syllable here of salvation by the death of the Son of man; of Christ crucified *for* man's guilt as well as *by* man's guilt. The hard, bare fact alone is stated; theology being reserved for another season, when the hearers should be in a fitter frame of mind for receiving instruction.

5. Finally, Jesus told His disciples that He should "be raised again the third day." To some so explicit a reference

[1] The cross is not even named here; but it was in Christ's thoughts, as the following address to the disciples plainly shows. The *fact*, without the *mode*, of death was enough for the first lesson.

to the resurrection at this early date has appeared improbable.[1] To us, on the contrary, it appears eminently seasonable. When was Jesus more likely to tell His disciples that He would rise again shortly after His death, than just on the occasion when He first told them plainly that He should die? He knew how harsh the one announcement would be to the feelings of His faithful ones, and it was natural that He should add the other, in the hope that when it was understood that His death was to be succeeded, after a brief interval of three days, by resurrection, the news would be much less hard to bear. Accordingly, after uttering the dismal words "be killed," He, with characteristic tenderness, hastened to say, "and be raised again the third day;" that, having torn, He might heal, and having smitten, He might bind up.

The grave communications made by Jesus were far from welcome to His disciples. Neither now nor at any subsequent time did they listen to the forebodings of their Lord with resignation even, not to speak of cheerful acquiescence or spiritual joy. They never heard Him speak of His death without pain; and their only comfort, in connection with such announcements as the present, seems to have been the hope that He had taken too gloomy a view of the situation, and that His apprehensions would turn out groundless. They, for their part, could see no grounds for such dark anticipations, and their Messianic ideas did not dispose them to be on the outlook for these. They had not the slightest conception that it behoved the Christ to suffer. On the contrary, a crucified Christ was a scandal and a contradiction to them, quite as much as it continued to be to the majority of the Jewish people after the Lord had ascended to glory. Hence, the more firmly they believed that Jesus was the Christ, the more confounding it was to be told that He must be put to death. "How," they asked themselves, "can these things be? How can the Son of God be subject to such indignities? How can our Master be the Christ, as we firmly believe, come to set up the divine king-

[1] The three synoptical evangelists agree in adding this reference to the resurrection to the first announcement of Christ's death. Their agreement in the whole of this announcement is very striking, yet only what was to be expected, considering its contents.

dom, and to be crowned its King with glory and honour, and yet at the same time be doomed to undergo the ignominious fate of a criminal execution?" These questions the twelve could not now, nor until after the resurrection, answer; nor is this wonderful, for if flesh and blood could not reveal the doctrine of Christ's person, still less could it reveal the doctrine of His cross. Not without a very special illumination from heaven could they understand the merest elements of that doctrine, and see, *e.g.*, that nothing was more worthy of the Son of God than to humble Himself and become subject unto death, *even* the death of the cross; that the glory of God consists not merely in being the highest, but in this, that being high, He stoops in lowly love to bear the burden of His own sinful creatures; that nothing could more directly and certainly conduce to the establishment of the divine kingdom than the gracious self-humiliation of the King; that only by ascending the cross could Messiah ascend the throne of His mediatorial glory; that only so could He subdue human hearts, and become Lord of men's affections as well as of their destinies. Many in the church do not understand these blessed truths, even at this late era: what wonder, then, if they were hid for a season from the eyes of the first disciples! Let us not reproach them for the veil that was on their faces; let us rather make sure that the same veil is not on our own.

On this occasion, as at Cæsarea Philippi, the twelve found a most eloquent and energetic interpreter of their sentiments in Simon Peter. The action and speech of that disciple at this time were characteristic in the highest degree. He took Jesus, we are told (laid hold of Him, we suppose, by His hand or His garment), and began to *rebuke* Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord; or more literally, God be merciful to Thee: God forbid! this shall not be unto Thee. What a strange compound of good and evil is this man! His language is dictated by the most intense affection: he cannot bear the thought of any harm befalling his Lord; yet how irreverent and disrespectful he is towards Him whom he has just acknowledged to be the Christ, the Son of the living God! How he overbears, and contradicts, and domineers, and, as it

were, tries to bully his Master into putting away from His thoughts those gloomy forebodings of coming evil! Verily he has need of chastisement to teach him his own place, and to scourge out of his character the bad elements of forwardness, and undue familiarity, and presumptuous self-will.

Happily for Peter, he had a Master who, in His faithful love, spared not the rod when it was needful. Jesus judged that it was needed now, and therefore He administered a rebuke not less remarkable for severity than was the encomium at Cæsarea Philippi for warm unqualified approbation, and curiously contrasting with that encomium in the terms in which it was expressed. He turned round on His offending disciple, and sternly said: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." The same disciple who on the former occasion had spoken by inspiration of Heaven, is here represented as speaking by inspiration of mere flesh and blood—of mere natural affection for his Lord, and of the animal instinct of self-preservation; savouring not the things of God, but those only that be of men. He whom Christ had pronounced a man of rock, strong in faith, and fit to be a foundation-stone in the spiritual edifice, is here called an offence, a stumbling-stone lying in his Master's path. Peter, the noble confessor of that fundamental truth, by the faith of which the church would be able to defy the gates of hell, appears here in league with the powers of darkness, the unconscious mouthpiece of Satan the tempter. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" What a downcome for him who but yesterday got that promise of the power of the keys! How suddenly has the novice church dignitary, too probably lifted up with pride or vanity, fallen into the condemnation of the devil!

This memorable rebuke seems mercilessly severe, and yet on consideration we feel it was nothing more than what was called for. Christ's language on this occasion needs no apology, such as might be drawn from supposed excitement of feeling, or from a consciousness on the speaker's part that the infirmity of His own sensient nature was whispering the same suggestion as that which came from Peter's lips. Even the hard word Satan, which is the sting of the speech, is in its

proper place. It describes exactly the character of the advice given by Simon. That advice was substantially this: "Save thyself at any rate; sacrifice duty to self-interest, the cause of God to personal convenience." An advice truly Satanic in principle and tendency! For the whole aim of Satanic policy is to get self-interest recognised as the chief end of man. Satan's temptations aim at nothing worse than this. Satan is called the Prince of this world, because self-interest rules the world; he is called the accuser of the brethren, because he does not believe that even the sons of God have any higher motive. He is a sceptic, and his scepticism consists in determined, scornful unbelief in the reality of any chief end other than that of personal advantage. "Doth Job, or even Jesus, serve God for nought? Self-sacrifice, suffering for righteousness' sake, fidelity to truth even unto death:—it is all romance and youthful sentimentalism, or hypocrisy and hollow cant. There is absolutely no such thing as a surrender of the lower life for the higher; all men are selfish at heart, and have their price: some may hold out longer than others, but in the last extremity every man will prefer his own things to the things of God. All that a man hath will he give for his life, his moral integrity and his piety not excepted." Such is Satan's creed.

The suggestion made by Peter, as the unconscious tool of the spirit of evil, is identical in principle with that made by Satan himself to Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness. The tempter said then in effect: "If thou be the Son of God, use thy power for thine own behoof; thou art hungry, *e.g.*, make bread for thyself out of the stones. If thou be the Son of God, presume on thy privilege as the favourite of Heaven; cast thyself down from this elevation, securely counting on protection from harm, even where other men would be allowed to suffer the consequences of their foolhardiness. What better use canst thou make of thy divine powers and privileges, than to promote thine own advantage and glory?" Peter's feeling at the present time seems to have been much the same: "If thou be the Son of God, why shouldst thou suffer an ignominious violent death? Thou hast power to save thyself from such a fate; surely thou wilt not hesitate to use it!"

The attached disciple, in fact, was an unconscious instrument employed by Satan to subject Jesus to a second temptation, analogous to the earlier one in the desert of Judea. It was the god of this world that was at work in both cases; who, being accustomed to find men only too ready to prefer safety to righteousness, could not believe that he should find nothing of this spirit in the Son of God, and therefore came again and again seeking an open point in His armour through which he might shoot his fiery darts; not renouncing hope till his intended victim hung on the cross, apparently conquered by the world, but in reality a conqueror both of the world and of its lord.

The severe language uttered by Jesus on this occasion, when regarded as addressed to a dearly beloved disciple, shows in a striking manner His holy abhorrence of every thing savouring of self-seeking. "Save thyself," counsels Simon; "Get thee behind me, Satan," replies Simon's Lord. Truly Christ was not one who pleased Himself. Though He were a Son, yet would He learn obedience by the things which He had to suffer. And by this mind He proved Himself to be the Son, and won from His Father the approving voice: "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased," —Heaven's reply to the voice from hell counselling Him to pursue a course of self-pleasing. Persevering in this mind, Jesus was at length lifted up on the cross, and so became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. Blessed now and for evermore be His name, who so humbled Himself, and became obedient unto *death!*

SECTION II.—*Cross-bearing the Law of Discipleship.*

MATT. XVI. 24–28; MARK VIII. 34–38; LUKE IX. 23–27.

After one hard announcement comes another not less hard. The Lord Jesus has told His disciples that He must one day be put to death; He now tells them, that as it fares with Him, so it must fare with them also. The second announcement was naturally occasioned by the way in which the first

had been received. Peter had said, and all had felt, "This shall not be unto Thee." Jesus replies in effect, "Say you so? I tell you that not only shall I, your Master, be crucified,— for such will be the manner of my death,[1] — but ye too, faithfully following me, shall most certainly have your crosses to bear. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'"

The second announcement was not, like the first, made to the twelve only. This we might infer from the terms of the announcement, which are general, even if we had not been informed, as we are by Mark and Luke, that before making it Jesus called the people unto Him, with His disciples, and spake in the hearing of them all.[2] The doctrine here taught, therefore, is for all Christians in all ages: not for apostles only, but for the humblest disciples; not for priests or preachers, but for the laity as well; not for monks living in cloisters, but for men living and working in the outside world. The King and Head of the church here proclaims a universal law binding on all His subjects, requiring all to bear a cross in fellowship with Himself.

We are not told how the second announcement was received by those who heard it, and particularly by the twelve. We can believe, however, that to Peter and his brethren it sounded less harsh than the first, and seemed, at least theoretically, more acceptable. Common experience might teach them that crosses, however unpleasant to flesh and blood, were nevertheless things that might be looked for in the lot of mere men. But what had Christ the Son of God to do with crosses? Ought He not to be exempt from the sufferings and indignities of ordinary mortals? If not, of what avail was His divine Sonship? In short, the difficulty for the twelve was probably not that the servant should be no better than the Master, but that the Master should be no better than the servant.

Our perplexity, on the other hand, is apt to be just the reverse of this. Familiar with the doctrine that Jesus died

[1] The cross, though not mentioned, was evidently in Christ's thoughts when He spake of His death at this time. *Vid.* last chapter, note, p. 176.

[2] Mark viii. 34, προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν ὄχλον; Luke ix. 23, ἔλεγε δὲ πρὸς πάντας.

on the cross in our room, we are apt to wonder what occasion there can be for our bearing a cross. If He suffered for us vicariously, what need, we are ready to inquire, for suffering on our part likewise? We need to be reminded that Christ's sufferings, while in some respects peculiar, are in other respects common to Him with all in whom His Spirit abides; that while, as redemptive, His death stands alone, as suffering for righteousness' sake it is but the highest instance of a universal law, according to which all who live a true godly life must suffer hardship in a false evil world.[1] And it is very observable that Jesus took a most effectual method of keeping this truth prominently before the mind of His followers in all ages, by proclaiming it with great emphasis on the first occasion on which He plainly announced that He Himself was to die. Thereby He in effect declared that only such as were willing to be crucified with Him should be saved by His death; nay, that willingness to bear a cross was indispensable to the right understanding of the doctrine of salvation through Him. It is as if above the door of the school in which the mystery of redemption was to be taught, He had inscribed the legend: Let no man who is unwilling to deny himself, and take up his cross, enter here.

In this great law of discipleship, the cross signifies not merely the external penalty of death, but all troubles that come on those who earnestly endeavour to live as Jesus lived in this world, and in *consequence* of that endeavour. Many and various are the afflictions of the righteous, differing in kind and degree, according to times and circumstances, and the callings and stations of individuals. For the righteous One, who died not only by the unjust, but *for* them, the appointed cup was filled with all possible ingredients of shame and pain, mingled together in the highest degree of bitterness. Not a few of His most honoured servants have come very near their Master in the manner and measure of their afflictions for His sake, and have indeed drunk of His cup, and been baptized with His bloody baptism. But for the rank

[1] Plato had a glimpse of this law. "The just," he writes, "will be scourged, racked, bound, will have his eyes put out, and after suffering many ills will be *crucified*" (ἀνασχινδιλευθήσεται).—*De Republica*, lib. ii.

and file of the Christian host the hardships to be endured are ordinarily less severe, the cross to be borne less heavy. For one the cross may be the calumnies of lying lips, "which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous;" for another, failure to attain the much-worshipped idol success in life, so often reached by unholy means not available for a man who has a conscience; for a third, mere isolation and solitariness of spirit amid uncongenial, unsympathetic neighbours, not minded to live soberly, righteously, and godly, and not loving those who do so live.

The cross, therefore, is not the same for all. But that there is a cross of some shape for all true disciples, is clearly implied in the words: "*If any one* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." The plain meaning of these words is, that there is no following Jesus on any other terms. A doctrine this, which, however clearly taught in the gospel, spurious Christians are unwilling to believe and resolute to deny. They take the edge off their Lord's statement, by explaining that it applies only to certain critical times, happily very different from their own; or that if it has some reference to all times, it is only applicable to such as are called to play a prominent part in public affairs as leaders of opinion, pioneers of progress, prophets denouncing the vices of the age, and uttering unwelcome oracles,—a proverbially dangerous occupation, as the Greek poet testified, who said: "Apollo alone should prophesy, for he fears nobody."[1] To maintain, they say, that all who would live devoutly in Christ Jesus must suffer somehow, is to take too gloomy and morose a view of the wickedness of the world, or too high and exacting a view of the Christian life. The righteousness which in ordinary times involves a cross, is in their view folly and fanaticism. It is speaking when one should be silent, meddling in matters with which one has no concern; in a word, it is being righteous over-much.

Such thoughts as these, expressed or unexpressed, are sure to prevail extensively when religious profession is common. The fact that fidelity involves a cross, as also the fact that

[1] Φοίβον ἀνθρώποις μόνον
Χρῆν θεσπιῳδεῖν ὃς δέδοικεν οὐδένα.—EURIP. *Phœnissæ*, 958–9.

Christ was crucified just because He was righteous, are well understood by Christians when they are a suffering minority, as in primitive ages. But, alas, these truths are sadly lost sight of in peaceful, prosperous times! Then you shall find many holding most sound views of the cross Christ bore for them, but sadly ignorant concerning the cross they themselves have to bear in fellowship with Christ. Of this cross they are determined to know nothing.

Some who have come to no such godless determination may be anxious to know how and where they may find the cross Jesus calls them to take up. To whom we might reply: You need not to go to the world's end in search of your cross. Only be willing to go after Christ; give thy whole heart and soul to the business of being a true Christian, and thou shalt find thy cross very near at hand, in thy daily life, in thy business, in thy home, yea, in thine own heart. The man who would walk with Christ will find many things done by others which he may not do, and which yet he is strongly tempted to do; many things neglected by others which he feels he ought to do, and yet is afraid to do. Crosses will become visible on every side within the sphere of ordinary duties, without entering into the region of petty scruples, ascetic rigours, or imaginary sins.

Cross-bearing, even for the most faithful, is irksome to flesh and blood; it demands even from the most gracious men a strong effort of will. Hence the exhortation to self-denial in connection with the call to take up the cross. Denying of self—a holy resolution that self shall not be our chief end—that personal feelings, interests, and enjoyments shall be made subordinate to the claims of truth, Christ, and the gospel,—is a necessary preliminary to the uplifting of the cross, as well as the necessary condition of perseverance in cross-bearing from day to day,[1] and to the end of life, for so long will the business last. If we abide not in a self-denied mind, we shall weary of our burden, and throw it down. Happily, on the other hand, abiding in this mind, we find the burden getting lighter; our shoulders become so accustomed to the load, that we hardly know we are carrying any.

[1] καθ' ἡμέραν, Luke ix. 23, reading in *text. rec.*

To the law of the cross Jesus annexed three reasons designed to make the obeying of it easier, by showing disciples that, in rendering obedience to the stern requirement, they attend to their own true interest. Each reason is introduced by a "For."

The first reason is this: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." In this startling paradox the word "life" is used in a double sense. In the first clause of each member of the sentence it signifies natural life, with all the adjuncts that make it pleasant and enjoyable; in the second, it means the spiritual life of a renewed soul. The deep, pregnant saying of the Lord Jesus may therefore be thus expanded and paraphrased: Whosoever *will* save, *i.e.* make it his first business to save or preserve, his natural life and worldly well-being, shall lose the higher life, the life indeed; and whosoever is willing to lose his natural life for my sake, shall find the true eternal life. According to this maxim, we must lose something: it is not possible to live without sacrifice of some kind; the only question being what shall be sacrificed,—the lower or the higher life, animal happiness or spiritual blessedness. If we choose the higher, we must be prepared to deny ourselves and take up our cross, though the actual amount of the loss we are called on to bear may be small; for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.[1] If, on the other hand, we choose the lower, and resolve to have it at all hazards, we must inevitably lose the higher. The soul's life, and all the imperishable goods of the soul—righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness[2]—are the price we pay for worldly enjoyment.

This price is too great. That is what Jesus next told His hearers, as the second persuasive to cross-bearing. "For what," He went on to ask, "is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The two questions set forth the incomparable value of the soul on both sides of a commercial transaction. The soul, or life, in the true sense of

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 8. [2] 1 Tim. vi. 11.

the word,[1] is too dear a price to pay even for the whole world, not to say for that small portion of it which falls to the lot of any one individual. He who gains the world at such a cost is a loser by the bargain. On the other hand, the whole world is too small, yea, an utterly inadequate price, to pay for the ransom of the soul once lost. What shall a man give in exchange for the priceless thing he has foolishly bartered away? "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"[2] No! O man; not any of these things, nor anything else thou hast to give; not the fruit of thy merchandise, not ten thousands of pounds sterling. Thou canst not buy back thy soul, which thou hast bartered for the world, with all that thou hast of the world. The redemption of the soul is indeed precious; it cannot be delivered from the bondage of sin by corruptible things, such as silver and gold: the attempt to purchase pardon and peace and life that way can only make thy case more hopeless, and add to thy condemnation.

The appeal contained in these solemn questions comes home with irresistible force to all who are in their right mind. Such feel that no outward good can be compared in value to having a "saved soul," *i.e.* being a forgiven, renewed Christian man. All, however, are not so minded. Multitudes account their souls of very small value indeed. Judas sold his soul for thirty pieces of silver; and not a few who probably deem themselves better than he would part with theirs for the most paltry worldly advantage. The great ambition of the million is to be happy as animals, not to be blessed as saved, sanctified men. "Who will show us any good?" is that which the many say. "Give us health, wealth, houses, lands, honours, and we care not for righteousness, either imputed or personal, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost. These

[1] The word rendered "soul" in ver. 26 is the same which is rendered "life" in ver. 25 (ψυχή). The two meanings are blended here.

