

teaching, the meaning of which is obscure to the unwilling hearer, is less hardening than plain truth, because it does not provoke such obstinate resistance. So also there was mercy in Isaiah's ministry to his hardened fellow-countrymen. It was to be continued until their cities were desolate, without inhabitant, and the Lord had removed men far away. Then its gracious purpose to them would become manifest, for when suffering Divine judgments they would be thrown back upon neglected warnings. Though so long unavailing, as unavailing as if their very design had been to confirm them in their disobedience, these warnings would eventually become weird fingers pointing to the cause of their sufferings, and indicating the way of salvation through repentance and turning to God (Verses 11-13). For the severest lines of the prophet's message plainly imply that, even after a course of obstinate impenitence, to *turn* is to put a constraint upon God's mercy, and draw forth his forgiveness: "*lest,*" he says, "*they convert, and be healed.*"

To sum up: these verses are an utterance of warning in the form of solemn irony; but the appointment of a ministry of warning and rebuke, when the temper of the nation was such that it would be more likely to harden than to win to repentance, was a judicial chastisement of disobedience to truth. This thought explains our Lord's use of the passage to illustrate his adoption of the parable as a means of conveying or hiding his meaning, according to the state of mind of the hearer. It is also the justification of the use made of the passage by St. John and St. Paul, to point their own statements respecting the moral blindness which overtakes those who fail of the grace of God.

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COLOSSIANS i. 24.—Dr. Gloag, in his article on "The Complement of Christ's Afflictions," in the March number of *THE EXPOSITOR*, has done scant justice to the view of this passage advanced by Meyer, and stated in these words:—"Paul describes his own sufferings as *afflictions of Christ*, in so far as the apostolic suffering in essential character was the same as Christ endured. The collective mass of these afflictions is conceived in the form of a definite measure. He only who has suffered all has filled up that measure." Dr. Gloag adds the following paraphrase, by Meyer, of verse 24: "I rejoice on account of the sufferings which I endure for you, and am in the course of furnishing the complete fulfilment of what, in my case, still remains in arrear of fellowship of affliction with Christ." Here it will be observed that Meyer understands the expression, τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ, to mean, not any deficiencies *in* the afflictions

of Christ, but the arrears in St. Paul himself of fellowship with those afflictions; or, in other words, that wherein the Apostle's afflictions fell short of the full measure of Christ's afflictions. There is nothing in this interpretation to justify Dr. Gloag's objection that it detracts from the reality of Christ's sufferings, and "gives a figurative interpretation to them," while he himself admits that it is supported by other passages of the New Testament; as when the Apostle Paul expresses his desire "to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death."¹ Dr. Gloag further objects to this view as hardly giving any distinct sense to the principal clause in the verse, "*filling up that which is behind*, or lacking, in (*"of"* in the Authorized Version) the afflictions of Christ." He says also that "the idea of deficiency in the suffering of Christ Himself—a deficiency that must be made good—is overlooked or omitted." It would be more correct to say that it is distinctly rejected. The German commentator's idea is not that of any "deficiency in the suffering of Christ Himself," but he gives great prominence to the idea of deficiencies in the apostle's own suffering, whereby his afflictions were still in arrear of Christ's. These were the arrears which, according to Meyer's explanation, the Apostle was engaged in making good.

No amount of ingenuity has been able to remove the serious objections to any interpretation of this passage which implies that there were defects or imperfections in the sufferings of Christ, from whatever point of view they are regarded. But it is quite in accordance with St. Paul's mode of thought to describe his own troubles and persecutions as incomplete, because they fell short of the troubles and persecutions of Christ on earth. He rejoiced, he said, in the sufferings for the sake of the Colossians, and was making up for² whatever was lacking in his flesh of the afflictions of Christ,³ for the

¹ Phil. iii. 10. Comp. Rom. viii. 17; 2 Cor. i. 5.

² Ἀναπληροῦν is to fill up, as in 1 Cor. xiv. 16. Ἀνταναπληροῦν is to fill up, *supply*, by way of compensation, so that the supply is set over against (ἀντί) and meets the deficiency. In the present instance, St. Paul said that he was endeavouring to make up the measure by which his afflictions fell short of Christ's, so as to compensate, as far as he might, the deficiency that was in them, when set against all that Christ had endured. So when Clement of Alexandria said (*Strom.* vii. 12), οὗτος . . . τὴν ἰσοστολικὴν ἀπουσίαν ἀνταναπληροῖ, the verb denotes, not merely that the man's presence supplied the absence of the apostles, but that it was a compensation for it. So also Diogenes Laertius (x. 48) says that a continual efflux takes place from the surface of bodies, which is imperceptible because of the compensation (τὴν ἀνταναπλήρωσιν) arising from a supply of moisture corresponding to the waste, and making up for it.

³ Ἐὰν ὑπερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου. Comp. Phil. ii. 30. Ἔνα ἀναπληρώσῃ τὸ ὑμῶν ὑστέρημα τῆς πρὸς με λειτουργίας, "That he might supply

sake of his body, the Church. "Whatever the Church," as Dean Alford observes, "has to suffer, even to the end, she suffers for *her* perfection in holiness and *her* completion in Him." But then he goes on to say, "The tribulations of Christ will not be complete till the last pang shall have passed, and the last tear have been shed. Every suffering saint of God, in every age and position, is in fact filling up, in his place and degree, the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, and in behalf of his body." Now if in the above extract we read, for "the tribulations of Christ will not be complete," "the tribulations of believers will not be complete," and for "the afflictions of Christ" read "that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ" (not τὰς θλίψεις τοῦ Χριστοῦ, but τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ), the latter clause of the Dean's explanation will be more consistent with the former, and will at the same time more accurately represent the sense of the original, in which the phrase τὰ ὑστερήματα is of the first importance. Thus also the apostle's words are found to be in conformity with the general teaching of the New Testament that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," and that the Christian's glory will be in proportion to the degree in which his tribulations have approached the measure of his Lord's; or, to use the Saviour's own language, will be in proportion to the measure in which he has denied himself, and taken up his cross and followed Christ. All Christians, indeed, must come far behind their Master in suffering, but this is no reason why they should not make it their chief ambition, as notably St. Paul did, to lessen the interval by which they come behind Him,¹ while following in his steps.

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that which was lacking on your part of the contribution meant for me (from Macedonia)." See also Judges xix. 19, "There is no lack of anything" (οὐκ ἴστω ὑστέρημα παντὸς πράγματος.—LXX.). The verb ὑστερεῖν τινος may mean either to be in need of something, as in Luke xxii. 35, or to fall behind, fall short of, so as to be inferior, as in 2 Cor. xii. 11. In Col. i. 24 the noun is derived from the verb in the latter signification.

¹ Matt. xvi. 24: literally, "If any one desires to come behind me (ὀπίσω μου ἰλθεῖν), let him deny himself."