THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

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

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

VERY REV. F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S., DEAN OF CANTERBURY.
RIGHT REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D., F.R.S.E.
VERY REV. PRINCIPAL J. TULLOCH, D.D.
REV. CANON G. RAWLINSON, M.A.
REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

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ST. MATTHEW.

Exposition

By REV. A. LUKYN WILLIAMS, M.A.,

PRINCIPAL OF THE HEBREW MISSIONARY COLLEGE OF THE LONDON SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY AMONGST THE JEWS; AND

REV. W. J. DEANE, M.A.,

RECTOR OF ASHEN.

Homiletics

By REV. B. C. CAFFIN, M.A.,

VICAR OF NORTHALLERTON AND RURAL DEAN;
LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. PROF. W. F. ADENEY, M.A. REV. PROF. MARCUS DODS, D.D.
REV. P. C. BARKER, M.A., LL.B. REV. J. A. MACDONALD.
REV. R. TUCK, B.A.

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GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

A few remarks by way of introduction to the characteristic portion of this chapter (vers. 1—52).

(1) We have here a collection of the Lord's parables, all spoken, as it would appear, at an early period in his ministry, descriptive of the principles of the kingdom of heaven as they make themselves felt in history, and of the way in which those who are brought into contact with the kingdom ought to act. As the chapter stands, it consists of three chief parts, which probably roughly correspond to three stages of development in its composition.

(*a*) Vers. 1—23, also in Mark and Luke, except some characteristic enlargements in vers. 10—17. The section contains the parable of the sower and its interpretation, together with a statement of our Lord's reasons for teaching by parables. This is so nearly akin to the fundamental lesson of the first parable, that we cannot be surprised that the two should be recorded together. They seem, indeed, to have formed the nucleus of the whole collection.

(*b*) Vers. 24—35, of which vers. 31, 32 alone are found both in Mark and Luke. Vers. 34, 35 also are represented in Mark, besides some expressions occurring in vers. 24—30. This part contains the parables of the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven, and a statement that our Lord spoke in parables to the multitudes, together with a passage from the Old Testament illustrating his doing so.

(*c*) Vers. 36—52. A series wholly peculiar to our Gospel, containing matter addressed to the disciples alone (the explanation of the parable of the tares, and the three parables of the treasure, the pearl, and the drag-net), ending with a special promise to disciples as such.

(2) But although this chapter is apparently the result of growth and development, this does not exclude the probability that it is no chance collection of fragmentary parables, but rather a mosaic of which the several parts stand in artistic relation to each other and are intended to form one whole. According to Bengel, and his opinion has been essentially adopted by many writers, the seven parables form a prophecy of seven ages of the Church: the first and second parables describing the apostolic and sub-apostolic periods; the third and fourth, the spread of the kingdom among princes and amongst the whole human race (referring more especially to the fourth and the ninth centuries); the fifth, the more hidden condition of the Church ("the reign of the beast, and the Reformation"); the sixth, the time when the kingdom of heaven shall be valued above all else, and Satan be bound; the seventh, the last confusion. But this is singularly imaginative, and at the very most can only be so far true that the tendencies described under each parable may possibly, one cannot say more, be stronger at the several times referred to than at others.

It is far more natural to see in the parables a summary by our Lord of certain principles

which are always at work, *i.e.* "the ideas and laws, not the actual facts, of the Church's history" (Trench, 'Parables,' p. 142). Thus we have the leading thoughts of the dissemination and reception of the kingdom of God (the sower), the obstacles to its success that exist even within its borders (the tares), its external and internal influence (the mustard seed and the leaven), the need for making it a personal possession, cost what it may, especially as it is worth all else (the treasure and the pearl), and the necessity of personal holiness if the benefit of being within it is not to be lost.

(3) It will have been noticed that our Lord did not use parables in the earlier part of his ministry (even ch. vii. 24, *sqq.*, is hardly more than an illustration), and that when he began to use them it was a matter of surprise to his disciples, who asked him his reason for doing so (ver. 10). This was, as appears from ver. 12, because of the value of parables as a means of *κρίσις*. Just as his coming was in itself to test men's hearts, and to act upon them according to their moral state (John ix. 39; cf. iii. 19; Luke ii. 35), so in measure were all his sayings. But if "the primary end [of a parable] everywhere is to place the doctrine, as yet unknown to the hearers, so directly before their eyes that they shall *intuitively* recognize its truth" (Goebel, 'Parables,' p. 15), it is evident that a parable was especially calculated to form a test of the moral state of those to whom it was spoken. If they did not really care for spiritual things, they would, either from sheer moral inability or from a lazy unwillingness to apply their attention or make further inquiries, fail to catch the lesson which the parable was intended to convey; while if they were in a favourable state for its reception, they would learn fresh truth from it. But if parables were so valuable why did not our Lord employ them from the beginning of his ministry? Just because they were so decisive in their effects. He wished at first to be as plain-spoken as possible, but when he saw that in the majority of his hearers his words produced no spiritual result, he then employed a method of teaching which should bring out their characters more clearly (cf. further vers. 10—17, and notes).

Vers. 1—9.—*The parable of the sower.* Parallel passages: Mark iv. 1—9; Luke viii. 4—8.

Ver. 1.—**The same day**; *on that day* (Revised Version). Although *day* is sometimes used in a metaphorical sense, so as to include what is, in fact, a long period of time (*e.g.* Luke vi. 23; Mark ii. 20; cf. also John xiv. 20; xvi. 23, 26; and possibly even Acts viii. 1), yet we are not justified in assigning this sense to it unless the context clearly requires us to do so. This is not the case here, so that we must assume that a literal day is intended. But which day? Naturally, the day that has just before been mentioned, either in the original source from which our narrative is taken or in the narrative as it now stands. Since, however, ch. xii. 46—50 and our vers. 1—23 appear to have been already connected in the framework (as is seen from their being in the same relative position in Mark), these supposed alternatives really represent the same thing, the phrase probably referring to the day on which our Lord's mother and brethren sought to speak to him (ch. xii. 46). **Went Jesus out of the house.** Where he had been when his mother came (ch. xii. 46, note), and presumably the one to which he returned in ver. 36. Possibly it was St. Peter's house at Capernaum (ch. viii. 14). **And sat** (ch. v. 1, note). **By the sea-side.** Until the crowds compelled him to enter the boat.

Ver. 2.—**And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship.** The article wrongly inserted in the Received Text (*τὸ πλοῖον*) suggests that it was the boat which, as some think, waited upon him. (For another occasion when he taught from a boat, cf. Luke v. 3.) **And sat; and the whole multitude stood**; *was standing.* The position of *ἱστήκει* at the end of the sentence in the Greek emphasizes their attitude. Their numbers compelled it, and they disregarded the fatigue. Further, the tense (pluperf., equivalent to imperf.) pictures them as patiently standing there. **On the shore**; *beach* (Revised Version); *ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλόν*: *i.e.* this part at least of the shore was covered with sand or pebbles. Possibly we have signs of an eye-witness, both in the exact description of the spot, and in the vividness of the *ἱστήκει* (comp. John i. 35, *al.*; and Bishop Westcott's remarks in *Expositor*, III. v. 248; cf., too, Introduction, p. xii.).

Ver. 3.—**And he spake many things.** Of which but a few are here recorded (cf. vers. 34, 51). **Unto them in parables.** Taking the expression in the widest sense, "speaking in parables" began in the very earliest ages, when natural or spiritual truths were described under figures taken from everyday life, and continues until the present

time, more especially among Eastern nations. Interesting examples of such a method of instruction are to be seen in the Haggadoth (which are frequently parabolic narratives) of the Talmuds and other Jewish works. But both myth (cf. Alford) and parabolic Haggada share the common danger of being misunderstood as narratives which are intended to be taken literally, while in the parable, in the narrower sense of the word, such a confusion is hardly possible. For the narrative then suggests, either by its introduction or its structure, that it is only the mirror by which a truth can be seen, and is not the truth itself. Such parables also, though seldom even approaching in beauty to our Lord's, are very frequent in Jewish writings, though they come but seldom in the Old Testament (Isa. xxviii. 23—29; 2 Sam. xii. 1—6; xiv. 6—11; 1 Kings xx. 35—40; comp. also Isa. v. 1—7 and Ezek. xvii. 1—10, which are rather allegories; and Judg. ix. 7—15 and 2 Kings xiv. 9, which are fables). (On the distinction of parable in the narrower sense from fable, myth, proverb, allegory, see Alford and Trench.) Weiss ('Life,' ii. 115) thinks that the most profound reason of all which the Lord had for employing parables was that he wished to show that the same regulations which hold good for the world round us and ourselves in relation to the world and each other, hold good also in the higher ethical and religious life. But at the most this can have been a very subsidiary motive with him. **Saying, Behold, a sower.** Observe that our Lord enters upon his parable at once (contrast ver. 24). He will attract attention. Mark's "Hear ye" would have forwarded this. *A sower*; literally, *the sower*, as the Revised Version; *i.e.* the sower of whom I am about to speak (cf. Driver on 1 Sam. xix. 13; also ch. i. 23; xii. 43). **Went forth.** In the Greek this verb comes first, as though our Lord wished to call attention, not so much to the sower himself as to his action. **To sow.** (For the minute adherence to actual life throughout the whole of this parable, see by all means Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' p. 82, edit. 1887; Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 425, *sqq.*, edit. 1868.)

Ver. 4.—**And when** (*as*, Revised Version) **he sowed, some seeds** (ἃ μέν). Here (cf. vers. 5, 7, 8) the seeds are, so to speak, each singled out. But in the parallel passages they are viewed as one whole (ὃ μέν). **Fell by the wayside.** Along the road (παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν), which evidently was at no mere corner of the field, but ran for some distance by or through it. **And the fowls** (*birds*, Revised Version, as in modern English) **came and devoured them up.**

Ver. 5.—**Some** (*and others*, Revised Version) **fell upon stony** places; *the rocky places* (Revised Version). Where the underlying rock was hardly, if at all, covered by soil. Such spots would be common in the fields of Palestine, as in those of all mountainous countries. **Where they had not much earth:** and **forthwith they sprang up** (ἐξανέτειλεν). They shot up quicker than the thorns in ver. 7 (ἀνέβησαν). **Because they had no deepness of earth.**

Ver. 6.—**And when the sun was up** (ἀνατείλαντος). It can hardly be accidental that the Greek suggests the contrast between the springing up of the seeds and of the sun's rays. **They were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away** (cf. John xv. 6).

Ver. 7.—**And some fell among thorns;** *upon the thorns* (Revised Version); which were sure to be close by (cf. Jer. iv. 3). **And the thorns sprang up** (*grew up*, Revised Version, ἀνέβησαν), **and choked them.** Whether brambles or merely spinous weeds (on their abundance, see Tristram, 'Nat. Hist. of Bible,' p. 423, edit. 1889) are here referred to is not certain. Even the former might be comparatively low in sowing-time, and only as they "grew up" cause serious injury to the wheat.

Ver. 8.—**But other fell into** (*upon the*, Revised Version) **good ground, and brought forth** (*yielded*, Revised Version, ἔδιδου); for effort is not implied. Contrast ἐποίησεν in Luke and ch. vii. 18, note. **Fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.** In Mark the numbers *increase*. Is this due to a desire to avoid even the semblance of a contradiction to αὐξανόμενα, that there precedes? In Luke "hundredfold" alone comes, the difference that exists even in the good ground not being mentioned. (For *hundredfold*, comp. Gen. xxvi. 12. Compare also the note on Luke viii. 8 in this Commentary for instances of still greater production, and for the beautiful parabolic saying recorded by Papias' Elders (Iren., v. 33. 3).)

Ver. 9.—**Who hath ears to hear** (Revised Version omits *to hear*), **let him hear.** So in all the accounts. Observe that it is not only a call to understand the parable, but is in itself a summary of the chief lesson of the parable. (On the phrase, see ch. xi. 15, note.)

Vers. 10—17.—*The reason why Christ spoke to the multitudes in parables.*

The question of the disciples (ver. 10).

Christ's antithesis—You are the recipients of God's gift; they are not (ver. 11).

This is not arbitrary, but in accordance with a universal law (ver. 12).

They have not been using their faculties,

and therefore they are thus judged, in accordance with the words of Isaiah (vers. 13—15).

The privilege of the disciples further insisted upon (vers. 16, 17).

Ver. 10.—Matthew alone in this form. In Luke the disciples asked our Lord what the parable was; in Mark, more generally, they "asked of him the parables." Whether the question as given by St. Matthew was actually spoken by the disciples or not, the Lord's answer, the substance of which is the same in all three accounts, suggests that it at least represents their thoughts. St. Matthew probably wishes to bring out with special clearness, by his version of their words, the point of our Lord's reply. **And the disciples.** Including more than the twelve; so Mark, "They that were about him with the twelve" (cf. ch. v. 1, note) **Came.** Presumably some little time afterwards, for he must have left the boat (ver. 2). **And said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?** *Them;* i.e. those outside the circle of Christ's followers (*οἱ ἔξω*, Mark). For the general meaning of our Lord's reply to this question, see the remarks at the beginning of this chapter. Other questions about our Lord's reasons for what he did are to be found in ch. ix. 11, 14; xv. 2; xvii. 19; xxvi. 8 (cf. also ch. xii. 2 with Luke vi. 2).

Ver. 11.—**He answered and said unto them, Because.** Omit *because*, with the Revised Version. The *ὅτι* is merely recitative. In this verse our Lord does not directly reply to their question, but only states God's ways of dealing with the two different classes of people (cf. ch. xi. 25, note). **It is given unto you** (*unto you it is given*, Revised Version); which better represents the sharpness of the antithesis in the Greek. *It is given;* already (*δέδοται*), *i.e.* in the counsel of God, though now given in possession, so far as regards this parable, by the explanation that I will add. **To know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.** The secrets about the establishment and development of God's realm, which cannot be discovered by human reason, but which are made known to the initiated. Under the term "mystery," St. Paul refers to such revealed secrets as the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles (Eph. iii. 3, 4, 9; Col. i. 26), the conversion of the Jews (Rom. xi. 25), the relation of Christ to the Church being like that of husband and wife (Eph. v. 32), and the general resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 51). (Cf. ch. xi. 25, note, "revealed;" and *infra*, ver. 35, note, and especially Bishop Lightfoot on the passage in Colossians.) **But to them it is not given.** Professor Marshall suggests that the variation "the rest" (Luke), points to a slight difference in one word of the original Aramaic text, the phrase in Mark ("them that are without") combining both readings (see *Expositor* IV. iv. 446). The suggestion is ingenious, but seems hardly necessary.

Ver. 12.—Matthew only in this context, but found in the parallel passages shortly after the explanation of this parable—Mark iv. 25; Luke viii. 18. The same saying is found in ch. xxv. 29 (the talents) and Luke xix. 26 (the pounds). **For.** The reason of God's action spoken of in the preceding verse. It is based on the following principle. **Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.** The last phrase (Matthew only) is probably due to a reminiscence of the form in which the saying was uttered at a much later period in our Lord's ministry, where it arises naturally out of the parable (ch. xxv. 29). **But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.** A paradox. What he already possesses, if it is so small as to be not worth speaking of, shall be lost to him. Luke's "thinketh he hath" calls attention to the superficial character of the man's mind. The unfit ground loses the seed it receives (cf. the remarks at the beginning of this chapter).

Ver. 13.—**Therefore** (*διὰ τοῦτο*). To carry out the principle of the whole preceding verse, but with special reference to the second half of it. **Because,** in this case, they "have not," *therefore* **I speak to them thus. Speak I to them in parables:** because. In the parallel passages Christ says that he speaks in parables "*in order that* seeing," etc.; but here, "*because* seeing," etc. The difference of the thought, which is more formal than real, is that (1) in the parallel passages their moral blindness and deafness are represented as the *effect* of what he says, parables being used *to bring about* the punishment for what was presumably earlier sloth (thus laying stress on the idea of "shall be taken away" in our ver. 12; cf. "that they which see not may be made blind," John ix. 39; and Bishop Westcott's note). (2) In Matthew their present moral blindness and deafness are represented as the *reason* for the use of parables. Parables are themselves the punishment; the people are fit for nothing else (thus laying stress on the "has not" of ver. 12); therefore Christ speaks to them in parables. **They seeing see not** (*seeing they see not*, Revised Version, keeping the order of the Greek, as even the Authorized Version in the next clause); **and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.** The participles "seeing," "hearing," in Matthew and Luke, probably do *not* represent the Hebrew infinitive in its common usage of giving intensity or continuance to the idea of the finite

verb to which it is joined (so in the original passage of Isaiah, and perhaps in Mark; compare also "seeing" in the next verse), but are to be taken separately, *i.e.* "Though they have powers of seeing and of hearing, they nevertheless do not so use these powers as to see and hear" (for the thought, cf. Jer. v. 21; Ezek. xii. 2). Thus in meaning, though not in form, as compared with the next verse, *seeing* is equivalent to "seeing ye shall see;" *they see not*, to "and shall in no wise perceive;" *hearing*, to "hearing ye shall hear;" *they hear not*, to "and shall in no wise understand."

Ver. 14.—**And in them**; *and unto them* (Revised Version); *i.e.* with reference to them (cf. Jude 14). **Is fulfilled.** Completely (ἀναπληροῦται; cf. 1 Thess. ii. 16). The present, because the process is still going on. **The prophecy of Esaias, which saith** (Isa. vi. 9, 10). Not quoted in this form in the parallel passages; for Mark iv. 12 and Luke viii. 10 are really nearer our ver. 13. The quotation is taken verbally from the LXX., and so in Acts xxviii. 26, 27. But John xii. 40, on the contrary, is nearer the Hebrew. **By hearing ye shall hear** (ἀκοῇ ἀκούσετε). A too literal translation of the Greek attempt to reproduce the Hebrew idiom, which is rather "hear ye indeed" as a continued action (שָׁמוֹעַ שִׁמְעוּ). **And shall not understand** (ch. xi. 25, note); **and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.** You may gaze at the object, but you shall not really see it. So with the bodily eye, an image may be formed in the retina, yet no impression conveyed to the brain.

Ver. 15.—**For this people's heart is waxed gross.** There are two ways of understanding this verse as it comes here. (1) It states the reason why God pronounced the judgment of ver. 14. The people's heart had already become fat, lest (μή ποτε will then express the effect from the Divine point of view) they should see, etc. (2) It merely enlarges the statement of ver. 14, expanding its meaning (for this force of γάρ, cf. Mark ii. 15; Luke xviii. 32): their heart is waxed fat (by God's judgment for preceding sins), lest they should see, etc. This second explanation is preferable, for it alone suits the imperative found in the Hebrew (cf. the transitive verbs in John xii. 40), and is strictly parallel to the introductory vers. 11—13, which do not dwell upon the causes of God's judgment. **And their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time** (ch. iv. 6, note) **they should see**; *perceive* (Revised Version)—to recall the same word in ver. 14. **With their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart.** Bengel calls attention to the order; first came heart, ears, eyes; here, eyes, ears, heart. "A corde corruptio manat in aures et oculos: per oculos et aures sanitas pervenit ad cor." **And should be converted**; *and should turn again* (Revised Version, ἐπιστρέψωσι); for "to be converted" has acquired too technical a meaning. **And I should heal them** (καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς). The verb is still dependent on the *lest* (of. ch. v. 25; vii. 6), but the future brings out the certainty of God's healing them on their turning, etc.

Vers. 16, 17.—Parallel passage: Luke x. 23, 24, after the return of the seventy, and immediately following our ch. xi. 25, 27. The verses stand there, that is to say, in close connexion with the other great utterance contrasting God's revelation of spiritual things to some and his hiding them from others. Possibly he spoke the verses only once (cf. the repetitions in the Prophets), but, in view of the frequency with which Christ's utterances are placed out of their original connexion, the assumption should be the other way. If he really only spoke them once, we cannot be sure which the occasion was, but the possibility that they do not properly belong here is increased by the doubt whether also ver. 12 was originally spoken now.

Ver. 16.—**But blessed** (ch. v. 3, note) **are your eyes.** Christ now returns to emphasize ver. 11*a*. **For they see** (ὅτι βλέπουσιν). This may refer to the disciples being able to see spiritual truths *before* God's special grace given them by way of reward to this effect, but this hardly suits the context from the phrase, "it is given" (ver. 12). It is, therefore, better to understand the verse to refer to their seeing and hearing things by virtue of grace given *in reward for* earlier faithfulness. Edersheim ('Life,' i. 594) gives a striking illustration of the thought of this verse from the 'Pesiqta' (edit. Buber, p. 149).

Ver. 17.—**For verily** (ch. v. 18, note). Not in the parallel passage; it is much more common in Matthew than Luke. Our Lord contrasts his disciples' "blessedness" not only with the state of their contemporaries, but with that of their predecessors in faith. **I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men.** Those who were specially favoured with insight into God's methods, and those who approached most closely to his standard of righteousness. *Righteous men*; "kings" in Luke. St. Luke's readers would probably not appreciate the force of the term, "righteous men," to the same degree that St. Matthew's would. **Have desired** (ἐπεθύμησαν). By reading ἐπεθύμησα, this saying has been attributed

to Christ (see Bishop Westcott, 'Introd.,' App. C.; Resch, 'Agrapha,' p. 397). **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 (cf. Heb. xi. 13; 1 Pet. i. 10—12).

Vers. 18—23.—*The explanation of the parable of the sower.* Parallel passages: Mark iv. 13—20; Luke viii. 11—15. Observe that after the preceding verses St. Matthew's readers would the more easily catch the lesson of the parable.

Ver. 18.—Matthew only. **Hear ye therefore**; Revised Version, *hear ye then*, which leaves more room for the rightful emphasis on *ye* (*ὑμεῖς*) than the Authorized Version, but hardly gives the full force of *οὖν* (*therefore*), *i.e.* in accordance with the privileges that have been given you. **The parable of the sower.**

Ver. 19.—**When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.** *Understandeth.* The form of the explanation here is influenced by the language of vers. 14, 15. **Then** (not in the Greek) **cometh the wicked** one; *the evil one* (Revised Version); ch. vi. 13, note. **And catcheth** (*snatcheth*, Revised Version) **away**—seizeth for himself (*ἁρπάζει*, ch. xi. 12, note)—**that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed.** *That was sown* (Revised Version, *ὁ σπαρείς*). And so throughout. The masculine is not merely concise, but also expresses the fact that, as even with land, the man who receives the seed does not put forth in turn merely the seed as something alien, but rather himself so far as he is influenced by the seed; or (regarding the subject from another point of view) he puts forth the new life and energy of the seed as conditioned by that which makes up himself.

Ver. 20.—**And anon**; *and straightway* (Revised Version, *καὶ εὐθύς*).

Ver. 21.—**But dureth for a while** (*ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιρός ἐστιν*). Luke's *οἱ πρὸς καιρὸν πιστεύουσιν* is an evidently later form. (For the thought, cf. John v. 35.) **By and by**; *straightway* (Revised Version, *εὐθύς*). **He is offended** (ch. v. 29, note).

Ver. 22.—**And the care** (*ἡ μέριμνα*); ch. vi. 25, note. **Of this world** (*of the world*, Revised Version, *τοῦ αἰῶνος*, omitting the *τούτου* of the Received Text). (For *αἰών* ["age," Revised Version margin], cf. ch. xii. 32, note.) **Choke the word.** Which is no unchanging thing, but is always affected for good or evil, however great progress it has made.

Ver. 23.—**Which also**; *who verily* (Revised Version, *ὃς δή*), the particle giving exactness to the relative (see Dr. Moulton's note at the end of Winer, § liii.). **Some**: *ὃ μεν* (Westcott and Hort). Neuter, and so the Vulgate. Nominative, the thought refers to the seed as such (cf. ver. 8). **An hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty.** "100 longius absunt a 60, quam 60 a 30. Habenti dabitur" (Bengel). The reason of the difference in the produce of the good ground is not stated, but, according to the tenor of the whole passage since ver. 3, this lay in a difference already existing within this good ground. Into the question of the *ultimate* cause of some men being in a better state of preparedness to receive Divine truths than others, our Lord does not enter. Prevenient grace is not always to be insisted upon in practical exhortation.

Vers. 24—30.—*The parable of the tares.* Matthew only. The parable of the sower dealt with the first reception of the gospel; this deals with the after-development.

The aim of this parable is to prevent oversanguine expectations as to the purity of the society of believers, and to hinder rash attempts to purify it by merely external processes. Archbishop Benson ('Dict. of Christian Biogr.,' i. 745) calls attention to the fact that the first extant exposition of this parable is in Cyprian's successful appeal to the Novatianists not to separate from the Church (Ep. liv.).

The aim of the somewhat similar parable in Mark iv. 26—29 is to show the slowness and gradualness of the growth of the kingdom of heaven, and also the certainty of its consummation. So many words and phrases in the two parables are identical, that the possibility of one being derived from the other, either by omission or addition, must be acknowledged, but the definiteness of the aim in each points rather to their being originally two distinct parables.

The divisions of the parable are—

(1) The fact of tares being present as well as good seed, and its cause (vers. 24—28*a*).

(2) Although there is the natural desire to gather out the tares at once, yet, on account of the impossibility of doing so without destroying some of the good seed, this must not be attempted. At the proper time full separation shall be made by the proper agents (vers. 28*b*—30).

Ver. 24.—**Another parable put he forth unto them**; *set he before them* (Revised Version, *παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς*); so also ver. 31

(cf. also Exod. xix. 7; Acts xvii. 3). Elsewhere it is often used of setting food before any one; *e.g.* Mark vi. 41; viii. 6; Luke xi. 6; Acts xvi. 34. *Them.* The people (vers. 3, 10, 34). **Saying, The kingdom of heaven.** The principles of its establishment and full development. **Is likened unto** (*ὡμοιώθη*). The aorist regards the moment in our Lord's mind in which he made the comparison. Observe that the verb is transitional; in ver. 3 our Lord began his parable without any introduction, so that he might attract attention; here he says that he gives an illustration of the kingdom of heaven; but in the later parables of this discourse (vers. 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; cf. 52) he is able merely to say that the kingdom of heaven is, in its principles, etc., absolutely like (*ὁμοία ἐστίν*). **A man which sowed.** Explained as "the Son of man" in ver. 37. **Good seed;** "the sons of the kingdom" (ver. 38); *i.e.* the seed represents, not good or bad doctrine as such, but persons. **In his field;** "the world" (ver. 37). Not exactly the Church, *i.e.* the Church upon earth, but the world so far as it is the sphere of the Church's missionary activity, even the physical world so far as it becomes the scene of Divine sowing of the gospel.

Ver. 25.—**But while men slept.** Not in the explanation. If more than merely a part of the necessary framework of the story, it points to the secrecy with which the devil works. **His enemy came.** This form of malice is still well known in the East (cf. Exell's 'Biblical Illustrator,' *in loc.*). **And sowed.** Sowed over or in (*ἐπέσπειρεν*). **Tares;** *i.e.* bearded darnel, *Lolium temulentum*, "a kind of rye grass, and the only species of the grass family the seeds of which are poisonous. The derivation of *zawân* [*ζιζάνια*] is from *zân*, 'vomiting,' the effect of eating darnel being to produce violent nausea, convulsions, and diarrhœa, which frequently ends in death" (Tristram, 'Nat. Hist. of Bible,' p. 487, edit. 1889). **Among the wheat, and went his way;** *went away* (Revised Version, *ἀπῆλθεν*).

Ver. 26.—**But when the blade was sprung up** (*ἐβλάστησεν ὁ χόρτος*: cf. Mark iv. 27), **and brought forth fruit.** Observe that there is no thought of the tares injuring the wheat (contrast vers. 7, 22). **Then appeared the tares also.**

Ver. 27.—**So;** *and* (Revised Version, *δέ*). **The servants of the householder came.** The explanation (ver. 38) does not say who are represented by these; they must be really identical with some of the wheat, yet since they are spoken of as though they are also the agents of the Sower, they must represent the more active, and especially the ministerial, members of the kingdom. Is it a mere coincidence that historically the clergy have shown themselves always the most eager advocates of the policy of rooting up the tares? **And said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?** *Thy.* For the knowledge that the world belongs to God, and is under his governance and care, makes the question so much the more serious to the servants.

Ver. 28.—**He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.** *An enemy* (*ἔχθρος ἄνθρωπος*). Not "my enemy," referring to some one person, for in real life a man can seldom be at once sure, without inquiry, who it is that has injured him secretly. There are so many coincidences in this verse and ver. 39 (*ἔχθρος ἄνθρωπος, τοῦτο ἐποίησεν,* [*Ἀμήν*] *ὁ πονηρὸς* [*οὗτος*], *ὁ διάβολος*) with the LXX. of Esth. vii. 4—6, that it would almost seem as though the evangelist remembered that passage. **The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?** Omit *up* (*συλλέξωμεν*); the servants, in their zeal to separate the tares from the wheat, forget the difficulty connected with pulling them up.

Ver. 29.—**But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.** Wetstein, on ver. 39, quotes an interesting parallel spoken by R. Joshua ben Korcha (Talm. Bab., 'Baba Metzia,' 83*b*).

Ver. 30.—**To the reapers.** Not all my servants, but they to whom such work belongs (cf. Goebel); *i.e.* the angels (ver. 39). **Gather ye together;** *gather up* (Revised Version), because the same word (*συλλέγειν*) is employed as in ver. 28. This command belongs to the time after the field is reaped. **First the tares.** The tares are to be separated and gathered together before the wheat is garnered. **And bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather** (*συνάγετε*). This word regards rather the destination, *συλλέγειν* the operation. **The wheat into my barn** (ch. iii. 12, notes).

Vers. 31, 32.—*The parable of the mustard seed.* Parallel passages: Mark iv. 30—32; Luke xiii. 18, 19. The central thought of the parable is the growth of the kingdom of heaven considered externally. Although it has small beginnings, it is to have a marvellous expansion, so that even those who naturally are outside it are glad to avail themselves of its protection. Observe that we have no right to limit its growth either to the reputation of its principles alone or to the power of its organization; both are included.

Regarded as a prophecy, the parable is partially fulfilled every time that a heathen

nation places itself under the protection of a Christian nation, and more truly fulfilled whenever a nation accepts Christianity as its own religion. It is parodied when a nation or a collection of nations submits its political freedom to the dictates of claimants to spiritual superiority, whether these claim to have received such superiority as an inheritance from the past, or to have acquired it in the present.

Ver. 31.—**Another parable put he forth unto them** (ver. 24, note), **saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto** (ver. 24, note; also ch. xi. 16, note) **a grain of mustard seed.** "The Common Mustard of Palestine is *Sinapis nigra*, of the order *Cruciferæ*, the Black Mustard, which is found abundantly in a wild state, and is also cultivated in the gardens for its seed. It is the same as our own Mustard, but grows especially in the richer soils of the Jordan valley to a much greater size than in this country. We noticed its great height on the banks of the Jordan, as have several other travellers; and Dr. Thomson remarks that in the Plain of Acre he has seen it as tall as a horse and its rider" (Tristram, 'Nat. Hist. of Bible,' p. 472, edit. 1889). **Which a man took.** The insertion of λαβών is probably to exclude the idea of a chance sowing. True that the seed might, under certain circumstances, then grow as well, but the reality which is being described was the result of long and deliberate purpose (Titus i. 3; 1 Pet. i. 20). **And sowed in his field.** "His garden" (Luke) suggests a piece of ground that was at once smaller and more cared for.

Ver. 32.—**Which indeed is the least of** (*is less than*, Revised Version) **all seeds**; *i.e.* all those ordinarily sown in Palestine then. Instances of the proverbial use in the Talmuds of the size of a grain of mustard to express something very small, may be seen in Levy, *s.v.* חרדל. **But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs**; *it is greater than the herbs* (Revised Version); *i.e.* than those which are usually called λάχανα. **And becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air.** There is not necessarily any connotation of evil about these (cf. vers. 4, 19); the thought is simply that those who are naturally outsiders are glad to come under cover of this tree. Compare, for both thought and language, Daniel's description of the empire of Babylon (Dan. iv. 12, 21), and Ezekiel's prophecy of the kingdom of Judah (Ezek. xvii. 23). **Come and lodge in the branches thereof.** *Lodge* (κατασκηνοῦν); ch. viii. 20, note. In Palestine the goldfinches and linnets settle on the mustard in flocks (Tristram, 'Nat. Hist. of Bible,' p. 473, edit. 1889).

Ver. 33.—*The parable of the leaven.* Parallel passage: Luke xiii. 20, 21. The growth of the kingdom regarded in its quiet and secret influence. This is to be ultimately complete and universal. The prophecy is partially fulfilled with every fresh recognition of Christian principles in public opinion, or customs, or laws. For "every thought" shall be brought "captive unto the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 5). **Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven.** This is the only passage where leaven is spoken of with reference to its permeating qualities alone, without any trace of the notion of defilement, which the Paschal and other regulations (Exod. xii. 15, 18; xxiii. 15, 18; Lev. ii. 11) so readily suggested. Even in 1 Cor. v. 6 and Gal. v. 9 this connotation of evil is not altogether absent. In Talm. Bab., 'Berach.,' 17*a*, it is used as a figure of the "evil impulse" within us. Hence some have interpreted it in a similar sense here, and have understood our Lord to be referring to the spread of worldliness in the Church (especially after the conversion of Constantine); but (1) this is opposed to the *primâ facie* meaning; (2) it is unreasonable to insist that a symbol must always have the same connotation; (3) it is opposed to the idea of deliberate purpose underlying the action of the woman; (4) the closing words would cast too awful a shadow—they would mean that Christianity fails. **Which a woman took** (ver. 31, note), **and hid.** The woman probably belongs entirely to the framework of the parable (cf. Luke xv. 4, 8). For the work described is always, in normal societies, performed by women. Of other interpretations that which sees in her the Church as the agent by whom the kiugdom of God is wrought into the world is the best. **In three measures of meal**; *i.e.* an ephah. This appears to have been a convenient quantity (about a peck) for kneading at one time (Gen. xviii. 6; Judg. vi. 19). **Until the whole was leavened**; literally, *until it was leavened, even the whole of it* (ἕως οὗ ἐζυμώθη ὅλον). While our Lord thus promises that the permeating influence of the kingdom of heaven shall at last be entirely successful, it is unfair to so press the parable as to deduce from it that the world as such will continue to be gradually and continuously improved up to the Lord's return. It may be so (contrast, however, Luke xviii. 8), but even direct prophecy, and still more parable, frequently regards the ultimate result, and passes over the intermediate stages.

Vers. 34, 35.—The parallel passage in Mark iv. 33, 34 is as follows: "And with

many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it; and without a parable spake he not unto them: but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things." The same general idea underlies our present verses, but although each evangelist appears to have used the same words as a basis, he has worked them out in his own characteristic way. For while both writers contrast our Lord's treatment of the multitudes and his treatment of the disciples in the matter of parables, St. Mark barely alludes to his using them as a judicial punishment upon the people, and St. Matthew merely hints here at the fact that Christ explained them to his disciples (see further, ver. 35*b*, note).

It will be noticed that our verses have much in common with the thought of ver. 10, *sqq.* It seems just possible that both paragraphs had one common nucleus from which they were each developed. But according to existing evidence, ver. 10, *sqq.*, and the parallel passages in Mark and Luke serve to introduce explanatory matter to the disciples, and our present verses with the parallel in Mark to close a series of parables.

Ver. 34.—**All these things** (*ταῦτα πάντα*). *All* seems to imply that the four preceding parables are but a few typical ones taken from a larger collection (cf. Mark, "with many such parables;" also vers. 3, 51). **Spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables**; *in parables unto the multitudes* (Revised Version); for the order of the Greek is the same as in the next clause. Observe the "parallelism" of the two clauses (contrast Mark). Is it due to the influence of Hebrew Christians? **And without a parable spake he not** (*nothing*, Revised Version, *οὐδέν*) **unto them.** As happens often in Semitic writers (cf. St. John's Gospel), the thought of the preceding clause is now expressed negatively, and yet a fresh thought is added, namely, that he spake in parables alone. *Nothing* (Revised Version); *i.e.* under these circumstances, when large crowds of Galilæans were listening to him. *Spake* (*ἐλάλει*: contrast *ἐλάλησεν* before); *i.e.* during this period.

Ver. 35.—**That it might be fulfilled** (ch. i. 22, note) **which was spoken by** (*through*, Revised Version; ch. i. 22, note) **the prophet**; rather, *Isaiah the prophet*, according to the margin of Westcott and Hort, on the evidence of the original hand of the Sinaitic and a few cursive manuscripts, the Rushworth Latin Gospels, a manuscript of the Æthiopic Version, the Clementine Homilies, Porphyry as quoted by Jerome and remarks by Eusebius. Dr. Hort ('Appendix') writes, "It is difficult not to think Ἡσαΐου genuine. There was a strong temptation to omit it (cf. xxvii. 9; Mc. i. 2); and, though its insertion might be accounted for by an impulse to supply the name of the best known prophet, the evidence of the actual operation of such an impulse is much more trifling than might have been anticipated. . . . The erroneous introduction of Isaiah's name is limited to two passages, and in each case to a single Latin manuscript." If it be genuine, it is a parallel case to the reading "Jeremiah" instead of "Zechariah" in ch. xxvii. 9, for which no satisfactory explanation has yet been suggested. A simple error of memory (cf. Alford) on the part of one who shows himself so well acquainted with Hebrew customs and modes of thought as our evangelist does, is perhaps the most improbable of all solutions. Possibly, just as there were summaries of legal maxims current in our Lord's time (cf. ch. v. 21, note), so there were in Hebrew-Christian circles well-known sets of quotations from the Old Testament, which were not expressly divided one from another (cf. Rom. iii. 10—18), and which were referred to *under the name of the author of the best known passage*. (Observe that this would distinguish these summaries from liturgical quotations.) Thus Zechariah's mention of the potter (xi. 13) was placed in connexion with Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house, and with his warning of the possible rejection of Israel (Jer. xviii. 1—6; cf. xix. 1—11); cf. further Pusey's remarks on the passage in Zechariah, and Ps. lxxviii. 2 (or perhaps 1—3), where Israel is bid listen to the lessons derived from their ancestors' behaviour, with the warning in Isa. vi. 9, 10 (cf. our vers. 34, 35 with ver. 14). We have an example of a similar connexion of passages in Mark i. 2, 3, where Mal. iii. 1 is closely joined to Isa. xl. 3. Observe that if St. Mark had copied his source (*ex hypothesi*) to the end of the quotation from Malachi, and for some reason omitted the next quotation, he might very easily have still retained the name "Isaiah" with which he introduces his double quotation. Had he done so, we should have had another parallel to our present verse and ch. xxvii. 9. *The prophet.* If "Isaiah" be not genuine, this refers to "Asaph the seer" (2 Chron. xxix. 30), who was the recognized author of the psalm. So David is called "a prophet" in Acts ii. 30. **Saying, I will open my mouth** (ch. v. 2, note) **in parables; I will utter** things which have been **kept secret from the foundation** of the world. From Ps. lxxviii. 1, 2. The first clause of the quotation is verbally the

same as the LXX., and fairly represents the meaning of the original (אפתחה במשל פי). The second clause is different from the LXX., the first verb being a literal translation from the Hebrew, and the rest a paraphrase. *I will utter* (ἐρεύξομαι: אביעה); so the LXX. in Ps. xix. 2; and cf. Ps. cxix. 171; cxlv. 7. Things which have been *kept secret* (κεκρυμμένα); but the Hebrew is חידות, *i.e.* "enigmatical sayings." *From the foundation of the world.* Ἀπὸ καταβολῆς, for κόσμου of the Received Text must be omitted. But the Hebrew מני קדם (*i.e.* "from of old") hardly, in the context of the psalm, refers further back than the beginning of the national history of Israel, when the Israelites came out of Egypt. "Asaph . . . here recounts to the people their history from that Egyptæo-Sinaitic age of yore to which Israel's national independence and specific position in relation to the rest of the world goes back. . . . He will set forth the history of the fathers after the manner of a parable and riddle, so that it may become as a parable, *i.e.* a didactic history, and its events as marks of interrogation and nota-benes to the present age" (Delitzsch). What, however, is the exact connexion of thought in the gospel between the passage as it stands, and its context? The first clause evidently corresponds in meaning to ver. 34; Christ fulfils in a fresh sense the expression of the psalmist by speaking in parables (*vide infra*). But the second clause brings in a different thought, not found, save very indirectly, in ver. 34, namely, that Christ utters things that before were always hidden. What does the evangelist mean by this second clause? (1) Truths never before revealed have now been revealed by Christ's parables, especially by those two which have just been related. For in these it has been affirmed that outsiders, *i.e.* those belonging to other nations than the Jewish nation, shall seek the protection of the kingdom of heaven, and also that the whole world, including, therefore, these Gentile nations, shall become permeated with its principles. It may well be thought that the clause refers to the announcement of these great truths. (2) This interpretation, however, if taken alone, is not enough. For the evangelist is not speaking of Christ revealing truths to men generally. On the contrary, he says that Christ does not reveal them to the multitudes, but to his disciples (cf. ver. 10, *sqq.*)—a contrast which the emphatic language of ver. 34 (τοῖς ὄχλοις, αὐτοῖς) would probably suggest, even though it is not expressly mentioned. It is, therefore, likely that it was this latter fact to which the evangelist specially wished to refer by his quotation of the second clause. Hence, to make his meaning clearer, he has modified its language. As he quotes it, not merely "enigmatical sayings," but "things hidden" (and that from the foundation of the world) are uttered by Christ; but these are now no longer "hidden" to those to whom he speaks them. This complete meaning of the clause—revelation to his disciples of truths before hidden—corresponds to the idea of μυστήριον in ver. 11 (where see note) and in St. Paul (cf. especially Rom. xvi. 25), and is merely another side of St. Mark's phrase, "Privately to his own disciples he expounded all things" (cf. *supra*, vers. 16, 17). It is also possible that κεκρυμμένα, which is not merely negative, so as to mean "unrevealed," but implies a positive concealment, includes a reference to the thought of ἔκρυψας in ch. xi. 25, that God purposely hid these truths from those who were morally unfit to receive them. These, indeed, belonged in general to the times before Christ came, but also "the multitudes" came under this category. If it be asked—What is the relation of the quotation in its context here to the verse in its original context? the easiest answer is that it is only superficial, that the "accidental" employment by the psalmist of the word "parable" was the only reason why the evangelist made the quotation. Yet it may not be quite so; for there was a real similarity between the psalmist teaching his contemporaries by history and Christ teaching his contemporaries by truths couched in narrative form. May we not go even further, and say that in both cases the message was, generally speaking, refused, though in both a remnant of those who heard it were saved (cf also Isa. vi. 9—13; *vide supra*)?

Vers. 36—52.—Christ alone with his disciples. He explains to them at their request the parable of the tares (vers. 36—43), and adds three parables—the treasure, the pearl, the drag-net—the first two calculated to urge them to full renunciation of everything for Christ, the third to save them from presumption (vers. 44—50). Upon their acknowledging progress in spiritual understanding, he shows them further possibilities (vers. 51, 52).

Vers. 36—43.—*The explanation of the parable of the tares of the field.*

Ver. 36.—**Then Jesus sent the multitude away**; *then he left the multitudes* (Revised Version, ἀφείς); cf. ch. xxvi. 44. **And went into the house** (ver. 1, note): **and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare**; *explain* (Revised Version, διασάφησον); *i.e.* make it thoroughly clear. The verb is found else-

where in the New Testament only in ch. xviii. 31, where the thought is that the man's fellow-servants brought his behaviour fully before their lord's knowledge (cf. also 2 Macc. i. 18). As compared with *φράσον* (Received Text, and ch. xv. 15), it leaves room for the disciples having already partially understood it. **Unto us the parable of the tares of the field.** The addition, "of the field," indicates the point of the parable, considered even as a mere story, that the tares grew in no chance place, but in a piece of cultivated ground already allotted to other produce.

Ver. 37.—**He answered and said unto them.** In the following reply of our Lord (vers. 37—43) observe the change of style at ver. 40. Until then we have pithy, concise sentences all joined by the simple copula δέ, which can hardly be anything else than literal translations of the Lord's own phrases. But vers. 40—43 are in the usual style of this Gospel. **The Son of man** (ch. viii. 20, note).

Ver. 38.—**The children of the kingdom**; *the sons*, etc. (Revised Version); ch. v. 9, note. **The tares are the children of the wicked one**; *of the evil* one (Revised Version); cf. ch. vi. 13, note. (On the bearing that the evidence of the Old Syriac and the Old Latin versions here has on the masculine interpretation there, see Chase, 'Lord's Prayer,' etc., pp. 155, 159, *sqq.*)

Ver. 39.—**The enemy that sowed them** (*ὁ σπείρας*); contrast ver. 37 (*ὁ σπείρων τὸ καλὸν σπέρμα*). Ver. 37 states what is ever true; ver. 39 merely refers back to the enemy spoken of in the parable. **Is the devil** (ch. iv. 1, note). (For the thought of this and the preceding clause, see John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 8, 10.) **The harvest is the end of the world**; literally, as the margin of the Revised Version, *the consummation of the age* (*συντέλεια αἰῶνος*); when the present age shall have received its completion, and the more glorious one be ushered in (cf. ch. xii. 32, note). **And the reapers are the angels**; *are angels* (Revised Version). But it is exactly parallel to the preceding predicate, and if the insertion of our English idiomatic "the" fails to lay the stress which the Greek has on the fact that the reapers are such beings as angels (as contrasted with human workers, ch. ix. 37, 38), its omission adds a thought which the Greek was probably not intended to convey—that the reapers would be only some among the angels.

Ver. 40.—**As therefore.** Observe that in vers. 40—43 our Lord dwells at much greater length on the details of the reapers' work than on the preceding stages of the parable. He wishes to draw special attention to the fact that the tares will, without any doubt, be one day separated, and the wheat appear in full splendour. **The tares are gathered and burned in the fire**—*burned with fire* (Revised Version); cf. ch. iii. 10, note—**so shall it be in the end of this world** (ver. 39, note).

Ver. 41.—**The Son of man.** Observe how expressly Christ identifies the Sower with the Lord of the angels. **Shall send forth** (*ἀποστελεῖ*)—**as his representatives** (ch. x. 2, note)—**his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom**—though they are now there—**all things that offend, and them which do iniquity** (*πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα καὶ τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν*); *all things that offend* (*that cause stumbling*, Revised Version); ch. v. 29, note. In itself it would naturally be understood of persons, in accordance with the meaning of "tares." But what is its relation to the following clause, for this latter cannot be merely tautological? There are two answers: (*a*) The two phrases bring out different aspects under which the persons are regarded. They, as "sons of the evil one," are both stumbling-blocks to others ("the sons of the kingdom"), and also active workers of lawlessness (*vide infra*). They sin against men (cf. ch. xxiv. 24*b*) and against God. (*b*) The first term regards not so much them as their actions—their scandalous acts (Goebel); the second, the persons themselves. The former of the two answers seems preferable, as keeping closer to the parable. It also agrees with the personal use of *σκάνδαλον* in ch. xvi. 23, and the use of *αὐτούς* alone in the next clause. With respect to the whole phrase, observe: (1) It is taken partly from Zeph. i. 3 (Hebrew), "I will consume [the verb אָסַף would readily lend itself to the interpretation 'gather'] . . . the stumbling-blocks with the wicked (והכשלות את־הרשׁעים . . . אסף)." (2) Yet, as it stands, it is taken partly also from Ps. xxxvii. 1, for the Greek of *them that do iniquity* is the same as in the LXX. there. Besides, the context (comp. Kirkpatrick) is not dissimilar; it is that the righteous should not be envious at the prosperity of the wicked, for it is only transitory, "They shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." (3) The phrase, *them which do iniquity* (rather, *lawlessness*; ch. vii. 23, note), looks as though St. Paul's teaching of "the man of sin" (*ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας*: Westcott and Hort, in 2 Thess. ii. 3; cf. 7, 8) might have some basis in the direct teaching of the Lord (cf. ver. 43, note; and on this question generally, Chase, 'The Lord's Prayer,' etc., p. 19). (4) Ephraem Syrus, evidently quoting this passage, but in the form in which, presumably, it existed in the 'Diatessaron,' deduces from it that the earth will be the abode of the glorified saints: "Quod

autem dicit: *Mundabit domum regni sui ab omni scandalo*, intellige de terra et rebus creatis, quas renovabit, ibique justos suos collocabit" (Resch, 'Agrapha,' p. 295).

Ver. 42.—**And shall cast them into a** (*the*, Revised Version) **furnace of fire: there shall be** (*the*, Revised Version) **wailing and gnashing of teeth.** Judging by the analogy of ver. 50, even the first clause is not necessarily due to the image of the tares. *The furnace of fire* was no unknown expression for the punishment of the wicked (cf. also ch. viii. 12, note).

Ver. 43.—**Then shall the righteous.** For with these also their character is seen in their lives (ch. v. 45, note). **Shine forth as the sun.** An undoubted reference to the substance of Dan. xii. 3. Observe that according to the thought of the parable, it is suggested that the likeness consists not only in the brightness of the sun in itself, but also in its being alone in the sky, with nothing round it to prevent its full glory being seen. *Then.* The chief lesson of the parable; not before, but at, that time. **In the kingdom of their Father.** In ver. 38 they were spoken of as "the sons of the kingdom;" here *their Father* is expressly mentioned, not "the Son of man" (vers. 37, 41). The same reference to his Father rather than to himself is found in ch. xxvi. 29. Did our Lord wish already to hint that "then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Cor. xv. 24)? Had St. Paul's teaching also here a direct connexion with that of our Lord (ver. 41, note)? **Who hath ears to hear, let him hear** (ver. 9, note).

Ver. 44.—*The parable of the hidden treasure found.* Matthew only. It seems probable, from ver. 51, that this and the next two parables were spoken to the disciples in private. They alone would appreciate the value of what they had found; to them alone could the warning be as yet given, that it is not sufficient to have been gathered within the gospel net. Observe in this parable that the treasure was found by chance, and it was near to the man without his knowing it. **Again.** To be omitted, with the Revised Version and Westcott and Hort. Its absence (contrast vers. 45, 47) suggests that this parable is the first of a group, marked as such either by our Lord beginning with it after he had made a pause, or by merely coming first in one of the sources that the evangelist used. **The kingdom of heaven** (ver. 24, note) **is like unto treasure hid in a field** (cf. Prov. ii. 4). *Hid* (*hidden*, Revised Version, *κεκρυμμένῳ*). It was not there by accident; it had been purposely placed there, hid by its former possessor for safety (ch. xxv. 18, 25). Observe that, doubtless unintentionally on the part of the evangelist, the parable forms in this respect the complement to ver. 35*b*. *In a field* (*ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ*); *in the field* (Revised Version); cf. ch. i. 23, note. **The which when a man hath found, he hideth; *which a man found, and hid*** (Revised Version). For fear some one else should take it. Premature assertion would lose the man the treasure. (For a similar truth in spiritual things, cf. Gal. i. 17.) **And for joy thereof.** So also the margin of the Revised Version; but *and in his joy* (Revised Version) is better (*καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτοῦ*). **Goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.** *Goeth . . . selleth . . . buyeth.* All in the present tense. Our Lord in this parable (contrast ver. 46) brings the man vividly before us in each separate stage of his action. For the self-denial that is a necessary of acquiring gospel privileges, comp. ch. xix. 21 (where contrast the young man's grief with the joy spoken of here). *Field.* Observe that, though the figure is the same as in ver. 24, the thing signified is very different. Here *field* represents merely that which contains the treasure, perhaps the outward profession of Christianity. *All.* Westcott and Hort omit, chiefly on the authority of the Vatican manuscript (cf. ver. 46, note). *And buyeth that field.* Into the morality of the action our Lord does not enter; he only illustrates his teaching by an incident that must have happened not unfrequently in a country like Palestine, which had already been the scene of so many wars. But the transaction "was, at least, in entire accordance with Jewish law. If a man had found a treasure in loose coins among the corn, it would certainly be his, if he bought the corn. If he had found it on the ground, or in the soil, it would equally certainly belong to him, if he could claim ownership of the soil, and even if the field were not his own, unless others could *prove* their right to it. The law went so far as to adjudge to the purchaser of fruits anything found among these fruits" (Edersheim, 'Life,' i. 595).

Vers. 45, 46.—*The parable of the pearl-merchant.* Matthew only. Observe in this parable that the merchant is accustomed to deal in pearls, and is searching for good ones, when he meets with one worth more than the others he possesses all put together. If the former parable described one who finds the gospel as it were by chance (*e.g.* the woman of Samaria), this speaks of one who has long been searching for truth (*e.g.* Andrew and John, the Ethiopian eunuch).

Ver. 45.—**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man.** Evidently

no poor man, but a rich wholesale dealer (*ἔμπορος*: cf. Rev. xviii. 23; not *κάπηλος*, "a retailer;" cf. 2 Cor. ii. 17). **Seeking.** According to the usual manner of his life. **Goodly pearls.** He cared nothing about the inferior kinds or specimens. The man aimed high; he got more than he can have thought possible (ch. vii. 7, 8). Origen (Commentary, *in loc.*; Huet, i. p. 210) has much curious matter about the different kinds of pearls.

Ver. 46.—**Who, when he had found** (*and having found*, Revised Version, "*εὑρὼν δέ*") **one pearl of great price** (Job xxviii. 18, Revised Version margin, *one*); hardly the indefinite article (cf. ch. viii. 19, note). Chrysostom's comment is, Μία γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ οὐ πολυσχιδής. **Went** (*ἀπελθών*); *i.e.* some distance, for he might well have to go much further than the man in the preceding parable (*ὑπάγει*). *Went* (aorist) . . . *sold* (perfect) . . . *bought* (aorist). He starts without delay; he sells irrevocably; he purchases at once (cf. ver. 44). **And sold all that he had, and bought it.** *All.* Genuine here. It may have been a great deal as worldly wealth is reckoned. Thus Saul of Tarsus acted (Phil. iii. 7, 8), and Moses (Heb. xi. 26).

Vers. 47—50.—*The parable of the dragnet.* This parable at once recalls that of the tares, but it will be noticed that there our Lord's aim is to inculcate patience and hopefulness on the part of his servants when they realize the close proximity of the ungodly even in districts won over to the faith, while here his aim is rather to warn. To be in the kingdom is not enough; some of those now within it may nevertheless be cast out. It thus greatly resembles the parable of the ten virgins; save that in that parable greater stress is laid on personal preparation and continued watchfulness; in this, on personal worth.

Ver. 47.—**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net** (*σαγήνῃ*: ch. iv. 18, note), **that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.** (For the thought, cf. ch. xxii. 10; and for the word, *συνάγειν*, ver. 30, note.)

Ver. 48.—**Which, when it was full**; *filled* (Revised Version, *ἐπληρώθη*); *i.e.* not as a matter of course, but by those that came or were brought in. **They drew to shore.** The Revised Version reproduces the local touch, *they drew up on the beach* (ver. 2, note). In the parable those who cast the net also separate the fish, but this identification of two distinct sets of persons (vers. 24, 30, 37, 41) is merely part of the machinery of the story (cf. ver. 25). **And sat down.** How true to life. Perhaps it "intimates the thoughtful care with which the work of separation is performed" (Goebel). **And gathered** (*συνέλεξαν*); ver. 30, note. **The good.** Corresponding to their proper nature also in appearance (*τὰ καλά*: cf. ch. vii. 17, note). **Into vessels, but cast the bad** (*τὰ δὲ σαπρά*); ch. vii. 17, 18, notes; ch. xii. 33. Not to be pressed to mean "corrupt, dead fish, in a state of rottenness" (Goebel), for surely fishermen seldom get many of these, but simply the worthless, the unfit for use. This would include the legally unclean. Tristram writes, "The greater number of the species taken on the lake are rejected by the fishermen, and I have sat with them on the gunwale while they *went through their net*, and threw out into the sea those that were too small for the market or were considered unclean" ('Nat. Hist. of Bible,' p. 291, edit. 1889). **Away** (*ἔξω ἔβαλον*). Compare, for both language and thought, the treatment of the salt that has lost its savour (ch. v. 13).

Ver. 49.—**So shall it be at** (*in*, Revised Version) **the end of the world** (cf. vers. 39, 40, notes): **the angels shall come forth** (ver. 41), **and sever.** Taking them completely away (*ἀφορισοῦσιν*). **The wicked** (*τοὺς πονηρούς*); ch. vii. 18 and vi. 13, notes. As compared with *σαπρός* (ver. 48), it refers more directly to the moral character. Our Lord has here left the imagery of the parable. **From among the just**; *the righteous* (Revised Version); ver. 43, note.

Ver. 50.—**And shall cast them,** etc. The verse is word for word the same as ver. 42.

Vers. 51, 52.—*The Promise, under the simile of the householder.* Matthew only.

Ver. 51.—**Jesus saith unto them.** Omitted by the Revised Version as a manifest gloss, perhaps originally due to a lectionary. **Have ye understood.** Our Lord wishes them to realize the progress that they have already made, that he may give them a fresh promise, and thus summon them to fresh energy. **All these things?** Probably the immediately preceding parables and others spoken at the same time (cf. ver. 34, note). **They say unto him, Yea, Lord.** *Lord* is rightly omitted by the Revised Version. It distracts the attention from the quiet affirmative.

Ver. 52.—**Then said he unto them, Therefore** (*διὰ τοῦτο*); *i.e.* because you understand, I add this. **Every scribe** (*πᾶς γραμματεύς*). The interpretation of the following clause, naturally suggested by this word in itself, is that our Lord meant to indicate the possibilities that lay before a Jewish scribe if he were only converted; but for such a reference by our Lord to Jewish scribes

there appears no reason in the context. The word must therefore be understood of Christian teachers, who by their study of the Gospel should hold a position in the Christian Church parallel to that of scribes among the Jews. It is possible that our Lord chose the term in order to accustom his disciples to the idea of carrying on the study of Divine things which the scribes were accustomed to make. Even if the disciples were not to follow their methods, they might well imitate their devotion. Dean Plumptre has an interesting note on our Lord's comparison of his own work and that of the apostles after him, to the work of the scribes of the Jewish schools. In ch. xxiii. 34 is found a wider application of the term than usual, hardly referring, however, to Christians, but rather to the Jewish scribes in their ideal character. **Which is instructed**; *who hath been made a disciple* (Revised Version, *μαθητευθείς*). Though the correction is right (cf. ch. xxviii. 19), the word, nevertheless, implies much more than mere admission to the circle of disciples; it includes also the thought of instruction having been really received. **Unto** (*to*, Revised Version) **the kingdom of heaven.** (*τῇ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*, dative of reference; cf. Winer, § xxxi. 4). The kingdom is not regarded as the teacher, but as the school, with reference to which discipleship is entered upon. **Is like.** In the preceding parables the general principles, etc., of the kingdom of heaven have been compared; here, only certain individuals belonging to it. **Unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure** (cf. ch. ii. 11, note). The thing signified is his experience and spiritual understanding. Ch. xii. 35 has a similar thought, but the treasure there is rather his personality as affecting his life; here, as affecting his intellect. It is curious that the thought of ch. xii. 33, 34 should also resemble our vers. 47—50. **Things new and old.** The thought of the saying is that as a householder brings out from his stores food recently and long ago acquired (cf. Cant. vii. 13), so a Christian "scribe" brings out (primarily, if not solely, for the use of others) the new truths that he learns, and also old ones that he has long since known. It is thus a promise that the disciples shall (if they use their opportunities rightly) be able to do more than understand Christ's teaching (as they have just claimed to have done); for they shall be able to teach (not merely to learn), and that not only new truths, but also old ones; they shall be able, that is to say, to understand the relation of the old to the new, and to bring out even the old in its true meaning. Hence *old* is mentioned after *new*, for it implies greater knowledge and skill. It will be observed that Irenæus' interpretation (IV. ix. 1) of *new and old* as the New and Old Testaments is only partially right. With the disciples, it is true, the *old* would naturally be, in the first place, Old Testament truths, and the *new*, such truths as they learned from Christ; but these also would, after a few weeks or months, in their turn become old to them, and the fresh truths taught them as their life went on would be ever the new ones. The thought of 1 John ii. 7, 8 is very similar. Weiss' interpretation is different and even less right. According to him, *new* represents the truths about the kingdom of God, and *old* the long-known arrangements of nature and human life, which, as the parables show, are drawn up on the same lines. Origen gives a beautiful application of Lev. xxvi. 10, 11*a*.

Ver. 53.—**And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.** The formula marks the end of an excerpt from the discourses (cf. ch. xi. 1, note, and Introduction, p. iii.). It is, however, to be noticed that the first and last words, *καὶ . . . ἐκεῖθεν*, come in Mark vi. 1, introducing the parallel passage to our following verses. But in the case of such common words this coincidence is, perhaps, to be considered as accidental. *He departed* (*μετῆρεν*). Elsewhere in the New Testament only in ch. xix. 1, where it comes in the same connexion as here.

Vers. 54—58.—Unbelief manifested in Jesus' own country, *i.e.* Nazareth. Parallel passage: Mark vi. 1—6. In Luke iv. 16—30 we have also an account of a scene at Nazareth; but the occasion was almost certainly a different one from that described here. His account, however, seems to have been modified in form from the better known narrative found in the Framework, and used in Matthew and Mark.

Ver. 54.—**And when he was come into his own country** (*εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ*); *i.e.* Nazareth (ch. ii. 23). In Luke iv. 23 the phrase is used with express contrast to Capernaum. In John iv. 44 it is, as it seems, used in a special sense of Judæa, even though it comes in a saying that is almost identical with our ver. 57 (see Bishop Westcott). **He taught them in their synagogue.** His teaching appears to have spread over at least a few days (*ἐδίδασκεν*). **Insomuch that they were astonished** (ch. vii. 28, 29), **and said, Whence** (*πόθεν*). And so again in ver. 56. The sentence might in itself express an earnest desire to know the origin of our Lord. But the fact that they were "offended in him" (ver. 57) shows that

their language was due, not so much to inquiry as to astonishment, which may in some cases be the first stage of inquiry (ch. ix. 33; xii. 23), or may, as here, be checked from further development. **Knowing** his family, and despising it, they treated him merely as a curiosity, and never thought of submitting themselves to him. **Hath this Man this wisdom.** Which they had just heard. **And these mighty works?** *These* is not expressed in the Greek, nor necessarily implied. Perhaps he had already performed some of the few miracles that he wrought there (ver. 58), or possibly his townsfolk referred to what they had heard of his miracles elsewhere.

Ver. 55.—**Is not this the carpenter's son?** In Mark, "the carpenter, the son of Mary," which may possibly be a doctrinal correction, made to avoid representing our Lord as the son of Joseph, but is more probably the earlier form of the narrative (due to immediate and, perhaps, local knowledge), which St. Matthew, or one of those who transmitted the source he used, avoided out of a feeling of reverence. In the Apocryphal Gospels our Lord is not represented as a carpenter himself, but as helping Joseph by miraculously lengthening a piece of wood which Joseph had cut too short (*e.g.* 'Pseudo-Matthew,' § 37; 'Gospel of Thomas,' first Greek form, § 13; contrast Justin Martyr, 'Dial. with Trypho,' § 88). **Is not his mother called Mary?** and **his brethren** (ch. xii. 46). Probably sons of Joseph by a former wife (see Bishop Lightfoot's classical dissertation in 'Galatians'). **James.** Afterwards "bishop" of Jerusalem (Gal. i. 19; Acts xv. 13), and the author of the Epistle. **And Joses;** *Joseph* (Revised Version), which is also probably right in ch. xxvii. 56. *Joses* is the Græcised form (see Westcott and Hort, 'Append.'). **And Simon, and Judas.** Probably the author of the Epistle.

Ver. 56.—**And his sisters.** Mentioned only here and in the parallel passage in Mark (cf. also "Western" authorities in Mark iii. 32, where see Westcott and Hort, 'Append.'). Their names are quite unknown. **Are they not all.** There were several, at any rate not less than three. Matthew alone has *all*. **With us?** Mark expressly adds "here;" *i.e.* in Nazareth. **Whence then hath this Man all these things?** (ver. 54, note).

Ver. 57.—**And they were offended in him** (ch. v. 29, note). Their knowledge of the earthly conditions of his youth proved a stumbling-block to their faith. **But Jesus said unto them.** He accepts the fact, but reminds them that they were under a special temptation thus to reject him. Even in his reproof he will call them to rise above their position. **A prophet is not without honour.** There will ever be some to honour him. He who speaks forth the mind of God shall not totally fail in any place save one. An encouragement and a warning. **Save in his own country** (ἐν τῇ πατρίδι). Better omit *own*, for αὐτοῦ is not genuine here (contrast Mark), and the insertion of ἰδίᾳ before πατρίδι is not supported by enough authority. Mark adds, "and among his own kin." **And in his own house.** Possibly Jeremiah's experience (Jer. xi. 21; xii. 6) gave rise to this proverb. (On John iv. 44, cf. ver. 54, note.)

Ver. 58.—**And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.** Our account is abbreviated from Mark's. Notice there, "He could not do . . . and he marvelled because of their unbelief." Our Lord was hindered, not by lack of power, but by lack of those moral conditions which would alone have made his miracles really tend to the spiritual advantage of the inhabitants of Nazareth (cf. ch. xii. 38). *Because of their unbelief;* i.e. complete (ἀπιστία); but in the case of the failure of the disciples to perform a miracle, only comparative (ὀλιγοπιστία, ch. xvii. 20).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—23.—*The parable of the sower.* I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. *The time.* It was the day, St. Matthew says (the order in St. Luke is different), on which our Lord had cast the devil out of the blind and dumb man; the day on which the Pharisees had so fiercely accused him of intercourse with Satan; when his own mother and brethren had feared for his safety, and sought to guide and regulate his work; when, as appears from St. Luke (xi. 37), a Pharisee had invited him in no friendly spirit to his house, and there the disagreement had been so great, the antagonism so marked and intense, that the scribes and Pharisees, in their bitter anger, pressed vehemently upon him, catechizing him with wrathful and ensnaring questions, to find, if possible, an opportunity for accusing him. "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side." After all that fury of opposition he was quiet and collected. In the holy calm of his soul he was able to think of others, able to teach them on that very day of strife. It is a blessed thing to be enabled by the grace of God to turn

from the cares and conflicts of life to holy meditation, and to find rest for our troubled soul in communion with God. 2. *The audience.* Multitudes followed him, excited probably by the startling events of the day. They longed to hear again the great Teacher who had held his ground against those famous rabbis, and had convicted them of hypocrisy and envy and falsehood. Many, doubtless, came from curiosity, some from better reasons. The Lord would lose no opportunity of saving souls. Wearied as he must have been, he went into a boat and sat down to preach to them, the whole multitude standing on the beach of fine white sand that borders the lake. 3. *His mode of teaching.* He spake in parables; now, it seems, for the first time. The parable was a bright, lively way of presenting truth, best suited for the dull understanding of the listeners. It would excite their interest; it would rivet their attention; it would stimulate them to think. The parables of Christ have sunk deep into the very heart of the Church. Perhaps they have been especially blessed to the simple and the unlearned; but they have been a rich store of spiritual teaching for all Christian people, the most educated as well as the ignorant; they have given us many precious sayings, current now in daily life; they have coloured our language. Another advantage in the use of parables at that time was that the parable would give the Lord's enemies no opportunity for their malicious accusations. They might perceive (as in ch. xxi. 45) that he spake of them, or with reference to their doctrine; but they could find no ground for a charge of heresy. We shall meet with another reason for the introduction of this mode of teaching in vers. 13—15.

II. THE STORY. 1. *The call for attention.* "Behold," the Lord said; in St. Mark there is the further preface, "Hearken." It is the Lord who speaks. We must listen; we must give him the attention which he claims. His words are simple, but they are full of spiritual instruction. Meditate on them; pray over them. They will throw a light on the dark mysteries of human life; they will guide us on our way to God. 2. *The incidents.* They were taken from the commonest details of daily life. The Lord's hearers might see them any day at sowing-time. Perhaps they were to be seen at that very moment. It may well be that the Lord, sitting on the raised prow of the boat, could see the corn-land descending, as we are told it does, to the water's edge. He saw, it may be, the sower as he went forth to sow. He could see the hard-trodden pathway running through the midst, with no fence to prevent the seed from falling on it. He could see the countless birds hovering over the rich Plain of Gennesaret. He could see the rocky ground of the hillside protruding here and there through the corn-field. He could see the large bushes of thorns springing up, as they do now, in the midst of the wheat. "He could see the good rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn" (Stanley, 'Sinai and Palestine,' pp. 426, 427). And he saw in these common sights a happy illustration of the varied effects of that Word of everlasting life which he came to preach. Happy are those who see in earthly things the shadows of heavenly realities, who walk by faith, not by sight. 3. *The enforcement.* "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." The Lord had bespoken attention at the beginning; he enforces that requirement again. He had shadowed forth solemn truths in those simple words; he would have men ponder them in their hearts. But not all would do so, he knew. All had listened with the outward ear; but to many it was simply a story, a story and nothing more. They would not penetrate into its real meaning; they had not ears to hear. But "who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Let him whose heart God hath opened weigh well these holy words, for they relate to the most momentous issues in our earthly life.

III. THE CONVERSATION WITH THE DISCIPLES. 1. *Their question.* It was the first time, it seems, that the Lord had taught by parables. His disciples were struck by the change in his mode of teaching. When the multitude had departed and they were alone (Mark iv. 10), they asked him, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" Men who are in earnest will be inquirers after truth. 2. *The Lord's answer.* (1) His immediate disciples were more advanced in religious knowledge than the multitude; they had had the inestimable advantage of his teaching and example. It was given unto them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God—those secrets which are revealed to faith and love. Those secrets are mysteries, unintelligible and

incredible to the worldly and the unconverted; hidden from the wise and prudent of the world, but revealed to the babes in Christ. That knowledge is a gift; it is not gained by thought and study. It is given in the gift of the Holy Spirit of God to those who come to Christ in faith. It is not given to all, for not all have the will to come. It is a law in spiritual as in natural things, that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given." It is so in all the various aspects of life—in the pursuit of wealth, honour, learning. Wealth leads to wealth; one step in rank to another; the learning already gained is the means for acquiring more. There must be energy, ability, industry. So in things spiritual there must be a receptivity, an honest and good heart ready to receive the holy seed; even that is God's gift. Every measure of grace given is a means of gaining more. There is a continued progress from strength to strength, nearer and nearer to God. "But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath;" or, as it is in Luke viii. 18, "that which he seemeth to have." The one talent must be taken from him who doth not use it. He seemed to have, but it was only seeming. That is not really ours which is hidden in the earth, which is not used. The means of grace, the opportunities of improvement, what seems to be natural goodness, the very receptivity of grace,—all this must at last be taken away from him who hath not (Heb. vi. 4—6; x. 26—29). (2) The fulfilment of prophecy. The prophecy of Isaiah, fulfilled first in the prophet's own experience, was fulfilled again in its ultimate meaning in the result of the preaching of Christ. The multitude heard his words, and yet they heard not, for they did not understand them with the understanding of faith. They saw him, and yet they saw not; for they saw only his outward form, and failed to perceive his Divine character. Their heart was gross and their ears dull, and they had closed their eyes, lest they should see and hear and understand, and should turn unto Christ. It is instructive to notice that in the prophecy the gross heart and the dull ears and the closed eyes are attributed to the will of God. The blindness is a judicial infliction, a penal visitation. But here our Lord himself seems to give a somewhat different turn to the prophet's words. The blindness is self-caused. "Their eyes they have closed." Then these two statements, contradictory as they may seem, must really express only two sides of the same truth. Both are true; we cannot wholly reconcile them; we incline sometimes towards the one, sometimes towards the other. We cannot yet unite them in one point of view. We must be content with our imperfect vision now; we shall see plainly hereafter. In some sense, then, the use of parables was penal. That mode of teaching would conceal the truth from the profane and hard-hearted, from those who had wilfully closed their eyes and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life (Acts xiii. 46). The parables were *φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσι*. They conveyed precious lessons of spiritual wisdom to the thoughtful; to careless hearers they were mere ordinary stories. God, in his awful justice, hides the truth at last from those who will not see it. It is a law of his moral government that perseverance in sin should result in hardness of heart and insensibility to the truth. That law is the ordinance of God, the expression of his holy will. The sinner by his obstinacy in sin brings himself under its operation. Hence it is that Holy Scripture tells us sometimes that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, sometimes that Pharaoh hardened it himself. (3) The blessedness of the disciples. Their eyes were blessed, for they saw the Christ of God; they saw him not only with the outward eye, as others saw, but with the vision of faith. Their ears were blessed, for they heard his holy words. They heard them not only with the outward ear, as scribes and Pharisees heard; but they heard them with the spiritual understanding, with the attentive ear of obedience. Many prophets and righteous men had longed to see and hear the Christ. Abraham had seen his day by faith, Isaiah had seen his life in the prophetic vision. But they had seen only glimpses. They had seen the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them. Now the Christ was come; the kingdom of heaven was in the world. Blessed are those who see by faith the Lord Christ, and hear his voice speaking to them in their hearts, guiding, teaching, comforting.

IV. THE INTERPRETATION. 1. *The seed.* It is the Word of God. Even the weightier words of men are seeds germinant with a living power; they strike root in the heart, and produce, sometimes noxious weeds and poisonous fruit, sometimes good and fruitful growths. How much more is this true of the living Word of God!

The Lord Jesus himself was the Sower. Others, in their measure, have been sowers—his apostles, evangelists, and pastors—but, in the first and highest sense, the Lord himself. He had been sowing now for many months. His holy words had taken root in some faithful hearts; many had heard listlessly without serious thought; some, like the Pharisees, had rejected the Word with scorn and anger. He is the Sower, and in a true and deep sense he himself is the Seed. He soweth the Word, and he is the Word. The spoken word will not live in the hearts of the hearers without his grace, his presence. Christians are born again of incorruptible seed—"by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23; comp. also 1 John iii. 9). That incorruptible seed is the grace of Christ, Christ's presence, Christ himself abiding in the heart by his Spirit. His grace lives in the soul, growing, spreading through the heart, filling it with a new life, transforming him in whom the seed abideth into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The Word soweth the Word. He is both Sower and Seed, as he is both Priest and Sacrifice. 2. *The wayside.* Some hear, but do not heed; they do not send their thoughts forth to meet the Word. It falls upon their ears; it does not excite their attention; it does not reach their hearts. And that for two reasons. (1) Their heart is hard, like the path through the cornfields. The path, trodden by many feet, was hard and dry; the seed could only lie on the surface; it could not sink into the earth. Such is the soil offered by many hearers to the holy Word of God. The Lord sowed all the field over; his followers must do the same. They must not choose one part which seems likely to be fruitful and neglect another which seems unpromising; they must try to reach all who are within the sphere of their influence. But there are, alas! many hearts worn hard by worldliness and selfishness, trodden into the hardness of stone by the constant passage of worldly thoughts and worldly cares. Such cannot receive the Word. It lies outside; it cannot enter. All that is high and holy, all that speaks of Christ and heaven, and of the life of faith and love, is unintelligible to such men. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him." (2) The fowls came and devoured it. The Word was not received into the heart; the wicked one cometh and taketh it immediately away. Such men have exposed themselves to his devices; for the hard-trodden path was good ground once. The hard heart was once tender, receptive of the truth. "To-day if ye will hear his voice," said the psalmist, "harden not your hearts." They who will not listen to the solemn warning expose themselves to the wiles of the devil. His evil spirits, countless like the fowls of the air, carry off the good seed. They fill the cold, unheeding heart with idle thoughts, with selfish and wicked imaginations; and the good seed is lost. "Take heed how ye hear." The good seed is precious exceedingly. Lose it not; to lose the good seed is to lose the very life. 3. *The stony places.* Here and there in the field the rock rose to the surface; there was a thin covering of earth lying on a sheet of rock. The seed could not sink in; it sprang up quickly because it had no deepness of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched; it had no moisture, no root, and it withered away. The heart was as hard as in the first case; it was utterly selfish, it had no capacity of real self-denial. But it had an appearance of softness. There was an outside of feeling, or what seemed like feeling; there was quickness of apprehension, a lively interest in novelties, a liking for excitement. But there was no depth, no real conviction, no truth of love. Underneath that outside of seeming life there lay the heart unchanged, unconverted, hard and cold as rock. Such persons are easily excited; they receive the Word with joy. But it is only the external beauty of religion, its attractiveness, its poetry, that charms them; they like religious excitement just as they like other forms of excitement. But they have not counted the cost; they have looked only on the fair side of religion, not on its severer aspect. They have never thought deeply of the sharpness of the cross, of their own danger, of the sacrifices which the cross demands. That premature joy is often a bad sign; it often means that there is no sense of sin, no genuine sorrow and contrition for the past. Such a one has no perseverance; he dureth for a while, but only for a while. The novelty wears off; perhaps trouble comes, or sickness and pain. The sun kindles into more vigorous life the deeply rooted plants; it scorches those that have no depth. So it is with affliction; it refines and strengthens the true disciple who is rooted in Christ; it offends the superficial Christian. The religion of excitement and outward form will not help us in sickness

and in the hour of death; we want something deeper. The root of the plant is not seen; it is hidden in the earth. So is the true life of the Christian. It is rooted in Christ, hidden with Christ in God. Such a man doth not fall away in time of temptation; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He does not need novelty and excitement. The old story of the love of Christ is ever new to him. Nothing can separate him from the love of Christ, neither tribulation nor distress; for he dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him. 4. *The thorns.* In this case the soil is good; the seed sinks deep; all promises well. But there were thorn-roots left in the ground. The thorn-bushes had been burnt or cut off, but the roots remained. And so the thorns sprang up with the wheat and absorbed its nourishment, and grew above it, taking away its light and heat. It did not wither, it still grew; there were stalk and leaves and ear; but the ear was empty; there was no fruit. The Lord is thinking of men, not superficial and thoughtless like those described last, but men of character, men of depth and thought and power, men of earnestness and stability. But, alas! there are thorn-roots. Such a man might have been a great saint; he becomes only a great merchant, or a great writer, or a great statesman. He never casts aside his profession of religion. He is upright, moral, attentive to the outward ordinances of worship. But he brings no fruit to perfection; and that because of the thorn-roots. He had not by diligent self-examination and anxious prayer weeded out the tendencies to worldliness which lie in every heart. They grew up, and acquired daily more height and strength. The soil was good, the thorns grew thick and strong and high. He met with great successes; he prospered in his undertakings; his engagements became more and more numerous. His cares increased. The cares of this world little by little filled his heart, leaving him no time, he supposed, for thought and self-examination and prayer. He grows rich; his riches become a snare; they draw him further from Christ. The love of money, the root of all evil, becomes a tyrant passion; it rules his heart. Or, it may be, the pleasures of this life allure him with their deceitful glitter; and he fritters away in frivolous gaieties the talents that might have raised him high in the service of Christ. All the time he keeps up the respectabilities of a religious profession; his life is decent and fair to look upon. There are leaves, but no fruit. The thorns have choked the wheat. The cares and pleasures of life have filled the heart that should have been given to Christ. He has no time, no thought, no real love, for the things that belong to his peace. He beareth no fruit. The fruit of holy thoughts, holy words, and holy deeds; the blessed fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;—he hath none of these things. He might have been a saint of God; but, alas! he hath gained the world, he hath lost his soul. 5. *The good ground.* The honest and true heart is the good ground. Such a heart offers no hindrance to the growth of the Divine seed, to the gracious inworking of the Holy Spirit of God. The soil is deep; there are no thorn-roots; or rather they have been extirpated by diligent care. The heart is thoughtful and serious; evil passions and covetous desires have been subdued by the grace of God. Such men bring forth fruit with patience. They go on from strength to strength in patient continuance of well-doing. They differ from one another in their natural gifts, in their opportunities; also in the degree of their devotion, their self-denial. But all bring forth the fruit of holy living, "some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." "One star differeth from another star in glory;" but all are bright, shining with the reflected glory of the Sun of Righteousness. 6. *General reflections.* (1) The honest and good heart is good only because God hath made it so. "There is none righteous, no, not one." The living seed of the Word hath a power which earthly seed hath not. Not only hath it life in itself, but it fertilizes the soil on which it falls; it gives richness and depth to the ground that once was barren. "By the grace of God I am what I am." It is his grace that makes the heart good and honest. That grace is offered to all. He "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." The Sower sowed the precious seed all the field over. The seed has the same life-giving power wherever it falls. The hard heart, the shallow heart, the heart filled full with cares or given up to pleasures, need not always remain what now they are. The holy seed, if received and cherished, will give richness and depth and freedom. The distinctions figured in the parable are not fixed and immutable. Thank God, the wicked man may turn from his wickedness which he hath committed; he may do that which is lawful and right; he may save his soul

alive. The conditions of the soil may change. Yet there are differences, the principles of which lie hidden in deepest mystery. Some hearts have a receptivity for God's grace; some have not. Some men come to the light, hating their own darkness, feeling their sinfulness, drawn to the light by its attractive power; others—strange and awful infatuation!—love darkness rather than light, and will not come to the Light which shineth in the world. But we must not despair; we know not what wonders the grace of God may work. The Sower soweth the Word; he sows it everywhere. His servants must do the like, sowing in all soils, even the hardest and most unpromising, in humble faith and hope. (2) We may notice a progress in the three classes of hearers figured in the parable (see Alford, *in loc.*). In the first case the seed does not spring up at all; in the second, it springs up, but is withered almost immediately; in the third it is checked, but not withered; it yields stalk and leaves and empty ears, but brings no fruit to perfection. The first understand not; the second receive the Word with joy; the third do something more—they "go forth," they enter on the way that leadeth unto life; but while they are on the way (πορευόμενοι) the Word is choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life. "It has been noticed," says Dean Alford, "that the first is more the fault of careless, inattentive childhood; the second, of ardent, shallow youth; the third, of worldly, self-seeking age." All three cases are sad; the last is the saddest, "for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. ii. 21).