[2] Micah vi. 6.

may be good also in their way, and if one could have them along with the other, without trouble or sacrifice, it were perhaps well; but we cannot consent, for their sakes, to deny ourselves any pleasure, or voluntarily endure any hardship."

The third argument in favour of cross-bearing is drawn from the judgment to come. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works." These words suggest a contrast between the present and the future state of the speaker, and imply a promise of a corresponding contrast between the present and the future of His faithful followers. *Now* Jesus is the Son of man, destined ere many weeks pass to be crucified at Jerusalem. At the end of the world He will appear invested with the manifest glory of a Divine Being, attended with a mighty host of ministering spirits; *His* reward for enduring the cross, despising the shame. Then will He reward every man according to the tenor of his present life. To the cross-bearers He will grant a crown of righteousness; to the cross-spurners He will assign, as their due, shame and everlasting contempt.

The hope set before disciples here is one which maketh not ashamed. It will most surely be realized. As certainly as the faithful have to suffer now, so certainly will there come a time when they shall be rewarded with eternal glory. It is a righteous thing in God to grant a recompense of rest and joy in a world to come unto those who have endured tribulation for His sake in this present evil world. Under His just government we may securely argue from a cross to a crown; much more securely than philosophers have argued from the moral *confusion* of this world to a state hereafter, in which the confusion will be cleared up, and moral order established. For, according to the doctrine of Christ, there is no confusion even here. His followers do not suffer by chance, but by law. The law for *all* disciples is: Bear the cross here, and you shall wear the crown hereafter. From experience we know that one part of this law does not fail, for the cross does come to all the truly good; and from the unfailing certainty with which the law operates in that part which comes under our

observation, we may predict the certainty of that which we see not—the future recompense promised to the faithful.

The hope of an eternal reward is not only a reliable, but a worthy motive to a self-sacrificing life. Philosophers affecting transcendental views of human virtue say men should do what is right, and be willing even to die for the right, without either hope of reward or fear of punishment. Such men, it is to be suspected, preach a heroism they do not practise. Men who do not philosophize, but act, have always an eternal hope in their view. Christ, the greatest and purest of all heroes by common consent, cherished such a hope; not to speak of heathen sages like Socrates, whose example with some may have even more weight. Christians need not be afraid of degenerating into moral vulgarity by imitating their Lord in this respect. There is no vulgarity or impurity in the virtue which is sustained by the hope of eternal life. That hope is not selfishness, but simply self-consistency. It is simply believing in the *reality* of the kingdom for which you labour and suffer; involving, of course, the reality of each individual Christian's interest therein, your own not excepted. And such faith is necessary to heroism. For who would fight and suffer for a dream? What patriot would risk his life for his country's cause, who did not hope for the restoration of her independence? And who but a pedant would say that the purity of his patriotism was sullied, because his hope for the whole nation did not exclude all reference to himself as an individual citizen? Equally necessary is it that a Christian should believe in the kingdom of glory, and equally natural and proper that he should cherish the hope of a personal share in its honours and felicities. Where such faith and hope are not, little Christian heroism will be found. For, as an ancient Church Father said, "There is no certain work where there is an uncertain reward."[1] Men cannot be heroes in doubt or despair. They cannot struggle after perfection and a divine kingdom, sceptical the while whether these things be more than devout imaginations, unrealizable

[1] Nullum opus certum est mercedis incertæ. Tertulliani *de Resurrectione Carnis*, cap. xxi. See also Clark's Ante-Nicene Library: Tertullian, vol. ii. p. 251.

ideals. In such a mood they will take things easy, and make secular happiness their chief concern.

One other inducement to patient bearing of the cross remains to be mentioned. In taking up their cross disciples but *follow* their Master, as His companions in tribulation. This inspiring thought turns pain into pleasure, and shame into glory, for the true disciple. Hence the observable contrast between the Old Testament saints and those of Christian ages in the endurance of sufferings for righteousness' sake. Before Christ came, good men murmured under the cross; after He came, men of the same moral temperament rejoiced when placed in a similar situation. Prophets complained in circumstances amid which apostles exulted with triumphant joy. The difference is marked, and it was due to this, that the apostles lived after Jesus had been lifted up on the cross. When the Master had suffered, they felt that it were unseemly in a disciple to complain. Nay, they had no thought of complaining. They gladly followed the Captain of salvation, who had been perfected through suffering; too happy to suffer with Him and for Him, if only they might enjoy the unspeakable felicity of rejoicing with Him in the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

MATT. XVII. 1–13 ; MARK IX. 2–13 ; LUKE IX. 28–36.

THE transfiguration is one of those passages in the Saviour's earthly history which an expositor is tempted to pass over in reverent silence. For such silence the same apology might be pled which is so kindly made in the Gospel narrative for Peter's foolish speech concerning the three tabernacles: "He wist not what to say." Who does know what to say any more than he ? Who is able fully to speak of that wondrous night-scene among the mountains,[1] during which heaven was for a few brief moments let down to earth, and the mortal body of Jesus being transfigured shone with celestial brightness, and the spirits of just men made perfect appeared and held converse with Him respecting His approaching passion, and a voice came forth from the excellent glory, pronouncing Him to be God's well-beloved Son ? It is too high for us, this august spectacle, we cannot attain unto it ; its grandeur oppresses and stupefies ; its mystery surpasses our comprehension ; its glory is ineffable. Therefore, avoiding all speculation, curious questioning, theological disquisition, and pretentious word-picturing in connection with the remarkable occurrence here recorded, we confine ourselves in this chapter to the humble task of explaining briefly its significance for Jesus Himself, and its lesson for His disciples.

The "transfiguration," to be understood, must be viewed in connection with the announcement made by Jesus shortly before it happened, concerning His death. This is evident from the simple fact, that the three evangelists who relate the event so carefully note the time of its occurrence with

[1] Of Hermon? The traditional scene of the transfiguration was Mount Tabor.

reference to that announcement, and the conversation which accompanied it. All tell how, within six or eight days thereafter,[1] Jesus took three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, and brought them into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. The Gospel historians are not wont to be so careful in their indications of time, and their minute accuracy here signifies in effect: "While the foregoing communications and discourses concerning the cross were fresh in the thoughts of all the parties, the wondrous events we are now to relate took place." The relative date, in fact, is a finger-post pointing back to the conversation on the passion, and saying: "If you desire to understand what follows, remember what went before."

This inference from the note of time given by all the evangelists is fully borne out by a statement made by Luke alone, respecting the subject of the conversation on the holy mount between Jesus and His celestial visitants. "And," we read, "behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease, or exodus, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."[2] That exit, so different from their own in its circumstances and consequences, was *the* theme of their talk. They had appeared to Jesus to converse with Him thereon; and when they ceased speaking concerning it, they took their departure for the abodes of the blessed. How long the conference lasted we know not, but the subject was sufficiently suggestive of interesting topics of conversation. There was, *e.g.*, the surprising contrast between the death of Moses, immediate and painless, while his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated, and the painful and ignominious death to be endured by Jesus. Then there was the not less remarkable contrast between the manner of Elijah's departure from the earth—translated to heaven without tasting death at all, making a triumphant exit out of the world in a chariot of fire, and the way by which Jesus should enter into glory—the *via dolorosa* of the cross. Whence this privilege of exemption from death, or from its

[1] *μεθ' ἡμέρας ἕξ*, Matthew and Mark; *ὡσεὶ ἡμέραι ὀκτώ*, Luke. The two expressions may easily mean the same period of time.

[2] Luke ix. 31, *ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ*.

bitterness, granted to the representatives of the law and the prophets, and wherefore denied to Him who was the end both of law and of prophecy? On these points, and others of kindred nature, the two celestial messengers, enlightened by the clear light of heaven, may have held intelligent and sympathetic converse with the Son of man, to the refreshment of His weary, saddened, solitary soul.

The same evangelist who specifies the subject of conversation on the holy mount, further records that, previous to His transfiguration, Jesus had been engaged in prayer. We may therefore see, in the honour and glory conferred on Him there, the Father's answer to His Son's supplications; and from the nature of the answer we may infer the subject of prayer. It was the same as afterwards in the garden of Gethsemane. The cup of death was present to the mind of Jesus now, as then; the cross was visible to His spiritual eye; and He prayed for nerve to drink, for courage to endure. The attendance of the three confidential disciples, Peter, James, and John, significantly hints at the similarity of the two occasions. The Master took these disciples with Him into the mount, as He afterwards took them into the garden, that He might not be altogether destitute of company and kindly sympathy as He walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and felt the horror and the loneliness of the situation.

It is now clear how we must view the transfiguration scene in relation to Jesus. It was an aid to faith and patience, specially vouchsafed to the meek and lowly Son of man, in answer to His prayers, to cheer Him on His sorrowful path towards Jerusalem and Calvary. Three distinct aids to His faith were supplied in the experiences of that wondrous night. The first was a foretaste of the glory with which He should be rewarded after His passion, for His voluntary humiliation and obedience unto death. For the moment He was, as it were, rapt up into heaven, where He had been before He came into the world; for His face shone like the sun, and His raiment was white as the pure untrodden snow on the high alpine summits of Hermon. "Be of good cheer," said that sudden flood of celestial light: "the suffering will soon be past, and Thou shalt enter into Thine eternal joy!"

A second source of comfort to Jesus in the experiences on the mount, was the assurance that the mystery of the cross was understood and appreciated by saints in heaven, if not by the darkened minds of sinful men on earth. He greatly needed such comfort; for among the men then living, not excepting His chosen disciples, there was not one to whom He could speak on that theme with any hope of eliciting an intelligent and sympathetic response. Only a few days ago, He had ascertained by painful experience the utter incapacity of the twelve, even of the most quick-witted and warm-hearted among them, to comprehend the mystery of His passion, or even to believe in it as a certain fact. Verily the Son of man was most lonely as He passed through the dark valley! the very presence of stupid, unsympathetic companions serving only to enhance the sense of solitariness. When He wanted company that could understand His passion thoughts, He was obliged to hold converse with spirits of just men made perfect; for, as far as mortal men were concerned, He had to be content to finish His great work without the comfort of being understood until it was accomplished.

The talk of the great lawgiver and of the great prophet of Israel on the subject of His death was doubtless a real solace to the spirit of Jesus. We know how He comforted Himself at other times with the thought of being understood in heaven, if not on earth. When heartless Pharisees called in question His conduct in receiving sinners, He sought at once His defence and His consolation in the blessed fact that there was joy in heaven at least, whatever there might be among them, over one penitent sinner, more than over ninety and nine just persons that needed no repentance. When He thought how "little ones," the weak and helpless, were despised and trampled under foot in this proud inhuman world, He reflected with unspeakable satisfaction that in heaven their angels did always behold the face of His Father; yea, that in heaven there were angels who made the care of little ones their special business, and were therefore fully able to appreciate the doctrine of humility and kindness which He strove to inculcate on ambitious and quarrelsome disciples. Surely, then, we may believe that when He looked forward to His own decease—the crown-

ing evidence of His love for sinners—it was a comfort to His heart to think: "Up yonder they know that I am to suffer, and comprehend the reason why, and watch with eager interest to see how I move on with unfaltering step, with my face stedfastly set to go to Jerusalem." And would it not be specially comforting to have sensible evidence of this, in an actual visit from two denizens of the upper world, deputed as it were and commissioned to express the general mind of the whole community of glorified saints, who understood that their presence in heaven was due to the merits of that sacrifice which He was about to offer up in His own person on the hill of Calvary?

A third, and the chief solace to the heart of Jesus, was the approving voice of His heavenly Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That voice, uttered then, meant: "Go on Thy present way, self-devoted to death, and shrinking not from the cross. I am pleased with Thee, because Thou pleasest not Thyself. Pleased with Thee at all times, I am most emphatically delighted with Thee when, in a signal manner, as lately in the announcement made to Thy disciples, Thou dost show it to be Thy fixed purpose to save others, and not to save Thyself."

This voice from the excellent glory was one of three uttered by the divine Father in the hearing of His Son during His life on earth. The first was uttered by the Jordan, after the baptism of Jesus, and was the same as the present, save that it was spoken to Him, not concerning Him, to others. The last was uttered at Jerusalem shortly before the crucifixion, and was of similar import with the two preceding, but different in form. The soul of Jesus being troubled with the near prospect of death, He prayed: "Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." Then, we read, came there a voice from heaven, saying: "I have both glorified it (by Thy life), and will glorify it again" (more signally by Thy death). All three voices served one end. Elicited at crises in Christ's history, when He manifested in peculiar intensity His devotion to the work for which He had come into the world, and His determination to finish it, however irksome the task might be to flesh and blood, these voices expressed, for His encourage-

ment and strengthening, the complacency with which His Father regarded His self-humiliation and obedience unto death. At His baptism, He, so to speak, confessed the sins of the whole world; and by submitting to the rite, expressed His purpose to fulfil all righteousness as the Redeemer from sin. Therefore the Father then, for the first time, pronounced Him His beloved Son. Shortly before the transfiguration, He had energetically repelled the suggestion of an affectionate disciple, that He should save Himself from His anticipated doom, as a temptation of the devil; therefore the Father renewed the declaration, changing the second person into the third, for the sake of those disciples who were present, and specially of Peter, who had listened to the voice of his own heart rather than to his Master's words. Finally, a few days before His death, He overcame a temptation of the same nature as that to which Peter had subjected Him, springing this time out of the sinless infirmity of His own human nature. Beginning His prayer with the expression of a wish to be saved from the dark hour, He ended it with the petition, "Glorify Thy name." Therefore the Father once more repeated the expression of His approval, declaring in effect His satisfaction with the way in which His Son had glorified His name hitherto, and His confidence that He would not fail to crown His career of obedience by a God-glorifying death.

Such being the meaning of the vision on the mount for Jesus, we have now briefly to consider what lesson it taught the disciples who were present, and through them their brethren and all Christians.

The main point in this connection is the injunction appended to the heavenly voice: "Hear Him." This command refers specially to the doctrine of the cross preached by Jesus to the twelve, and so ill received by them. It was meant to be a solemn, deliberate endorsement of all that He had said then concerning His own sufferings, and concerning the obligation to bear their cross lying on all His followers. Peter, James, and John were, as it were, invited to recall all that had fallen from their Master's lips on the unwelcome topic, and assured that it was wholly true and in accordance with the divine mind. Nay, as these disciples had received the

doctrine with murmurs of disapprobation, the voice from heaven addressed to them was a stern word of rebuke, which said: "Murmur not, but devoutly and obediently hear."

This rebuke was all the more needful, that the disciples had just shown that they were still of the same mind as they had been six days ago. Peter at least was as yet in no cross-bearing humour. When, on wakening up to clear consciousness from the drowsy fit which had fallen on him, that disciple observed the two strangers in the act of departing, he exclaimed: "Master, it is good for us to be here, and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He was minded, we perceive, to enjoy the felicities of heaven without any preliminary process of cross-bearing. He thought to himself: "How much better to abide up here with the saints, than down below amidst unbelieving captious Pharisees and miserable human beings, enduring the contradiction of sinners, and battling with the manifold ills wherewith the earth is cursed! Stay here, my Master, and you may bid good-bye to all those dark forebodings of coming sufferings, and will be beyond the reach of malevolent priests, elders, and scribes. Stay here, on this sun-lit, heaven-kissed hill; go no more down into the depressing, sombre valley of humiliation. Farewell, earth and the cross: welcome, heaven and the crown!"

We do not forget, while thus paraphrasing Peter's foolish speech, that when he uttered it he was dazed with sleep and the splendours of the midnight scene. Yet, when due allowance has been made for this, it remains true that the idle suggestion was an index of the disciple's present mind. Peter *was* drunken, though not with wine; but what men say, even when drunken, is characteristic. There was a sober meaning in his senseless speech about the tabernacle. He really meant that the celestial visitants should remain, and not go away, as they were in the act of doing when he spoke.[1] This appears from the conversation which took place between Jesus and the three disciples while descending the mountain.[2] Peter and his two companions asked their Master: "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" The question re-

[1] Luke ix. 33, ἐν τῷ διαχωρίζεσθαι. [2] Matt. xvii. 9–13; Mark ix. 9–13.

ferred, we think, not to the injunction laid on the disciples by Jesus just before, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen again from the dead," but rather to the fugitive, fleeting character of the whole scene on the mountain. The three brethren were not only disappointed, but perplexed, that the two celestials had been so like angels in the shortness of their stay and the suddenness of their departure. They had accepted the current notion about the advent of Elias before, and in order to, the restoration of the kingdom; and they fondly hoped that this was he come at last in company with Moses, heralding the approaching glory, as the advent of swallows from tropical climes is a sign that summer is nigh, and that winter with its storms and rigours is over and gone. In truth, while their Master was preaching the cross, they had been dreaming of crowns. We shall find them continuing so to dream till the very end.

"Hear ye Him:"—this voice was not meant for the three disciples alone, or even for the twelve, but for all professed followers of Christ as well as for them. It says to every Christian: "Hear Jesus, and strive to understand Him while He speaks of the mystery of His sufferings and the glory that should follow—those themes which even angels desire to look into. Hear Him when He proclaims cross-bearing as a duty incumbent on all disciples, and listen not to self-indulgent suggestions of flesh and blood, or the temptations of Satan counselling thee to make self-interest or self-preservation thy chief end. Hear Him, yet again, and weary not of the world, nor seek to lay down thy burden before thy time. Dream not of tabernacles where thou mayest dwell secure, like a hermit in the wild, having no share in all that is done beneath the circuit of the sun. Do thy part manfully, and in due season thou shalt have, not a tent, but a temple to dwell in: an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

It is true, indeed, that we who are in this tabernacle of the body, in this world of sorrow, cannot but groan now and then, being burdened. This is our infirmity, and in itself it is not sinful; neither is it wrong to heave an occasional sigh, and utter a passing wish that the time of cross-bearing were over. Even the holy Jesus felt at times this weariness of life. An

expression of something like impatience escaped His lips at this very season. When He came down from the mount and learned what was going on at its base, He exclaimed, with reference at once to the unbelief of the scribes who were present, to the weak faith of the disciples, and to the miseries of mankind suffering the consequences of the curse: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" Even the loving Redeemer of man felt tempted to be weary in well-doing—weary of encountering the contradiction of sinners, and of bearing with the spiritual weakness of disciples. Such weariness therefore, as a momentary feeling, is not necessarily sinful: it may rather be a part of our cross. But it must not be indulged in or yielded to. Jesus did not give Himself up to the feeling. Though He complained of the generation amidst which He lived, He did not cease from His labours of love for its benefit. Having relieved His heart by this utterance of a reproachful exclamation, He gave orders that the poor lunatic should be brought to Him that he might be healed. Then, when He had wrought this new miracle of mercy, He patiently explained to His own disciples the cause of their impotence to cope successfully with the maladies of men, and taught them how they might attain the power of casting out all sorts of devils, even those whose hold of their victims was most obstinate.[1] So He continued labouring in helping the miserable and instructing the ignorant, till the hour came when He could truly say, "It is finished."

