

of the Pharisees is plainly held up to view, whereas it was but *implied* before. For the "elder son" represents the Pharisees, and no one else. Numberless are the further applications which the old commentaries make; but they are all aside of the mark. And even Farrar still disfigures his admirable exposition by giving "two primary references of this divine parable (1) to the Pharisees and sinners—*i. e.* to the professedly religious and the openly irreligious classes; and (2) to the Jews and Gentiles." There is not the slightest ground outside or inside the parable for the latter reference, which is about the last that one would expect it to have on the lips of Him who "was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The Pharisees murmured because He ate with sinners. He vindicates Himself in these three parables. The key to the interpretation is the first two verses of the chapter.

The "younger son," then, is the "publican and sinner," as the phrase went in Judæa, or the openly irreligious everywhere. The "elder son" is the Pharisee or scribe then, the outwardly religious and respectable man now, and always, and everywhere. The "father" is God. The conduct of the younger son is described in accordance with what the Pharisees believed to be true of those who "knew not the law;" his sin is not denied or palliated; it is portrayed in imperishable colours. So far Christ is in agreement with the Pharisees. But what then? Said the Pharisee: "This people, which knoweth not the law, is accursed." In other words, he had no gospel for publicans and sinners. He did not believe they could be forgiven by God; he certainly would never forgive them himself. Not so is it with God, says Jesus. He "goes after that which is lost;" He "seeks diligently;" He "sees while yet a great way off, and has compassion;" He welcomes home with great and generous joy.

The conduct of the elder son is, therefore, no mere episode which may be separated from the rest of the parable. It is an essential part of the parable—the statement, in fact, of what is half the lesson of all three parables. And if it is objected that Christ could not speak of the unloving and unlovely Pharisee in the words, "Son, thou art ever with me," the answer is ready. Here, as often, Christ simply takes him at his own estimate for the moment, shows him thereby how unlovely he really is, and so makes manifest in the only possible way his need of repentance and restoration.

II.

August 10.—Luke xvi. 19–31.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

1. "A certain rich man." His name is not given, while that of the beggar *is* given; the reverse of the way of the world. Remember that *Dives* is simply the Latin for "a rich man."

2. "Purple and fine linen." Men may be rich and not luxurious; this man was both. Even a Roman emperor could get no costlier dress than a robe of purple dye, and the "fine linen" of Egypt.

3. "Lazarus." The word is the same as Eliezer, and means "helped by God."

4. "The dogs came and licked his sores." It is not meant that they increased his pain; but so miserable and low was Lazarus, compared with the rich man, that he had open sores exposed to view which the dogs came and licked.

5. "In hell." The Greek is simply *Hades*, "the other world," without yet specifying whether of joy (*Paradise*) or of woe (*Gehenna*). But immediately after comes the phrase, "being in torments."

6. "Tormented in this flame." Dr. Farrar says correctly that "the scenery and phraseology are Jewish, and are borrowed from those which were current among the Rabbis of Christ's day." Let us also remember that our Lord is making use of physical imagery to convey spiritual fact. But that does not make the spiritual fact less real or terrible. Mr. Fyfe's *The Hereafter* (of which we hope to give a review in our next issue) is the book to read. It will fix floating ideas that are true, and dispel those that are false.

7. "A great gulf fixed"—a most difficult passage for those who hold by "eternal hope." Farrar's effort to get over it is quite unsuccessful, though its spirit is good. "It *may* be no longer impassable," he says, "since Christ died, and went to preach to spirits in prison." To use in proof a text of so doubtful an interpretation is to expose an undefended flank, if not to hand over the key of the citadel.

This parable might be headed "The Reversal of Human Judgments." In harmony with the rest of His discourse, Christ tells it in order to bring home vividly the fact that the first here may be last yonder. The rich man was *buried*; that is to say, not only had he a high opinion of his own dignity himself, but his fellow-men had the same; they attended and followed his grand funeral to the tomb, while they allowed the body of the beggar to be thrust into any handy hole. But God's angels buried Lazarus—in Abraham's bosom. Superficially, honour belonged to *Dives*; essentially, to Lazarus. To the common eye of man, *Dives* was a fit companion for an emperor, Lazarus for the pariah dog; to God's eye the rich man was "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Lazarus was meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—a friend for God's great "friend," the patriarch Abraham. "There are first which shall be last, and there are last which shall be first."

III.

August 17.—Luke xvii. 11–19.

The Ten Lepers.