LESSONS. 1. Hearken! it is the Lord's voice. His disciples must listen with solemn attention. 2. Blessed are they who hear the Saviour's voice. The saints of the Old Testament had not our privileges; let us value them. 3. Pray for an honest and good heart. God can soften the hard-hearted; he can make the frivolous thoughtful; he can turn men from the cares of the world to the holy love of Christ. Pray always; despair not.

Vers. 24—43.—*The tares; the mustard seed; the leaven.* I. THE STORY OF THE TARES. 1. *Resemblance to the first parable.* Again we have the field, the sower, and the seed. Again the seed is good. "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Again the Sower sowed the good seed all over the field. No part was neglected. 2. *The differences.* (1) In this case there is an enemy; he came by night and sowed tares among the wheat. It was an act of pure malice; it could do him no good. But such things are sometimes done, we are told, in Eastern countries now; and, alas! actions of equal malice are done nearer home. In the blade the tares were like the wheat; the mischief was not discovered till the ears began to form. (2) There are servants also. They tell their lord; they suggest the plucking up of the tares. It is a thing often done (comp. 'Sinai and Palestine,' p. 426); if the tares had been few and scattered, it would have seemed the best course. But the enemy had done his work too thoroughly; the tares were sown thickly all over the field; their roots were intertwined with the wheat-roots. The lord bade his servants wait till the harvest; then the field should be reaped as it was; the tares should be burned, the wheat gathered into the garner.

II. THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED. 1. *The parable.* The mustard seed is small. It is sown in the field; it becomes greater than the herbs, a tree; the birds of the air lodge in its branches. 2. *Its meaning.* Such was the kingdom of heaven. It was small in its beginning; only a little Child was born in Bethlehem of Judæa. At first its growth seemed very slow. The King was a Man of sorrows; he died the cruel death of the cross. Twelve men were sent forth to fight the battle of the kingdom, to confront the whole power of heathendom; they were few; they were, for the most part, of no reputation, unknown and unregarded. But as the little seed had a vital power inherent in it, so was it with the kingdom of heaven. It spread itself with a strange expansive force, till it filled all the greatest kingdoms of the earth, and men flocked from all sides to take refuge in its shelter. 3. *Its encouragement.* It may be, as Chrysostom thinks, that this and the following parable were intended to encourage the disciples. There was something very saddening in the lessons of the first two parables. Three parts of the good seed were lost; the remainder was mingled with tares. It seemed a melancholy prospect. But now there is a word of comfort.

The seed will grow; it will become a tree, spreading its branches far; it will offer refuge to the wandering and the homeless. Let us take courage. The Church hath a vital expansive force, so long as it abides in Christ who is the Life. It will live on; it will spread. The wandering children will return; the restless, who have been driven about by every blast of vain doctrine, will find a home at last in the Church of Christ.

III. THE LEAVEN. 1. *The difference between this parable and the last.* The seed has a principle of life in it. Plant it, and under favourable circumstances it will grow. You cannot watch the actual process of growth from minute to minute; but day after day you see the results. The plant springs up, rises into the air, expands on all sides. So doth the Church of Christ. The leaven works secretly, silently, invisibly; it is hidden in the meal; little by little it spreads its assimilating influence through the whole mass. It figures the silent, unseen spreading of the gospel. 2. *The silent growth of Christianity.* The gospel was hidden in the world, in its three ancient divisions, among the descendants of the three sons of Noah. Its growth at first was silent; few marked it, as by slow degrees it spread its influence through the masses of heathenism. Heathen contemporary writers seem for the most part ignorant of its existence; but in silence and in secret it worked on, softening, refining, purifying. 3. *The unseen growth of personal religion.* But the three measures of meal may well be understood of the three constituent parts of our human nature—body, soul, and spirit. The leaven which is to regenerate society must first regenerate its individual elements. The germ of spiritual life is hidden in the soul; it is unseen, hid with Christ in God. But it is quick and powerful. It works under the surface with a strange penetrating energy. It diffuses its influence through the heart, which without it would be dull and heavy, indifferent to religion. Little by little it expels the counteracting agencies of the world, the flesh, and the devil. It spreads itself more and more through the whole life, assimilating with its secret influence every form of human activity. It works, and will work, till every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; till we have learned, whatever we do, to do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

IV. REMARKS OF THE EVANGELIST. 1. *The Lord's method.* On that occasion he taught the multitude only by parables. He spoke to the people as they were able to hear it (Mark iv. 33). He reserved the explanation for his disciples. Religious teaching should be adapted to the circumstances of the hearers. Simple teaching is best suited for simple minds. The teacher should imitate the Lord's example, and teach in singleness of heart, seeking only the good of souls. 2. *The reason: the fulfilment of prophecy.* There were other reasons, mentioned already, for the adoption of this mode of teaching. But the fulfilment of prophecy always underlay all the Lord's acts and words. The whole Scriptures of the ancient covenant spake of him and the new covenant which he was to inaugurate. Thus the seventy-eighth psalm prefigured his use of parables. That psalm represents the history of God's ancient people as a parable of spiritual things. There was a spiritual meaning in all its details. "These things were our examples (*τύποι*)" (1 Cor. x. 6, 11); they were types of the vicissitudes of the spiritual life, written for our admonition; a parable of God's dealings with the individual soul. Let us learn to look on the Old Testament in this light, to understand its religious use.

V. EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE TARES. 1. *The petition of the disciples.* The multitude had departed; the Lord and his disciples had returned to the house; they were alone. The disciples sought further instruction. So it is now. The multitude depart; the true disciples follow the Lord whithersoever he goeth. They are near him in the crowded church, sometimes even nearer in the silent hour of solitary prayer. Then they sit at his feet like Mary, seeking to learn ever deeper lessons of faith and love. He hears their prayer; he answers in his grace and mercy. 2. *The answer.* The Lord explained the parable to his disciples, as he will explain to us the meaning of our trials and perplexities, if we come to him in faith and prayer. (1) The Sower is the Son of man. God the Son, come in the flesh, and henceforth Son of man as well as Son of God. (2) The field is the world. But it is a parable of the kingdom of God (vers. 24, 41). The field is God's. He sowed the good seed in it. The world, so far as it is sown over with the good seed, becomes the Church. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (3) The seed. In the

parable of the sower, the seed is the Word of God; here it is the children of the kingdom. But the seed is identical with the plant. The living seed pervades and takes into itself the whole human nature. The principle of spiritual life which was sown by the Divine Sower becomes the full-grown plant, the Christian living in the faith of the Son of God. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." This identification is seen even in the parable of the sower. In vers. 20, 22, 23 the true translation is not "he that received seed," but "he that was sown." (4) The enemy. "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." It was not he who sowed the tares; it was the devil. This parable brings out into clear light the personality of Satan, his malice, his intense hostility to Christ. Dark, perplexing questions rise in our minds. Our very children ask us—Why did not God destroy the devil? We know that there is "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." He shall be cast into the bottomless pit, and deceive men no more. But in the mean time it seems to be necessary, for deep inscrutable reasons, that his malice should be counteracted, not by a direct act of almighty power, but by moral and spiritual forces. Such forces radiate into the Church from the cradle of Bethlehem, from the cross of Calvary. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." The enemy sowed the tares; they are the children of the wicked one. The evil seed has, through their own sinful compliance, so spread through their nature that it has made them like their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they do. It is an awful thought; but we know that though, in the natural world, tares can never become wheat, yet, in the spiritual world, they who were once under the power of darkness may by the grace of God be translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. A parable cannot, from the nature of the case, correspond in all its minute details with the eternal verities which it is intended to shadow forth. (5) The tares are to remain till the end of the world. The servants were impatient. Christians have been so often. "Whence then hath it tares?" is a question which has been asked in every age of the Church—which we often ask ourselves. The servants would have anticipated the office of the heavenly reapers; but the Lord forbade. The time was not come. They had not the knowledge. They would do more harm than good, wheat and tares were so inextricably mingled. Christians must wait for the Lord in patience. In the visible Church the evil will be ever mingled with the good. Earthly power must not be used to exterminate religious errors. The tares must grow with the wheat, for such is the Lord's command. It is a saddening thought that the Church, the bride of Christ, which ought to be "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," should be so rent asunder by schism and heresies, so disfigured with the evil lives of many baptized men. But the Lord warned us that it would be so. We must live in patient hope, purifying ourselves even as he is pure, and seeking by his gracious help to influence for good all who come within our reach. (6) For the harvest cometh. It is the end of the world. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels." He seemed a man among men, as he said the words; but he was in truth the high Son of God. None other could dare to describe the angels of judgment as *his* messengers. The reapers are the angels; they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. They were in the outward kingdom, the visible Church; they have no part in the kingdom of glory. The Lord hath prepared no place there for them. There remaineth only the furnace of fire, the wailing and gnashing of teeth. Most awful words! (7) The glory of the blessed. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." They were in his earthly kingdom; they had called him "Our Father." Now they are with him for ever in the everlasting glory. They shall shine forth. The glory which they had before, which Christ had given them (John xvii. 22), but which had been hidden in that inner life of holiness which is hid with Christ in God, shall be manifested then. They shall shine as the sun. As the raiment of the Lord shone on the Mount of the Transfiguration, so shall shine the glorified bodies of the blessed in the day when he shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be like unto the body of his glory. Listen, the Lord says; his words are of momentous importance. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

LESSONS. 1. The malice of the devil is hellish. You have renounced him and all his works; hate him and them with energetic hatred. 2. The mustard seed will grow; the leaven will diffuse its influence. He who hath begun the good work will fulfil it.

Be of good cheer; only believe. 3. Think of the great harvest. "Set your affection on things above."

Vers. 44—53.—*The parables addressed to the disciples.* I. THE HIDDEN TREASURE. 1. *The story.* Treasures were often hidden in fact, still more often in fiction. A man walked through the field; he lighted suddenly on the treasure. He hid it again. It was his, probably, by right of finding. But in this parable, as in others, not every detail is to be pressed. Earthly stories cannot exactly express every feature of spiritual truth. One parable supplies the omissions of another; taken together, they fill up the picture. His joy was great. He sold all that he had to buy the field, that the treasure might be clearly his beyond doubt and question. 2. *The meaning.* The field may be the visible Church. It may be the Holy Scriptures. The finder was in the Church. He knew his Bible well, but he had not yet found Christ. The ordinances of the Church were but forms to him; the Bible was like other books. Suddenly, by the grace of God, like St. Paul or St. Augustine, he lights upon the hidden treasure. He recognizes its surpassing value. A great joy fills his heart, a joy deep and entrancing, a glimpse of the gladness of heaven. But there is something awful in that joy, something too sacred for words. At first he dares not speak of it; not through jealousy of others—God forbid!—but through fear lest he should lose it. Loud talk, boasting, spiritual pride, might rob him of the treasure. In deep humility he hides it in his heart. But he sells all that he has. He buys the field. Now the Church is to him the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth; now the Bible is precious exceedingly; for the treasure in it is now his. Like St. Paul, he has counted all things else as dross, as very dung, that he might find Christ. He has found him, and in him he has found a treasure precious beyond what words can tell; a hidden treasure, which none can know save those who, like the happy finder, part with all other treasures to make that one holiest treasure theirs for ever.

II. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE. 1. *The merchant.* He was an earnest seeker. His life was not aimless. He knew that there is a meaning and a purpose in this our earthly life. It is not to be wasted; it must be used in real work. He was not content to live on from day to day enjoying the passing hour without thought of the future. He was no listless loiterer, but a seeker, seeking ever with steadfast perseverance after the true end of human life. He was thoughtful, earnest, single-hearted; such a seeker sooner or later findeth. 2. *The pearl.* There were many. But the merchant sought only for goodly pearls. He was a man of high aims from the beginning. Pleasure was not the pearl, nor earthly rank or wealth. But wisdom perhaps attracted him, or the desire of doing good, or the love of wife or child. These were goodly in their degree; but at last, in his search, he found one pearl, in comparison of which all that had seemed most lovely became pale and poor. At once he went, and with calm resolve sold all that he had to make that pearl his own. That pearl is the Lord Christ himself, the one thing needful, the good part which Mary chose, while Martha was careful and troubled about many things. That pearl is beyond comparison of all things goodly the goodliest and the best. He who would buy that pearl must sell all that he has. He must learn to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and to subordinate all other loves to that one holiest love. He must hush into calm the tumult of earthly desires, that the one strong desire of Christ, the Desire of all nations, may fill his heart. To such earnest seekers the pearl of great price is given. Again the parable is not exact in its details; no earthly story can be. Eternal life, which is the knowledge of Christ, is the gift of God. It is a reward altogether overpassing and throwing into shade our utmost efforts. Poor and helpless as we are, we could not buy it, were it not that he giveth the unspeakable Gift, the gift of Christ, without money and without price, to those who seek in persevering prayer and earnest faith. But he is pleased, in his Divine condescension, to speak of us as buying the pearl. He accepts our poor unworthy love, and gives us in return that priceless Gift to be our own.

III. THE NET. 1. *Cast into the sea.* It was a draw-net, large and long. It gathered of every kind till it was full. The sea is the world; the net is the Church. The net is drawn through the sea till it is filled with fishes. The Church spreads through the world till the number of the elect is accomplished. Till that time the net is in the sea, the Church is in the world. There are many not yet gathered into the net. The sea

is wide and large; the net has not yet swept through it. The gospel has not yet been preached over all the earth. There are many dark places where the fishers of men have not yet drawn the net. All waters must be tried. The glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven must be carried everywhere throughout the world. Then shall the end come. The net gathered of every kind. In the Church are good and bad. Men like Judas, or Demas, or Hymenæus, or Diotrephes, as well as men like St. Peter, or St. John, or St. Paul. Men, too, of all nations, of all conditions of life, manifold in character and circumstances. 2. *Drawn to the shore.* They sit down, they gather the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. It is a figure of the judgment. Again we hear of the angels, the ministers of God's most awful justice; again we hear of the furnace of fire, of the wailing and gnashing of teeth—words which contain a meaning most fearful, most tremendous.

IV. THE TREASURES OF THE HOUSEHOLDER. 1. *The Lord's question.* He was teaching his disciples now in private. He asks them, "Have ye understood all these things?" They who are to teach must learn themselves. The true teaching comes only from Christ. The deepest spiritual truths can be learned only by direct intercourse with the Lord. It is well if we can answer, "Yea, Lord." He accepts our imperfect knowledge; imperfect it must be. If only it is real, as far as it goes, it will be the beginning of deeper, holier wisdom. 2. *The comparison.* The careful householder brings out of his store things new and old; so doth the instructed scribe. The teacher must be a disciple; he must have been instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; he must himself be in the kingdom; he must have the kingdom in his own heart. Then he will possess a rich store of true wisdom; and out of that store he will bring things new and old; the old truths, unchanging, ever the same, but in the new light of living, personal experience; old and yet always new; the truths that drew the first disciples to the Lord; the truths that flash with a new light into the heart of each awakened Christian now when first he turns from darkness unto light, from Satan unto God.

V. THE SEVEN PARABLES. 1. "*Jesus had finished these parables.*" The words of the evangelist seem to regard the seven parables as a whole, a cycle of parabolic teaching. The number seven is the number of perfection. The parables fill up and supplement one another. No one human illustration can give an adequate view of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The seven taken together give a complete picture. In the first we see the various characters of men, receptive or unreceptive of the truth. In the second, the agency of the tempter. In the third, the gradual spreading of the kingdom through the world. In the fourth, its inner working in the individual heart. In the fifth it is found by one who sought not for it, in the sixth after diligent inquiry and anxious search; in both we see its exceeding preciousness, a preciousness which makes the Christian willing to sacrifice all for the kingdom's sake. In the seventh we see the consummation of all things, the final separation, the condemnation of the wicked, the glory of the righteous. 2. *The historical explanation.* We may see a brief Church history in these seven parables. We begin with the first sowing of the Word by the great Sower; then comes the growth of heresy and sin within the Church; then the gradual progress of the Church, spreading itself on every side, silently leavening the framework of society; then we read the history of this or that great saint of God, one lighting suddenly on the hid treasure, another seeking and finding; and at last the judgment. Let us learn of the great Teacher how to read the history of the world, looking back to the first sowing, looking onwards to the coming judgment, diligently seeking for the hid treasure, the pearl of great price.

LESSONS. 1. The treasure is hidden; oh that we may find it! The pearl is of great price; let us count the cost and buy it. 2. The Lord is at hand; prepare to meet him. 3. The true disciple ever learns, for Christ his Teacher is ever with him.

VERS. 54—58.—*The Lord's preaching at Nazareth.* I. HIS VISIT. 1. *It was his own country.* He had lived there nearly thirty years, from infancy to manhood. It was but a small place; every one knew him; some had been his schoolfellows, some friends of the family, some had bought their ploughs and yokes at the carpenter's shop. He had been absent a long time. During that absence the unknown village carpenter had become the most conspicuous figure in the Holy Land. The Nazarenes had wondered

as they heard of his mighty works and the strange influence of his teaching. They must have felt some natural pride in the eminence of their countryman. But their admiration was mingled with unworthy feelings—jealousy, envy. Holiness is not always popular. Ungodly men feel it as a rebuke to themselves; they hate it. 2. *His teaching there.* He went to the synagogue, as he was wont. The Lord always attended public worship. In this, as in all things, he is our Example. It was known that he would be there. The Nazarenes flocked to hear him. Their motives were different, but all were drawn by eager desire to listen to the great Preacher. We cannot tell for certain whether this visit, recorded also in St. Mark, is to be regarded as identical with that described in Luke iv. 16—30. We only know that the congregation was filled with astonishment now, as they were on that occasion. The Lord's words were words of deep and holy wisdom. "Never man spake as this Man." They had been told of his wisdom; now they heard it themselves, and they wondered greatly.

II. THE FEELINGS OF THE NAZARENES. 1. *Their talk.* They whispered together about the Lord's humble origin. (1) He was the Son, they thought, of the carpenter Joseph, whom they remembered so well—the good man now gone to his reward; the son of David, but yet the village carpenter. The Nazarenes forgot his royal descent; they forgot the higher nobility of goodness which had distinguished him; they thought only of his humble occupation. He was a carpenter, they said, only a carpenter; and this Preacher who spoke with such authority was, they supposed, the carpenter's Son. Mary was his mother. They knew her well; she lived long among them. (2) There were brothers, too, and sisters; children, probably, of Joseph by a former marriage, brought up with the Lord, older than he—which, perhaps, may serve to explain their assumption of authority (ch. xii. 46; Mark iii. 21, 31; John vii. 3, 4). It is a thought of deep interest that the blessed Lord had lived with brothers and sisters in family life. He felt its joys and its troubles; the sweetness of affection, and at times, perhaps, the vexations of jarring wills; for brothers and sisters were not, as he was, sinless and without spot. His brethren, we know, did not yet believe in him. We wonder how the sisters regarded his exalted holiness, his perfect purity, his tender love. Holy Scripture has hidden from us the details of our Lord's domestic life; but it is sweet to think that he lived as we have lived, and to regard him as our Example in all the varied relations of family life. 2. *Their rejection of the Lord.* They were offended in him. Their previous knowledge of him, of his early life among them, of his occupation, of his family, was a stumbling-block to them. They could not get over it. They stumbled and fell. Yet his life had been an example of unparalleled innocence and holiness. They had loved him in his holy childhood, when he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. But they could not receive "the carpenter's Son" as the Messiah. Let us learn not to despise the poor, the lowly; let no Christian dare to look down on honest trade. The Lord Christ was once a carpenter. The humble in earthly rank may be very high in holiness, first in the kingdom of heaven.

III. HIS DEPARTURE. 1. *His view of their conduct.* A prophet is not without honour. A prophet, a true man who speaks for God, who speaks in simplicity and earnestness, out of the abundance of his heart,—such a man is not without honour. He is honoured of God, and, sooner or later, he is honoured of men; not always in his life-time, but at last, when death raises him above the petty jealousies of life, men will own that there hath been a prophet among them, and will render him that meed of honour which perhaps in his lifetime they kept from him. But he is not always, not commonly, honoured in his own country and in his own house. Men do not envy those very high above them in rank and wealth, or those far removed from them in any way. They envy most those who are nearest to them in place, in time, in circumstances. It is so now, it was so in our Saviour's case. His fellow-countrymen held him not in honour. His brethren did not believe in him. If we suffer from the envy of others, let us think of him. He was despised and rejected. We may well be content if the disciple is as his Master. And oh, let us drive envy out of own hearts. It kept the Nazarenes from Christ; it keeps men from Christ now. The envious cannot know him who is love. 2. *His presence was not blessed to them.* "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." He was there, the Saviour, the mighty Son of God, but his presence brought little blessing. It was not the mere bodily presence of the Christ that saved and blessed. "He could there do no mighty work," says St. Mark, "save that he laid

his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them." The Lord's miracles of healing were not mere displays of power; they had a spiritual meaning. Faith was required in the recipient. He does not exercise his power arbitrarily; it is directed by his wise and holy will. A few had faith, those few he healed. The unbelieving derived no benefit from his visit. How earnestly we should pray, "Lord, increase our faith"!

LESSONS. 1. Never despise men because of their humble origin; it is a sinful thing in the Christian, whose King was called "the carpenter's Son." 2. Honour God's saints; to honour them is to honour God, whose servants they are. 3. Flee from envy; it kills the soul. 4. Be very careful to use all the means of grace! do not drive Christ away by unbelief and hardness of heart.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The parable of the soils.* Our Lord's popularity is now at its height. Crowds throng him wherever he goes. But he is not dazzled by the blaze of public favour. On the contrary, he sees how unsubstantial and delusive it is. Multitudes follow him for the charm of his words and the fame of his miracles; but of these large numbers do not truly accept his message and profit by it. It is necessary that he should sift his disciples, separating those who are in earnest from the superficial and indifferent. The method employed with this object in view is parabolic teaching (see vers. 13—16). By means of such teaching those who are only amused at a tale will not see the truth which they do not care to have, while those who are awake and alive to the gospel of the kingdom will be prompted to think and inquire, and to get a better hold of Christ's teaching. It is natural that the transition to this more veiled method of instruction should be made in a parable that illustrates the different classes of hearers.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PARABLE. A great principle underlies the whole parable, and is revealed in all its parts, viz.: That the success or failure of preaching is partly dependent on the character and conduct of the hearers. In the present instance the Sower is Christ—the greatest of preachers; and the seed is the word of his gospel—the best of all teaching. Yet there are no uniformly good results, but a variety of issues, from utter failure to a bountiful harvest. Then the preacher is not always to blame if his preaching is barren, and the doctrine is not to be accounted false simply because in some cases it does not produce good effects. The hearer is responsible. He has free-will, and he may reject the highest truths of the greatest teacher, or he may receive them with different degrees of profit.

II. THE BAD SOILS. These represent three characters. 1. *Dull indifference.* Instead of being receptive soil for the seed of truth, the heart of the worldly man is hard. The hardening is the result of the traffic of innumerable earthly interests. Troops of these secular concerns trample the heart into a highway. They may be harmless in themselves and even necessary, but the full surrender to them is ruinous to the spiritual life. The heart that is given up to the world is a prey to the ravages of Satan. 2. *Sentimental fervour.* The rocky ground is hot, and it provokes quick growth. Sentimental people show a passion of devotion. But they have no reservoirs of strength. When circumstances are adverse they are weak and they yield. 3. *Stifling worldliness.* In the third case more progress is made, and yet there is no harvest. Here we have not the gross worldliness which produces indifference from the beginning as in the first case. There is a competition between the spiritual and the worldly, and the latter wins by reason of its rank vigour.

III. THE GOOD SOILS. 1. *A common fruitfulness.* All the good soils bring forth fruit. This is the one result looked for. If it appears, we have the joy of harvest. Christ's preaching was not a failure, though many failed to profit by it. If no good comes from preaching, the fault may not lie wholly with the hearers. The gospel of Christ brings in a rich harvest of souls. 2. *A variation of productiveness.* All who profit by the truth of the gospel do not profit equally. It is not enough that some fruit is obtained. The aim should be for an abundant return. The seed is capable of enormous productiveness; there is no limit to the possibilities of Divine grace if only we will let them be realized in our own lives.—W. F. A.

Ver. 17.—*Christians enjoying what prophets desired.* They who truly receive the teaching of Christ and profit by it enjoy privileges which prophets and righteous men longed for in vain.

I. THE PROPHETS' DESIRES. The saints and seers of antiquity were not satisfied with the revelations made to them and the favour bestowed upon them. They looked forward to a glorious future when fuller light should appear, and when greater works of heavenly power should be accomplished. Let us consider the objects of the prophets' desire, what things they were the prophets longed to see and hear. 1. *The vision of God.* Job yearned to see God (Job xxiii. 3). The older revelations of God awakened a hunger for a nearer vision. The best men of antiquity desired above all things to "see the King in his beauty." 2. *The redemption of man.* Some were satisfied with the course of events and the condition of the world. But two classes of men were profoundly dissatisfied, viz. (1) prophets, who saw the truth of God and perceived the falseness of the world, its direct antagonism to the Divine will; and (2) righteous men, who had a keen conscience, and were horrified at the sin and guilt of mankind. Both of these saw that only ruin faced man when left to himself; both cried out for a Divine redemption. 3. *The advent of the kingdom of heaven.* This was the grand topic of Messianic prophecy; it was the supreme object of the patient hope of devout people, such as Anna and Simeon at the time of our Lord's infancy (Luke ii. 25—38). Such a hope went beyond deliverance and redemption; it pointed to a golden age in the future, excelling the best days of the past.

II. THE CHRISTIANS' PRIVILEGES. Christ congratulates his true disciples on their happy estate. Let us consider what privileges this brings. 1. *The presence of Christ.* (1) He is the Revelation of God, longed for by prophets, but never seen in Old Testament times. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" and Jesus replied, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 8, 9). (2) He, too, brings redemption, for he is the Redeemer, and he comes to save the world by the sacrifice of himself. (3) He establishes the kingdom of heaven, for he is its King. When Christ has come to us the kingdom is among us. But many saw Christ "after the flesh," in his bodily presence, and yet discerned none of these things. We do not see him walking in our streets or sitting at our table. Yet when we see him with the eyes of the heart, and perceive his Divine and redeeming presence, ours also is the vision longed for by the good and wise in ancient time. 2. *The Word of life.* This is what Christians hear. It is the good news of salvation in Christ. But it is also a living Word that awakens dead souls and quickens the Divine life within men. All who are within reach of the gospel may be familiar with the sound of this Word. But, alas! how many never perceive that to them has come a privilege greatly desired by prophets and righteous men of old. This Word must be heard in the heart to be appreciated. Then its gracious tones awaken responses of faith and love, because then it speaks in deep harmonies as the very music of heaven.—W. F. A.

Vers. 24—30.—*The tares.* The parable of the soils showed the various results of sowing the same good seed according to the various conditions of soil on which the seed fell; now this parable of the tares disregards differences of soil, but treats of different kinds of seed sown by different hands. Thus it introduces us to something worse than the failure of good work, to the existence of evil influences in the world.

I. CHRISTIAN PEOPLE ARE THE GROWTH OF SEED SOWN BY CHRIST IN THE WORLD. In his explanation of the parable our Lord tells us three things about this branch of his teaching. 1. *Christ is the Sower.* All good spiritual life springs from him. 2. *The field is the world.* Christ is no narrow ecclesiastic confining his interests to the Church. Nor has he the parochial mind. His gospel is for the whole world. Christians are to be "the salt of the earth." 3. *The good seed represents the "sons of the kingdom,"* i.e. Christian people. Christ is not satisfied with teaching ideas; he aims at growing souls. His harvest is not of thoughts and doctrines, but of men and women.

II. BAD MEN ARE LIKE TARES SOWN BY SATAN. 1. *Evil influences are at work in the world.* There is worse than the negative failure of good seed. Weeds spring up; nettles and poison plants take their place in the garden of nature. The world as we know it has been sown with the seed of sin. Here is positive evil, alive and propagating further evil. 2. *These evil influences are due to the great enemy of souls.* A malignant

power, the enemy of Christ and of mankind, is busy sowing evil. 3. *The fruit of these evil influences is seen in the lives of bad people.* It is not in false doctrine but in wicked living that the greatest mischief is manifested. The aim of Satan is to grow a crop of noxious characters.

III. THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST ARE FORBIDDEN TO USE FORCIBLE MEANS FOR THE EXTINCTION OF EVIL LIVES. This parable has often been abused by being applied to Church discipline, a subject with which it has nothing to do, seeing that "the field is the world"—not the Church. What it excludes is the violent uprooting of bad men from the world. If it is to be pressed to a literal application, it may be thought to forbid capital punishment. But as it deals with religious relations it is rather aimed at persecution; *e.g.* it is absolutely opposed to such action as that of the Spanish Inquisition. The violation of its precepts has vindicated our Lord's warning. The wheat has been rooted up with the tares. Too often persecution selected the very sons of the kingdom for its victims. This may be done honestly, by a horrible blunder; we cannot well distinguish between the blades of wheat and those of the plant that simulates it. At present it is premature to judge men finally, for characters are not yet developed.

IV. THERE WILL BE A FINAL JUDGMENT AND DOOM OF THE WICKED. 1. *This will happen at the end of all*, when characters have fully ripened, when the harvest is come. Even now the harvest is anticipated by the reaper Death, and after death there is the great judgment. The liberty of the present is no guarantee against the great doom of the future. Evil cannot flourish for ever. 2. *This will be in the hands of God.* It is not for man to use violent measures against his fellow-man; but God and his angels will search into all characters, and the issue must be fearful for those who have permitted themselves to become as the rank growth of Satan.—W. F. A.

Vers. 31—33.—*The mustard seed and the leaven.* These parables illustrate the world-wide growth and influence of the kingdom of heaven. It might not be wonderful that a peasant living in remote Syrian highlands should have dared to predict such a vast future for his work if he were only speaking in the enthusiasm of hope; but it is the wonder of the ages that the Galilæan predictions have been verified by history, which has proved that the Speaker uttered true words and was able to realize what he foretold. Let us consider the prophecy in the light of its fulfilment. The two parables set forth two different phases of the extension of the kingdom.

I. THE VISIBLE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM ITSELF. 1. *It appears in a small beginning.* Christ gathered about him a little group of fishermen; there was the kingdom, but as yet a minute seed. How many of the best movements spring from small beginnings—the river from the brook, the man from the child, the city from the hamlet, the empire from the city! History forbids us to despise the day of small things. It is better to begin obscurely and grow, than to commence with a flourish of trumpets, raising expectations which we may not be able to fulfil. 2. *It contains a centre of life.* The pebble will not grow. Multitudes of small ventures are destined to remain small or to fade away altogether. It is only the vital seed that grows. There is a life-principle in Christianity. Christ himself is in it. 3. *It has a great development.* The mustard seed becomes a tree. The little group of disciples becomes a world-wide Church. Christ has large aims, and he accomplishes them. He has not yet seen the full growth of the seed he sowed. Christianity is still spreading—spreading in heathen lands as in no previous age; it has in it vitality enough to fill the whole world. 4. *Its growth is beneficial to the world.* The kingdom of heaven is not a deadly Upas tree; it does not destroy all other lives in fostering its own life. The mustard tree furnishes night shelter for the birds; the kingdom of heaven is a great refuge for helpless, benighted souls.

II. THE INVISIBLE INFLUENCE OF THE KINGDOM. It works like leaven in a mass of meal. 1. *It spreads through the world.* The gospel has a marvellous penetrating influence. Early Christianity extended itself without any organized method of propagation, reaching all classes of society and touching remotest regions. There is a happy infection in Christian truth. A saintly example is healthily contagious. 2. *It influences the world.* The whole mass of meal is leavened. Christ gives us a leaven of society, not merely a new life to be in society and to spread itself, growing and multiplying, but a transforming and uplifting influence. Left to itself the world is

dead. The gospel comes as a ferment, breaking up the old lethargy and rousing fresh activity. It affects every part of life, and whatever it affects it assimilates to itself. We are not to think of the kingdom of heaven standing aloof from the world, which is to be let lie in its own deadness. It is sent into the world that it may benefit the world. Plunged into the midst of society, it works for the benefit of society. Commerce, science, literature, art, politics, social order, and domestic life are all sought out by the Christian spirit, and as they come under its influence they are purified and quickened. Seeing that the influences of the gospel are destined to be so widespread and manifold, it becomes us not to cramp them by any narrowness of our own, but rather to further them with courageous hopefulness.—W. F. A.

Vers. 45, 46.—*The pearl of great price.* Many people regard religion as a matter of grave duty which it behoves them to attend to, but to which they turn reluctantly and with weariness, because they never hope to see in it any attractions or to make it an object of eager desire. To such people our Lord's words may be a new revelation. In his teaching the kingdom of heaven is supremely desirable.

I. THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE PEARL. Our Lord is not speaking of the future heavenly reward, which most men vaguely imagine to be very valuable. What he means by the kingdom of heaven is a present possession—the rule of God in the hearts of his people. We have to see that this is an exceedingly good thing, here and now. It is good on its own account, not for the sake of its promises of the future, not because of any further advantages which may be got out of it. Religion is meant to be an end in itself; it is abused and degraded when it is treated as a means to some other end. To gain favour with the Church, to win a reputation for piety, even to court customers in business, may be the ends of some people in their religion. But it has to be seen that such low aims utterly obscure the true glory of the gospel. The soul's darkness and misery arise from enmity against God. To be reconciled to him is its sunrise and the advent of its peace. There is no gladness on earth so pure and deep and strong as that which springs from fellowship with God enjoyed through Jesus Christ. He who has this has the pearl of great price.

II. THE MERCHANT'S QUEST. We see a merchant seeking pearls. This point distinguishes our parable from the previous one, in which a man comes unexpectedly on a hidden treasure. That parable shows how God may be found even by those who do not seek him. Now we have the reward of one who does seek brought before us. Perhaps the merchant has travelled far, and sought carefully before he has lighted on his great prize. There are men and women who earnestly set themselves to seek for what is truly worth having in life—they crave for knowledge, hunger for righteousness, thirst for God. They may be long before they are satisfied, but if they will persevere they will not be disappointed in the end. The pearl is for them.

III. THE COST OF ACQUISITION. 1. *The pearl is found.* This is the first step. But the pearl is not yet owned. We may see the kingdom afar off, we may be close to its borders, yet we may not have possession of it. We need to know the gospel, to see the kingdom. Then we must go further if we would make the prize our own. 2. *The pearl is costly.* The merchant must sell all he has acquired on his journey to buy this one pearl. Now, we know that the gospel is God's free gift; it was costly, for it cost the life of Christ on the cross; therefore it is not a cheap gospel; yet it is not bought by us, but by Christ. These facts, however, do not exclude the necessity of sacrifice on our part. We can pay nothing to God. But we must renounce sin and self, and the idolizing and trusting in all things but God. 3. *The price is gladly paid.* The merchant is a connoisseur, and he at once recognizes the value of his great discovery. He feels that he has made a good bargain, though he has sold all to buy the pearl of great price. He who gives up all for Christ requires no commiseration, but rather congratulation, because his gain is great.—W. F. A.

Vers. 47—50.—*The drag-net.* This parable may be compared with the parables of the soils and the tares. All three show different results following the teaching of Christ according to the characters of those whom he teaches. The parable of the soils draws attention to the varying degrees of success or failure dependent on the condition of the hearers; the tares illustrate evil influences side by side with the work of Christ;

the drag-net disregards these two causes of failure, and deals only with results—it carries us on to the final judgment. Nevertheless, we should bear the lessons of the earlier parables in mind, in order to avoid drawing conclusions of fatalism and injustice from this one.

I. THE GOSPEL NET. Our Lord compares his method to the casting of a great net and the drawing it through the waters. 1. *Christ seeks men.* He spoke to fishers, who knew the sea and its commerce, and he compared his work to theirs. While the parable of the pearl of great price shows us a man seeking the kingdom, this parable presents to us the sight of the kingdom seeking men. Here is the grace of the gospel. It is further suggested by the woman sweeping for her lost coin, and the shepherd going after his wandering sheep (Luke xv.). 2. *Christ uses means to gather disciples.* The net may represent the preaching of the gospel, or all the agencies, first of Christ and his apostles, then of his missionary Church. We are not to wait till the world comes to Christ. We must mend our nets lest any slip through the broken meshes, and cast and drag them, using all means to gain some. 3. *Christ aims at a large gathering of souls.* The fisher does not angle with a line; he casts a net, and that net, the drag-net, is of the largest kind. Plainly his aim is large. Christ does not seek one here and there. He is the Saviour of the world. His love embraces all; his work is for the people.

II. THE GREAT DRAUGHT OF FISHES. 1. *The net gathers in many fishes.* At first the popularity of Christ won a multitude of adherents. Most of these fell away; but after Pentecost a larger host was brought in. Subsequently great numbers pressed in, till the balance of policy in the Roman empire swayed from heathenism to Christianity. "Like a sunbeam," says Eusebius, "it streamed over the face of the earth." 2. *The fishes are of various kinds.* The members of the Christian Church are not all of one class or type. Socially they differ, belonging to all grades and ranks; intellectually they differ, from a Newton to a simple ploughboy. But these differences are slight compared to the moral distinctions that are seen throughout Christendom. The Church includes a St. Francis and a Cæsar Borgia. Church-membership is no proof of Christianity.

III. THE SIFTING AND SORTING. Christ calls all kinds of people; but he does not accept all. "Many are called, but few are chosen." It is even possible to be a guest seated at the king's banquet, and yet to be cast out, if the wedding-garment is not worn. Nevertheless, there is no unfairness or partiality; much less is there fickleness or unfaithfulness in Christ. He desires to accept all. If he must reject any, it is against his will, a pain to him. The rejection is not because of his caprice, but wholly because of the characters of those whom he cannot receive. But how are we to reconcile this with Christ's express declaration that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners (ch. ix. 13)? The explanation is that the fish are found to be worthless when they are brought to land. If men remain sinners after entering the Church, they must be rejected by Christ. But Christ can change the sinner into a holy man, and he will do this with the truly penitent who trust him. Then they will not be like the worthless fish.—W. F. A.

Ver. 52.—*The Christian teacher.* Christ has a word for the scribe. It is not to be supposed that all the official teachers of Israel were unworthy men and unprofitable in their work. Some, doubtless, merited the description here set before us. But this description is also meant as the guide for the Christian teacher.

I. THE TEACHER MUST BE TRAINED. He must be "a disciple to the kingdom of heaven." Secular training is valuable. As the Magi brought their wealth and poured it out before the infant Jesus, so the learned and the intellectual may well bring all their mental acquisitions to be used in the service of Christ. There is no merit in ignorance. Dulness is not devotion; stupidity is not sanctity. Nevertheless, it is not of the very valuable general training of which our Lord here speaks. It is possible to be highly cultivated in the schools and yet quite a tyro in the kingdom. The essential training of the Christian teacher must be a Christian training. As the lawyer must study law and the doctor medicine, so the Christian scribe must study Christianity. It is strange that any should think themselves fit to teach others the greatest of truths without first devoting especial attention to learning them. It is well that

the Christian minister should know his Homer and his Cicero; but it is monstrous that he should be satisfied with an acquaintance with the pagan classics, without acquiring at least an equally familiar knowledge of the New Testament, which it is his life-work to teach. Now, the discipleship of the kingdom is not a merely intellectual schooling. It is more than learning the letter of Scripture. Only that living grasp of spiritual truth which comes from a sympathetic study of it, interpreted by experience, can fit one to teach it to others.

II. THE TEACHER MUST BRING FORTH NEW TREASURES. He must not be a mere machine grinding out exactly the same ideas year after year. Yet he is not to invent notions of his own and give them forth as Divine revelations. The treasury to which he is to go for his materials is the sacred Scriptures. How, then, can he find anything new? 1. *By new insight.* Each is to read for himself. There is always a freshness in what we perceive ourselves, even if others have perceived it before. To us, at least, it is new; and our own living apprehension of it gives it a new vitality for others. 2. *With fresh applications.* Truth is ever assuming new colours as it is reflected on fresh objects. The Christian teacher has to apply truths of the Bible to present circumstances. It is not his business to linger among the archæological conditions of ancient Israel, but to show how the revelation of God concerns the England of to-day. 3. *Because of the inexhaustible fulness of the Bible.* There is always fresh light for earnest eyes.

III. THE TEACHER MUST NOT NEGLECT OLD TREASURES. An idea does not cease to be valuable because it is old. Truth is eternal. Facts remain. The great events of Bible history are always speaking to us; they have living lessons for our own day. The experiences of psalmist and apostle are true to the heart of man, and types of devotion for all time; we cannot afford to forget them. Above all, the revelation of Christ, though now old in centuries, is still fresh and living. We can never outgrow the gospel. Bethlehem and Calvary will always be the centres of our most helpful meditations. The new truth is only inspiring when it springs out of the old, which it does not obscure, which rather it explains and exalts.—W. F. A.

Vers. 54—58.—"*The carpenter's Son.*" Jesus returns to Nazareth after having taught and wrought miracles in many places, and follows his usual method of preaching even in the synagogue of this town of his boyhood. Of all fields of labour this is the most difficult, and we cannot be surprised that the result is disappointing. The one thing that all hearers think of is the well-known homely up-bringing of the great Prophet, and their familiar knowledge of this is enough to destroy the influence of his words and works.

I. THE FACT. Jesus was a carpenter's Son; St. Mark tells us that he was himself a carpenter (vi. 3), and it is not to be supposed that he would have lived for thirty years in the humble Nazareth home without ever contributing to its maintenance. 1. *Jesus was a complete Man.* He was not a mere appearance of man. He took on him man's life and its toil. 2. *Jesus belonged to the artisan class.* He was so truly human, so large in his sympathies, that we cannot connect any class prejudices with him. He would not side unfairly with labour against capital, any more than he would with capital against labour. Still, if there is one class which beyond all others we may be sure he does not forget or misunderstand, it is that of handicraftsmen. Working men should claim Christ as one of themselves. 3. *He was trained in a secular calling.* He was not brought up in a monastery; he did not spend his time in a church. His school was the carpenter's workshop. Among the shavings and sawdust his thoughts rose to heaven and the redemption of man. A wholesome secular training is a help and not a hindrance to the spiritual life.

II. HOW IT WAS REGARDED. 1. *Jesus was judged by his circumstances.* Other grounds of judgment were not wanting. The people of Nazareth listened to the wonderful teaching of Christ, and it astonished them. Yet they only turn to the well-known external facts in coming to a conclusion about the Teacher. They seem to be attempting to dispel what they regard as the glamour of his words by the hard, common circumstances that are familiar to them. Thus men will judge by the outside, by the earthly, by the conventional. 2. *Jesus was rejected where he was best known.* He was judged by his circumstances and his family, all familiar to the

Nazareth townsfolk. Perhaps the character of his relatives was not such as to inspire great respect; but we have no hint of this. Social inferiority and familiar homeliness were enough. Therefore we do not lose much by not having seen Jesus in his earthly life.

III. THE UNHAPPY RESULTS. Nazareth suffered for its rejection of the one Man who has since given eternal fame to the hitherto obscure Galilæan town. The sick went unhealed. A chill fog of unbelief crept over the community and quenched the gracious curative influences of the Saviour. Unbelief is a fatal hindrance to the work of Christ. It is not that he is offended and will not help. It is that the very possibility of aid is cut off. Christ's miracle-working was dependent on the faith of its subjects, and when they were unbelieving he simply could not heal. "According to thy faith be it unto thee" was a common remark. Spiritually, Christ cannot save those who do not trust him, though he desires to save all, and this is the simple explanation of the miserable fact that all are not saved. Faith is not an artificial condition. It is the link of connection with Christ. If this link is missing we cannot have living relationship with him.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—23 (see also Mark iv. 1—20; Luke viii. 4—15).—*The beginning of parables.* Utilize introduction to dwell on the plain assertions of vers. 10—17. However deep their real theological meaning, however mysterious their significance in respect of the sovereign conduct of the world and the judgment of mankind, the *statements* are plain. The deep, unfathomable fact underlying the quotation from Isaiah (vers. 14, 15) is not altogether free from offering some analogy to the subject of the sin against the Holy Ghost (see our homily, *supra*), "not to be forgiven, in this world nor in the world to come." In the very pleasantest paths of the gospel the inscrutable meets us, and stands right across our way; yet not at all to destroy us, but to *order* knowledge, faith, and reverence. It is plain, from the express assertion of Christ, that it is to be regarded by us as some of the highest of our privilege, to have *authoritative revelation* of matters that may be called *knowledge* in "things present or things to come," which may be nevertheless *utterly inscrutable.* The absolutely mysterious in the individual facts of our individual life, and for which, nevertheless, the current of that life does not stand still, may stand in some sort of analogy to these greater phenomena and greater pronouncements of Divine knowledge and foreknowledge. The promise is not to be found—it were an *impossible* promise to find—that the marvels of Heaven's government of earth should be all intelligible to us, or should be *all* of them even uttered in revelation. But some *are* uttered; they are written, and there, deep-graven, they lie from age to age, weather-beaten enough, yet showing no wear, no attrition, no obliteration of their hieroglyphic inscription—hieroglyphic not for their alphabet, but confessedly for their *construction*, and the vindicating of it. Note also, in introduction, that the seven parables related in this chapter, a rich cluster, certainly appear from internal evidence (alike the language of the evangelist, ver. 3; that of the disciples in their question, ver. 10; and that of Christ himself, vers. 9, 13) to have been the first formally spoken by Christ. Of the beginning of parables, therefore, as of the beginning of miracles, we are for some reason specifically advised. Notice—

I. THE PERFECT NATURALNESS, FAMILIAR HOMELINESS, EXQUISITE APTNESS, OF THE MATERIAL OUT OF WHICH THE STRUCTURE OF THIS PARABLE IS MADE. Seed and soil; Sower and sowing: and, to throw moving life into the picture, the touch thrown in of the sower "going forth" to sow.

II. THE SPECIFIC SUBJECT OF THIS PARABLE—AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, *i.e.* THE WILL OF GOD "DONE IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN." Such an illustration might be given very variously. The view might be taken from many a point of vantage, and as the kingdom should be found growing or grown at many a date. *This* Christ might have given from all his stores of knowledge, and his true gift, true possession, of foresight. He might have shown it in the early days of martyrs; he might have shown it when Constantine proclaimed it *the* kingdom of Europe, and something beside; he might have shown it as Christendom projects it *now;* or he might have shown it even as glimpses—so strange are they that we are frightened to fix our gaze on them—are flashed before our doubting vision in the wonderful Book of the Revelation. But that which Jesus did really choose to give was one of a more present, practical character. It was, as one might suppose from very first glance, an

illustration of *sowing*-time. The sowing-time of God's truth, God's will, God's love and grace, in the midst of a hard, and unprepared, and shallow, and ill-preoccupied world—with nevertheless some better, some more promising material, in it.

III. THE ILLUSTRATION ITSELF IN DETAIL. It consists of the statement of the ways in which men would act on the "hearing" of the "Word of God." Four leading ways are described. 1. That of the man who is said (in Christ's own interpretation of his parable) "not to understand" the Word spoken; *i.e.* he has *no* sympathy with it, he possesses *no* instinct for it, finds awakened within him *no* response whatever. This is the man whose receptive state amounts to nothing. As the trodden path (all the more trodden and more hard as it is comparatively narrow) across the ploughed field is approached again and again by the bountifully flinging hand of the sower, as he paces the acres, even it receives of the good seed, but its callous surface finds no entrance for it, offers it no fertilizing or even fertilized resting-place, and yet others, who at least better know its value, for whatsoever reason, see it, seize it, and bear it off. 2. That of the man who "anon with joy receives" the Word. But it is a vapid and shallow joy. It does not last, it does not grow; its very root withers. The coating of hardness is not, as in the callous pathway, visible to the eye at first, for it is just concealed and covered over by a slightest layer of earth, just below which the hardness is not simply *like* that of "rock," but it *is* rock itself. There is *nothing* that has such a root wherewith to root itself as the Word of God, and this needs *deep* earth. Not the birds of the air, not Satan and his evil emissaries, take *this* seed away, before ever it could show a symptom of its *own* vital force, at any rate; this *has* shown its vitality, *and* has detected, discovered, and laid ruinously bare to sight the unsustaining, because itself *unsustained*, power to feed life, of that other element, that other essential in the solemn matter. 3. That of the man "who hears the Word, but the cares of this world, and the [seductive] deceitfulness of riches, and the [crowding] desires of other things," *i.e.* other things than the Word, "choke that Word, and it becometh unfruitful," or, if not unfruitful altogether, "it bringeth no fruit to perfection." It is the seed, still the good seed, lost, wasted, mocked of its glorious fruit, because that same liberal, scattering, Sower's hand has not grudged it, to earth, that is all the while *attesting* its own richness, quality, force, by what *is* growing out of it, but is untilled, undressed, unweeded—thorns, briers, brambles, and all most precocious growths suffered to tyrannize and usurp its best energies! How often have men moralized, and justly, that the cleverness of the sinner, and his wisdom in his generation, and his dexterity and resources when pushed to the last extremities, would have made the saint, and the eminent saint, had his gifts, instead of being so prostituted, so miserably misdirected, been turned in the right direction, fixed on the right objects! But short far of flagrant vice, true it is that the absorbing things and the seductive things and the crowding competition of desires of things of this world, have, millions of times untold, *choked* the Word. No room, no time, no care, no energy, has been left for the things of eternal value, immortal wealth, present holiness. 4. That of the man who "heareth, and understandeth, who also beareth fruit;" or again, "who in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keeps it, and brings forth fruit with patience." It is the seed, that pricelessly good seed, which now at last has found its appropriate earth. It falls not on the hard pathway; it falls not on the treacherous, deceptive, depthlessness, all radiant with light and sun though it be; it falls not on the soil bearing at the same time incontestable evidence of two things—its own power to grow, and its own doomed *state* to grow the things "whose end is to be burned." It falls "*into* the *good* ground." We are in the presence of the mystery, not of "who made us to differ," but of how and why he who made us to differ, did so. The practical part of the question is plain for every one who has an eye to see. Every man must give account of himself at the last; and every one must *now* prepare for that account. What *sign* of "goodness," what slightest germ of "goodness," what *instinct*, as it may seem, and power of "goodness," any man's heart, passing thought, life may just *suggest*—if it be but like a suggestion—must be reckoned with *now*, improved *now*, solemnly consecrated *now*, and the mystery will still for the present be left mystery. But the facts and the results and the blessedness will speak for themselves. And the kingdom of heaven be receiving its fairer and fairest illustration, instead of its darker and darkest illustrations. That kingdom will be the more a "coming" kingdom.—B.

Vers. 24—30, 36—43.—*The great Administrator's foresight.* This second parable of the seven proceeds in a certain degree upon the lines of the first. But its object is different; and though quite in the nature of an advance on the former, it is more limited in its scope. The first parable manifestly is the foundation of this one, and perhaps it may be said of all others. We may, perhaps, judge that to each parable, as one succeeded another, quickened attention was given, at any rate, by *some* of the hearers. But *this* parable seems to have specially asked, on the part of the disciples, for explanation. The former spoke broadest truth of broadest application for all the world, whether "received" or "not received." But very possibly even the *invidious* element contained in this may have gained for it a quicker ear and a more curious attention on the part of the disciples. Notice—

I. How this parable dates the kingdom of heaven as an original plantation in the world. It does this alike in form and in the necessary implication of its matter. In however true a sense Jesus Christ was now himself planting afresh the kingdom of heaven on earth, its *foundation* was from the beginning. Long time, with most varying rate of growth, had it been growing. In how true, and even double sense true, was it that while men slept the enemy came! And how naively true, only in *one* sense, that when he had sowed his tares, he "went his way"! Note also, as some instance of the perpetually recurring evidential coincidences of Scripture, the ministerial function of the "Son of man" is likewise dated to the beginning, creation itself.

II. How frank and calm the admission of the Divine Householder of the disastrous damage done in his field of the world!

III. How silent-left and untouched to the servants, the question (theoretic only, for them as it would appear to be deemed) how this was; and why no immediate strenuous steps for the discovery and condign punishment of the enemy were taken, or ordered, or suggested—the counsels of Heaven, and its highest or deepest decrees being herein left, unquestioned, unespied, in their proper profound inscrutable!

IV. How with perfect patience, with large-eyed observation, with unprovoked forbearance, and enduring long-suffering, the scene is surveyed, the directions that alone are needful for servants are sent forth, and time allowed to flow on.

V. How tremendous but most gracious the witness borne to the limited knowledge, limited discrimination, and even very limited skill of handiwork, able to be claimed by the servants now in question.

VI. How bold, trenchant, undismayed, the distinct affirmation, of the great Prophet present, as regards the end, its solemn apportionments, and its entire detailed scenery.—B.

Vers. 31, 32 (see also Mark iv. 30—32; Luke xiii. 18, 19).—*The herb that is a tree.* Note, in introduction, how much of *most relevant suggestion* is comprised in this very brief parable, not nevertheless of the essence of its direct meaning or direct object. *E.g.* is it not almost a parable within a parable to be able to observe on the appropriateness of the use of the illustration of the small mustard seed, and the seed instanced being *such* kind of seed *as* the mustard seed, to characterize Jesus Christ himself (the Sower of the seed of the kingdom) as well as that kingdom which he sowed? Another very relevant suggestion, as just intimated, springs out of the character of the mustard seed, its own intrinsic quality for fragrance, pungency, power to bring out flavour, either adding to that with which it is used, or counteracting it, or so combining with it as to make a new *tertium quid.* And so once more a most relevant suggestion springs out of the descriptive touch respecting the birds that fly to its shadow by day and its hospitable lodging by night. The subject, however, of this parable is of course still illustration of the kingdom of heaven, in some one certain respect or more. As the first parable was an illustration of it, ever applicable and on the broadest foundation; and the second, one still ever applicable, but intensely important as it might be, and that especially in its far-reachingness, yet somewhat more limited in its scope; so we shall be sure to find the specialty of this third parable stamped unmistakably upon it. Notice that it is distinctly foretold that—

I. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS TO HAVE ITS OWN DEVELOPMENT; IT IS TO GROW OF ITSELF AND FROM ITSELF. Wherever it is, whatever it works upon, whatever it may attract to itself, it shall receive *into* itself; leave some of it, take some of it, *incorporate* this, have *one* body and *one* spirit, and own to *no* rival.

II. THAT DEVELOPMENT WILL IN NO SENSE BE SIMPLY COMMENSURABLE WITH ITS BEGINNING, EVEN WHEN EVERY ALLOWANCE SHALL BE MADE FOR THE ORDINARY MEASURE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A BEGINNING AND THAT TO WHICH IT MAY GROW. It will contradict and gloriously disappoint untaught expectation. No mere proverbial oak from acorn will suffice to set forth the development this growth will attain. The only analogy that will suit will be the example of something that *is* indeed perfectly natural, but *looks* something other than natural. Wide nature, the work of God, will indeed find the analogue, however humble the scale of it. This is a very small seed, and its proper growth a herb; but the herb refuses to answer very strictly to its own sort, and waxes into a tree; and shows the features and properties of the tree, "shooting out great branches." So is the kingdom of heaven. And whether the seed be called that which was once found in the manger, or that which was once found in the tomb, it seemed small indeed—neither at the former time nor at the latter was it counted for anything but a thing to be disregarded and despised—yet to what was it to grow!

III. THAT GROWTH FROM SMALLEST SEED, THAT KINGDOM FOUNDED FROM MOST UNPROMISING MATERIAL, SHALL PROVE ITSELF NOT A GROWTH OF MERE GRANDEUR TO BEHOLD, NOT A MONUMENT OF HUMAN PRIDE OF POWER AND CONQUEST; BUT A RESORT OF HEAVENLY SHADE, HEAVENLY SAFETY, HEAVENLY REST—A HEAVENLY HOME FOR ALL THAT WILL SEEK IT, FOR ALL THAT WILL WING THEIR FLIGHT, WEARY OR GLAD, TO IT. *This* tree is in a new sense the tree of life, offered to all, and as free to all as air, and spreading branches, and whispering winds, the breath of morning, or the sweet sighings of evening, with their invitations, could make it, for all birds and "fowl of every wing" that fly under heaven.—B.

Vers. 33—36 (see also Luke xiii. 20, 21).—*The foretold now become the told.* In introduction, note that perhaps no parable more postulates that the student of it insist on observing the essential canon in the interpretation of every parable, viz. that its one main object be kept steadily in view, and that it *was* kept in view by the Author of it. So much may be made, even by warrant of Scripture, in respect of the ill associations of leaven, that if this be dwelt upon without a steady memory of the *quality* and the one *use* of leaven, whether in good association or in bad, the student-vision will be a double one, and his judgment warped and distorted. So, though in risk far inferior, and of far less moment, the incidents of this very brief parable, *e.g.* of the mention of the "woman" who took the leaven, and of the "three measures" of meal in which she is represented as hiding it, may easily be turned, for they have been so turned, to what tends to *mar*, instead of to complete our distinct apprehension and appropriation of the matter of the parable. These may, indeed, heighten effect, and, if possible, may beautify effect. They may be, perhaps, not illegitimately used to these very ends. They may so chime in with history, with fact, with reverent associations of faith, as not to be unjustified, for the very helpfulness and devoutness of them. But they must be subordinated to their right place and sphere with a stern resolution. Of this simplest parable-illustration of the kingdom of heaven on earth many difficulties have been made, and not a little distortion and perversion even; but in its brief simplicity it says—

I. THAT A CERTAIN PRESENCE OF SELF-ACTING INTRINSIC QUALITY AND TRANSMUTING FORCE IS INTRODUCED INTO WHAT MAY BE CALLED THE SOCIETY OF THIS WORLD, OR, MORE FORMALLY, THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD.

II. THAT THIS IS BROUGHT DISTINCTLY FROM WITHOUT, IN NO SENSE BEING ONE WITH THAT INTO WHICH IT IS INTRODUCED.

III. THAT SO SOON AS INTRODUCED, HOWEVER SILENTLY, HOWEVER SUDDENLY, IT BEGINS TO INCORPORATE ITSELF, AND TO BE ASSIMILATED, WORKING UNCEASINGLY AND IN EVERY DIRECTION UPON THE MASS OF MATERIAL IN WHICH IT IS HIDDEN, AND IN WHICH IT SEEMS SMOTHERED.

IV. THAT ITS OPERATION DOES NOT CEASE UNTIL IT HAS TRANSMUTED THAT WHOLE

MASS. All this was *fore*told; and all this was divinely called *parable*. But history has *told* it, and it has ceased by any possibility to be able to be called mere parable. In every respect it has been witnessed to, illustrated by most evident facts, and proved with not a shadow of doubt or uncertainty. The amazing mission of Christ to this world, his sojourn in it, his replacement by the Holy Spirit, the suddenness of this new and most wonderful and most gracious "departure," the silence and obscurity of the subduing and transforming work, and its unceasingness to the present hour, have all been *fact*, and are all forming an overwhelming presage of the further development and growth of their conquering power and grace. It means that the process, so wonderful, so potent, so beneficent, shall know no pause till the whole lump is leavened.—B.

Ver. 44.—*The treasure of great, but careful, joy.* Note, in introduction, that this fifth parable was not spoken from the ship to the multitude upon the shore, but within "the house;" and the character of it seems in some relative degree to alter. It is no longer a parable, illustrating the kingdom of heaven in respect of the *manner of its operation*, but emphasizing the value of itself, and the sense of its value as entertained and proved by some; and it is no longer a parable revealing the wide hold it shall establish over the mass of mankind, but the mighty hold it shall gain upon the individuals of whom the mass is composed. The parable exhibits these facts respecting the kingdom, and that which is of the very essence of it—the treasure of the gospel, the truth of Christ.

I. HOW SOVEREIGN AND FREE IT IS, IN THE NATURE OF ITS FIRST APPROACH TO ANY ONE! The present parable is not spoken of one who seeks already, but of one who, in the midst of his own duty, life's labour and toil, *lights on* the treasure. Why has *he* lighted upon it? In *this* case it will not do to say *chance!* Nor is it often given to us to say why. It is for the blest man himself, however, to count it an example of free, unmerited, sovereign goodness and mercy.

II. HOW IT IN A MOMENT EXCITES THE ATTENTION, AND LAYS HOLD OF THE DESIRE OF HIM WHO GETS BUT ONE REAL GLIMPSE OF IT! The *effect* in such cases is immediate; the man takes in at once the value of the opportunity that has opened before him.

III. HOW GREAT THE JOY OF THAT SUDDEN SURPRISE!

IV. HOW CAREFUL, AT THE SAME TIME, THAT JOY SHOWS ITSELF!

V. HOW CORRECT THE ESTIMATE PUT UPON THE VALUE! IT IS TREASURE, AND IT IS SUCH TREASURE, THAT HE WILL FORSAKE AND WILL SELL ALL ELSE FOR THAT.—B.

Vers. 45, 46.—*The superlative prize going to the seeker.* This sixth parable is also one which rather illustrates the power of the kingdom of heaven in its action on the individual. Under some aspect of it, it has justly fascinated him. For some reason he has seen, justly seen, his advantage in it, and has not confused that advantage with any lower one, nor lost it in even a thousand others. Therefore it seems to him, manifold though it really is, as one undivided thing, one prize of boundless desirableness—a pearl justly appraised as of *great* price. The parable exhibits, then, the kingdom of heaven as—

I. PRESENTING ITSELF A PRIZE TO ONE WHO SEEKS PRIZES. He has the advantage of being a business man; he knows his business; he is *accustomed* to weigh, and compare, and judge, and choose, and to *pay accordingly*. He is an expert of a trained eye, trained mind, and trained knowledge. He knows pearls, and very many of them.

II. IMPRESSING HIM IRRESISTIBLY, AS AN INCOMPARABLE, A SUPERLATIVE PRIZE.

III. JUSTIFYING HIM REASONABLY AND UNHESITATINGLY, AT THE SAME TIME, IN STAKING EVERYTHING ELSE WHATSOEVER ON THE POSSESSING HIMSELF OF THAT ONE PRIZE. This seeker, this merchant of pearls, had thought to make his advantage out of a succession of pearls, or had hoped fondly to find his fortune in many of them gathered together; but he comes to find he needs only one, that only one will answer his idea and his quest, and that it is now before him.—B.

Vers. 47—50.—*The gathering together in order to the separating.* Note, in introduction, that this parable is by no means merely another version of that of the tares. As *à priori* we should feel certain it could not be so, it needs neither long nor deep

search to see that it certainly is not so. The resemblance between the two parables lies only on the surface, and not less true is it that on the very surface also lies sufficient conviction of the real difference between the two. The illustration of the kingdom of heaven furnished by this parable sets it forth—

I. AS A LARGE GATHERING OF PERSONS OF VERY VARIOUS CHARACTER, WHO HAVE ENTERED FROM THE RESTLESS WAVES OF THIS TROUBLESOME WORLD WITHIN AN ENCLOSURE, NOT OF THEIR OWN MAKING, NOT OF THEIR OWN DESIGNING, AND NOT OF THEIR OWN PLACING, AND THERE FOR A TIME KEPT TOGETHER.

II. AS A GATHERING OF DIFFERENT PERSONS, WHO, THOUGH LONG FOUND TOGETHER WITHIN THAT ENCLOSURE, WOULD AT LENGTH BE SEPARATED; BE CALLED THE GOOD OR THE BAD, THE "WICKED" OR THE "JUST;" AND BE DEALT WITH ACCORDINGLY.

III. AS A GATHERING OF SUCH AS ABOVE DESCRIBED, THE SEPARATION AMONG WHOM AT LAST WOULD BE MADE BY SOVEREIGN AND IRRESISTIBLE AND SUPREME AUTHORITY. —B.

Vers. 53—58 (see also Mark vi. 1—6).—*The defying of conviction.* What is written in this passage is not to be understood as following close upon the speaking of the four parables from the ship, and the three following upon *them*, and which were spoken in the house. Nevertheless, the Evangelist Matthew furnishes us with the suggestive link, which consists of the fifty-third verse. The parables, with all their Divine fulness of meaning, whether more or less mystic, and whether those to the multitude and disciples, or to the disciples alone, are for the present "finished." But "wisdom and mighty works" are *not* finished; and he who speaks the wisdom and who does the mighty works journeys untiringly elsewhere, and with his face toward "his own country." Notice—

I. A CERTAIN POSITION OF HUMAN NATURE HERE DESCRIBED—VIZ. CONVICTION ITSELF, CONFRONTED BY A STUMBLING-BLOCK. The "wisdom" and the "mighty works" are not denied, are not doubted; *are* asserted and proclaimed. The material of conviction was all present, and its work asserted itself. The way is surely perfectly plain for the human mind, and what further need be said?

II. A CERTAIN ATTITUDE OF HUMAN NATURE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED. It is an uneasy attitude, one of uncertainty, one of casting about, how it is possible to make a difficulty, to get over, and conquer plain duty. It may be readily granted that there did exist a difficulty not *in*considerable for those who are here spoken of; that a difficulty was present in the very existence of so great a cause for wonder; that the difficulty was not lessened by the fact that he who was now the centre of observation and of admiration, and, to say the least of it, of unparalleled surprise, had been one familiarly known, and his family familiarly known, and familiarly known *not* as among those who were princes of the world in wealth, or in station, or in power and exalted sphere of influence.

III. A CERTAIN UNSATISFACTORY, INCONSEQUENTIAL, AND UTTERLY RECKLESS TREATMENT OF THE DILEMMA BETWEEN THE DIFFICULTY AND THE CONFESSED-TO CONVICTION. It is the treatment called *defiance.* The difficulty is not reasoned out to the end; nor is it treasured in reverent patience to await further light; nor is its comparative, *practical, un*importance acknowledged, and permitted to relegate it to its proper subordinate place. But the difficulty is petted and made much of, while conviction is defied, and conscience is dishonoured. These are bowed off the solemn scene; and with them another retreats awhile at least. It is he of whom it is said, "He *could* do no mighty work there, save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them;" and again, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief;" and, "He marvelled because of their unbelief." Some day later, when their eyes were perforce opened, and something beside their eyes also, what a marvel, what a reproach, what a remorse, that identical instance and working of "unbelief" must have been to *them!*—B.

Vers. 3—23.—*Parable of the sower.* The object of this parable is to explain the causes of the failure and success of the gospel. It might have been supposed enough to proclaim the kingdom. Why does this fail? It fails, says our Lord, because of the nature of the soil. This soil is often *impervious*, often *shallow*, often *dirty.*

I. "SOME SEEDS FELL BY THE WAYSIDE, AND THE FOWLS CAME AND DEVOURED THEM." The spiritual analogue is said to be in him "who heareth the Word, but *understandeth it not.*" The beaten footpath and the cart-track have their uses, but they grow no corn. The seed may be of the best quality, but for all purposes of sowing you might as well sprinkle pebbles or shot. So there is a hearing which keeps the Word entirely outside. It does not even enter the understanding. It rouses no inquiry, provokes no contradiction. You have occasion sometimes to mention a fact to a friend which should alter all his purpose, but you find he has not *taken it in.* So, says our Lord, there are hearers who do not *take in* what is said; their understanding is impervious, impenetrable. They hear because this has come to be one of the many employments with which they fill up their time, but they have never considered why they should do so, or what result they should look for. Or there may be a slowness and cold frostiness of nature which prevents the seed from fructifying. The proposals made suggest nothing to the wayside hearer. In some cases the seed apparently lost for years is quickened and brings forth fruit, but in this case *never.*

II. THE SECOND FAULT IS SHALLOWNESS. The sprinkling of soil on the surface of the rock, where the seed quickly springs, and for the same reason quickly decays. There is not depth of soil for any time to be spent in *rooting.* The shallow hearer is distinguished by two characteristics—he *straightway* receives the Word, and he receives it *with joy.* The man of deeper character receives it with seriousness, reverence, trembling, foreseeing the trials he will be subjected to. But while these are pondering the vastness of the revelation and the majesty of the hope, and striving to forecast all the results in and upon them, hesitating because they would receive the Word for eternity or not at all, the superficial man has settled the whole matter out of hand, and he who yesterday was known as a scoffer is to-day a loud-voiced child of the kingdom. These men are almost certainly taken to be the most earnest; you cannot see the root, and what is seen is shown in greatest luxuriance by them. But the same nature which made them susceptible to the gospel and quickly responsive makes them susceptible to pain, suffering, hardship, and easily defeated. When consequences have to be faced they give way. The question of how these shallow natures can be saved hardly falls within the parable, but it may be right to say a man's nature may be deepened by the relationships and conflicts of life. Much deepening of character is effected in passing through life.

III. THE THIRD FAULT IS WHAT IS TECHNICALLY KNOWN AS DIRT. The soil can only support a certain amount of vegetation, and every living weed means a choked blade of corn. This is a picture of the preoccupied heart, the rich vigorous nature occupied with so many other interests that only a small part is available for giving effect to Christ's ideas. Their interest is real, but there are so many other cares and desires that the result is scarcely discernible. The good crop is not the one with the greatest density of vegetation, but where all is wheat. Most soils have a kind of weed congenial, and the weeds here specified are "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches," the former being merely the poor man's species of the latter. Among rich and poor alike you will find many who would be left without any subject of thought and any guiding principle in action, if you took from them anxiety about their own position in life. It is not enough to put aside distracting thoughts. Cutting down the thorns won't do; still less holding them aside till the seed be sown. It is vain to hope for the only right harvest of a human life if your heart is sown with worldly ambitions, a greedy hasting to be rich, an undue love of comfort, a true earthliness of spirit. One seed only must be sown in you, and it will produce all needed diligence in business as well as all fervour of spirit.

There is one important distinction between material and moral sowing. Man is possessed of free-will, the power of checking to some extent natural consequences. Therefore the gospel is to be preached to every creature, and we may be expected to bring to the hearing of it a *soft, deep, clean* soil of heart—what Luke calls "an honest and good heart." There will be differences of crop even among those who bring good hearts, but wherever the Word is held fast and patiently cared for, there the life will produce all that God cares to have from it. But even the honest heart is not enough unless we *keep* the Word. The sower must be at pains to cover in the seed and *watch* that it be not taken away. So the hearer loses his labour unless his mind goes back on what he has

heard, and he sees that he has really got hold of it. We have all heard all that is necessary for life and godliness; it remains that we make it our own, that it secures a living root in us and in our life. We must *bear it in mind*, so that all that comes before us may throw new light on it and give it further hold on us.—D.

Vers. 24—30.—*Parable of the tares.* In the parable of the tares we see what appearance the kingdom of heaven presents in this world, and are warned against expecting to see now that perfect condition which will in the end be brought about. It has perplexed God's servants in all times that all in this earth should not be unmingled good. This world is God's; men are his property. And all that is needful for the production of the fruit dear to God has been done by him; and yet look at the result. Has he mistaken the capabilities of the field, or does he not care to develop them? The answer is, "An enemy hath done this." This is enough for us to know. We are not to stop short of this, and pause at men and hate them; but, pitying them, are to pass with our indignation and hatred to the enemy. We are not, on the other hand, to go beyond Satan, and think blasphemously of God as the Sower of bad seed; but, viewing his friendliness, and the cost he spends on this field, and his destruction of our enemy by his Son, are to spend all our hate on Satan. Such being the condition of the field and such the cause, what is to be the conduct of the servants? "Wilt thou that we go and gather them up?" This and that other propagator of falsehood, and perpetrator of evil, would it not be well if their hindrance were taken out of the way? Would not good men come to a quicker and more fruitful maturity were they not continually held down by the scoffing, exasperated by the persecution, and led astray by the example of the ungodly? "Let both grow together until the harvest," is the law of the Master. Again and again the Church has, in the face of this parable, taken upon her to root up infidels and heretics. The reasoning has been short and summary. We are Christ's; these men are Satan's—let us destroy them. This attempt to make the field of the world appear uniform has been one of the most disastrous hindrances to the growth of religion. This measure of the servants has effected a more frightful desolation and barrenness than anything which the existence of the tares could have done. But each of us has something of the persecutor within him, and needs to apply this parable to himself. It does not say that the world is as it ought to be, does not say that there is no distinction, or a very insignificant one, between good and bad men, but tells us we are not to act upon this distinction *to the extent* of injuring a man. If a man, because he is ungodly, defrauds his neighbour, murders, or robs, he is of course lawfully punished, but not on the score of his ungodliness, but of his breaking human law; not because he has been an unprofitable creature of God's and an offence in the sight of God, but because he is an injurious member of a civil community. *No* punishment is to be inflicted by us purely on the ground of a man's spiritual condition, of his not bearing fruit in the *kingdom of heaven*. It is most detrimental to the cause of Christianity when a Christian in his conduct towards an ungodly person seems to be always saying, "I wish you were out of the world; and for my part, and as far as I can, you shall be deprived of all its advantages." From the earliest times, however, it has been the all but universal opinion that this parable had reference to ecclesiastical discipline. And if not meant in its first intention to be applied thus, it is valid for this purpose as well. Within the Church it is often very difficult to know what is wheat and what is not. An opinion which is condemned as scandalous or full of danger may turn out to be true and wholesome; if it be at once pronounced tares and thrown over the hedge, the good fruit it might have borne is thrown away with it. And even where it is clear that evil has sprung up in the Church, it is a further question whether it should be summarily removed. If you leave false doctrine alone, may you not get rid of it sooner than if you fix public attention upon it? No man who had a regard for his field would carry a seeding thistle through every part of it and shake it in every corner. Our Lord gives two reasons for this method of delay. 1. If we endeavour to anticipate the end, we shall injure the children of the kingdom. You are not to root up the tares, because you will inevitably root up good corn along with them. You cannot injure one man and one only, and of those who are attached to him can you be sure there are none who are of the kingdom? 2. But the kingdom of heaven has a Judge and an executive of its own, which will be apparent in the end. And

when we reflect that what has raised our indignation has been observed by God, and will assuredly be dealt with by him, this not only stifles our indignation, but impels us to seek to save the sinner from the punishment he is earning. The bearing of this parable, then, on ourselves cannot be mistaken. Wheat and darnel, it says, are almost identical in appearance, but the root of the principle of the one is different from the other; the one is good food, the other is poison and they will eventually be treated accordingly. From this similarity it arises: (1) That the darnel is apt to think itself as good as the wheat. But the question is not whether you are not at present to all appearance as useful and pleasant a member of society as they, but whether there is not that in them which will grow to good and that in you which will grow to evil. What is it that is producing your actual life and character? What is the motive power? Is it mere desire to get on, or respect for your own good name? Or is your character being more and more formed by the belief that God calls you to live for him and for eternity? Are you rooted in Christ? Do you grow out of him? (2) The wheat is apt to think itself no better than darnel. You are troubled because others seem to be as regular, as zealous, as successful, in duty as you; they have even the advantage of you in some respects. Some natural infirmity of temper has fixed its stamp on you, or you are choked by uncongenial surroundings. But look to the end here predicted, "when all that offends shall be taken out of the way," and "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Be sure only that there *is* that in you which will shine forth if the hindrances and blinds be taken out of the way.—D.