[1] Matt. xvii. 19–21.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISCOURSE ON HUMILITY.

SECTION I.—*As this little Child!*

MATT. XVIII. 1–14; MARK IX. 33–37, 42–50; LUKE IX. 46–48.

FROM the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus and the twelve returned through Galilee to Capernaum. On this homeward journey the Master and His disciples were in very different moods of mind. He sadly mused on His cross; they vainly dreamed of places of distinction in the approaching kingdom. The diversity of spirit revealed itself in a corresponding diversity of conduct. Jesus for the second time began to speak on the way of His coming sufferings, telling His followers how the Son of man should be *betrayed* into the hands of men, and how they should kill Him, and how the third day He should be raised again.[1] The twelve, on the other hand, began as they journeyed to dispute among themselves who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.[2] Strange, humilating contrast exhibited again and again in the evangelic history; jealous, angry altercations respecting rank and precedence, on the part of the disciples, following new communications respecting His passion on the part of their Lord, as comic follow tragic scenes in a dramatic representation.

This unseemly and unseasonable dispute shows clearly what need there was for that injunction appended to the voice from heaven, "Hear Him;" and how far the disciples were as yet from complying therewith. They heard Jesus only when He spake things agreeable. They listened with pleasure when

[1] Matt. xvii. 22, 23; Mark ix. 30–32; Luke ix. 44, 45.
[2] Mark ix. 33.

He assured them that ere long they should see the Son of man come in His kingdom; they were deaf to all He said concerning the suffering which must precede the glory. They forgot the cross, after a momentary fit of sorrow when their Lord referred to it, and betook themselves to dreaming of the crown; as a child forgets the death of a parent, and returns to its play. "How great," thought they, "shall we all be when the kingdom comes!" Then by an easy transition they passed from idle dreams of the common glory, to idle disputes as to who should have the largest share therein; for vanity and jealousy lie very near each other. "Shall we all be equally distinguished in the kingdom, or shall one be higher than another? Does the favour shown to Peter, James, and John, in selecting them to be eye-witnesses of the prefigurement of the coming glory, imply a corresponding precedence in the kingdom itself?"[1] The three disciples probably hoped it did; the other disciples hoped not, and so the dispute began. It was nothing that they should all be great together; the question of questions was, who should be the greatest,—a question hard to settle when vanity and presumption contend on one side, and jealousy and envy on the other.

Arrived at Capernaum, Jesus took an early opportunity of adverting to the dispute in which His disciples had been engaged, and made it the occasion of delivering a memorable discourse on humility and kindred topics. In the first part of that discourse He made use of a child present in the chamber as the vehicle of instruction; so, out of the mouth of a babe and suckling, perfecting the praise of a lowly mind. Sitting in the midst of ambitious disciples with the little one in His arms for a text, He who was the greatest in the kingdom proceeded to set forth truths mortifying to the spirit of pride, but sweeter than honey to the taste of all renewed souls.

The first lesson taught was this: To be great in the kingdom, yea, to gain admission into it at all, it is necessary to

[1] The three disciples were forbidden to tell any man what they had seen on the holy mount. The prohibition was probably not meant to refer to their brethren. If it did, they must have found it very hard to keep silent about such a wondrous scene.

become like a little child. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Such was Christ's peremptory answer to the question disputed by the twelve. It was a serious answer for them; for it implied that, unless they got rid of the spirit which gave rise to their dispute, they could find no place in the kingdom, far less be great therein. It is a serious answer for us all. For who among us is child-like? Who among us is truly humble? Nowhere is the need of "conversion" in human character, in order to citizenship in the divine kingdom, more apparent than here. Pride is natural to man: the spirit of unrenewed human nature lusteth to ambition, jealousy, and envy. The objects of pride are manifold, and vary for different men: for one, the pole up which pride creeps is wealth; for another, birth; for a third, learning; for a fourth, moral character; for a fifth, religion: but in one form or another the evil spirit reveals itself in all who are not born from above. Nor do even the regenerate all at once escape its malign influence. The rudiments of the child-nature are in them from the first, but perfect child-likeness is very slowly reached. To get rid of pride, ambition, and vainglory, is indeed the great struggle of the new life; and he who hath by God's grace succeeded in humbling himself to be like a child, is one among a thousand—is, in fact, one of the great ones of the kingdom.

The feature of child-nature which forms the special point of comparison in this discourse on humility is its unpretentiousness. Early childhood knows nothing of those distinctions of rank which are the offspring of human pride, and the prizes coveted by human ambition. A king's child will play without scruple with a beggar's, thereby unconsciously asserting the insignificance of the things in which men differ, compared with the things that are common to all. What children are unconsciously, that Jesus requires His disciples to be voluntarily and deliberately. They are not to be pretentious and ambitious, like the grown children of the world, but meek and lowly of heart; disregarding rank and distinc-

tions, thinking not of their place in the kingdom, but giving themselves up in simplicity of spirit to the service of the King. "Not my will, but Thine;" "Not my glory, but Thy glory;" "Not honour, but duty," are the appropriate mottoes of Christians.

In proportion as men are great and good, they are humble in the sense explained. In this sense, the greatest one in the kingdom, the King Himself, was the humblest of men. Of humility in the form of self-depreciation or self-humiliation on account of sin He could know nothing, for there was no defect or fault in His character. But of the humility which consists in self-forgetfulness He was the perfect pattern. We cannot say that He thought *little* of Himself, but we may say that He thought not of Himself at all: He thought only of the Father's glory and of man's good. Considerations of personal aggrandizement had no place among His motives. He shrank with holy abhorrence from all who were influenced by such considerations, no character appearing so utterly detestable in His eye as that of the Pharisee, whose religion was a theatrical exhibition, always presupposing the presence of spectators, and who loved the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi. For Himself, He neither desired nor received honour from men. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister: He, the greatest, humbled Himself to be the least—to be a child born in a stable and laid in a manger; to be a man of sorrow lightly esteemed by the world; yea, to be nailed to a cross. By such wondrous self-humiliation He showed His divine greatness.

The higher we rise in the kingdom, the more we shall be like Jesus in this humbling of Himself. Child-likeness such as He exhibited is an invariable characteristic of spiritual advancement, even as its absence is the mark of moral littleness. The little man, even when well-intentioned, is ever consequential and scheming: ever thinking of himself, his honour, dignity, reputation, even when professedly doing good. He always studies to glorify God in a way that shall at the same time glorify himself. Frequently above the love of gain, he is never above the feeling of self-importance. The great

ones in the kingdom, on the other hand, throw themselves with such unreservedness into the work to which they are called, that they have neither time nor inclination to inquire what place they shall obtain in this world or the next. Leaving consequences to the great Governor and Lord, and forgetful of self-interest, they give their whole soul to their appointed task; content to fill a little space or a large one, as God shall appoint, and so He may be glorified.

Those who so live here shall obtain high place in the eternal kingdom. For be it observed, Jesus did not summarily dismiss the question, who is greatest in the kingdom, by negativing the existence of distinctions therein. He said not on this occasion, He said not on any other, "It is needless to ask who is the greatest in the kingdom: there is no such thing as a distinction of greater and less there." On the contrary, it is implied here, and it is asserted elsewhere, that there is such a thing. According to the doctrine of Christ, the supernal commonwealth has no affinity with jealous radicalism, which demands that all shall be equal. There are grades of distinction there as well as in the kingdoms of this world. The difference between the divine kingdom and all others lies in the principle on which promotion proceeds. Here the proud and the ambitious gain the post of honour; there, honours are conferred on the humble and the self-forgetful. He that on earth was willing to be the least in lowly love, will be the great one in the kingdom of heaven.

The next lesson Jesus taught His disciples at this time was the duty of receiving little ones; that is, not merely children in the literal sense, but all that a child represents—the weak, the insignificant, the helpless. The child which He held in His arms, having served as a type of the humble in spirit, next became a type of the humble in station, influence, and importance; and having been presented to the disciples in the former capacity as an object of imitation, was commended to them in the latter as an object of kind treatment. They were to receive the little ones graciously and lovingly, careful not to offend them by harsh, heartless, contemptuous conduct. All such kindness He, Jesus, would receive as done to Himself.

This transition of thought from *being* like a child to receiv-

ing all that of which childhood in its weakness is the emblem, was perfectly natural; for there is a close connection between the selfish struggle to be great, and an offensive mode of acting towards the little. Harshness and contemptuousness are vices inseparable from an ambitious spirit. An ambitious man is not, indeed, necessarily cruel in his disposition, and capable of cherishing heartless designs in cold blood. At times, when the demon that possesses him is quiescent, the idea of hurting a child, or anything that a child represents, may appear to him revolting; and he might resent the imputation of any such design, or even a hint at the possibility of his harbouring it, as a wanton insult. "Is thy servant a dog?" asked Hazael indignantly at Elisha, when the prophet described to him his own future self, setting the strongholds of Israel on fire, slaying their young men with the sword, dashing their children to the earth, and ripping up their women with child. At the moment his horror of these crimes was quite sincere, and yet he was guilty of them all. The prophet rightly divined his character, and read his future career of splendid wickedness in the light of it. He saw that he was ambitious, and all the rest followed as a matter of course. The king of Syria, his master, about whose recovery he affected solicitude, he would first put to death; and once on the throne, the same ambition that made him a murderer would goad him on to schemes of conquest, in the prosecution of which he would perpetrate all the barbarous cruelties in which oriental tyrants seemed to take fiendish delight.

The crimes of ambition, and the lamentations with which it has filled the earth, are a moral commonplace. Well might Jesus exclaim, as the havoc already wrought and yet to be wrought by the lust for place and power rose in vision before His eye: "Woe to the world because of offences!" And yet the woe is not all on the side of the wrong-sufferer. Jesus gave His disciples to understand that there was a greater woe impending over the wrong-doer. "But woe," He added, (still more) "to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Nor did He leave His hearers in the dark as to the nature of the offender's doom. "Whoso," He declared, in language which came forth from His lips like a flame of righteous indignation

at thought of the wrongs inflicted on the weak and the helpless,—"Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." "It were better for him"—or, it suits him, it is what he deserves; and it is implied, though not expressed, that it is what he gets when divine vengeance at length overtakes him. The mill-stone is no idle figure of speech, but an appropriate emblem of the ultimate doom of the proud. He who *will* mount to the highest place, regardless of the injuries he may inflict on little ones, shall be cast down, not to earth merely, but to the very lowest depths of the ocean, to the very abyss of hell, with a heavy weight of curses suspended on his neck to sink him down, and keep him down, so that he shall rise no more.[1] "They sank as lead in the mighty waters!"

Such being the awful doom of selfish ambition, it were wise in the high-minded to fear, and to anticipate God's judgment by judging themselves. This Jesus counselled His disciples to do, by repeating His weighty saying uttered once before in the Sermon on the Mount, concerning the cutting off offending members of the body.[2] At first view that saying appears irrelevant here, because the subject of discourse is offences against others, not offences against oneself. But its relevancy becomes evident when we consider that all offences against a brother are offences against ourselves. That is the very point Christ wishes to impress on His disciples. He would have them understand that self-interest dictates scrupulous care in avoiding offences to the little ones. "Rather than harm one of these," says the great Teacher in effect, "by hand, foot, eye, or tongue, have recourse to self-mutilation; for he that sinneth against even the least in the kingdom, sinneth also against his own soul."

How blessed for the church and the world if this doctrine were believed and acted on, and all regulated their conduct by the apostolic maxim: "Let every one of us please his neighbour for good to edification!"

[1] μύλος ὀνικός, stone of a mill turned by an ass, larger than one belonging to a handmill, selected to make sure that the wicked shall sink to rise no more.

[2] Matt. xviii. 8, 9; compare v. 29, 30.

One thing more Jesus taught His disciples while He held the child in His arms, viz. that those who injured or despised little ones were entirely out of harmony with the mind of Heaven. "Take heed," said He, "that ye despise not one of these little ones;" and then He proceeded to enforce the warning by drawing aside the veil, and showing them a momentary glimpse of that very celestial kingdom in which they were all so desirous to have prominence. "Lo, there! see those angels standing before the throne of God—these be ministering spirits to the little ones! And lo, here am I, the Son of God, come all the way from heaven to save them! And behold how the face of the Father in heaven smiles on the angels and on me, because we take such loving interest in them!" How eloquent the argument! how powerful the appeal! "The inhabitants of heaven," such is its drift, "are loving and humble; ye are selfish and proud. What hope can ye cherish of admission into a kingdom, the spirit of which is so utterly diverse from that by which ye are animated? Nay, are ye not ashamed of yourselves when ye witness this glaring contrast between the lowliness of the celestials and the pride and pretensions of puny men? Put away, henceforth and for ever, vain, ambitious thoughts, and let the meek and gentle spirit of heaven get possession of your hearts."

Two things in the beautiful picture of the upper world drawn here by Jesus are noteworthy. One is the intimation that the little ones have each their guardian angel or ministering spirit in glory. Of this piece of news it has been quaintly remarked by Henry: "Christ saith it to us, and we may take it upon His word who came from heaven to let us know what is done there by the world of angels." The other noticeable matter is the introduction by Jesus of a reference to His work as the Saviour of the lost, into an argument designed to enforce care for the little ones. The reference is not an irrelevance; it is of the nature of an argument *à fortiori*. If the Son of man cared for the *lost*, the *low*, the morally degraded, how much more will He care for those who are merely little! It is a far greater effort of love to seek the salvation of the wicked than to interest oneself in the weak;

and He who did the one will certainly not fail to do the other. He who came to die for sinners, even the chief, will certainly not despise the very least of those for whom He died; nor will He suffer any one to do so with impunity.

The saving love of Christ, as set forth in the parable of the good shepherd going after the straying sheep,[1] is in every respect an appropriate topic in a discourse on humility; for that love is, in the first place, the sublimest example of humility. It shows that there was not only no pride of greatness in the Son of God, but also no pride of holiness. He could not only condescend to men of humble estate, but could even become the brother of the vile: one with them in sympathy and lot, that they might become one with Him in privilege and character. Then that love believed in is the source of humility in us. To it we owe our hope of admission into the kingdom, whether as least or as greatest. All are lost ones, to begin with; and when we reflect what we are delivered from by Christ's merit, it makes us humbly thankful for the rights of citizenship in the supernal commonwealth, even though we should occupy the meanest station there.

Finally, faith in Christ's redeeming love is the true source of that charity which careth for the weak and despiseth not the little. No one who rightly appreciates His love can deliberately offend or heartlessly contemn any brother, however insignificant, for whom He died. He will count the little ones dear for His sake; he will feel that the least return he can make for personal salvation is to behave himself towards them with meekness and gentleness. He will be ready to deny himself harmless liberties, rather than hurt the tender conscience of even the least one in the kingdom. "If meat," said Paul, "make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."[2] The noble sentiment was inspired by the consciousness of deep personal obligation to the mercy of God in Christ, and all who have believed in Christ for salvation thoroughly sympathize with it.

[1] Matt. xviii. 12, 13. [2] 1 Cor. viii. 13.

SECTION II.—*Church Discipline.*

MATT. XVIII. 15–20.

Having duly cautioned His hearers against offending the little ones, Jesus proceeded (according to the account of His words in the Gospel of Matthew) to tell them how to act when they were not the givers, but the receivers or the judges, of offences. In this part of His discourse He had in view the future rather than the present. Contemplating the time when the kingdom—that is, the church—should be in actual existence as an organized community, with the twelve exercising in it authority as apostles, He gives directions for the exercise of discipline, in order to the purity and well-being of the Christian brotherhood;[1] confers on the twelve collectively what He had already granted to Peter singly—the power to bind and loose, that is, to inflict and remove church censures;[2] and makes a most encouraging promise of His own spiritual presence, and of prevailing power with His heavenly Father in prayer, to all assembled in His name, and agreeing together in the objects of their desires.[3] His aim throughout is to ensure beforehand that the community to be called after His name shall be indeed a holy, loving, united society.

The rules here laid down for the guidance of the apostles in dealing with offenders, though simple and plain, have given rise to much debate among religious controversialists interested in the upholding of diverse theories of church government.[4] Of these ecclesiastical disputes we shall say nothing here; nor do we deem it needful to offer any expository comments on our Lord's words, save a sentence of explanation on the phrase employed by Him to describe the state of excommunication: "Let him" (that is, the impenitent brother about to be cast out of the church) "be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." These words, luminous without doubt at the time they were spoken, are not quite so clear to us now; but yet

[1] Matt. xviii. 15–17. [2] Ver. 18. [3] Vers. 19, 20.

[4] Persons curious concerning these controversies will find abundant information in Gillespie's *Aaron's Rod Blossoming.*

their meaning in the main is sufficiently plain. The idea is, that the persistently impenitent offender is to become at length to the person he has offended, and to the whole church, one with whom is to be held no religious, and as little as possible social fellowship. The religious aspect of excommunication is pointed at by the expression "as an heathen man," and the social side of it is expressed in the second clause of the sentence, "and a publican." Heathens were excluded from the temple, and had no part in Jewish religious rites. Publicans were not excluded from the temple, so far as we know; but they were regarded as social pariahs by all Jews affecting patriotism and religious strictness. This indiscriminate dislike of the whole class was not justifiable, nor is any approval of it implied here. Jesus refers to it simply as a familiar matter of fact, which conveniently and clearly conveyed His meaning to the effect: "Let the impenitent offender be to you what heathens are to all Jews by law—persons with whom to hold no religious fellowship; and what publicans are to Pharisees by inveterate prejudice—persons to be excluded from all but merely unavoidable social intercourse."

Whatever obscurity may attach to the letter of the rules for the management of discipline, there can be no doubt at all as to the loving, holy spirit which pervades them.

The spirit of love appears in the conception of the church which underlies these rules. The church is viewed as a commonwealth, in which the concern of one is the concern of all, and *vice versa*. Hence Jesus does not specify the class of offences He intends, whether private and personal ones, or such as are of the nature of scandals, that is, offences against the church as a whole. On His idea of a church, such explanations were unnecessary, because the distinction alluded to in great part ceases to exist. An offence against the conscience of the whole community is an offence against each individual member, because he is jealous for the honour of the body of believers; and on the other hand, an offence which is in the first place private and personal, becomes one in which all are concerned, so soon as the offended party has failed to bring his brother to confession and reconciliation. A chronic alienation between two Christian brethren will be regarded,

in a church after Christ's mind, as a scandal not to be tolerated, because fraught with deadly harm to the spiritual life of all.

Very congenial also to the spirit of charity is the order of proceeding indicated in the directions given by Jesus. First, strictly private dealing on the part of the offended with his offending brother is prescribed; then, after such dealing has been fairly tried and has failed, but not till then, third parties are to be brought in as witnesses and assistants in the work of reconciliation; and finally, and only as a last resource, the subject of quarrel is to be made public, and brought before the whole church. This method of procedure is obviously most considerate as towards the offender. It makes confession as easy to him as possible, by sparing him the shame of exposure. It is also a method which cannot be worked out without the purest and holiest motives on the part of him who seeks redress. It leaves no room for the reckless talkativeness of the scandalmonger, who loves to divulge evil news, and speaks to everybody of a brother's faults rather than to the brother himself. It puts a bridle on the passion of resentment, by compelling the offended one to go through a patient course of dealing with his brother before he arrive at the sad issue at which anger jumps at once, viz. total estrangement. It gives no encouragement to the officious and over-zealous, who make themselves busy in ferreting out offences; for the way of such is not to begin with the offender, and then go to the church, but to go direct to the church with severe charges, based probably on hearsay information gained by dishonourable means.