1. "Through the midst of Samaria and Galilee." The phrase is peculiar; it is generally understood to mean that Christ passed along the border, between Galilee and Samaria, eastwards towards the Jordan. He would then cross the Jordan, and travel towards Jerusalem through Perea, a very common route for the Galileans to take, so as to avoid Samaria.

2. "Go shew yourselves unto the priests," to fulfil the law (see Lev. xiv).

“One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back.” Probably he was alone, for, being a Samaritan, he would be on his way to his own priests on Mount Gerizim.

Every miracle has its lesson, and in that lesson lies the reason why it has been recorded. There were many lepers cleansed of whose healing no record is given; but the story of these ten is told because one of them came back. “Giving Him thanks”—in these words the lesson lies. It is the beautiful story of the gratitude of a “stranger,” made more beautiful by contrast with the ingratitude of “His own.” It recalls the parable of the Good Samaritan; and the two narratives are parallel in more respects than one. And both illustrate in a remarkable way the great lesson of the previous series of discourses. It was the despised Samaritan who returned; the privileged Jews held on their selfish and legal way. *Legal* way; for observe that the nine had ample excuse; Christ had ordered it, and the law demanded it. But the letter killeth. Love rides over Acts of Parliament.

The nine held by the law, but the one got the grace. By grace was he saved through faith. “Thy faith hath made thee whole” should be “hath saved thee.” Physically, He was made whole already, so were His companions; but now he gets the nobler and only noble blessing,—“Thy faith hath saved thee.”

Ingratitude! Our greatest poet has written one of his greatest works on this fertile theme,—*King Lear*.

IV.

August 24.—Luke xviii. 1-14.

Prevailing Prayer.

There are in this lesson two parables, one of which will be quite enough for one day. Let us take the Unjust Judge.

1. “To faint” — to give up through faint-heartedness, which is faithlessness.

2. “A judge which feared not God, neither regarded man.” Judges who fear not God may still be found among us (see the last paragraph of the Great Text Commentary in this issue); but none who regard not man. The petty judges in the towns of Palestine were often absolute tyrants, there was scarcely a chance that they would be called to any human account.

3. “Avenge me.” This is not revenge; she simply asks justice—“do me justice,” is the Greek.

4. “She weary me.” (See the Expository Notes, p. 243.)

5. “Though He bear long with them.” There is much difference of opinion as to the meaning of these words. When God is said to “bear long” with men, it usually means that He is long-suffering in mercy towards them. Hence some interpreters take the meaning here to be that God delays the justice for which His own elect pray because He is long-suffering with their oppressors. But the grammar is against that, and, in fact, makes it impossible. The meaning must be, “Though He long defers His sympathy with them”—*i.e.* with the elect. And this suits the context also.

6. “When the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth.” Literally, “*the* faith,” that is to say, such faith as this widow had, which proves itself in persevering and prevailing prayer.

The last sentence leads us at once into the meaning of the parable. The disciples are about to pass through a time of tribulation. Two things will try them—the persecuting injustice of men, and the delay of Christ’s coming. They are, therefore, urged to pray that Christ may come again, in order that the persecution may be brought to an end; and they are urged to *persist* in that prayer even though God may seem to delay His answer to it, for, if they persist, He certainly *will* come.

The argument of the parable is one with which we ought to be perfectly familiar, for Christ uses it more than once. It is this: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him!” If this Godless, thoughtless judge grants the widow’s request because of her sheer persistency, *how much more* will your *Father* grant yours if you show the same faith and perseverance. There is no comparison of God with this unjust judge. The force of the argument lies in the very fact that He is in every respect the antipodes of this judge. If the prayer of faith, which is a moral power, could prevail with this man who recognised no moral restraint, how surely will it prevail with God, its author and fountain! “Fear not, little flock, for it is *your Father’s* good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

V.

August 31.—Luke xviii. 15-30.

Entering the Kingdom.

1. “Inherit eternal life.” (See THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for June, p. 215.)

2. “Why callest thou me good?” The question is put not to disclaim the title, but to test the young ruler’s sincerity. There was possibly a touch of patronage in his use of the word, like “my good friend.”

3. “For a camel to go through a needle’s eye.” To soften the expression, some have said that “the needle’s eye” is the small gate for foot passengers at the side of the large city gates. But if this side gate is so called, it is only in modern times; and, as Farrar says, the name “needle’s eye” may have been given to it from this very passage. But the point of the expression lies in its utter impossibility, and to tone it down is to lose that point. It was, no doubt, a common proverb which Christ laid hold of.