Ver. 33.—*Parable of the leaven.* This parable directs our attention to two points connected with the extension of Christianity. It illustrates (1) first, the *kind* of change which Christianity works in the world; (2) second, the method by which this change is wrought.

I. THE CHANGE OUR LORD MEANT TO EFFECT IN THE WORLD was to be a change not so much of outward forms as of the spirit and character of all things. The propagation of his influence is set forth and illustrated, not by a woman taking a mass of dough and making it into new shapes, but by a woman putting that into the dough which alters the character of the whole mass. There are two ways in which you may revolutionize a country or society. You may pull down the old forms of government, or you may fill them with men of a different spirit, revise the constitution, or, leaving it untouched, fill official positions with the right men. A machine refuses to work, and people tell you the construction is wrong; but the skilled mechanic pushes aside the ignorant crowd, and puts all to rights with a few drops of oil. Few distinctions are of wider application. What is pointed at is rather the regenerative than the creative power of Christ's Spirit; not so much the new facts and habits to which Christian feeling gives birth, as the new feelings and views it has about existing customs, institutions, relationships, occupations. His Spirit, he says, does not require new channels; a man does not require new arteries, but to have them filled with health-giving blood. In establishing the kingdom of heaven our Lord did not intend to erect a vast organization over against the world, but he meant to introduce into the world itself a leaven which should subdue all things to his own Spirit. It was to be without observation, hidden as leaven among meal.

II. THE METHOD BY WHICH THE KINGDOM IS TO GROW. Kingdoms have been extended in various ways, but chiefly by force, by the strong hand. And the idea that men can be compelled to accept the truth seems never to be wholly eradicated from the human mind. But our Lord teaches that the extension of his Spirit throughout the world is to be by the secret unnoticed influence of man upon man. No doubt there is a direct agency of God in each case, but God works through natural means, and the natural means here pointed to is personal influence. Than this there is no mightier power. Take even the influence of those who least intend to influence you, and seem least capable of it. Think of the influence in many ways of the little child who cannot stand alone; or of those who seem wholly pushed aside from the busy world by ill health or misfortune. How we have been brought to a chastened, sober habit by their suffering; and to the recognition of what is essential and what accidental, what good and what evil in the world! For the operation of this influence there must be: 1. A *mixing*; that is to say, there must be contact of the closest kind between the

regenerate and the unregenerate. The leaven is manifestly useless while it lies by itself. If our Lord had secluded himself in the household of Bethany, and never eaten with publicans and sinners, little of his Spirit could have passed into other men. The closeness of the intimacy, the depth of the love, is the measure of the effect produced. And in a country like ours, where what belonged yesterday to one person is to-day possessed by a thousand, good or evil propagates itself with the speed and certainty of contagion, the more effectually because insensibly. There is no banishment for the moral leper; no man can be evil for himself alone. This mixing is provided for in various ways—by *nature*, which sets us in families; by *society*, which compels contact of various kinds with others. Beyond these are the casual meetings we are unawares thrown into, and the voluntary friendships and associations we form. Of the first we may say, that if we cannot always choose our company we can always choose how we shall conduct ourselves in it; we can make our meeting a means of spreading the Spirit of Christ. The additions to his kingdom must be chiefly from among those who do not at present respond to Christian sentiments. For the regulation of connections which we form of our own choice the parable suffices. Can they be leavened, and by us? It is folly to argue that because some one else can go into certain company, or engage in certain pursuits and not be the worse for it, that therefore you can do so. But there is a culpable refusal to mix as well as a too great eagerness to do so. Two very opposite feelings lead to this. (1) One is the Pharisaic contempt for, or hopelessness about, other people. A converted person often seems to forget the hole of the rock whence he was digged—what he was yesterday, and what the unbeliever on whom he scowls may be to-morrow. Or (2) there is the opposite feeling, that our influence can only do harm. But this feeling should prompt us not to separate ourselves from the world, but to renew our connection with the leaven. If we fear to touch another lest we communicate disease, let us first touch him out of whom flows healing for all diseases. 2. But, the mixing being accomplished, *how does the process succeed?* The parable says—Be leaven, and you will leaven. Be a Christian, and you must make Christians or help to make them. No doubt direct address forms one great part of the means of leavening those around you, but the figure here points rather to the all-pervading and subtle extension of Christian principles than to their declared and aggressive advocacy. What is the influence of your example? If you are not leavening others, it is because you are yourself unleavened. There is no such thing as leaven that does not work. You cannot confine the perfume to the flower, or restrict the light of the sun to its own globe. It is a glorious consummation here spoken of—till "*the whole*" is leavened. In Christ's kingdom is to be gathered all that has ever served or gladdened humanity. His Spirit is to take possession of all national characteristics and all individual gifts. And all is to be achieved through personal influence. Can you know the earnestness of Christ in this behalf, and lift no finger to help him? Is there nothing you ought to do in leavening some little bit of the great mass?—D.

Vers. 44—46.—*Parables of the hid treasure and the pearl of price.* These parables depict the two great classes of men who become Christians. Some men are born merchants, others day-labourers; some, *i.e.*, are born with a noble instinct which prompts them to believe that there is infinite joy and satisfaction to be found, and that it shall be theirs; others, again, never look beyond their present attainment, have no speculation in them, no broad plan of life nor much idea that any purpose is to be served by it. This difference, when exhibited in connection with religion, becomes very marked.

I. The point of the first parable, and its distinction from the other, seems to lie in this—that while the man was giving a deeper furrow to his field, intent only on his team, his ploughshare suddenly grated upon the chest that contained the treasure. Or he may have been sauntering through a neighbour's field, when his eye is attracted by some sign that fixes him for the moment to the spot, because he knows that treasure must be there. Ages before this treasure had been hid; for him it had been prepared without any intention or labour of his, and now suddenly he lights upon it. Out of poverty he, to his own astonishment, steps into wealth, and his whole life is changed for a time without hope or effort of his own. So, says our Lord, is the kingdom of heaven. Suddenly, in the midst of other thoughts, a man is brought face to face with

Christ, and while earning his daily bread and seeking no more than success in life can give him, unexpectedly finds that eternal things are his. We only think of what *we* can make of life, not of the wealth God has laid in our path. But suddenly our steps are arrested; circumstances that seem purely accidental break down the partition that has hemmed us in to time, and we see that eternity is ours. We thought we had a house, a hundred acres of land, a thousand pounds well invested, and we find we have God. We were comforting ourselves with the prospect of increased salary, of ampler comforts and advantages, and a voice comes ringing through our soul, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." *How* it is that the eyes are now opened to this treasure, we can as little tell as the ploughman how he has never till this day seen the treasure. A few words casually dropped, some pause which allows the mind to wander in unaccustomed directions—one cannot say what is *insufficient* to bring the wandering and empty soul to a settled possession of the kingdom of heaven. But this morning he was content with what a man can have outside of God's kingdom, this evening everything outside that kingdom has lost its value and is as nothing. We are apt to think that, as the acceptance of Christ is the most important attainment a man can make, there ought to be some proportionate effort or expectancy on his part—that so great a treasure is not to be made over to one who is not caring for or thinking of it. But this parable shows us that there may be a finding without any previous seeking; that the essential thing is, not whether a man has been seeking, and how long and how earnestly, but whether he has found. The question is—Does a man know the value of what has turned up before him? and is he so in earnest as to sell all for it?

II. The second parable introduces us to the man who sets out with the inborn conviction or instinct that there *is* something worth the labour and search of a life, something to which we can wholly, freely, and eternally give ourselves up. He refuses to be satisfied with the moderate, often interrupted, often quenched joys of this world, though he considers them as goodly pearls. He goes on from one acquirement to another. Money is good, but friendship is better; he parts with the one to get the other. The respect of his fellows is good, but self-respect and a pure conscience are better. Human love is a goodly pearl, but this only quickens him to crave insatiably for the love of God. He refuses to believe that God has created us to be partially satisfied, happy at intervals, content with effort, *believing* ourselves blessed, but to be partakers of his own blessedness. This spirit of expectation is encouraged by the parable. It seems to say to us, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." It is not for you who have a God of infinite resource and of infinite love to accustom yourselves to merely negative blessings, and doubtful, limited conditions. There does exist a perfect condition, a pearl of great price, and there is but a question of the way to it, a question of search. You are to start with this belief, and to hold it to the end. Under no compulsion, in the face of no disappointment, give up the persuasion that into your life and soul the full sense of ample possession is one day to enter. You have certainty on your side—simple, sheer certainty; for "he that seeketh *findeth*." The important point in these parables is that which is common to both—the incomparable value of the kingdom of heaven, and the readiness with which one who perceives its value will give up all for it. The merchant does not part with his other possessions reluctantly when he wishes to obtain some better possession; he longs to get rid of them. People may think him mad selling out at low prices, at unsuitable times, at a loss; but he knows what he is doing. The world is full of stories that display the ingenuity, craft, perseverance, consuming zeal, spent on winning the piece of ground coveted. But is this not rather a picture of what ought to be than of what is? We see men hesitating to part with anything for the kingdom of heaven, looking at it as a sad alternative, as a resort to which they must perhaps betake themselves when too old to enjoy life any longer, but not as that on which life itself may best be spent. Entrance into it is looked upon much as entrance into the fortified town is viewed by the rural population; it may be necessary in time of danger, but it is by constraint, not from love, that they make the change. What meaning has this "selling of all" in our life? For it is to be observed that there is always this selling wherever the kingdom of heaven is won. It is what you really love that you spend thought and effort and money upon, not what you know you ought to love and are trying to persuade yourself to love. In conclusion, this parable lets fall two words of warning.

1. Make your choice and act upon it. If there is no better pearl, no higher treasure than what you can win by devotion to business and living for yourself, then by all means choose that and make the most of it. But if you think that Christ was right, if you foresee that what is outside his kingdom must perish, and that he has gathered within it *all* that is worthy, all that is enduring, then let the reasonableness and remonstrance of this parable move you to show some eagerness in winning that great treasure. 2. If you have this treasure, do not murmur at the price you have paid for it. Having what worlds cannot buy, you will surely not vex yourself by longing for this or that which the poorest-spirited slave of this world can easily obtain.—D.

Vers. 47—50.—*The parable of the net.* This parable, the last of the series, directs our thoughts to the completion of the kingdom. "So shall it be in the end of the world;" this is the starting-point of the interpretation. We are to consider what part the kingdom of heaven is to play *then*; when other kingdoms have played their parts; when things are being settled for eternity according to their value to God. It makes no practical difference in the application of the parable whether you make the net the Church, or simply the progress of all things towards eternity. Our Lord would have us consider the consummation of all things, when the great net shall at last be drawn to shore, when there shall be no more sea, no ebb and flow, especially no mingling of bad and good in an obscure and confusing element; but decision and separation, a deliberate sitting down to see what has been made of this world by us all, and a summing up on that eternal shore of all gains and results, and every man's *aim* made manifest by his *end*.

I. THIS PARABLE SUGGESTS THAT WE ARE ALL INEVITABLY ADVANCING. Our condition in this respect bears a close resemblance to fish enclosed in a net. At first, while the net is wide, they frisk and leap and seem free, but soon they discover that their advance is but in one direction, and when they halt they feel the pressure of the net. So it is with ourselves. We *must* go on; we cannot break through into the past; we cannot make time stand still till we resolve how to spend it. The years spent in indecision, in doubt, in self-seclusion, cannot now be filled with service of God and profit to our fellows.

II. THE NET SUGGESTS THE IDEA OF ENTANGLEMENT. Looking at fish in a net, you see many that are not swimming freely, but caught in the meshes and dragged on. Many have this interpreted by their own experience. They feel daily the pressure of the net; their position is not altogether of their own choosing, and now they discharge its duties because they must, not because they would. Such a condition may be sinful or sinless. If the duties required of you be sinful, then have you not recognized the detriment to your own soul? Do you not reflect that what was good when first entangled may be landed broken, bruised, and useless? But if the duties required of you are not violations of God's Law or offences to your own conscience, then rest satisfied with them, till God shows you a way of escape. Do not toss and struggle in the net, but quietly set yourself to make the most of the condition you have unfortunately fallen into. It may be your duty to *continue* in a position it was not originally your duty to enter. Just because it seems in many points unsuitable, it may call out deeper qualities within you—a patience that would otherwise have been undeveloped in you, a knowledge of man and of God that enlarges and matures your spirit. By very strange influences and means are we passing onwards, and we would often fain escape from the gentle compulsion by which God draws us to our end and bliss; and therefore must we bear in mind that however entangled and tied up we are and prevented from our own ways and directions, this present is, after all, only the drawing of the net, and not the time of our use. We are pressing to a shore where there is room and time enough for the fulfilment of every human purpose and exercise of every faculty.

III. Again, a third thing the net shows us is THE MIXTURE IN IT. "It gathers of every kind." And until it is fairly landed it is impossible to say whether the weight is to be rejoiced in or no. It is the glory of the kingdom of heaven that there is no man to whom it is not appropriate. It does not only gather those in whom it finds something congenial, a natural susceptibility of temperament inclining them to devotion; but it gathers in of every kind because it is suited to that moral condition in respect of which there is no difference of importance between one man and another. But this

mixture has its chief importance in connection with the ultimate separation. There are two great classes in which are to be for ever included all other distinctions and diversities. All must pass through the hands of the Judge. By keeping God out of your thoughts *now*, you do not secure that you shall never think of him, and that he shall never think of you. And this is specially a parable of warning. The figure is carried out and applied only so far as it concerns the fate of the wicked. The angels sever the wicked from among the just, so that the just alone are left in the net. The fishermen have thrown the net for a purpose, and whatever is not suitable for this purpose is refuse and rubbish to them. And so it shall be in the end of the world. Men will then understand what now scarcely one can constantly believe, that it is God's purpose that is silently being accomplished, and that it is usefulness to him that is the final standard of value. This will make a rapid separation among men. Have you those qualities which would serve to carry out such purposes as you know God's to be? Do you find now so much delight in doing his commandments, in living under his eye, that you can believe that in the end he can make some use of you? Do not say, "I will not alarm myself by judging of my own qualities; I am trusting to Christ;" for precisely in so far as you are trusting to Christ you *have* those qualities which God will require you to *show*. One other thing must be observed. The fish taken in the net are disposed of by the fishermen; are in their hands as mere dead matter without choice or motion. This handling and disposing of by others is not more new to the fishes than it will be to us. Here in this world we are conscious of a power to choose and regulate our own destiny—a power to change and become something quite different from what we are. But there comes a time when whatever you are that you shall for ever be; when you must abide by your choice and take all its consequences. This parable, therefore, has a most significant hint for those who decline to accept Christ on these two grounds. 1. That they do not practically need his help; that they can do all that is required of them very well without him. 2. That they do not see in the lives of those who do believe in him any such superiority as to induce them to follow their example and believe. But the difficulty now is for any serious and right-minded person to avoid accepting Christ's help. In order to do so a man would need to have been born outside of Christendom altogether. Besides, as regards conduct, can a man satisfy his conscience without Christ's help? He holds a relation to God as well as to man, and it is no apology for an unfilial attitude towards God to affirm that we fulfil all our duties to men. This parable reminds us that it is serviceableness which must determine our destiny in the future life; or, as God does not desire mere service, but the delighted co-operation of sons, it is sonship which determines our destiny. And who but Christ enables us to see what sonship is, and to become sons? As to the second reason, this parable not only admits, but makes much of the fact, that all that is within the net is by no means approved by God. But is not the kingdom as it ought to be worth striving for? Was the life of Christ misspent? and would it be a lamentable state of affairs on earth if his rule and spirit everywhere prevailed? The eternity that some are advancing towards, our Lord does not hesitate to describe as "a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Surely the condition that is so sad as to occupy the souls of those who are in it with eternal lamentation ought to occupy with *some* feelings the hearts of those who can give no reason why they shall not be there. It is not by some other and extraordinary way that you will evade what God warns you of, but only by the timeous use of what he has long ago told you, and what you ought long ago to have used.—D.

Vers. 1—9.—*The Sower.* Jesus had wrought many splendid miracles. He was himself the greatest Wonder. It is not surprising that he should have been followed by crowds. For convenience in addressing the multitude on this occasion, he entered a boat, and stood out from the beach. As he was about to open his mouth in parables, perhaps this *action* was parabolic. The pious Quesnel remarks, "We see here a representation of the Church, which consists of people united with their pastors. *These*, being more exposed to violent tossings and storms, are, as it were, in a *ship*, while *those* continue at ease on the *shore*." Foremost among the parables uttered is that of the sower (see Mark iv. 13). It is afterwards interpreted. Let us view it—

I. As to the sowing. Under this head we have: 1. *The seed.* (1) This is the

saving truth of God. In the interpretation it is styled "the Word of the kingdom" (ver. 19; see also Mark iv. 14). (2) That truth, like a seed, has a *body*. The earlier enshrinement of the saving truth was the letter of the *Sinai* covenant. This is called "the *body* of Moses" (see Jude 9). Now it comes to us in the Law from *Zion*. This is also called "the Word of the Lord from *Jerusalem*" (cf. Isa. ii. 3; Luke xxiv. 47). (3) The truth, like a seed, has a germinant principle. It is a *living* thing. The Spirit of God is the life of the Word. In the energy of the Spirit it is that "the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." 2. *The Sower.* (1) "The Sower is the Son of man." So we have the interpretation in the corresponding parable of the tares (see ver. 37). The Son of man is the Word in person. The character of the Sower belongs to him, as he is the Author of all truth. (2) The Son of man sows the Word of the kingdom by his servants. (*a*) Apostles. These were immediately commissioned. (*b*) Ministers. He provided for a succession of labourers separated to this great work. (*c*) Disciples. A dispensation of the gospel is committed to every believer. (3) As the Sower the Lord is gone forth. He has sown the truth in every age of the world. He carries the gospel into every land. He inseminates his truth in the mind of every child of man (John i. 9). 3. *The soil.* (1) This is the heart of the hearer. The interpretation makes this also plain. (2) He that made the seed made also the soil; and the Word and the heart are corelated. In the Bible there is food for every faculty of the mind. It has science for the reason. It has poetry for the imagination. It has history for the understanding. It has prophecy for the anticipative faculties. It has doctrines for the faith. It has promises for the hope. It has assurances for the love. (3) But the soil of the heart should be prepared for the reception of the seed of truth. (*a*) It should be ploughed and harrowed and crushed with conviction and grief and sorrow for sin. (*b*) It should also be weeded and cleaned by a thorough reformation and amendment. (*c*) It should be dressed by the holy excitements of faith and hope. (4) The reception depends upon the recipient. There are various *kinds* of reception. There are various *degrees* of reception.

II. AS TO THE YIELD. 1. *The seed is wasted on the trampled soil.* (1) The allusion is to the beaten footpaths in corn-fields. When the seed falls upon such a surface it cannot sink. It is therefore liable to be trodden underfoot (cf. Luke viii. 5). It is also liable to be carried away by the birds. In his 'Travels in Palestine,' Buckingham has the following: "We ascended an elevated plain where husbandmen were sowing, and some thousands of starlings covered the ground, as the wild pigeons do in Egypt, laying a heavy contribution on the grain thrown into the furrows, which are not covered by harrowing as in Europe." (2) The careless and unawakened are here described. They "hear the Word of the kingdom, but understand it not" (see ver. 19); *i.e.* they do not lay it to heart. The defect is moral. Note: Satan has diminished power where the truth is understood in the heart. (3) Understanding in the sense of intellectual apprehension is important. What our Lord means is to "understand with the heart," or to receive the truth in love. Note: The love of the truth is the soil suitable to the reception of the seed of the kingdom. (4) The love or goodness received from the Lord through parents and otherwise in early life is often so trampled upon by the practical errors of later years that the heart becomes hardened into unconcern for eternal life. (5) The seed that falls into such a heart is carried away by the devil, whose agents are compared to the "birds of the air." To forget the Creator, whom we were taught to "remember" in our youth, is one of the temptations of early manhood. Thoughts of light pleasures or of vain philosophy "catch away" that which pious hands have sown. The careless heart is the devil's thoroughfare. 2. *The seed is wasted on superficial soil.* (1) The "rocky places where they had not much earth" are places where the rock lies under the scanty surface (see Luke viii. 6). Such places represent the heart of the hearer who will at once receive the Word with gladness, but "having no root in himself, but dureth for a while" (vers. 20, 21). (2) The seed which quickly germinates in the slight but genial soil comes to a weak maturity quickly under favourable conditions. "In Palestine, during the seed-time in November, the sky is generally overspread with clouds. The seed then springs in stony places. But when the sun dissipates the clouds, having outgrown its strength, it is quickly dried away" (Rosenmüller). Note: What is swallowed without manducation is not perfectly digested. The ready hearer is not always the best fruit-bearer

(cf. 1 Thess. v. 21). Many endure "for a season," but not "to the end" (cf. ch. x. 22; Gal. v. 7). (3) The failure is "because they have no root in themselves." They have no fixed principles in their judgments. They have no rooted habits in their good affections. "The lack is not in the *soil*, but in careful *husbandry*" (Trench). The shallow are often the first to receive the good, as they are also to receive the evil; but they are fickle and unreliable. (4) If Nature has her zephyrs, dews, and tempered sunshine, so has she her floods, tempests, and scorching heats. So has providence its "tribulations and persecutions." No heavenly plant can be reared without these. The plant that cannot endure them must perish. 3. *The seed is wasted that falls among thorns.* (1) The soil here is neither deficient nor barren. That which can nourish briars can nourish something better. There are those who want not capacity, but culture. Not only must the wheat be sown; the thorns also must be rooted out. There are studious and exemplary persons who do not examine themselves in order to eradicate the evils of their neglected hearts. (2) The neglect of the briar is fatal to the wheat. The overgrowth of "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches" is often more disastrous than "tribulations and persecutions." Grace is more needed in prosperity than in adversity. (3) "The *deceitfulness* of riches" is a significant phrase. It suggests: (*a*) That riches promise more than they give. (*b*) That men are readily deluded by them. How plausible is the suggestion to one who is "making haste to be rich," that it is prudent to make provision for the future! They do not reflect that it is still more prudent to make provision for the future life. How plausible, that to increase wealth is to increase *ability* to do good! The effect upon the *disposition* to do good is left out of the question. The appetite for accumulating becomes more voracious and the liberality more stinted as men become more wealthy. (4) Luke's version adds, "the pleasures of this life." Riches encourage the pursuit of these by furnishing the means for their gratification. Luke adds, "the lust of other things," such as desires after honour, distinction, show, and the praise of men. (5) These things, so esteemed among men, are by Christ described as "briars," "thorns," "weeds." 4. *But the Sower has encouragement.* (1) Some of the seed of the kingdom finds its way into "good and honest hearts" (see Luke viii. 15)—hearts prepared by Divine grace (see Acts xvi. 14). Ground made good by ploughing, weeding, and dressing. (2) Note the gradation in respect to growth. (*a*) In the careless and unawakened the effect is *nil*. (*b*) The superficial readily accept the truth, profess it, but, discovering that the cross must go before the crown, renounce the crown to avoid the cross. "Swift to come, swift to go." (*c*) In the third class the Word sinks deeper, and gives more promise by abiding "persecutions and tribulations." They fail before the subtle power of the world. Note: We may be better than our neighbours and yet fall short of heaven. (*d*) But the fourth class receive the Word, retain it, and come to fruitfulness. The fruit-bearers are the genuine disciples (see John xv. 8). (3) Note now the gradation in respect to fruit-bearing. The return is in *tens*—three tens, six tens, ten tens. Tithes of produce are the Lord's. Our riches are what we bring to God. Ten, including under it all units, the factors of all values, was by the ancients taken as a symbol of richness and fulness. As there are degrees of fruitfulness, so will there be degrees of reward.—J. A. M.

Vers. 10—17.—*The reason of the parable.* After our Lord had discoursed in parables to the multitude assembled on the seashore, his disciples inquired of him why he used that mode of teaching, for hitherto he had spoken in simple and explicit language. The reply shows that the design was—

I. TO EVINCE THE SPIRITUALITY OF SAVING TRUTH. 1. *It is a mystery to be revealed.* (1) The universe is dual, having material and spiritual complements. Between these there are wonderful correspondences. There are, therefore, similitudes in abundance in the visible to illustrate the spiritual. (2) Yet we cannot, by natural reason unaided, attain to the knowledge of the spiritual. We know not how to apply the similitudes. (3) Revelation from God is therefore necessary to supply this need. "The things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God." (4) So this knowledge comes to us as a gift from God. "Unto you it is *given*," etc. (ver. 11; see also 1 Kings iii. 9, 12; Prov. ii. 6; John iii. 27; Jas. i. 17). 2. *It is still mystery when revealed.* (1) In its *doctrine*. God manifested in the flesh is the great mystery of

godliness. Connected with the incarnation are the awful mysteries of the passion and death of Christ. And with these, again, the resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. (2) In its *experience*. What a blessed mystery is the justification of a sinner before God! Then his adoption, regeneration, and sanctification. And finally his resurrection (see 1 Cor. xv. 51). 3. *The revelation is blessed.* (1) Saving truth is the highest truth. The things of God are the grandest things. The Godward side of all things is their nobler side. The things of God are the things of the soul. These are as superior to the things of the body as mind is superior to matter. (2) The gospel is the fuller revelation of the transcendent truth. Of this the "prophets and righteous men" of earlier times had glimpses which whetted their desire to see the brighter day (cf. Heb. xi. 40; 1 Pet. i. 9—12). The "eyes" of the disciples were "blessed" in beholding the Person of Messiah (see Luke ii. 30). Their "ears" were "blessed" in listening to his wonderful doctrine. (3) In these privileges the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of the prophets (see ch. xi. 11). And we are no less favoured than the first disciples. For there is still the personal manifestation of the Son of God to the believing heart (see John xiv. 21).

II. To LIMIT THE REVELATION OF THE SAVING TRUTH. 1. *It was to hide it from the false.* (1) The disciples perceived that in using the parable Jesus intended to conceal his meaning, and this prompted their question. The answer confirmed their suspicion. (2) It also showed that it was a judgment upon unbelief. Jesus did not at first discourse in parables. He adopted this method after his message had been refused. The Pharisees had *seen* the grandest miracles; they had *heard* the noblest doctrine; they were only moved to rancour. Now he abandons them to their obduracy. Pharaoh for a long time hardened his heart; then God hardened it for him (see Exod. viii. 15, 32; ix. 12; x. 20). A gross heart is a heart stupefied by sensual indulgence (see Deut. xxxii. 15; Ps. lviii. 4, 5). (3) In the passage cited from Isaiah the prophet anticipated the judgments which came upon the Jewish nation in the Babylonish captivity (see Isa. vi. 9—12). But the prophecy also refers to the days of Messiah. This is suggested in the fact that it was uttered in connection with a vision of the glory of the Lord which was the glory of Christ (see John xii. 39—41). This double or second fulfilment is recognized in the words, "in them is fulfilled" (ver. 14), ἀναπληροῦται, "*again* fulfilled." So the parabolic teaching of Jesus was a prelude to the abandonment of the nation to the terrible consequences of their unbelief. (4) The Gentile also has his admonition. From him that hath not, uses not, God's gifts, the gifts will be withdrawn. They will not see, therefore they shall not see. They will not be converted, therefore they shall not be converted. God says this at the end of every sinner's life. Sometimes he says it before the sinner's life is ended. 2. *It was to preserve it for the true.* (1) The parable encourages the diligent. The similitude is striking and pleasing, and arrests attention. It is a mystery, or secret thing. Its meaning is not on the surface. Inquisitiveness is excited. The prayerful heart has the help of the Spirit of truth. So the parable is "a shell that keeps good fruit *for* the diligent, but keeps it *from* the slothful" (Henry). (2) A man *has* what he *uses*. What he uses not he only *seems* to have (cf. Luke viii. 18). What a man uses not is wasted; but in the using it becomes a part of himself. Its resultant is in his character. Thus it is preserved. He *hath* it. (3) God increases his gifts to those who use them. Men act on the same principle. Truth attained is the key to truth concealed. For in all truth is unity and harmony. In the disciples of Christ is fulfilled the promised blessing, viz. that the eyes of them that see shall not be dim (Isa. xxxii. 3). (4) Those who now "see through a glass darkly" shall in the world to come see "face to face." The noblest blessings are entailed upon the true understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.—J. A. M.

Vers. 18—23.—*The Sower.* (See *ante* on vers. 1—9.)—J. A. M.

Vers. 24—30.—*The tares in the field.* The kingdom of heaven is the Church of God at once in heaven and on earth. This parable, like that of the sower, was afterwards explained to the disciples. As the exposition explains the parable, and the parable illustrates the exposition, it is fitting they should be considered together. From this parable we learn—

I. THAT THIS LIFE IS A SCENE OF TRIAL. 1. *The field is the world.* (1) So we have it in the interpretation (ver. 38). It is a wide field, whether viewed physically or morally. Still it is the Lord's domain. One day it will be universally fruitful to his glory (see Isa. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14). (2) Here we are now on our trial. This thought makes life solemn. The more so since there is no second probation. (3) The issues are tremendous. In quality. In duration. (4) How precious are the opportunities of the present! 2. *The soil will nourish any seed.* (1) It will nourish the *good.* This, as interpreted in the parable of the sower, is the "Word of the kingdom" (ver. 19). In the interpretation here it is those in whom that Word is incorporated—"the sons of the kingdom" (ver. 38). Note: The sons of the kingdom are distinguished by their relation to the truth. (2) It will nourish the *evil.* The truth of God is opposed by the perversions of Satan. Those ruled by error are the "sons of the evil one." The wicked do not consider their spiritual lineage (see John viii. 44; Eph. ii. 2). (3) Note: Here are only two classes. There are orders of good, and there are orders of evil. But if the seed be not good, then it is evil. To which of these classes do you belong? 3. *There are two seed-sowers.* (1) The Son of man, as in the parable of the sower, is one. The seed he sows is good. He is the incarnation of Infinite good. Christ sowed this good seed in person when he preached. He still sows it by his ambassadors (2 Cor. v. 20). (2) The enemy, not mentioned in this capacity in the parable of the sower, is the other. The devil is the enemy of Christ (ver. 39; see also Gen. iii. 15). So is he the enemy of the sons of Jesus. The enemy is the anti-Messiah, possessed of the devil, as was Judas Iscariot (cf. Isa. xi. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 8). (3) Note the differences in the sowing. The Son of man sows openly in the day. The evil one works in the darkness of night. "While men slept" (ver. 25). Satan takes every advantage of our drowsiness, indolence, lukewarmness. The approaches of evil are stealthy. (4) Note what follows. The evil one "went his way." He takes care not to be seen in his work. He can trust his weeds to grow. "When the blade was up." Beware of the *seeds* of evil. They may be *small,* but they *grow.*

II. THAT THIS SCENE OF TRIAL PRESENTS DIFFICULT PROBLEMS. 1. *There is the origin of moral evil.* (1) It puzzled the servants to see the darnel, or the bastard wheat, spring up among the good wheat (ver. 27). We may puzzle ourselves with many things. (2) Christ disclaims this authorship. He owns to sowing the good seed. He is infinitely good. Evil he can neither be nor do. (3) He fixes this authorship upon Satan. He is the enemy alike of God and man. Further than this in the solution of the question of the origin of evil we cannot go. (4) Note: The personality of the devil is here asserted. The author of moral evil must be a moral, and therefore an intelligent, agent. 2. *There is the forbearance of God towards evil.* (1) This also puzzled the servants. "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" "Wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" (Luke ix. 54—56). Zeal is commendable only when it is discreet. (2) God tolerates the evil for the sake of the good. (*a*) Were he to root all the wicked out of the earth, the population would be so reduced that the wild beasts could not be kept under. (*b*) The graces of the good are exercised by the toleration of the wicked. (*c*) So the grace of God is exemplified in supporting the good amongst the evil. (3) The wicked are tolerated to render it possible for the grace of God to convert them. 3. *There is the difference between discipline and persecution.* (1) Persecution is an evil against which zeal must be guarded. Men may think they do God service when they make havoc of his Church (cf. Acts viii. 3; Gal. i. 13; 1 Tim. i. 13). (2) The darnel so resembles the wheat that it may be mistaken for it. So may the unbeliever be mistaken for the believer, the hypocrite for the true man. So, on the contrary, some saints are so clumsy and awkward that they may be mistaken for deceivers. Where there is a doubt let the subject have the benefit. The wheat rather than the darnel has generally suffered from persecution. (3) But the toleration of darnel, which resembles wheat, is no reason for the toleration of thorns, which resemble it not (cf. ver. 22; 1 Cor. v. 13). The teaching of our parable is not directed against discipline, but against persecution. (4) Note: Our Lord gives us no authority to expect a perfect Church in this age. The objection against joining a Church because it is imperfect is unreasonable.

III. THAT THE GREAT JUDGMENT WILL VINDICATE THE WAYS OF GOD. 1. *Then will he separate the evil from the good.* (1) Angels will be employed in this service.

They are superior to the prejudices of mortals. They act also in the presence and under the direction of the omniscient Son of man. (2) There are no masks in heaven. Where no evil is there is nothing to conceal. Society is at its best when confidence has no restraint. (3) Masks are torn off in hell. Holy angels will unmask the wicked. What a spectacle will be then displayed! Society is at its worst when mistrust has no restraint. 2. *Then will he punish the wicked.* (1) The tares are bound in bundles. Is this a classification according to character? Are atheists to be bundled together? Blasphemers? Epicures? Persecutors? Hypocrites? (2) Is the bundling promiscuous? Will the scientist be bound in the same bundle with the sot? (3) "Bind them in bundles to burn them." The Son of man "shall cast them into the furnace of fire" (ver. 42). What a prison! What an imprisonment! (4) Despair has its woeful expression. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (ver. 42). 3. *Then will he reward the good.* (1) They will enjoy *security.* "Gather the wheat into my barn" (ver. 30; Ps. l. 5). Security from wind and weather. Beyond the mutations of probation. (2) They will enjoy *distinction.* "In the kingdom of their Father." "Now we *are* the sons of God." Then will the grandeur of this sonship *appear* (cf. John xx. 17; 1 John iii. 2). The palace. The throne (Rev. iii. 21). (3) They will be invested with *glory.* "Shall shine forth as the sun" (cf. Judg. v. 31; Dan. xii. 3). In the glory of purity like the "Sun of Righteousness." In glorified bodies like that of Jesus. They shall not "burn" like the wicked, but "shine." (4) Who hath ears, let him hear how tenderly God cares for the good.—J. A. M.

Vers. 31—35.—*Parable and prophecy.* The spirit of prophecy in ancient times enshrined itself in parables. The prophecy of Balaam, accordingly, is called "his parable" (Numb. xxiii. 18). Under the parable of two eagles and a vine Ezekiel shows forth the judgments of God upon Jerusalem for revolting from Babylon to Egypt (Ezek. xviii.; see also xxiv. 3; Micah ii. 4—6; Hab. ii. 6). So are the parables of Christ prophetic. Observe—

I. THAT JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES IN PURSUANCE OF PROPHECY. 1. *The end of that teaching was predicted.* (1) The end was to hide the saving truth from those who proved themselves unworthy of it. Our Lord did not assume the parable until his plainer teaching, with its miraculous demonstrations, had been wickedly rejected. (2) This judgment upon the proud, obstinate, and sensual people was foretold (cf. Isa. vi. 9—12; see homily on vers. 10—17). (3) The parable, at once, so wisely enshrined the saving truth as richly to reward the diligence of the prayerful. To these the parables of Christ are the *utterance* of "things hidden from the foundation of the world" (cf. Rom. xvi. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 9; Col. i. 26). 2. *So was the means to the end.* (1) Asaph, to whom the authorship of the psalm cited by Matthew in the text is ascribed, was a "seer," or prophet (see 2 Chron. xxix. 30). Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he predicted that Messiah should speak to the people in parables. For the psalm itself contains no parable. (2) In uttering these "dark sayings," Messiah was to "establish a testimony in Jacob," and to appoint "a law in Israel" (Ps. lxxviii. 5). These are distinct from the testimony and Law from Sinai, which were given long before the days of Asaph or David. What, then, can they be but the law destined to emanate from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem? (cf. Isa. ii. 3). (3) The psalmist, moreover, speaks of these as to be "given to the generation to come;" literally, "the *latter* generation," or the generation of the latter days. (4) In this mysterious teaching, therefore, Jesus exhibited another mark of his Messiahship. The unbelieving Jews seek in vain for any mark of Messiahship which is not verified in him.

II. THAT THE PARABLES BEFORE US MAY BE VIEWED AS PROPHECIES. 1. *They describe the gospel in its feeble beginning.* (1) How apparently insignificant is the grain of mustard seed! So apparently insignificant was Jesus in his feeble infancy; in the meanness of his circumstances; in the social grade of his few followers. Fishermen of Galilee! "Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees?" (2) How apparently insignificant is the lump of leaven as compared with the lump of meal! How are these words of Jesus uttered in the air of Galilee so to multiply as to reverberate in every human ear the world over? How is this company of fishermen to preach the gospel to every creature? 2. *They describe the gospel in its secret power.* (1) The

grain of mustard seed is *small*; but it is a *seed*. It has in it an unlimited power of growth and multiplication. So Jesus has in himself illimitable resources. See his power flashing from him in miracles. Physical. Moral. (2) The "little leaven," also, possesses wonderful potency. The word of Christ differs from every other word in that it carries in it the energy of omnipotence. During the first year of the ministry of Jesus we read of "*seventy* disciples." Note: They were not seventy *units*, but seventy *preachers*. In three years "the number of the names was one hundred and twenty." After the outpouring of the Spirit the disciples multiplied by *thousands* (Acts ii. 41; iv. 4). (3) The gospel has not only won its converts by millions, but it has demolished the idolatrous systems of the classic nations. It is now undermining the colossal systems of the East. It is in the van of all true science and civilization. 3. *They describe the gospel in its ultimate triumph.* (1) These parables do not predict that the visible Church by the gospel is to convert the whole world before Christ comes again. For this would oppose his own teaching, as when he advises us that at his coming the moral state of the world will sadly resemble that of the antediluvians in the days of Noah (see Luke xvii. 24—30). Paul also declares that "in the last days perilous times shall come;" that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 1, 13). (2) The interval of the seed lying in the soil is that portion of the parable of the mustard seed to which may be compared the period through which we are passing, extending from the first to the second advent of Christ. So with the leaven. Leaven works secretly in the meal for a long time before its power is visible in a universal commotion. As yet the kingdom of God is without observation. It comes secretly in the heart without ostentation or display. (3) The parables carry us beyond the time of the coming of Christ. They carry us forward to the millennium, in which season the grain of mustard seed will have become a great tree, in which the birds of the air—all nations and peoples—will find rest and shelter (cf. Ps. lxxx. 9, 11; Isa. lx. 1, 2; Amos ix. 15). Then will the work of the leaven be visible in the whole lump. "We cannot consider these words, *the whole*, less than a prophecy that the leaven shall yet pervade all nations and purify all life" (Trench). Note: The gospel, like leaven, works silently and insensibly in the heart (see Ps. cxix. 11). The Word, like fermenting leaven, is quick and powerful (Heb. iv. 12). It works "until the whole is *leavened*," or brought into similitude to itself. Leaven does not work in corn unground. So neither does the gospel work on the unbroken heart. The similes in these parables are encouraging to those who work for Christ and souls. The same gospel which now converts the individual believer will convert the race in the coming age.—J. A. M.

Vers. 36—43.—*The tares in the field.* (See *ante*, on vers. 24—30.)—J. A. M.

Vers. 44—46.—*The chief good.* The parable of the treasure and that of the pearl as they are here together may well be considered together, for the subject is the same. The repetition emphasizes the importance and value of the gospel. These parables set before us—

I. THE CHIEF GOOD. 1. *What is it?* (1) It is a "treasure." The allusion here may be to a pot of money or a casket of jewels "hidden in a field;" or possibly to a mine of precious ore. It is the "pearl of great price"—a stone of incomparable size, purity, and beauty. But these are only figures. (2) Christ unites in himself all qualities of excellence and value. He is the King of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Luke xvii. 20—25). The monarch is the representative of the kingdom's wealth and glory (cf. John i. 16; Col. i. 19; ii. 3). (3) In him are the treasures of pardons for the guilty. He has paid the great price of our redemption. In him also are the riches of purity for the believer. Purity is the title to the riches of the heaven of everlasting glory. 2. *Why is it hidden?* (1) For the rousing of our faculties and quickening of our diligence (see Prov. ii. 1—7). This stimulus is an important factor in our moral education. The miner becomes skilful in mining. So the merchantman in estimating the quality and value of pearls. (2) The diligence thus called forth enhances the value of the treasure. We value things according to the price we *will* pay. Also according to the price we *have* paid. The endurance of our faith is intimately associated with the thoroughness of our repentance. (3) They are hidden to conceal them from the

unworthy. (*a*) Lest they should insult them. The swine will trample on the pearl, and turn and rend the merchantman. (*b*) As a judgment upon their brutishness (cf. vers. 10—15; Isa. vi. 9). 3. *From whom are they hidden?* (1) From the wise and understanding, viz. in their own conceits (cf. ch. xi. 25—27). Not many of our *sophs* are called. (2) From the self-righteous. From the Pharisees, who were notably of this order, especially it was that Christ taught in parables to hide the saving truth. (3) From the sensual. The treasure of the gospel is spiritual. It is, therefore, to be discerned by the spiritual senses. The grosser sensualism of the flesh blinds the finer sense of the spirit (cf. John xiv. 9). (4) From the worldly. They can only see the surface of the field. A nobleman once gave a celebrated actress a Bible, telling her at the same time that there was a treasure in it. She, thinking he meant religion, laid the Bible aside. She died, and all she had was sold. The person who bought the Bible, on turning over its leaves, found a five hundred pound note in it. Had the actress read that book she might not only have found the note, but the "Pearl of great price."

II. ITS DISCOVERY. 1. *Where is it found?* (1) In this present world. "The field is the world" (ver. 38). (*a*) In that part of the world called Palestine the treasure was once hidden. Now the Pearl is to be found wherever the merchantman with sufficient diligence may seek for it (see John iv. 21—24). (*b*) In this present world we are probationers for eternity. If we miss the opportunities of this probation we have no promise of a second. There are no treasures of salvation for the richest of the rich men in hell (see Luke xvi. 26). (2) In the Word of God. It is not to be found in nature. God's plan of salvation is not written upon the ethereal dome in the fire of the stars. It is not uttered by the tongue of thunder. We neither hear it in the roar of the sea nor in the whispers of the groves. It is the theme of holy revelation (see John v. 39). (3) In the ordinances of religion. These are fittingly called "means of grace." In them the Word of revelation is read, expounded, preached. The Holy Spirit of inspiration is present. There by his own appointment (cf. Exod. xxix. 43; ch. xviii. 20). (4) In the believing heart. The blessings of salvation are revealed to faith (see Rom. x. 4—10). 2. *How is it to be found?* (1) Sometimes it may be found without seeking. The gospel found the Gentiles when they sought not for it (see Rom. x. 19—21). Sinners in the mid-career of madness have been arrested by a word. (2) It is always to be found by seeking. The miner may infallibly strike upon this lode. The merchantman need never miss the Pearl of great price (cf. ch. vii. 7, 8). (3) The purpose of the seeker must be simple. To the "babes" is revealed the wisdom hidden from the "wise and understanding" (ch. xi. 25).

III. ITS EFFECT. 1. *It fills the soul with joy.* (1) It brings the greatest relief. We have the treasure which discharges all our heavy liabilities to God. It delivers us from liability to the damnation of hell. (2) It assures the highest hope. For what hope is higher than the hope of heaven? Holiness is the qualification and assurance for that hope. (3) It is the purest joy. What joy can be purer than the love of God? 2. *It inspires a holy vigilance.* (1) The finder of the hidden treasure hides it still until he can make it his own. Note: The parable does not pronounce one way or another upon the ethical question as to how far a man may take advantage of the ignorance of his neighbour. The teaching of the simile is a commendation of vigilance. The true treasure is in everybody's field. One is not deprived of it in order that another may be enriched. But the unbelieving are ready to barter for folly that which the wise will buy at any cost. (2) But is it not the duty of the Christian to confess Christ? Undoubtedly. But how can a man confess him before he has him? The treasure is hidden only while it is in the prospect of possession. 3. *It begets the true spirit of sacrifice.* (1) The wise man buys the field; then the treasure becomes his. (2) But what does he give for it? "All that he has" (see ch. xix. 16—22). (3) But what *has* a man before he finds Christ? Nothing but sin. What, then, does he "sell"? Simply sin—all his sin. Blessed riddance! (4) What, then, does he gain? Christ. In Christ he has everything worth possessing. Blessed exchange!—J. A. M.

Vers. 47—50.—*The drag-net.* The import of this parable is similar to that of the tares, though perhaps of wider application. The theatre of the earlier parable is the land, which in prophecy designates the Hebrew people; while the sea, in the latter,

points to the Gentile nations (cf. Isa. v. 30; Dan. vii. 2, 3; Rev. xiii. 1; xvii. 1, 15). The kingdom of heaven was first offered to the Jews, and when they rejected it, it was then carried to the Gentiles (cf. ch. xxi. 43; Acts xiii. 46, 47). Note—

I. THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS ARE FISHERS OF MEN. 1. *To this service they are called.* (1) Some of the first disciples were literally fishermen (ch. iv. 17—22). The distinction of Christ's servants is spiritual rather than social. (2) From the lower they were promoted to the higher fishing-grounds. In calling them to become fishers of men Jesus said practically, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net." Their call was a parable, a prophecy, and a sermon. (3) Jesus found the fishermen diligent in their humble calling and promoted them. It is a dishonour to the gospel to send the weaklings of a family into the Church. 2. *For this service they were equipped.* (1) Christ gave them his drag-net. This is the "Word of the kingdom." This is a drag-net that sweeps all before it. (2) He taught them how to use it. They heard his preaching. They went forth under his commission and preached. (3) His almighty energy went with them. The physical miracles they wrought exemplified the corresponding moral power of the truth they preached. (4) He gave them remarkable pledges of future success. Conspicuous amongst these was the miraculous draught of fishes. That was a prophetic anticipation of the work on the Day of Pentecost.

II. THE MEN THEY GATHER ARE "OF EVERY KIND." 1. *The good are enclosed in the Church.* (1) These were the fish recognized as *clean* according to the Law, viz. such as have both "fins and scales" (see Lev. xi. 9, 10). By means of their fins they rise to the surface and swim in the purer water and under the clearer light of the heavens. The metallic lustre of their scales suggests the "armour of light." (2) Anciently, the clean creatures represented the Hebrew people, who were the people of the covenant, in contradistinction to the unclean Gentiles, who were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, being without hope and atheists in the world." (3) Now they stand for the morally good as opposed to the wicked. "For in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." (4) Of the good among men, as among fishes, there are many varieties. Religion does not destroy individuality. But they have the common marks of Christian discipleship. 2. *The bad also are included.* (1) These are represented by the unclean fish; those without fins or scales, as the eel, whose habits are foul, writhing in the mud. We say of cunning men that they "wriggle like eels." They may have fins like the shark, but if they have not also scales they are unclean. Men of rapacious dispositions we still call "sharks." (2) Anciently, the unclean creatures denoted the "sinners of the Gentiles," as opposed to the "saints" or "holy people" of Israel. (3) Now, since national distinctions in religion are abolished, the unclean are the unbelievers of every nation, Jew as well as Gentile. 3. *The visible Church is therefore imperfect.* (1) The world is a vast sea, and the sons of men are "in it things creeping innumerable both small and great" (Ps. civ. 25). Men in their natural state are "like fishes in the sea, and moving things that have no ruler over them" (Hab. i. 14). (2) From this mass multitudes are gathered into the net of the Church. Some of the evil becomes transformed by true conversion. Others are converted only in semblance. (3) This mixed state of things is evident in wide Christendom. It is no less real, though not equally evident, amongst communicants.

III. THE GOOD AND THE WICKED ARE DESTINED TO A FINAL SEPARATION. 1. *The wicked will be separated to destruction.* (1) They are "severed," separated with violence, as by cutting or rending. They will with reluctance yield to this final separation from the good and from their hopes. (2) They will be severed by the "angels." The angels of heaven can distinguish between the hypocrite and the true man, which the angels of the Church cannot do. As the tares among the wheat in the Jewish field, so are the bad fish among the good in the Gentile net (cf. vers. 28—30, 41). (3) "And shall cast them into the furnace of fire." This is in allusion to the Eastern punishment of burning alive. If figures do not come up to the reality, the punishment of the sinner must be fearful in the extreme. Note: The furnace of fire is reserved for unworthy members of Churches. (4) "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The agony of despair. The distress of impotent resentment. This, after the burning, shows that the burning of the wicked is not their consumption. Destruction, in Scripture, differs from annihilation. 2. *The good will be separated to*

salvation. (1) Salvation from the associations of the wicked. Those associations are now uncongenial. They are contaminating. They are damaging to the better reputation. In the new earth there will be "no more sea" (Rev. xxi. 1). There will be no more Gentiles in wickedness; all will be Israelites in goodness. (2) The good will be "gathered into vessels." Are not these the antitheses of the "bundles" into which the wicked are gathered, as in the corresponding parable of the tares? Does not this suggest order and class in heavenly society? (3) The time of this separation is when the net shall be "filled." The gospel must first fulfil its commission in witnessing to all the world (cf. Isa. lv. 10, 11; ch. xxiv. 14).—J. A. M.

Vers. 51, 52.—*The Householder.* This is the last of a connected series of parables. It was intended to emphasize and fix upon the minds of the disciples the lessons of those already spoken. It has also precious lessons of its own.

I. CHRIST IS THE HOUSEHOLDER. 1. *He is the Head of a spiritual family.* (1) He is the second Adam (cf. Rom. v. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 45; Eph. v. 31, 32). (2) He is the Founder of the new creation. "The Father of the everlasting age" (cf. Isa. ix. 6; Col. i. 15; Rev. iii. 14). (3) His children are the sons of God. They are the children of the everlasting covenant. "Children of Abraham's faith." (4) They are the "children of God, being children of the resurrection." Spiritually risen with Christ already. Entitled to the better resurrection of the last day. 2. *He has an ample treasure for their maintenance.* (1) "His treasure." The allusion is to the householder's store for the maintenance of his establishment. (2) The bountifulness of the store is expressed in the phrase, "things new and old." The old produce is not exhausted when the fruits of the new year are gathered in (cf. Lev. xxvi. 9, 10). (3) The stores of Christ are the infinite treasure of his wisdom and knowledge. These he derived not from human sources. He never studied under the doctors of the Hebrew colleges. Yet even at the early age of twelve he could astonish them. He drew his resources from heaven (cf. John iii. 36; Col. i. 19). (4) This store is for his children first (see Eph. i. 6—8; Col. ii. 9, 10). The servants also have their nourishment. The dogs may be thankful for the crumbs. The world is indebted to the gospel for the better elements of its civilization.

II. HE BRINGETH FORTH OUT OF HIS TREASURE THINGS NEW AND OLD. 1. *He discovers a monarchy in humility.* (1) This was a new thing. The Jews expected the King Messiah to appear after the type of Solomon in all his glory. They had yet to learn that the "Greater than Solomon" is Jesus in his humility. The dignity and glory of suffering had never been so seen. (2) Yet was this thing of the New Testament also in the Old. Messiah must first come in humiliation for purposes of redemption before he can appear, as he will in his second advent, "without sin unto salvation" (see Luke xxiv. 25—27). (3) In the depths of his humility he asserts Divine claims. He claims to be the Son of God (see John x. 36). To be the Lord of the sabbath day (see Mark ii. 27, 28; Luke vi. 5). To be David's Lord though David's Son (ch. xxii. 41—46). To have power on earth to forgive sins (see Mark ii. 7; Luke v. 21—26). 2. *He proclaims a spiritual kingdom.* (1) This was a new thing. Secular kingdoms were old enough. So familiar were these that the Jews expected Messiah to establish a "kingdom under the whole heaven" after their type (see Dan. vii. 27). (2) What, then, was their astonishment, while they were dreaming of release from the Roman yoke, and ruling the Gentiles with a rod of iron, to be told that the kingdom "cometh not with observation;" that it is a spiritual kingdom "within," in the heart? (3) What was their astonishment when they heard the requisites which made it hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom? (4) When they heard that love is the principle of the kingdom? Not only love supreme to God, but love also to the brotherhood. Love, moreover, to our neighbour, which is every man. Love even to our enemies. Such love as constrains us to bless when we are cursed, to requite hatred with benevolence, to answer persecution with supplication (see ch. v. 43—45). 3. *In his gospel he fulfils the Law.* (1) That Messiah should dignify and perfect the Law of Moses was nothing new to the Jews. They looked for this. But the manner of its accomplishment astonished them. (2) They did not see that in his death he should become the antitype of all the sacrifices; that summing up in himself all their virtues, and infinitely more, they should disappear, and henceforth be seen only in his cross. (3)

It was new that henceforth the ablutions of Leviticus should be seen in the gift of the Holy Ghost. (4) It was new that the gospel should so bring out the spirit of the "Law of commandments contained in ordinances" as to render obsolete the letter. (5) Yet all these things were as old as the Law itself, and were likewise testified by the prophets (cf. ch. v. 17; Rom. iii. 21; x. 4; xv. 8; Gal. iii. 24).

III. HE ENCOURAGES THE SONS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD. 1. *He instructs them in his wisdom.* (1) Teaching: (*a*) The doctrines of his gospel. (*b*) The evidences of his religion. (*c*) The practical ends for which it is instituted. Without Divine illumination no man can attain to this knowledge. (2) The question, "Have ye understood all these things?" suggests: (*a*) That it is the will of Christ that those who read and hear his Word should understand it. This is an encouragement to study. (*b*) That Divine truths must not be lightly passed over. (*c*) That he is ready to explain to his disciples what may be obscure. This is an encouragement to prayer. (3) The answer, "Yea, Lord," shows that the explanations which the disciples received of the parables of the sower and of the tares opened to them the meaning of the other parables (cf. Mark iv. 13). Truth is the key to truth (see Prov. viii. 8, 9; xiv. 6). 2. *He commends their proficiency.* (1) He styled them *scribes.* The scribe among the Jews was a person versed in the letter of the Old Testament. Some of them had knowledge also in its spirit. Ezra was "a ready scribe in the Law of Moses." He "prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord" (Ezra vii. 6, 10). (2) But the disciples of Jesus were more. They were made "disciples to the kingdom of heaven." Herein they were greater than the greatest of the old prophets (see ch. xi. 11). Note: He who undertakes to preach Christ should know Christ. A minister may be a linguist, a mathematician, a scientist, a politician, but unless he is "instructed in the kingdom of heaven" he is not qualified (see 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). (3) Like his Lord: (*a*) He must *have* a "treasure." (*b*) From it he must "bring forth." He must not bury his talents. A good pastor must not, like a *miser*, hoard his knowledge. He must not, like a *merchant*, make gain of it. Like a "householder," as a *father*, he must deal it out generously, yet with discretion. (4) He too must bring forth "things new and old." No man can understand the Old Testament but by means of the New. The Old Testament is the best commentary upon the New. Old truths should come forth with new expression, and with new affection and emotion.—J. A. M.

Vers. 53—58.—*Prejudice.* "When Jesus had finished these parables"—this cycle or system of parables, affording a general view of the conditions of the Church under the new dispensations—"he departed" from Capernaum. "And coming into his own country," arriving at Nazareth across the lake (see Luke iv. 16), he taught the Nazarenes in their synagogue. They had formerly rejected him, and now he receives from them no better treatment. In the narrative before us we see evidence of—

I. THE UNREASONABLENESS OF PREJUDICE. 1. *The Nazarenes were astonished at his wisdom.* (1) His parables, the fame of which had probably reached them, evinced it. Not only do they open the mysteries of spiritual wealth. They prophesied also things to come. A fool could no more utter a parable than a cripple gracefully dance (see Prov. xxvi. 7). (2) It was evinced in his teaching in their synagogue. Not only was his doctrine astonishing, but also the manner in which he was wont to confound the doctors when they ventured to question him. 2. *So were they astonished at his miracles.* (1) He had, probably, formerly wrought miracles among them. The fame of his wonderful works at Capernaum had certainly reached them (see Luke iv. 23). They had ocular proofs of his power in that he now "laid his hand upon a few sick folk, and healed them" (see Mark vi. 5). (2) The wisdom and power of Jesus should have conducted them to a believing recognition of his Person. They rested in astonishment. Astonishment is no substitute for faith. It can consist with prejudices. Miracles may confirm, but they cannot produce, faith. Faith is of the *heart.* It is in the honest heart *from God.* 3. *They rejected the evidence of both.* Prejudice has its reasons, but they refute themselves. (1) The Nazarenes rejected the claims of Jesus because they did not see whence he derived his wisdom and power. The rational conclusion would have been that if he did not receive them from the doctors of the Law or from any human source, then he must have had them from heaven. (2) They objected that he was the "carpenter's Son." But the carpenter was of the house and lineage of David

(see ch. i. 20; Luke i. 27). And Messiah must be the "Son of David" in order to satisfy the prophets. (3) They objected that "his mother was called Mary." She was of too humble a station to have any splendid title. Yet was this Mary by descent a princess of the great house of David. Moreover, she was the mother of the Son of God. Mary's miraculous conception seems to have been unknown to them. Prejudices are fostered by ignorance. (4) They could name his brothers, and his sisters they knew, though they did not deem them worthy of being named. Note: Those who should know Christ best are often most ignorant of him. "Mean and prejudiced spirits are apt to judge of men by their education, and to inquire more into their rise than into their reasons" (Henry). "His sisters, are they not all *with us?*" Note: How thoroughly is Christ one "with us"—*Immanuel!*

II. ITS DIREFUL CONSEQUENCES. 1. *It hardened the Nazarenes in their unbelief.* (1) "They were offended in him." Their astonishment was their offence. Prejudice is offended in wisdom, and resists the demonstration of power. Superior merit is envied, and envy turns the knowledge it has to the disadvantage of the envied. (2) If we approach the Scriptures in a cavilling humour we shall remain in ignorance, and become hardened in unbelief. 2. *It exposed them to the reproof of Christ.* (1) "Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." Note: A prophet should have honour. A man of God is a great man. The Son of God, how great! (2) But familiarity breeds contempt. The contempt a prophet experiences abroad is nothing to that he experiences at home. Even Columbus, when meditating the discovery of America, had to seek patrons out of his own country. 3. *It led to their abandonment.* (1) "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Unbelief is an impediment to the performance of miracles. Hence the question, "Dost thou believe that I am able to do this?" "Unbelief is a sin that locks up the heart of a sinner, and binds up the hand of the Saviour" (Flavel). (2) Christ did not judge it suitable to obtrude his miracles upon the Nazarenes. "A few sick folk" among them had faith to be healed. "Many" remained in their misery "because of their unbelief." (3) "The reason why mighty works are not wrought now is not that the faith is everywhere planted, but that unbelief everywhere prevails" (Wesley). "All things are possible" to the faith of promise (cf. ch. xix. 26; Mark ix. 23; Rom. i. 16; Eph. ii. 8). (4) Soon after this Jesus finally abandoned the Nazarenes. Their pride and envy and resentment became their desolation and destruction. And those who now reject the claims of Christ are even less excusable than they, since they despise the additional evidence of his resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost.—J. A. M.

Ver. 10.—*The reason for the use of parables.* It is not sufficiently observed that our Lord adopted the parabolic style only after he had been teaching for some time. His earlier discourses are full of illustrations, and they set truth in paradoxical sentences which excite thought and inquiry; but the parabolic was a new method of *hiding* truth for a while, and from some, which was called for by certain results attending Christ's teachings. It should be clearly seen that the parable is designed to wrap truth up so that it may be kept safe, but be hidden from the many for the present; and uncovered and brought to light, by the spiritually minded now, and for all by-and-by. The previous chapters of Matthew have shown what a divided feeling was growing up, even in Galilee, concerning Christ. Some, indeed, held fast their hope in him; but the official Pharisees took a decided position against him, and they influenced very many; even our Lord's own relations had joined the distrustful party. Jesus was influenced by these conditions. He wanted to warn, correct, and reprove; but these people would only turn to evil everything he said, and become more embittered against him if he spoke out plainly. So he wrapped truth of warning and correction up in parables, which would carry his meaning without his actually speaking it out. Three reasons for the use of parables may be given.

I. One reason was related to his immediate disciples: IT ENABLED HIM TO CONTINUE HIS TEACHING OF THEM. A chief part of our Lord's work was preparing the apostles for their future work. And he did this not only by direct teachings, but also by *examples of teaching.* But opposition might have stopped these examples if our Lord had not changed his style and adopted the parabolic.

II. One reason was related to his ordinary congregations: IT ENABLED HIM TO ADAPT HIMSELF MORE PRECISELY TO THEIR CAPACITIES. It is quite possible that our Lord found the paradoxical style of the sermon on the mount misused, and therefore tried the pictorial style of the parable, which is so eminently suited to the child-minded. All who teach such know how they are helped by being shown what things are like. By them principles are grasped when they are illustrated in incidents, or painted in pictures.

III. One reason was related to his enemies: IT ENABLED HIM VERY SEVERELY TO REPROVE THEM WITHOUT GIVING OPEN OFFENCE. No one could take exception to our Lord's beautiful descriptions and incidents, but men with bad consciences quickly perceived that he spake the parables against them.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The responsibility of the hearer.* The "parable of the sower" might with equal appropriateness be called the "parable of the *soil*." The point of it is not so much what the *sower* did, as what the *soil* did, and what the *soil* was. In each case good seed was scattered. In each case we are set thinking of the capacity of the soil, and of the manner in which it dealt with the seed. And this fact comes out forcibly to view: only when the soil was deep and soft and clean—well ploughed, well harrowed, well weeded—could even that good seed yield its thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold.

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR LORD AS A TEACHER. Compare him with the rabbinical moralists of his time. It is sometimes inconsiderately said that our Lord's moral teachings were not *new*. Of course they were not. How could they be? What new moral principles and duties can any teacher announce? *New morals* could not be *true morals*, for morals are the possession of humanity from man's earliest relations with God and with his fellows. You will find in our Lord's teachings some things new, some things old, and some things skilfully adapted to the needs of the day. Stalker says the teaching of Jesus "consisted of numerous sayings, every one of which contained the greatest possible amount of truth in the smallest possible compass, and was expressed in language so concise and pointed as to stick in the memory like an arrow." But observe that even Christ's Divine teachings were a partial failure, when men were not "prepared to hear."

II. THE RESPONSE MEN MADE TO OUR LORD'S TEACHINGS. It surprises us that all men did not receive him. But the fact is that our Lord shared the common experience of all teachers, and proved a direct blessing to only a few. Some of the people took offence at Christ's teaching. He did not say what they had been accustomed to hear just as they had been accustomed to hear it. He did not come forth with the proper approval of the ecclesiastical officials. He often spoke too plainly. He came right home to them. He made them see sins which they had tried hard to cover over and hide. He read their hearts, and made them feel uncomfortable. Some found him too advanced a Teacher for them. Some were impulsive, and became disciples at once, but could stand no testing and strain. The moral and spiritual results of our Lord's ministry depended on the moods of the people. The common people heard him gladly. The learned people questioned and criticized, and so gained no blessing. Jesus was to men as men were to him. All depended on the *soil*.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*Seeding the earthly fields to get seed for the heavenly fields.* See the farmer. The ground is provided for him and prepared for him. He cannot alter his surroundings and conditions. His chief aim is *good seeding*, and for the sake of the seed he wants he is anxious to secure good flowers. His harvest is largely, and ideally it is altogether, a gathering of seed for *next year's sowing*. We are familiar with the idea that the present life is our sowing-time, and the next life our harvest-time. But this view is less familiar. The present life is the growing and the preparing of the seeds which are to be sown in the fields of the next life. Every plant has this for its object, to seed the fields next year.

I. OUR EARTH-LIFE IS THE HARVEST-FIELD IN WHICH WE BOTH SOW AND REAP. The field is prepared for us. We cannot choose or make our own particular place and work. Our age, family, nation, circumstances, abilities, and disabilities are all arranged for us. What we have to do is to sow our own particular field, and exactly what we sow we shall reap, a fulness of the same thing. Youth is the time of sowing; early

manhood is the time of growing. The full maturity of life is our reaping-time. The man in middle life has attained the character which is the seed-result of the spring sowing and the summer growing. He will not be very different as long as he lives.

II. THE HARVEST OF THIS LIFE PROVIDES THE SEED-CORN FOR THE NEXT LIFE. Remember, every plant is working for *next year*. The flower or the fruit of this year is not its end; the *seed* is its end. And cultured, finished, high-toned, spiritual character is the seed which we are to have ready for the next harvest-field. The eternal ages may prove to be successions of harvest-fields, in which, like the plants, we shall be ever sowing and maturing for the next age's seeding; ever trying to secure better, worthier, character-seeds.

III. THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE WITH THE SEED-CORN, WHEN IT IS MATURE, BEFORE IT IS ALTOGETHER FIT FOR THE NEXT YEAR'S SOWING. It seems as if a piece of life were left out, and we ended it with manhood. But there is a space between full manhood and decay. That piece of life should be the weathering, winnowing, cleansing of the seed-corn character, ready for the eternal fields. Weathering, or exposing to the sun and wind of prosperity. Winnowing, or getting rid of the useless by adversity. Cleansing, or getting free from the mischievous by culture. Fully ripe and well prepared, God bears us off to seed his eternal fields.—R. T.

Ver. 30.—*Evil and good only together for a time.* In every parable we should expect to find three things. 1. General hints in relation to the kingdom, common to many parables. 2. Special points of description necessary to the completion of the picture, but not to be unduly pressed to yield a meaning. 3. A particular aspect of truth, for the sake of which the parable is specially given.

I. THE SALIENT POINTS OF THIS PARABLE. 1. Our inability to form perfect judgment of individuals now. 2. The duty of accepting profession now, and leaving perfect judgment for God's future. 3. The distinction between good and evil is vital; there is really no possible confusion between them. 4. The distinction between good and bad persons will one day be clearly seen. 5. The temptation to use outward physical force to accomplish the objects of the Church must be steadfastly resisted.

II. THE ONE POINT CALLING FOR PARTICULAR ATTENTION. It is the fact of life that evil and good do now grow together. Illustrate weeds and flowers; poison and food; fierce and gentle animals; good and bad men in every association. This is true of Christian worship, and even of the Church. Illustrate Epistle to Corinthians, which deals with a wicked man in the Church. Our Lord assumes the fact when he says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." It would be an incomprehensible fact if *this* were our only life. We can a little understand it, if we see God's purpose to morally test every man. Everything in life is arranged for testing purposes. Disposition is tried at home. Character is tried in business. Principles are tried in society. Evil has everywhere the chance of mastering good if it can. Suppose evil people were now put all by themselves; there would be no hope of their deliverance from evil. Suppose the good people were put all by themselves; they would get conceited past bearing. As it is (1) evil finds itself revealed as evil; (2) evil gains space for repentance; (3) evil has opportunity and incentive to repentance. Evil put in close association with goodness (1) tests goodness itself; makes it no easy thing to be good; (2) finds spheres for goodness to work in; and so, by working, goodness is nourished. Heaven is not to be thought of as the place for *becoming* good, but for *being* good. This life is the time for the training of man's character. We need have no fear concerning the issues of Divine training. As certainly as no tares will be spared from the burning, so certainly no true wheat will ever be lost.—R. T.

Ver. 31.—*The hope that may be in little things.* Dr. Royle thinks the mustard is the plant called in Syria *khardal*, and known to botanists as the *Salvadora persica*. From a small seed it grows into a considerable tree, and its fruit has a pleasant aromatic taste; birds like it much, and frequent the branches. It is said that it grew abundantly on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and so came under Christ's direct notice. But Dr. Thomson thinks the khardal was very rare in Palestine, and that our Lord referred to the common wild mustard, *Sinapis nigra*, which grows to a considerable height—as tall, indeed, as a horse and his rider. To call the mustard the least of seeds

was a proverbial expression of the time. It was the least that the husbandman would sow, and is fittingly taken as a type of little things that have great possibilities in them.

I. CHRIST'S KINGDOM ADVANCES BY GROWTH. That is, by unfoldings out of rather than by additions to. It is as a tree rather than as a house. Compare the *mechanical* extension of a religion, as in the case of Mohammedanism; and the *miraculous* extension of a religion, which would tend to destroy its moral character. If Christ's kingdom spreads by growth, we should not expect forced leaps, though we may look for periods of fuller flowing life, such as is the spring-time of nature. Christ's kingdom comes by the "out-populating of the Christian stock," and by the out-reaching of the Christian example and influence.

II. THE GROWTH OFTEN STARTS FROM VERY MINUTE BEGINNINGS. Illustrate: 1. By the mustard seed, the acorn, or the cedar-cone. 2. By the Christian Church in Europe, which began with the woman *Lydia* at Philippi. 3. By the unfoldings of missionary enterprise. 4. By the Sunday schools, which started in an effort to save a few children from the street. 5. By instances of personal Christian labour. A youth's prayer unfolded into the Young Men's Christian Association. Never "despise the day of small things," or miss the opportunity of doing a little.

III. THE GROWTH MAY AT LAST REACH GLORIOUS RESULTS. A little seed, scarcely covering a spot, may grow to spread its branches in the sky. Illustrate from the Christian Church of to-day, which is represented in well-nigh every land. Do you say, "The results are not yet"? That is only the result of your mode of reckoning. If the kingdom be a life, if it be righteousness and mercy, then the kingdom is nearer its full triumph than we have imagined.—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*The force there may be in quiet things.* "Like leaven." The word "leaven" means "something that raises," from the mode of its operation. In one way it corrupts; in another way it makes edible and wholesome. Leaven consists of myriads of the cells of the common green mould in an undeveloped state. It is at once a principle of destruction and construction, of decay and of growth, of death and of life. In this parable our Lord seems to fix attention on the very silent, quiet, hidden, yet persistent way in which leaven works its great results. The parable teaches the self-developing power of truth. The mode of its operation; ever from within outwards. And the fact which can be verified in human experience, that the greatest results may follow the most insignificant beginnings.

I. HOW SILENT ARE THE BEGINNINGS OF THE NEW LIFE IN SOULS! The devotion of the disciples to Christ was a power they did not estimate. It was a small beginning, but it grew in power to make them martyrs. The first faith and love of Christ's disciples was so weak that an evening breeze could have blown it away; by-and-by it stood the raging wintry storms of persecution. It was life, and, spreading, it gained power. The beginning of the new life in us is the time when mind and heart waken to personal interest in Christ. But this beginning is often *hidden* from others, and even from the man himself. If we recognized this fact (1) we should make more of God's part, and less of our own, in the work of redemption; (2) we should be more quick to discern signs of God's working; (3) we should much oftener be encouraged by noticing the results of our Christian labour.

II. HOW CONSTANT ARE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NEW LIFE IN SOULS! Like the leaven, that is always going on leavening. Think of it as the spirit of faith, of trust in God, put into our carnal, corrupt, self-seeking nature, even as leaven is put in meal; and as Christianity is put into an evil world. The spirit of trust is active, like the leaven. Christian life and relations provide the spheres in which the active principle of faith is spreading.

III. HOW GLORIOUS IS THE ISSUE TOWARD WHICH THE NEW LIFE IN SOULS IS WORKING! It will "leaven the whole lump." True of humanity; but now we see that it is especially true of *our* humanity, ourselves. It is working to win (1) the body, with all its passions and relations; (2) the mind, with all its endowments and interests; (3) the soul, with all its capacities and possibilities. When the whole lump is leavened, then holiness, and therefore heaven, is gained.—R. T.

Ver. 44.—*Religion gained at personal sacrifice.* A man is ploughing in a field

which he only rented, or perhaps only worked in as a labourer. He comes casually on the sign of a buried treasure; but he dares not touch a thing. So he covers up the signs, and sets all his heart and effort on gaining possession of that field. He counts no sacrifice too great if it helps to realize his aim. This parable deals with the individual man and personal religion.

I. TRUE RELIGION IS A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL CONCERN. Christ came to redeem the human race from sin; but he does it by redeeming them "one by one." Illustrate our Lord's dealing with individuals, as Nicodemus or woman of Samaria. It is easy to rest in a mere connection with Christianity; to belong to a Christian country, or a Christian family, or a Christian society. But the gospel singles the individual out, and says, "Thou art the man"—the sinner that needs Christ the Saviour.

II. TRUE RELIGION IS A MATTER OF DIRECT PERSONAL RELATIONS. This man may *know* of the hid treasure, but that does not satisfy him. He must have that treasure for *his very own*. We know of the great salvation, but that does not make it *ours*. Christ says, "Come unto me;" have personal dealings with me. The apostle says, "He that *hath* the Son," in the grip of his own personal trust and love, "hath life." Here so many fail. There must be personal appropriation. We must be able to say, "Who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*."

III. TRUE RELIGION REQUIRES A MAN TO MAKE PERSONAL SACRIFICE. This man gave up all else to gain possession of this treasure. Everything that is worth possessing is hard to win. Illustrate by the friends seeking healing for the paralytic, and breaking up the roof in order to get to Jesus; also by the persistency of the Syro-Phœnician woman. The forms of effort and sacrifice demanded depend on the age and the disposition. 1. Intellectual pride may have to be lowered. 2. Ensnaring talents (artistic or scientific) may have to be put aside. 3. The common sneer at all who are in real earnest in spiritual religion may have to be borne. 4. All forms of self-confidence and self-reliance have to be broken down. So many entrench themselves behind their own moral goodness, and fail to get the hid treasure, because they cannot make full sacrifice of that moral goodness.—R. T.

Vers. 45, 46.—*Satisfied only with the best.* The general truth taught in this and in the preceding parable is that he who would be a follower of Christ must be prepared to sacrifice everything for the kingdom of God. The difference between the two parables is that in the one case the man found accidentally, but in the other case he sought deliberately. "The one parable illustrates the eagerness of a poor man, who lights upon the treasure apparently by accident; the other illustrates the eagerness of a rich man, whose finding of the pearl of price is the result of carefully studied and long-sustained search" (Dods).

I. SOUL-SEEKING. What does a *soul* seek? Man seeks the true and the beautiful. Souls seek the good; and this is but a way of saying they seek God. "Man feels that he was not made in vain, there must be a centre of peace for him, a good that will satisfy all the cravings of his soul, and he is determined not to rest until it is found."

II. UNSATISFIED SOUL-SEEKING. No ordinary pearls content the man. The human seeker often fancies for a time that he has found rest in things—art, science, literature, or human love. The soul never deludes itself or permits any delusions. Short of God it never rests; it cannot. Illustrate by the hopeless wail of disappointment with which Solomon closes his life-quest; or by the delusion of the mirage in the desert regions.

III. SATISFIED SOUL-SEEKING. Only reached when the soul gets full possession of, and calls its very own, the "Pearl of great price." To the unsatisfied soul there presently comes the voice, "None is good save one, that is God." He is good. All good is but some ray from that sun. And then the soul says, "Can I find him, can I get him, can I possess him as my own?" He can. When he does, he may say as the poet, who uses another figure—

> "Now I have found the ground wherein
> Sure my soul's anchor may remain."

Can the soul find full satisfaction? It is not away in heaven, to be journeyed for. It is not in the deep, to be searched for. It is close nigh to every one of us. He who is

the soul's satisfaction is nigh. It is Jesus of Nazareth. It is God manifest in the flesh, who can be appropriated and possessed by our trust and our love.—R. T.

Ver. 48.—*The final sorting-time.* Those who have watched the hauling in of the great seine-net on our shores, the rapid sorting of its contents, the throwing of the bad away, and the noisy auction on the sands, will fully realize every point of our Lord's illustration. The net represents the gospel message, the good news of God the Saviour. It is like a net; it will catch and hold men. Put into words it is this: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus "is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." The gospel net is given in charge to the Church. The Church must work freely and constantly at casting the net in the wide sweep of the sea of humanity.

I. THE GOSPEL NET ENCLOSES ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE. From all sorts of motives, and with very different degrees of earnestness and sincerity, men accept the gospel message, and make Christian profession. Several parables teach that the Church is a very mixed body. Mere standing in a Church is no more guarantee of acceptance with Christ than presence in the net shows the goodness of the fish.

II. THE PEOPLE CANNOT BE SORTED WHILE THEY ARE IN THE NET. Some of the fish would escape if sorting were attempted while the net was being dragged through the water. Illustrate from the parable of the tares.