Characteristic of the loving spirit of Jesus, the Head of the church, is the horror with which He contemplates, and would have His disciples contemplate, the possibility of any one, once a brother, becoming to his brethren as a heathen or a publican. This appears in His insisting that no expedient shall be left untried to avert the sad catastrophe. How unlike in this respect is His mind to that of the world, which can with perfect equanimity allow vast multitudes of fellow-men to be what heathens were to Jews, and publicans to Pharisees—persons excluded from all kindly communion! Nay, may we not say, how unlike the mind of Jesus in this matter to that

of many even in the church, who treat brethren in the same outward fellowship with most perfect indifference, and have become so habituated to the evil practice, that they regard it without compunction as a quite natural and right state of things!

Such heartless indifferentism implies a very different ideal of the church from that cherished by its Founder. Men who do not regard ecclesiastical fellowship as imposing any obligation to love their Christian brethren, think, consciously or unconsciously, of the church as if it were a hotel, where all kinds of people meet for a short space, sit down together at the same table, then part, neither knowing nor caring anything about each other; while, in truth, it is rather a family, whose members are all brethren, bound to love each other with pure heart fervently. Of course this hotel theory involves as a necessary consequence the disuse of discipline. For, strange as the idea may seem to many, the law of love is the basis of church discipline. It is because I am bound to take every member of the church to my arms as a brother, that I am not only entitled, but bound, to be earnestly concerned about his behaviour. If a brother in Christ, according to ecclesiastical standing, may say to me, "You must love me with all your heart," I am entitled to say in reply, "I acknowledge the obligation in the abstract, but I demand of you in turn that you shall be such that I can love you as a Christian, however weak and imperfect; and I feel it to be both my right and my duty to do all I can to make you worthy of such brotherly regard, by plain dealing with you anent your offences. I am willing to love *you*, but I cannot, I dare not, be on friendly terms with your *sins;* and if you refuse to part with these, and virtually require me to be a partaker in them by connivance, then our brotherhood is at an end, and I am free from my obligations." To such language and such a style of thought the patron of the hotel theory of church fellowship is an utter stranger. Disclaiming the obligation to love his brethren, he at the same time renounces the right to insist on Christian virtue as an indispensable attribute of church membership, and declines to trouble himself about the behaviour of any member, except in so far as it may affect

himself personally. All may think and act as they please—be infidels or believers, sons of God or sons of Belial: it is all one to him.

Holy severity finds a place in these directions, as well as tender, considerate love. Jesus solemnly sanctions the excommunication of an impenitent offender. "Let him," saith He, with the tone of a judge pronouncing sentence of death, "be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Then, to invest church censures righteously administered with all possible solemnity and authority, He proceeds to declare that they carry with them eternal consequences; adding in His most emphatic manner the awful words,—awful both to the sinner cast out, and to those who are responsible for his ejection: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." The words may be regarded in one sense as a caution to ecclesiastical rulers to beware how they use a power of so tremendous a character; but they also plainly show that Christ desired His church on earth, as nearly as possible, to resemble the church in heaven: to be holy in her membership, and not an indiscriminate congregation of righteous and unrighteous men, of believers and infidels, of Christians and reprobates; and for that end committed the power of the keys to those who bear office in His house, authorizing them to deliver over to Satan's thrall the proud stubborn sinner who refuses to be corrected, and to give satisfaction to the aggrieved consciences of his brethren.

Such rigour, pitiless in appearance, is really merciful to all parties. It is merciful to the faithful members of the church, because it removes from their midst a mortifying limb, whose presence imperils the life of the whole body. Scandalous open sin cannot be tolerated in any society, without general demoralization ensuing; least of all in the church, which is a society whose very *raison d'être* is the culture of Christian virtue. But the apparently pitiless rigour is mercy even towards the unfaithful who are the subjects thereof. For to keep scandalous offenders inside the communion of the church, is to do your best to damn their souls, and to exclude them ultimately from heaven. On the other hand, to deliver them

over to Satan may be, and it is to be hoped will be, but giving them a foretaste of hell now, that they may be saved from hell-fire for ever. It was in this hope that Paul insisted on the excommunication of the incestuous person from the Corinthian church, that by the castigation of his fleshly sin "his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." It is this hope which comforts those on whom the disagreeable task of enforcing church censures falls in the discharge of their painful duty. They can cast forth evil-doers from the communion of saints with less hesitation, when they know that as publicans and sinners the excommunicated are nearer the kingdom of God than they were as church members, and when they consider that they are still permitted to seek the good of the ungodly, as Christ sought the good of all the outcasts of His day; that it is still in their power to pray for them, and to preach to them, as they stand in the outer court of the Gentiles, though they may not put into their unholy hands the symbols of the Saviour's body and blood.

Such considerations, indeed, would go far to reconcile those who are sincerely concerned for the spiritual character of the church, and for the safety of individual souls, to very considerable reductions of communion rolls. There cannot be a doubt that, if church discipline were upheld with the efficiency and vigour contemplated by Christ, such reductions would take place on an extensive scale. It is indeed true that the purging process might be carried to excess, and with very injurious effects. Tares might be mistaken for wheat, and wheat for tares. The church might be turned into a society of Pharisees, thanking God that they were not as other men, or as the poor publicans who stood without, hearing and praying, but not communicating; while among those outside the communion rails might be not only the unworthy, but many timid ones who dared not come nigh, but, like the publican of the parable, could only stand afar off, crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," yet all the while were justified rather than the others. A system tending to bring about such results is one extreme to be avoided. But there is another yet more pernicious extreme still more sedulously to be shunned: a careless laxity, which allows sheep and goats to be huddled together in one fold, the

goats being thereby encouraged to deem themselves sheep, and deprived of the greatest benefit they can enjoy—the privilege of being spoken to plainly as "unconverted sinners."

Such unseemly mixtures of the godly and the godless are too common phenomena in these days. And the reason is not far to seek. It is not indifference to morality, for that is not generally a characteristic of the church in our time. It is the desire to multiply members. The various religious bodies value members still more than morality or high-toned Christian virtue, and they fear lest by discipline they may lose one or two names from their communion roll. Alas, the fear is well founded! Fugitives from discipline are always sure of an open door and a hearty welcome in some quarter. This is one of the many curses entailed upon us by that greatest of all scandals, religious division. One who has become, or is in danger of becoming, as a heathen man and a publican to one ecclesiastical body, has a good chance of becoming a saint or an angel in another. Rival churches play at cross purposes, one loosing when another binds; so doing their utmost to make all spiritual sentences null and void both in earth and heaven, and to rob religion of all dignity and authority. Well may libertines pray that the divisions of the church may continue, for while these last they fare well! Far otherwise did it fare with the like of them in the days when the church was catholic and one; when sinners repenting worked their way, in the slow course of years, from the *locus lugentium* outside the sanctuary, through the *locus audientium* and the *locus substratorum*, to the *locus fidelium*: in that painful manner learning what an evil and a bitter thing it is to depart from the living God.[1]

The promise made to consent in prayer[2] comes in appropriately in a discourse delivered to disciples who had been disputing who should be the greatest. In this connection the promise means: "So long as ye are divided by dissensions and jealousies, ye shall be impotent alike with men and with God; in your ecclesiastical procedure as church rulers, and

[1] See Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiasticæ* for an account of the ancient church discipline.

[2] Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

in your supplications at the throne of grace. But if ye be united in mind and heart, ye shall have power with God, and shall prevail: my Father will grant your requests, and I myself will be in the midst of you."

It is not necessary to assume any very close connection between this promise and the subject of which Jesus had been speaking just before. In this familiar discourse, transition is made from one topic to another in an easy conversational manner, care being taken only that all that is said shall be relevant to the general subject in hand. The meeting, supposed to be convened in Christ's name, need not therefore be one of church officers assembled for the transaction of ecclesiastical business: it may be a meeting, in a church or in a cottage, purely for the purposes of worship. The promise avails for all persons, all subjects of prayer, all places, and all times; for all truly Christian assemblies great and small.

The promise avails for the smallest number that can make a meeting—even for two or three. This minimum number is condescended on for the purpose of expressing in the strongest possible manner the importance of brotherly concord. Jesus gives us to understand that two agreed are better, stronger, than twelve or a thousand divided by enmities and ambitious passions. "The Lord, when He would commend unanimity and peace to His disciples, said, 'If two of you shall agree on earth,' etc., to show that most is granted not to the multitude, but to the concord of the supplicants."[1] It is an obvious inference, that if by agreement even two be strong, then a multitude really united in mind would be proportionally stronger. For we must not fancy that God has any *partiality* for a little meeting, or that there is any virtue in a small number. Little strait sects are apt to fall into this mistake, and to imagine that Christ had them specially in His eye when He said two or three, and that the kind of agreement by which they are distinguished—agreement in whim and crotchet—is what He desiderated. Ridiculous caricature of the Lord's meaning! The agreement He requires of His disciples is not entire unanimity in opinion, but consent of mind and heart in the ends they aim at, and in

[1] Cyprianus, *de Unitate Ecclesiæ.*

unselfish devotion to these ends. When He spake of two or three, He did not contemplate, as the desirable state of things, the body of His church split up into innumerable fragments by religious opinionativeness, each fragment in proportion to its minuteness imagining itself sure of His presence and blessing. He did not wish His church to consist of a collection of clubs having no intercommunion with each other, any more than He desired it to be a monster hotel, receiving and harbouring all comers, no questions being asked. He made the promise now under consideration, not to stimulate sectarianism, but to encourage the cultivation of virtues which have ever been too rare on earth—brotherly-kindness, meekness, charity. The thing He values, in a word, is not paucity of numbers, due to the *want* of charity, but union of hearts in lowly love among the greatest number possible.

Section III.—*Forgiving Injuries.*

Matt. xviii. 21–35.

A lesson on forgiveness fitly ended the solemn discourse on humility delivered in the hearing of disputatious disciples. The connection of thought between beginning and end is very real, though it does not quite lie on the surface. A vindictive temper, which is the thing here condemned, is one of the vices fostered by an ambitious spirit. An ambitious man is sure to be the receiver of many offences, real or imaginary. He is quick to take offence, and slow to forgive or forget wrong. Forgiving injuries is not in his way: he is more in his element when he lays hold of his debtor by the throat, and with ruffian fierceness demands payment.

The concluding part of the discourse was occasioned by a question put by Peter, the usual spokesman of the twelve, who came to Jesus and said: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" By what precise association of ideas the question was suggested to Peter's mind we know not; perhaps he did not know himself, for the movements of the mind are often mysterious,

and in impulsive mercurial natures they are also apt to be sudden. Thoughts shoot into consciousness like meteors into the upper atmosphere; and suddenly conceived, are as abruptly uttered, with physical gestures accompanying, indicating the force with which they have taken possession of the soul. Suffice it to say, that the disciple's query, however suggested, was relevant to the subject in hand, and had latent spiritual affinities with all that Jesus had said concerning humility and the giving and receiving of offences. It showed on Peter's part an intelligent attention to the words of his Master, and a conscientious solicitude to conform his conduct to those heavenly precepts by which he felt for the moment subdued and softened.

The question put by Peter further revealed a curious mixture of child-likeness and childishness. To be so earnest about the duty of forgiving, and even to think of practising the duty so often as seven times towards the same offender, betrayed the true child of the kingdom; for none but the graciously minded are exercised in that fashion. But to imagine that pardon repeated just so many times would exhaust obligation and amount to something magnanimous and divine, was very simple. Poor Peter, in his ingenuous attempt at the magnanimous, was like a child standing on tip-toe to make himself as tall as his father, or climbing to the top of a hillock to get near the skies.

The reply of Jesus to His honest but crude disciple was admirably adapted to put him out of conceit with himself, and to make him feel how puny and petty were the dimensions of his charity. Echoing the thought of the prophetic oracle, it tells those who would be like God that they must multiply pardons:[1] "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." Alas for the rarity of such charity under the sun! Christ's thoughts are not man's thoughts, neither are His ways common among men. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts and ways higher than those current in this world. For many, far from forgiving times without number a brother confessing his fault, do not forgive even so much as once, but act so that

[1] Isa. lv. 7.

we can recognise their portrait drawn to the life in the parable of the *unmerciful servant.*

In this parable, whose minutest details are fraught with instruction, three things are specially noteworthy: the contrast between the two debts; the corresponding contrast between the two creditors; and the doom pronounced on those who, being forgiven the large debt owed by them, refuse to forgive the small debt owed to them.

The two debts are respectively ten thousand talents and a hundred denarii, being to each other in the proportion of, say, a million to one. The enormous disparity is intended to represent the difference between the shortcomings of all men towards God, and those with which any man can charge a fellow-creature. The representation is confessed to be just by all who know human nature and their own hearts; and the consciousness of its truth helps them greatly to be gentle and forbearing towards offenders. Yet the parable seems to be faulty in this, that it makes the unmerciful servant answerable for such a debt as it seems impossible for any man to run up. Who ever heard of a private debt amounting in British money to millions sterling? The difficulty is met by the suggestion, that the debtor is a person of high rank, like one of the princes whom Darius set over the kingdom of Persia, or a provincial governor of the Roman Empire. Such an official might very soon make himself liable for the huge sum here specified, simply by retaining for his own benefit the revenues of his province, as they passed through his hands, instead of remitting them to the royal treasury.

That it was some such unscrupulous minister of state, guilty of the crime of embezzlement, whom Jesus had in His eye, appears all but certain when we recollect what gave rise to the discourse of which this parable forms the conclusion. The disciples had disputed among themselves who should be greatest in the kingdom, each one being ambitious to obtain the place of distinction for himself. Here, accordingly, their Master holds up to their view the conduct of a great one, concerned not about the faithful discharge of his duty, but about his own aggrandizement. "Behold," He says to them in effect, "what men who wish to be great ones do! They

rob their king of his revenue, and abuse the opportunities afforded by their position to enrich themselves; and while scandalously negligent of their own obligations, they are characteristically exacting towards any little one who may happen in the most innocent way, not by fraud, but by misfortune, to have become their debtor."

Thus understood, the parable faithfully represents the guilt and criminality of those at least who are animated by the spirit of pride, and deliberately make self-advancement their chief end: a class by no means small in number. Such men are great sinners, whoever may be little ones. They not merely come short of the glory of God, the true chief end of man, but they deliberately rob the Supreme of His due, calling in question His sovereignty, denying their accountability to Him for their actions, and by the spirit which animates them, saying every moment of their lives, "Who is Lord over us?" It is impossible to overestimate the magnitude of their guilt.

The contrast between the two creditors is not less striking than that between the two debts. The king forgives the enormous debt of his unprincipled satrap, on receiving a simple promise to pay; the forgiven satrap relentlessly exacts the petty debt of some three pounds sterling from the poor hapless underling who owes it, stopping his ear to the identical petition for delay which he had himself successfully presented to his sovereign lord. Here also the colouring of the parable appears too strong. The great creditor seems lenient to excess: for surely such a crime as the satrap had been guilty of ought not to go unpunished; and surely it had been wise to attach little weight to a promise of future payment made by a man who, with unbounded extravagance, had already squandered such a prodigious sum, so that he had nothing to pay! Then this great debtor, in his character as small creditor, seems incredibly inhuman; for even the meanest, most greedy, and grasping churl, not to speak of so great a gentleman, might well be ashamed to show such eagerness about so trifling a sum as to seize the poor wight who owed it by the throat and drag him to prison, to lie there till he paid it.

The representation is doubtless extreme, and yet in both parts it is in accordance with truth. God does deal with His

debtors as the king dealt with the satrap. He is slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil He hath threatened. He giveth men space to repent, and by providential delays accepts promises of amendment, though He knoweth full well that they will be broken, and that those who made them will go on sinning as before. So He dealt with Pharaoh, with Israel, with Nineveh; so He deals with all whom He calls to account by remorse of conscience, by a visitation of sickness, or by the apprehension of death, when, on their exclaiming, in a passing penitential mood, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all," He grants their petition, knowing that when the danger or the fit of repentance is over, the promise of amendment will be utterly forgotten. Truly was it written of old: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

Nor is the part played by the unmerciful servant, however infamous and inhuman, altogether unexampled; although its comparative rarity is implied in that part of the parabolic story which represents the fellow-servants of the relentless one as shocked and grieved at his conduct, and as reporting it to the common master. It would not be impossible to find originals of the dark picture even among professors of the Christian religion, who believe in the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus, and hope to experience all the benefits of divine mercy for His sake.

It is by such, indeed, that the crime of unmercifulness is, in the parable, supposed to be committed. The exacting creditor meets his debtor just as he himself comes out from the presence of the king, after craving and receiving remission of his own debt. This feature in the story at once adapts its lesson specially to believers in the gospel, and points out the enormity of their guilt. All such, if not really forgiven, do at least consciously live under a reign of grace, in which God is assuming the attitude of one who desires all to be reconciled unto Himself, and for that end proclaims a gratuitous pardon to all who will receive it. In men so situated, the spirit of unmercifulness is peculiarly offensive. Shameful in a pagan—for the light of nature teacheth the duty of being merciful—

such inhuman rigour as is here portrayed, in a Christian, is utterly abominable. Think of it! he goes out from the presence of the King of grace; rises up from the perusal of the blessed gospel, which tells of One who received publicans and sinners, even the chief; walks forth from the house of prayer where the precious evangel is proclaimed, yea, from the communion table, which commemorates the love that moved the Son of God to pay the debt of sinners; and he meets a fellow-mortal who has done him some petty wrong, and seizes him by the throat, and truculently demands reparation on pain of imprisonment or something worse, if it be not forthcoming. May not the most gracious Lord righteously say to such an one: "O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest thou not also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" What can the miscreant who showed no mercy expect, but to receive judgment without mercy, and to be delivered over to the tormentors, to be kept in durance and put to the rack, without hope of release, till he shall have paid his debt to the uttermost farthing?

This very doom Jesus, in the closing sentences of His discourse, solemnly assured His disciples awaited all who cherished an unforgiving temper, even if they themselves should be the guilty parties. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Stern words these, which lay down a rule of universal application, not relaxable in the case of favoured parties. Were partiality admissible at all, such as the twelve would surely get the benefit of it; but as if to intimate that in this matter there is no respect of persons, the law is enunciated with direct, emphatic reference to them. And harsh as the law might seem, Jesus is careful to indicate His cordial approval of its being enforced with Rhadamanthine rigour. For that purpose He calls God, the Judge, by the endearing name "My heavenly Father;" as if to say: "The great God and King does not seem to me unduly stern in decreeing such penalties against the unforgiving. I, the merciful, tender-hearted Son of man, thoroughly sympathize with such judicial severity. I should solemnly say

Amen to that doom pronounced even against you, if you behaved so as to deserve it. Think not that because ye are my chosen companions, therefore violations of the law of love by you will be winked at. On the contrary, just because ye are great ones in the kingdom, so far as privilege goes, will compliance with its fundamental laws be especially expected of you, and non-compliance most severely punished. To whom much is given, of him shall much be required. See, then, that ye forgive every one his brother their trespasses, and that ye do so really, not in pretence, *even from your very hearts.*" By such severe plainness of speech did Jesus educate His disciples for being truly great ones in His kingdom: great not in pride, pretension, and presumption, but in loyal obedience to the behests of their King, and particularly to this law of forgiveness, on which He insisted in His teaching so earnestly and so frequently.[1]

SECTION IV.—*The Temple Tax: an Illustration of the Sermon.*

MATT. XVII. 24–27.