Dante calls this incident “the grand refusal.” It is one to catch the attention of the most careless pupil. But it should not be read apart from the little event which precedes it, the blessing of the infants. Whether they occurred about the same time or not, they are closely connected. It was just because this ruler would not receive the kingdom of God as a little child that he could not enter it. “All these have I kept;” “what lack I yet?” “what good thing shall I do?”—it is all far removed from the obedient, trustful disposition of the little child.

Jesus dealt very gently with the young man, though some have rashly said He was harsh. He took him upon his own ground, did not say that he had *not* kept the commandments, but led him by a simple test to realize that he

scarcely knew what keeping the commandments meant. Was not the sum of the commandments, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" (See the lesson for June 1.) But how could he say that he was loving his neighbour as himself when he rolled in wealth, while all around him were the poor and the needy? Jesus had not tried him yet with the greater table of the law. Alas! he failed utterly when tested by the lesser and easier.

Thus Jesus led him to see that it was *impossible for him* to inherit eternal life by keeping the commandments. He who thinks so, knows not what it means. The selling of his goods was simply the test made use of. If he had done so, still there was the "Come, follow me." Not even by selling all that we have, but by following Jesus,—by the obedience of faith, by trust as of a little child,—that is the way to inherit eternal life.

Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John.

BY PROFESSOR RICHARD ROTHE, D.D.

CHAPTER II. 3-5.

"And hereby know we that we have known Him, if we conscientiously keep His commandments. He that saith, I have known Him, and keepeth not His commandments conscientiously, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth His word conscientiously, in him verily hath love to God been perfected. Hereby know we that we are in Him."

Ver. 3. From this point John starts his polemic against the *morally empty* Christianity of that age. The verse we are now considering, which joins on to what precedes in a very loose manner, is connected in thought with the beginning of ver. 1, and all that lies between is only an intervening thought. My object, says John, in writing this is that ye may not sin; for to be a Christian has its truth, and therewith also the infallible sign whereby it may be known, only in our acting in accordance with duty. A piety that is not full of ethical content is no Christian piety. *To have known Him* is a description of the real acceptance of Christ through true faith, and consequently of belonging to Him,—in other words, of true Christianity as a whole. According to Scripture, *knowing* has a pregnant signification, *loving* being distinctly included. That John expresses this by "knowing," is closely connected with the following fact: John has no notion whatever that a man could know Christ, could have a right idea and conception of Him, without believing in Him and loving Him. Whenever he sees want of love or hostility to Him, it is natural for him to take for granted that here a misconception of Christ is also at work. To every genuine Christian also it seems psychologically impossible that one should really know this Christ and yet turn away from Him. Hence the warmest Christian is gentlest in his judgment of that in the world which seems enmity against Christ. More especially he whose knowledge of Christ is very distinctly knowledge of Him in His ethical quality, is convinced that all real knowledge of Christ necessarily has surrender to Him as its consequence. Moreover, the Christian is daily experiencing in regard to himself that he does not yet know the Saviour perfectly, and that His image must con-

tinually be rendered clear to him. Accordingly, it is not difficult for him to believe that one may altogether misjudge Christ.

Ver. 4. What was said in ver. 3 is more emphatically repeated in negative form and applied distinctly to the mere lip-Christians, the reality of their Christianity being thereby expressly denied. It is an impossibility to know and love Christ, and yet at the same time refuse obedience to His commandments. Such behaviour John characterizes as an audacious falsehood. He casts the utmost infamy upon it, and thereby confirms the universal human judgment, that nothing raises such horror as hypocritical Christianity. John looks upon such conduct as a token of the most complete loss of all inner subjective truth in man. Whoever is capable of such a lie must have reasoned himself into it, and must therewith have utterly destroyed the last roots of inner truthfulness. One may still have ever so many false grounds of comfort:—nothing is more dangerous than to make a pillow of the grace of God.

Ver. 5. The thought that has just been expressed in negative form John now, in order to lend it intensity, expresses also positively. At the same time, however, the truth of the thought, that the keeping of the Saviour's commandments is the true token of belonging to Him, is also established. The *keeping* of the word is here a keeping with careful heedfulness and conscientious fidelity. Only in him who conscientiously labours at keeping the word of the Lord faithfully is there present that bent of life with which God can enter into fellowship, communicate Himself to man, and accept man's surrender to Him. Whoever keeps the word of the Saviour conscientiously, in him is love to God actually realized. This love to God,