III. WHEN THE NET IS DRAWN ASHORE SORTING WORK CAN BE DONE. A revealing day, a testing day, must come for us all. But no imperfect human judgment will do the great sorting work. God himself will superintend the severing of the righteous from the wicked. We will not venture to describe the wicked. We can safely describe the *good*. They are such as (1) receive Christ with meekness; (2) bring forth the fruits of righteousness; (3) patiently continue in well-doing. So Christ's gospel, like a great net, is to be sent out into all the world, that it may, if possible, gather all men in. So the contents of the gospel net, when gathered in at last, will need, and will receive, a final sifting.—R. T.

Ver. 55.—*Unexpected learning in a carpenter's son.* "Whence hath this Man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?" The Jews never despised handicrafts, and this expression must not be explained as scorning Jesus because he was a carpenter's son, or a carpenter. What is in the minds of these scorners is that he was *nothing but a carpenter;* he had received no training whatever in the rabbinical schools. He was no educated and authorized rabbi, and that they knew very well. Hillel, the greatest rabbi of the same age as Joseph, though he was a descendant of David, spent most of his life in the deepest poverty as a common workman.

I. A SURPRISE THAT PROPERLY EXCITED THOUGHT. Jesus certainly was an unusual Teacher. He dealt with unusual subjects in an unusual way, and with an unusual attractiveness and authority. There were no such subtle distinctions as exhibited the great learning of the rabbis; but men had skill enough to recognize unusual and extraordinary intellectual as well as moral power in Christ. It was quite right for *them* to think about such a strange fact and phenomenon. It is quite right for *us* to think about it. We may well say to one another, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?"

II. A SURPRISE THAT RECEIVED MISTAKEN EXPLANATIONS. Exactly how they explained the fact they admitted we are not told; but it is quite clear that prejudice blinded their eyes, and prevented their getting any true ideas of Christ. No doubt they accused him of conceited self-assertion. He was pushing himself to the front, and talking big, as if he were better than his brothers and sisters. They were offended at him, and thought unkind things of him. Illustrate by the things prejudiced men say of Christ now.

III. A SURPRISE THAT CAN HAVE A SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION. This man was taught of God; was a Prophet of God who received Divine messages; nay, was the Son of God revealing the things of the Father-God to men. Never mind about remembering him when he was a boy. Never mind about his never having gone to a school of the rabbis. Never mind his having toiled at the carpenter's bench. Fix thought on what he *is*—the divinely taught Teacher and Saviour of men.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 1—36.—CHRIST'S POWER TO SUPPLY AND PROTECT AND HEAL, PREFACED BY A STATEMENT OF HEROD'S RELATION TO HIM.

Vers. 1—12.—*Herod's opinion of Jesus, and a parenthetical account of his murder of John the Baptist.* Parallel passages: Mark vi. 14—29; Luke ix. 7—9; iii. 19, 20.

Ver. 1.—**At that time**; *season* (Revised Version); ch. xi. 25, note. **Herod the tetrarch**; *i.e.* Antipas, youngest son of Herod the Great, and by one of his father's wills named his successor on the throne, but by the last will appointed only tetrarch of Galilee and Perœa. Though not legally king, he sometimes received the title by courtesy (ver. 9; Mark vi. 14; cf. ch. ii. 1, note). "In point of character, Antipas was a genuine son of old Herod—sly, ambitious, and luxurious, only not so able as his father." He was deposed by Caligula, A.D. 39, when, at the instance of Herodias, he had gone to Rome to try to obtain the same title of king that had been granted to her brother Agrippa I. (Schürer, I. ii. 18. 36). **Heard of the fame**—*heard the report* (Revised Version); ch. iv. 24, note—**of Jesus.**

Ver. 2.—**And said unto his servants.** According to Luke, the following assertion was brought forward by some, but was, it would seem, summarily rejected by Herod (Luke ix. 7, 9); according to Mark (ἔλεγον, Westcott and Hort, *text*) it was common talk, and agreed to by Herod (Mark vi. 14, 16). If a reconciliation of so unimportant a verbal disagreement be sought for, it may perhaps lie in Luke representing Herod's first exclamation, and Matthew, with Mark, his settled belief. Clearly Herod did not originate it, as the summary account in our Gospel would lead us to suppose. **This is John the Baptist** (ch. iii. 1 and iv. 12, notes). (For this opinion about our Lord, compare, besides the parallel passages referred to in the last note, also ch. xvi. 14.) **He** (αὐτός, ch. i. 21, note) **is risen from the dead.** The other dead still lie in Hades (ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν). Plumptre, on Mark, adduces a curious passage from Persius, v. 180—188, which he thinks is based on a story that when Herod celebrated another of his birthdays (cf. ver. 6) in Rome, in A.D. 39, he was terrified by a Banquo-like appearance of the murdered prophet. The superstition that already suggested to Herod the resurrection of John might well act more strongly on the anniversary of the murder, and after he had connived at the death of the One who, by his miracles, showed that he possessed greater power than John. **And therefore**; "because he is no ordinary man, but one risen from the dead" (Meyer). **Mighty works do show forth themselves in him** (*αἱ δυνάμεις ἐνεργοῦσιν ἐν αὐτῷ*); *do these powers work in him* (Revised Version). "These" (*αἱ*, the article of reference), *i.e.* these which are spoken of in the report (ver. 1). Αἱ δυνάμεις may be (1) specifically miracles (cf. ch. xiii. 58), in which case they are regarded as potentially active in John before their completion in history; or (2) the powers of working miracles, as perhaps in 1 Cor. xii. 28. Observe that this passage confirms the statement of John x. 41, that John performed no miracle. Observe that it is also an indirect witness to the fact of our Lord performing miracles. For Herod's utterance is not such as a forger would have imagined.

Ver. 3.—**For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him.** Although *had* simplifies the meaning to the English reader, as definitely marking what must have been the case, that John's imprisonment began some time before, yet in the Greek only the aorist is used to commence a vivid narrative. **And put him in prison**; "put him away in prison (*ἐν φυλακῇ ἀπέθετο*)." So of Micaiah by Ahab (2 Chron. xviii. 26, LXX., but not Lucian's text). Probably here in allusion to the distance of Machærus from Herod's usual residence at Tiberias. Possibly, also, a reference to John being safer there from the designs of Herodias (Mark vi. 19, 20). Anyhow, notice the stages in Herod's action—capture, binding, imprisonment in a place where he was quite out of the way. **For Herodias' sake.** John was imprisoned, according to the New Testament, (1) as a punishment for his rebuke of Herod; (2) to protect him from Herodias' vengeance. (On the statement by Josephus, that it was for political reasons, see ch. iii. 1, note.) **His brother Philip's wife.** According to Josephus ('Ant.,' xviii. 5. 4), the first husband of Herodias was "Herod," son of Herod the Great by Mariamne the high priest's daughter, and the daughter of Herodias, Salome, married Philip the tetrarch, who was also the son of Herod the Great by Cleopatra of Jerusalem. Hence many critics (*e.g.* Ewald; Schürer, I. ii. 22) suppose the account in Matthew and Mark to be mistaken, and due to a confusion of Herodias with her daughter. But, although it is curious that two sons of Herod the Great should have been called Philip, yet, in view of their being by different mothers, it cannot be pronounced impossible ("An-

tipas" and "Antipater" are *not* precisely identical). Besides, Herod the son of Mariamne would probably have had some other name than that of his father alone. It is noticeable that, in the same context, Josephus speaks also of Antipas by the name Herod only.

Ver. 4.—**For John said unto him, It is not lawful** (οὐκ ἔξεστιν, ch. xii. 2) **for thee to have her.** Herod Philip being still alive. Bengel remarks, "Causas matrimoniales non possunt plane abdicare theologi." Was he thinking of Luther's unfortunate advice to Philip of Hesse?

Ver. 5.—**And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude** (cf. Luke xx. 6). Mark has, "And Herodias set herself against him, *and would have put him to death*; and she could not; for Herod *feared* John." The more detailed account in Mark is doubtless the more exact. Perhaps the facts of the case were that, in the first heat of his resentment, Herod wished to kill John, but feared the anger of the people, and that afterwards, when he had him in his power and Herodias still urged his death, Herod had himself learned to respect him. Observe (1) that it is quite impossible to suppose that either evangelist had the words of the other in front of him. The difference does not consist merely of addition or explanation; (2) that these are exactly the kind of verbal coincidences which might be expected to be found in two oral traditions starting from a common basis. **For they counted him as a prophet** (ὡς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον); so ch. xxi. 26 (cf. ch. xxi. 46; Mark xi. 32; Phil. ii. 29).

Ver. 6.—**But when Herod's birthday was kept**; *came* (Revised Version); γενεσίοις δὲ γενομένοις τοῦ Ἡρῴδου, dative of time (Winer, § xxxi. 9), with the addition of a participle. *Birthday.* So "Pharaoh's birthday" (Gen. xl. 20, ἡμέρα γενέσεως). Thayer's Grimm refers to "Alciphr. Epp. 3, 18, and 55; Dio Cass., 47, 18, etc.," for γενέσια being used in the same sense. The Talmudic גינסיא (see Levy, *s.v.*) apparently represents the same word, and (preceded by יום) has the same meaning (cf. Schürer, I. ii. 27). Possibly Jews found γενέσια an easier word to pronounce than the more classical γενέθλια. **The daughter of Herodias**; *i.e.* Salome, daughter of Herod Philip and Herodias; she afterwards married her half-uncle, Philip the tetrarch (ver. 3, note). She could not now be *less* than seventeen or eighteen years old (cf. Gutschmid, in Schürer, I. ii. 28), so, in the East, could only just be still called τὸ κοράσιον (ver. 11). Mark's text (like the Greek of Codex Bezæ here) speaks of her as though she herself was called Herodias, and was the daughter of Antipas and Herodias; but the issue of this union could not then have been more than two years old (Schürer, *loc. cit.*). Besides, the trait mentioned by Mark (vi. 25), that she came back *with haste* to the king, asking for the head of the Baptist, implies that she was more than a child. Rendel Harris ('Texts and Studies,' II. i. p. 68) suggests that the confusion is due to an early Latinization of the Greek from an ambiguous *ejus.* **Danced.** Probably with the same kind of voluptuous dance as that of the Egyptian *almé* described by Warburton ('Crescent and Cross,' chap. xiv.). But that a member of the royal family should so dance before a company must have been almost unheard of. **Before them**; *in the midst* (Revised Version). Matthew only. Such a dance with men sitting round would be specially abhorrent to the Jewish mind. **And pleased Herod.** And of course, as St. Mark adds, "them that sat with him" (cf. ver. 9).

Ver 7.—**Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.**

Ver. 8.—**And she, being before instructed**; *being put forward* (Revised Version); προβιβασθεῖσα (Acts xix. 33, Received Text; Deut. vi. 7, LXX.). The word implies that the girl herself would not have thought of it, and perhaps that she had at first some little reluctance. But if so, it was soon over, for she came back "in haste" (Mark). **Of her mother.** St. Mark explains that she left the room to ask her mother. **Said, Give me.** This is the gift I want. **Here.** And evidently at once. The word excludes the possibility of the feast being in Tiberias, if John was slain at Machærus, as the passage in Josephus states (cf. ch. iii. 1, note). There is no very great difficulty in supposing the chief men of Galilee, etc. (Mark), to have gone as far as Machærus to pay their respects to Herod and to partake of the feast, but whether the statement in Josephus is accurate, and how, if it be so, it is to be reconciled with the preceding statement that Machærus belonged to Aretas, are questions not easily answered (see Schürer, I. ii. 26). **John Baptist's head in a charger**; *in a charger the head of John the Baptist* (Revised Version). She defines *here* still more closely (ὧδε ἐπὶ πίνακι), and then states her request. On the form of her demand for John's death, Chrysostom says that she wished to see his tongue lying there silent, for she did not merely long to be freed from his reproaches, but to insult and jeer him (ἐπιβῆναι καὶ ἐπιτωθάσαι κειμένῳ). *Charger.* A wooden trencher.

Ver. 9.—**And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake**; better, *and though the king was grieved, yet for the sake of his oaths* (καὶ λυπηθεὶς ὁ βασιλεὺς διὰ τοὺς ὅρκους, κ.τ.λ.). That he was grieved at John's death is a verbal contradiction to

ver. 5, but after some weeks' or months' delay psychologically quite possible (cf. note there). Kübel attributes the change to his conscience recoiling when his wish had a sudden chance of being accomplished; or it may be that he still feared the multitude (cf. ver. 5), and felt anxious lest he should bring about some political disturbance. *Oaths;* for in making the promise of ver. 7 he would certainly take more than one. **And them which sat with him at meat.** Had he uttered the promise and the oaths in private, it would have been different, but now there were so many witnesses. Observe that these said nothing to stop him. They were no friends of the enthusiast who was now a prisoner. **He commanded it to be given** her.

Vers. 10, 11.—**And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison, and his head was brought in a charger** (ver. 8, note), **and given** (the fourth time that the word "give" has come in five verses; the head of the herald of the kingdom becomes a royal gift) **to the damsel**—(*τῷ κορασίῳ*, ver. 6, note)—**and she brought it to her mother.** But a few minutes after she had first spoken her request (ver. 8, note).

Ver. 12.—**And his disciples came.** "And when his disciples heard thereof, they came" (Mark). Perhaps they were not permitted to be so much with him as at an earlier period in his imprisonment (ch. xi. 2). But if the murder was in the evening, as would appear probable from the circumstances of it, they would naturally not be in the castle at the time. **And took up the body;** *the corpse* (Revised Version, *τὸ πτῶμα*). **And buried it;** *him* (Revised Version, *αὐτόν*). *It* is right in Mark, but St. Matthew has preserved the more popular form of expression. **And** (Revised Version adds *they*) **went and told Jesus.** Matthew only. In Mark (vi. 30; cf. also Luke ix. 10) this expression clearly belongs to the next paragraph, and is predicated of *the twelve apostles on their return from their mission* (Mark vi. 7—12; our ch. x. 5). It looks as though some confusion had arisen in the source before St. Matthew used it. As the words stand here they show the kindly feelings which both John and his disciples felt towards our Lord

Vers. 13—21.—*The feeding of the five thousand.* Parallel passages: Mark vi. 30—44; Luke ix. 10—17; John vi. 1—13. The miracle was deemed so characteristic of our Lord's work, in his care for men and his power to sustain them, and more especially in its being a parable of his readiness to supply spiritual food, that it was recorded not only by each of the three evangelists who used the framework, but also by the one who depended entirely upon his own materials. But though St. John's account of it is on the whole independent, yet even this has expressions which are certainly due to the influence of the source used by the synoptists, or, less probably, of one or other of our present Gospels.

The evangelist relates (1) the occasion of the miracle (vers. 13, 14); (2) the preparation of the disciples (vers. 15—18); (3) the miracle itself (vers. 19, 20); (4) a summary statement of the numbers fed (ver. 21).

Ver. 13.—**When Jesus heard** of it (cf. ver. 12*b*, note), **he departed.** (For the form of the sentence, see ch. iv. 12; xii. 15.) **Thence by ship;** *in a boat* (Revised Version); ch. viii. 23. **Into a desert place apart.** Defined in John vi. 3 as "the mountain;" in Luke ix. 10 as "a city called Bethsaida." The spot appears to have been in part of the plain *El-Batiha*, which is at the north-east corner of the Sea of Galilee on the Gaulonitis side of the Jordan, and in which stood Bethsaida-Julias. Mark vi. 45 implies that there was a second Bethsaida on the western side of the lake, which, though not alluded to by Josephus, is expressly spoken of in John xii. 21, and is probably referred to in all the other passages of the New Testament where the name Bethsaida occurs. **And when the people** (*the multitudes*, Revised Version) **had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.** The fact that it was near a feast-time (John vi. 4, the Passover, if the text be right; and cf. *infra*, ver. 19, note) perhaps accounts for the multitudes being so large. Some at least would be on their way up to Jerusalem.

Ver. 14.—The first half of this verse is found verbally in Mark (vi. 34); comp. also ch. ix. 36, note. **And Jesus went forth;** *came forth* (Revised Version); *i.e.* from the more retired place where he had been conversing with his disciples (cf. Mark and Luke). **And saw a great multitude.** "The multitudes" of ver. 13 have now become one body. **And was moved with compassion toward them;** *and he had compassion on them* (Revised Version). The true reading, *ἐπ' αὐτοῖς* (contrast Mark and ch. xv. 32), regards the Lord's pity at, so to say, a later stage than the common reading, *ἐπ' αὐτούς*. It was not only directed towards them, but actually resting on them. **And he healed** (*ἐθεράπευσεν*, ch. iv. 23, note) **their sick** (*τοὺς ἀῤῥώστους αὐτῶν*). *Ἄῤῥωστος* here only in Matthew, elsewhere in the New Testament in Mark vi. 5, 13 [xvi. 18]; 1 Cor. xi. 30. As compared with *ἀσθενής*, it "seems to point

to diseases predominantly marked by loss of bodily power ('diuturno languore teneri,' Calvin), while the more common ἀσθενής is simply used to denote sickness generally" (Bishop Ellicott, on 1 Cor., *loc. cit.*). But in our passage it is used without any such limitation (cf. Luke, "And he healed them that had need of healing"). Mark and John do not speak of miracles of healing on this occasion.

Ver. 15.—**And when it was evening.** But not as late as the "evening" of ver. 23. (For a discussion upon the technical division of two "evenings," see Gesenius, 'Thesaurus,' p. 1064.) It appears that the first evening was from the ninth to the twelfth hour (our 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the equinoxes), and the second evening was for a short time, perhaps forty minutes, after sunset (cf. ch. viii. 16, note). **His** (*the*, Revised Version) **disciples came to him, saying.** St. John alone has recorded our Lord's previous conversation with Philip (vi. 5—7). **This is a desert place**; *the place is desert* (Revised Version), which better marks the parallelism with the next clause. **And the time is now** (*already*, Revised Version) **past** (ἡ ὥρα ἤδη παρῆλθεν); *i.e.* probably the hour at which he was accustomed to dismiss his audience. For he would often have to consider their wish to get home before nightfall. **Send the multitude away**; *the multitudes* (Revised Version); for now again they are regarded separately as having to go in different directions. **That they may go** (*go away*) **into the villages, and buy themselves victuals**; *food* (Revised Version). One at least of the disciples would have a keen eye for the amount of the contents of the common purse.

Ver. 16.—**But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart**; *they have no need to go away* (Revised Version). Matthew only. The Lord takes up the expression. There is no need for them to move from this place, desert though it is. **Give ye them to eat.** *Ye*; emphatic. He throws upon his disciples the duty of feeding them, and, strange though the command seemed to them (cf. 2 Kings iv. 43), they carried it out.

Ver. 17.—**And they say unto him, We have here** (ὧδε) **but five loaves** (ch. iv. 3, note), **and two fishes** (ch. vii. 9, note). St. Matthew omits the question, "Shall we go and buy?" etc., which comes in Mark and Luke, and essentially in John (ver. 5).

Ver. 18.—Matthew only. **He said, Bring them hither to me** (φέρετέ μοι ὧδε αὐτούς). This gives the sense, but still more is implied. He takes up their ὧδε. "Yes," he says, "it is possible to feed them where we are, and especially where I am. For there is not the poverty of supply here that you think there is." Observe that for the disciples to bring them "here" was in itself an act of faith.

Ver. 19.—**And he commanded the multitude**; *the multitudes* (Revised Version). Here also the plural (ver. 15), because they are thought of as grouped over the ground. **To sit down**; *i.e.* to recline as at a meal (ἀνακλιθῆναι). **On the grass** (ἐπὶ τοῦ χόρτου). The addition of "green" (χλωρός) in Mark suits the time of the Passover (ver. 13, note), but hardly of any later feast, for the grass would have been dried up. **And took the five loaves, and the two fishes.** He used all the means there were. **And looking up to heaven.** So also Mark vii. 34; John xvii. 1. **He blessed.** He may well have used the blessing that is still used over bread ("Blessed art thou, Jehovah our God, King of the world, that causest bread to come forth from the earth"); for this can be apparently traced to the second or third century A.D., and is probably much older still (cf. Edersheim, 'Life,' i. 684; Zunz, 'Gottesdienstliche Vorträge,' p. 371, edit. 1832). (For the habit of saying grace before meals, cf. ch. xv. 36; xxvi. 26; Rom. xiv. 6; 1 Cor. x. 30; 1 Tim. iv. 5; see also 1 Sam. ix. 13.) **And brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.** That the people received the bread at the hands of the disciples is not mentioned by St. John. Perhaps because his chapter dwells so much on the need of direct contact with Christ. But Christ's work through his agents, both before and after his time on earth, is an important point with the synoptists.

Ver. 20.—**And they did all eat, and were filled** (ἐχορτάσθησαν, ch. v. 6, note). **And they.** Undefined, but seen from ch. xvi. 9; John vi. 12, to have been the disciples. **Took up of the fragments that remained**; *that which remained over of the broken pieces* (Revised Version); *i.e.* of the pieces broken by our Lord for distribution (ver. 19). **Twelve baskets full.** The disciples personally lost nothing by the miracle (ver. 15, note), the provision basket that each always carried was now replenished. *Baskets*; "cofyns" (Wickliffe); κοφίνους (cf. Luke ix. 17, note; and the Talmudic saying, "He that has bread in his basket is not like him that has not bread in his basket," Talm. Bab., 'Yoma,' 74*b*).

Ver. 21.—**And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.** Only Matthew mentions the presence of other than men. We may assume that no great number of women and children were there; and this, considering the distance that must had been obliged to go (ver. 13), is what we should expect. "Observe here the diminutive παιδίων, *little children*, whom their mothers either car-

ried in their arms or led by the hand" (Meyer).

Vers. 22—33.—Christ's power over the elements. He walks on the water and stays the storm. St. Peter's attempt to walk on the water is successful so long as he exercises faith on Christ. Jesus receives homage as Messiah. Parallel passages: Mark vi. 45—52; John vi. 15—21. It is strange that the incident of St. Peter is recorded in Matthew only, and not in Mark, for it serves to emphasize what is a leading thought of the preceding narrative, even in Mark, viz. the power that believers receive by virtue of faith on Christ (vers. 16, 19). With Christ in the boat, difficulties cease (ver. 32); they that believe on him can triumph as he did (vers. 28—31; cf. the thought of John xiv. 19, end). For St. John's purpose the mention of St. Peter was not necessary; since, by way of introduction to the following discourse, he desired rather to familiarize his readers with the idea of Christ's body being triumphant over earthly limitations (cf. ver. 19, note).

Ver. 22.—**And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples.** It was not their wish to leave him, especially when the multitudes seemed likely to elect him king (John vi. 15). But from the temptation to side with the multitudes our Lord desired now to shield them. Separation and physical work (ver. 24) would calm their excitement, and the object-lesson that their Master already ruled over wind and sea would lead them to more perfect trust in his methods. Another reason for his sending them forward may have been that they should use the failing light; and yet another, that he himself desired time for prayer. **To get into a ship;** *a boat* (ἐμβῆναι εἰς πλοῖον); cf. ch. viii. 23 (*the boat*, Revised Version, reading εἰς τὸ πλοῖον). **And to go before him** (προάγειν αὐτόν: ch. ii. 9; xxi. 9). For he would follow. He fulfilled his promise much more literally than they anticipated. **Unto the other side.** "Unto Bethsaida" (Mark); "unto Capernaum" (John). Probably they landed at the western Bethsaida (ver. 13, note), in Gennesaret (ver. 34), and went on to Capernaum, where our Lord again addressed the people (John vi. 24—26). **While he sent**—*till he should send* (Revised Version); ἕως οὗ ἀπολύσῃ, ch. xiii. 33—**the multitudes away.** Why should this take up time? Why did he not dismiss them then and there? Possibly they were too eager to carry out their own plans on his behalf to attend to only one expression of his wish.

Ver. 23.—**And when he had sent the multitudes away.** Matthew speaks merely of the dismissal as such (ἀπολύσας τοὺς ὄχλους); Mark refers to his parting words (ἀποταξάμενος αὐτοῖς, *i.e.* probably to the multitude). **He went up into a mountain**—*the mountain* (Revised Version); ch. v. 1, note—**apart.** Κατ' ἰδίαν is to be joined with the preceding, and not to the following words (cf. ver. 13; ch. xvii. 19). **And when the evening was come** (ver. 15, note), **he was there alone.** For some eight hours, if it was spring or autumn (ver. 25).

Ver. 24.—**But the ship;** *boat* (Revised Version); ver. 22. **Was now;** rather, *already*, when the following incident happened. **In the midst of the sea.** So also the text of the Revised Version (with practically Mark vi. 47), but its margin, "was many furlongs distant from the land." Westcott and Hort prefer the latter, with Codex B and the Old Syriac. It somewhat resembles John vi. 19. **Tossed;** *distressed* (Revised Version). For βασανιζόμενον suggests not physical motion, but pain and anguish, the idea being transferred in figure to the boat. In Mark it is applied more strictly to the disciples. **With waves;** *by the waves* (Revised Version). The agents of the torture (ὑπὸ τῶν κυμάτων). **For the wind was contrary.** Yet he came not at once, for he would teach us to bear troubles bravely (cf. Chrysostom).

Ver. 25.—**And in the fourth watch of the night.** Therefore some nine hours after sunset (ver. 23, note). They had been battling for hours, and had only gone about three miles and a half (John vi. 19). **Jesus went;** *came* (Revised Version); ἦλθε, not ἀπῆλθε, with Received Text. **Unto them, walking on the sea** (ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν); contrast ver. 26 (ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης). Here there is more thought of motion (cf. ver. 29), but in the next verse the advance is almost forgotten, and the fact of Christ being on the water is all-important; "they saw him on the sea, walking."

Ver. 26.—**And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit**—*an apparition* (Revised Version, φάντασμά ἐστιν)—**and they cried out for fear.**

Ver. 27.—**But straightway Jesus spake unto them** (ἐλάλησεν, not ἔκραξεν). He was evidently near them. **Saying, Be of good cheer** (θαρσεῖτε, ch. ix. 2); **it is I; be not afraid.** Encouragement, self-manifestation, recall from present terror. But the absence of θαρσεῖτε in John vi. 20 suggests that it is, perhaps, a duplicate rendering of the Aramaic for μὴ φοβεῖσθε. For the LXX. commonly translates "fear ye not"

by θαρσεῖτε (*e.g.* Exod. xiv. 13; xx. 20). One or two second-rate manuscripts omit θαρσεῖτε in Mark, but this may be only due to a reminiscence of John. It is also omitted in Tatian's 'Diatessaron' (edit. Hemphill).

Vers. 28—31.—*St. Peter's venture.* Matthew only.

Ver. 28.—**And**; δέ, slightly adversative, because St. Peter's words were so contrary to what might have been expected. **Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou** (εἰ σὺ εἶ). No doubt is implied (ch. iv. 3, note). **Bid me** (κέλευσόν με); *jube me* (Vulgate). He will only come at Christ's command. In this lies the difference—and it is a decisive difference—from the second temptation (ch. iv. 6). **Come unto thee on the water.** Not "bid me walk on the water;" for he does not want to perform a miracle, but to come to Jesus. His request is not due to the hope of making a show, but to impulsive love. Observe, too, that he seems to have realized that the Lord would enable his followers to do as he himself did (cf. Chrysostom). *On the water; the waters* (Revised Version); rough though they were. Had we any other account of this incident, it would be interesting to see if it contained these words. They read very like an explanatory addition by the narrator.

Ver. 29.—**And he said, Come.** Our Lord takes him at his word, and gives the command. It is not merely a permission. Observe that our Lord never blames him for having made the request. His venture of faith would have been altogether successful had his faith continued. **And when Peter was come down out of the ship.** The Revised Version has more simply, *And Peter went down from the boat, and.* **He walked on the water.** For the narrator was chiefly interested in his walking there (contrast ver. 28). **To go to Jesus**; rather, *and came to Jesus* (Westcott and Hort; cf. margin of Revised Version). The true text states what did, in fact, happen, notwithstanding Peter's lack of faith (cf. ver. 31).

Ver. 30.—**But when he saw the wind boysterous** (ἰσχυρόν is clearly a gloss, and therefore omitted by the Revised Version). **He was afraid; and beginning to sink.** The natural tendency to sink, which he had had all the time, was counteracted before by his faith, which enabled him to receive Christ's power. But now that his doubt made him incapable of receiving this, he sank (cf. Meyer). **He cried** (ἔκραξεν), **saying, Lord, save me** (ch. viii. 25). Aphraates ('Homilies,' *vide* Resch, 'Agrapha,' p. 380) quotes an apocryphal saying of our Lord's, "Doubt not, lest ye are engulfed in the world, as Simon; for he doubted, and began to sink in the sea."

Ver. 31.—**And immediately.** Without any waste of time, just as in ver. 27. **Jesus stretched forth his hand.** So that St. Peter had come up to him (ver. 29). **And caught him**; *and took hold of him* (Revised Version, ἐπελάβετο αὐτοῦ: cf. Heb. ii. 16; viii. 9). **And said**; *saith* (Revised Version). The writer passes to more vivid narration. **Unto him, O thou of little faith** (ὀλιγόπιστε); ch. vi. 30, note. But in ch. xvii. 20 (Westcott and Hort) the substantive is used of faith in a more active sense. **Wherefore** (εἰς τί); "לְמָה, literally rendered" (Dr. Guillemard). **Didst thou doubt?** (ἐδίστασας). In the New Testament, ch. xxviii. 17 only. Christ saves first, and rebukes afterwards. Perhaps the need for help was more immediate than in ch. viii. 26, or possibly the fervency of St. Peter's love deserved gentler treatment.

Ver. 32.—**And when they were come**—*gone up* (Revised Version)—**into the ship, the wind ceased.** Apparently not before, so that Peter may still have walked a little further on the water in the midst of the storm, but upheld by the Lord's hand.

Ver. 33.—Matthew only. **Then**—*and* (Revised Version, δέ)—**they that were in the ship**; *boat* (Revised Version). If there were others than the disciples in the boat, as is probable, these also would be included; but the disciples would naturally take the lead (cf. the notes on ch. viii. 23, 27). **Came and.** The Revised Version omits these two words, with the manuscripts. They are due to the analogy of ch. viii. 2; ix. 18. **Worshipped him** (ch. iv. 9, note). In ch. viii. 27 we read of wonder; here, of homage. **Saying, Of a truth** (ἀληθῶς); cf. ch. v. 18, *s.v.* "verily." The word seems to imply that the suggestion did not enter their minds now for the first time. Two had, perhaps, heard the words spoken at the baptism (ch. iii. 17), and most of them, if not all, the utterance by the demons in ch. viii. 29. Yet these utterances in reality far surpassed what they even now imagined (*vide infra*). **Thou art the Son of God** (Θεοῦ υἱὸς εἶ). Although the phrase is not of the definite form found in ch. xxvi. 63 and xvi. 16, where it is used with express reference to the Messiahship of Jesus (cf. for the intermediate form, ch. xxvii. 40 with 43), yet it is impossible to take it here as merely referring to a moral relation between Jesus and God. In ch. xxvii. 54 this might be sufficient (Luke has "righteous"); but here there is no question of coming up to a standard of moral uprightness, but rather of manifestation of power, and this is connected with Messiah. His authority over the elements leads to the homage of those who witness its exercise.

and forces from them the expression that he is the promised Representative of God on earth (Ps. ii. 7; cf. ch. ii. 15, note). Observe, however, that not even so is it a profession of faith in his absolute Divinity. (Kübel's note on this subject in ch. viii. 29 is very good.)

Vers. 34—36.—*On landing at Gennesaret numbers come to him and are healed.* Parallel passage: Mark vi. 53—56, which is fuller.

Ver. 34.—**And when they were gone over**—*had crossed over* (Revised Version); διαπεράσαντες, ch. ix. 1—**they came into the land of Gennesaret**—*to the land, unto Gennesaret* (Revised Version, with the true text). The plain *El-Ruwēr*, part of the north-west side of the lake, and some three miles long by one broad, extending, roughly, from Chorazin (perhaps *Khan Minyeh*; but comp. ch. xi. 21, note) to Magdala. (For its fertility, see Josephus, 'Wars,' iii. 10. 8.)

Ver. 35.—**And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about** (cf. ch. iii. 5). Matthew alone states definitely that this zeal was shown by the inhabitants of the Plain of Gennesaret. **Mark's** words (vi. 55) are vaguer. **And brought unto him all that were diseased**; *sick* (Revised Version); cf. ch. iv. 24; viii. 16.

Ver. 36.—**And besought**; *and they besought* (Revised Version); *i.e.* the sick, for probably the change of person takes place here and not at "that they might touch." **Him that they might only touch the hem of his garment** (ch. ix. 20, 21, notes): and **as many as touched were made perfectly whole** (διεσώθησαν); *were made whole* (Revised Version). For διά here is probably not intensive, but rather gives the thought of being brought out safe through the danger. In the LXX. διασώζεσθαι is a common rendering of פלט, "escape."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The death of John the Baptist.* I. HEROD THE TETRARCH. 1. *He heard of the fame of Jesus.* Herod Antipas was a weak, cruel, voluptuous tyrant; he resembled his father in his vices, not in his capacity and energy of character. He heard of Christ's miracles; it seems strange if, as the words appear to imply, he now heard of Christ for the first time. For Christ had long been preaching in Galilee; about a year, perhaps more. Great multitudes had flocked to hear him; his mighty works had excited a far-spread interest and wonder. Herod may have been absent from Galilee during much of the time, possibly at the distant fortress of Machærus, where John the Baptist was imprisoned. But his life was spent in ostentatious display and sensual excesses. He would take no interest in a religious movement unless his fears were aroused by the popular excitement which it caused. His courtiers would not listen themselves to the preaching of Jesus; or if any did, such as the nobleman whose son was healed by the Lord at Capernaum, or Chuza, Herod's steward (possibly identical with that nobleman), whose wife Joanna ministered to our Lord, they would not relate to the hard-hearted selfish tyrant teaching so uncongenial to his character. The miracles, it is true, would excite more interest; they would stir up his curiosity. Some account of them reached him at last. Thus the ruler of Galilee was perhaps one of the last men in the province to hear of the Saviour. The great in this world are not always great in the kingdom of heaven. The tumult of political cares and the glitter of earthly pomp often prevent them from hearing the fame of Jesus. His blessed work goes on among the lowly. Souls are healed, the eyes of the blind are opened. The good news does not reach those who dwell in kings' houses. Thank God, it is not always so; there are men high in rank who are also living near to Christ. 2. *His superstitious fears.* Herod is thought to have been a Sadducee. Probably he had no real religious convictions. But inconsistencies are common in human nature; the unbelieving are not unfrequently superstitious. Herod was haunted by a guilty conscience. The spectres of those whom he had foully murdered troubled his dreams. Christ's mighty works excited his attention. No ordinary man, he knew, could do such things. It must be some one more than mortal; some one in whom the powers of the unseen world were active and energetic. And conscience whispered, and an awful shudder thrilled through the despot's soul, "It is John—John, whom I beheaded." Better to be the most miserable prisoner perishing in the gloomy dungeons of Machærus than that tyrant, whom the world called happy, terror-stricken in his gilded palace. 3. *He desired to see Christ.* The Lord would not come; he departed into a desert place. "I will come and heal

him," he said, when the centurion sent for him. He would not go to Herod. For what were Herod's motives? Partly mere curiosity; partly that awful power of conscience which seems sometimes to draw the criminal to the scene of his crime or the murdered body of his victim; partly, perhaps, malice and fear; he would have slain the Lord as he had slain the prophet. The Lord Christ doth not manifest himself to those who seek him from motives such as these. Herod saw him at last. The sight did him no good; it increased his condemnation. He set Christ at nought, and shared with Pilate the guilt of his death.

II. THE IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN. 1. *The sin of Herod.* He had married Herodias. That wicked woman had ensnared him with her deceitful beauty. She was not contented with the quiet life of her husband Philip; she sought rank, wealth, magnificence. Antipas was the greatest prince of the family. She lured him to his ruin. She heeded not sin and shame and scandal, so that she might compass her wicked purpose. Now she was the tetrarch's queen, but her soul was stained with the double guilt of incest and adultery. What is beauty of person when it hides a black and loathsome soul? Herod was weak and self-indulgent. He fell into the snares of Herodias. He took her from her husband. The stronger will of that wicked woman led him on from sin to sin; she became a second Jezebel to a second Ahab. 2. *The rebuke of John.* John had had considerable influence with Herod. "Herod feared John," St. Mark tells us, "knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him [or rather, 'kept him in safety']; and when he heard him, he did many things [or rather, 'he was much perplexed'], and heard him gladly." Herod had paid some attention to John; partly, perhaps, from political reasons, for John had been for some time a great power in the land; partly from curiosity and some sort of languid interest in John's mission and character. He was struck, too, with the intense earnestness of his preaching; he felt the power of his commanding personality. Worldly men sometimes take a sort of interest in religious matters. Statesmen are forced to do so from the widespread influence of religious motives. Men are attracted by a strong character or great spiritual eloquence. But this external interest in religion may coexist with irreligious habits and a hatred of religious restraints. John the Baptist knew this. He did not care to retain Herod's favour at the cost of condoning his sin. He wanted Herod's soul; his spiritual good, not his patronage. So he rebuked him boldly for his sin: "It is not lawful for thee to have her." John possessed in a high degree that holy courage which is so often necessary in dealing with souls. It is easy to speak to the humble and the timid of their faults; but when the sinner is great and powerful, stern, perhaps, and masterful, it needs a brave man then to set his sin before him, and to urge him to repentance. John did so plainly. The guilty pair must be separated. Nothing else could avail Herod; no affectation of religion, no costly gifts, no patronage of John's cause. He could not be saved in his sin—that was impossible; he must at any cost tear himself from it. 3. *Herod's answer.* He cast John into prison. Wicked men will do the like now as far as lies in their power; they will do all they can to injure the faithful Christian who reproves them for their souls' good. So it was with Herod. John might reprove the Pharisees and Sadducees, the publicans and soldiers; but when he came to reprove Herod himself, then he shut up John in prison. It was a hard lot for one like John, accustomed to the free open life of the desert, to be penned up in some wretched dungeon. Herod would have put him to death at once; his own anger prompted him, Herodias urged him in her unfeminine malice. But he feared the people; and, as St. Mark tells us, he feared and respected John himself. Herod feared John, he feared the people; he did not fear God. John feared God, and that holy fear raised him above all other fears; he feared nothing else, but only God. Oh for that brave and holy faith to keep the fear of God in our hearts, and in that fear always to obey him! Worldly men are restrained from crime by some lower motive; it was selfish fear that kept Herod for a time from the awful guilt of murder.

III. THE BIRTHDAY FEAST. 1. *The dance of Salome.* There were high festivities at Machærus to celebrate Herod's birthday or perhaps his accession to the crown. He had gathered a great company round him—his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee. We may be sure that his guests were entertained with all the costly luxury of the time. Even the Roman Persius had heard of the sumptuousness of these Herodian banquets (v. 180). But there was one show which could not have been

expected. Salome, Herod's own niece, the great-granddaughter of Mariamne, the descendant of the long line of Asmonæan princes, so utterly forgot the delicacy of a Hebrew maiden and the decorum of a princess as to dance alone in the midst of Herod's nobles when excited with feasting and heated with wine. Vashti, the Persian queen, had forfeited the crown rather than even appear at such a banquet. Salome, it seems, came unbidden, and in all the bright beauty of her early youth danced before the assembled guests. It was unbecoming, indecent. But the guests were delighted; and, strange to say, Herod too was pleased, though it was his own niece, and now his step-daughter, who was thus transgressing the accepted rules of society. Feasting and wine often lead to sin. A simple life is safest for a Christian. 2. *Herod's rash oath.* In his excitement and folly he promised her with an oath whatever she would ask. He invoked the holy Name of God at this wild, dissolute feast. He swore to what he knew not. Wine and luxury help the devil in his work of slaying souls. The plot had been laid. The princess was instructed by her wicked mother. The malice of hell lurked under the girlish beauty of Salome. That fatal oath was to bring the most awful guilt upon the soul of Herod. For Salome claimed his promise. "I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist." She would have it immediately. The tetrarch was weak and vacillating; she would hold him to his wicked oath. She would have it there and then on a charger—on one of the great dishes, perhaps of silver or gold, which had been used at that gorgeous banquet; a thing ghastly and horrible exceedingly. The king was sorry. He had hated John; once he wished to kill him. But not now. He feared the people; his old reverence for John returned; he shrank from the fearful deed. But he had sworn; all his courtiers had heard him. He had not cared for the shame of his niece; but he thought it shame that a prince should break his word, should be false to his oath. He thought much more of those half-drunken guests who sat around than he thought of God. For, had he thought of God's honour, his conscience would have told him that to break such an oath was far less insulting to the honour of God than to keep it. It was sinful exceedingly to swear as Herod had done, and so to expose himself to the snare of the devil. But it was beyond all comparison more wicked to keep that wicked oath than to break it. Herod's grief did not save him; it was only the sorrow of the world; not godly sorrow, not repentance. 3. *The martyrdom.* The wicked woman gave him no time for thought; she forced him to send an executioner immediately. John was beheaded in the prison. It was a noble death, the death of a hero, the death of a high saint of God. Salome might bear the bleeding head upon the golden charger—a strange burden for a young and beautiful princess; Herodias might exult over it in her gratified malice. The holy martyr's soul was safe in the Paradise of God. Herod might wear his blood-stained diadem; John had received the crown of glory that fadeth not away. He has left behind him a glorious example. Let us ask God to give us his grace that we may truly repent according to the Baptist's teaching; and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake. 4. *The burial.* The disciples of John cared for his decent burial. Herod, conscience-stricken, perhaps, already, did not hinder them. They laid his body in the grave, and then went and told Jesus. It was as he would have wished. He himself while living had sent his own followers to Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God!" he said to them; and now that he was dead, to whom should his disciples go but to the Lord whom he had honoured, before whose face he had been sent? We should go to Christ in all our troubles; we should tell him. He will listen; he will give us his loving sympathy. He will be a Father to the fatherless, and a Husband to the widow. In our great and in our little troubles, in the bitter sorrow of bereavement, in the petty vexations of daily life, let us tell Jesus. If we come to him in faith and love, we shall never come in vain.

LESSONS. 1. Christians are sometimes called to rebuke vice; let them do it fearlessly when it is their duty. 2. Much feasting often leads to sin; the Christian must be temperate in all things. 3. Rash oaths are full of guilt; take not God's holy Name in vain. 4. One sin leads to another; hate the beginnings of sin. 5. Bring all your troubles to Christ; he will help you to bear them.

VERS. 13—21.—*The feeding of the five thousand.* I. THE LORD'S DEPARTURE FROM GALILEE. 1. *He went by ship into a desert place.* His apostles had returned from

their mission (Luke ix. 10); they needed rest, "for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." He had also heard of Herod's superstitious fears, and that he was desirous to see him. The Lord would not meet the tyrant; he departed out of his tetrarchy. He crossed the lake to a place near Bethsaida Julias, in the dominions of Herod Philip. His hour was not yet come; he would not expose himself to the cruelty of Antipas, nor would he satisfy his curiosity. 2. *The people followed him.* It seems to have been long before Herod heard of the fame of Jesus. The humble inhabitants of Galilee heard of all his movements; they followed him on foot out of the cities. The poor Galilæans were better instructed than the wealthy, wicked prince. They followed Christ whithersoever he went; so should we. They went with him into the desert, trusting in him; so should we always trust. While he is with us, we are safe. 3. *His compassion.* (1) He went forth, perhaps from the ship. He found, not the quiet which the apostles needed so much, but a great multitude. They had looked for retirement, and they found crowds of people; they had looked for rest, and they found more work awaiting them. (2) His forgetfulness of self. He had compassion on the multitude. Wearied as he was, he healed their sick. The Lord is an Example to us here as always. We are apt to repine if work is thrust upon us when we need rest. We must learn of Christ; we must imitate his compassion for the needy and suffering, and take, as he did, every opportunity of doing good to the souls or bodies of our neighbours. He began to teach them many things, the other evangelists tell us; he spake unto them of the kingdom of God.

II. THE MIRACLE. 1. *The conversation with the apostles.* The multitude was great; the place was desert; the hour was late; there were no ordinary means of providing for their wants. The disciples were burdened with a deep sense of responsibility. The Lord had himself, earlier in the afternoon, put the question to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John vi. 5). Then the difficulty was only suggested; it was not removed; it became more pressing as the day wore on. Later in the evening the disciples came to Christ, not to ask advice, but to give it; it was late, they said, too late already. "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals." There was something of presumption, perhaps, in this advice; certainly there was a want of faith. They did not understand the Lord's majesty, his power, his love. We too often wish to dictate to Almighty God what we think he should do for us. It is best to trust ourselves absolutely to his providence. He doeth all things well. He himself knoweth what he will do. "They need not depart," the Lord replied. It can never be necessary for any needs of ours to depart from Christ. In the greatest tumult of business, in the utmost poverty, in the most imminent danger, faithful souls will not depart; they will draw nearer to the Lord, as temptations thicken round them. He who has learned to know and love the Lord Jesus will cling closest to him in want, in peril, in distress. "Give *ye* them to eat," he added. There is an emphasis on the pronoun. It was good that they should feel their helplessness. They had but five loaves and two small fishes. It was nothing for that great multitude. How often we feel our ability, our strength, our means, utterly inadequate to fulfil the work which the Lord has given us to do! If we offer them to him in simple trustfulness, he will multiply them. "Bring them hither to me," he said. He asks us for what we can give him, what is in our power. Let us bring our offerings in faith. He will accept them, if only we bring that offering which he most desires—our hearts, ourselves. If we give him that, then those little offerings which we thought unworthy of his acceptance shall be honoured, and will, it may be, by his grace become the means of working great results. 2. *The feast in the wilderness.* He bade them sit down in companies. He would have order, not confusion. They must sit in their ranks; they must not press rudely round him; they must not try to anticipate one another; they must so sit that the apostles could move freely among them; each must wait till his turn came. Mark how, even in these smaller matters of courtesy and order, the Lord gives us an example for the regulation of our daily life. He looked up to heaven, teaching us to recognize the great truth that it is our Father in heaven who gives us day by day our daily bread, and that we should always look to him in every time of need. Then he blessed; he blessed God, the Giver of all; he blessed the food. As God in the beginning blessed his creatures, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply," so now God

the Son, by whom all things were made, blessed this little store of food, that through the power of that Divine blessing it might be multiplied to the satisfaction of the hunger of that great multitude. He gave thanks, St. John tells us. Our food is blessed to our use. It is sanctified by the word of God and prayer when it is received with thanksgiving. We learn of Christ to ask a blessing on our food. To eat bread with unwashen hands, the Pharisees said, was against the tradition of the elders; to eat without asking a blessing is against the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us follow that example, recognizing at every meal the bounty of our heavenly Father; let us look up to heaven, as Christ did, and make the grace before and after meat a real act of worship. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Then the Lord brake the bread, as he brake it a year afterwards at the institution of the Holy Eucharist; as he brake it on the resurrection-day, when he was made known to the two at Emmaus in the breaking of bread. He gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And lo! "they did all eat, and were filled." It was a mighty miracle, beyond our comprehension, but no wonder to him who filleth all things living with plenteousness. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him." It was only to be expected that the presence of the Son of God should be marked by wonderful works. His presence in the form of man was of all wonders the greatest—a mystery of almighty power, a mystery of ineffable love. 3. *The twelve baskets full.* The Lord had provided largely for his guests. There was enough and to spare. That which remained over and above was more than the five loaves and the two fishes, the little store which they had at first. He bade his disciples, "Gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost." He is an Example at once of generous bounty and of carefulness. He would have nothing wasted. The Christian should guard against waste, that he may have to give to the needy. 4. *The number.* There were five thousand men, beside women and children. The men were arranged in companies of fifty; they were easily numbered. The women and children seem to have sat apart. Probably there were not many. The multitude seems to have been gathered together for the Passover (John vi. 4), which only men were commanded to attend; though religious women, like the virgin Mary, went sometimes with their husbands. The Lord cared for all alike—men, women, and children. So should his servants do. 5. *Lessons of the miracle.* Herod feasted in his palace with his nobles, Christ in the wilderness with his disciples; Herod's feast was costly and luxurious, Christ's very simple. The sumptuous banquet of Herod ended in guilt and murder. It was a godless feast, profaned by wicked oaths. The Christian should never be present at any festivities, any amusements, on which he cannot ask the blessing of God. The simplest food, when Christ is present, when we feel that it is he who gives and he who blesses, satisfies the Christian's wants. The presence of Christ gives peace and blessedness in the wilderness. Without Christ the gorgeous palace is a desert. Christ can prepare a table in the wilderness; he can provide for his people wherever they are. The multitude had followed him into this desert place. He had compassion on them; he would not send them away fasting. So he hath compassion now on all who seek first the kingdom of God; he knows that we have need of food and raiment; he will give them. Let us trust in him. But let us pray with the deepest earnestness not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life. He who on that day fed the five thousand with earthly food, feeds now the ten thousand times ten thousand of his saints with the bread which came down from heaven. He himself is the spiritual Food of believers. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." They need nothing more whom he feedeth with that heavenly food. All the cravings of their souls are stilled; all the yearnings of their hearts are satisfied with his gracious presence who is the Bread of life. Let us feed on him in the daily life of faith; let us ask him to feed us with the spiritual food of his own most precious body and blood in the holy sacrament which he himself ordained.

LESSONS. 1. Try, like Christ, to forget self and to care for others. 2. Trust him always; he will multiply the five loaves if we are following him. 3. Feast with Christ, not with Herod; with Christians in a Christian home, not with the wicked in unholy revelry.

VERS. 22—36.—*The walking on the sea.* I. JESUS LEFT ALONE. 1. *He sends the*

disciples across the lake. He "constrained his disciples to get into a ship." It is a strong word. He compelled, he forced them; evidently they were very unwilling to leave him. St. John's narrative throws a light upon this. The miracle had produced a great impression; it was in accordance with the hopes of the Jews; it was what they looked for in the expected Messiah. It must be he, the multitude thought; he is come indeed. This great Wonder-worker is surely the Christ of God. They were right; but their conception of the work of the Christ was not the true one. He was to reign at Jerusalem, they thought; to set them free from the tyranny of Herod, from the detested Roman yoke. They wanted to "take him by force, to make him a King" (John vi. 15). The Lord was not blinded by popular excitement. He was a King indeed, but his kingdom was not of this world. His kingdom was to come, but in the way appointed by God; and that was the way of the cross. He would not attempt to seize it prematurely, whether at the prompting of the evil one (ch. iv. 8, 9) or at the clamour of the multitude. The apostles shared the enthusiasm of the crowd. They had been prominent in the distribution of the miraculous food; doubtless the people magnified them. They were great men now; they hoped to sit near to the Lord, on his right hand and on his left, in his kingdom. They had a right above all other men, they may well have thought, to be with their Master in this day of triumph, as they had been faithful to him in his tribulations. They were very unwilling to leave him. But he forced them to go. This excitement was not good either for the multitude or for the disciples. Ambition is an evil thing, especially the ambition of reaching the high places of the Church. The best of men have their faults; the apostles had theirs. Christ forced them to leave him for a time when their hearts were set on earthly triumphs. Religion loses all its beauty when men try to make it a means for self-exaltation. 2. *He dismisses the multitude.* He could do it more easily and quietly now that the apostles were gone. They were probably the most enthusiastic. They had to be forced; the others were dismissed. Doubtless that enthusiasm was mainly honest zeal for their Master's glory; though selfish motives, such as those just mentioned, were perhaps unconsciously mingled with it. But even that honest enthusiasm was mistaken. It could do only harm; it would excite the suspicions of Herod ("that fox," Luke xiii. 32), and the hostility of the Roman governor. Christ's hour was not yet come. He would not anticipate the time appointed in the counsels of God. He sent the multitude away. Their disappointment, we may be sure, was great. The apostles, perhaps, were more than disappointed; perhaps they were vexed and even angry; he had to force them to leave him. How often it is so now! Success, popularity, excites us. We hope for great things; perhaps our hopes for spiritual victories include (though we scarcely know it) hopes for our own advancement. Then we are disappointed. He teaches us the holy lesson of patience. We must wait for him, for his time. The Lord reigneth; but it doth not always please him to manifest his power when we expect and wish it. 3. *He retires to a mountain for prayer.* He had retired to a mountain; he had prayed there all night long, before he called his apostles. Now he does the like. This great popularity did not dazzle him. He knew that that excited multitude did not understand his mission or his purpose. He himself would the very next day turn that popularity into suspicion or even active opposition. He would offer them the bread of life, and they would not receive it; many of his disciples would go back and walk no more with him. It was a crisis in his earthly life. He retired to collect his thoughts, to hold communion in solitude with his heavenly Father. It is what we should do in times of excitement and difficulty. The hours spent in earnest prayer are the best spent hours of our lives; they give strength, calmness, perseverance. The Lord prayed long. When the evening was come, he was there alone; he prayed on into the late night. A few hours before he had more than five thousand zealous adherents round him. Now they had left him; he himself had sent them away. He was alone, with only God. He was preparing himself, we may reverently believe, for the struggle which lay before him—the controversies, the desertions, the bitter opposition. He was holding communion with the Father. He never sought counsel of men; for in some sense he was always alone. His Divine nature isolated him, not from human sympathy and love—that was precious even to him (ch. xxvi. 40)—but from human advice, human help. He could receive strength only from heaven (Luke xxii. 43).

II. THE MIRACLE. 1. *The disciples.* They were in peril now, and the Lord was

not with them in the ship, as he had been once before. There was a great wind; the ship was tossed with waves; they were in distress, toiling in rowing. But the Lord saw them in their danger; he saw them from the lonely mountain where he was kneeling in prayer; he saw and came. So he sees us now from heaven, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. He sees all our trials; and he comes, as then he came, to help and to save. He sent them from him when they would have made him a King; he comes to them now they need his help. 2. *They see him coming.* It was dark—three or four in the morning; they were struggling still with wind and wave. They see suddenly an august Form moving over the surface of the water, coming towards them, seeming as though it would pass by. It was a strange sight in the darkness of that tempestuous night. It increased their terror. It must be an apparition, they thought. It boded ill. Danger, death, was at hand. They cried out for fear. Then in that moment of agony there came a well-known voice, sweet and clear, amid the din of the storm, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." So the good Lord cheers his people now, in sickness, sorrow, in the hour of death. "It is I," he saith. He comes to his people in the hour of need. He sees them in their distress from afar off, from the heaven where he is making intercession for them. He comes, manifesting himself in all his love and mercy to those who cry to him in fear and peril. He cometh; it seems sometimes as though he would pass by and leave us in our anguish. But it is only a trial of our faith, to make us feel our need of him—that without him we can do nothing. Faithful, earnest prayer always brings him to our side. When he is with us, we can fear no more. "It is I; be not afraid." He is not afraid who hath the blessed presence of the Saviour. Wind and wave may roar; but when the Lord moves over the tossing billows there is peace and hope for the fearful trembling soul even in the immediate nearness of the king of terrors. "It is I; be not afraid." May we hear that gracious word, may we feel that gracious presence, in the hour of our death! 3. *Peter.* Peter, ever impulsive, ever impetuous, was not willing to wait for the coming of the Lord; he would go to him, and that upon the water. So ardent souls think to do great things and expose themselves sometimes to great perils, over-estimating their own faith, under-estimating the danger, thinking perhaps too much of self, too little of others. "Bid *me* come unto thee," Peter said, as if he had a special interest in the Lord above his brother apostles, as if he indeed loved him more than these (John xxi. 15). He would not come, indeed he dared not, without the Lord's bidding; but he asked for that bidding, instead of waiting, as the Christian should wait, to hear his Master's will. Balaam, with baser motives, sought permission to expose himself to danger; he obtained his request, and it ended in his ruin. Peter was saved, but "scarcely" (1 Pet. iv. 18; perhaps his narrow escape was in his thoughts when he wrote those words), by the Lord's direct interposition. Christ himself, when tempted to do the like, taught us the course of duty. "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." But the Lord said, "Come." He said it, we may be sure, in love, to teach Peter his own weakness and the danger of presumption. Peter came, and he too walked upon the water. While he was strong in faith, looking unto Jesus, he felt the truth of that blessed promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." But his faith failed. He ceased to look with the steadfast gaze of trustfulness upon the face of Christ. "He saw the wind boisterous." It had been so from the beginning. He would not have seen it had his eyes been still fixed upon the Saviour. And now he was afraid—he who but a moment before had been so daring. His very skill in swimming (John xxi. 7) failed him in his extremity. Earthly resources will not help us when our faith gives way; and faith will give way when men look at their troubles, not at their Lord. He felt himself sinking. His friends were near, his brother disciples; but they could not help him in that great peril. In deep distress, in the hour of mortal anguish, One, only One, can help. "Out of the deep have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice." Peter still believed in Christ's love and power. His faith had not the calm strength which he had attributed to it, but it was true and real; it was like the faith of the poor father at the Mount of the Transfiguration: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." He looked again to Christ; "Lord, save me!" he cried. It is the prayer of humility and penitence and self-abasement. The trial had done him good. The danger had shown him his weakness. The

old self-confidence was gone; it returned afterwards, and was dispelled for ever by the deep repentance which followed a yet graver, a far more humiliating failure. Now he felt his weakness. His first request was unbecoming, not such as a sinner should make; his second was a true prayer, such a prayer as we all should lift up out of the depths of our heart to our loving Saviour. Such a prayer is never made in vain. "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" The Lord waited not one moment. The needed change was wrought; Peter felt his helplessness. The Lord stretched forth his hand. So doth he now. We feel, when we come to him with strong crying and fervent prayer, that gracious hand holding us up, lifting us out of distress and terror, drawing us closer to himself. "O thou of little faith," he said, in gentle sweet reproof. Peter's faith never wholly failed him; but it was mingled with doubt. That doubt, that divided mind, divided between faith and fear, might have been his ruin had not the Lord in his great mercy saved him. Let us learn never to doubt the love of our dear Lord. If only he is with us, let us think, not too much of our difficulties and distresses, but of his grace and power. "Lord, increase our faith," be that our constant prayer. 4. *The adoration of the disciples.* They came into the ship, the Lord and the thankful, penitent apostle. Immediately the wind ceased. Immediately, St. John tells us, the ship was at the land whither they went. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him. They did not forget to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for his great mercies vouchsafed unto them. "Of a truth thou art the Son of God," they said. It was the first time, except the cases of John the Baptist and Nathanael (John i. 34 and 49), that men had given this title to the Lord. It followed a night of exceeding great terror. Our trials are blessed if they bring us near to Christ, if they help us to realize his love and power, if they bring us to our knees in awe and love and adoration.

III. THE RETURN TO THE LAND OF GENNESARET. 1. *The sick brought to him.* He was recognized at once; all knew him as the Healer, the Wonder-worker. The men of the place went out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased. That care for the afflicted, that eagerness to bring them to the Saviour, is an example to us; let us go and do likewise. 2. *They were healed.* They believed in him; their faith was like that of the woman who followed him when he was on his way to heal the daughter of Jairus—a faith deep and strong, if not altogether the faith of the instructed Christian. They did not, however, come behind him, as she did; they asked his permission to touch the hem of his garment, and all who touched were made perfectly whole. So it is now. He cleanseth from *all* unrighteousness those who come to him touching him with the touch of faith.

LESSONS. 1. Let us learn of the Lord not to desire popular applause, not to seek the high places of the world. 2. Let us learn in all times of difficulty and anxiety to seek for peace and guidance in fervent, persevering prayer. 3. Let us trust in him; he will help us in our troubles. "It is I," he saith; "be not afraid." 4. Let us shrink from presumption; we are safe when we distrust ourselves, when we trust only in Christ. 5. Let us always look unto Jesus; in temptation, in sorrow, in agony, let us look steadfastly to him. He will stretch forth his hand; he will not let us sink.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Herod's hypothesis.* Men's minds were much perplexed about the wonderful life of the new Prophet, and various theories were started to explain it. Here we have the king's hypothesis. This has something in common with the other suggestions, and also a peculiar aptness in regard to Herod himself.

I. IT IS NOT EASY TO ACCOUNT FOR JESUS CHRIST. The very variety of the theories shows that the problem was not solved at a glance. It was evident to his contemporaries that our Lord was no ordinary man. And yet these people saw little more than his outer life. The teaching of his apostles and the revelation of Christ in his Church have brought out far greater marvels in his nature. If we accept him and his claims, his Divine nature and mission will explain all. But if we reject him we have still to account for him. And just here is the great difficulty for all unbelievers. It

is not enough for them to urge certain objections against the Christian position. Christ remains the wonder of all history. How could the carpenter of Nazareth live and teach and work and revolutionize the world as Jesus did if he was only a village artisan?

II. MEN VAINLY TRY TO EXPLAIN THE NEW BY THE OLD. Herod thinks of the one great man whom he has known. Others recall the historic figures of Hebrew prophecy (ch. xvi. 14). In all this there is no idea that God is surpassing antiquity; that he is making a new start with a greater revelation and glory than anything yet witnessed on earth. It was difficult to understand Jesus Christ—in part, because he was not a repetition of antiquity. So long as there was no idea of a *new* work of God, the *New* Testament gospel could not be entertained. The same mistake was made later and in another way by those Jewish Christians who wished to limit Christianity by tying it to the ordinances of the old Law; and the old mistake is repeated to-day by those who think that Christ must be explained by what we know of the ordinary workings of human lives and characters.

III. THE GUILTY CONSCIENCE INVENTS ITS OWN TORMENTOR. Herod's hypothesis is the creation of his conscience. The stain of blood is on his soul, and it colours all his thoughts. He is a murderer, and he is haunted by suspicions of the return of his victim. He cannot silence the voice of the faithful prophet. Although he has shut him up in a dungeon, although at the instigation of his wicked wife he has lawlessly murdered him, he cannot forget him, cannot elude his warning voice. There is no escape from the guilt and consequences of sin, except by the narrow door of repentance. A king may be a slave to the terrors of his own evil conscience.

IV. THE REJECTION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH IS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY THE ACCEPTANCE OF A FOOLISH SUPERSTITION. Herod could not bring himself to accept the claim of Christ; yet he was willing to believe in a most extraordinary alternative. In early ages multitudes who rejected the Christian gospel yielded to the spell of ridiculous charlatans in the profession of magic. To-day we see the negation of the gospel accompanied by a ready belief in what is called "spiritualism." There is no superstition so abject as the superstition of scepticism. It is the greatest mistake to suppose that the unbeliever is always walking in the white light of reason. Christian faith is the true way of escape from unchristian superstition. To believe in Christ as the Son of God who has risen from the dead is the best security for intellectual sanity in religion.—W. F. A.

Vers. 3—12.—*The murder of John the Baptist.* This is introduced quite incidentally to account for the superstitious terror of Herod; but the story is so graphic that we seem to be carried into the midst of the scene of dissipation and crime. It is a hideous picture, and its chief lessons are of warning, and yet its gloom is not utterly unrelieved, for the portrait of the Baptist stands out in grand contrast to its vicious surroundings.

I. THE PROPHET'S FIDELITY. John the Baptist was a prophet of repentance. His was a difficult task, because he aimed at making it effective. It is easy to denounce sin in the general; no one will be affected. It is safe to accuse the weak of their wickedness; they cannot retaliate on their censor. Therefore the temptation is to take one or the other of these courses; but the first is useless, and the second mean and cowardly. 1. *John denounced particular sins.* He did so with the various classes who came to his baptism. The animus of Herodias' hatred springs from the fact that his shaft went home to one great and shameful act of wickedness. 2. *John fearlessly accused the great.* He was not stern with the miserable outcast, and meek with the sinner in high places. Pharisees could rail at the weeping penitent and be silent about the sin of the harlot-queen. John preached to the court; but he was no court preacher. The faithful prophet must denounce the sins of princes as well as those of peasants.

II. THE PRINCESS'S SHAME. In the flush and splendour of her youth, the highest-born maiden of the land lowers herself to perform a disgraceful dance under the gloating gaze of a company of half-drunken men of pleasure. The sin of the guilty mother is already bearing bitter fruit in the shame of her ill-trained daughter. We are appalled at the contrast between the lofty character of the faithful prophet and the miserable state of the princess on whose young soul the bloom of innocence is so early destroyed. The ruin of natural modesty prepares for a more horrible evil—callousness

in brutal crime. Thus the loss of the pure simplicity of maidenhood leads to the hardened heart of unwomanly cruelty. None are so cruel as the dissolute.

III. THE QUEEN'S VINDICTIVENESS. It was the king s sin that John denounced, for that was the first evil; and the prophet was a man, and one who dared to bring a vile deed home to its true author. But naturally the queen feels the sting of the reproach most keenly. Then, instead of admitting its justice and humbling herself, she turns on the preacher like an infuriated tigress. Her very ferocity shows that her conscience has been wounded. When people will not repent at the word of a faithful admonitor, they flame out in a rage against him as though he were their mortal enemy. If they did but see the truth they would own him as their best friend.

IV. THE KING'S WICKED WEAKNESS. Herod himself had some respect for the prophet. He even kept him, as he might have kept an actor or a singer, to amuse his idle hours; or perhaps he was somewhat drawn to the serious teaching of John. Yet he weakly yielded to the bloodthirsty demand of the daughter of Herodias. He was moved by two considerations. 1. *His oath.* But it was a gross error to suppose that his oath could be made to demand compliance with the savage request made to him under it, for the most awful oath cannot bind a man to do wrong. 2. *His fear.* He dreaded to be thought weak by his guests. In this he revealed the very weakness he wanted to avoid. There is no cowardice so despicable as that which does wrong from fear of ridicule.—W. F. A.

Vers. 15—21.—*Jesus feeding the multitude.* On the death of John the Baptist Jesus retired to the eastern side of the lake, oppressed with grief and longing for a time of seclusion. But it was one of his trials that he was forbidden the rest of privacy when he most craved it. The crowds followed him with such enthusiasm that they quite forgot to provide themselves with needful food, and therefore when the evening was come they were out among the lonely mountains faint and hungry. Jesus had not brought about this awkward situation. But he could not see distress without desiring to remove it. Thus there was an adequate occasion for the wonderful feeding of the thousands.

I. JESUS HAS COMPASSION ON BODILY DISTRESS. He had manifested this compassion earlier by healing the sick who were brought out to him in this remote region; and now the sight of the weary multitude touched his heart, as it became apparent to him that the evening shadows would find them far from home and without the means of providing themselves with their evening meal. 1. *The motive of Christ was compassion.* This was the motive of his life-work and of his atoning death. He came into the world because he took pity on the world's misery. The same motive moved him in particular actions. This is the grand Christian motive. The passion of pity is a peculiarly Christ-like feeling that seems to be rising among us in the present day. 2. *The trouble was bodily distress*—hunger. Then it is a Christ-like thing to feed the hungry. We are not to neglect men's bodies in caring for their souls.

II. JESUS HELPS THROUGH EARTHLY MEANS. He utilized the existing provisions. He did not create food out of nothing, but he wrought with the loaves and fishes already in hand. They were few, but he did not despise them, for they were invaluable in affording a foundation for his miracle. Christ now uses the instruments of human work. We have to contribute our share, and if we selfishly or despairingly refuse to do so we have no right to look for his blessing.

III. JESUS PRODUCES WONDERFUL PROVISIONS. We do not know how the miracle was wrought; we cannot even conceive of it. But we do not know how God makes the corn to grow in the fields. Nature only seems to us less wonderful than miracle because we are familiar with her external aspect and her visible processes. But behind all nature, as behind every miracle, there is the unfathomable mystery of life and being which God only understands. It is enough for us that our Lord is not thwarted, that there is nothing to which he sets his hand in which he fails. He is powerful as well as pitiful. We bemoan the distress we cannot aid. When Christ is moved with compassion he helps effectively.

IV. JESUS SATISFIES THE HUNGRY. He gave no princely banquet, but mere loaves and fishes—the common barley loaves of the poor, the familiar fishes of the lake. His object was not to pamper jaded appetites—that was not needed in the keen mountain

air; he simply fed the hungry. Moreover, he gave what he received, and of the same kind. He will bless our work according to its character and quality. He gives the increase, but it is according to the seed we sow—"after its kind."

Surely this miracle is more than a miracle; it is a sacrament, a sacred symbol, as our Lord shows in the discourse that follows in St. John's account (John vi.). Christ is the real Bread of life, feeding hungry souls.—W. F. A.

Vers. 22—33.—*Walking on the sea.* The wonderful feeding of the thousands produced a great effect, rousing the multitude to enthusiasm, so that the people actually tried to force on an insurrection in support of the kingship of Jesus, and so that he had to dismiss them with haste, sending his disciples across the sea, and retiring to the mountains for prayer. Then it was that the sudden squall fell on the lake, and the need of his disciples called him to their aid.

I. JESUS IN PRAYER. 1. *He was much in prayer.* No doubt he thus obtained spiritual refreshment after the toils and vexations of the day. Here he found the joy of communion with his Father without distracting influences. To Jesus prayer was a necessity; it was also a joy. He could not have treated it as a formal duty. If Christ could not live without prayer, is it possible for the Christian to be healthy in the neglect of it? 2. *He prayed in solitude.* He hated the showy prayers of the religious people of his day, ostentatiously offered up in the market-place, primly uttered in the synagogue. He hungered to be alone with God. He found God among the mountains. 3. *He prayed at critical moments. E.g.* at the grave of Lazarus, in Gethsemane. Now there was great danger of an insurrection which would wreck his plans. To him, too, the third temptation may have returned, and he may have sought strength to overcome it. Prayer is most valuable in the soul's hardest struggles with temptation.

II. THE DISCIPLES IN TROUBLE. Away from their Master they were overtaken by a tempest. It would seem that they were rowing up north in order to take Jesus on board at a spot further along the eastern shore. Therefore it was for his sake that they were facing the contrary wind, for had they turned directly homewards they would have been able to run before the gale. Trouble may come upon the servants of Christ in their very efforts to keep near him and to serve him.

III. THE COMING OF CHRIST. In that wild, dark night, while the wind lashed the sea to fury, it must have howled with fearful blasts among the rocks of the wilderness where Jesus stood alone in his prayer, and then he must have recognized the danger this would mean to his disciples. He was never selfish in his devotions. It was his habit to permit the interruption of his most sacred hours of retirement by some cry of distress, some appeal for help. So he came down to his disciples on the sea. It must have been an act of faith on his part to venture on the black, boiling waters. But faith was working through love. The sea must be risked in an unheard-of miracle to save his friends out on its waste of waters. It is not surprising that the disciples could not believe their eyes, and mistook their Saviour for a spectre. Sometimes his deliverances are quite as unexpected, and almost too good to be believed. It is difficult for our faith to keep pace with his far-reaching grace.

IV. ST. PETER'S ADVENTURE. This singular sequel is quite true to the character of the apostle. His impetuosity, his enthusiasm for Christ, his failure to measure his own weakness, are all in accordance with what we know of "the prince of the apostles." But perhaps in the incident we may detect a touch of humour. There was no necessity for the apostle to walk on the water. Yet Christ indulged his whim and permitted it to be a means of revealing Peter's weakness, and of introducing one source of strength. Foolish, needless, and even ridiculous adventures may be turned to good ends. We learn to know Christ even by means of the follies of which we are heartily ashamed.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1, 2, 3—5, 6—12 (see also Mark vi. 14—16; 17—20, 21—29; Luke ix. 7—9; iii. 19, 20).—*The ruin of reckless rashness.* Note, in introduction, that in an historic point of view this stretch of verses, numbering twelve in our Gospel and seventeen in St. Mark's Gospel, is remarkable for the way in which it gives the information with which it is charged. The same way is identically followed in the parallel of St. Mark; and one not dissimilar in its leading feature in that of St. Luke. As regards the two

former, the narrative, starting from the fact that Herod is startled by the growing notoriety and repute of Jesus, continues (until, indeed, it finds its end) by glances at two several retrospective passages of the history (an ill history) made by him. These two retrospective glimpses concern Herod's first and second dealings with John the Baptist —how, *first*, he was tempted to put him in prison, and yielded to the temptation; and how, *secondly*, he was snared on by his own sin, in first, second, and third degree, till he put him to death by beheading him. Notice this career in its simplest steps of sin.

I. A MARRIAGE ALLIANCE INCESTUOUS, ADULTEROUS, AND AT THE EXPENSE OF A HALF-BROTHER.

II. A GOOD MAN IMPRISONED FOR HOLY TESTIMONY AGAINST THIS, MADE IN THE UNDENIED DISCHARGE OF HIS DUTY AS A PROPHET OF RELIGION.

III. BY THAT IMPRISONMENT, NOT ONLY CRUEL PRESENT INJUSTICE DONE TO THE VICTIM, BUT THE WAY PAVED FOR THE PERPETRATION OF YET WORSE CRUELTY AND INIQUITY.

IV. UNDER THE STIMULUS OF DEBAUCHERY, A BOASTFUL AND RECKLESS PROMISE MADE.

V. UNDER THE BLINDEDNESS OF DEBAUCHERY, A SNARE LAID, WHICH TOO EFFECTUALLY FITTED IN WITH RISKS ALREADY SELF-HAZARDED AND SELF-CHALLENGED.

VI. THE SNARE ENTERED WITH VAINLY HEARD, VAINLY UTTERED REMONSTRANCES OF CONSCIENCE.

VII. IN THAT SNARE A TERRIBLE FALL; AND IRRETRIEVABLE HARM BOTH DONE AND TAKEN.

VIII. LATER ON, CONSCIENCE CALLING ON A VERY FAITHFUL ALLY CALLED MEMORY, STARTLED AND GALVANIZED INTO LIFE BY CIRCUMSTANCES AND EVENTS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN, AND EVEN EASILY MIGHT HAVE BEEN, ALL MATTER OF INTEREST AND JOY—CREATORS AND STRENGTHENERS OF PEACE INSTEAD OF DISTURBERS AND DESTROYERS OF IT.—B.

Vers. 13—21 (see also Mark vi. 32—44; Luke ix. 10—17; John vi. 2—14).—*The sacrament-miracle.* Distinguish this miracle of the feeding the five thousand, so glorious in all its incidents, and with its full fourfold narration, from that of the feeding the four thousand, recorded by Matthew (xv. 32—39) and Mark (viii. 1—9) only. Lead to the consideration of this miracle by dwelling briefly on—

I. THE MOTIVES OF THIS MIRACLE. There was *one leading* motive—a kind human compassion, a condescending memory of the bodily want of the multitude of people, and a gentle consideration of the same. We may imagine that the mixture of "women and children" among the repeatedly mentioned "five thousand men" will have added to the feeling of thoughtful pity in Christ. But beside this predominating incentive, it may well be that this occasion proffered itself, considering certain peculiar characteristics of the miracle (for which see next head), as a most fit occasion for such a miracle, as would be adapted to utilize itself, in the most direct moral service, like an acted discourse, for instance. It was a wide-spoken discourse indeed for thousands upon thousands, who never heard so plainly as when they were now *thus fed*; nor were open to blame, in anything like all cases, for its being able to be thus said. This multitude scattered again from this sacred spot to their homes over wide stretches of their country, what sermons *they* would take with them, and what memories would again and again warm up in their hearts! And yet again, the occasion was one of special import for the small circle of disciples. Philip, for one, was "proved," and we need not doubt that all the other disciples were both proved and reproved, when they learned the truth to very reality of that word, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat." And forthwith, after the *commission*, were furnished with the means to execute it, and *did* execute it, and distributed that true shadow of a sacrament, to say the least of it, from the very fingers of the Lord of all sacraments.

II. THE MIRACLE ITSELF. There is a sense in which every miracle is not merely a wonder of power, but an inscrutable wonder of power. We cannot pass from the limited finite power, over the border into the unlimited, without confessing that, though we gaze at or gaze into the unbridged abyss, it *is* an abyss, and we can nothing else than *only* gaze! But the character of some miracles lends itself to help our imagination, to guide and give strength to our weak power of thought. And we *say* within ourselves that a

fever stayed by a word, palsy and paralysis cured, a blind eye, a deaf ear, a dumb tongue re-energized, and even water converted into wine, are wonders of power more easy to track than that a solitary loaf of bread find another at its side by an absolute fresh act of creation in a moment and by a word. *This* once seen through, the *multiplication* may seem to follow more easily on the level of some other miracles. But this is *not* to be "once seen through." Notice, *again*, of this miracle, that it was neither one of the absolute necessity of the heart of mercy allied with the hand of might, nor one of such very secondary character of kindness and goodness (it is said with all perfect reverence) as when for the purposes of a marriage feast water was made wine. Christ divinely and humanly *pitied* the fainting hunger of the men who had long lingered around him, and of their women and children; but when he made the water into wine we cannot say it was similar pity. *Again*, we are not told at what point the miraculous multiplication of the bread took effect—under the "blessing," and at the "breaking" of the five loaves and two fishes in the hands of Christ, or as the disciples distributed, or as the people ate. Though we are *not* told it, *this* is one of the untold things that we can scarcely find difficulty in supplying; and this without charge, or any *self*-charge even, of presumptuousness. We need not suppose unnecessary wonders, such as that the little original store and stock of material could be handled by those who distributed, when parted into several thousand minute portions. Even this would point to the increase as taking place in the blessing and under the manual acts of Christ. *Again*, we are not told of any expression either of surprise or of any other kind upon this subject, as made by any of the multitude either at the time or subsequently, or by any disciple, such as might give us a suggestion, or throw light upon it. *Again*, we are not told what time it took, or what sort of difficulty, if any, the disciples encountered in their work of distributing to some hundred companies of those set down, in parties of fifty each. That the large multitude *were* thus arranged speaks design of itself, and we can see the disciples threading their way with their distributing baskets, by aid of the passages, and, so to say, the aisles left. There were some eight hundred to be ministered to by each of the twelve disciples. Nor have we any statement as to how and where the "women and children" got *their* portions; the suggestion of our vers. 19—21, nevertheless, would leave us in no practical doubt that they were grouped in the companies of the fifties and hundreds (St. Mark). With all these things untold, the miracle itself stands confessed in its simplest grandeur, in its irrefragable evidence, and for its welcome satisfyingness—some through it to acknowledge "that Prophet that should come into the world;" some to show to-morrow that they were thankless for the moral feast, even if they had eagerly partaken of the literal one; but some also, we cannot doubt it, and we know not how many, to remember it for days and years to come, and to speak of it far and wide with grateful heart and tongue.