This story is a nut with a dry hard shell, but a very sweet kernel. Superficial readers may see in it nothing more than a curious anecdote of a singular fish with a piece of money in its mouth turning up opportunely to pay a tax, related by Matthew, alone of the evangelists, not because of its intrinsic importance, but simply because, being an ex-taxgatherer, he took kindly to the tale. Devout readers, though unwilling to acknowledge it, may be secretly scandalized by the miracle related, as not merely a departure from the rule which Jesus observed of not using His divine power to help Himself, but as something very like a piece of sport on His part, or an expression of a humorous sense of incongruity, reminding one of the grotesque figures in old cathedrals, in the carving of which the builders delighted to show their skill, and find for themselves amusement.

Breaking the shell of the story, we discover within, as its

[1] See Matt. vi. 14.

kernel, a most pathetic exhibition of the humiliation and self-humiliation of the Son of man, who appears exposed to the indignity of being dunned for temple dues, and so oppressed with poverty that He cannot pay the sum demanded, though its amount is only fifteenpence; yet neither pleading poverty nor insisting on exemption on the score of privilege, but quietly meeting the claims of the collectors in a manner which, if sufficiently strange, as we admit,[1] was at all events singularly meek and peaceable.

The present incident supplies, in truth, an admirable illustration of the doctrine taught by Jesus in the discourse on humility. The greatest in the kingdom here exemplifies by anticipation the lowliness He inculcated on His disciples, and shows them in exercise a holy, loving solicitude to avoid giving offence not only to the little ones within the kingdom, but even to those without. He stands not on His dignity as the Son of God, though the voice from heaven uttered on the holy mount still rings in His ears, but consents to be treated as a subject or a stranger; desiring to live peaceably with men whose ways He does not love, and who bear Him no good-will, by complying with their wishes in all things lawful.

We regard this curious scene at Capernaum (with the Mount of Transfiguration in the distant background!) as a historical frontispiece to the sermon we have been studying. We are justified in taking this view of it, by the consideration that, though the scene occurred before the sermon was delivered, it happened *after* the dispute which supplied the preacher with a text. The disciples fell to disputing on the way home from the Mount of Transfiguration, while the visit of the taxgatherers took place on their arrival in Capernaum. Of course Jesus knew of the dispute at the time of the visit, though He had not yet expressly adverted to it. Is it too much to assume, that His knowledge of what had been going

[1] Jesus did work miracles expressive of humour, not in levity, but in holy earnest. Such were the cursing of the fig-tree; the healing of blindness by putting clay on the eyes, as a satire on the blind guides; and the present one, expressing a sense of the incongruity between the outward condition and the intrinsic dignity of the Son of God.

on by the way influenced His conduct in the affair of the tribute money, and led Him to make it the occasion for teaching by action the same lesson which He meant to take an early opportunity of inculcating by words?

This assumption, so far from being unwarranted, is, we believe, quite necessary in order to make Christ's conduct on this occasion intelligible. Those who leave out of account the dispute by the way are not in the right point of view for seeing the incident at Capernaum in its natural light, and they fall inevitably into misunderstandings. They are forced, *e.g.*, to regard Jesus as arguing seriously against payment of the temple tax, as something not legally obligatory, or as lying out of the ordinary course of His humiliation as the Son of man. Now it was neither one nor other of these things. The law of Moses ordained that every man above twenty years should pay the sum of half a shekel as an atonement for his soul, and to meet the expenses connected with the service of the tabernacle rendered to God for the common benefit of all Israelites; and Jesus, as a Jew, was just as much under obligation to comply with this particular law as with any other. Nor was there any peculiar indignity either in kind or degree involved in obeying that law. Doubtless it was a great indignity and humiliation to the Son of God to be paying taxes for the maintenance of His own Father's house! All that He said to Peter, pointing out the incongruity of such a state of things, was sober truth. But the incongruity does not meet us here alone; it runs through the whole of our Lord's earthly experience. His life, in all respects, departed from the analogy of kings' sons. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience; though He were a Son, yet came He not to be ministered unto, but to minister; though He were a Son, yet became He subject to the law, not merely the moral but the ceremonial, and was circumcised, and took part in the temple worship, and frequented the sacred feasts, and offered sacrifices, though these were all but shadows of good things, whereof He Himself was the substance. Surely, in a life containing so many indignities and incongruities—which was, in fact, one grand indignity from beginning to end—it was a small matter to be obliged to pay annually, for the

benefit of the temple, the paltry sum of fifteenpence! He who with marvellous patience went through all the rest, could not possibly mean to stumble and scruple at so trifling a matter. He who did nothing towards destroying the temple and putting an end to legal worship before the time, could not be a party to the mean policy of starving out its officials, or grudging the funds necessary to keep the sacred edifice in good repair. He might say openly what He thought of existing ecclesiastical abuses, but He would do no more.

The truth is, that the words spoken by Jesus to Simon were not intended as an argument against paying the tax, but as an explanation of what was meant by His paying it, and of the motive which guided Him in paying it. They were a lesson for Simon, and through him for the twelve, on a subject wherein they had great need of instruction; not a legal defence against the demands of the tax-gatherer. But for that dispute by the way, Jesus would probably have taken the quietest means for getting the tax paid, as a matter of course, without making any remarks on the subject. That He had already acted thus on previous occasions, Peter's prompt affirmative reply to the question of the collectors seems to imply. The disciple said "yes," as knowing what his Master had done in past years, and assuming as a thing of course that His practice would be the same now. But Jesus did not deem it, in present circumstances, expedient to let His disciples regard His action with respect to the tax as a mere vulgar matter of course; He wanted them to understand and reflect on *the moral meaning* and *the motive* of His action, for their own instruction and guidance.

On these two points, we repeat, Jesus desired to arrest the attention of Simon and the rest of the twelve. He wished them to understand, *in the first place*, that for Him to pay the temple dues *was* a humiliation and an incongruity, similar to that of a king's son paying a tax for the support of the palace and the royal household; that it was not a thing of course that He should pay, any more than it was a thing of course that He should become man, and, so to speak, leave His royal state behind and assume the rank of a peasant; that it was an act of voluntary humiliation, forming one item in the course of

humiliation to which He voluntarily submitted, beginning with His birth, and ending with His death and burial. He desired His disciples to think of these things in the hope that meditation on them would help to rebuke the pride, pretension, and self-assertion which had given rise to that petty dispute about places of distinction. He would say to them, in effect: "Were I, like you, covetous of honours, and bent on asserting my importance, I would stand on my dignity, and haughtily reply to these collectors of tribute: Why trouble ye me about temple dues? Know ye not who I am? I am the Christ, the Son of the living God: the temple is my Father's house; and I, His Son, am free from all servile obligations. But, note ye well, I do nothing of the kind. With the honours heaped upon me on the Mount of Transfiguration fresh in my recollection, with the consciousness of who I am, and whence I came, and whither I go, abiding deep in my soul, I submit to be treated as a mere common Jew, suffering my honours to fall into abeyance, and making no demands for a recognition which is not voluntarily conceded. The world knows me not; and while it knows me not, I am content that it should do with me, as with John, whatsoever 'it lists. Did the rulers know who I am, they would be ashamed to ask of me temple dues; but since they do not, I accept and bear all the indignities consequent on their ignorance."

All this Jesus said in effect to His disciples, by first adverting to the grounds on which a refusal to pay the didrachmon might plausibly be defended, and then after all paying it. The manner of payment also was so contrived by Him as to reinforce the lesson. He said not to Simon simply: "Go and catch fish, that with the proceeds of their sale we may satisfy our creditors." He gave him directions as the Lord of nature, to whom all creatures in land or sea were subject, and all their movements familiar, while yet so humbled as to need the services of the meanest of them. By drawing on His omniscience in giving these instructions to His disciple, He did, in a manner, what He never did either before or after: viz. wrought a miracle for His own behoof. The exception, however, had the same reason as the rule, and therefore proved the rule. Jesus abstained from using His divine faculties

for His own benefit, that He might not impair the integrity of His humiliation; that His human life might be a real *bonâ fide* life of hardship, unalleviated by the presence of the divine element in His personality. But what was the effect of the lightning-flash of divine knowledge emitted by Him in giving those directions to Peter? To impair the integrity of His humiliation? Nay, but only to make it glaringly conspicuous. It said to Simon, and to us, if he and we had ears to hear: "Behold who it is that pays this tax, and that is reduced to such straits in order to pay it! 'Tis He who knoweth all the fowls of the mountain, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea!"

The other point on which Jesus desired to fix the attention of His disciples, was the reason which moved Him to adopt the policy of submission to what was in itself an indignity. That reason was to avoid giving offence: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them." This was not, of course, the only reason of His conduct in this case. There were other comprehensive reasons applicable to His whole experience of humiliation, and to this small item therein in particular; a full account of which would just amount to an answer to the great question put by Anselm: "Cur Deus Homo;" Why did God become man? On that great question we do not enter here, however, but confine ourselves to the remark, that while the reason assigned by Jesus to Peter for his payment of the temple dues was by no means the only one, or even the chief, it was the reason to which, for the disciples' sake, He deemed it expedient just then to give prominence. He was about to discourse to them largely on the subject of giving and receiving offences; and He wished them, and specially their foremost man, first of all to observe how very careful He Himself was not to offend: what a prominent place the desire to avoid giving offence occupied among His motives.

Christ's declared reason for paying the tribute is strikingly expressive of His lowliness and His love. Notice, as the mark of His lowliness, that there is no word here of *taking* offence. How easily and plausibly might He have taken up the position of one who did well to be angry! "I am the Christ, the Son of God," He might have said, "and have substan-

tiated my claims by a thousand miracles in word and deed, yet they wilfully refuse to recognise me; I am a poor homeless wanderer, yet they, knowing this, demand the tribute, as if more for the sake of annoying and insulting me than of getting the money. And for what purpose do they collect these dues? For the support of a religious establishment thoroughly effete, to repair an edifice doomed to destruction, to maintain a priesthood scandalously deficient in the cardinal virtues of integrity and truth, and whose very existence is a curse to the land. I cannot in conscience pay a didrachmon, no, not even so much as a farthing, for any such objects."

The lowly One did not assume this attitude, but gave what was asked without complaint, grudging, or railing; and His conduct conveys lessons for Christians in all ages, and in our own age in particular. It teaches the children of the kingdom not to murmur because the world does not recognise their status and dignity. The world knew not when He came, even God's eternal Son; what wonder if it recognise not His younger brethren! The kingdom of heaven itself is not believed in, and its citizens should not be surprised at any want of respect towards them individually. The manifestation of the sons of God is one of the things for which Christians wait in hope. For the present they are not the children, but the strangers: instead of exemption from burdens, they should rather expect oppression; and they should be thankful when they are put on a level with their fellow-creatures, and get the benefit of a law of toleration.

Another lesson taught by the conduct of Jesus concerns those especially who consider themselves aggrieved by demands for "church rates" and "annuity taxes." These things have made great noise, and given rise to no little scandal, in our day. Many offences have been both given and taken in connection therewith, on the part of those who have pertinaciously demanded the "tribute money" on the one hand, and also on the part of those who as pertinaciously have refused it on the other. Both offenders and offended might find in Christ's discourse on humility much seasonable counsel; but the lesson embodied in the present incident concerns specially those who deem themselves the injured

party. What, then, is the message which it conveys for them? It is to this effect: "Ye prize freedom:—well, freedom is good. Spiritual freedom is a priceless treasure; and even freedom from pecuniary burdens, *i.e.* from obligations to pay money for objects with which ye do not sympathize, is not to be despised, and may be sought in all lawful ways. Let all the children be free, if possible. But beware of imagining that it is necessary for conscience sake always to resist indignities, and to fight for a freedom which mainly concerns the purse. It is not a mark of greatness in the kingdom to bluster much about rights, and to complain loudly of ecclesiastical or other imposts. The higher one rises in spiritual dignity, the more he can afford to endure in the way of indignity, and the more it becomes him to avoid quarrelling about trifles. The greatest in the kingdom paid the temple tax for Himself, and for Peter, an apostle elect of the new dispensation, which was destined ultimately to supersede the temple and its worship. They had greater cause to dissent from the state church than you have. But they did not strive, nor cry, nor agitate, but quietly submitted to the temporary humiliation of upholding an effete institution; habitually spoke the truth which would ere long make all things new, and left the rest to time and the providence of God. So do ye."

As the humility of Jesus was shown by His not *taking*, so His love was manifested by His solicitude to avoid *giving* offence. He desired, if possible, to conciliate persons who for the most part had treated Him all along as a heathen and a publican, and who ere long, as He knew well, would treat Him even as a felon. How like Himself was the Son of man in so acting! How thoroughly in keeping His procedure here with His whole conduct while He was on the earth! For what was His aim in coming to the world, what His constant endeavour after He came, but to cancel offences, and to put an end to enmities—to reconcile sinful men to God and to each other? For these ends He took flesh; for these ends He was crucified. His earthly life was all of a piece—a life of lowly love.

"Lest *we* should offend," said Jesus, using the plural to hint that He meant His conduct to be imitated by the

twelve and by all His followers. How happy for the church and the world were this done! How many offences might have been prevented, had the conciliatory spirit of the Lord always animated those called by His name! How many offences might be removed, were this spirit abundantly poured out on Christians of all denominations now! Did this motive, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend," bulk largely in all minds, what breaches might be healed, what unions might come! A national church morally, if not legally, established in unity and peace, might be realized in Scotland in the present generation. Surely a consummation devoutly to be wished! Let us wish for it; let us pray for it; let us cherish a spirit tending to make it possible.

SECTION V.—*The interdicted Exorcist: another Illustration of the Sermon.*

MARK IX. 38–41; LUKE IX. 49, 50.

The discourses of our Lord were not continuous unbroken addresses on formally announced themes, such as we are wont to hear, but rather for the most part of the nature of Socratic dialogues, in which He was the principal speaker, His disciples contributing their part in the form of a question asked, an exclamation uttered, or a case of conscience propounded. In the discourse or dialogue on humility, two of the disciples acted as interlocutors, viz. Peter and John. Towards the close, the former of these two disciples, as we saw, asked a question concerning the forgiving of injuries; and near the commencement, the other disciple, John, related an anecdote which was brought up to his recollection by the doctrine of his Master, respecting receiving little ones in His name, and on which the truth therein set forth seemed to have a bearing. The facts thus brought under His notice led Jesus to make reflections, which supply an interesting illustration of the bearing of the doctrine He was inculcating on a particular class of cases or questions. These reflections, with the incident to which they relate, now solicit attention.

The story told by John was to the effect that on one occasion he and his brethren had found a man unknown to them engaged in the work of casting out devils, and had served him with an interdict, because, though he used the name of Jesus in practising exorcism, he did not follow or identify himself with them, the twelve. At what particular time this happened is not stated; but it may be conjectured with much probability that the incident was a reminiscence of the Galilean mission, during which the disciples were separated from their Master, and were themselves occupied in healing the sick, and casting out evil spirits, and in preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

John, it will be observed, does not disclaim joint responsibility for the high-handed proceeding he relates, but speaks as if the twelve had acted unanimously in the matter. It may surprise some to find *him*, the apostle of love, consenting to so uncharitable a deed; but such surprise is founded on superficial views of his character, as well as on ignorance of the laws of spiritual growth. John is not now what he will be, but differs from his future self, as much as an orange in its second year differs from the same orange in its third final year of growth. The fruit of the Spirit will ultimately ripen in this disciple into something very sweet and beautiful; but meantime it is green, bitter, and fit only to set the teeth on edge. Devoted in mind, tender and intense in his attachment to Jesus, scrupulously conscientious in all his actions, he is even now; but he is also bigoted, intolerant, ambitious. Already he has played the part of a high churchman in suppressing the nonconforming exorcist; ere long we shall see him figuring, together with his brother, as a persecutor, proposing to call down fire from heaven to destroy the enemies of his Lord; and yet again we shall find him, along with the same brother and their common mother, engaged in an ambitious plot to secure those places of distinction in the kingdom about which all the twelve have lately been wrangling.

In refusing to recognise the exorcist as a fellow-worker, however humble as a brother, the disciples proceeded on very narrow and precarious grounds. The test they applied was

purely external. What sort of man the person interdicted might be they did not inquire; it was enough that he was not of their company: as if all inside that charmed circle—Judas, for example—were good; and all outside, not excepting a Nicodemus, utterly Christless! Two good things, on their own showing, could be said of him whom they silenced: he was well occupied, and he seemed to have a most devout regard for Jesus; for he cast out devils, and he did it in Jesus' name. These were not indeed decisive marks of discipleship, for it was possible that a man might practise exorcism for gain, and use the name of Christ because it had been proved to be a good name to conjure by; but they ought to have been regarded as at least presumptive evidence in favour of one in whose conduct they appeared. Judging by the facts, it was probable that the silenced exorcist was an honest and sincere man, whose heart had been impressed by the ministry of Jesus and His disciples, and who desired to imitate their zeal in doing good. It was even possible that he was more than this—a man possessing higher spiritual endowment than his censors, some provincial prophet as yet unknown to fame. How preposterous, in view of such a possibility, that narrow outward test, "Not with us!"

As an illustration of what this way of judging lands in, one little fact in the history of the celebrated Sir Matthew Hale, whose *Contemplations* are familiar to all readers of devout literature, is instructive. Richard Baxter relates that the good people in the part of the country where the distinguished judge resided, after his retirement from the judicial bench, did not entertain a favourable opinion of his religious character; their notion being that he was certainly a very moral man, but *not converted*. A serious conclusion to come to about a fellow-creature! and one is curious to know on what so solemn a judgment was based. The author of the *Saint's Rest* gives us the needful information on this momentous point. The pious folks about Acton, he tells us, ranked the ex-judge among the unconverted, because he did not frequent their private weekly prayer-meetings! It was the old story of the twelve and the exorcist, under a new Puritanic form. Baxter, it is needless to say, did not sympathize with the harsh, uncharitable

opinion of his less enlightened brethren. His thoughts breathed the gentle, benignant, humble, charitable spirit of Christian maturity. "I," he adds, after relating the fact above stated, "I that have heard and read his serious expressions of the concernments of eternity, and seen his love to all good men, and the blamelessness of his life, thought better of his piety than of mine own."[1]

In silencing the exorcist, the twelve were probably actuated by a mixture of motives—partly by jealousy, and partly by conscientious scruples. They disliked, we imagine, the idea of any one using Christ's name but themselves, desiring a monopoly of the power conferred by that name to cast out evil spirits; and they probably thought it unlikely, if not impossible, that any one who kept aloof from them could be sincerely devoted to their Master.