III. THE MULTIFORM PARABLE THAT IS INCORPORATE WITH THIS MIRACLE. 1. It is a parable of Christ feeding the wide world. 2. It is a parable of Christ feeding that world by the human instrumentality of his servants, his disciples, his apostles, those some certain called from the mass, and called by him, and "sent forth" by him. 3. It is a parable of what effect Christ's "blessing" can have and shall have on his own appointments, his own appointed provision, his own appointed "means of grace," his own appointed methods of distribution, and his own ordering of his Church and its ministers. 4. To devout, thoughtful, reverent faith, surely it constitutes itself, it welcomely *forces* itself, into a parable of a sacrament—the sacrament in "one kind" for the fulness of time was not yet come—the sacrament of the food of the blessed body of the Lord himself! How many a time has the individual, humble, and praying believer lighted on what should seem some small morsel of Divine truth, and of the Divine Word, and as he meditated, how it opened, how it refreshed his fainting state, how it filled his eye, and feasted his highest powers of feeling and of imagination! And how many a time have the true ministers of Christ, the bishops and pastors of the flock of God, begun to think and begun to speak upon what seemed a word, a sentence, a verse, but it has increased under meditation, under prayer, under the familiar, common, sometimes despised "preaching" of Christ's last charge and commission, and under the realization of the priceless "blessing" of his last promise, while multitudes have listened, been divinely fed, learned to love and to adore and to live a new life, and the human feeder and the fed all been satisfied!—B.

Vers. 22—33 (see also Mark vi. 45—52; John vi. 16—21).—*A contention of sense and faith.* The last miracle was one the teaching of which was certainly good for all, alike for the disciples *and* the multitude; and of the two for obvious and natural reasons, perhaps more so for the former than for the latter. But, letting alone the teaching force of it, that foregoing miracle had for its practical object the benefit of the five thousand with women and children, allaying their hunger and bringing home to their hearts—of whatever character those hearts—some sense of and some persuasion of the thoughtful consideration of the Lord. For the small number of the twelve disciples there was never any great difficulty—probably never any at all—in supplying "all their need." But the present miracle was one for the disciples themselves. It was good alike for their body and soul. It may, perhaps, be said to have been in *higher kind* also, even as limb and life are ever of more import than the satisfying of hunger, though this may be intense. Though we are not at all bound to find herein the reason of its following so distinctly in each account upon the other, yet the link of thought may be helpful. And far is it from being out of analogy with the truth, that he who so cares for the vast flocks scattered, needy, distracted with fear, or callous with indifference, shows no small proportion of that care in also caring for the shepherds and bishops and pastors of the flock, whom he has set, and whom he ever still is setting, over them. It certainly is so in the history now before us. Notice here—

I. AN INSTANCE OF CHRIST SENDING HIS SERVANTS TO TRY THEIR WAY BEFORE HIM · TO FEEL AND TO TEST THEIR OWN QUANTUM OF STRENGTH AND RESOURCES; AND OF HOW, THEN, IN SUCH CASES HE IS WITH THEM, AND OVERTAKES THEM TO THE VERY MOMENT OF THEIR REAL NEED. Distinguish with emphasis such cases from those in which forwardness and self-confidence and unsafe zeal lead the way. And notice what room there is in the dispensation of the Spirit for full account to be taken of this principle. How needful it is, how desirable it is, for us often to feel that there is One who trusts us to go onward awhile, and apparently as though by ourselves, but whose eye and whose love are none the less ever near to us! And notice, further, that these are not for a moment to be counted artificial devices of the vast and infinitely wise superintending Providence, even though for wise and high ends. There were *reasons* why the disciples were sent onward before Christ.

II. AN INSTANCE OF A CERTAIN APPARENT CONSPIRACY AND ACCUMULATION OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF NATURE CONTENDED WITH, BY THE INCREASE OF CONSCIOUS HUMAN EFFORT AND TOIL; AND YET WITHOUT AVAIL, OR WITH VERY LITTLE AVAIL. Darkness, wind, and stormy waves were *all* "contrary" to the disciples; but they *rowed* where sails would not serve; and they *toiled*; and yet there came the hour when the most that they could say for themselves and their effort was that they did not retreat, that they could just hold their way. But *this* was much to be able to say.

III. AN INSTANCE OF THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF HELP BEING JUDGED TO BE EITHER AN EMPTY FORM, OR A FORM, IF NOT EMPTY, CHARGED WITH SOME SPECIES OF ADDITIONAL FEARFULNESS. Remark that the version, "a spirit," is not most correct to the word used, or probably to the real description of the alarm excited in the minds of the disciples. Nor can any justification be adduced from the passage of any scriptural warrant for belief in certain superstitions. It may be said to be Scripture, on the other hand, which defines spirit, and determines the reality of spirits, and *does not deny*, indeed, that spirits may take "phantom" appearances, but in this place certainly does not state it. The word is not the same as that used, *e.g.* in Acts xii. 15, nor does it point in the same direction.

IV. AN INSTANCE OF THE BOUNDLESS GENTLENESS OF THE PITY, "LIKE AS A FATHER'S," WITH WHICH THE LORD DISPELS HIS SERVANTS' FEAR, AND REPLACES IT WITH ALL THE EXULTATION OF AN UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCE OF COMFORT AND REPOSE.

V. AN INSTANCE OF A GLORIOUS EPISODE OF FAITH, AND THE FAITH THAT SIGHTS IMITATION AND LIKENESS. Faith is the very father of great thought and great enterprise for some; for others it is patient endurance of the storms, and the vanquisher of fears, and exquisite rest from anxiety. But in its noblest attempts, it knows no measure and owns no limit, while it keeps its firm look on its Lord. It partakes of the omnipotence of its unseen object.

VI. AN INSTANCE OF AN INGLORIOUS LAPSE OF FAITH. The cause of this very plainly marked here—the eye turned away from its great object, and confused by the difficulties of sense.

VII. AN INSTANCE OF A VERITABLE SCRIPTURE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE TUMULT, THE DARKNESS, THE STORM OF THE WORLD—BUT SAFE; CHRIST NEAR IT, THE EYE OF CHRIST ON IT, CHRIST HIMSELF IN IT, AND ITSELF AT LAST WITH HIM IN THE HAVEN.—B.

Vers. 1—12.—*John's death.* Herod Antipas is a character not quite easy to understand, but possibly on that account all the more worth understanding. Weak men are always difficult to understand, no principle you can calculate on guiding their conduct. Herod was not a bloody man like his father, but, like Ahab, his irresolution was used by the resolution of his wife. Before his doubly unlawful marriage much hope might have been entertained for him, with men like the apostles among his peasantry, not without good influences in his own palace and family, and even himself showing an interest in the spiritual movements of his time. But this miserable woman spoilt his life. What could he do in compliance with John's requirements when he understood her fierce, unscrupulous, vindictive temper so well as to feel quite helpless in her hands? What we learn from this act of Herod's is: 1. *That wherever a person forms connection with one less scrupulous than himself, he puts himself at a great disadvantage for living righteously.* This pressure becomes extreme when the connection is so close as that of marriage. And many a marriage of this kind involves the parties in difficulties as trying if not as tragic as those which now involved Herod. 2. Again, we see *the tendency of sin to spread and infure many.* The sensualist often lays the flattering unction to his soul that, however vile his sin may be, he at least injures only himself. When Herod laid aside his self-respect and allowed his passions to be inflamed by the dancing of a wanton, he was not conscious of injuring any one. But before the sun was set his coarse profligacy had suddenly thrust itself into the most sacred life, and carried ruin with it. And in a thousand ways do sins of the flesh, which we flatter ourselves shall hurt nobody but ourselves, make us much wickeder than we wish, and carry us to consequences disastrous to others as well as to ourselves. 3. It is in our Lord's treatment of Herod that we see the full result of this passage in his history. When brought before his judgment-seat he would not vouchsafe a word to his judge. By his treatment of John, Herod had forfeited his right to judge our Lord. Any interest he now professed in Jesus was false. He played round the margin of higher things, and flattered himself he would one day take the plunge; but this trifling only hardened his heart, and had made him incapable of understanding the gravity and importance of the matters that were brought before him. This is no unusual experience. Many men deal so shiftily with conscience, and constantly make enjoyment their real end in life, that there is left in them no capacity for earnest spiritual thought and feeling. Had Herod saved John's life and braved the anger of Herodias, he would probably have saved the life of Jesus also. But since that first opportunity of playing the man, he had steadily fallen, till he not only sacrificed a greater than John, but was unconscious of the enormity of his guilt. To such a man what could our Lord have to say? Here we may discern *the reason why many men who seem to be inquirers after truth are left in darkness. They omit the preliminaries.* Like Herod, who said nothing about John's death, they neglect to do the obvious duties that daily call them. They do not act on the light they have, and therefore they get no more. By trifling with former convictions and dealing insincerely with conscience, they reach that most appalling of human conditions, in which they cannot receive help even from him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Turning now to the heroic figure in this tragedy, we are struck first with the completeness given to John's character both by his rebuke of Herod and by his death. All Jews were more or less scandalized by the conduct of the king; but, so far as history informs us, none were honest enough or bold enough to tell him how his conduct stood related to the Law. (Compare conduct of courtiers of Henry VIII. when asked if his divorce were lawful.) Such freedom from fear and favour as John's is rarely attained, and attained only by those whom the truth makes free—by those who are themselves living so true a life that all personal interests are eclipsed by the steady shining of the truth. That must shine whatever else goes out. We may be tempted to ask—What good did John do by his boldness? He did not make Herod repent, and he only made things look more hopeless for the righteous. And so with ourselves, the good we

attempt is not done, and we ourselves are permanently injured. Were it not better for us to turn for ever away from those unattainable heights which only heroes can climb? But: 1. John could not have helped rebuking Herod. He was sent to turn people to repentance. Herod invited him, and he must speak. 2. Are we sure John's conduct was fruitless? It is by admiration of such heroic acts that men are practically brought within sight of a spiritual world, in presence of which all earthly glory and gain seem poor and tarnished. It is through such acts that we are enabled to believe in the righteousness of God. Righteousness becomes a new thing when it assumes a visible form upon earth, and condemns our unrighteousness with irresistible force. Lastly, it is true direct success did not attend John's efforts; and if we are to act righteously and courageously, we must not do so in expectation that such conduct will always bring us in this life outward comfort and personal safety. But let no one think of his own life as so commonplace, so padded round with social safeguards and comforts, that no act of heroism can ever be required of him. Acts requiring true moral courage and absolute self-sacrifice are called for every day, and your day and opportunity will no doubt also come. And out of very feeble and commonplace material heroes are made by John's fundamental quality, fidelity to Christ. It is knowledge of Christ and sympathy with him, loyalty to him and genuine love for him, which carry the soul forward to greater things than otherwise it could dare.—D.

Vers. 22—33.—*Peter walking on the sea.* This time was a crisis in the life of our Lord. Thousands of people had followed him into a secluded part of the country, and insisted that he should proclaim himself King. It would have been a lesson to leaders of men to have seen how he induced the huge mob quietly to disperse. But the strain was tremendous. He had to control not merely the clamouring, infatuated thousands, but himself also. What more seductive to the human spirit than the being carried by acclamation to the place of highest influence, entrusted with power to work out one's own ideas of what is for the welfare of men? Feeling, therefore, the difficulty of the conflict, he gave himself, as soon as the victory was gained, to prayer. He spent the night calming, steadying, fortifying his spirit by fellowship with the Father. Thus prepared, he went to seek his disciples. Why did our Lord adopt at this time so extremely unusual a mode of action? He never did singular things, although he had power to do anything. His power was infinite, so were his sobriety of mind and self-control. His motive probably was the desire to rescue his disciples from difficulties into which he himself had brought them. For consider their probable state of mind. They had first met with the deep disappointment of hearing our Lord distinctly decline a crown; they had been made conscious that, so far from helping their Master, they were sometimes encumbrances to him. But, worst of all, they had been compelled, against their own will and judgment, to embark. They seemed to have very good reason for murmuring at their Master, and yet here on their own lake, in their own boat, they do his bidding. And they had their reward. They kept on as he had told them, and therefore they were overtaken by his presence and help. The disciples, then, could not fail to be impressed chiefly with *Christ's mindfulness* of them. His appearance showed them that no interests of his own, however distracting, could make him oblivious of them and their necessities; it showed them also that nothing could prevent him from bringing them the aid they required. Is it not likely that a great part of his prayer through the night was occupied with them and their individual temptations to deny him and go with the multitude? And it were well if we could attain to the knowledge they now acquired regarding Christ's mindfulness. We seem at times to be so entirely delivered over to unsympathetic and almost unintelligent agents and influences, that it seems impossible the help of one so spiritual can penetrate to us or avail us aught; but he can make himself understood by the dullest forces of nature, and can find his way to us through the wildest turmoil. The men who had taken the wild fury of wind and sea as a part of the day's work, and had without any quickening of pulse faced the dangers they were professionally familiar with, are appalled at once and together by the single Figure that approaches them without menace or noise. They saw in it a whole world of unconceived possibilities, and coming at that hour when already they were hard pressed, they concluded it came as the herald of doom. God's way of helping us is often so different from the one we have planned, that when it comes

we murmur instead of being grateful. The transport of reaction finds expression, as usual, through Peter. We need not try to account for the extraordinary request he now made, further than by saying that it was due to the sudden joy of meeting the Friend in whom was all safety, after a night of such tension and toil and disturbance of thought. And the Lord approved Peter's impulse, else he would not have bid him come, and eventually does not rebuke him for attempting the thing, but for not succeeding. Impulse has its fit place, only it needs to be strongly backed. There are things now that need to be done, but which will seem as impossible as walking on the sea except to the eye of warm feeling. This unreasoning impulse of Peter's, too, penetrated more deeply into the nature of miracle than a good deal of our would-be wisdom penetrates. For it saw no reason why the miracle should not be evinced in Peter's person as well as in Jesus'. And our Lord, by ascribing Peter's failure solely to lack of faith, implies that any one with faith enough could walk on the sea just as he himself did. He himself did it by faith. But did our Lord mean that if only a man believed he could walk on the water, this would give him power to do so? Certainly not. Faith is needed, but a legitimate occasion is also needed. It is harmony, identification with God and his will, that give power to work miracle. The miracles of our Lord are, therefore, a great promise to human nature; in the Person of Jesus it was shown what that nature is capable of when in its right and normal relation to God. But the results of faith did not last one moment beyond the faith itself. Peter's fear for one moment excluded faith; the waves shut him off from God, and at once he sank. We do not by once believing receive the Spirit *in retention* as our own; the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and only while connected with the Son does the Spirit flow from him to us. We fail and sink as soon as we separate ourselves and begin to live by ourselves and for ourselves. We are strong with a strength far beyond our own when we live in God, with his will at heart and intending to work as his hand in the world. But that is the perfect human condition, habitually realized by our Lord alone. There is a lower condition consistent with salvation—the condition in which Peter, conscious of his weakness and seeing his danger, cries, "Lord, save me!" Is there any part of your life, any matter of thought or conduct in regard to which you feel that you are sinking, and must shortly be overwhelmed altogether? then consider the prompt, willing, efficient help that answers the cry. The lasting result of this incident on the disciples was their deepened conviction of our Lord's Divinity. How are we to arrive at that conviction; to feel that our proper attitude is one of worship, and that in his presence we are secure against all calamity; that for rest of mind and spirit, for education of conscience, for fulness of help in all for which we are insufficient, we need go no further than him? I do not suppose that this one miracle would have convinced that boat's crew; but their minds had been gradually accumulating material for understanding him, and this incident was but a more brilliant light set in front of that material, and which gave the right reading of it. The same material, or nearly the same, is available for us. Let us be patient, sincere, and hopeful. These men who were with him from day to day did not all at once reach the joy of recognizing in the Friend they had learned to love their God and Saviour; but their experience of his love, his truth, his wisdom, his power, gradually separated him in their thoughts from all others and gave him the highest place.—D.

Vers. 1—12.—*The morals of a tragedy.* Here we have a tragedy in which the principal actors are, on the one side Jesus and John the Baptist, and on the other Herod, Herodias, and Salome. We propose to bring out some of its lessons. Learn, then—

I. THAT THE HAUGHTIEST DESPOT IS HIMSELF RULED BY THE MEANEST THINGS. 1. *What is meaner than vile passion?* (1) Capricious lust ruled the destinies of Herod. The king is ruled by the beast. The beast excites the murderer. The man is bedevilled. (2) "He that ruleth his heart is greater than he that taketh a city." Brute force may take the city. Brute force may imprison the saint. Moral force rules the heart. It vanquishes sin. It vanquishes Satan. 2. *What is meaner than the pander of vile passion?* (1) This Herodias was. A despicable woman, who could abandon her living husband to consort with his brother. (2) The tetrarch was the creature of that wretch. He consented to her stipulation that he should divorce his lawful wife. He became a murderer to please her. (3) How much lower can the despot sink? Let those who

would be honourable eschew despotism. Be admonished by the "dog in office;" by the "beggar on horseback."

II. THAT THE DIVERSIONS OF THE WORLD ARE COMMON OCCASIONS OF SIN. 1. *Feasting.* (1) This in the abstract is innocent. There are religious festivals. (2) Excesses have to be avoided (see Prov. xxiii. 31—33). (3) The folly of the fool comes out of his merry heart. "There cannot be a better glass, wherein to discern the face of our hearts, than our pleasures; such as *they* are, such are we" (Bishop Hall; see Prov. x. 23; Hos. vii. 5). 2. *Dancing.* (1) This may evince a holy excitement, as when David danced before the ark. His dancing would be the hilarious stepping of a soul full of holy triumph. (2) The dancing of Salome was of another kind. The dancing of the ball-room is a pernicious invention to excite criminal passion. It has often led to the sacrifice of chastity, and to murder afterwards to conceal shame. (3) Christian mothers who send their daughters to the dancing-school should remember the mother of Salome (cf. 2 Chron. xxii. 3). 3. *Company.* (1) The company of the good is from the Lord. It was none the less edifying to the disciples of John because a prison was the place of meeting. (2) The company of the wicked is from the devil. It is none the less demoralizing when the meeting-place is in a palace. (3) Tyrants will have flatterers for their courtiers. They hate reprovers. John's words were rough like his raiment (see 1 Kings xxii. 8; Prov. ix. 8; xv. 10—12). The prisoner is not bidden to the feast. (4) Unlike the princes of Jehoiakim (see Jer. xxxvi. 25), the guests of Antipas had not the spirit to protest against the oaths or the murder, and so they became accomplices in both. To their notions of honour the Baptist's head must be sacrificed.

III. THAT A PARTIAL SURRENDER TO TRUTH IS NO SECURITY AGAINST CORRUPTION. 1. *Herod for some time spared John's life.* (1) In the first flush of his resentment for John's reproof, he was minded to put John to death. In this, too, he was encouraged by Herodias. But he was restrained by his fear of the multitude, "because they counted John as a prophet." (2) The fear of man is to the wicked a greater restraint than the fear of God. Men fear to be hanged for what they fear not to be damned (see Eccles. vii. 17). The fear of man *restrains;* the fear of God *constrains.* 2. *He even listened to John's sermons.* (1) The consequence was that he had a new motive for sparing John's life, which was still coveted by Herodias. He now "feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe." (2) He heard John with a conviction which "much perplexed him; and he heard him gladly." Wicked men are not insensible to the beauty and power of great principles. Many such listen gladly to faithful gospel preaching. (3) He went further; "he did many things" at the instance of John. 3. *But he did not forsake all his sins.* (1) He retained Herodias. How many things in the way of reformation will men do while they hold to the sin that easily besets them! (2) He detained the Baptist in prison. There he lay for eighteen months—a term equal to that of his public ministry. Thus was the tyrant responsible for the crime the public ministry of that great man might have prevented. (3) The sequel was that, though "the king was sorry," yet he murdered his monitor to gratify his mistress.

IV. THAT THE WICKED HAVE TO DREAD RETRIBUTIVE RESURRECTIONS. 1. *Crime distorts the conscience.* (1) "The king was sorry." (*a*) Sorry at his banquet. Note: Sorrow accompanies the joys of earth. (*b*) Sorry that he had pledged his oath to the damsel when he saw the consequence. "How human passion contradicts itself! Now war is waged for an inch of land; now half a kingdom is sacrificed to the will of a young coquette!" (Quesnel). (2) But his honour was at stake. "Herod had so much religion as to make scruple of an oath—not so much as to make scruple of a murder" (Bishop Hall). Can a wicked oath justify a wicked deed? (3) "For the sake of them that sat at meat with him" (cf. Mark vi. 21). The law of honour would condemn Herod as a coward if he did not keep his oath. Yet was he such a coward that he would rather brave the anger of God than the contempt of vain men. So he murdered a great prophet for very tenderness of conscience! (4) "The king was sorry." Men enter on a new stage of crime when the restraints of fear yield to self-indulgence. A new step in sin is seldom made without compunction. A guilty man is ever miserable under the power of self-accusation, reproach, and remorse. 2. *Phantoms arise from the distortion.* (1) Christ had been now preaching and working miracles about two

years, yet Herod had not heard of him. The fame of the good moves slowly to the great (cf. 1 Cor. i. 26; ii. 8). (2) The guilty conscience is quick in its conclusions. Herod saw in the miracle-worker John the Baptist whom he had beheaded risen from the dead. Blood cries from the conscience of the murderer. He cannot rid himself of that gory visage. (3) Where now is the Sadducee? The "leaven of Herod" is understood to be the doctrine of the Sadducees (cf. ch. xvi. 6; Mark viii. 15). They denied the resurrection (see Acts xxiii. 8). But Sadduceeism staggers when conscience is awake. (4) The resurrections of the conscience, however, are premonitory of those of the last day. John will yet in verity confront Herod before the bar of God.—J. A. M.

Vers. 13—21.—*The table in the wilderness.* Jesus had several reasons for his crossing the lake to the desert of Bethsaida. 1. He was there out of the jurisdiction of Herod. (1) Antipas, instigated by Herodias, had recently beheaded the Baptist, and might have been moved to proceed against Jesus, who he suspected was his victim risen from the dead (see vers. 1, 2). Jesus could have secured himself by Divine power, but, as our Exemplar, he chose to do so by human prudence. It is lawful in times of peril to fly from persecution when we have no special call of God to expose ourselves to it. (2) Herod desired to see Jesus, but was unworthy of that honour. So, when afterwards they came face to face, "Jesus answered him nothing" (cf. Luke ix. 9; xxiii. 8, 9; cf. also the case of Saul and Samuel, 1 Sam. xv. 35; xx. 24). 2. He avoided the pressure of the people and gained some leisure to converse with his disciples newly returned from their progress (cf. Mark vi. 31, 32; Luke ix. 10). 3. He intended to spread before the multitude a table in the wilderness. He knew that the people would follow him. Note: Jesus sometimes leaves us that we may follow him. He lures us into spiritual solitudes to show us there the wonders of his compassion and goodness. The scene is before us.

I. THERE ARE THE GUESTS. 1. *They are many.* (1) Seldom do we hear of a banquet spread for ten thousand. There were "about five thousand men." They were easily reckoned, for they were ranged in companies of fifty. "Beside" these were the "women and children." (2) Yet these thousands were only representative of the thousands of millions who are daily feasted upon the bounty of Divine providence. Also countless millions of animated organisms. "Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." (3) They were also representative of the host for whom God has provided the bounties of his grace. From these none are excluded who have not excluded themselves. 2. *They are earnest.* (1) Their interest is excited by the "signs which Jesus did on them that were sick" (see John vi. 2). They travelled round the lake on foot, many of them a distance of about four miles. (2) They brought with them their sick to be healed. Perhaps, in some cases, sought his healing for those at their homes too invalided to be carried. Certain it is that Jesus required faith for healing. It is equally certain that "he had compassion on these, and healed their sick." He "healed them that had need of healing" (ver. 14; Luke ix. 11). (3) They are earnest in attention to his teaching. Luke tells us that Jesus "received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 11). From the texts of his power he unfolded his wisdom. Such is the effect that they are scarce restrained from proclaiming him king (see John ix. 14, 15). 3. *They are needy.* (1) This fact is recognized in the prudence of the disciples (ver. 15). Note: Disciples are often more apt to show discretion than faith. (2) If they need the bread that perisheth, how much more do they need that which endureth to everlasting life! Jesus "had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark vi. 34). The poor people were woefully neglected by the Pharisees and scribes. (3) "They have no need to go away." In their eagerness after Jesus they had forgotten their ordinary food; but Jesus had not forgotten them. "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

II. THERE IS THE TABLE. 1. *It is spread in the wilderness.* (1) The disciples did not yet properly estimate the resources of their Lord. Instead of looking to him for the supply of their wants, like Israel in the desert, they were for returning to Egypt. Are there now no disciples in that prudent apostolical succession? (2) When the Lord said, "Give ye them to eat," still they did not properly consider who it was that spake to them. They now looked to their own resources and found them utterly

inadequate. In this error also the disciples have many successors. (3) Soon, however, they discovered that the God of Israel was among them. The five loaves and two fishes were so multiplied that the thousands were satisfied, and the fragments left were greatly in excess of the original store. Hallelujah! 2. *This recalls an earlier scene.* (1) Every reflective person in that company would be reminded of the earlier miracle when their fathers in the wilderness were fed from heaven with manna. Even the desert was suggestive. Moreover, "the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh" (see John vi. 4), and many in this company were on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate that feast, so significantly recalling the history of the Exodus. (2) Who, then, but the same God of Israel, who fed the fathers with that heavenly bread, is this Jesus who now feeds their children no less miraculously? 3. *This also anticipates a later scene.* (1) This broken bread was a type of the Bread of life, to be broken for the spiritual nourishment of believers (see John vi. 26, 27). "By it" Jesus "proclaimed himself the Bread of the world, the Source of all life, of which there shall be enough and to spare for all evermore" (Trench). (2) The Lord gave the bread to denote the life we have in communion with him. The identity of the teaching in the argument of Jesus upon this miracle (see John vi.), with the teaching of the Eucharist, cannot be missed. (3) This, by parity of reasoning, invests with new interest the corresponding miracle of the multiplication of the wine at the marriage (see John ii. 1—11). The communion of Christ is the cheer of our joy as well as the food for our need.

III. THERE IS THE SERVICE. 1. *The King heads his table.* (1) "We have here but five loaves, and two fishes." God often permits his servants to be brought low that they may have the more frequent opportunities of trusting him. (2) "Bring them hither to me." If we bring our frugal fare to Jesus for his blessing, he will make it a sufficiency for the body and a sacrament to the soul (cf. Ps. xxxvii. 19; Hag. i. 9). He clothes himself with a body that he may encourage us to depend upon him for the supply of our bodily wants. He takes special care of the bodies of those who are engaged in his service. (3) "Looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake." God's creatures must be received with thanksgiving (see 1 Sam. ix. 13; Acts ii. 46, 47; xxvii. 35; 1 Tim. iv. 4). But the blessing of Jesus was more than a thanksgiving. (4) The presence of Christ can turn a wilderness into a paradise (cf. Isa. xli. 19, 20; li. 3). 2. *The disciples are the servitors.* (1) They are commissioned to order the multitude into companies (see Luke ix. 14). These fifties are representative of the Churches of Christendom, which are presided over by the ministers of Christ. What Christ designed for his Churches he signified by his servant John (Rev. i. 1—4). (2) They were commissioned to give the loaves to the multitude. Receiving the bread of life themselves, they are strengthened to minister it to others. Through their hands the multitudes are to receive it from the Lord (cf. ch. xxiv. 45; 2 Cor. v. 20; vi. 1). (3) The bread multiplies in their hands. Herein the Word of God proves itself to be the living bread. So it is like seed. The living Word is the life of the word preached. As seed is multiplied, not by hoarding, but by sowing, so is the Word. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." Note: What we give in charity should first be given to Christ, that his blessing may multiply its benefit. They that have little must relieve others out of that little, that they may have more. (4) They are instructed to "gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost" (John vi. 12). What they gave they received back manifold. There were "five loaves," one for every thousand men; they gathered up twelve hand-baskets full, one for each apostle. They had also fragments over from the fishes (see Mark vi. 43; Luke xv. 17).—J. A. M.

Vers. 22—33.—*Lessons of the storm.* The wonderful narrative before us suggests many lessons, amongst which the following may be noted, viz.—

I. THAT JESUS IS A PARTY TO THE TROUBLES OF HIS DISCIPLES. 1. *These are often induced by their own folly.* (1) After the miracle of the loaves the multitudes were eager to proclaim Jesus as their national King. From what we learn from John (vi. 15), it would seem the disciples were more disposed to second their wishes than to aid their Master in his efforts to send the people away. In this they were moved by the ignorant prejudices of the times. Note: The ignorance of his disciples has ever been a trouble to Christ. (2) This was the occasion of their having to embark and put to sea, and consequently of their having to encounter a terrific storm. Note: We may

expect to encounter afflictions and perplexities when, from whatever motives, we are so foolish as to oppose the will of Christ. 2. *Satan has a malignant hand in them.* (1) Evil spirits are concerned in the mischief of destructive storms. The history of Job shows what power Satan has over the elements when he is permitted to use it. When our Lord, in another storm, "*rebuked* the winds and the sea" (see ch. viii. 26), did he not recognize blameworthy intelligence as working behind these elements? (2) The closing petitions of the Lord's Prayer, "And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one," show that not only is Satan, in some of his agencies, concerned in every mischief, but that he is so of set malignant purpose. It shows, moreover, that our defence is prayer. 3. *Jesus has a benevolent hand in them.* (1) He *constrained* his disciples to enter the boat and put to sea. This was to relieve himself from their embarrassing sympathy with the prejudices of the multitude. This in itself was a benevolence. It put them out of the way of working further mischief. (2) He knew, when he constrained them to enter that boat, that they would have to encounter the storm. He permitted the evil spirits to exert their power upon the elements, or, otherwise, commissioned those elements to war. But his design here also was benevolent. It taught the disciples: (*a*) That those who will not submit to the ruling of Christ's wisdom will have to sail without him in the voyage of life. (*b*) That in voyaging without Christ the way is difficult and perilous. (*c*) That the policy of their ignorant prejudice in making Christ a civil Ruler, if carried out, would, instead of bringing the tranquillity they pictured to themselves, bring them into a political hurricane. (3) If, then, Jesus is a party to the troubles of his disciples, and that his hand in those troubles is benevolent, let us bless him for them. Let us also be quick to learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

II. THAT JESUS IS PRESENT WITH HIS DISCIPLES IN THEIR TROUBLES. 1. *He is present in spirit when invisible.* (1) When he had dispersed the multitudes "he went up into the mountain apart to pray." He knew the temper in which his disciples had sailed; he foresaw the coming storm; he remembers them in prayer. By that intercession the malignity of Satan is restrained, and the fury of the winds and waves so moderated that the lives are preserved. (2) And if Jesus from that mountain-height could see and sympathize with his disciples in that tempest, so does he still, from the height of heaven, see and sympathize with his followers in every trouble of their lives. 2. *He is present, moreover, in power.* (1) In the crisis of extremity that power is seen. The disciples were now "about five and twenty furlongs" from the shore, in the centre of the inland sea, and the storm most distressing. Just then Jesus "came unto them, walking upon the sea." (2) That blessed presence is as powerful as it is timely. The Egyptian hieroglyphic for impossibility was a man's feet walking on the sea. Things impossible to men are possible with God (cf. Job ix. 8). In this miracle the law of gravitation is inverted, and the liquid waves are converted into an adamantine way. (3) Now he enters the boat. Behold, instantly, all is calm!

III. THAT CREDULITY IS THE COMPANION OF UNBELIEF. 1. *The heart is slow to discern Christ.* (1) There he is walking upon the sea, yet is he not identified even by his own disciples. Why did they not recognize him instantly? Who else could it possibly be? (2) But they deemed this too wonderful to be Christ. What, too wonderful for that Blessed One who in this very lake district—at Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum—had wrought so many miracles! Who on this very sea had stilled a tempest with a word! Who but a few hours earlier had feasted ten thousand upon five barley cakes! Yet such was the fact (see Mark vi. 52). (3) Are we more quick to discern Christ in the wonders of providence than the apostles were to recognize his presence in the wonders of this history? How seldom do we see deeper than the second causes of things! 2. *It mistakes him for a phantom.* (1) "And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition; and they cried out for fear" (cf. Acts xii. 15). (2) This "fear" suggests that they even mistook Jesus for a demon or evil spirit. How frightful are the distortions of the credulity of unbelief! (3) The disciples were terrified at an apparition which was designed for their salvation. When in their extremity they "cried out for fear," *then* came their relief. By a word, "It is I; be not afraid," the deepest fear is turned into the highest joy (cf. Ps cxii. 4). The calm now succeeds the storm in the soul.

IV. THAT NATURAL RESOURCES ARE USELESS IN SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS. 1. *Seaman-*

ship failed in this storm. (1) Several of the disciples were brought up as fishermen, and knew how to handle the oar (Mark vi. 48). But here they were at their wits' end, so furiously was the sea working in the storm. This was not purely an elemental strife; it was a spiritual conflict, brought about for spiritual purposes. (2) Their salvation was of the Lord. He laid the storm. We too shall exclaim, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God," when he tranquillizes the mind which the prince of the powers of the air had disturbed and troubled. Only in so far as the love of Christ is in us can we worship him as Love. 2. *The swimming art failed in these waves.* (1) Peter's fault was not his courage when he said, "Lord, if it be thou"—since it is thou—"bid me come unto thee upon the waters." Courage is fearlessness, and intelligent fearlessness is faith. Faith is the opposite of doubt and fear (cf. Mark v. 36; Rom. xiv. 23; Jas. i. 6). (2) The Lord permits us to try our strength that we may discover our weakness. Peter in the ship was bold; timid on the angry sea. Men are often confident in speculation, diffident in practice. (3) Peter was borne up on the water in proportion to his faith, as the children of Israel were victorious as the hands of Moses were held up (Exod. xvii. 11). "The true position of every disciple is this: So to see the deep that is beneath him as to lose all confidence in himself, and so to see the Saviour that is near him as to lose all terror of the billows" (Anon.). (4) Peter was a good swimmer (see John xxi. 7), but he trusts not to his swimming in this peril. Those who rely on grace lose confidence in nature. Christ is the sufficient confidence of his saints.—J. A. M.

Vers. 34—36.—*Philanthropy.* After Jesus had come to his distressed disciples walking on the sea, and calmed for them the fury of the storm, with their Master now in their company, they had a pleasant run to the land of Gennesaret. Behold now another scene of wonder. "When the men of that place knew him," etc. Here we have a fine example of philanthropy, in which there is—

I. A TRUE SYMPATHY WITH HUMANITY. The evidences of this are: 1. *A knowledge of what it is.* This is expressed in the single word "sick." And this implies: (1) Disorganization; (*a*) physical; (*b*) intellectual; (*c*) moral. (2) Disability, viz. in every part of our nature. (3) Suffering. (4) Death. 2. *An estimate of what it ought to be.* This also may be expressed in the single word "healthy." And this implies: (1) That the elements of our nature work together harmoniously. (*a*) As to the organs of the body; (*b*) as to the faculties of the intellect; (*c*) as to the will and the affections of the heart. (2) That consequently there is strength and competence in all our powers. (3) Moreover that there is happiness. (*a*) The sense of immunity from pain; (*b*) the sense of vigour. (4) And there is life. This is more than existence. Physically, it is existence under the best conditions. So, morally, it is union with God. 3. *A yearning for its regeneration.* This is the crucial point. There are theorists who have noble conceptions of what men ought to be, who do not endeavour to exemplify their ideal, nor to induce others to do so. Such a theorist may be a devil.

II. AN ACTIVE PUBLIC SPIRIT. This is evinced in: 1. *The quick discernment of the presence of the Healer.* (1) The men of Gennesaret recognized Jesus as soon as he landed on their shore. He had been amongst them before. Gennesaret, the ancient Chinnereth (see Deut. iii. 17; Josh. xix. 35), the district in Lower Galilee in which Capernaum was situate (cf. Mark vi. 53; John vi. 22—25). Probably they had been amongst those who witnessed the miracle of the loaves on the preceding day. (2) They were more noble than their neighbours, the Gergesenes, who "besought Jesus that he would depart out of their coasts," for they welcomed him among them. Note: If Christ were better known he would be better trusted, and not rejected as he is too often. (3) The discernment of the day of opportunity is an important step towards its improvement (cf. Luke xix. 24; John i. 10). It is better to know that there *is* a prophet amongst us than that there *has been* one (see Ezek. ii. 5). 2. *The prompt gathering into that presence of the sick.* (1) The men of Gennesaret lost no time, but sent instantly messengers through all parts of the surrounding country to advise the sick that the Healer had arrived. Note: Those who know Christ should preach him. (2) If these men of Gennesaret had tasted of the loaves, and that this zeal was an effect of the miracle upon them, this lesson is suggested, viz. that the inward reception of the truth will create a desire for the removal of outward evil. When the word

comes into the heart it will renovate the life. (3) The zeal of the men of Gennesaret was transfused into their messengers. Mark gives a graphic description of their activity (see Mark vi. 53—56). 3. *The earnest supplication of the Divine blessing.* (1) The religious is the truest philanthropy. (*a*) Religion benefits the body. Its precepts conduce to health. Their violation is the chief cause of disease. (*b*) Religion benefits the soul. The soul is the grander part. The philanthropy which terminates in the body is imperfect. (2) It is prayerful. "They," the men of Gennesaret, "besought Jesus that they," the sick, "might only touch the border of his garment." Note: (*a*) The prayer was importunate. "Besought him." (*b*) It was mixed with faith. "That they might only touch." The virtue was not in the garment, but in the touch, which, as an act of faith, was to be rewarded. (*c*) It was mixed with gratitude. Eastern people show respect to their princes by kissing their sleeve or skirt. (3) They were evidently influenced by the example of their countrywoman. For she was of Capernaum who introduced this idea of touching the hem of the garment (see ch. ix. 20—22). The precious ointment which was upon the head of Jesus ran down to the skirts of his garment (Ps. cxxxiii. 2). (4) "As many as touched were made whole." If ministers could cure bodily diseases they would have many clients; for, unhappily, men are commonly more concerned about the body than about the soul. The cure of disease, morally considered, is the removal of evils and errors, by which the faculties recover their true tone and balance, and the mind becomes enriched with truth and goodness.—J. A. M.

Ver. 4.—*John's rugged faithfulness.* How John came into contact with Herod, or how he was called to administer such a public reproof, we are not informed. It is quite possible that, in the Divine inspiration, he had done somewhat as Elijah had done before him—suddenly appeared at court,—a strange weird figure before which the soldiers shrank back,—marched straight into the presence of Herod, and with no preamble or apology, declared, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." It is, however, quite possible that Herod may have sent for him, hoping to get his conscience eased by securing the prophet's approval of his act; and no doubt Herod had some fine excuses and explanations to offer. Men always have when they have resolved to satisfy their own fancies and vices. And at Eastern courts there are always people willing enough to flatter their king, and encourage him in his vices. John stands out in strong contrast with all such.

I. A MAN WHO KNEW THE RIGHT. We are often confused because, though we may know the right, there are special circumstances in each particular case which disturb our judgment. We can see the abstract right, but it is difficult to see the right in *just this case.* It cannot be right that a man should have his brother's wife. And yet advisers at court may make out that high policy makes that necessary in this case. Compare Cranmer helping Henry VIII. to secure his shameless divorce. John the Baptist listened to no excuses of policy, which were but excuses of passion. He knew the right.

II. A MAN WHO SPOKE OUT THE RIGHT HE KNEW. So often we "keep silence in the evil time." We think we can do no good by speaking out, and may only bring trouble on ourselves. The men who have influenced the generations are the men of strong convictions, who could not keep silence. John, on this occasion, might have been cautious; he might have spoken like a courtier, eased his message, spoken carefully, and taken care not to offend. His mission was to the conscience of the wicked king. There shall be no trimming in his message; it shall smite right home. It is bald, bare, strong, uncompromising. "It is not lawful for thee to have her." People are sometimes what they call "faithful," but they are only irritating and humiliating. True faithfulness is conscience-rousing.

III. A MAN WHO SUFFERED FOR THE RIGHT HE SPOKE. Not really at the hands of Herod. Really at the hands of Herodias, the unscrupulous woman who was the Jezebel to this Ahab. A man who fears the personal consequences of witnessing to the right, or doing the right, will never stand beside rugged, faithful John in the Divine approval.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The foolishness of unlimited promises.* "He promised with an oath to give

her whatsoever she would ask." We are sometimes invited to promise before we are told what is to be asked. It should never be done. No man can tell whether it is right to promise until he knows what is to be promised. In the case now before us, we find a man excited with wine and company, and not really himself. It is necessary to realize the gay but degrading scene, and the skilfulness of the wicked scheme carried through by Herodias. To us dancing is a modest and beautiful amusement, whatever may be thought of its relation to religious people. But at Eastern feasts, girls of bad character were often introduced, who amused the guests, and excited evil passions, by rude movements and antics, and dancing in filmy garments. "Herodias knew the tetrarch's weak point as well as Madame du Barry knew that of Louis XV. of France, and sought to bend him to her will, even though it were by the sacrifice of her daughter's modesty." She made Salome act before these guests as if she were an Almeh-dancer. Herod loses all self-control, and foolishly promises her anything.

I. A SURRENDER OF JUDGMENT. A man should always consider and decide before he promises. A man may surrender his judgment to God. He may yield his judgment in discussion with his fellow-men, because a better judgment may be given. But he may never give away his judgment, and let some one else judge for him. Then a man is weak, unmanly. By unlimited promise Herod surrendered his manhood, his right to control his conduct.

II. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE UNSCRUPULOUS. Their trouble always is that their plans may be considered, weighed, judged. So their scheme always is to get things carried through before they can be thought about. "To-morrow" is the weakness of the undecided, and the ruin of the unscrupulous. If Herod had said, "We will see about the promise to-morrow," John Baptist would not have lost his head. That unlimited promise broke the barriers down; and unscrupulous Herodias pressed her opportunity.

III. A CURSE ALIKE FOR THOSE WHO GET AND THOSE WHO GIVE. Is it possible for us to estimate the moral effect of this abominable transaction on Herodias and Salome? The worst thing that can ever happen to us is to be *successful* in some shameless enterprise. Salome's life was a horror, almost worse than that of Herodias. Then estimate the misery of Herod. His conscience that ever reminded him of the head in the charger. His dreadful fears that John had risen from the dead. Never promise without knowing what you promise.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Vain regrets.* "And the king was sorry." But no good came of his sorrow. It was too late. He had lost his opportunity. He had put his foot upon a slide, and down he had to go. Plumptre says, "It was the last struggle of conscience. In that moment there must have come before his mind his past reverence for the prophet, the joy which had for a time accompanied the strivings of a better life, possibly the counsels of his foster-brother Manaen." Every man must have his regrets. Things done in all good faith turn out very different to our expectations, and we regret that we did them. But, if we are strong men, we work at the correction or the remedying of our unintended evil. And regret sometimes is an important element in repentance. Regret concerns the *result* of action. Repentance concerns the *wrong* of action.

I. REGRETS ARE VAIN WHEN CHARACTER IS WEAK. Undisciplined people are always full of regrets; but they do them little or no good. Herod was sorry that he had made that unconditional promise. But he was too weak to refuse to do the wrong to which it led. The weak fear of man extracted the order for the beheading; he was ashamed before that assembly to recall his too-hasty promise. "Like most weak men, Herod feared to be thought weak. It was not so much his regard for the oath which he had taken, but his shrinking from the taunt, or whispered jest, or contemptuous gesture of the assembled guests, if they should see him draw back from his plighted word." When the character is weak it is (1) always sensitive to public opinion; (2) it is always subject to the sway of stronger characters. Herod may be as sorry as he pleases, but his regret is helpless and vain. Public opinion will drag him on into crime, and so will the shameless companion of his sins.

II. REGRETS ARE VAIN WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES ARE MASTERFUL. A man may be sorry, and may even try to put right his wrong, yet find all his efforts in vain. The man who plays with the fates will be dragged on to his doom by them. It is easy to

set going a train of circumstances, but even the strong man vainly tries to check their unfoldings; they become masterful; and he must see the misery he has made, and be punished by seeing it. Our life is so ordered that good, sooner or later, inevitably unfolds good; and evil, sooner or later, inevitably unfolds misery. Let a man do the prudent, the thoughtful, the self-restrained, the good, and he will never know the misery of vain regrets.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The first impulse of the sorrow-stricken.* There may have been more than one reason for our Lord's retirement on this occasion. He may have designed to secure a time of close personal intercourse with the apostles. They had just returned from their trial-mission; they were in a very excited frame of mind, and sorely needed a time of quiet guidance and teaching. He may also have felt that the violent death of John the Baptist, of which very imperfect accounts must have reached him, put his own life in peril, and made it advisable to remove from more public scenes for a while. But the accounts leave on us the impression that our Lord was specially affected by the news of John's death, and felt the longing for quietness and seclusion, which is the first impulse of the sorrow-stricken; in this showing himself tempted and tried even as we are, and so having a "fellow-feeling of our infirmities." The point on which we dwell is that the first desire of the sorrow-stricken is a mixed one. He both seeks quietude and he seeks company; and often he restlessly changes from the one to the other. This peculiarity we find in Jesus, in "the Man Christ Jesus."

I. THE IMPULSE TO SEEK LONELINESS. This perhaps always comes first. Sorrow sends us into retirement. The stricken care to see nobody. Leave them alone in their grief. This is illustrated in two scenes of Christ's life. 1. In the case before us, when Jesus received the sad news of the violent death of a friend and fellow-worker. He wanted to be alone. He went into quietude. He passed across the lake, to the lonely eastern side, away from the pressure of the crowds. Silence, separation, are the felt needs of such an hour. 2. In the case of Gethsemane, when Jesus was in immediate anticipation of calamity, and overwhelmed with mental distress. Then he sought the quiet of the garden, the shade of the olives, and even separation from the trusted three. None may see the Man in his sublime soul-wrestlings. He must be alone.

II. THE IMPULSE TO SEEK COMPANY. This is quite as marked. The stricken man *wants* to be alone, and yet cannot *bear* to be alone. He wants to feel that friends are near; that he can reach them. He must sometimes speak out the woe to them, or it would grow unendurable. This is illustrated in the same two scenes of Christ's life. In the first, our Lord must have the apostolic company with him. "Come ye into a desert place, and rest a while." In the second, he must feel that the chosen three were close at hand. Truly a "fellow-feeling of our infirmities."—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*The necessity for constraint.* Thomson puts together the narrative so as to bring out the reason for Christ's constraining the disciples; or, rather, a first and external reason which prepares for the discernment of the deeper reason.

I. THE EVIDENT NECESSITY FOR THE CONSTRAINT. "As the evening was coming on, Jesus commanded the disciples to return home to Capernaum, while he sent the people away. They were reluctant to go and leave him alone in that desert place; probably remonstrated against his exposing himself to the coming storm and the cold night air, and reminded him that he would have many miles to walk round the head of the lake, and must cross the Jordan at Bethsaida before he could reach home. To quiet their minds, he may have then told them to go on toward Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd, promising to join them in the night, which he intended to do, and actually did, though in a manner very different from what they expected. Still they were reluctant to leave him, and had to be *constrained* to set sail. In this state of anxiety, they endeavoured to keep near the shore between this and Bethsaida, hoping, no doubt, to take in their beloved Master at some point along the coast. But a violent wind beat off the boat, so that they were not able to make Bethsaida, nor even Capernaum, but were driven past both; and when near the Plain of Gennesaret, at the north-west corner of the lake, Jesus came to them walking on the sea." This illustrates well the surface-explanation of these events; but it does not satisfy, because

it does not give any reason for our Lord sending the disciples away. Why did he not keep them to help him in dismissing the crowd?

II. THE REAL NECESSITY FOR THE CONSTRAINT. We must look below the surface, and then some interesting things come to view. The miracle of feeding the thousands excited the people, and led them to regard Jesus as the delivering Messiah, and there and then proclaim him as the expected King. And our Lord's disciples, instead of repressing this excitement, were carried away by it, and would have joined in this mistaken acclamation. Herein lies the explanation of the following things. 1. Their uselessness as helpers in dismissing the excited crowd, seeing they were themselves excited. 2. Christ's determination to get them out of the way. 3. Their unwillingness to go. 4. Our Lord's constraint. 5. The revelation of his mystery and spirituality, in the walking on the sea, as corrective of the material notions to which they were giving room.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The soothing power of prayer.* Earnest effort should be made to realize the strain, and excitement, and fatigue, and distress of that day to Christ. In some senses it was the very hardest day of his active ministry. Appraise carefully the spiritual, and even physical, influence of the following things. 1. Anxiety concerning the excitement of his disciples because the devils had been subject to them on their first mission. 2. Distress on hearing of the violent death of John. 3. Effort to put personal feeling aside in order to teach and heal the crowds who gathered at his landing-place. 4. The spiritual strain of expending miraculous force in multiplying the few loaves. 5. Excitement at the dangerous intentions of the people to make him king. 6. Annoyance at his disciples when they would take part with the people. 7. Necessity for acting promptly and vigorously in checking the beginnings of mischief. 8. Pain to find his disciples still imprisoned in material conceptions of him and of his mission. Surely when all was over, the disciples were on the lake, and the last lingerer of the crowd well out of sight, Jesus must have been utterly exhausted, and needed some soothing, healing balm. Where could he get it? He knew. He shows us the place of soothing. It is the place of prayer.

I. PRAYER SOOTHES BY ENABLING US TO CAST OUR CARE ON GOD. The simple soothing mission of prayer is not often dwelt on. It is too much treated as a means of getting something. Its best blessings may be said to be the good things it does for us, rather than the good things it obtains for us. Prayer allays excitement. Prayer soothes the worried. Prayer quiets the restless. Prayer stills our atmospheres. And all because it just means *telling God.* If we *begin* to tell excitedly we soon fall into the deep peace which his presence and sympathy always breathe.

II. PRAYER SOOTHES BY ASSURING US THAT GOD CARES FOR US. And that, of necessity, means the mastery of the circumstances that trouble us. We are in the midst of difficulties, and they worry; they seem to be masterful. We go to God in prayer, and feel that he is in the midst of them, ruling and overruling; and we are calmed and rested. There are no real difficulties. "Greater is he who is for us than all who can be against us."—R. T.

Ver. 26.—*A first lesson on the spiritual presence.* The answor of the disciples to the sight of Jesus walking on the sea revealed the fact that they shared the superstitious sentiments of their age. They said, "It is a spirit." "Orientals continue to believe, as of old, in supernatural agencies, not only in the all-pervading and all-controlling providence and personal influence of the Deity, which they have ever pushed to extreme fatalism, but also in the existence and activity, either for good or for evil, of spirits and invisible beings, who people the air." Our Lord desired to guide his disciples to worthier apprehensions of spiritual things, through the proper apprehension of himself as a spiritual Being and a spiritual Messiah. Our Lord had wrought many miracles which displayed his power, and revealed him as (1) Lord of Nature in all her moods; (2) of death in all its stages; (3) of devils in all their forms of mischief; (4) of souls in all their spiritual needs. Now, by this walking on the sea, he would reveal to them something of the mystery which belonged to his own Person. And this particular revelation was called for by the fact that the disciples had encouraged the attempt of the people to make their Master a merely *earthly king* (John vi. 15).

I. CHRIST'S BODILY PRESENCE DID BUT ILLUSTRATE HIS SPIRITUAL PRESENCE. It should be clearly seen that our Lord was with his disciples in a double sense. He was with them spiritually, just as he is still with us; but, besides that, he was with them in bodily relations, in ways that could be apprehended by their senses. That bodily presence was given to teach them what the spiritual presence is and involves. The record of that bodily presence is preserved that it might do the same thing for us. Christ, by coming on the sea, taught the disciples two things. 1. That he would be with them when they could not see him. 2. That they must not wonder if he came to them in strange forms and manifestations. He was teaching them how to use their wings in the spiritual atmosphere, as the mother-bird teaches her fledgelings.

II. CHRIST'S BODILY PRESENCE WAS PRESENTLY TO PASS INTO A SPIRITUAL PRESENCE. The first suggestion was the loss of body-weight which enabled Jesus to walk on the water. The second suggestion was the passing of the bodily into the spiritual at the Resurrection. The third was the passing of the spiritual body beyond the apprehension of the senses at the Ascension. The illustrative bodily presence has gone now, and gone for ever; the reality of the spiritual presence of Christ is the possession and the glory of his Church to-day.—R. T.

Vers. 29, 30.—*The lack of staying power.* "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid." It is the weakness of the impulsive man that he has no staying power, and is only good for the little while that the fit is on him. It is the weakness of impulsive, excitable nations, that while they are splendid at a dash, they have none of the persistency that holds on until the end is fully secured. St. Peter often spoke and acted before he thought. Behind him was impulse rather than resolve. So difficulties created at once a new and opposing impulse. He failed as quickly and as unreasonably as he acted. The men who succeed in life are the men who can hold on. St. Peter might have safely walked the water if he had held on the faith with which he started from the boat, and which had received the Master's approval.

I. ST. PETER ATTEMPTED AN IMPOSSIBILITY. There is nothing that men regard as so impossible as "walking on the sea." Men can walk on the narrowest ledges of the loftiest cliffs, or on the thinnest ropes, but not on the water. The Egyptians, in their hieroglyphics, were wont to represent an impossibility by painting the figure of a man with his feet walking upon the sea. St. Peter saw this impossibility overcome by his Master. A sudden thought seized him. He should like to do what his Master did. It was a child's wish; but it showed love and trust. He spoke it out. The Master said "Come," and he tried to do the impossible. A nobler man than those who never had such thoughts, and never made such attempts.

II. ST. PETER BEGAN TO SUCCEED WITH HIS IMPOSSIBILITY. A man can walk steadily along a very dangerous place if he looks up at the steadfast sky. He will be giddy if he ventures to look around or to look down. It is thus always in the spiritual spheres. St. Peters can always walk safely, even on the treacherous waters, so long as they look up and away to the steadfast Christ. They will fail and fall as soon as they look around, or down, or within. And the reason is that man is strong when he leans on another, but weak when he trusts to himself. The impulsive man leans for a minute and is strong; then impulse fails, and he is, like Samson, weak as other men.

III. ST. PETER SOON FAILED WITH HIS IMPOSSIBILITY. If he could have kept his eye and mind fixed on Jesus he would have succeeded. But he thought of the wind; and the wind took the place of Jesus. Jesus quickened *faith*; the wind quickened *fear*. Faith makes a man strong. Fear wholly unnerves. What St. Peter needed for success was "staying power of faith." Keeping on trusting. Keeping on "looking off unto Jesus;" "patient continuance in well-doing."—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*The name which disciples found for Jesus.* In a previous homily attention has been given to the name which Jesus found for himself, "The Son of man." Here we have the name for the highest thoughts which disciples could reach concerning him, "The Son of God." Much interest may be found in comparing the leading names given to Christ. God's name for him. His own name for himself. His disciples' name for him. The name he was to have. The name he wished to have. The name he came to have. "Emmanuel;" "Son of man;" "Son of God." The

disciples' confession was made in a moment of wonder at their Lord's walking on the sea, which convinced them that he was more than man. We need not suppose that they put into the term that full meaning which we associate with it; but they said it to Christ in a spirit of true reverence, offering to him the worship due only to a Divine Being.

I. THE NAME "SON OF GOD" DOES NOT REPRESENT OUR FIRST APPREHENSION OF CHRIST. It is intended that the *humanity* of Christ should make the first impression upon us. At first sight he is the "Man Christ Jesus." St. John is even supremely jealous of the truth that "Jesus is come in the flesh." It may be doubted whether any arguments for the Divinity of Christ can be effective until the truth of his humanity has been fully apprehended. What requires to be seen clearly is that the humanity of Christ cannot be fully and adequately set forth without producing the conviction that he was more than human. What the orthodox party needs to secure is a *complete* representation of our Lord's humanity. Imperfect representations have laid the basis of erroneous doctrines concerning our Lord's Person. We begin with his full humanity.

II. THE NAME "SON OF GOD" REPRESENTS ADVANCED CHRISTIAN ATTAINMENT. Hardly in the instance now before us, which is better regarded as an anticipative exclamation of what would be more intelligently and more considerately stated by-and-by. We have also to remember that the Jews commonly spoke of tradesmen as "son of the trade," and these disciples may but have intended a figure for the good man, the "Son of God." But the term was subsequently used with its fullest meaning. It represents the advanced spiritual apprehension of Christ. He is "the Son of God with power." The conviction of the Divinity, or Deity, of Christ is seldom or ever reached by arguments. It is the conviction which comes to men by personal dealings with Christ; personal experiences of his power. At first we know him as our *Saviour*; by-and-by we know him as our *God*.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

Vers. 1—20.—*Discourse concerning ceremonial pollution.* (Mark vii. 1—23.)

Ver. 1.—**Then.** This is after the third Passover, which whether our Lord attended or not, has been a matter of some dispute. Moral considerations would make us infer that he was present, fulfilling all righteousness, though there is no direct statement in our narratives on the subject. **Came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying.** The Sinaitic, B, and some other manuscripts read, *Came to Jesus from Jerusalem scribes and Pharisees.* This, which is virtually the reading of the Revised Version, whether original or not, seems to represent the fact correctly. The bigoted rabbis of the capital, aroused to fresh action by the news of Christ's success in Galilee, send emissaries from Jerusalem to see if they cannot find some cause of offence in the words or actions of this rash Innovator which may give the desired opportunity of crushing him. An occasion offered itself, and was immediately seized.

Ver. 2.—**Thy disciples.** They had watched our Lord and his followers partaking of some meal, and doubtless Christ had acted in the same manner as his disciples. Open houses and food partaken of in public allowed this close observation without any infringement of Eastern courtesy. They come to Christ with the insidious question, because they consider him answerable for his disciples' doings (comp. ch. ix. 14; xii. 2). They imply that his teaching has led to the transgression on which they animadvert. Doubtless the apostles, from Christ's instruction and example, were learning to free themselves from the endless rules and restrictions which were no help to religion, and to attend more to the great realities of vital piety and holiness. The omission of the outward acts, rabbinically enjoined, was readily marked and censured. **The tradition.** This formed a vast collection of additions, explanations, etc., of the original Law, partly, as was affirmed, delivered orally by Moses, and handed down from generation to generation; and partly accumulated by successive expounders. St. Paul refers to this when he speaks of himself before his conversion as being "exceedingly jealous for the tradition of my fathers" (Gal. i. 14). From it, in the course of time, was formed the Talmud, with its text (Mishna) and its commentary (Gemara). It was not put into writing till after our Lord's time

(hence called ἄγραφος διδασκαλία), but was taught authoritatively by accredited teachers, who, while retaining the letter of the Law, abrogated its spirit, nullifying the broad line of God's commandments by enforcing minute observances and puerile restrictions, which were a burden and impediment to purity and devotion, rather than an aid and encouragement. **The elders** (*τῶν πρεσβυτέρων*); *the ancients*. The older expositors and rabbis, whose commentaries had been orally handed down. Such traditions were regarded with more respect than the letter of Scripture, and the latter had to give way when it seemed to be antagonistic to the former. **Wash not their hands when they eat bread.** To *eat bread* means to take food of any kind. The fear of legal defilement led to a multitude of rabbinical rules of the most vexatious and troublesome nature, the infringement of any of which endangered a man's ceremonial purity (see Mark vii. 3, 4). These frivolous regulations had been built upon the plain Mosaical enactments of Lev. xi., etc. St. Matthew, writing for those who were well acquainted with these glosses, enters into no details; St. Mark is more explicit. It is to be remarked that the Pharisees were extending and enforcing these traditions just when the Law was to be superseded by something more spiritual, and doing so in spite of the interdiction, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you" (Deut. iv. 2).

Ver. 3.—**He answered.** Christ does not formally defend his disciples, nor condemn the Pharisees for their ceremonial ablutions, but he turns to a matter of more importance, even a plain breach or evasion of a plain commandment. **Ye also.** If my disciples transgress a tradition of the ancients, ye too transgress, and that **the commandment of God**—an error of far graver character. His non-observance of these minutiæ showed their unimportance, and called attention to the inward purity which they typified, and which could be maintained without these external ceremonies. At the same time, Jesus does not condemn such symbolical acts, even as he himself washed the disciples' feet before the last Supper. The evil in rabbinical teachings was that it superseded the spiritual view, and placed outward cleansing on a higher level than inward holiness. **By** (*διά* with accusative); *on account of*, in order to maintain. **Your tradition.** Tradition which is emphatically yours and not God's, a human gloss, not a revealed command. Jesus does not accept the assertion that these traditions are derived from the ancients; he gives them a more modern origin.

Ver. 4.—Christ proceeds to give an instance of the evacuation of the Law by means of tradition. **God commanded.** Mark, in the parallel passage, has, "Moses said," which may be taken, in conjunction with our text, as conveying our Lord's testimony to the Divine origin of the Mosaic code. Christ cites the fifth commandment, because it more especially appealed to the conscience of every one, and was emphasized by the solemn enactment of death as the penalty of its infringement (Exod. xx. 12; xxi. 17). **Honour** (*τίμα*). This term includes the idea of succour and support, as in 1 Tim. v. 3, "Honour widows that are widows indeed;" and in 1 Tim. v. 17, where *τιμή* means "stipend." In Ecclus. xxxviii. 1, "Honour a physician with the honours due unto him," the expression has reference to his proper fees, the *honorarium* paid for his services. In God's view honour to parents is not shown only in outward salutations, obedience, and respect, but also in material assistance, help provided for their needs, alms freely bestowed when necessary. This well-known signification makes the tradition next given more inexcusable. **Die the death.** An Hebraism, equivalent to "shall surely be put to death" (comp. Gen. ii. 17, margin). If words against parents are thus punished, shall not deeds be visited?

Ver. 5.—**But ye say.** In direct contradiction to what "God commanded." **It is a gift,** etc. This is better rendered, *That wherewith thou mightest have been benefited by me is Corban;* i.e. is given, dedicated to God. The vow to consecrate his savings, even at death, to the temple absolved a man from the duty of succouring his parents. It was further ruled that if a son, from any motive whatever, pronounced any aid to his parents to be corban, he was thenceforward precluded from affording them help, the claims of the commandment and of natural affection and charity being superseded by the vow. He seems to have been allowed to expend the money thus saved on himself or any other object except his father and mother. So gross an evasion of a common duty could not be placed in the same category as the omission of unnecessary washings.

Ver. 6.—**And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free.** The last clause is not in the Greek; it is supplied by our translators, as it was in Coverdale's version, to complete the apodosis. There are various methods of translating the passage. Retaining *καί* at the beginning of the sentence, some make these words the continuation of the gloss, "Whosoever shall say," etc., the apodosis being found in the sentence following. Others conceive an aposiopesis after "be profited by me," as if Christ refrained from pronouncing the hypocritical and indeed blasphemous words which completed the gloss. In this case the apodosis follows

in ver 6, καὶ, *then such a one will not honour* (τιμήσει, not τιμήσῃ), etc. The words are best taken as put into the Pharisees' mouth in the sense, "The man under those circumstances shall not honour," etc.; he is free from the obligation of helping his parents. The form of the sentence (οὐ μὴ with the future verb) is prohibitory rather than predictive, and implies, "he is forbidden to honour." Christ thus sharply emphasizes the contradiction between God's Law and man's perversion thereof. St. Mark has, "Ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father." Thus; καὶ in the apodosis, removing the full stop before it in the Authorized Version. This is our Lord's own saying. Made . . . of none effect. Evacuated its real force and spirit. By; owing to, for the sake of, as St. Mark says, "that ye may keep your tradition." Our translators often mistake the meaning of the preposition διὰ with the accusative, which never signifies "by means of."

Ver. 7.—Ye hypocrites. He called them by this name because, while they pretended that zeal for God's glory led them to these explanations and amplifications of the Law, they were really influenced by covetousness and avarice, and virtually despised that which they professed to uphold. A Jewish proverb said that if hypocrites were divided into ten parties, nine of them would be found in Jerusalem, and one in the rest of the world. Well did Esaias prophesy of you (Isa. xxix. 13). That is, their conduct fulfilled the saying of the prophet, as ch. xiii. 14. Such "prophecies" were for all time, and were suitable for various circumstances, characters, and events. Christ is wont to fortify his arguments by the authority of Scripture, often rather explaining the mind of the Spirit than quoting the exact words.

Ver. 8.—The quotation is from the Septuagint Version, with a slight variation from the text at the end. The Hebrew also differs a little; but the general meaning is not affected. With their mouth. They use the prescribed forms of worship, guard with much care the letter of Scripture, observe its legal and ceremonial enactments, are strict in the practice of all outward formalities. But their heart. This is what the prophets so constantly object. Prayers, sacrifices, etc., are altogether unacceptable unless inspired by inward devotion, and accompanied by purity of heart.

Ver. 9.—But in vain, etc. The Hebrew gives, "And their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them," or "learned by rote" (Revised Version). Septuagint, "In vain do they worship me, teaching men's commandments and doctrines." Their worship is vitiated at its very root. Commandments of men. This is Christ's designation of rabbinical traditions (comp. Col. ii. 22).

Ver. 10.—He called the multitude. Jesus had now finally broken with the Pharisaical party; he had carried the war into their camp. It was necessary that those who had followed these false teachers should know, on the one hand, to what irreligion, immorality, and profanity their doctrines led, and, on the other, should learn the unadulterated truth, "pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father." So he calls around him the crowd of common people, who from respect had stood aloof during the previous controversy, and teaches them a great moral truth which concerns every human being. Hear, and understand. The distinction which he was about to enunciate was difficult for persons trained in Pharisaical dogmas to receive and understand; he therefore calls special attention to his coming words. The depreciation of ceremonial cleansings might easily be misunderstood. Jesus would say—There is indeed cleansing necessary for all men; but it does not consist in outward washings, but in inward holiness. In what follows, our Lord says nothing definitely about the distinction between clean and unclean meats laid down in the Mosaic Law; he would only show that impurity in the moral sense came from within. This is leading up to the principle enunciated by the apostle, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified through the Word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5).

Ver. 11.—Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man. The word rendered "defileth" (κοινοῖ) means "renders common," in opposition to ἁγιάζειν, "to separate" for God's use; hence the verb, ethically applied, signifies "to contract guilt." The rabbis taught that certain meats of themselves polluted the soul, made it abominable in God's sight. This was a perversion of the law respecting clean and unclean food. The pollution or guilt arose, not from the nature of the meat, but from the eating of it in contravention of a positive command. It was the disobedience, not the food, which affected the soul. It is remarkable that these distinctions of meats still obtain among half the civilized inhabitants of the world—Buddhists, Hindoos, Mohammedans—and that one of the hardest tasks of Christian missionaries is to make men understand the non-importance of these differences. We do not see that Christ here abrogated the Levitical Law, but he certainly prepared the way for its supersession and transformation. But he made no sudden and violent change in the

constituted order of things. Indeed, some distinctions were maintained in apostolical times, as we read in Acts x. 14; xv. 20, 29; and it was only gradually, and as circumstances made their observation impossible, that such ceremonial obligations were regarded as obsolete. It is, perhaps, with the view of not shocking inveterate prejudice, that he does not say, "No food whatever defileth," but "That which goeth into the mouth" defileth not, referring especially to the notion above reprehended, that eating with unwashen hands polluted the food taken and the soul of the person who consumed it. Our Lord says nothing of excess, *e.g.* gluttony and drunkenness, which, of course, has a polluting and deteriorating effect on the moral nature (see Luke xxi. 34). **But that which cometh out of the mouth.** In the former sentence the mouth is regarded simply as the instrument for receiving food and preparing it for digestion; in this sentence it is considered as the organ of the heart, that which gives outward expression to inward thoughts and conceptions. Fillion distinguishes them as "la bouche physique, et la bouche morale." Philo has well said, "The mouth is that by which, as Plato puts it, mortal things enter, and whence immortal things issue. For therein pass meat and drink, the perishable food of a perishable body; but from it proceed words, immortal laws of an immortal soul, by which the rational life is directed and governed" ('De Mundi Opif.,' § 40). **Defileth a man.** Pollutes his soul, not with merely ceremonial defilement, but intrinsically and morally. Of course, our Lord is referring to evil words, etc., as he explains in ver. 19. For the mouth may give utterance to God's praise, words of love, sympathy, edification. But the evil in a man's heart will show itself in his mouth; and the open expression will react on the wicked thought, and make it more substantial, deadly, and operative.

Ver. 12.—**Then came his disciples.** Jesus had been speaking in some open spot; he now leaves the crowd, and, entering a house with his disciples, instructs them further in private (Mark vii. 17). These had been greatly alarmed at their Master's antagonism to the popular party, and, on the first occasion that presented itself, expostulated with him on the danger incurred by this hostile attitude. **This saying** (τὸν λόγον); *the word.* What he had said to the multitude (ver. 11). The Pharisees had cared less for the denunciation addressed to themselves (vers. 3—9), but when he interfered with their doctrinal supremacy over the people, they were offended, they took exception to the teaching, believing that they detected therein an insidious attack on the Law. In their view, spiritualization of any of its enactments was equivalent to its subversion. But, as St. Gregory observes, "If offence arises from the statement of the truth, it is more expedient that offence be permitted to arise than that the truth should be abandoned" ('Hom. vii. in Ezek.').

Ver. 13.—**Every plant, etc.** The answer of Christ signifies—Do not be alarmed by the displeasure of the Pharisees, and at my opposition to their teaching; the system which they support is ungodly and shall be soon destroyed. Christ, as often, puts the statement in a parabolic form, using two images, one derived from the vegetable kingdom in this verse, and one from human life in ver. 14. **Plant** (φυτεία); *plantation.* The act of planting, and then by metonymy the thing planted. It here signifies the sect and doctrine of the Pharisees, the persons themselves, and that which they taught. The comparison of men and trees, plant and doctrine, is a common biblical metaphor (comp. Ps. i.; Isa. v. 7; ch. vii. 16—20; Luke vi. 43, 44, etc.). The traditions of the rabbis were plants which **my heavenly Father hath not planted.** They were of human, not Divine, growth; and the men themselves, even though originally planted in holy soil, had degenerated, and become not only unfruitful, but pernicious. So the Lord speaks by Jeremiah (ii. 21), "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" **Shall be rooted up.** Our Lord is not referring to the judgment of the last day (ch. iii. 10), nor to any forcible destruction effected by human agency; he means that the system must pass away entirely to make room for a better growth, even the gospel. The Jews would not see that the Law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ; they deemed that their ceremonies and rites were to be permanent and universal; and this, more than anything, impeded the reception of Christ's claims, and made men utterly averse from his teaching. It was in vain that Jesus proclaimed, "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me" (John v. 46). The very Law, as handled and obscured by the Pharisees, was made an obstacle to the truth.

Ver. 14.—**Let them alone.** Do not trouble yourselves about them; let them be offended, if they will. **Blind leaders of the blind.** Both teachers and taught are alike ignorant of the truth. The people had no spiritual light, and, applying to their appointed pastors, they learned nothing profitable from them; for these were as much in the dark as themselves. It was evident, then, that the

rabbis ought not to be followed unreservedly. If the blind. A proverbial saying. Comp. Horat., 'Epp.,' I. xvii. 3—

"... ut si
Cæcus iter monstrare velit."

And the Greek adage, Μήτε τυφλὸν ὁδηγόν, μήτε ἐκνόητον σύμβουλον. Nösgen calls attention to the order of the words, Τυφλὸς δὲ τυφλὸν ἐὰν ὁδηγῇ, "Blind blind if he lead," which, while it substantiates the advice, "Let them alone," forcibly expresses the fatal result of this guidance. The ditch (βόθυνον); *a pitfall* (comp. Isa. xxiv. 17, 18, Septuagint, where it is used as the translation of the Hebrew *pachath*, a pit in which wild animals are taken). The "ditch" in one sense is unbelief in Christ, to which rabbinical teaching undoubtedly led. In another sense it adumbrates the ruin in which these false principles would involve the Jewish polity and people. It is obvious that the rejection of the Messiah drew down the punishment which has made the Hebrew nation an astonishment to all the world.

Ver. 15.—**Then answered Peter.** The disciples could not understand the apparent depreciation of the external in religion; they did not see the meaning of what Christ had said. Peter, as their mouthpiece, asked for further explanation. **Declare**; φράσον: *edissere*. Explain. **Parable.** The word in an extended sense is used of any hard, enigmatical saying or figurative expression. The term here is applied to the statement in ver. 11. The apostles did not comprehend the minimizing of the rules concerning purification, and the possibility of a man being defiled by what proceeded from his mouth. Inveterate prejudices die hard, and it is difficult to emancipate one's self from old modes of thought.

Ver. 16.—**Are ye also yet without understanding?** *Even yet*; ἀκμήν: *adhuc*. In spite of all that has passed—my teaching, my life, my miracles—do you not understand in what real purity consists? Often had Jesus to complain of the dulness of his disciples' intelligence, the slow appreciation of his meaning, the indifference to the spiritual side of his acts and doctrine. Up to the very last they failed to apprehend his mission; nor was it till the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured upon them, that they really and in fulness understood the Lord's teaching and their own duties and powers.

Ver. 17.—**Whatsoever entereth in at the mouth,** etc. Food taken into the mouth goes into the stomach, is assimilated into the bodily system, and its refuse passes away to the draught (ἀφεδρῶνα), the necessary house. It has nothing to do with the heart or the moral being; it affects only the material organization, and has no connection with the spiritual. Christ does not concern himself with questions, which modern philosophers would attempt to solve, concerning the mutual influence of soul and body, the animal and spiritual nature; he puts forth an argument which every one could receive, plain even to those "without understanding." This is the elucidation of the first part of ver. 11. The further explanation follows in vers. 18, 19.

Ver. 18.—**Those things.** He does not assert that everything which issues from a man's mouth defiles him; for, as was said above on ver. 11, many good things may come from a man's mouth; but he means that the evil to which he gives utterance is fraught with pollution to his moral nature. **From the heart.** The heart stands for soul, mind, spirit, will, the whole inner man, that which makes him what he is, a conscious, intelligent, responsible being. Hence are attributed to it not only words, but acts, conceptions which issue in external actions, and the consequences which these involve.

Ver. 19.—**Out of the heart proceed.** The shameful catalogue which follows is less full than that in St. Mark, which contains thirteen items, while this consists of seven only. These are produced or created by the human will, of which the heart is the symbol. **Evil thoughts** (διαλογισμοὶ πονηροί). Some would translate the words, "evil machinations." But there is no need to change the usual rendering, which is very appropriate here. Evil thoughts are the preparation of all other sins, and have a pernicious influence on the character. We are very much what we think. That on which our minds are fixed, that which is the chief object presented to our inward sight, shapes our disposition and life. High and noble thoughts elevate and purify; low and mean thoughts debase and pollute. The wickedness in a man springs from within; he is guilty of it. If he admits the tempter, succumbs to his seductions, it is his own will that is in fault, encouraging the evil imagination, and not at once resisting, abhorring, and repelling it. Well may we pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. li. 10); and remember the wise man's injunction, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23). The enumeration follows more or less closely the second table of the Decalogue.

Ver. 20.—Thus Jesus sums up what has been said, and recalls the circumstance which led to the discourse, emphatically repeating his judgment on the Pharisaical gloss.

Vers. 21—28.—*Healing of the daughter of the Canaanitish woman.* (Mark vii. 24—30.)

Ver. 21.—**Went thence.** Jesus left the place, probably Capernaum, where the above discourse had been held, and where it was no longer safe for him to remain. He had grievously offended the dominant party by his outspoken words concerning purity and defilement; therefore, to escape any premature violence, he **departed** to a more secure quarter. **Into the coasts** (τὰ μέρη, "the parts") **of Tyre and Sidon.** The word "coasts" here, ver. 22, and elsewhere, does not mean "sea-coasts," but "borders." The Authorized Version conveys a wrong impression by its use of the word. These two cities lay on the coast of Galilee, and had never been really conquered by the Israelites, though allotted to the tribe of Asher. There was no very exact limitation of territory between Phœnician (of which they were the capitals) and Jewish land, but there was a great moral distinction. The Phœnicians were sunk in the grossest idolatry; the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth reigned among them with all its depravity and pollution. Whether our Lord actually entered this district, or only approached its confines, is a matter of dispute. The language in the two extant accounts is ambiguous, and might be taken to imply either proceeding. But we cannot suppose that Christ betook himself to the close neighbourhood of those evil towns. His injunction to the apostles, when he sent them on their missionary tour, to abstain from going into any way of the Gentiles or entering any Samaritan city (ch. x. 5), and his own declaration which shortly follows, that he was sent to the house of Israel, alike preclude the idea that he ever passed beyond the boundaries of the Holy Land. The woman, too, who appealed to him is said to have "come out away from those borders"—an expression which could hardly have been used if Christ had at this time been within them. And that he did no mighty work in these Phœnician cities may be gathered from his denunciation of Chorazin and Bethsaida for not showing the appreciation of his power and mercy which these centres of heathendom would have exhibited had they been equally favoured (see ch. xi. 21; Luke x. 13). If, as Chrysostom suggests, Jesus, by going to these partly Gentile districts, wished to give a practical commentary on the abrogation of the distinction between clean and unclean (breaking down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile), this lesson was given equally well by the acceptance and commendation of the Gentile woman's faith, even though Christ himself was outside of pagan territory.