In so far as the disciples acted under the influence of jealousy, their conduct towards the exorcist was morally of a piece with their recent dispute who should be the greatest. The same spirit of pride revealed itself on the two occasions, under different phases. The silencing of the exorcist was a display of arrogance analogous to that of High Churchmen, who claim to be exclusively the church of Christ. In their dispute among themselves, the disciples played on a humble scale the game of ambitious, self-seeking ecclesiastics, contending for seats of honour and power. In the one case the twelve said in effect to the man whom they found casting out devils: We are the sole commissioned, authorized agents of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the other case they said to each other: We are all members of the kingdom, and servants of the King; but I deserve to have a higher place than thou, even to be a prelate sitting on a throne.

One cannot help thinking here of the contrast between these foolish weak disciples, with their professional jealousies and their vain rivalries, and the same men as the apostles of after days, when they were so ready to welcome assistance from every quarter in the work of the gospel, feeling that the harvest was great, and the labourers all too few, and so utterly free from all ambitious love of pre-eminence. Men of High

[1] *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, part iii. p. 47.

Church proclivities make a slight mistake when they prate of *apostolic* succession. It is not from the apostles, but from the disciples, they derive their descent. High-Churchism is not an apostolic virtue; it is the vice of tyros in Christ's school, who are yet largely under the dominion of the carnal mind.

In so far as the intolerance of the twelve was due to honest scrupulosity, it is deserving of more respectful consideration. The plea of conscience, *honestly* advanced, must always be listened to with serious attention, even when it is mistaken. We say "honestly" with emphasis, because we cannot forget that there is much scrupulosity that is not honest. Conscience is often used as a stalking-horse by proud, quarrelsome, self-willed men, to promote their own private ends. Pride, says one, speaking of doctrinal disputes, "is the greatest enemy of moderation. This makes men stickle for their opinions, to make them fundamental. Proud men, having deeply studied some additional point in divinity, will strive to make the same necessary to salvation, to enhance the value of their own worth and pains; and it must needs be fundamental in religion, because it is fundamental to their reputation."[1] These shrewd remarks hold good of other things besides doctrine. Opinionative, pragmatic persons, would make everything in religion fundamental on which they have decided views; and if they could get their own way, they would exclude from the church all who held not with them in the very minutiæ of belief and practice. But there is such a thing also as honest scrupulosity, and it is more common than many imagine. There is a certain tendency to intolerant exaction, and to severity in judging, in the unripe stage of every earnest life. For the conscience of a young disciple is like a fire of green logs, which smokes first, before it burns with a clear blaze. And a Christian whose conscience is in this state must be treated as we treat a dull fire: he must be borne with, that is, till his conscience clear itself of bitter, cloudy smoke, and become a pure, genial, warm flame of zeal tempered by charity.

That the scrupulosity of the twelve was of the honest kind, we believe for this reason, that they were willing to be instructed. They told their Master what they had done, that they

[1] Thomas Fuller, *Holy State*, B. iii. c. 20.

might learn from Him whether it was right or wrong. This is not the way of men whose plea of conscience is a pretext.

The instruction honestly desired by the disciples, Jesus promptly communicated in the form of a clear, definite judgment on the case, with a reason annexed. "Forbid him not," he replied to John, "for he that is not against us is for us."[1]

The reason assigned for this counsel of tolerance reminds us of another maxim uttered by Jesus on the occasion when the Pharisees brought against Him the blasphemous charge of casting out devils by aid of Beelzebub.[2] The two sayings have a superficial aspect of contradiction: one seeming to say, The great matter is not to be decidedly against; the other, The great matter is to be decidedly for. But they are harmonized by a truth underlying both—that the cardinal matter in spiritual character is the bias of the heart. Here Jesus says: "If the heart of a man be with me, then, though by ignorance, error, isolation from those who are avowedly my friends, he may seem to be against me, he is really for me." In the other case He meant to say: "If a man be not in heart with me (the case of the Pharisees), then, though by his orthodoxy and his zeal he may seem to be on God's side, and therefore on mine, he is in reality against me."

To the words just commented on, Mark adds the following, as spoken by Jesus at this time: "There is no man that shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me." The voice of wisdom and charity united is audible here. The emphasis is on the word ταχὺ, lightly or readily. This word, in the first place, involves the admission that the case supposed might happen; an admission demanded by historical truth. For such cases did actually occur in after days. Luke tells, *e.g.*, of certain vagabond Jews (in every sense well named), who took upon them to call over demoniacs the name of the Lord Jesus, without any personal faith in Him, but simply in the way of trade; being vile traffickers in exorcism for whom even the devils expressed their contempt, exclaiming, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?"[3] Our Lord knowing before that such cases would happen, and being acquainted with the depths of human depravity, could not do

[1] Mark ix. 39, 40 (Luke has "you" for "us"). [2] Matt. xii. 30. [3] Acts xix. 13.

otherwise than admit the possibility of the exorcist referred to by John being animated by unworthy motives. But while making the admission, He took care to indicate that, in His judgment, the case supposed was very improbable, and that it was very unlikely that one who did a miracle in His name would speak evil of Him. And He desired His disciples to be on their guard against readily and lightly believing that any man could be guilty of such a sin. Till strong reasons for thinking otherwise appeared, He would have them charitably regard the outward action as the index of sincere faith and love (which they might the more easily do then, when nothing was to be gained by the use or profession of Christ's name, but the displeasure of those who had the characters and lives of men in their power).

Such were the wise, gracious words spoken by Jesus with reference to the case brought up for judgment by John. Is it possible to extract any lessons from these words of general application to the church in all ages, or specially applicable to our own age in particular? It is a question on which one must speak with diffidence; for while all bow to the judgment of Jesus on the conduct of His disciples, as recorded in the Gospels, there is much difference among Christians as to the inferences to be drawn therefrom, in reference to cases in which their own conduct is concerned. The following reflections may, however, safely be hazarded:—

1. Learn from the discreet, loving words of the great Teacher to beware of hasty conclusions concerning men's spiritual state, based on merely external indications. Say not with the Church of Rome, "Out of our communion is no possibility of salvation or of goodness;" but rather admit that even in that corrupt communion may be many building on the true foundation, though, for the most part, with very combustible materials; nay, that Christ may have not a few friends outside the pale of all the churches. Ask not with Nathanael, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" but remember that the best things may come out of most unexpected quarters. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Bear in mind that, by indulging in the cry, "Not with us," in reference to trifles and crotchets,

you may tempt God, while giving His Holy Spirit to those whom you unchurch, to withdraw His influences from you, for your pride, exclusiveness, and self-will; and may turn your creed into a prison, in which you shall be shut out from the fellowship of saints, and doomed to experience the chagrin of seeing through the window-bars of your cell God's people walking at large, while you lie immured in a gaol.

2. In view of that verdict, "Forbid him not," one must read, with a sad, sorrowful heart, many pages of church history, in which the predominating spirit is that of the twelve rather than that of their Master. One may confidently say, that had Christ's mind dwelt more in those called by His name, many things in that history would have been different. Separatism, censoriousness, intolerance of nonconformity, persecution, would not have been so rife; Conventicle Acts and Five-mile Acts would not have disgraced the statute-book of the English Parliament; Bradford Gaol would not have had the honour of receiving the illustrious dreamer of the *Pilgrim's Progress* as a prisoner; Baxter, and Livingston of Ancrum, and thousands more like-minded, by whose stirring words multitudes had been quickened to a new spiritual life, would not have been driven from their parishes and their native lands, and forbidden under heavy penalties to preach that gospel they understood and loved so well, but would have enjoyed the benefit of that law of toleration which they purchased so dearly for us their children.

3. The divided state of the church has ever been a cause of grief to good men, and attempts have been made to remedy the evil by schemes of union. All honest endeavours having in view the healing of breaches, which since the days of the Reformation have multiplied so greatly as to be the opprobrium of Protestantism, deserve our warmest sympathies and most earnest prayers. But we cannot be blind to the fact, that through human infirmity such projects are apt to miscarry; it being extremely difficult to get a whole community, embracing men of different temperaments and in different stages of Christian growth, to take the same view of the terms of fellowship. What, then, is the duty of Christians meanwhile? We may learn from our Lord's judgment in the case of the exorcist. If those who are not of our company cannot

be brought to enter into the same ecclesiastical organization, let us still recognise them *from the heart* as fellow-disciples and fellow-labourers, and avail ourselves of all lawful or open ways of showing that we care infinitely more for those who truly love Christ, in whatever church they be, than for those who are with us ecclesiastically, but in spirit and life are not with Christ, but against Him. So shall we have the comfort of feeling that, though separated from brethren beloved, we are not schismatical, and be able to speak of the divided state of the church as a thing that we desire not, but merely endure because we cannot help it.

Many religious people are at fault here. There are Christians not a few, who do not believe in these two articles of the Apostles' Creed, "the holy catholic church," and "the communion of saints." They care little or nothing for those who are outside the palè of their own communion: they practise brotherly-kindness most exemplarily, but they have no charity. Their church is their club, in which they enjoy the comfort of associating with a select number of persons, whose opinions, whims, hobbies, and ecclesiastical politics entirely agree with their own; everything beyond in the wide wide world being regarded with cold indifference, if not with passionate aversion or abhorrence. We may say, indeed, that this tone of feeling is a prevailing characteristic of modern religious life. The religion of the club is the order of the day.

Now a club, ecclesiastical or other, is a very pleasant thing by way of a luxury; but it ought to be remembered that, besides the club, and including all the clubs, there is the great Christian commonwealth. This fact will have to be more recognised than it has been, if church life is not to become a mere imbecility. To save us from this doom, one of two things must take place. Either religious people must overcome their doting fondness for the mere club fellowship of denominationalism, involving absolute uniformity in opinion and practice; or a sort of Amphictyonic council must be set on foot as a counterpoise to sectarianism, in which all the sects shall find a common meeting-place for the discussion of great catholic questions bearing on morals, missions, education, and the defence of cardinal truths. Such a council (utopian it

will be deemed) would have many open questions in its constitution. In the ancient Amphictyonic council men were not known as Athenians or Spartans, but as Greeks; and in our modern utopian one men would be known only as Christians, not as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Churchmen, and Dissenters. It would be such a body, in fact, as the "Evangelical Alliance" of recent origin, created by the craving for some visible expression of the feeling of catholicity; but not, like it, amateur, self-constituted, and patronized (to a certain extent) by persons alienated from all existing ecclesiastical organizations, and disposed to substitute it as a new church in their place, but consisting of representatives belonging to, and regularly elected and empowered by, the different sections of the church.

One remark more we make on this club theory of church fellowship. Worked out, it secures at least one object. It breaks Christians up into small companies, and ensures that they shall meet in twos and threes! Unhappily, it does not at the same time procure the blessing promised to the two or three. The Spirit of Jesus dwells not in coteries of self-willed opinionative men, but in the great commonwealth of saints, and especially in the hearts of those who love the whole body more than any part, not excepting that to which they themselves belong; to whom the Lord and Head of the church fulfils His promise, by enriching them with magnanimous heroic graces, and causing them to rise like cedars above the general level of contemporary character, and endowing them with a moral power which exercises an ever-widening influence long after the strifes of their age, and the men who delighted in them, have sunk into oblivion.

4. The present theme should lead all to ask themselves two questions: Am I with Christ, or merely with this or that religious body? and, Am I growing in grace; growing out of pride into humility, out of exclusiveness into catholicity, out of censoriousness into charity? John grew thus, and so should all. It is no sin to be austere for a season, for fruit must be green ere it be ripe. But it is a sin to remain for ever austere. Alas, how many do! in whose case God looks for grapes, and never finds anything but wild grapes.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SONS OF THUNDER, OR FIRE FROM HEAVEN.

LUKE IX. 51–56.

THE delivery of the discourse on humility appears to have been the closing act of our Lord's ministry in Galilee; for immediately after finishing their accounts of the discourse, the two first evangelists proceed to speak of what we have reason to regard as His final departure from His native province for the south. "It came to pass," says Matthew, "that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea."[1] Of this journey neither Matthew nor Mark gives any details: they do not even mention Christ's visit to Jerusalem at the feast of dedication in winter referred to by John,[2] from which we know that the farewell to Galilee took place at least some four months before the crucifixion. The journey, however, was not without its interesting incidents, as we know from Luke, who has preserved several of them in his Gospel.

Of these incidents, that recorded in the passage above cited is one. For the words with which the evangelist introduces his narrative obviously allude to the same journey from Galilee to the south, of which Matthew and Mark speak in the passages already referred to. The journey through Samaria adverted to here by Luke occurred "when the time was come (or rather coming)[3] that He (Jesus) should be received up," that is, towards the close of His life. Then the peculiar expression, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," hints not obscurely at a final transference of the scene of Christ's work from the north to the south. It refers not merely to the geographical direction in which He was going, but also and

[1] Matt. xix. 1, 2; Mark x. 1. [2] John x. 22, 23. [3] Ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι.

chiefly to the state of mind in which He journeyed. He went towards Jerusalem, feeling that His duty lay in and near it henceforth, as a victim self-consecrated to death, His countenance wearing a solemn, earnest, dignified aspect, expressive of the great lofty purpose by which His soul was animated.

It was natural that Luke, the companion of Paul and evangelist to the Gentiles, should carefully preserve this anecdote from the last journey of Jesus to Judea through Samaria. It served admirably the purpose he kept in view throughout in compiling his Gospel—that, viz., of illustrating the catholicity of the Christian dispensation; and therefore he gathered it into his basket, that it might not be lost. He has brought it in at a very suitable place, just after the anecdote of the exorcist; for, not to speak of the link of association supplied in the name of John, the narrator in one case and an actor in the other, this incident, like the one recorded immediately before, exhibits a striking contrast between the harsh spirit of the disciples, and the gentle, benignant spirit of their Master. That contrast forms the moral interest of the story.

The main fact in the story was this. The inhabitants of a certain Samaritan village at which Jesus and His travelling companions arrived at the close of a day's journey having declined, on being requested, to give them quarters for the night, James and John came to their Master, and proposed that the offending villagers should be destroyed by fire from heaven.

It was a strange proposal to come from men who had been for years disciples of Jesus, and especially from one who, like John, had been in the Master's company at the time of that meeting with the woman by the well, and heard the rapturous words with which He spoke of the glorious new era that was dawning.[1] It shows how slow the best are to learn the heavenly doctrine and practice of charity. How startling, again, to think of this same John, a year or two after the date of this savage suggestion, going down from Jerusalem and preaching the gospel of Jesus the crucified in "many of the villages of the Samaritans,"[2] possibly in this very village which he desired to see destroyed!

[1] John iv. [2] Acts viii.

Such are the contrasts which growth in grace brings. In the green, crude stage of the divine life, whose characteristics are opinionativeness, censoriousness, scrupulosity, intolerance, blind passionate zeal, John would play the part of a mimic Elijah; in his spiritual maturity, after the summer sun of Pentecost had wrought its effects in his soul, and sweetened all its acid juices, he became an ardent apostle of salvation, and exhibited in his character the soft, luscious fruits of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control." Such contrasts in the same character at different periods, however surprising, are perfectly natural. Amid all changes, the elements of the moral being remain the same. The juice of the ripe apple is the same that was in the green fruit, *plus* sun-light and sun-heat. The zeal of the son of thunder did not disappear from John's nature after he became an apostle; it only became tempered by the light of wisdom, and softened by the heat of love. He did not even cease to hate, and become an indiscriminately amiable individual, whose charity made no distinction between good and evil. To the last John was what he was at the first, an intense hater as well as an intense lover. But in his later years he knew better what to hate,—the objects of his abhorrence being hypocrisy, apostasy, and Laodicean insincerity;[1] not, as of old, mere ignorant rudeness and clownish incivility. He could distinguish then between wickedness and weakness, malice and prejudice; and while cherishing strong antipathy towards the one, he felt only compassion towards the other.

To some it may seem a matter of wonder how a man capable of entertaining so revolting a purpose as is here ascribed to James and John, could ever be the disciple whom Jesus loved. To understand this, it must be remembered that Jesus, unlike most men, could love a disciple not merely for what he was, but for what he should become. He could regard with complacency even sour grapes in their season, for the sake of the goodly fruit into which they should ripen. Then, further, we must not forget that John, even when possessed by the devil of resentment, was animated by a purer and holier spirit.

[1] *Vide* book of Revelation, commonly regarded as the latest of John's writings. Reuss, however (*Theologie Chretienne*), maintains it was his earliest.

Along with the smoke of carnal passion, there was some divine fire in his heart. He loved Jesus as intensely as he hated the Samaritans; it was his devoted attachment to his Master that made him resent their incivility so keenly. In his tender love for the Bridegroom of his soul, he was beautiful as a mother overflowing with affection in the bosom of her family; though in his hatred he was terrible as the same mother can be in her enmity against her family's foes. John's nature, in fact, was feminine both in its virtues and in its faults, and, like all feminine natures, could be both exquisitely sweet and exquisitely bitter.

Passing now from personal remarks on John himself to the truculent proposal emanating from him and his brother, we must beware of regarding it in the light of a mere extravagant ebullition of temper, consequent upon a refusal of hospitality. No doubt the two brethren and all their fellow-disciples were annoyed by the unexpected incivility, nor can one wonder if it put them out of humour. Weary men are easily irritated, and it was not pleasant to be obliged to trudge on to another village after the fatigues of a day's journey. But we have too good an opinion of the twelve, to fancy any of them capable of revenging rudeness by murder.

The savage mood of James and John is not even thoroughly explained by the recollection that the churlish villagers were *Samaritans,* and that they were Jews. The chronic ill-will between the two races had unquestionably its own influence in producing ill-feeling on both sides. The nationality of the travellers was one, if not the sole reason, why the villagers refused them quarters. They were Galilean Jews going southwards to Jerusalem, and that was enough. Then the twelve, as Jews, were just as ready to take offence as the Samaritan villagers were to give it. The powder of national enmity was stored up in their breasts; and a spark, one rude word or insolent gesture, was enough to cause an explosion. Though they had been for years with Jesus, there was still much more of the old Jewish man than of the new Christian man in them. If they had been left to the freedom of their own will, they would probably have avoided the Samaritan territory altogether, and, like the rest of their countrymen, taken a round-

about way to Jerusalem, by crossing to the eastward of the Jordan.

Between persons so affected towards each other offences are sure to arise. When Guelph and Ghibeline, Orangemen and Ribbonmen, Cavalier and Roundhead, meet, it does not take much to make a quarrel.

But there was something more at work in the minds of the two disciples than party passion. There was *conscience* in their quarrel, as well as temper and hereditary enmities. This is evident both from the deliberate manner in which they made their proposal to Jesus, and from the reason by which they sought to justify it. They came to their Master, and said, "Wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" entertaining no doubt apparently of obtaining His approval, and of procuring forthwith the requisite fire from heaven for the execution of their dire intent. Then they quoted the precedent of Elijah, who, refusing to have any dealings with the idolatrous king of Samaria, called down fire from heaven to consume his messengers, as a signal mark of divine displeasure.[1]

The conscious motive by which James and John were actuated was evidently sincere, though ill-informed, jealousy for the honour of their Lord. As the prophet of fire was indignant at the conduct of King Ahaziah in sending messengers to the god of Ekron, Baalzebub by name, to inquire whether he should recover from the disease with which he was afflicted;[2] so the sons of thunder were indignant because inhabitants of the same godless territory over which Ahaziah ruled had presumed to insult their revered Master, by refusing a favour which they ought to have been only too proud to have an opportunity of granting.

The two brothers evidently thought they did well to be angry; and, comparing them with other zealots and persecutors, for not so bad reasons. If they had been minded to defend their conduct after it was condemned by Jesus, which

[1] The words ὡς καὶ Ἠλίας ἐποίησε are a doubtful reading. It is evident, however, that the two disciples must have had Elias in *mind* when they made their proposal.

[2] 2 Kings i.

they do not seem to have been, they might have made a defence by no means destitute of plausibility. For consider who these Samaritans were. They belonged to a mongrel race, sprung from heathen Assyrians, whose presence in the land was a humiliation, and from base degenerate Israelites unworthy of the name. Their forefathers had been the bitter enemies of Judah in the days of Nehemiah, spitefully obstructing the building of Zion's walls, instead of helping the exiles in their hour of need, as neighbours ought to have done. Then, if it was unfair to hold the present generation responsible for the sins of past generations, what was the character of the Samaritans then living? Were they not blasphemous heretics, who rejected all the Old Testament Scriptures save the five books of Moses? Did they not worship at the site of the rival temple on Gerizim,[1] which their fathers had with impious effrontery erected in contempt of the true temple of God in the holy city? And finally, had not these villagers expressed their sympathy with all the iniquities of their people, and repeated them all in one act by doing dishonour to Him who was greater than even the true temple, and worthy not only to receive common civility, but even divine worship?

What better reasons could persecutors give for all the murders which they have perpetrated in the name of religion? By just such reasons, indeed, has persecution ever been defended. Heresy, hostility to the cause and people of God, Old Testament precedents, have been the favourite pleas by which the professed followers of Jesus have justified themselves when acting the part of the "sons of thunder;" calling down, as they thought, fire from heaven, but in reality calling up fire from hell, to consume the hapless victims of their blind and heartless zeal.

Ruthless persecutors and furious zealots have always been confident, like the two disciples, that they did God service. It is of the very nature of zealotry to make the man of whom it has taken possession believe that the Almighty not only approves, but shares his fierce passions, and fancy himself entrusted with a *carte blanche* to launch the thunders of the

[1] The temple was destroyed a hundred years before Christ by Hyrcanus the high priest. Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* xiii. 9. 1.

Most High against all in whom his small, peering, inhuman eye can discern aught not approved by his tyrannic conscience. What a world were this, if the fact were so indeed!

> "Every pelting, petty officer
> Would use God's heaven for thunder; nothing but thunder."

Thank God, the fact is not so. The Almighty does thunder sometimes, but not in the way His petty officers would wish.

> "Merciful Heaven!
> Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt,
> Splitt'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak
> Than the soft myrtle."

Jesus too, all gentle as He was, had His thunderbolts; but He reserved them for other objects than poor benighted, prejudiced Samaritans. His zeal was directed against great sins, and powerful, privileged, presumptuous sinners; not against little sins, or poor, obscure, vulgar sinners. He burst into indignation at the sight of His Father's house turned into a den of thieves by those who ought to have known and did know better; He only felt compassion for those who, like the woman by the well, knew not what they worshipped, and groped after God in semi-heathen darkness. His spirit was kindled within Him at the spectacle of ostentatious orthodoxy and piety allied to the grossest worldliness; He did not, like the Pharisee, blaze up in sanctimonious wrath against irreligious publicans, who might do no worship at all, or who, like the heretical Samaritans, did not worship in the right place. Would that zeal like that of Jesus, aiming its bolts at the proud oak and sparing the humble shrub, were more common! But such zeal is dangerous, and therefore it will always be rare.

The Lord, in whose vindication the two disciples wished to call down heaven's destroying fire, lost no time in making known His utter want of sympathy with the monstrous proposal. He turned and rebuked them, and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."[1]

The remark was true in more senses than one. The spirit

[1] Luke ix. 55. Or, "Know ye?" Critical students of the New Testament are aware that the words are not found in some MSS. But in any case the statement is *true*, and might have been made.

of James and John was, in the first place, not such as they fancied. They thought themselves actuated by zeal for the glory of their Lord, and so they were in part. But the flame of their zeal was not pure; it was mixed up with the bitter smoke of carnal passions, anger, pride, self-will. Then, again, their spirit was not such as became the apostles of the gospel, the heralds of a new era of grace. They were chosen to preach a message of mercy to every creature, even to the chief of sinners; to tell of a love that suffered not itself to be overcome of evil, but sought to overcome evil with good; to found a kingdom composed of citizens from every nation, wherein should be neither Jew nor Samaritan, but Christ all and in all. What a work to be achieved by men filled with the fire-breathing spirit of the "sons of thunder!" Obviously a great change must be wrought within them, to fit them for the high vocation wherewith they have been called.

Finally, the spirit of James and John was, of course, not that of their Master. He "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."[1] To see the difference between the mind of the disciples and that of Jesus, put this scene side by side with that other which happened on Samaritan ground—the meeting by the well. We know what we have seen here: what see we there? The Son of man, as a Jew, speaking to and having dealings with a Samaritan, so seeking to abolish inveterate and deep-seated enmities between man and man; as the friend of sinners, seeking to restore a poor, erring, guilty creature to God and holiness; as the Christ announcing the close of an old time, in which the worship even of the true God was ritualistic, exclusive, and local, and the advent of a new religious era characterized by the attributes of spirituality, universality, and catholicity. And we see Jesus rejoicing, enthusiastic in His work; deeming it His very meat and drink to reveal to men one God and Father, one Saviour, one life, for all without distinction; to regenerate individual character, society, and religion; to break down all barriers separating man from God and from his fellow-men, and so to become the great Reconciler and Peacemaker. Thinking of this work

[1] The words quoted are regarded by critics as a gloss; but, like those referred to in the previous note, they are true and appropriate.

as exhibited by sample in the conversion of the woman by the well, He speaks to His surprised and unsympathetic disciples as one who perceives on the eastern horizon the first faint streaks of light heralding the advent of a new glorious day, and all around, in the field of the world, yellow crops of grain ripe for the sickle. "It is coming on apace," He says in effect, "the blessed, long-expected era, after a long night of spiritual darkness; the new world is about to begin: lift up your eyes and look on the fields of Gentile lands, and see how they be white already for the harvest!"

At the time of the meeting by the well, the disciples who were with Jesus neither understood nor sympathized with His high thoughts and hopes. The bright prospect on which His eyes were riveted was not within their horizon. For them, as for children, the world was still small, a narrow valley bounded by hills on either side; while their Master, up on the mountain-top, saw many valleys beyond, in which He was interested, and out of which He believed many souls would find their way into the eternal kingdom.[1] For the disciples, God was yet the God of the Jews only; salvation was *for* the Jews, as well as *of* them: they knew of only one channel of grace—Jewish ordinances; only one way to heaven—that which lay through Jerusalem.

At the later date, to which the present scene belongs, the disciples, instead of progressing, seem to have retrograded. Old bad feelings seem to be intensified, instead of being replaced by new and better ones. They are now not merely out of sympathy with, but in direct antagonism to, their Lord's mind; not merely apathetic or sceptical about the salvation of Samaritans, but bent on their destruction. Aversion and prejudice have grown into a paroxysm of enmity.

Yes, even so; things must get to the worst before they begin to mend. There will be no improvement till the Lamb shall have been slain to take away sin, to abolish enmities, and to make of twain one new man. It is the knowledge of that which makes Jesus set His face so stedfastly towards Jerusalem. He is eager to drink the cup of suffering, and to be baptized with the baptism of blood, because He knows that

[1] This thought is suggested by a passage in Richter's *Flegeljahre*.

only thereby can He finish the work whereof He spoke in such glowing language on the earlier occasion to His disciples. The very wrath of His devoted followers against the Samaritan villagers makes Him quicken His pace on His crossward way, saying to Himself sadly as He advances, " Let me hasten on, for not till I am lifted up can these things end."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN PERÆA.

SECTION I.—*Counsels of Perfection.*

MATT. XIX. 1–26 ; MARK X. 1–27 ; LUKE XVIII. 15–27.

AFTER His final departure from Galilee, Jesus found for Himself a new place of abode and scene of labour for the brief remainder of His life, in the region lying to the eastward of the Jordan, at the lower end of its course. "He departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan."[1] We may say that He ended His ministry where it began, healing the sick, and teaching the high doctrines of the kingdom in the place which witnessed His consecration by baptism to His sacred work, and where He gained His first disciples.[2]

This visit of Jesus to Peræa towards the close of His career is a fact most interesting and significant in itself, apart altogether from its accompanying incidents. It was evidently so regarded by John, who not less carefully than the two first evangelists records the fact of the visit, though, unlike them, he gives no details concerning it. The terms in which he alludes to this event are peculiar. Having briefly explained how Jesus had provoked the ill-will of the Jews in Jerusalem at the feast of dedication, he goes on to say : "Therefore they sought again to take Him ; but He escaped out of their hands, and went away *again* beyond Jordan, into the place *where John at first baptized.*"[3] The word "again," and the reference to the Baptist, are indicative of reflection and recollection—windows letting us see into John's heart. He is thinking with emotion of his personal experiences connected with the first visit of

[1] Matt. xix. 1. [2] See ch. i. [3] John x. 40.

Jesus to those sacred regions, of his first meeting with his beloved Master, and of the mystic name given to Him by the Baptist, "the Lamb of God," then uncomprehended by the disciples, now on the eve of being expounded by events; and to the evangelist writing his Gospel, clear as day in the bright light of the cross.

It was hardly possible that the disciple whom Jesus loved could do other than think of the first visit when speaking of the second. Even the multitude, as he records, reverted mentally to the earlier occasion while following Jesus in the later. They remembered what John, His forerunner, had said of One among them whom they knew not, and who yet was far greater than himself; and they remarked that his statements, however improbable they might have appeared at the time, had been verified by events, and he himself proved to be a true prophet by Christ's miracles, if not by his own. "John," said they to each other, "did no miracle; but all things that John said of this man were true."[1]

If John the disciple, and even the common people, thought of the first visit of Jesus to Peræa at the time of His second, we may be sure that Jesus Himself did so also. He had His own reasons, doubt it not, for going back to that hallowed neighbourhood. His journey to the Jordan was a pilgrimage to holy ground, on which He could not set His foot without profound emotion. For there lay His Bethel, where He had made a solemn baptismal vow, not, as Jacob, to give a tithe of His substance, but to give Himself, body and soul, a sacrifice to His Father, in life and in death; there the Spirit had descended on Him like a dove; there He had heard a celestial voice of approval and encouragement, the reward of His entire self-surrender to His Father's holy will. All the recollections of the place were heart-stirring, recalling solemn obligations, inspiring holy hopes, urging Him on to the grand consummation of His life-work; charging Him by His baptism, His vows, the descent of the Spirit, and the voice from heaven, to crown His labours of love, by drinking of the cup of suffering and death for man's redemption. To these voices of the past He willingly opened His ear. He wished to hear them, that by

[1] John x. 41.

their hallowed tones His spirit might be braced and solemnized for the coming agony.

While retiring to Peræa for these private reasons, that He might muse on the past and the future, and link sacred memories to solemn anticipations, Jesus did not by any means live there a life of seclusion and solitary meditation. On the contrary, during His sojourn in that neighbourhood, He was unusually busy healing the sick, teaching the multitude "as He was wont" (so Mark states, with a mental reference to the past ministry in Galilee), answering inquiries, receiving visits, granting favours. "Many resorted unto Him" there, on various errands. Pharisees came, asking entangling questions about marriage and divorce, hoping to catch Him in a trap, and commit Him to the expression of an opinion which would make Him unpopular with some party or school, Hillel's or Shammai's,[1] it did not matter which. A young ruler came with more honourable intent, to inquire how he might obtain eternal life. Mothers came with their little ones, beseeching for them His blessing, thinking it worth getting, and not fearing denial; and messengers came with sorrowful tidings from friends, who looked to Him as their comfort in the time of trouble.

Though busily occupied among the thronging crowd, Jesus contrived to have some leisure hours with His chosen disciples, during which He taught them some new lessons on the doctrine of the divine kingdom. The subject of these lessons was sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom,—a theme congenial to the place, the time, the situation, and the mood of the Teacher. The external occasion suggesting that topic was supplied by the interviews Jesus had had with the Pharisees and the young ruler. These interviews naturally led Him to speak to His disciples on the subject of self-sacrifice under two special forms,—abstinence from marriage, and renunciation of property,—though He did not confine His discourse to these points, but went on to set forth the rewards of self-sacrifice in any form, and the spirit in which all sacrifices must be performed, in order to possess value in God's sight.

[1] The question of divorce was a subject of dispute between these two schools, the loose and the strict schools of morals respectively.

The Pharisees, we read, "came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" To this question Jesus replied, by laying down the primitive principle, that divorce was justified only by conjugal infidelity, and by explaining, that anything to the contrary in the law of Moses was simply an accommodation to the hardness of men's hearts. The disciples heard this reply, and they made their own remarks on it. They said to Jesus: "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." The view enunciated by their Master, which took no account of incompatibility of temper, involuntary dislike, uncongeniality of habits, differences in religion, quarrels among relatives, as pleas for separation, seemed very stringent even to them; and they thought that a man would do well to consider what he was about before committing himself to a life-long engagement with such possibilities before him, and to ask himself whether it would not be better, on the whole, to steer clear of such a sea of troubles, by abstaining from wedlock altogether.

The *impromptu* remark of the disciples, viewed in connection with its probable motives, was not a very wise one; yet it is to be observed that Jesus did not absolutely disapprove of it. He spoke as if He rather sympathized with the feeling in favour of celibacy,—as if to abstain from marriage were the better and wiser way, and only not to be required of men because for the majority it was impracticable. "But He said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given." Then going on to enumerate the cases in which, from any cause, men remained unmarried, He spoke with apparent approbation of some who voluntarily, and from high and holy motives, denied themselves the comfort of family relationships: "There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Such, He finally gave His disciples to understand, were to be imitated by all who felt called and able to do so. "He that is able to receive (this high virtue), let him receive it," He said, hinting that, while many men could not receive it, but could more easily endure all possible drawbacks of married life, even on the strictest views of conjugal obligation, than preserve

perfect chastity in an unmarried state, it was well for him who could make himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven, as he would not only escape much trouble, but be free from carefulness, and be able to serve the kingdom without distraction.

The other form of self-sacrifice—the renunciation of property—became the subject of remark between Jesus and His disciples, in consequence of the interview with the young man who came inquiring about eternal life. Jesus, reading the heart of this anxious inquirer, and perceiving that he loved this world's goods more than was consistent with spiritual freedom and entire singleness of mind, had concluded His directions to him by giving this counsel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and then thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, and follow me." The young man having thereon turned away sorrowful, because, though desiring eternal life, he was unwilling to obtain it at such a price, Jesus proceeded to make his case a subject of reflection for the instruction of the twelve. In the observations He made He did not expressly say that to part with property was necessary to salvation, but He did speak in a manner which seemed to the disciples almost to imply that. Looking round about, He remarked to them first, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples being astonished at this hard saying, He softened it somewhat by altering slightly the form of expression. "Children," He said, "how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" hinting that the thing to be renounced in order to salvation, was not money, but the inordinate love of it. But then He added a third reflection, which, by its austerity, more than cancelled the mildness of the second. "It is easier," He declared, "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." That assertion, literally interpreted, amounts to a declaration that the salvation of a rich man is an impossibility, and seems to teach by plain implication, that the only way for a rich man to get into heaven is to cease to be rich, and become poor by a voluntary renunciation of property. Such seems to have been the impression made thereby on the

minds of the disciples; for we read that they were astonished above measure, and said among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"[1]

It is an inquiry of vital moment, what our Lord really meant to teach on the subjects of marriage and money. The question concerns not merely the life to come, but the whole character of our present life. For if man's life on earth doth not consist wholly in possessions and family relations, these occupy a very prominent place therein. Family relations are essential to the existence of society, and without wealth there could be no civilisation. Did Jesus, then, frown or look down on these things, as at least unfavourable to, if not incompatible with, the interests of the divine kingdom and the aspirations of its citizens?

This question up till the time of the Reformation was for the most part answered by the visible church in the affirmative. From a very early period, the idea began to be entertained that Jesus meant to teach the intrinsic superiority, in point of Christian virtue, of a life of celibacy and voluntary poverty, over that of a married man possessing property. Abstinence from marriage and renunciation of earthly possessions came, in consequence, to be regarded as essential requisites for high Christian attainments. They were steps of the ladder by which Christians rose to higher grades of grace than were attainable by men involved in family cares and ties, and in the entanglements of worldly substance. They were not, indeed, necessary to salvation,—to obtain that is a simple admission into heaven,—but they were necessary to obtain an abundant entrance. They were trials of virtue appointed to be undergone by candidates for honours in the city of God. They were indispensable conditions of the higher degrees of spiritual fruitfulness. A married or rich Christian might produce thirty-fold, but only those who denied themselves the enjoyments of wealth and wedlock could bring forth sixty-fold or an hundred-fold. While, therefore, these virtues of abstinence were not to be demanded of all, they were to be commended as "counsels of perfection" to such as, not content to be commonplace Chris-

[1] Mark x. 23–27.

tians, would rise to the heroic pitch of excellence, and, despising a simple admission into the divine kingdom, wished to occupy first places there.

This style of thought is now so antiquated, that it is hard to believe it ever prevailed. As a proof, however, that it is no invention of ours, take two brief extracts from a distinguished bishop and martyr of the third century, Cyprian of Carthage, which are samples of much of the same kind to be found in the early Fathers of the church. The one quotation proclaims the superior virtue of voluntary virginity in these terms: "Strait and narrow is the way which leads to life, hard and arduous is the path (*limes*, narrower still than the narrow way) which tends to glory. Along this path of the way go the martyrs, go virgins, go all the just. For the first (degree of fruitfulness), the hundred-fold, is that of the martyrs; the second, the sixty-fold, is yours (ye virgins)."[1] The second extract, while ascribing, like the first, superior merit to virginity, indicates the *optional* character of that high-class virtue. Referring to the words of Christ, "There be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake," Cyprian says: "This the Lord commands not, but exhorts; He imposes not the yoke of necessity, that the free choice of the will might remain. But whereas He says (John xiv. 2), that there are many mansions with His Father, He here points out the lodging quarters of the better mansion (*melioris habitaculi hospitia*). Seek ye, O virgins, those better mansions. Crucifying (*castrantes*) the desires of the flesh, obtain for yourselves the reward of greater grace in the celestial abodes."[2]

Similar views were entertained in those early ages respecting the meaning of Christ's words to the young man. The inevitable results of such interpretations in due course were monastic institutions and the celibacy of the clergy. The direct connection between an ascetic interpretation of the counsel given by Jesus to the rich youth who inquired after eternal life, and the rise of monasticism, is apparent in

[1] *De Disciplinâ et Habitu Virginum, sub finem* [Clark's Ante-Nicene Library, *Cyprian*, vol. i. p. 333].