Ver. 22.—**Behold.** The word marks the sudden and unexpected character of the incident. **A woman of Canaan.** She belonged to the accursed race of Canaan, the ancient inhabitants of the land, doomed, indeed, to destruction, but never thoroughly extirpated. St. Mark calls her "a Greek," *i.e.* a Gentile, and "a Syro-Phœnician," which explains her proper nationality. **Out of the same coasts.** Some join these words with "a woman;" but **came out** would still imply that she left her own territory to meet Christ. **Have mercy on me.** She speaks as though she herself were the one that needed healing, identifying herself with her diseased daughter, as though the horrible incubus lay upon her own spirit and could not be relieved without the cure of the suffering girl. **O Lord, thou Son of David.** Living among a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles, she had heard this title applied to Jesus; she knew something of the hopes of the Hebrew nation, that they were expecting a Messiah, son of the great King David, who should preach to the poor and heal the sick, as she heard that Jesus had done. We know that the reputation of Jesus had spread into these parts, and that persons from this country had come to him to be healed (Mark iii. 8; Luke vi. 17). There is no reason to suppose that the woman was a proselyte; but evidently she was of a humble and religious spirit, open to conviction, and of an enlightened understanding, which needed only grace and instruction to ripen into faith. At present she saw in Christ only a merciful Wonder-worker—an error which he often combated, and which now by his conduct he corrected. **My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.** She must have learned from her Hebrew neighbours to attribute her child's malady to demoniacal influence, as such an idea would not have naturally occurred to a heathen Greek. The power of the devil was shown more openly in heathen localities. We do not read of many bad cases of possession in strictly Jewish districts. It is in Gentile or semi-Gentile regions that the worst instances occur; and while the pagan inhabitants attributed the mysterious maladies to natural causes, the truer insight of believers assigned them, and often most justly, to spiritual agencies. In the present case, the possession must have been unconnected with any ethical relations. It was not that the child, by any act of her own, had put herself into the demon's power. We must regard it, like the sufferings of innocent infants, as a providential arrangement which God for wise purposes allows.

Ver. 23.—**Answered her not a word.** The woman made no specific request; she had not brought the sufferer with her, and

entreated Christ to exorcise the evil influence; she did not urge him to go to her house, and by his gracious presence work a cure. Simply she tells her affliction, and lets the woeful tale plead for itself. But there was no response. The Merciful is obdurate; the Physician withholds his aid; in the face of misery, to the voice of entreaty, the Lord is silent. It is the discipline of love; he acts as though he hears not, that he may bring forth perseverance and faith. **Send her away.** There is some doubt concerning the feeling of the apostles in thus addressing Christ. Did they wish him to grant her virtual petition or not? On the one hand, it is urged that they were thoroughly annoyed at her importunity. They had sought for quiet and privacy, and now this woman was bringing a crowd around them, and occasioning the very notoriety which they wished to avoid. Their Jewish prejudices, too, were aroused by this appeal from a Canaanite; they could not endure the idea that favour should be extended to this Gentile of an abhorred race; hence they desire Christ to dismiss her at once, give her a decided rejection. On the other hand, the answer of Christ to their request leads to another explanation, as if he understood them to be asking him to grant her prayer. And this is undoubtedly what they did want, though they did not presume to prescribe the manner or to beg for a miracle. They range themselves on the woman's side, not from any genuine compassion, but from mere selfishness. The ground of their appeal is, **She crieth after us.** The appeal had been first made in the open street, and the Canaanite had followed them, as they moved, continuing her piteous cry, and thus attracting attention to them and defeating their hope of retirement and rest. So they, for their own peace and comfort, ask Christ to grant the prayer of this obstinate suppliant: "Give her what she wants, and have done with her."

Ver. 24.—**I am** (*was*) **not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** Doubtless the woman had listened to the apostles' intercession, and thought her cause won; but the repulse is only repeated; this Gentile is beyond the sphere of his mission; he cannot help her without departing from the rule which he had set himself. Jesus says nothing here about the rejection of the Jews and the future ingathering of the Gentiles; he states merely that his personal mission while he was on earth was confined to the Hebrew nation. He was, as St. Paul calls him (Rom. xv. 8), "a Minister of the circumcision." Later, he would send others to evangelize those who were now aliens from the chosen commonwealth; at present he has come unto his own possessions. **Lost sheep.** There is a tenderness in this expression natural from the mouth of the good Shepherd. He had used it when he sent forth the twelve on their apostolical journey (ch. x. 6); the metaphor is found in the Old Testament (see Jer. l. 6, etc.). It is appropriate here, where he is emphasizing his attitude towards the chosen people, and teaching the Canaanitish woman the relative position of Jew and Gentile.

Ver. 25.—**Came she and worshipped him.** Meantime, as we learn from St. Mark, Jesus had left the street and entered into a house. The woman, nothing daunted by her rebuff and the disregard with which her appeal was received, followed him persistently, and, growing bolder in her importunity, fell as a suppliant at his feet. While he still seemed to repulse her, she was learning fresh faith and hope. **Lord, help me.** She does not now call him "Son of David." She begins to feel that she has little claim upon him as the Jewish Messiah; she appeals rather to his mercy and his power. Still, she identifies herself, as at first, with her daughter; the only boon she wants for herself is her child's relief. "For she indeed (my daughter) is insensible of her disease, but it is I that suffer her innumerable woes; my disease is with consciousness, my madness with perception of itself" (St. Chrysostom, 'Hom. lii. in S. Matt.').

Ver. 26.—**But he answered and said.** At length Jesus spoke directly to her; but his words were rough in sound, still enforcing the previous repulse. **It is not meet;** *οὐκ ἔστι καλόν*: *non est bonum* (Vulgate). Another reading of less authority is *οὐκ ἔξεστιν*, "it is not lawful." The question is rather of fairness and expediency than of lawfulness. **To take the children's bread.** "The children" are the chosen people, "the children of the kingdom" (ch. viii. 12), who held this high position by election, however individuals might forfeit it by an unworthy use of privileges. "Bread" is meant to signify the graces and favours bestowed by God in Christ. **To cast it.** An humiliating term; not to give it, as you would to your children, but to throw it away as valueless, fit only for animals. **Dogs** (*κυναρίοις*). A contemptuous diminutive, rendered by Wickliffe, "whelpies," or, as we might say, "ours." This was the term applied by the Jews to the Gentiles, even as Turks nowadays talk of "dogs of Christians," and as in later times, by a curious inversion, the Jews themselves were generally saluted with the opprobrious name of "dogs." Some have seen a term of endearment in the diminutive "little dogs," as though Christ desired to soften the harshness of the expression by referring, not to the prowling, unowned animals that act

as scavengers in Oriental towns, but to the petted inmates of the master's house. But Scripture gives no warrant for thinking that the Hebrews ever kept dogs as friends and companions, in our modern fashion; and our Lord adopts the language of his countrymen, to put the woman in her right position, as one with whom Jews could have no fellowship. To take the blessings from the Church of Israel in order to give them to aliens was to throw them away on unworthy recipients.

Ver. 27.—**And she said, Truth, Lord**; or better, *but she said, Yea, Lord* (Revised Version). Christ's answer might have seemed the climax of rejection, and to have at once closed the matter for ever. But her love for her daughter, and her growing faith in Jesus, overcame all seeming hindrances. With a woman's ready wit, quickened by urgency and affection, she seizes the opportunity, and turns Christ's own words against himself. Thou sayest truth, she means; the Jews are the children; we are the dogs; and as dogs we claim our portion. This we can receive without defrauding the children of any of their food. **Yet**; *καί*, or *καὶ γὰρ, for even; nam et* (Vulgate). The Authorized Version injures the significance of the mother's reply, as if there were something adversative in the particles, which really introduce the confirmation of her assent. **The dogs eat of the crumbs**, etc. Dogs in the East have access to the rooms, and live on what they can pick up or on what is thrown to them. The fragments at meals were naturally numerous, the abundance being occasioned by the nature of the food, the use of fingers instead of spoons and forks, and the employment of pieces of bread as platters and napkins. We may paraphrase the Canaanite's reply thus: By calling us dogs, you virtually grant what I desire. You can do what I wish without infringing your rule, in the justice of which I humbly acquiesce. I claim nothing as a daughter of Abraham; I look only for uncovenanted mercies; I ask only for that portion which falls to the lot of the creatures which hold the lowest place in the household, and the loss of which will never be felt. Truly by humbling her Jesus educated her, taught her that her real plea was her unworthiness, that in acknowledgment of her degradation lay the force of her appeal. And in asking for this one act of mercy she is doing no wrong to the sons of the house.

Ver. 28.—**O woman, great is thy faith.** Jesus had often to complain of unbelief in his hearers; at no man's faith did he ever express surprise, except in the case of another Gentile, the centurion of Capernaum (ch viii. 10). **Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.** She had conquered; she gained her wish. But we must not think that Christ consented because his human feelings were overcome by her importunity, like the unjust judge in the parable, though the principle and teaching of that parable were here beautifully illustrated. He acted all the time as God, who foreknew what he would do. He had been leading her up to this climax; he had willed to give her an opportunity of exhibiting this trust and self-command and unfailing confidence, and now he crowns her with his mighty eulogium, and grants her request, rewarding her great faith by a great mercy. **Her daughter was made whole.** St. Mark reports the words of Christ, "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." He does not say, "I will come and heal her;" he tells her that the cure is already effected. Without personal contact with the sufferer, without any command uttered to the possessing demon, by his silent will alone the wonder comes to pass. This blessing for the child was won by the mother's faith. The two points to be remarked in this marvellous history are—Christ's abnormal treatment of a suppliant, and that suppliant's astonishing faith and perseverance. Both of these subjects have been noticed in the course of the Exposition.

Vers. 29—39.—*Healing of the sick, and feeding of the four thousand.* (Mark vii. 31; viii. 1—10.)

Ver. 29.—**From thence.** From the borders of Tyre and Sidon. We learn from St. Mark that Jesus, making a considerable circuit, traversed the territory of the ten free cities called Decapolis, situated chiefly on the east and south of the Sea of Galilee. **A mountain** (*τὸ ὄρος*); *the mountain* (as ch. xiv. 23). The range of hills by which the lake is bounded on the east and north-east. No particular hill seems to be indicated. **Sat down there.** Rested awhile after his journeyings and labours.

Ver. 30.—The incidents in this and the following verse are mentioned only by St. Matthew. **Great multitudes.** The fame of Jesus attracted the Jews settled in this semi-Gentile district, and cut short the privacy which he had lately been enjoying in his apostles' company. The people seized the opportunity of listening to his teaching and profiting by his superhuman power. **Having with them.** The catalogue of sufferers that follows represents accurately the sight that meets one in Oriental towns and villages, where the absence of medical appliances and the general want of surgical treatment render slight maladies or injuries chronic and inveterate, and fill the streets with persons in all stages of disease.

Maimed; κυλλούς: *debiles* (Vulgate). In ch. xviii. 8 the word means "deprived of a member;" but it has been doubted whether our Lord ever exerted his creative power to replace an absent limb. In the case of Malchus the ear probably was not wholly severed from the skull, but was still attached thereto by a fragment of flesh or skin, and no fresh creation was needed. We may well understand the word to signify "deformed," or deprived of the use of hand or foot. The Arabic Version renders it "dried up," or "withered." **Cast them down**. The expression implies the precipitancy with which their friends offered the sufferers to Christ's notice, appealing to his mercy and relying on his power—not with careless abandonment, but with an earnest rivalry to be first attended to.

Ver. 31.—**The maimed to be whole.** This clause is omitted by ℵ and some other manuscripts, the Vulgate and other versions, and some modern editors. Probably the difficulty mentioned above led to its being first obelized and then rejected. **The God of Israel.** Jehovah, whose covenanted mercies they were enjoying. St. Matthew is careful on all occasions to exhibit Jesus as the Messenger and Representative of the God of the Old Testament. The apostles, as Alford suggests, might joyfully contrast this abundance of acts of mercy with the great difficulty with which a Gentile's faith had lately obtained help. "Seest thou," says St. Chrysostom, "how the woman indeed he healed with so much delay, but these immediately? not because these are better than she is, but because she is more faithful than they. Therefore, while in her case he defers and delays, to manifest her constancy, on these he bestows the gift immediately, stopping the mouths of the unbelieving Jews, and cutting away from them every plea. For the greater favour one hath received, so much more is he liable to punishment, if he be insensible, and the very honour makes him no better."

Ver. 32.—**Called his disciples** unto him. Seeing the necessities of the multitude, Jesus, as it were, takes his disciples into council, treating them not as servants, but as friends. They were doubtless dispersed among the crowd, and Jesus summons them around him, and puts before them the special point to which his attention is turned. Thus he tries their faith, and shows that there were no human means available for feeding these famishing people. Thus God, so to speak, takes Abraham into his confidence before visiting the iniquity of Sodom: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. xviii. 17). **I have compassion** (σπλαγχνίζομαι) **on the multitude.** The human heart of Jesus felt for these distressed followers; his perfect sympathy was aroused in their behalf. We observe references to this tender feeling in many other instances (see ch. ix. 36; xiv. 14; xx. 34; Mark i. 41; v. 19; Luke vii. 13. And in the Old Testament, *e.g.* Isa. xlix. 15; Jer. xii. 15; Micah vii. 19). **They continue with me now three days.** The verb used here (προσμένειν) implies close attendance persevered in against obstacles; it is used in Acts xi. 23 in a spiritual sense, "He exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave (προσμένειν) unto the Lord." The three days, according to the Hebrew formula of computation, would consist of one whole day and parts of two others. Thus constantly employed in healing and teaching, Jesus thinks not of himself; his whole care is centred on the people who, in their anxiety to see and hear him, forget their own necessities. There would be nothing strange in the people camping out for a night in Palestine. Men and women ordinarily lie down to rest in the clothes which they have worn during the day, and need no special preparation for sleeping. Thus a man covers himself with his heavy outer garment, lies on the dry ground, like Jacob at Bethel, with a stone or his arm for a pillow, and sleeps comfortably and safely till awakened by the morning sun. **I will not send them away fasting.** Like a good master of a household, in his tender pity, Christ takes the circumstances of the multitude into consideration, and cannot endure the idea of dismissing them wearied and unfed to find their way to their own homes, which, as St. Mark adds, were, in the case of many of them, at a long distance. **Faint.** Travellers tell us that out of the motley crowd of pilgrims that flock to Jerusalem at Easter-tide, many run short of provisions and perish on the road. Christ's thoughtful care regards the possibility of such disaster, and prepares the remedy. He had treated the sicknesses of the multitude; he had instructed their ignorance; now he will feed their bodies. They had sought nothing from him, nor begged for food; probably they had no idea of looking to him to supply their want. But they who follow Jesus shall never lack. They were seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and temporal blessings were added to them.

Ver. 33.—**Whence should we have so much bread, etc.?** Christ had said nothing to his disciples concerning his design of feeding the people, but his remarks pointed to the possibility of such a design, and the apostles at once threw cold water upon the project. They do not indeed, as they did before urge him to send the multitude away, that they may supply their own needs, but

they emphasize the impossibility of carrying out the idea of feeding them. Their answer bristles with objections. The place is uninhabited; the multitude is numerous; the quantity of food required is enormous; and how can *we*, poor and needy as we are, help them? It seems to us incredible that they could return this answer, after having, not very long before, experienced the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. They seemed now to have forgotten the earlier marvel, and to be in utter doubt how the necessary food was to be provided on the present occasion. That Christ would display his miraculous powers appears not to have crossed their minds. Such suprising forgetfulness and slowness of faith have seemed to some critics so unlikely and unusual, that they have regarded the apostles' attitude as confirming their assumption of the identity of the two miracles of feeding. But really such conduct is true to human nature. Calvin, while he condemns in vehement terms the disciples' dulness—"nimis brutum produnt stuporem"—is careful to add that men are always liable to a similar insensibility, prone to forget past deliverance in the face of present difficulty. Immediately after the passage of the Red Sea, the people feared that they would perish of thirst in the wilderness; and when God promised to give them flesh to eat, even Moses doubted the possibility of the supply, and asked whence it could be provided (Exod. xvii. 1, etc.; Numb. xi. 21, etc.). How often did Jesus speak of his sufferings, death, and resurrection! And yet these events came upon believers as a surprise for which they were altogether unprepared. Continually the disciples forgot what they ought to have remembered, drew no proper inferences from what they had seen and experienced, and had to be taught the same lessons repeatedly under different circumstances. Since the first miraculous meal many events had happened; often possibly they had been in want of food, as when on the sabbath day they appeased their hunger with ears of corn plucked by the way, and Christ had worked no miracle for their relief. It did not immediately suggest itself to them to have recourse to their Master in the emergency; they were very far from expecting Divine interposition at every turn. If they thought at all of the former miracle, they may have looked upon it as the outcome of an intermittent power, not always at command, or at any rate not likely to be exercised on the present occasion. They were slow to apprehend Christ's Divine mission and character. The acknowledgment of his Messiahship did not necessarily connote the realization of his Godhead. In the writings of this and the immediately preceding period we see that the great Prophet, Prince, Conqueror, who is to appear, is not God, but one commissioned by God, and at most a God-inspired man or angel. So the apostles were only in unison with the best of their contemporaries when at present they hesitated to believe in, and were incapable of apprehending, the Divine nature of Christ.

Ver. 34.—**How many loaves have ye?** Jesus gives no formal answer to the apostles' hesitating question, but by a new interrogation leads them to expect his interposition. This was the prelude to the miracle. **Seven, and a few little fishes.** They do not add, as on the former occasion, "But what are they among so many?" They have learned something from what had previously occurred. Whether this little store was what remained of their own supplies, or whether it was all they could find among the multitude, does not appear. From the indeterminate mention of the fish, we should suppose the latter to have been the case, as they would probably have mentioned the number of the fishes had they been their own. There may have been some contempt implied in the diminutive ἰχθύδια, "little fishes," as though these were scarcely worthy of notice. Dried fish was a staple commodity in the region.

Ver. 35.—**To sit down** (ἀναπεσεῖν) **on the ground.** At this time there was not "much grass in the place," the season being no longer early spring. Their seat was the bare ground, their meal of the plainest character. He who as man had pitied them was now feeding them as God, yet not with luxuries or dainties, but with food sufficient for their needs.

Ver. 36.—**He took.** The account differs little from that on the former occasion. **Gave thanks** (εὐχαριστήσας). This represents the blessing of the viands. Thanksgiving was a specially enjoined accompaniment of meals. The Talmud said, "He that enjoys anything without an act of thanksgiving is as one that robs the Almighty." The blessing here was the efficient cause of the multiplication of the food. Without any fresh creation Jesus used the materials ready to his hands, and only increased them by his Almighty power. **Brake** them, **and gave** (ἔκλασε καὶ ἐδίδου). Looking to the tenses used, we should say that Jesus brake the viands once, and then kept continually giving of them to the twelve for the purpose of distribution. We do not read how the multitude was arranged in the present case. Possibly the locality did not admit of methodical division into ranks and companies, or, on the other hand, its natural terraces may have obviated the necessity for any such formal arrangement, the company falling naturally into convenient sections.

Ver. 37.—**Baskets** (σπυρίδας); *panniers*. Large wicker receptacles, which were sometimes of such size as to hold a man. It was in such a basket that St. Paul was let down from the walls of Damascus (Acts ix. 25). The number of the basketfuls corresponded to the original number of loaves; the increase of substance must therefore have been enormous.

Ver. 38.—The computation is made in the same way as in ch. xiv. 21, the greatness of the miracle being thus enhanced.

Ver. 39.—**Sent away the multitude.** Having supplied their spiritual and material wants. He wished to avoid all disturbance or collision with constituted authorities; and the people dispersed quietly, being less excitable than the inhabitants of Bethsaida, and not so well acquainted with the Messianic claims. The number thus dismissed was less than on the previous occasion, though the provision was greater—a difference which distinguishes one incident from the other, and which no forger would have introduced, it being much more natural to make the second wonder transcend, instead of falling short of, the previous one. We mention this here, because some critics have assumed that the present is only an imperfectly remembered account of the feeding of the five thousand already narrated. There are, of course, many points of similarity in the two incidents. Being of identical character, they must naturally present the same general features. But careful survey of the two narratives discloses many differences, which quite preclude the notion that the latter is a traditional reproduction of the former. To one who believes in the honesty and good faith of the evangelists, the allusion which Christ makes to the two miracles is a sufficient argument for their separation. Our Lord pointedly calls to mind the two occasions when he multiplied food, and rebukes the apostles for their lack of apprehension in the face of these marvels. "Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets (κοφίνους) ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets (σπυρίδας) ye took up?" (ch. xvi. 9, 10; Mark viii. 19—21). Many of the essential points of difference between the two accounts are noticed in the Exposition, and they will be seen to dispart wherever divergence was possible, in time, scene, and detail. **Magdala.** The right reading is most probably *Magadan*, or *Magedan* (Vulgate), the better known *Magdala* having at an early date been substituted for it. Conder identifies one of the two with a mud and stone village called *El Mejdel*, a little north of Tiberias, a poor place without any gardens, situated in a plain of partially arable soil.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*Unwashen hands.* I. CONTROVERSY WITH SCRIBES AND PHARISEES. 1. *They were of Jerusalem.* It seems that a deputation had been sent by the leading men in Jerusalem. The great discourse related in John vi. had probably been reported to them; they had heard that the scribes and Pharisees of Galilee were unable to cope with our Lord; and they now sent some of their own body to watch him and to find opportunity for accusing him. Mark the reception which he met with on his return from the eastern side of the lake. The people of Gennesaret knew his power and mercy. They brought their sick; they besought him that they might touch the hem of his garment. The poor and simple came in their simplicity, seeking help; the zealots, the learned students of the Scriptures, came, with malice and envy in their hearts, seeking to compass the ruin of the Saviour. The outward show of sanctity will not deceive God, will not save our souls. Let us see that we come to Christ in single-hearted earnestness, seeking only to know him who is the Saviour of the world. 2. *Their question.* They busied themselves, as formalists do, about the infinitely little. The Lord's holiness, wisdom, power, were of no interest to them in comparison with the small matters of ceremonial observance enjoined in their traditions. They thought that it was enough to secure salvation if a man lived in the land of Israel, if he ate his food with duly washed hands, and spoke the holy language, and recited his phylacteries morning and evening. They regarded these traditions of theirs as more sacred than the written Law. The Lord's disciples had, it seems, neglected these frequent washings. The Pharisees wished to fix the responsibility on him: "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Strange perversity, to insist on these trivialities in the presence of that unearthly holiness; to ask these petty ensnaring questions of him who could teach them the way to heaven! 3. *The Lord's answer.* (1) He answers

as at other times, by another question, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" His disciples had, indeed, transgressed the traditions of men; but their accusers had transgressed the commandments of God, and that, because of these traditions. They had dared to bring these traditions into direct opposition to the holy Law of God. (2) The instance. They had contrived to evade the force of the fifth commandment. A man had only (they wickedly said) to pronounce the words, "It is a gift," to be freed from the duty of supporting his parents. It was good to give, and to give freely, for the service of the temple—the Lord commended the poor widow for doing so—but it was not right to neglect the nearer duty of caring for father or mother even for the temple's sake. And these hypocrites, it seems, held that the pronunciation of the word "corban" absolved a man from the duty of supporting his nearest relatives, even if he did not really give the property so dedicated to the service of God. Thus they made the commandment of God of none effect. They put these miserable traditions above the eternal laws of morality, above the written Word of God. Well might the Lord denounce them as hypocrites; they were acting the part of religious men, but they knew not what religion was; they had no love for God, no care for his glory; they loved the praise of men. 4. *His quotation from Isaiah.* The Lord applies to the Pharisees what the prophet had said of his contemporaries. Prophecy is for all time; it is fulfilled again and again in the history of the Church. God's words spoken by Isaiah extended, in their prophetic range, to the scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's days. *They* honoured God with their lips, but their heart was far from him. Such worship is in vain. It is no true worship; it is false, counterfeit. Worship is the adoration of the heart when it loses sight of self in the contemplation of the glory of God. The worship of the Pharisees was full of self; they sought not the glory of God; they put the commandments of men above his holy Word. In truth, they worshipped themselves, and not God; for it was their own profit, their own advancement, their own honour, which they loved with all their heart. And that which we love with the whole heart is the object of our worship. Let us take heed to ourselves.

II. THE MULTITUDE. 1. *The Lord called them.* Perhaps they had stood aloof. They honoured the Lord; they had been taught to reverence the Pharisees; they were in perplexity. But now the Lord turned away from the Pharisees in holy indignation at their hypocrisy, their perversion of the truth of God. He called the multitude to come nearer; he would not have them lose the lesson. "Hear, and understand," he said. He bespoke their attention; for he was about to enunciate a great principle—a principle which seems simple enough to us; but it was new and startling then; it was contrary to accepted doctrines. It struck at the minute observances of the scribes and Pharisees; it swept them away by the application of one wide-reaching rule. And it did more than this; it pointed to the coming abrogation of the ceremonial law. 2. *His teaching.* "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." The words might be understood, according to the well-known Hebrew idiom, as meaning only that moral defilement was far more serious and important than ceremonial defilement (compare the twice-quoted passage of Hosea, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" or our Lord's words in John vi. 27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life"). But probably the Lord's meaning went further. It was an anticipation of the coming change. According to the reading of the most ancient manuscripts, as explained by Chrysostom and several modern commentators, St. Mark represents our Lord as saying this, "cleansing all meats" (Mark vii. 19). If this be correct, the Lord anticipates here the Divine announcement made afterwards to St. Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts x. 15). The Lord's utterance was not so decided now. The Jews were not yet able to bear a peremptory declaration of the abolition of the laws respecting meats. The distinction between clean and unclean was to them of immense importance and significance, one of the marked characteristics of their religious life, one of the barriers between them and the Gentiles. They could not have endured to see all this elaborate system swept away at once; the disciples themselves were not ripe for such a change. Long afterwards St. Paul found it necessary to deal very tenderly with consciences that might be troubled by similar scruples. The Lord now indicates the coming abolition

of the Levitical rules; he does not insist upon it; he returns to the original topic of discussion, "To eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." It was one of those sayings which the apostles could not receive in their full meaning at once, but which remained in their memory, and afterwards were understood and brought forth fruit.

III. THE DISCIPLES. 1. *Their fears.* The Pharisees were offended. The Lord's words were a stumbling-block to them; he had struck so hard at their prejudices, their traditions—those traditions which were so deeply interwoven with their whole life; he had called them hypocrites, too; he had said that they were no better than actors of a part, and had applied to them the strong condemnation of Isaiah. Again, in his address to the multitude, reported doubtless to the Pharisees, perhaps heard by them, he seemed to set aside the plain teaching of the written Law. At all this the Pharisees stumbled; it was an offence to them; such teaching was in direct opposition to all that they esteemed most sacred. They thought it dangerous, heretical. They were offended, irritated, alienated. And evidently the Lord's disciples had not wholly divested themselves of their old reverence for the rabbinical system, and for the received teachers of the nation, the Pharisees. They were troubled at their increasing hostility; perhaps they were in their hearts somewhat vexed with the Lord himself; his words, it may be, seemed to them so stern, so needlessly strong. They apprehended difficulties, dangers; they feared for their Master and for themselves. And now they came to him privately, into the house (Mark vii. 17); they hinted at their anxieties; they sought to know what he would do. We must always come to Christ in our troubles; but we must trust him and yield up our wills to him; he doeth all things well. 2. *The answer.* (1) The teaching of the Pharisees was not of God; it came from human tradition or from their own evil hearts. And all that is not of God must perish. The whole system of rabbinical teaching must pass away. It had wrought itself into the very nature of the Pharisees, as the good seed in the parable had filled the heart and determined the character of the true disciples. That system must perish, and its professors, alas! with it, if they would not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2) "Let them alone," the Lord said. They stood high in popular estimation; they sat in Moses' seat; but they were blind guides. "Let them alone." Christ is the one Master; we must follow him. They are blind who see not Christ, for Christ is the Light of the world. They who see not the light walk in darkness; the darkness hath blinded their eyes. Guides who see not the Christ and follow not the Christ themselves are no guides for the Christian; he must let them alone. Such men may sometimes be set in places of authority; Judas was an apostle. We may not speak of them as the Lord spoke of the Pharisees; we have not the right; we have not his knowledge, his holiness; we must not speak evil of dignities. But let them alone; be not dazzled by their rank, their popularity, their intellectual power. They are blind, and those who follow them are blind also. This blindness is wilful; it is the result of spiritual sloth, or pride, or indulged sin of some sort. The blind who follow the blind must fall into the ditch; spiritual blindness must lead to spiritual ruin. Come to Christ with the prayer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" Follow those who follow him the closest; who, seeing him themselves with the vision of faith, are enabled by his grace to lead others nearer to the true Light that shineth upon them. 3. *The request of Peter.* He spoke in the name of all the disciples (Mark vii. 17). But we know that long afterwards he clung to his old Jewish habits of life (Gal. ii. 11—16); and at this time our Lord's words in ver. 11 must have seemed a very hard saying to him. He called it a parable; it was very difficult for him with his Jewish training to receive it; he wanted to understand what was in our Lord's thoughts, the spiritual meaning of his words. 4. *The Lord's reply.* "Are ye also yet without understanding?" he said to the disciples. They had been with him long; they ought to have understood by this time the spiritual character of his teaching. But it was hard for them to throw aside the beliefs, the practices, of a lifetime; they needed the plainest teaching on a subject like this. And Christ gave it them. It is the inner life of thought and feeling which determines the true cleanliness or uncleanliness of a man, not the quality of his food. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "All things indeed are pure;" there may be good and holy reasons for abstaining from certain things under certain circumstances; but "there is nothing unclean of itself." Such was the teaching

of St. Paul, inspired, as he tells us, by the Lord Jesus; the same Lord anticipates that teaching here. It is that which cometh out of the mouth which defileth a man; for out of the mouth come evil words, and evil words issue from the evil treasure of the heart. Evil words imply evil thoughts, and evil thoughts are wrought into the inner moral being of the man, into the very centre of his personality. The man, the true self, is defiled, not by things external, not by meats or by unwashen hands; these and such-like matters have to do only with his bodily frame. Cleanliness is good; it may be next to godliness; there is, as a rule, a certain connection between them; there must be a certain connection between the outward life and the inward, as long as we remain in the flesh. But cleanliness is not godliness; the body may be clean, but the heart within full of all uncleanness. It was so with these Pharisees who blamed the Lord; they took the greatest pains to secure the exactest external cleanness; but the Lord said to them, "Your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness" (Luke xi. 39). Let us remember the words of the wise man, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Let us labour for that inner purification of the heart which is granted unto those who walk in the light, whom the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing from all sin.

LESSONS. 1. The Pharisees found fault with our Lord; men will find fault with the holiest of his servants. Remember the eighth Beatitude; be patient. 2. God is our King; he is to be obeyed; not men, when they would draw us from his commandments. 3. Follow those who follow Christ. There are blind guides; let them alone. 4. The pure in heart shall see God; seek earnestly that precious grace of purity.

Vers. 21—28.—*Departure from the Holy Land.* I. THE JOURNEY NORTHWARDS. 1. *The Lord leaves Galilee.* He had been teaching there long, perhaps for two years. At first there had been a time of dazzling popularity. The strange dignity of his personality, the Divine authority of his words, the singular originality of his teaching, the pure holiness of his perfect life, his many deeds of love and mercy and power, had drawn multitudes around him. The world was going after him, the Pharisees said; their opposition seemed useless; they prevailed nothing. It seemed as if there would be no failures, no discouragements; but a steady progress, success after success, till he should be raised to the throne of his father David, and reign as the King Messiah with undisputed sway over his people Israel. But it was not to be so; a change was coming. The Lord's popularity had excited the intense hostility of the Pharisees; it threatened their influence, their authority. They conspired against him. They had apparently procured his exclusion from the synagogues of Judæa; they were now driving him from those of Galilee. Their opposition was gathering strength, bitterness, determination. The Lord's followers must not look for popularity; if it comes, they must not be dazzled with it, they must not count on its continuance; it comes and it goes. The multitude are uncertain, fickle; they soon weary of those whom they once admired. Christ, the beloved Master, was sometimes popular, sometimes despised and rejected of men; his servants must be content to share the Master's lot. There must be disappointments and discouragements in pastoral work; this mortal life is full of changes. Let the Christian seek, not success, not human praise, but righteousness and the praise which cometh from God to those who serve him with a single heart. 2. *He departs into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* Driven from the Holy Land, he retires to the heathen countries of the north, not for mission work, but for safety, for rest, for quiet intercourse with the twelve. The end of his earthly life was drawing near; he was preparing his disciples to carry on the work; they needed much teaching, much undisturbed communion with the Lord. It was for this purpose, apparently, that our Lord, as St. Mark tells us (vii. 24), would have no man know where he was. It is a touching thought that the Lord found more safety in heathen lands than in his own country, among his own people.

II. THE WOMAN OF CANAAN. 1. *Her circumstances.* She was a Greek, St. Mark tells us, that is, a Gentile; not one of God's chosen people, but a Gentile by birth, and, apparently, by religion. She was a Canaanite, too, living in Phœnicia; she was descended from the ancient enemies of Israel. She had no claim either of kindred or religion. 2. *Her trouble.* Her young daughter had an unclean spirit: she was grievously

vexed with a devil. The mother's heart was full of sorrow for her child. She knew not what to do; probably she had tried such modes of healing as were in vogue among her heathen neighbours—incantations, strange forms of exorcism. All was in vain. But she had heard of Christ; his fame had long ago gone throughout all Syria (ch. iv. 24). Now the great Healer had come into her neighbourhood; she took the opportunity at once; she left her daughter at home; she came out, and sought the Lord. 3. *Her interview with Christ.* (1) She found him. She told him of her distress. She had heard something, even in that heathen land, of the Messiah, the Son of David, who was to sit on David's throne; she owned the Lord Jesus to be the long-expected King; she cried after him with a loud shrill cry to have mercy on her and to heal her child. Her heart was full of anguish; her mother's love made her daughter's grief her own. "Have mercy on *me*," she cried. That cry had never before fallen in vain on the ears of the compassionate Redeemer. But now he was strangely silent. He had entered into a house, St. Mark tells us, and would have no man know it. The woman had followed him there. He sat still as if absorbed in meditation too sacred to be interrupted. It was unlike his usual custom. This long silence was distressing to the suppliant, perplexing to the disciples; they could not understand the reason of it. Often the Lord seems silent now when we come to him in earnest prayer; there is no voice, no answer. But we must pray on; he is surely listening, for he heareth prayer. There are reasons, unknown to us, for his silence; reasons full of thoughtful love and holy wisdom. He will answer in his own good time. (2) The disciples. They interceded for her. "Let her go," they said; as Simeon had said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart" (the Greek word is the same). They knew that the Lord was not wont to refuse the petitions of those who stood in need of his help; they wished him to grant her prayer at once. But their request was partly selfish, like the action of the unjust judge in the parable. The woman was crying after them; she was interrupting their intercourse with the Lord; she was drawing the attention of the multitude upon them—the very thing which at that time they wished to avoid. How often people give alms now from similar reasons, to escape trouble and importunity, not out of real charity! (3) The Lord's answer. He did not at once act according to the wish of the disciples. Their intercession was not single-hearted; it arose from mingled motives; it did not prevail. "I am not sent," he said, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The Lord's personal mission was to the Jews; he was "a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8). He was born in the ancient covenant; he was formally admitted into it by the rite of circumcision. He lived as a Jew; he preached to the Jews. But he himself had prophesied that many should come from the east and from the west, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. He had other sheep not of that fold; and here was one—one that had been lost—now coming to the good Shepherd, while many, alas! from his own special fold were wandering, and would wander further and further in the wilderness. Trouble brought her to him; trouble is a blessed thing when it brings us to the Lord. He seemed not to notice her; not even when the disciples drew his attention to her cries. It was, we may be sure, out of thoughtful mercy, for her sake and for theirs; for the more confirmation of her faith, and perhaps to prove to the apostles that she was, though a Canaanite, spiritually a child of Abraham; her faith brought her into the family of the father of the faithful. "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." (4) The woman's perseverance. She came nearer, and worshipped him. He had not as yet answered her a word; she had heard nothing from his lips, except, perhaps, the discouraging reply which he addressed to his disciples; but still she persevered. She threw herself at his feet in the intensity of her longing desire, saying, "Lord, help me." This time the Lord answered her; but, it seemed, with a cold and stern refusal. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." He had never before so repelled a suppliant; he had never before used words apparently so harsh, so contemptuous. But still the Gentile woman persevered in her entreaty. She accepts the truth of the Lord's words. It was right, she owned, that the children should first be filled; it would not be meet to cast their bread to the dogs; and the Gentiles, she admits, were as dogs compared with the chosen people. But she understands the word, in its milder application, of the little dogs (τὰ κυνάρια) which play with the children and lie under the table, not of the

wild savage packs which roam about Eastern cities. She is well pleased to be regarded as a little dog, for it gives her a claim to the Master's kindness. The Jews were wayward children; they had rejected the bread of life. The Gentiles would flock round the board. The Jews called them dogs; they would gladly, thankfully receive the bread which the Jews had spurned. She pleaded for her share; she asked only for the crumbs which fell from the table. They were the children's crumbs, she knew; but the children had let them fall. Might not she—no child, but a Gentile; no better, she owned, than a dog—might not she have her portion of those most precious crumbs? It was a beautiful humility, a touching holy perseverance. It was an illustration of the first Beatitude. This Syro-Phœnician woman was poor in spirit; she felt her spiritual poverty, and acknowledged it; and she obtained her share in the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, though not a child of the kingdom. Her prayer is a model for us. So ought we to pray; with the same humility, feeling and owning our own utter unworthiness; with the same importunity, urging our request in earnest continual supplication, though the Lord be silent and seem to heed us not. Sooner or later, he always answers the prayer of faith. He answered now. "O woman," he said, "great is thy faith!" The Lord admired the faith of this Canaanite woman, as he had marvelled at the faith of the Gentile centurion. Sometimes those who have the fewest privileges, few opportunities, little knowledge, are nevertheless rich in faith, and live very near to Christ. Such shall receive the blessing of this Gentile woman, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." For the Christian's prayer is, "Thy will be done." He yields up his will to God's most holy will; and thus, willing such things as God willeth, he obtains his requests; for "all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And now the mother's heart was glad; her child was healed. The Lord was distant in body, but his saving energy was present, as it is present now wherever men call on him in faithful prayer. He has taught us by his holy apostle to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks for all men. Let us try to fulfil this great duty of intercessory prayer. Let ministers pray for their people, parents for their children, all Christians for one another. Let parents pray earnestly, perseveringly, for erring children. "It is impossible," it was said to the mother of St. Augustine, "that the child of so many tears should perish."

LESSONS. 1. Do not value too highly the external signs of success; think more of duty than success. 2. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." 3. Be humble; to such God giveth grace.

Vers. 29—39.—*The return.* I. THE JOURNEY. 1. *The Lord leaves the borders of Tyre.* He had sojourned for a short time in this heathen land. He had wrought one mighty miracle; one heathen woman had shown a strangely energetic and persevering faith—a faith that we Christians may well covet earnestly. Surely some heathen souls—two at least, one would think—must have been drawn to Christ and to salvation by that work of love and power. They may, perhaps, have been among the little company who, thirty years afterwards, "kneeled down on the shore, and prayed," when St. Paul left Tyre on his last journey to Jerusalem. But the borders of Tyre were not to be the scene of the Lord's personal labours. He departed, going northwards at first through Sidon (if the reading of the most ancient manuscripts in Mark vii. 31 is to be followed). He looked on the great Phœnician cities, with their commerce, their magnificence, their idolatries. So now from heaven he looks down on our great towns, with their strange sharp contrasts of wealth and poverty, luxury and misery, with their unbelief and heathenism, with their drunkenness and uncleanness. His followers were to labour afterwards in those great centres of population. His own work lay not there. 2. *He comes to the Sea of Galilee.* He turned south-eastwards, and came through the half-heathen Decapolis to the eastern coast of the well-known lake. He went up into a mountain and sat down there, perhaps for prayer and meditation, perhaps for quiet intercourse with the twelve. But again he could not be hid; the healing of the deaf man who had an impediment in his speech (Mark vii. 32—37) was soon noised abroad. Great multitudes came; they were rough, ignorant mountaineers, inhabiting a semi-pagan country; but they saw the works of Christ; they recognized his power and love. They brought the sick and suffering from all the neighbourhood, and cast them down at Jesus' feet. We do not read of any words—they knew not how to pray; but in their

intense eagerness and excitement they cast down their suffering friends before the Lord. The action was enough. The sick lay around him; their reverential attitude, their mute distress, pleaded with the compassionate Saviour; he healed them all. 3. *The wonder of the multitude.* These peasants of Decapolis were men of simple hearts; they had not been prejudiced against our Lord by the emissaries of the Pharisees; they saw the Lord's power, and they wondered. But they did more than wonder; they glorified the God of Israel. Possibly they had worshipped other gods; but it was the Prophet of the God of Israel who had wrought these marvellous cures; they recognized his majesty, as Naaman the Syrian had done ages before. It is a lesson to us. God's mercies should lead us on to adoration. Worship is what we owe to God, and worship is the prostration of the whole being, bowed low in adoring reverence before the glory of God. May the mercies of each day lead us to practise here on earth that holy unselfish worship which we hope hereafter to offer before the glory-throne!

II. THE SECOND MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES. 1. *The Lord's words.* The disciples made no suggestion now, as they had done before under similar circumstances (ch. xiv. 15). Their confidence in their Master was increasing; their reverence was deepening; they felt, it may be, that patient waiting was their most becoming attitude; it was not their place to offer advice. But he called them; he would teach them, and us through them, to care for the bodily wants of our fellow-creatures. "I have compassion on the multitude." "These words," Stier well says, "in the mouth and from the heart of Christ, have called into existence all the institutions of philanthropy, unknown to heathenism, for all sorts of indigence and distress." The people were hungry; some of them (the Lord knew, as he knoweth all things) had come from far; they had continued with him three days. Their deep interest in the Lord's teaching, their wonder at his miracles, had so absorbed their thoughts that they had made no provision for their necessities, and their food was exhausted. Probably they were strangers from Decapolis; very possibly they had not heard of the feeding of the five thousand, who seem to have been gathered together on their way to the Passover. But these ignorant country people forgot themselves in attending upon the Lord. He cared for them. So he will care for us if we continue in his service, casting all our care on him. 2. *The disciples.* They must have remembered the former miracle; their question, indeed, as reported by St. Matthew, sounds almost like an allusion to it: "Whence should *we* have so much bread?" The Lord's words seemed to imply that they were to provide the food; whence should they obtain it? He could supply it—that they knew; they knew not yet certainly whether it would please him to do as he had done before; they did not presume to prescribe his course of action. Their stock of provisions was very small, somewhat larger than on the former occasion, but utterly inadequate for the wants of such a multitude. 3. *The miracle.* Again the Lord gave thanks, teaching us that we should never omit to acknowledge the bounty of God at every meal; again he brake the bread in that gracious manner so long and so well remembered (Luke xxiv. 35); again the disciples were his ministers in conveying the food to the assembled crowds. "And they did all eat, and were filled." The seven loaves and the few little fishes satisfied the hunger of four thousand men. The evangelist reminds us that, though the men only were numbered, there were women and children also. The Lord provided liberally for all alike. In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. Christianity has raised woman to her proper place in society. The Lord always loved the little children; he bade them come to him. He fed the whole multitude in his sovereign power and generous bounty, as now from day to day he feedeth us, fathers, mothers, children. "He satisfied them with the bread of heaven." There was enough, and more than enough; the disciples took up seven baskets full (and those baskets of large size; compare in the Greek, Acts ix. 25)—more, apparently, than the little store which they had at first. So he will bless our basket and our store if we trust in him.

LESSONS. 1. The multitudes brought their sick to Christ; let us commend our sick in faithful prayer to the mercy of the Lord. 2. They glorified the God of Israel; let us learn always to recognize his gracious hand, and to adore him who giveth all things. 3. He had compassion on the multitude; let us learn of him to feel for the needy and helpless. 4. Let us look to him for our daily bread; the Lord will provide.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The mischief of tradition.* I. TRADITION COMES FROM AN INEXPERIENCED ANTIQUITY. The Pharisees and scribes showed reverence for it because it descended from the elders; but these elders were only men. It is common to attach the greatest weight to the oldest opinion. Yet it is not correct to look for wisdom in antiquity; because, as Bacon reminds us, we are the ancients, and they who lived before us belonged to the childhood of the race. Under the Divine education of man wisdom should be growing with the ages. We look back with amazement on a multitude of fantastic notions cherished by our forefathers which have become ridiculous in our eyes. There is one thought, however, to be set off against this. Ideas that have stood the test of time win a certain guarantee of their solidity in comparison with raw notions suddenly springing from the imagination of a new thinker. But that is only the case when those ideas are being constantly tested by experience and criticism; and it does not apply after tradition has become petrified and has attained the rank of a venerated idol.

II. TRADITION IS MARKED BY HUMAN IMPERFECTION. The enemies of Christ greeted the elders with reverence; but our Lord replied by calling attention to a greater authority. They had honoured the elders, but they had dishonoured God. The tradition of the elders may deserve some reverence, but it cannot be compared with the commandment of God. Yet it was being preferred to that commandment. Tradition sometimes claims to be of Divine origin, handed down in the Church from the time of the apostles in a line of authorized teachers. If its claim could be proved, of course it would have an apostolic authority; but even then how could it be of superior value to the immediate utterances of the apostles recorded in the Scriptures? We have no warrant for believing, as the Gnostics taught, that an esoteric teaching of supreme importance has been thus handed down. The extravagant pretensions of Romanism, founded on the authority of tradition, which the Council of Trent declared to be of equal value with that of Scripture, warn us against the danger of trusting similar claims again.

III. TRADITION MAY BECOME AN EXCUSE FOR UNFAITHFULNESS TO DIVINE REVELATION. Thus it was with the Jews. The revelation they treated with contempt was that of the moral law. Parental claims were eluded on the plea of traditional usages. Nothing short of horrible hypocrisy was here practised. The plea that what was due to a needy parent could not be given because it had been already consecrated to God was quite false, inasmuch as the pretended consecration did not prevent the unnatural son from enjoying it himself. Thus tradition was a means of relaxing moral claims. The tendency to trust in tradition in the Christian Church has been sometimes associated with a casuistical treatment of simple obligations. The reason of this seems to be that while God's commandments are "exceeding broad" (Ps. cxix. 96), man's additions to them are dreadfully narrow. Thus tradition slides down to petty contrivances, and wastes its resources in miserable scruples. Christ would warn us to escape from the lowering and narrowing influence of this system of man's invention, by turning to the large, living, eternal, spiritual truth of the kingdom as he has revealed it to us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 11.—*The source of defilement.* The religious people in the time of Christ were right in being anxious to avoid defilement, but they made a great mistake in their idea as to its source, and therefore they went wrong in their notions of the evil thing itself.

I. THE AWAKENED CONSCIENCE DESIRES TO BE FREE FROM DEFILEMENT. 1. *On its own account.* Children who have been brought up in the gutter have no idea of cleanliness and no desire for it; and souls that have habitually wallowed in filth do not perceive their own degradation until a new and better influence has been brought to bear upon them. Nevertheless, man, made in the image of God, cannot attain his true end while the Divine image is corrupted and befouled, and when a gleam of his better nature awakes he longs to be pure. The cultivation of the spiritual life brings a horror of defilement. For its own sake the soul then longs to be clean. 2. *Because of the effects of defilement.* (1) Shame. The first perception of defilement

seen side by side with purity sends a shock of shame through the awakened soul. (2) Banishment from God. Without holiness no one can see God. Nothing unclean can enter heaven, *i.e.* the presence of God (Rev. xxi. 27). (3) Blindness. The defiled soul is dark; it cannot perceive spiritual truth.

II. THE PERVERTED CONSCIENCE MISTAKES THE SOURCE OF DEFILEMENT. The root-error of the Pharisees was externalism. The prim propriety of demeanour which characterized the professional saints of Jerusalem covered hearts as corrupt as any of the publicans' and sinners'. Yet the Pharisees thought themselves clean. They dreaded contact with a corpse, but they had little scruple in entertaining a corrupt thought. They would stop their ears at the sound of blasphemy, but they would give the reins to their tongues in malignant words. The evil of Pharisaism is by no means extinct to-day. Religious people dread to be found in association with questionable characters. They are anxious to be perfectly correct in the external observances of worship. They do not go to the extreme of the folly of the Pharisees, but they too often manifest the same spirit.

III. THE ENLIGHTENED CONSCIENCE PERCEIVES THE TRUE SOURCE OF DEFILEMENT WITHIN ITSELF. It is part of the work of Christ to arouse and guide the consciences of men. Thus he shows us that the real origin of defilement is in our own hearts. A black fountain will always pour out a black flood, do what we may to cleanse the stream; on the other hand, a spring of pure water will quickly wash away any casual defilement that falls into it. A man is not his environment. It is dangerous to be in the midst of corrupting influences; and yet a bed of lilies may grow out of foulest mire. A herd of swine will not be converted into a troupe of pure virgins by entering a temple; they will only convert the sanctuary into a sty. The corruption of a bad heart will be detected in language and conduct. When these are unworthy they will reflect shame on the debased heart from which they come. It is the great lesson of Christ, needed much in our own day, that as the root of all evil in the world is the evil heart of man, the only radical cleansing must be that which washes the heart. We must have done with the superficial treatment of mere appearances. Christ's method is to renew the life within.—W. F. A.

Ver. 14.—"*Blind leaders of the blind.*" This is a startling image, vividly suggesting to our minds a most deplorable condition of society. While it was especially true of the official teachers of Israel in our Lord's time, it has never ceased to have an application to somewhat similar men. It may be applied to heathen priests, to the benighted leaders of superstition in mediæval Europe, and, alas! to many in Christendom to-day who essay to guide others though they themselves cannot see the way of life.

I. THE BLIND LOOK FOR LEADERS. The consciousness of inability and the confession of it may not be recognized by superficial observers, because a certain surface pride tries to veil the deep diffidence and the yearning hunger for guidance that really inhabit the souls of men. The blindness of the multitudes that "knew not the Law" was but a shadow of the blindness of mankind generally. Ignorant of God, unable to comprehend itself, lost in the wilderness of thought, the mind of man seems to be eyeless, or at best dim-sighted and confused in its attempt to grasp spiritual truth.

II. THE BLIND MAY BE DECEIVED IN THEIR LEADERS. Their very blindness puts them under a disadvantage in judging of the worth of those who offer to guide them. Sounding words are no proofs of clear vision. Yet too often teachers have been accepted on their own terms and accredited by their self-assertions. Nevertheless, when one who sees arrives, it is possible for him and others to detect a mistake. The common people who heard Jesus gladly quickly perceived that his teaching had an authority which that of the scribes lacked.

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEADERS OF THE BLIND IS MOST SERIOUS. They are trusted men, and in proportion to their acceptance of confidence will be their responsibility. If they fail to carry out their promises their charges will suffer. But they too will fall into trouble. Men cannot guide others wrongly without going wrong themselves. Their fatal mistake is to pretend to be leaders of souls while they themselves are benighted, for it is possible to refuse the responsible function and to take the lower and humbler place of the blind who need guidance.

IV. IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT RELIGIOUS TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW THE TRUTH

THEY ARE CALLED UPON TO TEACH. This idea is so obvious that it seems to be a waste of words to state it. Yet it is constantly ignored. 1. *Special training is needed.* In the present day the air is laden with questions concerning the foundations of the faith, and no one is fit to be a teacher of others who is not prepared to meet those questions. Though some of them may not be readily answered, at least the teacher must know how to give some guidance to the inquirer in his perplexity. 2. *Divine light is needed.* It is not enough for the teacher to have been trained in theological studies. These may have left him in a midnight darkness; and they will do so if he has not opened his soul to the light of God.

V. THE ONLY SAFE GUIDE IS JESUS CHRIST. He has clear vision, and he leads surely through all difficulties. We lean on the teaching of ignorant men when we might go straight to the teaching of Christ. With the Light of the world shining upon our path, we should be able to see, and yet this will not be possible if we are blind. Now, it is the great work of Christ not merely to guide the blind, but to give them sight, so that they may see their way and follow him by their own vision of truth.—W. F. A.

Vers. 21—28.—*The triumph of a mother's love.* Jesus was beyond the borders of Palestine, on heathen soil. He had not extended his travels in order to carry his ministry to the heathen; but he was in retirement. He had left Galilee because the Galilæans were in a restless state—many of them perplexed by his teaching and turning from him, and also because the official teachers were seriously impeding his work. After this our Lord never resumed his old open ministry by the seashore and on the hillside. Yet even during his retirement he could not resist the pleadings of a mother's love.

I. THE CONDUCT OF THE MOTHER. The vivid picture given to us by the evangelist sets before us a very remarkable character. Let us observe some of its most interesting features. 1. *Devoted love.* A mother is just absorbed in her devotion to her poor daughter. As is often seen, the very affliction of the child the more endears her to the mother. A mother's love is no mere sentiment, and it is not satisfied to expend itself in idle tears. It inspires a keen and energetic interest. The mother is lifted above her people, and is carried forward to attempt what others never thought of, because her love will not permit her to give up her hope and her effort. 2. *Rare faith.* (1) The woman was a heathen. Yet, like the centurion of Capernaum, she had a faith greater than that of any Jew or Jewess. Thus, although our Lord's immediate ministry is to Israel, it is manifest, even while this is being carried out, that other peoples must share its benefits. (2) She recognized the Messiahship of Christ. Though a heathen, she had learnt to share the hope of Israel. In the time of his exile, depression, and disappointment, she did not fail to recognize the very Christ of God. 3. *Unyielding persistency.* The wonder is that this woman would take no refusal; and yet shall we call it a wonder at all when we remember that she was a mother? Here is the greatest instance in all history of the victory of persevering prayer. 4. *Quick inventiveness.* Jesus was a Master of the fine art of repartee; but for once he gladly allows that his words are perfectly met and replied to, and he generously leaves the last word with his applicant. In this word there is a full admission of all Christ said, and no departure from perfect humility, and yet there is a brilliant shaft of wit as modest as it is effective. There is room for the quick intellect in the kingdom of heaven.

II. THE BEHAVIOUR OF CHRIST. On the surface this is mysterious and apparently ungenerous; but a fair consideration of the whole narrative will not leave any ground of complaint against it. 1. *A true statement.* The mission of Christ was to the Jews. This was a fact not to be gainsaid. Though he came for the salvation of the world, his method was to begin with Israel and to confine his personal labours on earth to the people who were to be his instrument for saving others. 2. *A test of faith.* Our Lord's discouragement of the applicant would have been unkind if she had been a weak and timorous person. But with his keen intuition of character he could see at a glance that she was a woman of courage and confidence. It was an acknowledgment of her good qualities that permitted the severe test to be applied to her. 3. *A final blessing.* In the end this eager mother got all she sought after, and therefore she had no complaint against Christ, but, on the contrary, good ground for thankfulness. Jesus Christ

does not refuse any true applicant for his grace. He may seem to discourage at first, but in the end faith is always rewarded.—W. F. A.

Vers. 29—31.—*The healing ministry.* After his retirement to the north, Jesus seems to have returned for a short time to the scenes of his earlier labours in Galilee. His open public ministry had almost ceased, and his miracles were now for the most part rare, and only performed in response to some special appeal. But we have here one last occasion of widespread healing, crowning the public beneficence of Christ's earthly life.

I. OUR LORD'S PURPOSE. He went up the well-known mountain where he had taught the people during his earlier ministry, and there he seated himself in preparation for further teaching. This was his aim, as the deliberate sitting down implied. But this was not what the people wanted; they were anxious for bodily healing. Now, we do not find that Jesus discouraged applications for the cure of sickness; he encouraged them by his generous response. Nevertheless, it must have been painful for him to see how much more anxious the people were to receive earthly blessings than to secure those higher spiritual blessings which it was the great end of his life-work to bestow. He is always thinking first of the kingdom of God, and only adding the other things to it as secondary boons. His true disciples should learn a sense of proportion, and seek first what Christ is most anxious to bestow.

II. THE PEOPLE'S TROUBLE. 1. *Great bodily distress.* It is noteworthy that all the cases here specified represent diseases or defects in some bodily organ. They are not like the instances of fever, leprosy, or general paralysis that we have met with earlier. It would seem that these cases would be difficult to treat. 2. *Variety of need.* Though a certain common character belongs to all these cases, they still differ from one another very considerably. Yet they are all brought to Christ. He is not a specialist able only to treat one class of complaints. He welcomes and helps people whose needs are infinitely various. 3. *Brotherly sympathy.* The people brought their afflicted friends, leading the blind and carrying the lame up the steep, broken mountain-path. It was the Christ-spirit that helped these poor sufferers to Christ. There is room for large mutual helpfulness in the kingdom of heaven. If we cannot save our brothers, we can bring them to the Saviour.

III. OUR LORD'S GRACE. The response was ready and sufficient. It is stated in few words, "And he healed them;" yet this is enough. The very laconic phrase shows that there were no qualifications, limitations, exceptions. 1. *Healing.* This was the chief miracle-work of Christ. It was the symbol of his spiritual ministry (Luke iv. 18). He comes to give eyes to the soul, and the hearing of Divine voices, and strength for the service of God. 2. *Feeding.* This is recorded in the following paragraph. Some needed healing; all needed feeding. Now, Christ, who cures sick souls, also nourishes healthy souls with the bread of life. They who bring others to Christ are themselves blessed by Christ.

IV. THE PEOPLE'S JOY. It is occasioned by the wonderful sight of the results of Christ's miracle-working. Christ is honoured by what he does in the world now. We can see his spiritual miracles, and they are his best credentials. The effect on the people was twofold. 1. *Amazement.* "The multitude wondered." Yet they had come to seek these very boons! The sight of the reality was greater than the previous hope. Christ is truly named "Wonderful" (Isa. ix. 6). 2. *Praise.* The people saw the hand of God in this, and a spontaneous outburst of praise followed. Thus the work of Christ glorifies the Name of God.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—20.—*On hand-washing.* The omission with which the Pharisees here charge the disciples was that of a ceremonial observance on which they laid immense stress. Certain washings for purification had been commanded by the Law of Moses, but to these countless additions of a minute and vexatious kind had been added by the rabbis. Even when no defilement had been consciously contracted, the washings must be observed because, unwittingly, a man might touch what would defile him. Wherever in religion such human inventions are accepted as binding, they tend to become more prominent than the fundamental moral law. It was so in this case, and it is to this our Lord's words point. "By your tradition," he says, "ye make the Word

of *God* of none effect. You put aside his commandment that you may keep your own tradition. You accept as the important things such trifles as these, while the truly great things of the Law you utterly neglect." But the evil of Pharisaism lay even deeper than this. The Pharisees were not mere formalists; those of Paul's type could honestly say that, touching the Law, they were blameless. Their mistake was that they thought their good actions made them good men. Our Lord came to give men clear perception and hold of the real distinction between good and evil. Men were not to be allowed to suppose the distinction between good men and bad was a slight one, that could be bridged over by a few acquired habits or formal observances. They were to be made to see that the distinction was deep as humanity itself; that their goodness must be one that would be eternal; not being the result of a superficial imitation, or attempt to satisfy the expectations or win the applause of men, but springing from the man's inmost self. To illustrate the principle that respect to human tradition tends to disrespect of God's Law, our Lord cites an instance well known to them. Under the guise of extra devotion to God, a man could evade the first of human duties by merely saying over anything he wished to keep, "Corban"—"It is devoted." This was monstrous, and the system which encouraged it manifestly "a plant which his Father had not planted." The principle which lies at the root of our Lord's teaching here he enounces in the words, "There is nothing from without a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile a man." We may apply this in two ways. 1. *To those who, under the guise of greater religiousness than that of other men, evade the common duties of life;* who, in defending some trifle that hangs to the skirt of religion, do not scruple to transgress the broad laws of justice, truth, and charity which form its life. Every age has had its representatives of the Pharisees, the defenders of traditional religion, who have shown the same unscrupulousness and intolerance in defence of what they suppose to be religious truth. And when we consider the damage done to religion by such persons, and the difficulty of convincing them of their error, we do not wonder that no class was so frequently and so unsparingly denounced by our Lord. In every religious community there is a tendency to place the keeping of certain observances that are added to the Law above the Law itself; to consider these extra things as the marks of a religious man, and to call a man religious or irreligious according as he does or does not things that have as little to do with fundamental morality as the washing of hands before eating. We are apt, all of us, to pay attention to the means rather than to what is the great end of all religion; to wash our hands instead of our hearts. "These things ye ought to have done, but not to have left the others undone." All these things that are peculiar marks of religious people are good, but become enormous evils when out of proportion to the essential matters of *the Law*—of morality, of justice and truth between man and man, of love to God and to our fellows. Or: 2. We may consider the principle as enouncing the general truth that *man's life is determined in all respects by what is within, not by what is without.* Our Lord was sinless, not because he was not in circumstances of temptation, but because there was nothing on which temptation could fix. We lay the blame of our low spiritual condition, our actual falls, on our circumstances. But why is it these circumstances tempt us? Others pass through them without peril. The blame is within. We must seek for the remedy, also, within. The change that determines our destiny is a change in ourselves.—D.

Vers. 21—28.—*The Syro-Phœnician woman.* The peculiarity of the incident here related is not the cure wrought, but the refusal with which the mother's petition was at first met. It did not need a sympathy such as our Lord's to urge him to dismiss this foul intrusion into the innocent and happy days of childhood; it did not need his hatred of evil to urge him to rebuke the Satanic malice, which could exult in attacking, not the aged sinner, but the pure child who knew nothing of the sources of disease and had no arguments to resist its terror. Who would not count it one of the best pleasures to be able to bring a suffering child from pain and terror to the sane and healthy joy of childhood? But our Lord answered never a word, and when urged to speak, his speech was more discouraging than silence. What is it, then, which justifies this conduct? It may have been his meaning from the first to grant the petition, and he

put the difficulties in a harsh form that the woman might apprehend the value of what she asked. But what were the difficulties? His own reason was that he was not sent to any but Israelites. He sent his apostles to every creature, but his own ministry was confined to Israel. This people had been the object of a constant enriching care for many generations, that at length the Messiah might come to them and through them bless the world; and to act in the end as if this made no difference would have been for God to stultify himself. It is only after the distinction between Jew and Gentile has been cordially accepted by the woman that her request is granted. In humbly and faithfully taking her place among the dogs, she took her place among the children of faithful Abraham. She had the faith which was the best possession of the Jew, and for the sake of which all their training had been given. Observe—

I. HER HUMILITY. Radically it was her humility which made her victorious. Quick in intellect and brilliant; resolute, capable, and even audacious, in obtaining what she set her heart on, she was yet humble. She was of the meek who inherit the earth.

II. IT WAS HER FAITH TO WHICH OUR LORD DREW ATTENTION. This woman alone was victorious over him in debate; but it is not her cleverness, but her faith, which delighted him when she snared him in his own words—her faith in his inability to refuse to do a kindness, and in his God-given power to do it.

III. WE SOMETIMES, LIKE THIS WOMAN, ASK GOD FOR SOMETHING WHICH HE MIGHT TELL US IN THE FIRST INSTANCE IT WAS NOT LAWFUL FOR HIM TO DO. We break some natural law, physical or moral, and, broken-hearted at the consequences, we cry to God. But he answers us never a word; there is no sign that we have spoken. We feel that we are receiving the wages of sin. Gradually and painfully and with deep humility we accept the position we have brought ourselves into, and learn to say, "It *is* better I should learn the rigour of this perfect and holy order of things than that I should at once have all I ask for."

IV. BEGINNING WITH THIS WOMAN BY LEARNING HOW LITTLE CLAIM WE HAVE, WE MUST WITH HER HOLD TO CHRIST TILL HE GIVES US ALL WE NEED. Can you have such reason to think you are not among Christ's people as this woman had? Did he not plainly tell her that he was not sent to her, and yet in the end yield all to her? You will find that by submitting yourself humbly to the laws you have broken, and to him whose laws they are, you do pass into a new condition, and other laws begin to work in your favour.

V. PARENTS MUST BE ENCOURAGED BY THE SUCCESS OF THIS MOTHER'S INTERCESSION. You may be able to make nothing of your child that strangely perplexes you by his conduct, but Christ can make something of him.

In conclusion, have you sufficiently considered the blessedness of succeeding with Christ, of getting from him what you desire? He assures you that importunate prayer prevails. Whatever great trouble, he bids you come to him. He knows human life well, and does not underrate its difficulty. He assures you he can help you. He asks for no certificate of character. If you feel no want he can relieve, is not this itself a reason for seeking him; a proof that you are benumbed in spirit, and need the life he offers?—D.

Vers. 29—39.—*Feeding of the four thousand.* Matthew puts side by side with miracles of healing this miracle of feeding the four thousand, as if inviting us to read them in the light they reflect upon each other. 1. The first point of contrast is that, while the healing *originated in the desire of the multitude* who sought our Lord's help, the feeding *originated with him*, he being the first to notice the faint looks of many of the people. It were much to receive at Christ's hand all we ask for; but, in fact, we receive a great deal more. This miracle is a concrete proof that God knows what we have need of before we ask him, and that the Creator cares for his creature with a tenderness and sympathy which no human relationship rivals. 2. As the one class of miracles exhibits Christ's power to *cure*, the other reveals his power to *prevent*, human suffering. As it is a lowered vitality that gives disease its opportunity, so the only preservative against any form of sin is a strong spiritual life. Perhaps the gospel has come to be looked on too exclusively as a remedial scheme, and too little as the means of maintaining a healthy condition of spirit. It is men who have thirsted for righteousness all their

lives who have served their generation best; and while we should not do less for the reclamation of the abandoned, we should rectify the balance by doing more to preserve the young from the misery of a wasted life. For every *one* our Lord *healed*, he *fed ten*. He presents himself not only and always as Medicine, but also as Food—as the Bread that nourishes true and eternal life. *Bread* a fit symbol, as showing—

I. THE UNIVERSAL NEED OF CHRIST AND HIS APPLICABILITY TO ALL. From the first God saw that so surely as we should all hunger and need bread, so surely should we need Christ if our souls were to live. In all that Christ calls us to, he is not putting a strain on our natures, but simply recalling us to that condition in which alone we can live with the ease and comfort of health, and in which alone we can finally and permanently delight.

II. CHRIST GIVES LIFE TO THE WORLD THROUGH HIS DISCIPLES. He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down. It is a very grave truth that every one of us who has himself received spiritual life from Christ has thereby in possession what may give life to many human souls. We may give or withhold, but it is given not only to be consumed, but to be distributed. It is not the privilege of any one class of disciples, but of all.

III. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS THE SOURCE OF LIFE IS REQUISITE BOTH FOR RECEIVING AND IMPARTING SPIRITUAL LIFE. That bread was offered was nothing; each man must use it for himself. Had any scoffed at the idea of our Lord's feeding the multitude with the few loaves he had before him, or refused to believe that bread so produced could have any nourishment in it, they must have remained unfed and faint. And it must have been trying to the disciples to do as they were bid, and advance each man to his separate hundred with his morsel of bread. But if they gave cautiously and sparingly to the first, they must soon have felt rebuked and their hearts enlarged. However slender our attainments or our power of influencing others, let us not be afraid of attempting to nourish some other soul; it is not what we have, but what Christ makes of it, that is to do good.

IV. CONSIDER THE ABUNDANCE AND THE ECONOMY OF CHRIST'S PROVIDING. Many might have despised to gather up the broken bread and bits of fish; have thought they must be hungry indeed who would use such food. Yes, and it is only the hungry soul God promises to satisfy. His food is plain, but it is nutritious, and they who must have fresh food or will take none will be disappointed.

V. THE CHARACTER IN WHICH CHRIST HERE APPEARS IS ONE WHICH WE MAY REMEMBER ALWAYS. Now, as then, he is considerate of our wants, mindful of our infirmities, quick to calculate our worldly prospects, and provide for us; simple, practical, earnest in his love. In his presence none need lack any good thing. "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."—D.

Vers. 1—20.—*Casuistry reproved.* The fame of the miracles and ministry of Jesus passed from Galilee to Jerusalem, whence came certain Pharisees and scribes, who were probably sent to watch him, and find matter of accusation against him (cf. ch. xxii. 15, 16). "Jerusalem—the high-school of hypocrisy. Rabbi Nathan says, 'If the hypocrites were divided into ten parts, nine would be found in Jerusalem, and one in the world beside'" (Stier). These zealots set up the traditions of the elders against the character and claims of Jesus. Their accusation is contained in the question, "Why do thy disciples," etc.? (ver. 2). The reply takes the form of a retort, an admonition, and an exposition; the former being hurled at the accusers, and the latter given for the edification of disciples and the people.

I. THE RETORT. "Why do ye transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" 1. *The appeal was followed up by an example.* (1) The instance cited is their violation of the fifth commandment. This enjoined, under the term "honour," a dutiful respect to parents in taking care of and supporting them (cf. Prov. iii. 9; Numb. xxiii. 17; 1 Tim. v. 3, 17). The neglect of parents is included under the expression *cursing* them, and was, according to the Law, a crime so heinous as to be punishable with death (cf. ver. 4; Exod. xxi. 17). Let our youth remember this. (2) Under pretext of zeal for God the casuists managed to release themselves from this obligation. The device was to make a vow to devote to the temple treasury that

which their parents might otherwise claim from them (see Mark vii. 11). In this wickedness they sheltered themselves under the authority of their traditions, and thus made void the Law of God. 2. *This was a triumphant defence of the disciples.* (1) It showed that the traditions in question were *vicious*, and therefore that no blame could justly be laid to the account of the disciples for disregarding them. It showed that they were, on the contrary, to be commended for protesting against them. If this was the worst thing alleged against them, they must have conducted themselves inoffensively. (2) It was all the more incumbent upon the disciples to protest, since the Jewish doctors affirmed that the matter of their traditions had been originally delivered by God himself to Moses, and from him orally transmitted; that they are more excellent than, and consequently of superior obligation to, the Law itself. (3) Note: The Council of Trent claims for the Romish traditions that "they are to be held with the same pious affection and reverence" as the Holy Scriptures (sess. 4, decr. 1). Brooks compares this addition of tradition to Scripture to putting paint upon a diamond. Luther likens the interpretation of Scripture by tradition to the straining of milk through a coal-sack. 3. *It was a heavy impeachment of the accusers.* (1) It put them to the worse. Whether or not the disciples had transgressed, their accusers are accused of being the chief transgressors. Those who have the beam in their own eye are not the persons to take the mote out of their brother's eye. Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The Pharisees of every religious community take more pleasure in blaming others than in amending themselves. (2) It branded them as *hypocrites*. What else are they who, under pretence of zeal for God, transgress his holy Law? They honoured him with the lip while their heart was far from him. Their *heartless* worship was "vain"—such as God could not approve. What vanity there is in the major portion of the religion of every age and clime (see Jas. i. 26)!

II. THE ADMONITION. This was addressed to the disciples. "Then came the disciples," etc. (vers. 12—14). 1. *The doom of the hypocrite is declared.* (1) They were offended at the truth. This was obvious to the disciples. Their pride was mortified. They were silenced. They had no reply. They nursed their wrath. Plain speaking never fails to offend the sinner who is unwilling to repent. (2) They were blinded by the light. Their blindness was not involuntary ignorance, but voluntary error. They shut their eyes against the Light of the world, and were in consequence judicially blinded. So it fell out according to the prediction in Isaiah (see context in the prophet, Isa. xxix. 14). (3) They were doomed to be rooted out of the Church of God. He would not own them as his planting (cf. Isa. xli. 19; John xv. 2). The sect of the Pharisees did not survive the destruction of Jerusalem. Every spurious plant will be rooted out of the Church in the judgment of the great day (see ch. xiii. 30). (4) Their membership will be transferred to the Church of the devil. The blind guides will fall into a pit (see John ix. 40; Rom. ii. 19, 20). The well in the figure represents Gehenna. The pit of falsehood is the prelude to the pit of perdition. 2. *Their dupes will share their doom.* (1) So it proved. The blinded nation were led on to crucify their King, and to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and were, together with their guides, rooted out by the Romans (cf. Jer. xiv. 15, 16; xx. 6). "How many men have ruined their estates by suretyship for others! But of all suretyship none is so dangerous as spiritual suretyship. He that pins his faith upon another man's sleeve knows not whither he will carry it" (Flavel). (2) The crime and consequences of illegal impositions will be charged upon those who maintain as well as upon those who invent them (see Micah vi. 16). God suffers one man to lead many to ruin. (*a*) A rich profligate. (*b*) An infidel. (*c*) A man of learning. (*d*) A politician. (*e*) A teacher of heresy or of levity. "If both fall together into the ditch, the blind leaders will fall undermost, and have the worst of it" (Henry). But that will be slender comfort to the sufferers in the crush that will follow. (3) The moral, then, is, "Let them alone." Avoid false teachers. Have no communion with them. A literal attention to these words of Christ produced the *Reformation* (see Hos. iv. 17; 1 Thess. ii. 14, 15). Be not satisfied with attending a place of worship. See that the teaching is of God (cf. 1 John iv. 1). None but the blind will submit to be led by the blind.

III. THE EXPOSITION. This was given alike to the disciples and the people (vers. 10, 11, 15—20). 1. *It distinguishes between Moses and the elders.* (1) The traditions

were human. "The precepts of men," not to be confounded with the "doctrines" of God. Moses made a distinction in meats—the clean and unclean—but prescribed nothing respecting the eating with unwashen hands. This was a refinement of the elders. The ground of it was the possibility of the hands having touched something that might communicate legal uncleanness, and the contention that, since the Jews, like other Orientals, made great use of their fingers in eating, the uncleanness would be communicated to the food; then the food, taken into the system and assimilated, would defile the whole body. Hence such precepts as this of the Rabbi Akiba: "He that takes meat with unwashen hands is worthy of death." (2) With these refinements the disciples had no sympathy. They rejected the casuistry that would make void the law of the fifth commandment. They did not scruple to eat with unwashen hands. (3) But the multitude still needed enlightenment on this point. And how many nowadays scruple to communicate with unwashed hands, but scruple not to communicate with unwashed consciences! (Quesnel). 2. *It distinguishes between the letter and the spirit of the Law.* (1) In the letter those who ate of unclean meat were unclean; but then the uncleanness was that of the meat; *not* moral, but *ceremonial.* Moreover, the Mosaic distinction of meats was not instituted for its own sake, but to point out the distinction between *moral* good and evil. Hence, when the ceremonial law ceased to serve this purpose, it became useless. (2) These principles were now enunciated by Christ, and so commenced that spiritual teaching respecting the war between the flesh and Spirit unfolded in the writings of Paul (cf. Rom. vii. 18, 19; viii. 1, 2; Gal. v. 16—21). (3) This was what Peter could not understand when he "answered and said, Declare unto us this parable" (ver. 15). He could scarcely believe his ears that a distinction in meats, in the abstract, availed nothing. His prejudices darkened his understanding; nor were they dispersed until nine years later, when he received the vision of the sheet (see Acts x. 15, 28). (4) The spirit of the Law, then, is the all-important matter. Not that which goeth into the mouth, but that which cometh out of the heart. In religion the heart is everything. Religion is the union of the heart with God. The teaching of Christ here (*a*) recognizes original sin. "Temptations and occasions put nothing into a man, but only draw out what is in him before" (Dr. Owen). (*b*) Before evil becomes sin it must have the sanction of the understanding (see 1 John iii. 4).—J. A. M.

Vers. 21—28.—*Great faith.* So the faith of the Syro-Phœnician woman is described by the Lord. The elements of that great faith are evident in the narrative.

I. GREAT FAITH IS CLEAR-SIGHTED. 1. *In the discernment of evil.* (1) This woman saw that her daughter was possessed of a devil; that her faculties were under the power of an evil spirit. Her eyes were not blinded by maternal partiality. She clearly apprehended the terrible fact. Do Christian parents ever fail to discern that their unchristian children are vexed in spirit with a proud devil, an unclean devil, a malicious devil? (2) She saw that her daughter was "grievously vexed." The demon, in this case, was of extraordinary malignity. Note: As in evil men, so in devils, there are varieties and degrees of malignity. Or the demon in this case had unusual scope allowed him for the exertion of his malignity. 2. *In the discernment of the cure.* (1) This woman saw that the cure for her daughter was not within the ordinary physicians' skill. She may have come to this conclusion through experience. She may have come at it by reasoning. For devils are stronger than men. (2) She saw it in the power of God. That power devils must acknowledge. That power she sought in Jesus. When she called him "Lord," she meant more than the complimentary *Sir.* She identified him as the Christ; for such is the meaning of the title "Son of David." (3) She saw it in the mercy of God. The Messiah of prophecy is full of mercy. The fame of Jesus was in accordance with the promises. "Mercy," therefore, was her plea.