[2] *Ex eodem libro.*

the history of Antony, the father of the monastic system. It is related of him, that going into the church on one occasion when the gospel concerning the rich young man was read before the assembly, he, then also young, took the words as addressed by Heaven to himself. Going out of the church, he forthwith proceeded to distribute to the inhabitants of his native village his large, fertile, and beautiful landed estates which he inherited from his fathers, reserving only a small portion of his property for the benefit of his sister. Not long after he gave away that also, and placed his sister to be educated with a society of pious virgins, and settling down near his paternal mansion, began a life of rigid asceticism.[1]

The ascetic theory of Christian virtue, which so soon began to prevail in the church, has been fully tested by time, and proved to be a huge and mischievous mistake. The verdict of history is conclusive, and to return to an exploded error, as some seem disposed to do, is utter folly. At this time of day, the views of those who would find the *beau ideal* of Christian life in a monk's cell appear hardly worthy of serious refutation. It may, however, be useful briefly to indicate the leading errors of the monkish theory of morals; all the more that, in doing this, we shall at the same time be explaining the true meaning of our Lord's words to His disciples.

This theory, then, is in the first place based on an erroneous assumption—viz., that abstinence from things lawful is intrinsically a higher sort of virtue than temperance in the use of them. This is not true. Abstinence is the virtue of the weak, temperance is the virtue of the strong. Abstinence is certainly the safer way for those who are prone to inordinate affection, but it purchases safety at the expense of moral culture; for it removes us from those temptations connected with family relationships and earthly possessions, through which character, while it may be imperilled, is at the same time developed and strengthened. Abstinence is also inferior to temperance in healthiness of tone. It tends inevitably to morbidity, distortion, exaggeration. The ascetic virtues were wont to be called by their admirers *angelic*.

[1] *Vita S. Antonii* (Athanasii). See also Neander, *Church History*, Clark's edition, vol. iii. p. 308.

They are certainly angelic in the negative sense, of being unnatural and inhuman. Ascetic abstinence is the ghost or disembodied spirit of morality, while temperance is its soul, embodied in a genuine human life transacted amid earthly relations, occupations, and enjoyments. Abstinence is even inferior to temperance in respect to what seems its strong point—self-sacrifice. There is something morally sublime, doubtless, in the spectacle of a man of wealth, birth, high office, and happy domestic condition, leaving rank, riches, office, wife, children behind, and going away to the deserts of Sinai and Egypt to spend his days as a monk or anchoret.[1] The stern resolution, the absolute mastery of the will over the natural affections exhibited in such conduct, is very imposing. Yet how poor, after all, is such a character compared with Abraham, the father of the faithful, and model of temperance and singleness of mind; who could use the world, of which he had a large portion, without abusing it; who kept his wealth and state, and yet never became their slave, and was ready at God's command to part with his friends and his native land, and even with an only son! So to live, serving ourselves heir to all things, yet maintaining unimpaired our spiritual freedom; enjoying life, yet ready at the call of duty to sacrifice life's dearest enjoyments: this is true Christian virtue, the higher Christian life for those who would be perfect. Let us have many Abrahams so living among our men of wealth, and there is no fear of the church going back to the middle ages. Only when the rich, as a class, are luxurious, vain, selfish, and proud, is there a danger of the tenet gaining credence among the serious, that there is no possibility of living a truly Christian life except by parting with property altogether.

The ascetic theory is also founded on an error in the interpretation of Christ's sayings. These do not assert or imply any intrinsic superiority of celibacy and voluntary poverty over the conditions to which they are opposed. They only imply, that in certain circumstances the unmarried dispossessed state affords peculiar facilities for attending with-

[1] We refer to Nilus of Constantinople. See Isaac Taylor's *Logic in Theology*, p. 130.

out distraction to the interests of the divine kingdom. This is certainly true. It is less easy sometimes to be single-minded in the service of Christ as a married person than as an unmarried, as a rich man than as a poor man. This is especially true in times of hardship and danger, when men must either not be on Christ's side at all, or be prepared to sacrifice all for His sake. The less one has to sacrifice in such a case, the easier it is for him to bear his cross and play the hero; and he may be pronounced happy at such a crisis who has no family to forsake, and no worldly concerns to distract him. Personal character may suffer from such isolation: it may lose geniality, tenderness, and grace, and contract something of inhuman sternness, but the particular tasks required will be more likely to be thoroughly done. On this account, it may be said with truth that "the forlorn hope in battle, as well as in the cause of Christianity, must consist of men who have no domestic relations to divide their devotion, who will leave no wife nor children to mourn over their loss."[1] Yet this statement cannot be taken without qualification. For it is not impossible for married and wealthy Christians to take their place in the forlorn hope: many have done so, and those who do are the greatest heroes of all. The advantage is not necessarily and invariably on the side of those who are disengaged from all embarrassing relationships *even in time of war;* and in times of peace it is all on the other side. Monks, like soldiers, are liable to frightful degeneracy and corruption when there are no great tasks for them to do. Men who in emergencies are capable, in consequence of their freedom from all domestic and secular embarrassments, of rising to an almost superhuman pitch of self-denial, may at other seasons sink to a depth of self-indulgence in sloth and sensuality which is rarely seen in those who enjoy the protecting influence of family ties and business engagements.[2]

The theory under consideration is guilty, in the third place, of an error in logic. On the assumption that abstinence is necessarily and intrinsically a higher virtue than temperance,

[1] Robertson (Brighton). Sermons, Series iii.: *On Marriage and Celibacy.*

[2] For a dark picture of the corruption prevalent among the monastics in early ages, see Isaac Taylor's *Ancient Christianity.*

it is illogical to speak of it as optional. In that case, our Lord should have given not counsels, but commands. For no man is at liberty to choose whether he shall be a good Christian or an indifferent one, or is excused from practising certain virtues merely because they are difficult. It is absolutely incumbent on all to press on towards perfection; and if celibacy and poverty be necessary to perfection, then all who profess godliness should renounce wedlock and property. The Church of Rome, consistently with her theory of morals, forbids her priests to marry. But why stop there? Surely what is good for priests is good for people as well.

The reason why the prohibition is not carried further, is of course that the laws of nature and the requirements of society render it impracticable. And this brings us to the last objection to the ascetic theory, viz. that, consistently carried out, it lands in absurdity, by involving the destruction of society and the human race. A theory which involves such consequences cannot be true. For the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of nature are not mutually destructive. One God is the sovereign of both; and all things belonging to the lower kingdom—every relation of life, every faculty, passion, and appetite of our nature, all material possessions—are capable of being made subservient to the interests of the higher kingdom, and of contributing to our growth in grace and holiness.

The grand practical difficulty is to give the kingdom of God and His righteousness their due place of supremacy, and to keep all other things in strict subordination. The object of those hard sayings uttered by Jesus in Peræa was to fix the attention of the disciples and of all on that difficulty. He spoke so strongly, that men compassed by the cares of family and the comforts of wealth might duly lay to heart their danger; and conscious of their own helplessness, might seek grace from God to do that which, though difficult, is not impossible: viz., while married, to be as if unmarried, caring for the things of the Lord; and while rich, to be humble in mind, free in spirit, and devoted in heart to the service of Christ.

One word now on the beautiful incident of the little children brought to Jesus to get His blessing. Who can believe

that it was His intention to teach a monkish theory of morals after reading that story? How opportunely those mothers came to Him, seeking a blessing for their little ones, just after He had uttered words which might be interpreted, and were actually interpreted in after ages, as a disparagement of family relations! Their visit gave Him an opportunity of entering His protest by anticipation against such a misconstruction of His teaching. And the officious interference of the twelve to keep away the mothers and their offspring from their Master's person, only made that protest all the more emphatic. The disciples seem to have taken from the words Jesus had just spoken concerning abstaining from marriage for the sake of the kingdom, the very impression out of which monasticism sprang. "What does He care," thought they, "for you mothers and your children? His whole thoughts are of the kingdom of heaven, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage: go away, and don't trouble Him at this time." The Lord did not thank His disciples for thus guarding His person from intrusion like a band of policemen. "He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."[1]

Section II.—*The Rewards of Self-sacrifice.*

Matt. xix. 27–30; Mark x. 28–31; Luke xviii. 28–30.

The remarks of Jesus on the temptations of riches, which seemed so discouraging to the other disciples, had a different effect on the mind of Peter. They led him to think with self-complacency of the contrast presented by the conduct of himself and his brethren, to that of the youth who came inquiring after eternal life. "We," thought he to himself, "have done what the young man could not do,—what, according to the statement just made by the Master, rich men find very

[1] Mark x. 14. For an admirable defence of the anti-ascetic interpretation of Christ's words to the young rich man, see the tract of Clement of Alexandria, *Quis dives salvetur.*

hard to do: we have left all to follow Jesus. Surely an act so difficult and so rare must be very meritorious." With his characteristic frankness, as he thought so he spoke. "Behold," said he with a touch of brag in his tone and manner, "we have forsaken all, and followed Thee: what shall we have therefore?"

To this question of Peter, Jesus returned a reply full at once of encouragement and of warning for the twelve, and for all who profess to be servants of God. First, with reference to the subject-matter of Peter's inquiry, He set forth in glowing language the great rewards in store for him and his brethren; and not for them only, but for all who made sacrifices for the kingdom. Then, with reference to the self-complacent or calculating spirit which, in part at least, had prompted the inquiry, He added a moral reflection, with an illustrative parable appended, conveying the idea that rewards in the kingdom of God were not determined merely by the fact, or even by the amount, of sacrifice. Many that were first in these respects, might be last in real merit, for lack of another element which formed an essential ingredient in the calculation, viz. *right motive;* while others who were last in these respects might be first in recompense, in virtue of the spirit by which they were animated. We shall consider these two parts of the reply in succession. Our present theme is, the *rewards of self-sacrifice in the divine kingdom.*

The first thing which strikes one in reference to these rewards, is the utter disproportion between them and the sacrifices made. The twelve had forsaken fishing-boats and nets, and they were to be rewarded with thrones; and every one that forsakes anything for the kingdom, no matter what it may be, is promised an hundred-fold in return, in this present life, of the very thing he has renounced, and in the world to come life everlasting.

These promises strikingly illustrate the generosity of the Master whom Christians serve. How easy it would have been for Jesus to depreciate the sacrifices of His followers, and even to turn their glorying into ridicule! "You have forsaken all! What was your all worth, pray? If the rich young man had parted with his possessions as I counselled,

he might have had something to boast of; but as for you poor fishermen, any sacrifices you have made are hardly deserving of mention." But such words could not have been uttered by Christ's lips. It was never His way to despise things small in outward bulk, or to disparage services rendered to Himself, as if with a view to diminish His own obligations. He rather loved to make Himself a debtor to His servants, by generously exaggerating the value of their good deeds, and promising to them, as their *fit* recompense, rewards immeasurably exceeding their claims. So He acted in the present instance. Though the "all" of the disciples was a very little one, He still remembered that it was their all; and with impassioned earnestness, with a "verily" full of tender, grateful feeling, He promised them thrones as if they had been fairly earned!

These great and precious promises, if believed, would make sacrifices easy. Who would not part with a fishing-boat for a throne? and what merchant would stick at an investment which would bring a return, not of five per cent., or even of a hundred per cent., but of a hundred to one?

The promises made by Jesus have one other excellent effect when duly considered. They tend to humble. Their very magnitude has a sobering effect on the mind. Not even the vainest can pretend that their good deeds deserve to be rewarded with thrones, and their sacrifices to be recompensed an hundred-fold. At this rate, all must be content to be debtors to God's grace, and all talk of merit is out of the question. That is one reason why the rewards of the kingdom of heaven are so great. God bestows His gifts so as at once to glorify the Giver and to humble the receiver.

Thus far of the rewards in general. Looking now more narrowly at those specially made to the twelve, we remark that on the surface they seem fitted to awaken or foster false expectation. Whatever they meant in reality, there can be little doubt as to the meaning the disciples would put on them at the time. The "regeneration" and the "thrones" of which their Master spake would bring before their imagination the picture of a kingdom of Israel restored,—regenerated in the sense in which we now speak of a regenerated Italy:—

the yoke of foreign domination thrown off; alienated tribes reconciled and reunited under the rule of Jesus, proclaimed by popular enthusiasm their hero King; and themselves, the men who had first believed in His royal pretensions and shared His early fortunes, rewarded for their fidelity by being made provincial governors, each ruling over a separate tribe.

These romantic ideas were never to be realized; and we naturally ask why Jesus, knowing that, expressed Himself in language fitted to encourage such baseless fancies? The answer is, that He could not accomplish the end He designed, which was to inspire His disciples with hope, without expressing His promise in terms which involved the risk of illusion. Language so chosen as to obviate all possibility of misconception would have had no inspiring influence whatever. The promise, to have any charm, must be like a rainbow, bright in its hues, and solid and substantial in its appearance. This remark applies not only to the particular promise now under consideration, but more or less to all God's promises in Scripture or in nature. In order to stimulate, they must to a certain extent deceive us, by promising that which, as we conceive it, and cannot at the time help conceiving it, will never be realized.[1] The rainbow is painted in such colours as to draw us, children as we are, irresistibly on; and then, having served that end, it fades away. When this happens, we are ready to exclaim, "O Lord, Thou hast deceived me!" but we ultimately find that we are not cheated out of our blessing, though it comes in a different form from what we expected. God's promises are never delusive, though they may be illusive. Such was the experience of the twelve in connection with the dazzling promise of thrones. They did not get what they expected, but they got something analogous, something which to their mature spiritual judgment appeared far greater and more satisfying than that on which they had first set their hearts.

What, then, was this Something? A real glory, honour, and power in the kingdom of God, conferred on the twelve as the reward of their self-sacrifice, partially in this life, per-

[1] See a striking sermon on this point by Rev. F. W. Robertson, in third series of his Sermons. Subject—*The Illusiveness of Life.*

fectly in the life to come. In so far as the promise referred to this present life, it signified, we presume, the judicial legislative influence of the companions of Jesus, as apostles and founders of the Christian church. The twelve, as the first preachers of the gospel trained by the Lord for that end, occupied a position in the church that could be filled by none that came after them. The keys of the kingdom of heaven were put into their hands. They were the foundation stones on which the walls of the church were built. They sat, so to speak, on episcopal thrones, judging, guiding, ruling the twelve tribes of the true Israel of God, the holy commonwealth embracing all who professed faith in Christ. Such a sovereign influence the twelve apostles exerted in their lifetime; yea, they continue to exert it still. Their word not only was, but still is, law; their example has ever been regarded as binding on all ages. From their epistles, as the inspired expositions of their Master's pregnant sayings, the church has derived the system of doctrine embraced in her creed. All that remains of their writings forms part of the sacred canon, and all their recorded words are accounted by believers "words of God." Surely here is power and authority nothing short of regal! The reality of sovereignty is here, though the trappings of royalty, which strike the vulgar eye, are wanting. The apostles of Jesus were princes indeed, though they wore no princely robes; and they were destined to exercise a more extensive sway than ever fell to the lot of any monarch of Israel, not to speak of governors of single tribes.

The promise to the twelve had doubtless a reference to their position in the church in heaven, as well as in the church on earth. What they will be in the eternal kingdom we know not, any more than we know what we ourselves shall be, our notions of heaven altogether being very hazy. We believe, however, on the ground of clear Scripture statements, that men will not be on a dead level in heaven any more than on earth. Radicalism is not the law of the supernal commonwealth, even as it is not the law in any well-ordered society in this world. The kingdom of glory will be but the kingdom of grace perfected, the regeneration begun here brought to its final and complete development. But the

regeneration, in its imperfect state, is an attempt to organize men into a society based on the possession of spiritual life, all being included in the kingdom who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and the highest place being assigned to those who have attained the highest stature as spiritual men. This ideal has never been more than approximately realized. The "visible" church, the product of the attempt to realize it, is, and ever has been, a most disappointing embodiment, in outward visible shape, of the ideal city of God. Ambition, selfishness, worldly wisdom, courtly arts, have too often procured thrones for false apostles, who never forsook anything for Christ. Therefore we still look forward and upward with longing eyes for the true city of God, which shall as far exceed our loftiest conceptions as the visible church comes short of them. In that ideal commonwealth perfect moral order will prevail. Every man shall be in his own true place there; no vile men shall be in high places, no noble souls shall be doomed to obstruction, obscurity, and neglect; but the noblest will be the highest and first, even though now they be the lowest and last. "There shall be true glory, where no one shall be praised by mistake or in flattery; true honour, which shall be denied to no one worthy, granted to no one unworthy; nor shall any unworthy one ambitiously seek it, where none but the worthy are permitted to be."[1]

Among the noblest in the supernal commonwealth will be the twelve men who cast in their lot with the Son of man, and were His companions in His wanderings and temptations. There will probably be many in heaven greater than they in intellect and otherwise; but the greatest will most readily concede to them the place of honour as the first to believe in Jesus, the personal friends of the Man of sorrow, and the chosen vessels who carried His name to the nations, and in a sense opened the kingdom of heaven to all who believe.[2]

Such we conceive to be the import of the promise made to

[1] Augustini *de Civitate Dei*, xxii. 30.

[2] The superior rank of the twelve in the eternal kingdom is recognised in the book of Revelation, chap. xxi. 14: "The walls of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

the apostles, as leaders of the white-robed band of martyrs and confessors who suffer for Christ's sake. We proceed to notice the general promise made to all the faithful indiscriminately. "There is no man," so it runs in Mark, "that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life."

This promise also, like the special one to the twelve, has a twofold reference. Godliness is represented as profitable for both worlds. In the world to come, the men who make sacrifices for Christ will receive eternal life; in the present they shall receive, along with persecutions, an hundred-fold of the very things which have been sacrificed. As to the former of these, eternal life, it is to be understood as the minimum reward in the great Hereafter. All the faithful will get that at least. What a *maximum* is that *minimum!* How blessed to be assured on the word of Christ, that there is such a thing as eternal life *attainable* on any terms! We may well play the man for truth and conscience, and fight the good fight of faith, when, by so doing, it is possible for us to gain such a prize. A hope so great and so divine may trials well endure. To win the crown of an imperishable life of bliss, we should not deem it an unreasonable demand on the Lord's part that we be faithful even unto death. Life sacrificed on these terms is but a river emptying itself into the ocean, or the morning star losing itself in the perfect light of day. Oh that we could lay hold firmly of the blessed hope set before us here, and through its magic influence become transformed into moral heroes! We in these days have but a faint belief in the life to come. Our eyes are dim, and we cannot see the land that is afar off. Some of us have become so philosophical, as to imagine we can do without the future reward promised by Jesus, and play the hero on atheistical principles. That remains to be seen. The annals of the martyrs tell us what men have been able to achieve who earnestly believed in the life everlasting. Up to this date we have not heard of any great heroisms enacted or sacrifices made by