II. GREAT FAITH IS HUMBLE. 1. *In conduct.* (1) This woman cried for "mercy." Here was no plea of right. Her hope was in the sympathy of a merciful heart. Nothing can touch that like the cry of misery. (2) She cried "after" him (ver. 23)—followed at a distance, as unworthy to come too near. As a daughter of Canaan, her behaviour accorded with the condition of a servant (see Gen. ix. 26). (3) When she did come near, "she came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." In her the humble attitude of worship expressed truly its humble spirit. 2. *In temper.* (1) She

consented to the appellation of "dog." "Truth, Lord," was her humble reply. "Dog" here is opposed to "sheep." The clean animal in the Law was the type of the Israelite; the unclean, of the Gentile. She was a "Greek" or Gentile, "a Syro-Phœnician by race" (Mark vii. 25). She does not seem to have been a proselyte. (2) It does not hence follow, however, that she was an idolater. Hiram, a king of her nation, had a hand in building the temple of Solomon, and was a lover of David, and blessed the God of Israel (see 1 Kings v. 7). Zarephath, where dwelt the worthy widow in the days of Elijah, was in the land of Sidon (see 1 Kings xvii. 9; Luke iv. 25). Many Gentiles in those parts respected Judaism, and looked for the promised Messiah. (3) If she understood the spirit of the Law, and the force of the promise which makes clean the Gentile believer, and constitutes him the child of Abraham's faith, she did not plead this. She accepted the title of "dog" in its spiritual as well as in its ceremonial signification. Note: Modesty is no restriction to greatness of faith (cf. ch. viii. 8, 9).

III. GREAT FAITH IS EARNEST. 1. *It will not miss an opportunity.* (1) Here was a golden opportunity. Jesus was "in the parts of Tyre and Sidon." He was "a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God" (Rom. xv. 8), yet went to the limits of his commission to cast a look of pity over the boundary. (2) Hearing of his vicinity she "came out." She did not wait until Jesus should cross over the border-land. Had she done so, she would have missed her opportunity. Note: Many lose their souls by devising opportunities instead of accepting those provided for them by God. (3) Abram had to come out of Ur in order to his inheriting Canaan. This woman had to come out of Phœnicia to inherit the blessing of Israel. So must the sinner leave his sins in order to find salvation. If he be in earnest he will not miss his opportunity. 2. *Its heart is in its cause.* (1) This woman made her daughter's case her own. Her cry was, "Have mercy upon *me*." Her plea was as though she herself was sorely vexed with the demon that possessed her child. So she sought relief as for herself. "Lord, help *me*." (2) Her importunity moved the disciples to plead for her: "Send her away; for she crieth after us." "O disciples! and does the voice of prayer trouble you? How little at present do ye resemble the Master! We never read of *his* being troubled with the cry of the poor and needy. And this is all that you have to urge, is it? Your charity amounts to just so much as that of some wealthy persons, who give a poor man a penny, not out of compassion, but in order to get rid of him!" (A. Fuller). But whether the motive of the disciples was that of the unjust judge or something more worthy of them, the earnestness of the woman cannot be mistaken.

IV. GREAT FAITH IS PERSISTENT. 1. *It refuses discouragement.* (1) Jesus "answered her not a word;" still she cried. He knew the quality of her faith. We must not construe delay in answering our prayers into a refusal to answer them. It may be to draw out the quality of our faith. God *proves* that he may *improve* our faith. (2) Jesus refused the intercession of his disciples for her; still she cried. "He answered her and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This silenced the disciples; not so the woman. (3) Jesus "entered into a house, and would have no man know it," apparently to avoid her importunity. But "he could not be hid," for this woman followed him, and then "fell down at his feet" (see Mark vii. 24). (4) Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." This was the culminating point. 2. *In the very heart of discouragement it finds encouragement.* (1) Never for a moment did she lose sight of her great argument, viz. that hers was the appeal of misery to Mercy itself. The more sensibly we feel the burden the more resolutely we pray for its removal. Christ himself in his agony *prayed more earnestly*. This plea of misery to Mercy remained in undiminished force. (2) The quickness of her faith could even discover the presence of that mercy in the tenderness of tone behind the sternness of expression. Did not Jesus use the diminutive (κυνάρια), "*little* dogs"? Here was a leverage which she adroitly seized. The children are familiar with the little dogs, and have no objection to their eating the crumbs that fall from the table. "The spirit of faith suggests the best forms of prayer" (Bengel). It is, moreover, "their master's table." It cannot go ill with the dogs. "There is bread enough [for the children] and to spare" for the servants and the dogs (see Luke xv. 17, 19). A crumb of Christ's mercy is sufficient to expel a malignant devil. (3) So faith triumphed. "It resembled the river, which becomes enlarged by the dykes opposed to it, till at last it sweeps them away" (A. Clarke). "O woman." By faith the dog

is already transformed into the woman. "Great is thy faith." "Jesus admires this faith to the end we may admire and imitate it" (A. Clarke). "Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." There is faith in willing. "And her daughter was healed from that hour." Healed at her home (see Mark vii. 30). (4) Here was a gleam of that light which was to lighten the Gentiles; a presage of that mercy to be fully revealed after his death. Here also is a proof that the curse upon Canaan was only meant for those of his race who should follow his unbelief. The doom of corporate bodies does not necessarily fall upon all their individual members. True faith is saving evermore.—J. A. M.

Vers. 29—31.—*The power of Christ.* In this narrative there is no word of Christ recorded; yet the scene is full of animation. It is the animation of *power*. We have in it—

I. CHRIST IN THE POWER OF HIS ATTRACTION. 1. *He sat upon the mountain.* (1) Possibly Tabor. "The mountain," meaning some particular mountain which he was accustomed to frequent; for whenever it is spoken of at a time when Jesus is in *Galilee*, it is always distinguished by the *article* (cf. ch. iv. 18; v. 1; xiii. 54; xiv. 23; xxviii. 16). "I suppose it was Mount Tabor" (Wakefield). (2) Mountains were symbols of powers. So they are put for kingdoms. Thus the powerful kingdom of Babylon is described as a "destroying mountain" to be devoted to destruction (see Jer. li. 25). Places of power and authority within a kingdom are also compared to mountains (see Amos iv. 1). Powerful obstacles to the progress of the gospel are described as mountains which have to be removed (see Isa. xl. 4; xli. 5; xlix. 11). The exaltation of the kingdom of Christ above the kingdoms of the world is called the establishing of the mountain of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains and its exaltation above the hills (see Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 1). And the kingdom of Christ is described as a little stone destined to swell into a great mountain which shall fill the whole earth (see Dan. ii. 35). (3) The attitude of Jesus, seated upon this mountain, silently asserted his enthronement above all power, material and spiritual, secular and sacred. 2. *Great multitudes came to him.* (1) See them streaming out from the surrounding towns and villages. Yet are these but portents of the millions through the ages to be influenced by his attractive power (see John xii. 32). Surely this is that Shiloh to whom shall be the gathering of the people (Gen. xlix. 10). (2) Some *came* to him. These were the more healthy. It is a sign of spiritual health when a man can come to Jesus in faith. Conspicuous amongst those who came would be those upon whom, on former occasions, Jesus had shown miracles of healing. (3) Others were *brought*. These were the diseased who could not come without help. It is the purest benevolence to bring to Jesus, the Healer, in faith those who are morally diseased. Perhaps many who now bring the sick were formerly themselves brought as sick. So the attractive power of Christ is ever multiplying.

II. CHRIST IN HIS POWER OF HEALING. 1. *Physical maladies owned this power.* (1) The sick of all sorts were brought to him. Note: Sin has turned this world into a hospital. (2) The spectacle moved his compassion as the accumulation of living misery was "cast down at his feet." The oratory of misery is eloquent in the ear of mercy. (3) "And he healed them." Here was no case so malignant as to baffle the resources of this great Physician. As from the Mount of Beatitudes Jesus delivered in his memorable sermon lessons of wisdom, so now from this, probably the same mountain, he dispenses the blessings of his power. 2. *The physical are typical of the spiritual.* (1) The *lame*. Lameness here is perhaps limited to the legs, and is thus distinguished from the *maiming* mentioned afterwards. Those are morally lame whose walk or conduct is irregular or inconsistent, or who cannot move in the ways of righteousness. (2) The *dumb*. These are also generally deaf. And there are those who are deaf to the voice of God calling them to duty; and who have not the moral courage to confess the truth, or the moral disposition to praise God. (3) The *blind*. Those the vision of whose understanding is blinded by prejudice. Those whose judgment is at fault through ignorance, error, or malignity. Moral blindness is voluntary, and therefore the more difficult of cure (see John ix. 41). (4) The *maimed*. These would include those who had lost a member; those who had lost the use of a member, as by palsy; and those whose limbs were disabled by distortion through

disease or accident (cf. ch. xviii. 8; Mark ix. 43). The morally maimed are those whose faculties are impaired or obliterated by sin. (5) "Many others." As devils are legion, so are their possessions. The varieties of evil are legion as well as the number of their victims. 3. *The miraculous is typical of the spiritual healing.* (1) See now the lame leaping for joy and walking steadily in the ways of God's commandments. (2) Listen now to the dumb witnessing for Christ and singing the praises of the Saviour. (3) Behold how the faculties and powers of the maimed have been restored. Is there not a new creation here? (4) Witness how the blind eyes are opened to see the wonders of God's Law. (5) All distortions of the soul are cured by the power of Jesus.

III. CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD. 1. *The people glorified Christ as God.* (1) His healing power was undoubtedly the power of God. For here is the reproduction of a hand or foot at a word or touch. Is not this creative energy? What power short of omnipotence can create? (2) But Jesus wrought his miracles immediately from himself. In this case he could not have wrought by delegated power. Omnipotence cannot be delegated, for there cannot be two Omnipotents. (3) How otherwise, then, could the people who "wondered" at the miracles glorify God without discerning Christ to be the Power of God? 2. *They glorified him as "the God of Israel."* (1) They identified him as the very God of Jacob, who in human form wrestled with that patriarch and changed his name to Israel (cf. Gen. xxxii. 24—30). (2) They identified him as the God of the covenant people. The same Miracle-Worker who brought Israel out of Egypt. The same who gave them the Law from Sinai. The same who established them in the land of promise. The same who in the Shechinah enthroned himself in the temple as in the palace of his kingdom. The same who will restore again to Israel the kingdom.—J. A. M.

Vers. 32—39.—*The compassion of Jesus.* Having let fall that crumb under the table, in the parts of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus returns to make a full feast for the children. When he had here performed miracles of healing, he proceeds to the performance of a miracle of feeding. The removal of evil is a prelude to the communication of good.

I. THE COMPASSION OF JESUS IS READY. 1. *Quick to discern a need.* (1) "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat." Three hours, under ordinary conditions, would be a long service; especially so should the dinner-hour be invaded. But here is a service of three days, in which dinner is the last thought with the congregation. The Minister, however, able, and withal considerate. (2) "They have nothing to eat." This world is a *desert*, where nothing can be found to satisfy the soul of man, but the salvation which Christ has purchased. (3) Christ suffered the multitude to hunger, as Israel of old, to teach them great lessons (see Deut. viii. 3). That is sweet to the hungry soul which the full soul loathes. Fasting precedes feasting. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is the prelude to being satisfied with the bounties of God's table. 2. *Quick to provide against calamity.* (1) "They may faint in the way." Note: It is fitting and religious to give due attention to the wants of the body. "Our prayers should be for a sound mind in a sound body" (Juvenal). (2) The wants of the body restrain the desires of the spirit. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus still, from the loftier elevation of the mount of glory, compassionately sees. (3) The compassion of Jesus provides for the everlasting future. Through his merciful provisions we may avoid the hungering and thirsting of perdition. The spiritual body of the better resurrection will have no wants to impair the desires of the spirit. "They hunger no more, neither thirst any more" (see Rev. vii. 16—18). So can they "serve God day and night in his temple."

II. THE COMPASSION OF JESUS IS POTENT. 1. Its potency had been evinced. Within the year or two of his public ministry how many miracles had Jesus wrought! Yet how few that were not miracles of mercy! 2. Some of these were recent. Within these "three days" how numerous were the "lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others," the healing of whom "astonished" this multitude (see vers. 30, 31)! 3. The potency of the compassion of Jesus was now to receive additional illustration. Here are eight thousand hungry people. Four thousand men, "besides women and children," who were probably as many more. For the nourishment of these there are "seven

loaves, and a few small fishes." But "they did all eat, and were filled;" and moreover of the fragments left there were seven hampers. The *spyris* was larger than the *cophinus* of the miracle. It seems to have been a load for a porter (see Acts ix. 25). A hamper of fragments for every loaf.

III. THE COMPASSION OF JESUS IS DISCRIMINATING. 1. *The circumstances of the miracle are instructive.* (1) "He gave thanks." In the former miracle with the five loaves "he blessed." It comes to the same. Giving thanks to God is a proper way to ask the blessing of God. Thanks given before taking food (see Acts xxvii. 35) acknowledges his past bounty, craves his blessing upon the present, anticipates the future. All good comes from God. His blessing makes little go far. (2) He used all the provision he had. God works miracles only, and in so far as there is necessity. So are we to use the means Providence sets before us. When these fail, then trust God. What his ordinary providence denies his miraculous power will supply. All spiritual blessings are immediately from God, so miraculous. (3) The multitude sat down in faith. They saw but little. Yet took advice and prepared themselves for a banquet. So they were all "filled." Those whom Jesus feeds he fills (see Ps. lxv. 4; Isa. lv. 2). Not only was Jesus from Bethlehem; he is Bethlehem himself, the *House of bread.* (4) He then "sent the multitude away." Though he had twice fed them, they must not expect miracles to give them daily food. Meanwhile he himself entered the boat and came to Magdala. He generally withdrew after working a miracle, lest the people should attempt to raise a sedition and make him a King (cf. ch. xiv. 22; John vi. 15). How different from the conduct of a pseudo-Messiah! 2. *There are lessons in the service of the disciples.* (1) To them he first expressed his tender sympathy for the people. This was a mark of his friendship. The disciples of Christ know most of his goodness. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (cf. Gen. xviii. 17—19; Ps. xxv. 14; Amos iii. 7; John vii. 17; xv. 15). (2) The communication was also intended to quicken their compassions, to teach them generosity, and to strengthen their faith. Their answer showed that they needed the lesson, "Whence should we have so many loaves," etc.? (ver. 33). "They walked in a world of wonders, spiritual and physical, where they felt strange, until the Holy Ghost came and brought to their minds all that Christ had done" (Olshausen, John xiv. 26). Forgetting former experience leaves us in present doubt. Here is no niggardliness of to-day in forethought for to-morrow. (3) The disciples had the custody of the provisions. To them also is committed the custody of the bread of God's Word. They have had to shield it from the vigilance of the anti-Christian destroyer. (4) They are the dispensers of the Word of grace for the nourishment of the world. In their hands it multiplies both in the dispensing and in the store.—J. A. M.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The right to reproach others.* Though the address of these visitors is put in the form of a question, it is not really an inquiry, it is a reproach. Therefore it was properly met, not by an explanation, but by another question, which brought to others' view, if not to their own, their bad mind and intent. These Pharisees could see clearly enough what they thought was a "mote" in the eye of Jesus. They must be made to feel the "beam" that was in their own eye. Who were these men, and what right had they to reproach Jesus? The Sanhedrin at Jerusalem regarded itself as the supreme ecclesiastical authority in the land, whose approval every teacher should secure, and whose inquiries every would-be teacher must look for. Both John Baptist and Jesus acted in perfect independence of this central authority. Both were subject to its official inquiries. Of John we are told (John i. 19), "The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?" John answered their inquiries in a very patient fashion. Jesus was sterner in his dealings with them, and denied their right, or their fitness, to make any such inquiries, which were but veiled reproaches.

I. AUTHORITY MAY GIVE A RIGHT TO REPROACH. The natural authority of the parent; and the social authority of the master and the king. But the authority must be rightly grounded. It must not rest on mere self-assertion, and it must be duly recognized and accepted. What authority could such a council as the Sanhedrin have over one who was a Prophet, a heaven-sent Messenger? By all Israelite principles, *he* had the authority, and they should have heeded *him.*

II. SUPERIORITY MAY GIVE A RIGHT TO REPROACH. Superior knowledge; superior character. The competent man may reproach us, the saintly man may reproach us. Then had these visitors from Jerusalem either of these forms of right to reproach? Were they superiors of Christ in the knowledge of Divine things? Were they superiors of Christ in holy living? This at least may at once be tested. If they were really holy they would be jealous of God's honour and God's claims. That they were only sham holy, our Lord made clear enough by his searching question to them. They cared for forms and ceremonies, they cared little or nothing for truth, or righteousness, or charity. They would reproach another; they should have reproached themselves.

III. LOVE MAY GIVE A RIGHT TO REPROACH. No man rightly reproaches unless he loves. No man well receives reproach save from those whom he is sure are full of love to him. The vital wrong in the reproach of the text is this—there is no *love* in it.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Schemes for shirking obligation.* Human relationships involve obligations. Our relations with God bring the supreme obligations. But here is the patent fact—response to our obligations toward God always carries with it response to our natural obligations toward man. The pious man cannot be pious if he is unfaithful and unkind to his father and mother. All the professions men ever made would form no excuse for the neglect of our natural duties to our parents. And this tests the seeming religiousness of our Lord's time. Men might be very pious, but were they shirking their natural obligations? We can well imagine the indignation of our Lord when he found the misery that the shameless system of "corban" was working. A man wanted to shirk all responsibility for the well-being of his parents, and yet keep the public repute of being a pious man; so he brought a gift to the priest, in presenting it used a particular formula, and wiped out all his obligations. The false religious sentiment of those times actually led to men's regarding such a man as extra pious. St. Paul is severe, with a very righteous severity, on such wickedness: "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8).

I. SCHEMES DEVISED BY SELFISHNESS. These are specially hateful in relation to parents, because of their self-denials for our sakes in our earliest years. They take such forms as: 1. Leaving the neighbourhood or the country. 2. Spending all a man has on his own gratification. 3. Delaying present help under plea of the excuses that it will be wanted much more by-and-by. Selfish souls are marvellously clever at making excuses.

II. SCHEMES DEVISED BY TEMPER. There arise quarrellings and disputings in families, and these are made into reasons for refusing to fulfil natural obligations. It may even be that the conduct and character of parents make us angry, and lead us to threaten the withdrawal of our help. Character may make advisable readjustments of our ways of meeting our obligations, but even bad character cannot excuse our shirking them.

III. SCHEMES DEVISED BY SPURIOUS PIETY. Illustrate by a man who excuses his neglect of his father and mother by saying that he has had to give such a large subscription to the new church. Honourably meeting our human obligations is the sign and expression of piety. He deceives himself who claims to serve God while he is not doing his duty to his fellow-men.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The evil influence of man-made rules.* "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Sincerely enough, and with a view to helping the people to apply the revealed principles of truth and duty, the national teachers had begun to supply commentaries on, and applications of, the Holy Scriptures. These became ever more and more elaborate; controversies were excited by them, and an authority was claimed for the minute, man-made rule rather than for the comprehensive and searching principle. One part of our Lord's mission was to liberate men from the painful and worryful pressure of these man-made rules, and recover for man the genuine unalloyed moral force on moral beings of God's commands. It was sometimes necessary for him to be severe in dealing with the claims made on behalf of traditions. We can but little conceive how religion was affected, in our Lord's time,

by a mere ritual that was so comprehensive, so minute, and yet so ridiculous, that it must have made men hate the very name of religion.

I. MAN-MADE RELIGIOUS RULES ARE ATTRACTIVE TO MEN. It may be said, to *all* men. It can with confidence be said, to *some* men. There are, in every age and society, persons who prefer to have their religion done for them; who cannot, and will not, bear the burden of personal responsibility. They ask to have their conduct arranged by *rules*. And there have always been those who were willing to meet their requests, and to claim authority for so doing. It is a seemingly easy way in which to get through the difficult business of religion, if only it could be made satisfactory; but that it can never be. In all ages, and to-day, the man-made rules are sure to "make the Word of God of none effect." They are sure to push God out of those direct and personal relations which he bears to each one.

II. MAN-MADE RELIGIOUS RULES ARE RUINOUS FOR MEN. If they could keep them as mere helps and guides, all would be well. But that is just what man has never been able to do. Man-made rules are always pushing out of their place, and into a place which does not properly belong to them. The following points may be worked out and illustrated. 1. Man-made rules shift the basis of authority in religion from God to man, from the true authority to an altogether false one. 2. Man-made rules exaggerate the place of *self* in religion. For the authority of *man* is only the authority of idealized self. 3. Man-made rules substitute a religion of *hand* (conduct) for the religion of the *heart*.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Sincerity the key-note of piety.* Formality is always imperilling piety. The representation of religious truths in ritual and ceremonial is a necessary condescension to the weakness of men, who want material aid in their effort to grasp spiritual things. But material things have a constant tendency to enslave men. And the enslaving work is done with so much subtlety that many a man who is a slave to his rituals, and to his rules, thinks himself to be a free man to-day. But, worse than that, and the thing that so much distressed our Lord, when a man knows that all his spiritual religion is gone, he will keep up his ritual, and be more exact in obeying his rules, and try to persuade himself that "formality" will do instead of "spirituality." Then the searching Lord pleads, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

I. RELIGION IS EXPRESSION. We ought to "draw nigh unto God with our mouth, and to honour him with our lip." Religion is holy worship, wise ordering of conduct, bearing honourable responsibilities, taking part in Christian activities, bringing the body into subjection. No man can wisely or safely restrain the *expression* of religion. A faith which says nothing is no real faith. A love that does nothing is no real love. If there is life in the seed, the blade will appear above the soil. Secret religion is self-delusion. If a man is religious, it will get expression in his life and relations.

II. RELIGION IS FEELING. It is something that can get expression. It is a state of mind and heart. It is a spiritual relationship with the Divine Spirit, into which man, the spirit, has been brought. It is the quickening of the soul's love, and setting it wholly on God. It is the redirection of the soul's trust, and fixing it on God. It is the sanctifying of the soul's will unto the choice of God's will. "The kingdom of God is within you." Piety is a soul affair. Religion is the expression of piety in conduct and relation.

III. SINCERITY IS THE RIGHT RELATION BETWEEN FEELING AND EXPRESSION. Sincerity Christ asked for. Insincerity Christ denounced. Sincerity psalmists prayed for and prophets pleaded for. Weakness, incompleteness, failure, can be patiently borne; insincerity cannot be borne; nothing can be done with it. To a man's own self he must be true. To his fellow-men he must be true. To God he must be true. A man must say, by lip and act, what he feels, and only what he feels. The vice of modern external religion is its utterance of more and better things than are really in men's hearts.—R. T.

Vers. 11, 19, 20.—*The secret of human defilement.* It is quite possible to exaggerate in presenting the teachings of our Lord in these verses. We do so if we make too absolute the distinction between what goes into a man and what comes out of a man.

Our Lord's illustration needs to be kept within its natural and proper limits. The Pharisees had objected to the disciples eating their bread with unwashen hands, their notion being that something causing ceremonial defilement might be upon their hands, and this taken in with the bread would make them ceremonially unclean. It was a ridiculous subtlety, and yet it had become quite an established notion. It was best met by such scorn as Jesus poured upon it. You cannot defile a man's soul by putting some dirt into his food; that may bring on disease in the man's body, but it cannot defile the man himself. Our Lord strikes hard at the insincerities of the Pharisee class, who were foul in speech, unclean in life, and self-seeking in relations, however anxious they were about ceremonial defilement. What came out of them—their speech, conduct, relations—these defiled them.

I. THE SECRET OF HUMAN DEFILEMENT IS THE WRONG INSIDE A MAN. A man is very largely responsible for the contents of his mind. True, he may have been placed in circumstances beyond his control which have brought evil associations; but the law is always working, that the things only are retained and effective on which attention is continuously and persistently fixed. Then we must have fixed our attention on what our minds now have in them, and so we must be responsible for their contents. Can we bear to look at the actual contents of our minds? How utterly unimportant ceremonial defilements seem in view of *this real evil!* A man is in a state of defilement, heart-defilement, to begin with. From this may be shown the absolute need of regeneration.

II. THE FURTHER SECRET OF HUMAN DEFILEMENT IS THAT THIS INSIDE WRONG GETS STRENGTHENED BY EXPRESSION. If the foul things inside a man would just stay quiet, things would not be so serious. But they are persistently active, ever trying to get expression, to say something or to do something. And they become stronger and more active by every expression. How that which comes out of a man defiles him may be shown by indicating the way in which a foul thought, gaining utterance in a foul speech, becomes an act of the will; the man is made foul thereby.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*A claim on God's mercy.* "Have mercy on me." The woman was wiser than she knew. She could bring no claim; as a foreigner she had no sort of *right* to our Lord's help. She made no pretence of having any claim, save the claim which every sufferer and every sinner may have on God's *mercy*. But that is the best of all claims; the one to which response is always assured. The sufferer and the sinner may fully hope in God's mercy.

I. THE CLAIM OF THE SUFFERER ON GOD'S MERCY. Mercy includes interest, pity, sympathy, consideration, and desire to help. The good man feels merciful toward the suffering creature; the father is merciful to the suffering children. God is merciful to the suffering being he has made. But God's mercy is assured because, to him, all suffering is the fruitage of sin; and God knows how the suffering has to fall on those who have not committed the sin. If God saw only *sin*, he would respond with judgment. He sees so much *suffering* following on sin, to which he can only respond with mercy. The child pleaded for was not suffering directly for sin. The mother's suffering was part of the race-burden, and not distinctively her own. So, here, suffering claimed mercy. We might be led on to indicate that God's mercy can be shown to sufferers by prolonging the suffering as truly as by removing it. Mercy in its operation is ever guided by an infinite wisdom.

II. THE CLAIM OF THE SINNER ON GOD'S MERCY. Not a natural claim. There is no reason why God should bear with sinners in the nature of things. Every notion of government shows demand for justice. Officially God must deal justly. Mercy brings in the qualification that belongs to God's character. We see this in the case of a human magistrate. As a magistrate he has no mercy; he is strictly to apply the law. As a man, and as a character, he can bring mercy in to qualify the strict applications of law. It is well to remember that God never deals with men simply as an official. He is always a character, a noble character, and therefore "merciful and gracious." Lead on to show that the supreme interest of the manifestation of Christ, the supreme interest of such a scene as is now before us, lies in its revelation of the *character* of God, and especially its disclosure of the fact that God's having a character gives both sufferers and sinners a claim upon his mercy.—R. T.

Ver. 25.—*Importunity and quick-wittedness.* Importunity: "Lord, help me." Quick-wittedness: "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." The strangeness of our Lord's dealing with this woman has often been pointed out. But the story needs to be read in the light of the fact that our Lord's supreme work was work in *character*. In doing anything for the bodies of men our Lord really worked for their souls, and tried to make his healing bear a gracious influence on the minds, hearts, and dispositions of those whom he healed. And he seems to have kept the further aim before him of making the manner in which his miracles were wrought parts of his training of his disciples for their future mission. Those disciples learned so much just by watching how their Master dealt with individuals, such as this woman of Canaan.

I. OUR LORD SOUGHT TO BRING OUT IMPORTUNITY. This explains delay and seeming refusal. Remember how much our Lord thought of importunity. He commends it in prayer, by his parables. 1. It is a valuable sign of character. There is something in a man who can persist; who can set an aim before him, and refuse to be discouraged. It is all the nobler when the aim concerns the well-being of another. 2. It is one of the best expressions of faith. The woman could not have kept on her plea if she had not fully believed that the Lord both could and would help her. So Jesus, by his mode of dealing with her, brought out to view her faith. 3. It is one of the best indications of the *value* of the thing desired. If we do not care much about a thing, we soon give up our pursuit of it. If it is to us a "pearl of great price," we keep on until we get it. The woman had all her heart in this healing for her daughter. Then how importunate in seeking salvation we should be! "It is not a vain thing for you; it is your life."

II. OUR LORD WAS GRATIFIED WHEN HE BROUGHT OUT QUICK-WITTEDNESS. The woman's answer is an exceedingly sharp and clever one. She skilfully turned our Lord's reason for refusing into a reason for granting. Her word for "dogs" was cleverly chosen; it meant the "pet dogs of the house." They have a claim on the children's crumbs. And she pleads just for the crumbs for her "little pet dog." It will not take anything from the "children" to send her a crumb of blessing. Jesus seemed really pleased with the woman; there was a most gracious tone in his final reply. See how his dealing brought her character out; and showed the disciples how to deal with people so as to be the fullest possible blessing to them.—R. T.

Ver. 28.—*The praise of faith.* There were several occasions on which our Lord specially praised faith; we may note what were the peculiar features of the faith which received these unusual commendations. Olshausen says, "Overcome as it were by the humble faith of the heathen woman, the Saviour himself confesses, 'Great is thy faith,' and straightway faith received what it asked. This little narrative lays open the magic that lies in a humbly believing heart more directly and deeply than all explanations or descriptions could do. In this mode of Christ's giving an answer to prayer we are to trace only another form of his love. Where faith is weak, he anticipates and comes to meet it; where faith is strong, he holds himself far off in order that it may in itself be carried to perfection."

I. OUR LORD'S NOTICING THE SIGNS OF FAITH WITHOUT SPECIAL PRAISE. A specimen case is the act of the four friends who carried the helpless paralytic on to the roof to ensure his getting into the presence of Jesus. It is said of them, "Jesus seeing their faith." On another occasion it is said of Peter, looking on the lame man, "perceiving that he had faith to be healed." The apostles follow the Master in looking for and recognizing faith. And this we fully understand when we regard faith as the necessary state of *spiritual recipiency* for Divine help and blessing.

II. OUR LORD'S NOTICING THE SIGNS OF FAITH WITH SPECIAL PRAISE. Two illustrative cases may be given. And it is remarkable that they both concern aliens, and not Israelites. This probably accounts for our Lord's feeling surprise, and giving it expression. The first is the Roman centurion, who sought Christ's healing for a servant. Everybody then, even those who believed in Christ's power, thought it essential that Christ should *touch* the sufferer. The centurion had faith to believe that Jesus could act through a simple commanding word. So of him Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." The other case is

that associated with our text. The Canaanite woman showed her strong faith by her persistency in overcoming obstacles; and of her Jesus said, "O woman, great is thy faith."

In conclusion, the reasons for praising such faith may be given. 1. Full trust honours God. 2. Active and persistent faith reveals a state of heart that fits for receiving Divine healing and salvation.—R. T.

Ver. 31.—*One effect of miracles of healing.* "They glorified the God of Israel." Two points may be unfolded and illustrated. This effect was good so far as it went. This effect fell far short of what Jesus desired.

I. THIS EFFECT WAS GOOD SO FAR AS IT WENT. In a general way they praised God, who had given such power unto men. And it is always good to recognize the hand of God in our guidances, deliverances, and restorations. He is *the* Healer and Restorer; and we should always turn to thank the Source of blessing before we thank the agent whom God has been pleased to use. But to class Jesus among God's prophets, to make of him only an Elisha, was to keep in the region of commonplace, when God would have them step up into the higher region of revelation. It was *an* effect, to "glorify the God of Israel," but it was not *the* effect. It was a good beginning, but a bad resting-place. It did not reach to apprehend the special meaning of Christ's miracles. Show that men still treat Christ in the same way. They thank God for the example of his life, for the teaching of his inspiring truths, and for the gracious deeds recorded of him; and there they stop. That is all—"They glorify the God of Israel." That does not go far enough.

II. THIS EFFECT SHOULD HAVE PREPARED THE WAY FOR A BETTER. After turning to praise God, these healed people should have resolutely fixed their attention on Christ, and tried to understand the Man who could do such mighty works. And this not as a merely curious inquiry, but with the distinct feeling that such a man must have a *message*; that his work could not end with opening blind eyes and unstopping deaf ears. Such things were signs of authority and power to do greater things. Israel knew well, from its history, that miracles illustrate messages and authenticate messengers; so they ought to have said of Christ, "Who is he?" "What has he to say?" It would be a deeply interesting subject of inquiry—What would have been the moral effects of our Lord's mission if his miracles had been entirely concerned with the healing of bodily infirmities, sicknesses, and disabilities? We may well fear that the people would have used the kind Doctor's gifts freely enough, and just satisfied themselves with "glorifying the God of Israel."—R. T.

Ver. 36.—*The mission of miracles of supply.* They were corrective of the influence that was actually produced by the miracles of healing. The differences in the spheres and the character of our Lord's miracles is not sufficiently observed. He was no mere Eastern Hakim, with a wonderful panacea for all forms of bodily woe. He is too often spoken of as if this were his description. More importance needs to be given to our Lord's walking the water, stilling the storm, raising the dead, and multiplying the food-supplies. It is competent for any man to plead that the healing gift is, like the artistic gift, the special endowment of individuals; and Jesus was a Man with an unusual gift of the healing power. No such explanation can be found for the miracles of supply, or for the miracles of control over nature. And we shall come back upon the miracles of healing with new and worthier ideas when we have rightly apprehended the miracles of supply. We have seen, in the previous homily, that Christ's doctoring work rather directed men's attention to the "God of Israel" than to himself, "God manifest in the flesh."

I. THE MIRACLES OF SUPPLY SET THE PERSON OF JESUS IN PROMINENCE. Illustrate by the effect of the wine-making at Cana. That miracle "manifested forth his glory." Also by the other feeding of the thousands, which set Christ's Person forth so prominently that the people wanted, then and there, to make him king. Miracles of supply are stranger things, more difficult to explain, and more impressively related to the individual, than miracles of healing. Forth from miracles of supply men go, saying to their neighbours, "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is he?" Compare the remarkable direction of the thoughts of the disciples to the Person and mystery of Christ, when he came to them walking on the sea.

II. THE MIRACLES OF SUPPLY SET THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF THE WORK OF JESUS IN PROMINENCE. They belong to another and more suggestive region. Removal of disabilities may be a great thing, but renewal of life is greater. Food, to be taken into a man's body, and turned into life, is a revelation of Christ's higher relation to men. He is soul-food; taken in by faith and love, he is turned into the soul's life. "He that eateth me shall live by me."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

Vers. 1—4.—*The Pharisees and Sadducees desire a sign.* (Mark viii. 11—13.)

Ver. 1.—**The Pharisees also with the Sadducees**; rather, *and the Pharisees and Sadducees.* The scribes and Pharisees are often mentioned together as watching or attacking Jesus; but this is the first time that we hear of Pharisees combining with Sadducees for this purpose. The two sects were directly opposed to each other, the traditional belief of the former being antagonistic to the scepticism and materialism of the latter. But both were hostile to Christ, whose teaching, on the one hand interfered with rabbinism, and on the other maintained the existence of the supernatural and the certainty of the resurrection. The Sadducees alone seem to have attacked Christ only on two occasions. They were probably Herodians (comp. ch. xxii. 16), and on this account also disliked by the Pharisees; but they were powerful, and held most of the highest offices in the state, and their alliance was sought or allowed in order more effectually to compromise Jesus. Even theological hatred and political opposition sank into indifference in the face of what was regarded as a common danger. Strauss and his school regard this combination as so unnatural that they throw discredit on the whole account. This is shallow criticism. Nothing is more common than for persons opposed on all other subjects to coalesce for an unholy purpose in which they are jointly interested. The most violent political opponents will join forces in order to gain some desired point, and when an attack on the Church is meditated, even unbelievers are gladly welcomed. Tertullian says forcibly, "Christ is always being crucified between two thieves." **Tempting.** Trying him with captious questions, to bring him into a difficulty, or to give them an opportunity of accusing him of heterodoxy, or disloyalty, or insubordination, and of discrediting him with the people. **A sign from heaven.** The rabbis held that demons and false gods could perform certain miracles on earth, but God alone could give signs from heaven, such as, *e.g.*, the manna of Moses' time, the staying of the sun and moon by Joshua, the lightning and thunder that came at Samuel's word, the stroke of death on the captains who tried to arrest Elijah. They had heard of the miraculous meal just before, and saw how deeply the people were moved by it, and they would imply that such a miracle was no proof of a Divine mission, as it might have been wrought by magical or Satanic agency. Let Christ give a sign from heaven, and they would acknowledge his claims. They knew what Christ's answer would be, as they had already attacked him with the same demand (ch. xii. 38); and they hoped that he would either refuse to gratify them, as before, or else make an attempt and fail. In either case they thought they might turn the circumstance to his disadvantage. The Sadducees joined in the request, because they disbelieved in all such occurrences, and were fully persuaded that they were impossible, and any one who attempted to produce them must prove himself a miserable impostor. The word translated desired (ἐπηρώτησαν) is emphatic; the verb is used classically in the sense of "to put a question for decision;" so the interrogation here would signify that this was to be a final test of the claims of Christ; on his answer depended their adhesion or opposition (comp. 1 Cor. i. 22).

Ver. 2.—The paragraph consisting of this and ver. 3 is omitted by many good manuscripts, probably owing to its similarity to the passage in ch. xii. 38. These verses are most probably genuine; and they certainly could not have been foisted into the text from Luke xii. 54—56. The circumstances are too different, and the variations too marked, to make such interpolation probable. **When it is evening.** The Pharisees had demanded a sign from heaven; Jesus points to the western glow in the sky, and taunts them with being ready enough to read the signs of the weather, but slow to interpret proofs of more important circumstances. He does not, in the case of these mixed cavillers, argue from Scripture, but from the natural world, and he points out that, had they eyes to see and a mind to discern, they might mark tokens in historical events, in the moral and spiritual world, which attested his Messiahship as clearly as any specially given sign

from heaven. Ye say, It will be fair weather (εὐδία). Probably an exclamation, *Ye say, Fair weather!* Rabbinical schools made a point of teaching weather-lore; prognostications on this subject were greatly in vogue, and the rains of the coming year were annually foretold. On such meteorological observations, we may refer to Virgil, 'Georg.,' i. 425, etc.; and Pliny, 'Nat. Hist.,' xviii. 35 and 78.

Ver. 3.—It will be foul weather to-day; more tersely in the Greek, *To-day a storm!* Such prognostications are found among all peoples. Many examples are collected by Wetstein. Lowring (στυγνάζων); a word applied to the expression of the countenance ("his countenance fell," Mark x. 22), and therefore applicable, by prosopopœia, to the look of the sky. Fillion quotes Aulus Gellius, xiii. 29, "Non solum in hominum corporibus, sed etiam in rerum cujusquemodi aliarum facies dicitur. Nam montis et cœli et maris facies, si tempestive dicatur, probe dicitur." O ye hypocrites (ὑποκριταί). The word is omitted by some uncial manuscripts, the Vulgate, etc., and many modern editors. If it is genuine, we must consider that Christ thus calls them, because their pretence of being satisfied with sufficient proof of Christ's claims was a mere fiction, as they were obstinately determined never to acknowledge him. It would be casting pearls before swine to give further external proofs to people without sympathy and not open to conviction. The signs of the times (τῶν καιρῶν). Critical times, the age foretold for the appearance of the Messiah. These signs, which all who were candid and unbiassed might read, were such as the following: the sceptre had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet; the fourth great empire was established; the prophetic weeks of Daniel were at their close; the Baptist had come in the spirit and power of Elias; all the world was expecting the advent of some great personage; the best and holiest Jews were looking for the Redeemer; Christ's own miracles and teaching proved his Divinity and the fulfilment of many obscure prophecies; these and such like signs were set for all to see and ponder, and the Lord, as he marked the obstinate unbelief of his countrymen, might well be grieved, and "sigh deeply in his spirit" (Mark viii. 12).

Ver. 4.—A wicked and adulterous generation . . . Jonas. These words our Lord had already uttered on a former occasion (ch. xii. 39), but he does not here explain them, as he did before (see Introduction, § 7). Under similar circumstances he repeats himself, but he wastes not time in useless discussions with perverse opponents who will not see the truth. Of his death and resurrection, whereof Jonah was a type, they knew and understood nothing. Perhaps they thought of Jonah only as a prophet against the heathen city Nineveh, and a preacher of repentance, and were disposed to resent the allusion as an affront to their vaunted righteousness. He left them. Took ship for Magedan, and crossed the lake to the north-east shore, in the neighbourhood of Bethsaida Julias. He, as it were, despaired of their improvement, and left them in righteous anger at their obduracy. "A man that is heretical after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned" (Titus iii. 10, 11). Jesus never taught publicly or worked miracles again on this spot.

Vers. 5—12.—*Warning against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.* (Mark viii. 14—21.)

Ver. 5.—They had forgotten (ἐπελάθοντο, not pluperfect); *came to the other side, and forgot; obliti sunt* (Vulgate); *i.e.* they perceived that they had forgotten to take sufficient bread for the journey before them. The district which they were about to traverse was but sparsely inhabited, and offered no hope of supplying this want. It is doubted whether the ensuing conversation took place during the voyage or after they had landed. The language of St. Mark inclines one to believe that the deficiency was discovered during the transit, and the remarks now narrated were made then. As it would take some hours to cross, there was ample time to feel and expatiate upon the need; and if Christ had told them of his future movements, they would naturally feel regret for their carelessness and want of forethought. Or it might be that Christ's observation concerning the leaven was made in the boat, and his reproof of their thoughts was given on landing.

Ver. 6.—The leaven. Christ's thoughts were still fixed on the late disputants, whose powerful influence on popular opinion called for forcible warning. By "leaven" he does not here refer specially to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Sadducees, as in Luke xii. 1, but to the evil influence which they exercised, which was diffused far and wide, and penetrated to all ranks and classes. Their unsound opinions, their inability or disinclination to enter into the spiritual sense of Scripture, vitiated their whole system, and made them dangerous teachers directly they attempted to explain or amplify the letter of Holy Writ. It was this same perverse blindness that led them to refuse to accept Jesus as Messiah in spite of all the proofs which had been brought

before them. That leaven, in one aspect, was regarded as a sign of impurity and corruption, we learn from the strict rules which banished it from Divine service, and especially during the Passover season. Says St. Paul, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. v. 9); and, "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened" (1 Cor. v. 7). Elsewhere Christ makes a distinction between what these teachers taught *ex cathedrâ*, and what they put forth on their own authority or what they practised themselves (ch. xxiii. 2, 3, where see note).

Ver. 7.—**They reasoned among themselves.** With a crass literalness, the apostles utterly misunderstood the drift of their Master's warning, and thought that he alluded to their forgetfulness in coming without bread. They were always slow to apprehend the metaphorical and spiritual signification of their Master's language. Thus at the synagogue in Capernaum they failed to grasp his meaning when he spoke of himself as the Bread of life (John vi.), and at Jacob's well they interpreted of material food his Divine words concerning the nourishment of the soul (John iv.). It is well remarked by Sadler (*in loc.*) that "it is no small proof of the good faith and consequent truth of the gospel, that the apostles should have recorded things so against themselves as this account. If they had written for any purpose except the simple exhibition of the truth, they could easily have suppressed facts such as this, so very discreditable to their spiritual, indeed to their mental, perception. But if we had lost accounts such as these, we should have lost the proof of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, miracle of its kind; for no miraculous change in the spirit of man which God has wrought can be accounted greater than this—that men who, before the resurrection and the Day of Pentecost, should have exhibited such utter want of the lowest spiritual discernment, should, after the descent of the Spirit, have written such searching spiritual documents as the catholic Epistles of Peter and John." In the present case some commentators take it that the apostles fancied Christ was warning them against procuring any leavened bread from Pharisees and Sadducees, whom Jesus so sternly denounced; but it is more probable that their anxiety arose simply from the want of provisions, not from the consideration that they were debarred from obtaining them at the hands of certain parties. These doubts they seem to have whispered one to another.

Ver. 8.—**When Jesus perceived** (γνούς). He knew their thoughts, if he did not overhear their words, and he reproved them severely on two accounts—first, for want of faith in his care; and secondly, for not understanding the mystical allusion in the word "leaven." **Ye of little faith.** They showed lack of faith by being solicitous concerning bodily wants, thinking that Christ was regardless of, or unable to provide for them under all circumstances. He applied the same term to them elsewhere, as when they apprehended not the lesson of the grass of the field (ch. vi. 30), and when they were fearful in the storm on the lake (ch. viii. 26).

Vers. 9, 10.—Christ, in support of his reproof, refers to the two miracles of the multiplication of food, which ought to have assured them of his care and power. **Do ye not yet understand?** So he asked in ch. xv. 16, "Are ye also yet without understanding?" Their heart was hardened, and they failed to apprehend the spiritual bearing of the incidents. **Neither remember?** This was an additional ground for censure, that they even forgot the facts at the very time when they ought to have been recalled to their memory. Jesus reminds them of the distinctive differences between the two miracles, mentioning even the receptacles in which the fragments were collected—in the one case κόφινοι, small baskets, and in the other σπυρίδες, large panniers. It is surely wilful perversity that has deemed these two incidents, thus pointedly disjoined by our Lord, as versions of one story; and yet this is what some modern critics have suggested and upheld.

Ver. 11.—**That I spake it not to you,** etc. The Revised Version, following many modern editors, divides the clause into two, thus: *that I spake not to you concerning bread? But beware of the leaven,* etc. This is the second ground for the Lord's reproof administered to the apostles. They had taken in a carnal, literal sense a word which he had used in a symbolical or mystical meaning. It is the want of spiritual discernment which he censures. They had had frequent opportunities of hearing and appreciating his mode of teaching: miracles, parables, discourses, had an inner signification, which it was their duty to apprehend. The want of understanding was a moral fault for which they were answerable. We may say it would have been easier for our Lord to have spoken of doctrine without using the misunderstood figure of leaven. But it is in the way of his providence to speak words which need thought and grace to make them fully comprehended. They are thus more impressed upon the heart and memory, and bring forth better fruit. A well-instructed Hebrew ought to find no difficulty in understanding metaphorical allusions. His Scriptures were full of them, and could not be

intelligently read without the light thus cast upon them.

Ver. 12.—**Then understood they.** Jesus did not explain his meaning further; but his reproof roused their intellect, made them reflect, set them on the road to the truth. **The doctrine.** This was what Jesus meant by "the leaven." In a wider sense it might include practice as well as precept, manner of life as well as teaching. The same spirit permeated all. "See," says St. Chrysostom, "how much good his reproof wrought. For it both led them away from the Jewish observances, and, when they were remiss, made them more heedful, and delivered them from want of faith; so that they were not afraid nor in alarm, if at any time they seemed to have few loaves; nor were they careful about famine, but despised all these things."

Vers. 13—20.—*The climax of recognition of Christ's true nature declared in the great confession of Peter.* (Mark viii. 27—30; Luke ix. 18—21.)

Ver. 13.—**Coasts** (*μέρη*); *parts*, as ch. xv. 21, etc. **Cæsarea Philippi.** The addition to the name *Cæsarea* is intended to commemorate its restorer and beautifier, the tetrarch Philip, and to distinguish it from the city of the same name on the coast between Joppa and Carmel (Acts viii. 40, etc.). Our Lord had landed at Bethsaida, where the Jordan enters the Lake of Gennesaret, turned northwards, and, following the course of the river, had now arrived in the vicinity of one of its chief sources at Cæsarea Philippi, the most northerly city of the Holy Land. It was, if not identical with, in close proximity to, the Dan of the Old Testament, whence arose the saying, "From Dan to Beersheba," to denote the whole extent of country from north to south. Later it was called *Paneas*, and now *Banias*. Philip altered the name to Cæsarea in honour of Tiberius Cæsar, his patron. Christ seems not to have visited the city itself, but only the outlying villages in the district. We may conjecture why at this time he moved to this remote region. It was probably, partly, a measure of precaution. He had excited the fiercest animosity of the dominant party, and even of the sceptical Sadducees; he was pertinaciously followed by their emissaries, always on the watch to lay hold of his words and actions, and to found upon them dangerous charges; and now, knowing it was time to announce to his followers in plain terms his claim to be Messiah, he would not do this in Judæa, where it might cause commotion, and embroil him with the authorities, but preferred to teach this great truth where he might speak freely without fear of immediate consequences, out of the reach of his persevering opponents. Virtually, also, his public work in Judæa and Galilee had reached its end. He had no chance of a hearing if he had made further attempts at teaching. The calumnies of the rabbis had affected the fickle populace, who would willingly have followed a military pretender, but had no heart to set at nought their national teachers in favour of One whom they were persuaded to regard as a dangerous innovator, not improbably upheld by Satanic agency. **He asked his disciples.** It was after a time of solitary prayer (Luke ix. 18) that he put this question to his followers. Determined now to reveal himself, he desired to make them express the mistaken views which were rife concerning his Person and office, and to lead them to the more important inquiry—what opinion they themselves held touching this momentous mystery (ver. 15). **Whom** (*who*) **do men say that I the Son of man am?** *Quem dicunt homines esse filium hominis* (Vulgate); *Who do men say that the Son of man is?* (Revised Version). The versions represent the variation of manuscripts between *τίνα με λέγουσιν, κ.τ.λ.*, and *τίνα λέγουσιν*, omitting *με*. The pronoun is probably genuine and emphatic. In the other case, "the Son of man" is equivalent to *με* in ver. 15. I call myself the Son of man: what do the multitudes say of me? Who do they consider the Son of man to be? This was the term he used to show the truth of the Incarnation—"perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." To Jewish ears it connoted Divinity (see Luke xxii. 69, 70; John iii. 13).

Ver. 14.—**John the Baptist.** This was the opinion of Herod Antipas (ch. xiv. 1, 2), who fancied that Christ was animated by the spirit of John the Baptist, or was actually that personage revived; though it was noticed by others that John did no miracle (John x. 41), and lived a life in contrast to that of Christ (ch. xi. 18, 19). **Elias;** Elijah, who was taken up to heaven without dying, and was announced by Malachi (iv. 5) as destined to return before the appearance of Messiah. **Jeremias.** Some opined that he was Jeremiah, who was expected to come as a precursor of Messiah (2 Esdras ii. 18), and reveal the tabernacle, ark, and the altar of incense, which, according to the legend of 2 Macc. ii. 4—7, he had hidden in Mount Nebo, "until the time that God gather his people again together, and receive them unto mercy." **One of the prophets.** One of the celebrated prophets of antiquity revived, restored to life again to prepare the way for the great consummation. The well-known prediction of Moses (Deut. xviii. 15)

may have given rise to this idea. The four popular opinions here mentioned showed two facts—that Jesus had a high reputation among his contemporaries, and that he was by none at this time regarded as the Messiah. Even those who, after certain of his marvellous works, had been ready to honour him with that title, soon cooled in their ardour, and, checked by his reserve and the slanders of the Pharisees, learned to see in him only a wonder-worker or a precursor of the expected Prince and Liberator.

Ver. 15.—**But whom (*who*) say ye that I am?** More emphatic in the Greek, *Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; But ye, who do ye say that I am?* This was the important question to which the previous one led. Ye, who have shared my life and received my teaching, witnessed my miracles and have been endued by me with supernatural powers, ye know better than the people, whose crude opinions you have heard and recounted; so tell plainly what you believe of me: who you think and say that I am? A momentous inquiry! upon which hung the foundation of the Christian Church. Their knowledge of the real nature of Jesus was now to be tested.

Ver. 16.—**Simon Peter answered and said.** The ardent Peter, when all were asked, replies in the name of the rest, giving, however, his own personal sentiment and belief, as we see from Christ's answer (ver. 17). Some of the others probably would have been less ready to make the same confession; but in his vehement loyalty, Peter silences all hesitation, and declares boldly what must be the conviction of all his comrades. He speaks out the persuasion wrought in his soul by Divine grace. **Thou art the Christ** (*ὁ Χριστὸς*), **the Son of the living God.** *The Christ;* the Anointed, the Messiah. *The Son of God;* of the same substance, one with the Father. *Living;* as alone "having life in himself," "the living and true God" (John v. 26; 1 Thess. i. 9). The same (or nearly the same) confession was made by Peter in the name of all the apostles at Capernaum (John vi. 69); but the sense of the expression was different, and sprang from very different conviction. It referred rather to the subjective view of Christ's character, as it influenced the believer's inward assurance of the source of eternal life. Here the acknowledgment concerns the nature, office, and Person of our Lord. That there was some special distinction between the two enunciations is evident from Christ's unique commendation of Peter on this occasion compared with his silence on the former. The present confession is indeed a noble one, containing itself a compendium of the Catholic faith concerning the Person and work of Christ. Herein Peter acknowledges Jesus to be the true Messiah, commissioned and sent by God to reveal his will to man, and accomplishing all that the prophets had foretold concerning him; no mere man, not even the most exalted of men (which common opinion held Messiah to be) but the Son of God, of the substance of the Father, begotten from everlasting, God of God, perfect God and perfect man, Son of God and Son of man. Such was Peter's faith. The Church has added nothing to it, though she has amplified and explained and illustrated it in her Creeds; for it comprises belief in Christ's Messiahship, Divinity, Incarnation, personality, and the momentous issues depending thereon. We need not suppose that Peter understood all this or speculated on the question how these several attributes were united in Christ. He was content to accept and acknowledge the truth, waiting patiently for further light. This is the attitude which Christ approves.

Ver. 17.—**Jesus answered and said unto him.** This weighty and momentous answer is given alone by St. Matthew. St. Mark, who wrote under the instruction of Peter, and for Roman Christians, mentions it not; the other two evangelists are equally silent, having evidently not understood the special importance attached to it. **Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona.** "Blessed," as in the sermon on the mount (ch. v.), expressing a solemn benediction, not a mere encomium. Peter was highly favoured by a special revelation from God. Christ calls him "son of Jona," to intimate that Peter's confession is true—that he himself is as naturally and truly Son of God as Peter is son of Jona. So Christ addresses him when he restores the fallen apostle at the Sea of Galilee after the second miraculous draught of fishes, reminding him of his frail human nature in the face of great spiritual privileges (John xxi. 15, etc.; comp. i. 42). Simon would be the name given at his circumcision; Bar-jona, a patronymic to distinguish him from others of the same name. **For** (*ὅτι*). This introduces the reason why Christ calls him "Blessed." **Flesh and blood.** This is a phrase to express the idea of the natural man, with his natural endowments and faculties. So St. Paul says (Gal. i. 16), "I conferred not with flesh and blood;" and "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. vi. 12). The Son of Sirach speaks of "the generation of flesh and blood" (Ecclus. xiv. 18). No natural sagacity, study, or discernment had **revealed** the great truth. None of these had overcome slowness of apprehension, prejudices of education, slackness of faith. No unregenerate mortal man had taught him the

gospel mystery. **My Father which is in heaven.** Christ thus accepts Peter's definition of him as "the Son of the living God." None but the Father could have revealed to thee the Son.

Ver. 18.—**And I say also** (*I also say*) **unto thee. As** thou hast said unto me, "Thou art the Christ," so I say unto thee, etc. **Thou art Peter** (Πέτρος, *Petrus*), **and upon this rock** (πέτρᾳ, *petra*) **I will build my Church.** In classical Greek, the distinction between πέτρα and πέτρος is well known—the former meaning "a rock," the latter "a piece of rock," or "a stone." But probably no such distinction is intended here, as there would be none in Aramaic. There is plainly a paronomasia here in the Greek; and, if our Lord spoke in Aramaic, the same play of words was exhibited in *Kephas* or *kepha*. When Jesus first called Peter to be a disciple, he imposed upon him the name *Cephas*, which the evangelist explains to be *Peter* (John i. 42). The name was bestowed in anticipation of Peter's great confession: "Thou shalt be called." This preannouncement was here fulfilled and confirmed. Upon this passage chiefly the claims of the Roman Church, which for fifteen centuries have been the subject of acrimonious controversy, are founded. It is hence assumed that the Christian Church is founded upon Peter and his successors, and that these successors are the Bishops of Rome. The latter assertion may be left to the decision of history, which fails to *prove* that Peter was ever at Rome, or that he transmitted his supposed supremacy to the episcopate of that city. We have in this place to deal with the former assertion. Who or what is the *rock* on which Christ says that he will hereafter build his Church? French Romanists consider it a providential coincidence that they can translate the passage, "Je te dis que, Tu es Pierre; et sur cette pierre je bâtirai," etc.; but persons outside the papal communion are not satisfied to hang their faith on a play of words. The early Fathers are by no means at one in their explanations of the paragraph. Living before Rome had laid claim to the tremendous privileges which it afterwards affected, they did not regard the statement in the light of later controversies; and even those who held Peter to be the rock would have indignantly repelled the assumptions which have been built on that interpretation. The apostolic Fathers seem to have mentioned the passage in none of their writings; and they could scarcely have failed to refer to it had they been aware of the tremendous issues dependent thereon. It was embodied in no Catholic Creed, and never made an article of the Christian faith. We may remark also that of the evangelists St. Matthew alone records the promise to Peter; Mark and Luke give his confession, which was the one point which Christ desired to elicit, and omit that which is considered to concern his privileges. This looks as though, in their view, the chief aim of the passage was not Peter, but Christ; not Peter's pre-eminence, but Christ's nature and office. At the same time, to deny all allusion to Peter in the "rock" is quite contrary to the genius of the language and to New Testament usage, and would not have been so pressed in modern times except for polemical purposes. Three views have been held on the interpretation of this passage. (1) That Christ himself is the Rock on which the Church should be built. (2) That Peter's confession of Jesus Christ as Son of God, or God incarnate, is the Rock. (3) That St. Peter is the rock. (1) The first explanation is supported by passages wherein Christ speaks of himself in the third person, *e.g.* "Destroy this temple;" "If any man eat of this bread;" "Whoso falleth on this stone," etc. In the same sense are cited the words of Isaiah (xxviii. 16), "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." Almighty God is continually called "a Rock" in the Old Testament (see 2 Sam. xxii. 32; Ps. xviii. 31; lvii. 2, 6, 7, etc.), so that it might be deemed natural and intelligible for Christ to call himself "this Rock," in accordance with the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. iii 11), "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid (κεῖται), which is Jesus Christ." But then the reference to Peter becomes unmeaning: "Thou art Peter, and upon myself I will build my Church." It is true that some few eminent authorities have taken this view. Thus St. Augustine writes, "It was not said to him, 'Thou art a rock (*petra*),' but, 'Thou art Peter,' and the Rock was Christ" ('Retract.,' i. 21). And commentators have imagined that Christ pointed to himself as he spoke. In such surmises there is an inherent improbability, and they do not explain the commencement of the address. In saying, "Thou art Peter," Christ, if he made any gesture at all, would have touched or turned to that apostle. Immediately after this to have directed attention to himself would have been most unnatural and contradictory. We may safely surrender the interpretation which regards Christ himself as the Rock. (2) The explanation which finds the rock in Peter's great confession has been widely adopted by commentators ancient and modern. Thus St. Chrysostom, "Upon this rock, that is, on the faith of his confession. Hereby he signifies that many were now on the point of believing, and raises his spirit, and

makes him a shepherd." To the same purport might be quoted Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory Nyss., Cyril, and others. It is remarkable that in the Collect from the Gregorian Sacramentary and in the Roman Missal on the Vigil of St. Peter and St. Paul are found the words, "Grant that thou wouldst not suffer us, whom thou hast established on the rock of the apostolic confession (*quos in apostolicæ confessionis petra solidasti*) to be shaken by any commotions." Bishop Wordsworth, as many exegetes virtually do, combines the two interpretations, and we cite his exposition as a specimen of the view thus held: "What he says is this, 'I myself, now confessed by thee to be both God and Man, am the Rock of the Church. This is the foundation on which it is built.' And because St. Peter had confessed him as such, he says to St. Peter, 'Thou hast confessed me, and I will now confess thee; thou hast owned me, I will now own thee. Thou art Peter,' *i.e.* thou art a lively *stone*, hewn out of and built upon me, the living *Rock*. Thou art a genuine *Petros* of me, the Divine *Petra*. And whosoever would be a lively stone, a *Peter*, must imitate thee in this thy true confession of me, the living *Rock*; for upon this Rock, that is, on myself, believed and confessed to be both God and Man, I will build my Church." As the opinion that Christ means himself by "this rock" is untenable, so we consider that Peter's confession is equally debarred from being the foundation intended. Who does not see that the Church is to be built, not on confessions or dogmas, but on men—men inspired by God to teach the great truth? A confession implies a confessor; it was the person who made the confession that is meant, not the mere statement itself, however momentous and true. Thus elsewhere the Church is said to have been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. ii. 20), "Ye," says St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 5), "as living stones are built up a spiritual house." "James and Cephas who were reputed to be pillars" (Gal. ii. 9). In Revelation (xxi. 14) the foundation-stones of the heavenly temple are "the twelve apostles of the Lamb." Hence we gather that the rock is a person. (3) So we come to the explanation of the difficulty which naturally is deduced from the language if considered without regard to prejudice or the pernicious use to which it has been put. Looking at the matter in a straightforward way, we come to the conclusion that Christ is wishing to reward Peter for his outspoken profession of faith; and his commendation is couched in a form which was usual in Oriental addresses, and intelligible to his hearers. "Thou hast said to me, 'Thou art the Son of God;' I say to thee, 'Thou art Peter,' a rock-man, 'and on thee,' as a rock, 'I will build my Church.'" As he was the first to acknowledge Christ's nature and office, so he was rewarded by being appointed as the apostle who should inaugurate the Christian Church and lay its first foundation. His name and his work were to coincide. This promise was fulfilled in Peter's acts. He it was who took the lead on the Day of Pentecost, when at his preaching, to the hundred and twenty disciples there were added three thousand souls (Acts ii. 41); he it was who admitted the Gentiles to the Christian community (Acts x.); he it was who in those early days stood forth prominently as a master-builder, and was the first to open the kingdom of heaven to Jews and Gentiles. It is objected that, if Peter was a builder, he could not be the rock on which the building was raised. The expression, of course, is metaphorical. Christ builds the Church by employing Peter as the foundation of the spiritual house; Peter's zeal and activity and stable faith are indeed the living rock which forms the material element, so to speak, of this erection; he, as labouring in the holy cause beyond all others, at any rate in the early days of the gospel, is regarded as that solid basis on which the Church was raised. Christ, in one sense, builds on Peter; Peter builds on Christ. The Church, in so far as it was visible, had Peter for its rocky foundation; in so far as it was spiritual, it was founded on Christ. The distinction thus accorded in the future to Peter was personal, and carried with it none of the consequences which human ambition or mistaken pursuit of unity have elicited therefrom. There was no promise of present supremacy; there was no promise of the privilege being handed down to successors. The other apostles had no conception of any superiority being now conferred on Peter. It was not long after this that there was a strife among them who should be the greatest; James and John claimed the highest places in the heavenly kingdom; Paul resisted Peter to the face "because he stood condemned" (Gal. ii. 11); the president of the first council was James, the Bishop of Jerusalem. It is plain that neither Peter himself nor his fellow-apostles understood or acknowledged his supremacy; and that he transmitted, or was intended to transmit, such authority to successors, is a figment unknown to primitive Christianity, and which was gradually erected, to serve ambitious designs, on forged decretals and spurious writings. This is not the place for polemics, and these few apologetic hints are introduced merely with the view of showing that no one need be afraid of the

obvious and straightforward interpretation of Christ's words, or suppose that papal claims are necessarily supported thereby. **I will build my Church** (*μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν*). My Church, not thine. Plainly, therefore, the Church was not yet builded. Christ speaks of it as a house, temple, or palace, perhaps at the moment gazing on some castle founded securely on a rock, safe from flood and storm and hostile attack. We know how commonly he took his illustrations from objects and scenes around him; and the rocky base of the great castle of Cæsarea Philippi may well have supplied the material for the metaphor here introduced. The word translated "church" (*ἐκκλησία*), is found here for the first time in the New Testament. It is derived from a verb meaning "to call out," and in classical Greek denotes the regular legislative assembly of a people. In the Septuagint it represents the Hebrew *kahal*, the congregation united into one society and forming one polity (see Trench, 'Synonyms'). The name *kehila* in modern times is applied to every Jewish community which has its own synagogue and ministers. From the use of the metaphor of a house, and the word employed to designate the Church, we see that it was not to be a mere loose collection of items, but an organized whole, united, officered, and permanent. Hence the word *Ecclesia* has been that which designated the Christian society, and has been handed down and recognized in all ages and in all countries. It may be regarded as the personal part of that kingdom of heaven which was to embrace the whole world, when "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. xi. 15; see Introduction, § x.). **The gates of hell** (*ᾅδου*) **shall not prevail against it.** Hades, which our version calls "hell," is the region of the dead, a gloomy and desolate place, according to Jewish tradition, situated in the centre of the earth, a citadel with walls and gates, which admitted the souls of men, but opened not for their egress. There are two ways of explaining these words, though they both come to much the same idea. The gates of Hades represent the entrance thereto; and the Lord affirms that death shall have no power over the members of the Church; they shall be able to rise superior to its attacks, even if for a time they seem to succumb; their triumphant cry shall be, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. xv. 55). Through the grave and gate of death they shall pass to a joyful resurrection. The other interpretation is derived from the fact that in Oriental cities the gate is the scene of deliberation and counsel. Hence "the gates" here may represent the evil designs planned by the powers of hell to overthrow the Church, the wiles and machinations of the devil and his angels, Hades being taken, not as the abode of the dead, but as the realm of Satan. Neither malignant spirits nor their allies, such as sin, persecution, heresy, shall be able to wreck the eternal building which Christ was founding. Combining the two expositions, we may say that Christ herein promises that neither the power of death nor the power of the devil *shall prevail against it* (*κατισχύσουσιν αὐτῆς*), shall overpower it, keep it in subjection. The pronoun refers doubtless to *Church*, not *rock*, the verb being more applicable to the former than the latter, and the pronoun being nearer in position to *ἐκκλησίαν*. To see here an assurance of the infallibility of the pope, as Romanists do, is to force the words of Scripture most unwarrantably in order to support a modern figment which has done infinite harm to the cause of Christ. As Erasmus says, "Proinde miror esse, qui locum hunc detorqueant ad Romanum Pontificem."

Ver. 19.—**I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.** The metaphor of a house or castle, with its gates that must be opened with keys, is still maintained; or else the idea is of the exercise of a stewardship in a household. But the latter seems unnecessarily to introduce a new notion, and to mar the concinnity of the passage. In Isa. xxii. 22 we read, "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open"—where the figure is similar. The delivery of the keys of a city, etc., to a person, symbolizes the handing over of the authority to that person. "The kingdom of heaven" means here the visible Church of Christ in its most extended form. In this Church, hereafter to be constituted, Peter personally is promised a certain authority. This is a personal reward for his good confession, and a prediction of the way in which he was to exercise it. At the same time, there is a change in the figure used. He who was the foundation of the Church is now its overseer, and may open or shut its doors, may admit or exclude whomsoever he will, always following the guidance of the inspiring Spirit. This promise was fulfilled after the Day of Pentecost. It seems to have been at this time only promised, not conferred upon Peter. The actual gift of the power to him and his brother apostles took place after the Resurrection, as we read in John xx. 22. The "power of the keys," as it is called, is considered to have two branches—a legislative power and an absolving power. The former Peter exercised when he took the

lead after the effusion of the Spirit, and opened the door to the Jews. It was his action that admitted the Gentiles, without compliance with the distinctive rites of Judaism, to all the privileges of the gospel (see Acts xv. 7). This most momentous precedent he established and made good for all time. These were legislative acts which he had the honour of introducing, and which, thus inaugurated, upheld, and defended by him, tended to advance that unity which the Lord held so dear. As an instance of his shutting the door of the kingdom in the face of an impious intruder, we may notice his rebuke to Simon Magus (Acts viii. 21), "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." The absolving power, supposed to be contained in the gift of the keys, seems rather to belong to the terms of the succeeding promise. We conceive that this power was first given to St. Peter in acknowledgment of his good confession, and as an emblem of unity, and was afterwards bestowed on all the apostles. That the Fathers did not regard it as limited exclusively to Peter, may be seen by quotations gathered by Wordsworth and other commentators. Thus Tertullian, 'Scorpiac.,' 10, "Memento claves hic Dominum Petro, et per illum Ecclesiæ reliquisse;" St. Cyprian, 'De Unit.,' p. 107, "Apostolis omnibus post resurrectionem suam parem potestatem tribuit;" St. Augustine, 'Serm.,' ccxcv., "Has claves non homo unus, sed unitas accepit Ecclesiæ." **Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth**, etc. "Binding" and "loosing" has been explained in various ways. Some say the terms mean admitting or debarring from the Church, which would make them identical with the power of the keys, and would give no additional privilege; whereas it is plain that further honour is intended to be bestowed. Others affirm that the expression is to be understood of absolution from sin. They take the metaphor to be derived from a prisoner and his chain. Sinners are tied and bound with the chain of their sins; they are released on repentance by the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. v. 18, 19); they are bound, when the means of grace are withheld from them, owing to the absence of tokens of sincerity and faith. This is the view taken in the Anglican Ordinal, where to the priest it is solemnly said, "Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." But this was no special gift to Peter; it was bestowed not long after upon all the apostolic body in the very same terms (ch. xviii. 18), and was indeed inherent in the ministry. This interpretation also introduces a new element into the promise, which does not agree with the context. There is nothing to lead one to expect such an item, and to supply "sins" to the general term "whatsoever" twice repeated, is harsh and unnatural. A more reasonable explanation of the phrase is derived from the use of the terms among the Jews themselves. In their Talmudic glosses we find equivalent expressions. "To bind" is to forbid, to pronounce unlawful; "to loose" is to allow, to declare lawful. And the Lord here promises Peter a certain pre-eminence in the government and organization of the Church, and that the rules which he ordained and the sentences which he should pass in the due exercise of his apostolical authority, should be ratified and confirmed in heaven (Burgon). The phrase is found in Josephus, expressive of the possession of unrestricted authority. Thus he speaks of the Pharisees as having power to loose and bind (λύειν τε καὶ δεῖν) whom they would ('Bell. Jud.,' i. 5. 2). And it is noted that an inscription upon a statue of Isis reads, "I am the queen of the country, and whatsoever I bind no man can loose" (Diod. Sic., i. 27). This is a personal distinction conferred on St. Peter in the exercise of an office common to all the apostles. It was needful, in the early Church, that one should be chosen, *primus inter pares*, to be the chief office-bearer and leader of the body of believers. Not that he conceived himself to be, or was recognized by others as, infallible, or as an irresponsible despot; many events before and after Pentecost forbid such an assumption; but his faith, character, and zeal pointed him out as well constituted to regulate and order the infant community, and to take the first part in maintaining that unity which was essential to the new kingdom. This personal primacy may justly be conceded, even by those who are most inimical to the arrogant claims of the papacy; for it carries not with it the consequences which have been appended. Precedence in rank does not of necessity involve supreme or even superior authority. A duke has no authority over a baron, though he has precedence. The fuller consideration of this sphere of the subject belongs rather to the historian and the polemist than to the expositor, and to such we leave it, only adding that, in his peculiar privilege, Peter stands alone, and that in his extraordinary power he had, and was intended to have, no successors.

Ver. 20.—**Then charged he his disciples.** Immediately after Peter's confession and Jesus' promise. St. Matthew's word "charged" (διεστείλατο) becomes more emphatic in the other synoptists (ἐπετίμησεν), implying a command with a rebuke attached to it on its infringement; Vulgate, *comminatus est* (Mark viii. 30). **That they should tell no man that he** (αὐτὸς) **was**

[Jesus] the Christ. The received text inserts the word "Jesus," but very many good manuscripts omit it; and it seems to have been received by inadvertence, the point being that he was Messiah. The injunction to tell no man (with which comp. ch. viii. 4) was necessary at this time for many reasons. The time was not ripe for the declaration, which might have led to tumult and disorder among an excited populace. Any ambitious ideas which the apostles might have formed from what had just passed were here nipped in the bud. They were not sufficiently familiar with the true notion of the Messiah, especially a suffering Messiah, to be competent to preach him to others. This we see by Peter's inconsiderate remonstrance in ver. 22. Till they received the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension, they could not rightly and profitably preach of Christ's nature, office, and kingdom. Jesus may have looked forward to their desertion of him in his hour of trial, and prevented them from proclaiming his real character, which, in the face of such desertion, would have proved a stumbling-block to the faith of believers. Some of these reasons we may reverently believe were those which led Christ to lay this severe restriction on the enthusiasm of his followers (see on ch. xvii. 9).

Ver. 21—ch. xxv. 46.—SUFFERING: JESUS ACCEPTS AND DOES NOT SHUN IT.

Vers. 21—28.—*Jesus announces plainly his death and resurrection. Rebukes Peter.* (Mark viii. 31—ix. 1; Luke ix. 22—27.)

Ver. 21.—**From that time.** Henceforward Christ changes his teaching and his behaviour. He tells of his sufferings, and of their necessity in the order of things, so that any one who opposes this design is fighting against God; and shows how self-denial and pain must be the lot of his followers. **Began to show unto his disciples.** No longer obscurely, but plainly and without reserve. He had already intimated his future sufferings, though his disciples had been slow to receive these dark hints, so opposed to all their preconceived opinions of Messiah's glory and victorious career. Such sayings as, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19); and, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John iii. 14), had fallen unheeded on the disciples' ears, and had not guided them to forecast the future. Even the allusions to their own trials, in the warnings about bearing the cross and following him (ch. x. 38), were not understood. The great point of his real nature had become clear to them; they had now to learn that the way to glory, both for him and them, led through sufferiug and death. Conscious of Christ's Divinity, they could now more patiently endure the mystery of his cross and Passion. **Unto Jerusalem.** The appointed scene of these events (see ch. xx. 17). **He must** (δεῖ) go thither to meet and endure these sufferings, because it was so ordained in the counsels of God and announced by the prophets (comp. ch. xxvi. 54; Luke xxiv. 26, 46). **Many things.** These are detailed in ch. xx. 18, 19; Luke xviii. 31—33. **Elders, chief priests, and scribes.** The various members of the Sanhedrin (see ch. ii. 4). The three classes are, in Nösgen's opinion, intentionally named here—the elders, as the most aged and venerated members, or such as were distinguished by rank and character; the chief priests, heads of the twenty-four courses, as office-bearers of the theocracy; and scribes, at that time occupying almost the position of the prophets. The whole religious world would thus be combined against Christ. **Be killed.** He does not here say "crucified," as he did afterwards (ch. xx. 19), only gradually revealing the whole awful truth. **Be raised again the third day.** This announcement was intended to support the disciples in view of Christ's sufferings and death. And "the third day" is mentioned, not only for typical reasons, but to assure them that his death should be speedily followed by his return to life from the grave. It is obvious to us that Jesus prophesied plainly concerning his resurrection; but such an event, so unprecedented, so unexperienced, was not understood; and though the prediction was so far known as to cause his grave to be watched, it was only a vague kind of expectation, without form or definiteness, that was cherished, and the actual fact came as a surprise (see Mark ix. 10, 32).

Ver. 22.—**Peter took him** (προσλαβόμενος). Either taking him aside, or taking him by the hand or dress—a reverent familiarity permitted by the Lord to his loving apostle. And now this same Peter, who had just before made his noble confession, and had been rewarded with unique commendation, unable to shake off the prejudices of his age and his education, began to **rebuke** (ἐπιτιμᾶν) his Master. He presumed to chide Jesus for speaking of suffering and death. He, the Son of God most High, what had he to do with such things? How could he name them in connection with himself? Peter, while accepting the idea of Messiah as Divine and triumphant, could not receive the notion of his death and Passion. That the same person should be so humiliated and yet so glorious, was beyond his conception. He was as much in

the dark as his fellow-apostles; of that which was not specially revealed to him he knew nothing. It was the carnal mind that here influenced him, not the spiritually enlightened soul. By writing "began," the historian intimates that he had not time to say much before the Lord mercifully interposed and cut him short. **Be it far from thee**; ἵλεώς σοι: Vulgate, *absit a te*. The Greek phrase is elliptical, εἴη ὁ Θεός being understood; "God be merciful to thee," equivalent to "God forbid." The complete expression occurs in the Septuagint of 1 Chron. xi. 19. It is used in deprecation of a disastrous event. **This shall not be unto thee**; οὐ μὴ ἔσται σοι τοῦτο. This is a very strong assertion, not a prayer or wish, as some would make it; the use of language is quite against that, as the phrase is predictive, never prohibitory. In his mistaken zeal and his ignorant affection, Peter would be wiser than his Lord. The cross and Passion shall never be thy lot; Messiah cannot suffer, the Son of God cannot die. Such merely human asseveration, even prompted by undoubted love, had to be checked and rebuked.

Ver. 23.—**He turned.** Peter and the rest were following Christ, as he walked onward. Now Jesus stops, turns, and faces them. **Get thee behind me, Satan.** Jesus uses nearly the same words in rebuking Peter that he had used to the devil in his temptation (ch. iv. 10); and justly, because the apostle was acting the adversary's part, by opposing the Divine economy, and endeavouring to persuade Jesus that the way he proposed was wholly unnecessary. The lively stone has become a very Satan in opposing the Divine will; hence the sharpness of the rebuke administered to him. **An offence unto me** (σκάνδαλον ἐμοῦ); *my stumbling-block*. Petros, the stone, to maintain the metaphor, is now "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" (1 Pet. ii. 8). He stood in the Saviour's way, and impeded his onward progress in the course ordained. He who would turn him aside from Calvary is the enemy of man's salvation, which was to be won there. **Thou savourest** (φρονεῖς) **not**; *mindest not* (as Rom. viii. 5); thy taste is not for the Divine plans, but for human considerations; thou art not promoting the great purpose of God, but worldliness and self-pleasing. "Peter," says St. Chrysostom, "examining the matter by human and earthly reasoning, accounted it disgraceful to him [Christ] and an unmeet thing. Touching him therefore sharply, he saith, 'My Passion is not an unmeet thing, but thou givest this sentence with a carnal mind; whereas if thou hadst hearkened to my sayings in a godly manner, disengaging thyself from thy carnal understanding, thou wouldst know that this of all things most becometh me. For thou indeed supposest that to suffer is unworthy of me; but I say unto thee, that for me not to suffer is of the devil's mind;' by the contrary statements repressing his alarm" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 24.—St. Mark tells us that Jesus called the multitude unto him together with the disciples, as about to say something of universal application. The connection between this paragraph and what has preceded is well put by St. Chrysostom. Then. "When? when St. Peter said, 'Be it far from thee: this shall not be unto thee,' and was told, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' For Christ was by no means satisfied with the mere rebuke of Peter, but, willing more abundantly to show both the extravagance of Peter's words and the future benefit of his Passion, he saith, 'Thy word to me is, "Be it far from thee: this shall not be unto thee;" but my word to thee is, "Not only is it hurtful to thee to impede me and to be displeased at my Passion, but it will be impossible for thee even to be saved, unless thou thyself too be continually prepared for death."' Thus, lest they should think his suffering unworthy of him, not by the former words only, but by those that were coming, he teaches them the gain thereof." **If any man will** (θέλει, *wills to*) **come after me.** To come after Christ is to be his follower and disciple, and the Lord here declares what will be the life of such a one (see a parallel passage, ch. x. 38, 39). Jesus mentions three points which belong to the character of a true disciple. The first is self-denial. **Let him deny himself.** There is no better test of reality and earnestness in the religious life than this. (See a sermon of Newman's on this subject, vol. i. serm. v.) If a man follows Jesus, it must be by his own free-will, and he must voluntarily renounce everything that might hinder his discipleship, denying himself even in things lawful that he may approach the likeness of his Master. **Take up his cross.** This is the second point. St. Luke adds, "daily." He must not only be resigned to bear what is brought upon him —suffering, shame, and death, which he cannot escape, but be eager to endure it, meet it with a solemn joy, be glad that he is counted worthy of it. **Follow me.** The third point. He must be energetic and active, not passive only and resigned, but with all zeal tracking his Master's footsteps, which lead on the way of sorrows. Here too is comfort; he is not called to a task as yet untried; Christ has gone before, and in his strength he may be strong.

Ver. 25.—(Comp. ch. x. 39; John xii. 25.) **Whosoever will** (ὃς γὰρ ἂν θέλῃ, *whosoever*

will to) **save his life** (*ψυχήν*). Here are set forth the highest motives for courage, endurance, and perseverance in the way of righteousness. The word translated "life" is used four times in this and the following verse, though in the latter it is rendered "soul" in the Anglican Version. The fact is the word is used in two senses: for the life which now is—the bodily life; and the life which is to come—the spiritual, the everlasting life. These are indeed two stages of the same life—that which is bounded by earth and that which is to be passed with the glorified body in heaven; but they are for the moment regarded as distinct, though intimately connected by belonging to the same personality. And the Lord intimates that any one who avoids bodily death and suffering by compromise of duty, by denying Christ and disowning the truth, shall lose everlasting life. On the other hand, whosoever sacrifices his life for the sake of Christ, to promote his cause, shall save his soul and be eternally rewarded. **Shall find it.** "Find," as the opposite of "lose," is here equivalent to "save." There may, too, be in it a notion of something great and unexpected, a treasure discovered, "salvation far beyond all that they looked for" (Wisd. v. 2). Says St. Gregory, "If you keep your seed, you lose it; if you sow it, you will find it again" ('Hom. in Evang.,' xxxii.).

Ver. 26.—**For what is a man** (*shall a man be*) **profited?** This verse explains the paradox concerning loss and gain in the previous verse. It is probably intended as a reminiscence of Ps. xlix. 7, 8. Wordsworth notes that it is quoted by Ignatius, 'Ep. ad Rom.,' vi.; but it is probably an early interpolation there. **The whole world.** It is but a trifle of the whole world, with its riches, honours, pleasures, which the most successful man can obtain; but granted it all lay at his feet, how would it repay him for the loss of everlasting life? **Lose his own soul** (*life*) (*τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ζημιωθῇ*). The phrase means "suffer loss in respect of," equivalent to "forfeit," as in Luke ix. 25. "Life" here is the higher life, the life in God. The Vulgate renders, *Animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur.* **In exchange;** *ἀντάλλαγμα*: Vulgate, *commutationem; as an equivalent for his life.* Or, it may be, to purchase back his life. "Again, he dwells upon the same point. 'What? hast thou another soul to give for this soul?' saith he. 'Why, shouldst thou lose money, thou wilt be able to give other money; or be it house, or slaves, or any other kind of possession; but for thy soul, if thou lose it, thou wilt have no other soul to give; yea, though thou hadst the world, though thou wast king of the whole earth, thou wouldst not be able, by paying down all earthly goods together with the earth itself, to redeem even one soul" (Chrys., 'Hom.,' lv.). The value of the soul is often expressed in classical adages.

Ψυχῆς γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστι τιμιώτερον.

"Naught is of higher value than the soul."

Οὐ γάρ τι ψυχῆς πέλει ἄνδρασι φίλτερον ἄλλο.

"Naught unto men is dearer than the life."

So Homer, 'Iliad,' ix. 401—

"For not the stores which Troy, they say, contained
In peaceful times, ere came the sons of Greece,
Nor all the treasures which Apollo's shrine,
The archer-god, in rock-built Pythos holds,
May weigh with life . . .
But when the breath of man hath passed his lips,
Nor strength nor foray can the loss repair."
(Lord Derby.)

Ver. 27.—**For the Son of man shall come.** The final judgment would put things in their true light—would show the value of self-sacrifice, would reveal the punishment of self-pleasing. Our Lord seems to refer to Dan. vii. 13, as it were, in testimony to the truth of what he had just said. *Shall come; μέλλει ἔρχεσθαι: venturus est* (Vulgate), is more than the bare announcement, and implies that it is in accordance with the eternal counsels of God that he should appear this second time. **In the glory of his Father.** As one with the Father, and his Representative. So he speaks of "the glory which thou hast given me" (John xvii. 22). **Reward;** *ἀποδώσει: render, reddet* (Vulgate). The term includes punishment as well as recompense. **Works** (*πρᾶξιν*); *doing, work.* The word does not signify isolated acts, but general course of conduct, practice as a whole.

Ver. 28.—This verse has always been a *crux* to commentators, who cannot decide what is the event to which it refers. Many, taking it in connection with the preceding announcement, refer it exclusively to the day of judgment; but this idea is not compatible with Christ's assertion that some present shall see it ere they die. Nor can it refer to Christ's resurrection and ascension, and the mission of the Holy Ghost, which took place only half a year after this time, and the prediction of which so short a time before could not have been introduced in the terms here used. Other expositors, and some of great name, agree that the event to which Christ alludes is his transfiguration narrated in the next chapter. But there are insuperable objections to this view.

How could Christ assert in the most solemn manner, **Verily, I say unto you**, that some of his hearers would live to witness an event which was to occur only a week hence? Nor is it likely that he would thus publicly announce a transaction which was strictly private, seen only by three chosen witnesses, who were further charged not to reveal the vision till the Son of man was risen from the dead. The Lord had been telling of the final judgment; he now announces, with the formula used by him to present some revelation of Divine truth, that there was to be a coming of the Son of man at no very distant date. This advent is doubtless the destruction of Jerusalem, which, as it occurred only some forty years after this time, some of his auditors, apostles and the multitude, would live to behold. This great event was a type of the second advent, the two being closely connected by Christ himself (see ch. xxiv.). There is some truth in all the views that have obtained concerning this passage: "The prophecy unfolded itself by degrees; it has put forth buds and blossoms, but it will not be in its full bloom of accomplishment till the great day" (Wordsworth). There was some display of Christ's kingdom at the Transfiguration; another at his resurrection, and the events consequent thereupon; but the great one was when the overthrow of Jerusalem and its temple made way for the full establishment and development of the gospel, putting an end to the first dispensation. **Some standing** (*of them that stand*) **here**. Among the apostles St. John certainly survived the destruction of Jerusalem. There seems to be no recondite meaning in the term "standing," as if it signified "remaining steadfastly by me, adhering to my side;" as, **taste of death** is merely a periphrasis for "die," and has not the sense of tasting the bitterness of death, experiencing its sting. It appears to have been originally a metaphor derived from a nauseous draught, which every one must drain. **Coming in his kingdom**. Not "into his kingdom," but in the power and glory that appertain to his kingdom. Not that he will personally appear, but his mystical presence will be seen by its effects, the judgment on the Jewish nation, the establishment of a spiritual, yet visible kingdom in the place of the old covenant. There may be a similar allusion in Christ's words about St. John, "If I will that he tarry till I come" (John xxi. 23), and "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled" (ch. xxiv. 34)—where the dissolution of the Jewish polity is the event signified.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The visit to Galilee.* I. THE LORD CROSSES THE LAKE TO THE WESTERN SHORE. 1. *He dismisses the multitude.* They went away quietly, it seems. There was no need now to constrain the disciples to depart first. The people did not attempt to take the Lord by force to make him a King. They were more docile than the five thousand had been. They were full of thankfulness. They glorified the God of Israel. But they were simple-hearted people; they did not regard themselves as wiser than the Lord. They were content to believe and adore. So we must wait on him, and say, like the rustic people on the east of the Sea of Galilee, "He hath done all things well." He sent them away, and took ship, and crossed to the western side of the lake. 2. *The coalition of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.* They were bitterly hostile to each other. The Sadducees rejected the whole system of traditional interpretations and observances on which the Pharisees insisted so strongly, and maintained the necessity of accepting in every particular the literal meaning of the written Law. They were in possession of the chief places in the Church. They were cold-hearted and apathetic. They clung to the honours and emoluments of the priesthood, but they had no earnestness, no faith in spiritual religion. They were the aristocratic party in the Jewish Church of the day. Their support of the Herodian family and the Roman rule made them unpopular with the people. The Pharisees were fanatics, full of zeal; but it was misguided zeal—zeal for the letter of the Law as interpreted by the immense mass of rabbinical learning which, though not yet digested into the Mishna and Gemara, was taught in the school of the rabbis, and regarded as at least of equal authority with the Scriptures themselves. The Pharisees were intensely national. They mixed with the people. They sympathized with and encouraged their hatred to foreign domination. Their principles were generally accepted. They were looked upon with reverence as the teachers of the nation. Their great popularity more than compensated for the fact that all the highest positions in the Church were held by the Sadducees.

The Pharisees were narrow-minded fanatical zealots; the Sadducean priests were worldly unspiritual ecclesiastics. The two parties hated one another with all the bitterness of party spirit; but they hated the Lord yet more; and this common hatred now brought them together in ill-omened union against the most holy Saviour. Apparently they had been on the watch for his return. He had been some time absent; first, in the borders of Tyre and Sidon, then in the half-heathen Decapolis. The rude country-people had received him with enthusiasm; but, it may be, his holy human heart (for he was made like unto us, sin only excepted) yearned for the familiar scenes of the much-loved Galilee, his own country, his home, so far as he could be said to have had a home during the years of his ministry. He returned; but his feet had scarcely touched the land when his enemies were upon him. They came with a renewed demand for a sign from heaven. The Lord had wrought miracles in abundance, but these they wickedly attributed to the agency of the evil one. Let him show some sign from heaven, they said, such as Joel and Daniel had predicted; then they would recognize him as the Messiah. They understood not the Scriptures. They confused the first and second advents. They expected an earthly Messiah—a king like David or Solomon. They prescribed the kind of miracle which they required. So unbelievers now say, "Let there be such and such a miracle wrought publicly in London or Paris; then we will believe." But this is tempting God. Such a demand implies a presumptuous boldness which is the very opposite of trustful faith. If men will not believe after all that God has done for our salvation, "neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." 3. *The Lord's answer.* They were weather-prophets, he said. They talked much about the weather, as people do still; they knew the signs of its probable changes. These things interested them; they were much in their thoughts and on their lips. But there were signs of far more momentous import for those who had eyes to see. The sceptre had departed from Judah; the mystic weeks of Daniel were fulfilled; the Lord himself had pointed out to the messengers of the Baptist the signs of the Messiah's presence. These things they would not understand. The signs of the times should be to us a subject for careful study and solemn thought. The signs of the workings of the Holy Spirit in the Church should strengthen and encourage us; the signs which seem to point to the approach of the great apostasy and to the coming end should stir us up to watchfulness and earnest prayer; the signs which show the energy of the wicked one, and his awful power in ensnaring the souls of men, should kindle in us a determined resolution to resist even unto death. The Lord had shown signs of his Divine mission sufficient to the full to satisfy all earnest seekers after truth. The Pharisees and Sadducees came in the spirit of the tempter, tempting him. The Lord would work no further miracle in proof of his Messiahship; had he done so they would not have believed. He replied in the same stern words which he had used once before (ch. xii. 39) in answer to the like demand. He left them, and departed. It was not his last visit to Galilee, but it was his last public appearance there. He preached there no more; he wrought no more miracles there. "He sighed deeply in his spirit," St. Mark tells us, as he spoke these last words, and entered into the ship again. He had come to Galilee with words of love, with a message of peace and salvation; but these hard, selfish men rejected him, and prejudiced the people against him. He was indeed "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." That deep sigh told the anguish of his spirit. He came to save them. He had given up the effulgence of the Divine Majesty. He was ready to lay down his life for their salvation; and they would not be saved. He had come to his own country, the Galilee which he loved so well; and they opposed and insulted him, and drove him from his only home on earth. Let us be patient when we meet with opposition and disappointments. Opposition and disappointments, if we take them meekly and in faith, will help to make us more and more like unto our Lord.

II. HE RETURNS TO THE EASTERN SIDE. 1. *The Lord's caution.* He bade his disciples beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. It was not the first time that he had used this figure; but they misunderstood him. Probably they were in great distress. They had hoped to return to Capernaum. They had seen it in the distance. Now they were obliged to depart again to the inhospitable eastern side of the lake, away from home and kindred, away from the scene of the many triumphs

of the Lord's earlier ministry. They felt, too, that their Master's popularity was passing away. The influence of the scribes and Pharisees had undermined it. Now the Sadducees, who wielded all the power of the priesthood, had joined them in opposing him. The disciples continued faithful. They followed Christ in his retreat; but probably with very sad and troubled hearts. In their excitement they had forgotten to take bread. They had only one loaf, St. Mark tells us, with his wonted exactness in little details. The discovery of their neglect added to their trouble. What should they do? Where should they find bread in those uninhabited regions? They interpreted the Lord's warning according to the thoughts that filled their mind. He seemed to forbid them from using the bread of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, though they had but one loaf with them. They thought that Christ's words were aimed at their neglect, as people sometimes suppose that the preacher is aiming at them, when it is really their own conscience that disquiets them. The disciples were full of excitement and hurry; the Lord was calm. Let us imitate him, and try to learn of him that holy calmness of spirit which will keep us by his grace thoughtful and collected amid trouble and disappointment. 2. *His explanation.* (1) He rebuked them for their want of faith. They had seen his miracles. Twice he had fed with his sovereign bounty vast multitudes on those same barren shores which they were now approaching. He recalled to their memory the details of those wondrous banquets in the wilderness. He had bidden them take no thought for the morrow, what they should eat or what they should drink. Strange that they could have forgotten his words, enforced, as they had been, by those marvellous displays of power; strange that they could have been anxious about food while the Lord was with them. They knew him then after the flesh; we know him, if we are his indeed, with a deeper and holier knowledge. Let us trust him. If only he is with us, we have all that we can really want. We need not fear the enemies of faith, whether fanatics or free-thinkers. We need not tremble for ourselves. We need not be anxious about our future, if only we are Christ's and Christ is ours. (2) He explained his words. It was not of bread that he had spoken; such a caution would have been like the formal precepts, the countless ceremonial rules of the Pharisees. The Lord's words had a deeper meaning. As the children of Israel at the first institution of the Passover were forbidden to take leaven with them, in token that the defiling influences of Egypt were to be left behind; so now, when the disciples were departing from the controversy with the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Lord had warned them to take with them nothing that savoured of error and corruption. The leaven of the Pharisees was hypocrisy; the leaven of the Sadducees was indifference. We may well dread such evil influences; we may well shun such evil examples. The leaven of hypocrisy or of indifference spreads itself with a corrupting power through the heart which admits it, through the society which encourages it. "Take heed and beware," the Lord says. The human heart is prone to evil, prone to sloth; indifference and hypocrisy soon take possession of it, if they are once received through the contagion of sinful companionship. We must depart from the Pharisees and Sadducees. We must not make friends of the hypocritical and the indifferent; we must take none of their influences with us. We must depart with the Lord. (3) We must be careful, in reading Holy Scripture, not to understand literally what is spoken figuratively; and we must be equally on our guard against the opposite error. We must not explain away by figurative interpretations what is intended to be taken literally. The disciples made both mistakes at different times. The student of the Scriptures needs humility, single-hearted patient thought, and earnest prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

LESSONS. 1. Party spirit is an evil thing; beware of it. 2. Study the signs of the times; look for the fulfilment of prophecy; prepare for coming troubles; prepare for the second advent. 3. Shun hypocrisy and indifference; be truthful and earnest; see that your religion is real and living. 4. Remember the Lord's past mercies, and be not anxious for the future.

Vers. 13—19.—*Cæsarea Philippi.* I. THE GREAT CONFESSION. 1. *The Lord's question.* It was asked amid scenes of singular beauty; there was much to delight the eye: the gushing source of Jordan, the terraced heights on which the city was built, the majestic mass of Hermon with its crown of snow. But these fair sights were

associated with sad thoughts of idolatry and sin. Dan was near at hand—the seat of the old worship of the golden calf. The city itself was more than half heathen; its name told of the Roman supremacy; it had its great temple dedicated by the first Herod to Augustus Cæsar; it had its famous cave sacred to the Grecian Pan. But here, in the tetrarchy of Herod Philip, the Lord found that rest and freedom from persecution which he could find no longer in his own Galilee. Awful events were coming; his hour was at hand; he must be alone with the twelve to prepare them for the approaching trial. St. Luke tells us that he was alone praying; only his disciples were with him. There were no thronging multitudes here needing his gracious mercy; there were no Pharisees and Sadducees to disturb him with their taunts and hypocrisies. But a great crisis was at hand, and the Lord was alone praying. The holy Son of God teaches us by his own blessed example the infinite value of prayer to prepare us for times of peril. He ever lived in unbroken communion with the Father. Those who by the help of his Spirit are learning to live in that fellowship which is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, will naturally have recourse to prayer in all the emergencies of life; habitual communion with God leads his people to live always in the spirit of prayer, and keeps them always ready. Those who thus ever live with God will instinctively draw closer to him, and pour out their hearts in the intense energy of earnest supplication at all the turning-points of life, in the hour of danger or temptation, in the critical times of the history of the Church. It was a critical time now. The Lord had been rejected; he had been driven from Galilee, where he was once so popular. His own action had caused this seeming failure. Not long ago the multitude sought to take him by force to make him a King. They would have flocked around him in countless numbers and in fierce enthusiasm, if, like Judas of Galilee, he had raised the standard of national independence against the Roman rule; if he had announced himself publicly as the expected Messiah, he would have been hailed as the Deliverer, the Son of David, the Heir to David's throne. But instead of following the current of popular thought and popular expectation, the Lord had set himself directly against it. He had put aside the offered crown; he had himself forced the apostles to leave him, and had sent the multitudes away in the hour of his seeming triumph. They did not understand his mission; his kingdom was not of this world. Henceforth his work of teaching lay mainly with the twelve; he was to convince them of the true character of his Person and office. He was bringing them to the point now. He was bringing them face to face with the great truth which they had long felt in their hearts, but which had not been yet distinctly declared save once or twice in private. "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" the Lord asked. In the dignity of his conscious Divinity he had never asked such a question before; he heeded not the opinions of men; he sought not their praise; he knew their hearts. But he asked for the sake of the apostles, to bring their vague thoughts into clearer distinctness, to deepen their convictions, to confirm their faith. The well-known phrase, "the Son of man," seemed to point to the true answer; from the time of Daniel it had a Messianic significance. It was associated with the Messiah, both by the priests (Luke xxii. 69, 70) and by the people (John xii. 34), but not, perhaps, always certainly and distinctly. "Who is this Son of man?" the people asked in the passage last referred to. 2. *The answer of the disciples.* They were men of the people; they had mixed freely with them; they had heard frequent and eager discussions about their Master's teaching and miracles, about his character, his authority, his claims. His life must have been regarded with the deepest interest and the intensest curiosity throughout the country. It excited jealousy and opposition in many quarters; but it could not be ignored by any one. It forced itself upon public attention; it was so strange, so unlike any other life in its originality, in its perfect holiness, in its Divine power. And now the Lord asked what had the disciples heard men say of him. The answer was sad, not disappointing, to him who knew all things; but a hard thing for the apostles to confess. None now owned him to be the Christ. There were many opinions: some, like the terrified Antipas, thought that he was John the Baptist risen from his martyr's tomb; some thought that he was Elijah, come again as Malachi had prophesied; some said he might be Jeremiah, come to restore the ark, as the Jews fondly hoped (2 Macc. ii. 1—8); others imagined that he might be some one or other of the old prophets, come, perhaps,

as the forerunner of the Messiah. Such were the various opinions current among the people. None, as far as the apostles knew, then recognized his Messiahship. It had not been so always. From the time when John bare record that he was the Son of God, when Andrew said, "We have found the Messias," there had been many who asked, "Is not this the Christ?" The belief revived afterwards at Jerusalem (John vii. 41; ix. 22; xii. 13); but now in Galilee, his own country, it seems to have become extinct. The change in popular feeling had been brought about, partly by the Lord's own conduct and teaching (John vi. 66), partly by the influence of the enemies. Had he adapted himself to the spirit of the times, and yielded to the wishes of the people, the way to transient and apparent success lay open to him. His refusal gave strength to the combined opposition of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and enabled them to undermine his popularity. He knew it. He asked the question, not for information, but to lead on to deep and holy teaching. Observe the truthfulness of the apostles; they report the exact truth; they do not attempt to hide the ebbing tide of popular applause. They do not flatter the Lord with false hopes; they were too sincere for that; he was too high and holy. 3. *The second question.* "But whom say ye that I am?" This was the question that was in the Lord's heart. The views entertained about Christ in the world, the different phases of opinion concerning the Lord's Person and office, are subjects of interest to the student of theology; but this is the momentous question which is presented to each individual soul, "What think *ye* of Christ?" "Whom say *ye* that I am?" The speculative opinions of unbelievers or half-believers are not without their importance; but the great question is, what do they think who have known the Lord, who have heard his holiest teaching, and lived in close communion with him? What do they think who are to be the Lord's ambassadors, who are to go forth in his Name to preach the gospel of salvation, to carry on the blessed work which he began? They must be men of deep and strong convictions; they must not be carried about by every blast of vain doctrine; they must be established in the truth of the holy gospel which they preach. Double-minded and lukewarm men are worse than useless in the ministry; it is only the force of strong conviction that can win souls for Christ. 4. *The confession.* The question was put to all the apostles; Peter answers in the name of all. He was, as Chrysostom says, the mouth of the apostles, the leader of the apostolic choir. Yet there is something of his individual character, his fervid impetuous personality, in the strong decided answer. Peter had no doubts, none at all. He may have shared (all the apostles shared) in the general mistake as to the office and work of the Messiah; he had looked for a king to reign on the earthly throne of David. But he was at least sure of this—the Lord Jesus was the Messiah. Whatever might be his surroundings, whether poverty and seeming weakness or magnificence and sovereign power; however he might be received, whether scorned and rejected by Pharisees and Sadducees, or welcomed with the acclaiming shout, "Hosanna to the King of Israel!" whatever might happen, Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed King. Of this Peter was convinced with an absolute undoubting conviction. But this was not all. Peter not only recognized Jesus as the Christ according to the Jewish conception of the Messiah; he rises higher. The Lord was not what the Jews, it seems, expected—a Man very highly distinguished for wisdom and holiness, chosen by God to be the Messiah. He was far more; he was the Son of the living God. The words are full of force and energy. Men may become the sons of God by adoption and grace; but, we feel instinctively, no mere man could be styled "the Son of the living God." The Lord is the Son of him who hath life in himself, and by virtue of that eternal generation he hath life in himself (John v. 26). He is the only begotten Son, Life of life, as he is Light of light, very God of very God. We know not whether St. Peter himself understood at the time the full meaning, the blessed, holy, awful meaning of his great confession. It was revealed to him now by the Father. The Holy Spirit led him by degrees to realize the great and solemn truths which it implied. Nathanael, indeed, had anticipated him; the disciples had hailed the Lord as the Son of God when he had come moving over the stormy sea to their succour; Peter himself, not long before, had confessed his faith in the same exalted terms (John vi. 69). But on those occasions the Lord seemed not to heed the title which was ascribed to him. Now he formally accepted it. The time was come when the apostles should

recognize their Master as the Christ, the time for the first founding of the Christian Church.

II. THE RATIFICATION OF THE CONFESSION. 1. *The blessing.* The Lord repeats the word which he had so often used on the Mount of the Beatitudes in describing the children of the kingdom; he applies it now to St. Peter. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona," he said solemnly, using the full name, patronymic as well as personal name, as we do on solemn occasions; as he did once again when he put to the same apostle the searching question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Simon was blessed, for this knowledge had come, not from human teachers, but by revelation from the Father. Simon's confession was not like other confessions of the Lord's Messiahship, an inference from his words or works; it was the expression of an inward spiritual conviction, a knowledge gained by Divine revelation, like St. Paul's knowledge of Christ (Gal. i. 15, 16), a knowledge which transformed his heart and consecrated his whole life to the service of the Lord. Blessed are they now who have the like knowledge, into whose hearts God hath shined, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Blessed are they who with that inner knowledge of the heart own the Lord Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God; for thus to know Christ, he himself hath told us, is eternal life. 2. *The prophecy.* (1) "Thou art Peter." The Lord had given him that name long ago, at his first interview with him (John i. 42). It was then given by anticipation. Now Simon had shown the truthfulness of the Lord's foreknowledge; he was proving himself to be a true Peter, or rock-like apostle, strengthened and established by the grace of Christ for the work to which the Lord had called him. He was Peter, rock-like, a piece of rock. "That Rock was Christ," the Lord whom Peter had just confessed to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. There is not "any rock like our God." He is the Rock of Ages, the Rock that is higher than the highest of saints, the Rock of our refuge, the Rock of our salvation. The Lord Jesus is our Rock, because he is God, the Messiah, the incarnate Son of the living God. "The Word was made flesh;" that great fact is the foundation of all our hopes. "God manifest in the flesh" is the Rock on which the Christian Church is built, the one foundation once laid (1 Cor. iii. 11); the Stone which the builders disallowed, but nevertheless the Head of the corner; the chief Corner-stone, elect, precious. Peter had no strength in himself apart from the one Rock; he was sinking in the stormy sea when the Lord caught him by the hand; he was falling into a deeper abyss when the Lord's loving mournful look recalled him to the sense of his sinfulness. Peter was as the dove (Bar-Jona: Jonah means "a Dove") that is in the clefts of the rock (Cant. ii. 14); he was only safe, as we are only safe, when he was hidden in the Rock of Ages. Yet, in a secondary sense, Peter may be regarded as a rock. He derived his new name, which is by interpretation "a Stone," from Christ the Rock; he derived his rock-like character from spiritual union with the Rock of Ages; he was one of the living stones, hewn out of the Rock (Isa. li. 1), built into the Rock, which form the spiritual house described by himself in his First Epistle. (Doubtless he was thinking then of these great words of Christ when he spoke of Christ as a living Stone, a chief Corner-stone, a Rock.) But he was more than this; he was one of those who helped to lay the one foundation, the one only foundation in the truest sense (1 Cor. iii. 11), the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Eph. ii. 20), when they preached Christ as the only Saviour. And in a secondary sense he might himself, like the other apostles, be called one of the foundations (comp. Rev. xxi. 14), one of the pillars (Gal. ii. 9), and in another figure one of the master-builders (1 Cor. iii. 10). But the foundation-stones rest upon the Rock, the one true Foundation; and the wise master-builders build under the one Master, which is Christ. (2) The Church. We meet with this great word here for the first time as we read the Scriptures of the New Testament in the existing order; once more only it occurs in the Gospels (ch. xviii. 17). We must remember where this prophecy was spoken; in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, among the most remarkable rock-scenery of the Holy Land, possibly under the shadow of the high red limestone cliff which overhangs the town, the summit of which was crowned by the white marble temple built by Herod in honour of Augustus. That rock, Dean Stanley says ('Sinai and Palestine,' p. 399), "may possibly have suggested the words which now run round the dome of St. Peter's." That temple with its blasphemous dedication

was an outrage in the eyes of the holy Son of God; the temple which he would rear was wholly different, built on a Rock more stable, more abiding far. "My Church"—it was a wondrous prophecy. All seemed to have forsaken him save only the twelve; one was a traitor even in that little company; yet the Lord looked forward, in the vision of his Divine foreknowledge, to that great multitude which no man could number, called out from all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. It was to be the whole congregation of Christian people called out of the whole world, first by himself, then by his apostles and their successors speaking in his Name. It was to be built up (edified) in him, resting on him the living Rock, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone. It was to be one, and yet many; many living stones built up into one holy temple, united into one by the one chief Corner-stone, the one Rock on which it rests. It was Christ's, "my Church;" given to him by the Father, bought to be his own with his most precious blood, sanctified and illuminated by the indwelling of his most Holy Spirit. It is the Church of the *living* God; therefore the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. Hades is the realm of the disembodied dead; it is insatiable, it hath never enough, it enlargeth itself, and openeth its mouth without measure. The Lord himself, the Head of the Church, seemed once to yield to its power; he descended into Hades. But it was not possible that he could be holden of death; the third day he rose again from the dead. "He is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of Hades and of death." Because he liveth, his Church shall live also. The gates of Hades shall not prevent his saints from rising to meet the returning Lord. The abode of the dead shall not retain the Church which belongs to Christ, the Son of the living God, the Church which is his bride, nay, his body; which liveth in the life of Christ and rejoiceth in his love. Filled with this blessed hope, the Church sings its song of triumph in the presence of death, "O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 3. *The promise.* (1) The keys. The Church is now presented to our view as the kingdom of heaven, the holy city. The Lord Christ hath the key of David; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth (Rev. iii. 7). That power was now delegated to St. Peter as the representative of the apostolic college. He exercised it when under his ministry three thousand souls were added to the Church on the great Day of Pentecost; he exercised it when he baptized Cornelius, when he said to Simon Magus, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." The Church exercises that power now in preaching, in baptizing, in admitting to Communion, in declaring by God's authority God's absolution of the penitent. "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent." (2) Binding and loosing. The words seem to mean, according to constant Hebrew usage, "to forbid" and "to allow." The Lord commits to Peter, as afterwards (ch. xviii. 18) to all the apostles, the government of the Church; he gives him legislative authority, power to declare what is lawful, what is unlawful; what is obligatory, what is open. That power he exercised when he spoke in favour of the Gentiles at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 7—11). That power St. Paul exercised again and again. That power in some degree is still vested in the Church. "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith; and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another."

LESSONS. 1. What is the Lord Jesus to us? Oh that he may reveal himself into our hearts, that we may know him as the Son of the living God! 2. It is a blessed thing to have St. Peter's strong convictions; let us pray, "Lord, increase our faith." 3. Christ is the Rock of Ages; let us seek to be living stones, built into that living Rock.

Vers. 20—28.—*The cross.* I. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF COMING SUFFERING. 1. *The Lord.* Two figures come prominently into contrast—the Lord and Peter: the Lord looking forwards with sweet and holy calmness to agony and shame and death; Peter, eager and impetuous, burning with zeal for what seemed to him his Master's honour. The Lord bade the apostles tell no man that he was the Christ. The people were not ready for the announcement; if they accepted it, they would in their present temper misunderstand it; they would again try to take him by force to make him a King.

Let us learn of our dear Lord to be indifferent to titles, not to care to make known things that may bring us earthly honour. The Lord had received, as his due, the homage of St. Peter; he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. But while he accepted, as his by right, those loftiest of all conceivable titles, he prophesied the near approach of the extremest humiliation. He must go to Jerusalem; he must suffer many things; he must be killed. It *must* be, he said; it was necessary for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose, for the remission of sin, for the salvation of mankind. He must rise again the third day. He could not be holden of death, for he hath life in himself; he is the Life. The apostles did not understand him (Mark ix. 10, 32); they could not think that he was speaking literally; they could not believe that the Divine Messiah would suffer what seemed to them such utter degradation. And when it had come to pass, their misery and despondency were so great that they found no comfort in the prophecy of the resurrection; their horror and distress drove it quite out of their hearts. The Lord was graciously and tenderly preparing them for the coming trial. Let us prepare in the time of health and strength for what must come, sickness and pain and death; so by his grace may we be ready. 2. *Peter.* He was impulsive, impetuous, as always. He took the Lord, caught him by the dress or hand; he ventured to rebuke him, as if he was wiser than the Christ. The Lord interrupted him; he would not allow him to proceed in his thoughtless talk; he sternly checked his improper freedom. "Get thee behind me, Satan," he said to the apostle whom not long before he had pronounced "blessed," to whom he had committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The Lord had used those same strong words once before. The evil spirit, whom he had foiled in the wilderness, was now tempting him again through the agency of Peter. Again the Lord repelled the temptation. It was the old temptation, the last of Satan's approaches in the wilderness (ch. iv. 8, 9), the temptation to wear the crown without bearing the cross; to take the kingdom which was his by right, but to take it without treading the path of suffering, the way ordained by God. Peter was a stumbling-block now. Years afterwards, in his First Epistle (ii. 8), he described "the chief Corner-stone" (with a manifest allusion to this conversation) as being to the disobedient and unbelieving "a Rock of offence (*πέτρα σκανδάλου*)." He was now making himself a stumbling-block to Christ; he was minding, not the things of God, but the things of men. Men set their affections on earthly things, ease, comfort, honour, riches; these are not always good for us. Affliction, meekly borne, is better; it worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Peter acted the tempter's part. Our kindest friends sometimes unwittingly do the like, when they dissuade us from enduring hardness, from making sacrifices for Christ's sake. Peter loved the Lord fervently, but his love was not wise. He was presumptuous, forward, even in some degree irreverent. Perhaps he was exalted above measure by the Lord's commendation, as St. Paul thought he himself might have been through the abundance of the revelations (2 Cor. xii. 7). There is no safety without humility; the nearer we draw to Christ, the more we need to learn of him that most precious grace.

II. THE DISCIPLE MUST FOLLOW THE MASTER'S STEPS. 1. *The daily cross of self-denial.* The Lord had told the apostles of his own coming sufferings; now he warns them that those sufferings must, in some sense, repeat themselves in all his faithful followers. He speaks to all. "*If any man willeth* to come after me," he said. There must be the wish first. There is no perseverance in religion without desire, without longing, without love. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." They who do not hunger are not filled. Again, the true Christian wish is to come after Christ. All men wish, more or less earnestly, more or less languidly, to get to heaven at last. That wish is, as many entertain it, utterly selfish. The Christian wishes to come after Christ, and, following Christ here, to be at last with him there. To come after Christ, then, is the central wish of the Christian life, and the means by which that wish is realized is self-denial. Christ pleased not himself; his disciples must follow him. The true self is the conscience; but the lower part of our nature, the appetites and affections which we share with the rest of the animal creation, are so noisy and turbulent, fill so large a part of our conscious existence (in many men, alas! almost the whole), that they seem to be the self, and usurp the name of self, which properly belongs to the higher self, the conscience and the reason. It is the lower self which we must deny. When appetite says, "This is pleasant," but

conscience answers, "It is wrong," then we must take part with conscience, which bears in itself the evidence of authority, and deny that lower self which would disturb the harmony of our nature by usurping the position of command which does not belong to it. The precept is one of paramount importance. The Lord repeats it, translating it now into the distinctive language of Christianity, "Let him take up his cross." He had used those words once already (ch. x. 38). It was long, probably, before the apostles understood them. We know their meaning now. The cross was a thing of horror once; but the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ has shed a halo of resplendent light around the tree of shame. The word has changed its meaning; it has become a name for the noblest self-denial, the most Divine self-sacrifice. Not all acts of self-denial are a bearing of the cross, but only those which spring out of faith in Christ, and radiate from the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. He taketh up his cross who denies himself daily in the faith of Christ, and for the sake of Christ, seeking only to please him and to be made more and more like unto him. Such acts of holy self-denial are taken up, so to speak, into the one great act of holiest self-sacrifice, and become parts of it (Col. i. 24), and derive their beauty and glory from the reflected glory of the Saviour's cross. Such faithful Christians, whom the strong wish to come after Christ urges with ever-growing earnestness to take up their cross daily, will follow him who bore the cross for them along the narrow way till they appear, sealed with the seal of the living God upon their foreheads, before the glory-throne. 2. *The true life.* The wish which is centred in this present life is opposed to the Christian wish to come after Christ. When the heart is set upon the things of this life, comfort, station, wealth, and such-like, it loses sight of Christ, who is the Life of men. Therefore he who willeth, whose set purpose is, to save this life, with all its treasures, must lose the true Life, which is Christ. For the Lord died upon the cross. His first followers shrank not from the death of martyrdom for his sake. All true Christians must have the martyr-spirit; they must be martyrs in will; they must be willing, if need be, to lose all earthly things, even life itself, for Christ's sake. The Lord gave himself for us. He asks for our whole self in return. We must keep nothing back, or we shall lose the true life, which is the life in Christ—eternal life, Christ himself. And if this is lost, all is lost. Nothing can compensate a man for the loss of the true life. No gain, not even the gain of the whole world, if it were possible, can balance that tremendous loss. For the loss is real, but the gain illusory. A man may seem to gain all that the world prizes; but if with that gain the true life is lost, there is no true joy, no brightness, no abiding gladness. And all that was gained, though it seemed like all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, must vanish in a moment when the years come to an end as it were a tale that is told. Then what shall a man give in exchange for his life, when the true life is lost, and only that life, which is living death, remains? What shall a man give then, when he hath naught to give; when his riches, and his knowledge, and his strength, and his earthly rank, and the time given him for working out his own salvation, and all his opportunities of serving God and doing the work which God had given him to do, have passed away for ever;—when all these things have fallen away from him and left him all desolate and alone, a poor soul, helpless and destitute, realizing, when it is too late, the bitter truth that it is in the sight of God wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked—what shall a man give then? Let him learn to give now—to give his heart, and, with his heart, his time, his labour, his prayers, his earthly goods. It is a poor gift at the best; but if it is given in faith and love, it is lent unto the Lord, and the Lord will repay with large increase in the great day of account. We are unprofitable servants; the best of us only do what is our bounden duty; we only give him what is his own. But he is pleased in his gracious condescension to accept this poor service of ours, and to give us in return that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, that eternal life which is the *gift* of God. 3. *The end.* "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels." He is the Son of man in virtue of his incarnation; but in his essential Being he is God, equal with the Father as touching his Godhead. The Father's glory is his; the angels of God are his angels, for "all things that the Father hath are mine" (John xvi. 15). Then he shall reward every man according to his work, his work as a whole. The award will be proportioned to the whole scope and meaning of each man's earthly life in infinite justice,

and, blessed be his holy Name, in infinite mercy. He bids us to look ever forward to the coming of that great day, and to estimate things in reference to the coming judgment. The glory of the world seems now, to our short-sighted eyes, very great and magnificent and overpowering. But look at it in the fierce light that streams from the judgment-throne; then it shrinks into nothingness. Its brightness is like the poor little candle in the effulgent radiance of the noontide sun; you see that its beauty is marred with the traces of decay, rottenness, death. "The world passeth away . . . but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Let us not lose that eternal life for the sake of this fleeting, dying world. For the Son of man cometh in his kingdom. There were some, the Lord said, standing there who should see that kingdom before they died. Three of them soon saw the transfigured Saviour in his glory. All, save one, saw the risen Lord, victorious over death, manifested as the Lord of life, the everlasting King, to whom all power in heaven and in earth is given. Some of them, we know not how many, saw the manifestation of his power in the destruction of Jerusalem; when the old dispensation made way for the kingdom of heaven, the one Catholic Church over which Christ shall reign as King until the end cometh; then, on the ruins of the old theocracy, was established that spiritual kingdom which shall reach its consummation in the day of the Lord. In each of these great events the Lord's prediction was in some sense fulfilled. If we cannot define its meaning to our complete satisfaction, let us remember what he said of the last survivor of the apostles, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

LESSONS. 1. The cross is the very emblem of our religion; he is no true Christian who beareth not the cross. 2. The whole world is worth nothing to him whose soul is lost. No price can redeem the lost soul. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." 3. The judgment is at hand. Think of this life in the light of the judgment. "Love not the world."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—*The cry for a sign.* It strikes us as somewhat remarkable that the contemporaries of our Lord should be inquiring a sign; for was not his work teeming with signs and wonders? Plainly the demand of the sceptical people, and the response with which Christ met it, give us another view of miracles and their relation to the evidences of Christianity from that commonly held by apologists.

I. MEN DESIRE A CONVINCING SIGN OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. This desire is not in itself wrong or unreasonable. To believe without sufficient evidence is a symptom of weakness, and such a faith is only a superstition. It is not a mark of pride, but a simple consequence of loyalty to truth, that we should seek for good grounds on which to establish our convictions. If this were all that the people demanded, our Lord could not have met the cry for a sign with the anger which we see he displayed against it. But it is evident that the Jews were not satisfied with the signs Christ offered. They wanted a "sign from heaven"—some flaring portent that would compel conviction. Is there not a tendency in the present day to look away from the only sources of truth that are available, and to demand impossible grounds of conviction?

II. THE DEMAND FOR A SIGN MAY SPRING FROM AN UNWORTHY CHARACTER. It is most unjust to accuse doubters of exceptional wickedness. Many people have no doubts simply because they dare not face truth. They would be sceptics if they were not cowards. On the other hand, it cannot be maintained that scepticism is in itself an indication of sanctity. Now, Jesus tells us that the pure in heart are they who shall see God. But all men—doubters included—have lost the vision of God by their sin. Thus the whole faculty of discerning the spiritual has become dim. Further, an age of self-indulgence must be an age of aggravated spiritual blindness.

III. CHRIST WILL NOT SATISFY THE UNWORTHY DEMAND FOR A SIGN. 1. *He cannot.* With all reverence this must be affirmed. No portent can prove a spiritual truth to one who has not spiritual sight. You might as well expect the blare of a trumpet to reveal the beauty of a landscape to a blind man. 2. *He would not if he could.* Forced faith has no moral worth. Truth revealed to unprepared hearts is but as pearls

cast before swine. Abraham refuses the prayer of Dives that Lazarus, risen from the dead, should be sent to his brothers, telling the miserable man that no good would come of such an errand.

IV. CHRIST GIVES THE SIGN THAT IS REALLY NEEDED. He never disappoints the honest seeker after truth, although he does not always lead to truth by the expected path. The only truth of value is that which touches our hearts and consciences, and this is not thrust upon us by sheer authority, with threats of punishment if we will not accept it blindfold. That insolent and tyrannic ecclesiastical method is quite abhorrent to "the sweet reasonableness" of Jesus. His way is to bring a genuine proof to the awakened soul, and he compares this to the sign of Jonah. The preaching of Jonah convinced by reaching the consciences of the Ninevites. Christ's teaching, his life—above all, his death and resurrection—speak to our consciences. When these are responsive, they can perceive the weight of his claims.—W. F. A.

Ver. 6.—*Dangerous leaven.* It is astonishing to us that our Lord's disciples should have been so slow to understand the simplest metaphors employed in the teaching of their Master. When he speaks of leaven, they think of baker's bread! The fact that the evangelists describe this singular backwardness is a strong evidence of the truthfulness of the Gospel writings; for it is not to be supposed that such humiliating circumstances would have been invented or imagined by a later generation which regarded the apostles with the greatest reverence. The backwardness itself must have been one of the trials of Christ; his efforts to meet it and overcome it reveal his wonderful patience and perseverance. By such means he succeeds in bringing his warning lesson home to the dullest comprehension (vers. 11, 12).

I. THE CHURCH IS INFECTED WITH DANGEROUS LEAVEN. 1. *Evil influences in her midst.* The leaven is plunged into the meal; it cannot produce any effect until it is thus mixed up with what it is to influence. We have to beware, not only of entirely external dangers, but of such as are found in the very teaching and practices of Christian people. 2. *Subtle influences.* The leaven is almost invisible. There is at first but "a little leaven." Obscure, unobserved influences may be the causes of much serious harm. 3. *Spreading influences.* The growing power of the leaven, its marvellous capacity for propagating itself, makes it a serious thing to admit but a little. Sinful ideas tend to spread and permeate Christian society when once they are permitted to exist unchecked.

II. THE LEAVEN OF EVIL MAY COME FROM RESPECTED AUTHORITIES. The Pharisees were the professed saints of their day; the Sadducees were the party of the priesthood and of the national council. Yet both of these were spoken of by our Lord as sources of evil influence. We can with difficulty picture to ourselves the immense significance of his words. It is as though the mediæval Church were warned against the influence of the monks and priests; as though the Church of to-day were told that there was danger for her in the presence of the most pious-looking of her communicants and the most respected of her ministers. Surely here is a warning against being misled by appearances in religion.

III. THE LEAVEN MAY ASSUME VARIOUS FORMS. It is startling to meet this conjunction of Pharisees and Sadducees, because we know that the two parties were bitterly opposed to one another; but then we also know that they were brought into a sort o partnership in their common enmity to Jesus Christ. Now, both of them are represented as constituting the dangerous leaven. 1. *Pretentious piety.* This is one of the most dangerous of evil influences, because (1) it ensnares with a show of religion, and (2) it denies the true essence of religion. It is hypocrisy (Luke xii. 1). 2. *Worldly scepticism.* The doubt of the typical Sadducee was not the perplexity of the serious student of truth; it was the scoffing indifference of the man of the world who did not believe in the spiritual because his whole life was absorbed in the earthly.

IV. THE DANGER OF THE LEAVEN NECESSITATES A WATCHFUL ATTITUDE. "Take heed and beware." It is not enough to cultivate Christian graces. The servant of Christ must be a soldier as well as a husbandman. He must stand as a sentry challenging all suspicious thoughts and influences. He must exercise the policeman's office in arresting the dangerous disturbers of the peace and purity of his soul.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—17.—*The great confession.* Jesus had now reached a crisis in his ministry. Away from the scenes of his earlier labours, at the beautiful Roman colony by the foot of Mount Hermon, close to the famous altar of Pan, where the Jordan springs from the mountain-side, he suddenly called upon his disciples to give a definite expression of their thoughts concerning himself.

I. THE MOMENTOUS QUESTION. This was preceded by a less important inquiry—as to the various opinions of the world about Christ. Then the disciples were brought face to face with the question for themselves, "Whom say ye that I am?" We must be able to furnish an answer to this question. The whole weight and worth of the gospel hangs upon it. The special character of the gospel is that it is immediately concerned with its Founder. The Christian ethic and the Christian theory of the universe will neither of them redeem the world. Beneath and before all else comes the Person of Christ. To know him is to know the gospel. If he is not what he claims to be, all our faith rests on a delusion. But if his claims are true, all else is of secondary importance.

II. THE DIFFICULTY OF ANSWERING THIS QUESTION. The Jews were much perplexed. They could not but be impressed with the greatness of Christ, yet they failed to recognize his high claims. It would not have been surprising if the disciples also had been perplexed; indeed, many were troubled, and many forsook the great Teacher (John vi. 66). Jesus had not fulfilled the hopes of the people; the religious leaders of the nation had definitely rejected him; he was now in voluntary exile, deserted by the crowds that had once followed him with enthusiasm. If some of us find it difficult to believe in him to-day after his great work has been completed, and we see the fruits of it in history, is it wonderful that many felt the difficulty in his lifetime?

III. THE TRUTH CONFESSED. St. Peter does not hesitate or doubt for one moment. He knows that his Master is the Christ, the Son of God. His confession contains two ideas. 1. *The office of Christ.* The apostle saw that Jesus was the long-expected Messiah. This truth means to us that he is the Saviour of the world. 2. *The nature of Christ.* The apostle also saw that Jesus was "the Son of the living God." How far these words expressed a faith in the essential Divinity of Christ we cannot say. The Church was not very slow in perceiving that tremendous truth, for we find that the earliest heresy was not a denial of the Divinity, but a denial of the humanity, of our Lord.

IV. THE SECRET OF THE CONFESSION. How did the apostle come to see this great truth under the most unpropitious circumstances? Jesus says it was a revelation. We need not understand by that term any direct heavenly voice. The revelation was inward. Some such revelation is always needed. Until the eyes of our hearts are opened, we cannot perceive the true character and nature of Christ. In the spiritual world this is parallel to the fact of daily life that we can only understand a man when we are in sympathy with him.—W. F. A.

Ver. 18.—*The rock on which the Church is built.* This famous sentence, which is emblazoned in great letters of gold round the interior of the dome of St. Peter's at Rome, has been a centre of controversy in the Church for generations. It would be beside our present need to discuss the history of that controversy. Leaving out of account the angry arguments of polemical theology, let us see what positive truth our Lord is here teaching us; for too often the jewel of truth is lost by both parties in a quarrel while they are contending as to who has a right to the possession of it.

I. ST. PETER'S CONFESSION IS THE ROCK ON WHICH THE CHURCH IS BUILT. Accepting this idea as the most probable outcome of a fair exegesis of the passage, let us see what its real significance is. 1. *The Church is built on Christ.* He is its Author, its original Foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11), and its chief Corner-stone (Eph. ii. 20). When we abandon faith in Christ we forsake the grounds of our faith. 2. *The Messiahship and Divinity of Christ are essential to the stability of the Church.* These two facts were the contents of St. Peter's confession. The Church cannot rest on vague sentiments concerning Christ. Exact philosophical definitions may not be attainable; the history of theology shows that the effort to form them nearly wrecked the Church. But the great central truths themselves are essential. 3. *The confession of these truths is requisite in order that the Church may be firmly planted.* It looks as though our

Lord spoke of the confession as being itself the foundation. We must have faith in Christ before we can profit by him, and we must have courage to confess him if we would possess a robust Christian life.

II. THE CHURCH ON THIS ROCK WILL BE SECURE. 1. *It is built by Christ.* Therefore the superstructure will be sound as well as the foundation. Our Lord is ever at work on his Church. He can do nothing with those who will neither believe him nor confess him. But wherever he finds the faith and confession, he himself builds up the strong structure of a Christian character. 2. *It is assailed by evil.* The powers of hell attack the Church because she is their enemy; therefore the question of a sure foundation is of vital importance. The floods are sure to come and try the house. 3. *It cannot be overthrown.* This is a positive prediction of Christ's, and it ought to dispel our fear and confirm our faith. Of all he has predicted nothing has failed. He promised that the grain of mustard seed should become a great tree; and his promise has come true. His assurance that nothing shall overthrow the Church built on the true confession of faith in him has proved to be correct for nearly twenty centuries. 4. *Its security is shared by those who confess the faith it embodies.* St. Peter's name is justified by his rock-like confession. The Christian character is confirmed by a loyal faith and a bold confession. The spirit of St. Peter's confession is typical of the Christian heroism that can withstand all attacks of doubt or opposition.—W. F. A.

Vers. 21—23.—*A terrible anti-climax.* Immediately after receiving his apostles' confession of his claims Jesus began to tell them of his approaching death. He wanted to be assured first that they had the faith which would stand the test of this announcement. Then he delayed no longer in confiding to them the dark secret which oppressed his own heart. The result was a terrible anti-climax. St. Peter, who had been treated with the greatest honour, is seen for the time being as only an incarnation of the tempter.

I. THE SAD ANNOUNCEMENT. Jesus now for the first time distinctly declares his approaching rejection by the rulers, his death, and his subsequent resurrection. 1. *The facts predicted.* (1) Rejection. This looked like utter failure, for Christ came to be the King and Deliverer of Israel. (2) Death. This would put the crowning stroke on the apparent failure. It would also add a new horror, for "all that a man hath will he give for his life." (3) Resurrection. This should completely transform the prospect. But the final announcement does not seem to have been understood or at all taken in by the disciples. 2. *The foresight.* Jesus saw what lay before him, yet he set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem. His foresight meant much to him. (1) Additional distress. God mercifully veils the future from us. If we saw the coming evil with certainty it would be very difficult to face it. But Jesus walked with the shadow of the cross on his path. (2) Courage. 3. *The prediction.* Why did Jesus tell his disciples of this awful future? (1) To prepare them for it, and prevent the disappointment of false hopes. (2) To claim their sympathy.

II. THE FOOLISH REBUKE. St. Peter's conduct is culpably officious. He lays hold of Christ with undue familiarity, and even ventures to rebuke his Master. His action, however, is true to the well-known impetuosity of his character, and it reveals very natural traits. 1. *Intense affection.* The apostle loves his Master unwisely but greatly, with a love that is not sufficiently submissive, yet with one that is most intense. It is easy for cold-hearted people to blame the apostle. But they who do not approach his love for Christ are not the men to sit in judgment upon the devoted disciple. 2. *Elated self-confidence.* Jesus had just greatly commended St. Peter. It looks as though he were one of those unhappy people who lose their balance when they are too much praised. Such people have many a sad fall from glorious self-complacency to deepest humiliation. 3. *Sudden surprise.* The apostle did not speak deliberately. The astounding words of Christ started an ill-considered remark. Hasty words are not often weighty words.

III. THE STERN REPLY. 1. *Rebuffing a temptation.* The quick answer of Jesus shows how keenly he had felt the well-meant dissuasion of his friend, which had just chimed in with the cravings of his human nature. Here was a real temptation of the devil which must be faced and conquered! Jesus recognized it as a stumbling-block laid on his path. 2. *Unmasking an illusion.* The words were from St. Peter, but the

spirit of them was Satan's, and the keen conscience of Jesus at once assigned them to their true source. In an unguarded moment the apostle had let the tempter into his heart, had become but a tool of Satan. The character of the words reveal their origin, they have a savour of men about them. The common principles of men of the world are many of them directly counter to the will of God. Then, for all their innocent appearance, they are of a Satanic character.—W. F. A.

Ver. 24.—*The great condition.* The heart-searching truths of this verse are too often neglected in popular presentations of the gospel. We have a Christianity made easy as an accommodation to an age which loves personal comfort. Not only is this unfaithful to the truth, no part of which we have any right to keep back; it is most foolish and shortsighted. It prepares for a surprising disappointment when the inevitable facts are discovered; and it does not really attract. A religion of sweetmeats is sickening. There is that in the better nature of man which responds to the doctrine of the cross; it is the mistake of the lower method that it only appeals to the selfish desire of personal safety, and therefore does not awaken the better nature at all. Christ sets the example of the higher and truer method; he does not shun to set before us the dangers and difficulties of the Christian course. If we meet with them we cannot say we have not been warned.

I. CHRISTIANITY IS FOLLOWING CHRIST. It is not merely receiving certain blessings from him. If we think we are to enjoy the fruits of his work while we remain just as we were, we are profoundly mistaken. He does give us grace, the result of his life-work and atoning death. But the object of this grace is just that we may have strength to follow him. It is all wasted upon us and received quite in vain if we do not put it to this use. Now, the following of Christ implies three things. 1. *Imitating him.* 2. *Seeing him.* 3. *Obeying him.* He whose experience comprises these three things is a Christian; no one else is one.

II. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS CONDITIONED BY SELF-SURRENDER TO HIM. This is what he means by self-denial. He was not an ascetic, and he never required asceticism in his disciples; those who did not understand him accused him of encouraging an opposite mode of life. There is no merit in putting ourselves to pain for the mere sake of enduring the suffering. Christ will not be pleased if we approach him in agony because we have affixed a thumb-screw to our own person. It is possible to be very hard on one's body and yet to remain terribly self-willed. What Jesus requires is the surrender of our will to him—that we may not seek to have our own will, but submit to his will.

III. SELF-SURRENDER TO CHRIST LEADS TO BEARING THE CROSS FOR HIM. It is impossible to give ourselves up to Christ without suffering some loss or trouble. In early days the consequence might be martyrdom; in our own day it always involves some sacrifice. Now, the cross which the Christian has to bear is not inevitable trouble, such as poverty, sickness, or the loss of friends by death. These things would have been in our lot if we had not been Christians. They are our burdens, our thorns in the flesh. They are sent to us, not taken by us. But the cross is something additional. This is taken up voluntarily; it is in our power to refuse to touch it. We bear it, not because we cannot escape, but because it is a consequence of our following Christ; and the good of bearing it is that we cannot otherwise closely follow him. He, then, is the true Christian who will bear any cross and endure any hardship that is involved in loyally following his Lord and Master.—W. F. A.

Vers. 25, 26.—*The gain that is loss, and the loss that is gain.* Great confusion has been introduced into these verses in the Authorized Version by the rendering of the same Greek word as "life" in ver. 25, and "soul" in ver. 26. The Revisers have helped to a better understanding of the passage by translating the word "life" throughout. Christ was not speaking of the soul as we understand it, of the higher nature of man; but of life as opposed to the idea of being killed and so losing one's life.

I. SELF-SEEKING IS SELF-LOSING. Jesus is warning his disciples of the dangers and hardships of his service. Many will be tempted to shrink from the cross in order to save their lives. They are told that a cowardly unfaithfulness under persecution is not the way to save their lives. It is true a violent death may be thus avoided. But

what is the use of a life preserved at the cost of honour and fidelity? It is not really saved, for it is so degraded that it has become a worthless thing. Thus it is a wasted life, a lost life. The same is true to-day under other circumstances. The man who denies Christ for his own convenience lowers himself to the level of worthlessness. He who greedily grasps at his own pleasure to the neglect of higher interests so impoverishes his nature by his mean and narrow way of living that his life is really ruined. This is the case on earth. It will be more apparent in the next world, when Christ comes to "render unto every man according to his deeds" (ver. 27). Even in spiritual things, if a man's religion is purely selfish it will be of no use to him. If he thinks only of his own salvation, and nothing of the service of Christ and the benefit of his fellow-men, he will be lost. It is not the teaching of Christ that our great business is to save ourselves. Religious teachers are greatly to blame for inculcating this most unchristian notion. Christ comes to save us from ourselves; but this will not be effected by the cultivating of a habit of supreme self-seeking in religion. Such a habit is ruinous to all that is worthy in a man. Therefore ver. 26, which is often quoted in favour of a self-seeking religion, should be read in the light of ver. 25.

II. SELF-LOSING IS SELF-FINDING. This is the opposite to the principle just considered; it has a positive importance of its own that demands careful consideration. How is the paradox verified in experience? We must first of all call to mind the immediate circumstances our Lord had in view. His disciples were being warned of coming persecutions. Some of them would lose their lives in martyrdom. Yet then they would most truly find them, for they would be the heirs of life eternal, and would live on in the bright future. That is the first lesson of the words. But they go much further. What is true under persecution is true at all times. The martyr-temper is the Christian spirit. We gain the only life worth living on earth when we deny ourselves and embark on a career of unselfish service. The abandonment of selfish aims is the acquisition of heavenly treasures. There is a blessedness in the life of obedience and self-surrender that the selfish can never know. Happiness is not attained by directly aiming at it; it comes in as a surprise to him who is not seeking it when he is busy in unselfish service. Now, these lessons are driven home and clenched by the obvious truth of the following verse (ver. 26). What is the use of a world of wealth to a man who loses his life in acquiring it? The pearl-seeker who is drowned in the moment of clutching his gem is a supreme loser even while he is a gainer. Nothing will compensate a man for making shipwreck of his life by self-seeking.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—19.—*Peter's confession.* This renewed retirement of our Lord is best accounted for by his need of quiet. What was now to be done? Another Passover was coming round. To proclaim himself at Jerusalem was indeed certain death; and yet was not the hour for taking this step at last come? Filled with inward conflict, our Lord journeys on and on until he finds himself at the very edge of the land of Israel. But when his own mind is made up he at once communicates with the disciples, because it was necessary that those who were to be his witnesses should understand the state of matters and should willingly accompany him on the fatal journey to Jerusalem. And in asking them to declare frankly what they thought about him, he wished them to do this in presence of their remembrance of other and more generally received opinions, and feeling that the weight of authority was against them. With that generous outburst of affectionate trust which should ring through every creed, Peter exclaims, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord does not conceal his intense relief and keen satisfaction. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for this faith is wrought in thee not by mere logical inferences from my works, nor by weighing other men's opinions, but by that enlightenment which God produces and suffers never again to be obscured." In this divinely wrought conviction of Peter's our Lord finds at last the foundation-stone or solid rock on which the earthly building of his Church can be raised. Now for the first time does he introduce his disciples to the great idea that this divinely wrought power to see his nature and confess him is destined to form men into the most distinct and permanent of associations; that a new society is now begun in this little circle, a society, however, formed of those whom *God calls*, and who are distinguished from all others by their attachment to what is Divine, and by their being recipients of a Divine teaching. The

significance, therefore, of this moment cannot be exaggerated, though it has been misunderstood. When our Lord says, "On this rock will I build my Church," he introduces to the minds of his hearers a new idea. They see their future associates in the faith forming together an edifice or spiritual temple in which God will dwell. And they are assured that amidst the wreck of other societies this shall stand. The power of "Hades," "the unseen," that mysterious region into which all human things pass, is to have no power over the Church. This is the fact: while empires moulder into a mere memory, the Church renews herself from age to age, and is as living now as ever before. But that Christ should have predicted this, and at the very time when all seemed over with his hope of being received by Israel, seems almost as wonderful as the continuance of the Church itself. "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" —this certainly involves that Peter should have a position of the highest authority in the Church. And in point of fact, it was Peter who opened the gates of the kingdom to the Gentiles. This power is further explained in a form of speech common among the Jews, and which bore a perfectly definite meaning. The power to bind and loose was what we speak of as legislative power, power to introduce new laws and to repeal old ones. Such is the overwhelming return which our Lord makes to Peter for his confession. No confession can rival the first, or can bring the comfort, the relief, the hope which Peter's brought to the overburdened spirit of his Lord—no confession now made can seem to our Lord as the firm rock on which the Church may rise. And yet every acknowledgment must bring gratification to his spirit, and must be responded to by some recognition more or less distinct. Perhaps it is not easier for us than it was for Peter to come to a clear decision regarding the Person of Christ. Certainly there was a great weight of authority against Peter, but our own judgment is not free from the disturbing effect of similar influences. The verdict of the leaders of thought in our own day is almost unanimously against the distinctive claims of Christ. Christians, too, betray a consciousness that they are in a less secure and certain position than formerly, and are too careful to let it be seen they appreciate the difficulties of belief. There is all the louder call upon us to make our confession of Christ full, clear, hearty, and steadfast; to form an opinion for ourselves; so that we come to Christ with what he can accept as a fresh tribute, and not as a mere echo of some other people's confession. We see here that the difference between acknowledging him as a Prophet and acknowledging him as the Son of God is just the difference between faith and unbelief. In answer to Peter's "Thou art Christ," comes our Lord's "Thou art Peter." It is an instance of the fulfilment of his promise, "He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father;" but it is more than this. In recognizing who Jesus was Peter learned what his own character and his own prospects were. Now, for the first time, he saw the significance of his own name. It is so with every one. It is in the vision of Christ's true nature and purpose that a man awakens to a sense of his own worth and of the possibilities that lie before him. For you as for Peter he will mark out the proper work; he will give you a place as a living stone; he will impart to you every quality you need in the difficult circumstances of life and in the actual career that lies before you.—D.

Vers. 20—28.—*Necessity of the cross.* Peter's words pierced like a sharp thorn into the very heart of Christ, and roused as keen an indignation as his previous words had awakened gratitude. For the horror which our Lord saw in Peter's face as he announced the near approach of death reflected the horror he himself had passed through during those past days in which he had been making up his mind to die; the incapacity of Peter to understand that death should be the necessary step to glory tended to upset the balance of his own mind as well as to disclose to him the extreme difficulty there would be in persuading the world at large that a crucified King could be a King at all. Peter seemed for the moment to be the very embodiment of temptation, to be inspired by that very spirit of evil which had assailed him in the wilderness. Instead of a rock on which to found the Church, he had become a rock of offence. The words of reprimand were severe, but in the circumstances intelligible. Seeing, then, the unwillingness of the disciples to think of a Messiah who should not come with armed followers and all the pomp and circumstance of war, our Lord from this time forward spends much time in an endeavour to demonstrate the necessity of his

death, and to fix in their minds that in following him to Jerusalem they were going to see him die. Again and again we find him solemnly assuring them that he must be taken and put to death, and that he would rise again. And yet when he was crucified they were entirely disheartened, and had no expectation of his rising again. Our wonder at the small impression made by our Lord's words is lessened when we consider the originality of his conception of the Messiah's glory. Only by Divine illumination, he said, could Peter have known him to be the Christ, but even a higher Divine illumination was needed to teach him the doctrine of the cross. So clean counter to natural human belief is this law that the truest glory is in humiliation for others, that even now each one has to discover this law for himself, and, when he discovers it, thinks he alone has had it revealed to him. So difficult is it for us to comprehend that what the world needs for its regeneration more than the strong hand of a wise Ruler is the entrance into it, and the diffusion throughout it, of a meek and lowly spirit, of a righteous and God-fearing life. But our Lord assures us that not only for the Leader, but for the follower, this law holds good; those who would be with him in his glory must take his own path to it. The man who means to keep near Christ must not only deny himself one or two enjoyments or sinful indulgences, but must absolutely deny *himself*, must renounce self as an object in life, must give himself up as the enthusiastic physician gives himself up, regardless of all consequences to self, to the relief of his patients or to the advancement of science. You may say that the physician who does so does not deny himself, but gives expression to his highest and best self, and that is what our Lord means when he adds as his first proof of the truth of his law, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." So long as you make self your object, your end, and your centre, you are losing your life and your self; but when you are enabled to abandon self and to live for righteousness, for God, for Christ, for the community, you emerge into life eternal, you find your truest self. "And what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" This is one of those truths that need no demonstration, and yet are very difficult to act upon. To gain even a very small part of the world is so appreciable a gain, whereas the loss of the soul is so inappreciable often in the process, and it seems so easy to regain it, that we are tempted to act as if it were a very small matter. A third ground on which our Lord rests his injunction to follow him is laid down in the twenty-seventh verse. All permanent happiness is so bound up with character that he can only make men happy in proportion to their growth. The reward chiefly desired by every one who loves him is an increase of that love and a truer likeness to himself, and in eternity, as on earth, Christ and all who are like him, will find their glory in works of self-sacrificing compassion and helpful mercy. Vers. 27, 28: As far as can be gathered from the abbreviated form we have in the text, our Lord meant to say that the man who spent his life on self, and so lost his truest life, would find his mistake in the day when at Christ's second coming things are for ever arranged according to the principles he himself laid down and lived on in his first coming, and then, as if to answer the doubt whether such a day of true judgment should ever come, he goes on to say that the kingdom of heaven would, even in the lifetime of some standing there, be sufficiently manifested to make his Divine power clear to them.—D.

Vers. 1—4.—*The signs of the Messiah.* Coming into the borders of Magadan, after the miracles of the mountain in which he healed all manner of diseases, and miraculously feasted about eight thousand persons, Jesus encountered the Pharisees and Sadducees, who, sinking their sectarian differences for the time, agreed to tempt or test him by demanding a special sign of his Messiahship. Jesus declined to gratify them in this, appealing to the signs of the times which should be sufficient for them, and giving them himself a special sign. Let us consider, then—

I. THE SPECIAL SIGN WHICH THE PHARISEES SOUGHT. 1. *They sought a sign from heaven.* (1) This was clearly the sign of the Prophet Daniel (see Dan. vii. 9—14). The Pharisees then desired Jesus then and there to prove his Messiahship to them by appearing in the heavens as the Son of man in glory, and to establish a visible kingdom. (2) This is a true sign of the Messiah. Not only is it a favourite sign with the Jews, but one also which Jesus acknowledged. He commonly spoke of himself, in

manifest allusion to that very sign, as "the Son of man." But why, then, did he not gratify their expectations? The answer is: 2. *They sought that sign too soon.* (1) It is a sign of a second advent of Messiah. A second advent there must needs be, for Messiah is described in prophecy in two distinct characters, which he could not fulfil at one and the same time. He is to come in the character of a Priest, to make atonement for sin, in humiliation, suffering, and death. He is also to come in the character of a King, in glory and immortality. (2) In the first of these characters Jesus had then appeared. He must first suffer before he can enter into his glory, and therefore, also, before he can be revealed in his glory (cf. Gen. iii. 15; Deut. xviii. 15—19; Ps. xvi. 8—10; xxii.; Isa. l. 5, 6; liii.; Dan. ix. 24; Luke xxiv. 26). (3) In the second character he promises in due time to appear (cf. ch. xxiv. 29—35; xxvi. 64—68; Rev. i. 7; xiv. 14). And in this character accordingly he is expected by his disciples (cf. Acts i. 11; 1 Thess. i. 10; iv. 14—17; 2 Thess. i. 7—10).

II. THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES TO WHICH JESUS APPEALED. 1. *Those connected with his personal advent.* (1) At the period of his birth there was a general expectation. The weeks of Daniel were fast running out within which Messiah was to be cut off (see Dan. ix. 23—27). He must be born a considerable time before the date of his Passion. Gentiles then shared in the expectation of the Jews. (2) His birth was itself a miracle. He was born of a virgin, and in the house and lineage of David. This was according to the requirement of the first promise in Eden, that he should be the "Seed of the woman," and of that remarkable place in Isaiah where a virgin of the house of David was to bring forth a son, who was to be distinguished as Immanuel (see Gen. iii. 15; Isa. vii. 14; ch. i. 23). (3) That birth was also attended by miracles. The annunciation to the Virgin by Gabriel corresponded to that made to Manoah's wife concerning the birth of Samson, who was a type of Christ (cf. Judg. xiii. 2—5; Luke i. 26—35). The wonderful birth was then celebrated by angels, who appeared to the shepherds; and by a star seen by the Wise Men in the East (cf. Numb. xxiv. 17; ch. ii. 2; Rev. xxii. 16; Luke ii. 9—14). 2. *Those connected with his public ministry.* (1) Foremost amongst these was the miracle at his baptism, when he was about to enter upon that public ministry (ch. iii. 16, 17). (2) This was followed up by the testimony of the Baptist. That testimony could not be impeached. The Baptist was authenticated as a prophet of God by the miracles connected with his birth (see Luke i. 5—22). In that character he was acknowledged by his nation. He announced himself, as the angel had designated him to be, the harbinger of Messiah. In that capacity he pointed out Jesus to his disciples as the "Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). (3) This wonderful character Jesus was able to sustain. He wrought the miracles which the prophets said Messiah was to work. He did everything and suffered everything which the prophets said Messiah was to do and suffer in his advent as a Priest. (4) The very wickedness of the generation that "tempted him, and proved him, and saw his works," was a sign of the times (cf. Isa. vi. 9—12; ch. xiii. 14, 15). And to all but themselves is their obstinacy in rejecting Jesus, together with their long-continued sufferings, a proof that Jesus is the Christ; for these things he foretold (cf. ch. xxiii. 34—39; Luke xxi. 22—24).

III. THE SPECIAL SIGN WHICH JESUS GAVE. 1. *He gave them a sign from the earth.* (1) They sought a sign from heaven. The sign they sought, as we have seen, was that of the Prophet Daniel. That he gave them was the sign of the Prophet Jonah (cf. ch. xii. 39). (2) They sought the sign of the kingdom of glory. He gave them the sign of the priesthood and suffering. The burial presupposes the death, and the death the suffering, of Messiah. These things he afterwards plainly showed to his disciples (see ver. 21). 2. *This sign best suited a wicked generation.* (1) It fulfilled the sacrifices of the Law. Those sacrifices were ostensibly to make atonement for sin. But in what sense? Ceremonially and typically. Morally they could not remove sin. To suppose so would be to outrage common sense. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Their inability to do this was acknowledged, for it was necessary to repeat the sacrifices. In the light of the great sin-sacrifice of Calvary, all is plain. (2) It fulfilled the sacrifice of Isaac. In the daily prayers read in the synagogue we have this: "אב המלך, O most merciful and gracious King! we beseech thee to remember and to look back on the covenant made between the divided offerings, and let the recollection of the sacrificial binding of the only son appear before thee, in

favour of Israel." But what sense is there in this unless the "sacrificial binding" of Isaac be accepted as typical of the only Son of God, the Seed of Isaac, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed? (3) The sign of a sufficient sacrifice for the expiation of sin is, of all others, to be desired by a wicked generation. But were the Lord to have answered their foolish prayer, and to have appeared without a sin sacrifice, as their King in judgment, they would be the first to be destroyed in the fires of his anger. 3. *Jesus rested his claims upon this sign.* (1) He predicted that he "must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed." Within a year this was literally fulfilled. (2) But now comes the testing point. He added, "and the third day be raised up" (see ver. 21). So about a year earlier he explained this sign of the Prophet Jonah to certain scribes and Pharisees. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (see ch. xii. 40). (3) This also was fulfilled to the letter. No event of history is better authenticated than the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And if the evidence that Jesus is the Christ will not convince the Jews, they cannot be convinced by evidence; they can only be convinced by judgment. The sign from heaven will convince them.—J. A. M.

Vers. 5—12.—*The leaven of error.* After an encounter with certain Pharisees and Sadducees at Magadan, Jesus warned his disciples against their teaching. This is not written for their sakes alone, but also for our admonition. From Luke's account we may infer that Jesus likewise warned the people (see Luke xii. 1). Every age has its Pharisees and Sadducees, and it becomes us to note—

I. THE ERRORS AGAINST WHICH WE ARE WARNED. 1. *Those which distinguish the Pharisee.* (1) He plumes himself upon his orthodoxy and superior sanctity. The ancient Pharisee was scrupulous in observing the ritual of the elders, and refused to eat with sinners. Hence his name, from the Hebrew word פרש, "to separate." But the reputation of orthodoxy is no security against error. The apostate Greek Church is called "orthodox;" and her Romish sister claims infallibility. These and their kindred are the Pharisees of our times. (2) He is zealous for Church traditions. The ancient Pharisee pretended that his traditions came to Moses on Mount Sinai together with the Law, immediately from God, and concluded that they were of equal authority. Several of these traditions are mentioned in the Gospels; but a vast number more may be seen in the Talmud. Corresponding to these are the "apostolical traditions" and papal "decretals" of the Romanists. (3) Such authority is worthless, to say the least. For any simple story passing through half a dozen hands will be found to receive so many new complexions and additions, and to suffer so many distortions and omissions, that the original narrator could scarcely recognize it. Church traditions are in this respect no better than others. Perversion and distortion could only be prevented by plenary inspiration continued throughout all the links of transmission. (4) But it is worse than worthless. The ancient Pharisee set his tradition above the Law of God by making it the interpreter of the Law, and thus by it the Law was made void (cf. ch. xv. 1—9; Luke xi. 39—42). The vicious effects of the traditions of our modern Pharisee upon the Gospel corresponds. What single truth of God is there that has not been distorted by this process? 2. *Those which distinguish the Sadducee.* (1) The Sadducee of old derived from Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus Sochæus, who lived about three hundred years B.C. Antigonus, in his lectures, taught the duty of serving God from filial love and fear rather than in a servile manner, whence Sadoc concluded that there are no rewards after this life. His followers proceeded to deny the existence of a spiritual world, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the providence of God (see ch. xxii. 23; Acts xxiii. 8). They differed little from the ancient Epicureans. (2) Sadduceeism is not limited to ancient times. We have it still under the names atheism, deism, agnosticism, positivism, rationalism, erastianism. They are, in many respects, the opposite of Phariseeism. The one is the reaction of the other. Hence they are associated evermore. (3) As the Pharisee boasts superior piety, so does the Sadducee affect superior intelligence. Sadduceeism is fashionable through the concessions of ignorance to this affectation. Herod was the head of the Sadducees in Galilee. The "leaven of the Sadducees" is otherwise described as the "leaven of

Herod" (cf. Mark viii. 15). Herod's courtiers, of course, were Sadducees. The conceited amongst the vulgar would sympathize with boasted intelligence, that they might, in turn, be credited with an intelligence which they did not possess. 3. *Those common to both.* (1) Failure to discern the signs of the times. The prophecies of Scripture were lost upon them. The events of providence were to them without significance. Their intelligence went no further than discerning the face of the sky. With all their boasted piety and affectation of sagacity, Pharisees and Sadducees were alike in this condemnation. Note: The neglect of the study of prophecy is neither creditable nor innocent. (2) Opposition to the truth of God. As Pilate and Herod became friends in their hostility to Christ, so did the Pharisees and Sadducees sink their differences to oppose him. However fiercely errors may wrangle together, they will evermore combine against the truth of God. (3) Herein the Sadducee is open to the same impeachment of hypocrisy as the Pharisee. Pretence in devotion is the hypocrisy of the Pharisee; yet he opposes Christ, who is the impersonation of goodness. Pretence of a free and impartial search after truth is the hypocrisy of the Sadducee; yet he also opposes Christ, who is the impersonation of truth.

II. THE NECESSITY FOR THE ADMONITION. 1. *Error is like leaven, subtle in its influence.* (1) As the "kingdom of heaven," in the parable, "is like unto leaven," so is the kingdom of hell. Many interpret the parable to describe the subtle working of error in the lump of the Church, rather than the secret working of the truth in the lump of the world (cf. ch. xiii. 33; 1 Cor. v. 6; Gal. v. 9). (2) Its subtlety lies in its hypocrisy. "Think not that false doctrine will meet you face to face, saying, 'I am false doctrine, and I want to come into your heart.' Satan does not go to work in that way. He dresses up false doctrine like Jezebel. He paints her face, and tires her head, and tries to make her like truth" (Anon.). (3) Christians are not proof against this subtlety. They are often such as have no great forecast for this world. Here the disciples "forgot to take bread." Mark says they had only one loaf in the ship (Mark viii. 14). In nothing is the veracity of the sacred writers more plainly seen than in the unsparing fidelity with which they record the proofs of their own infirmity. Their very simplicity would expose them to the subtlety of error. It was therefore needful to warn them. (4) In the false concern of the disciples concerning the bread, we see already a Pharisaic care for externals, and a Sadducean forgetfulness of the supernatural. "It is because we took no bread." Men blame themselves most for carelessness in externals, which is just that in which God blames them least. We may blame ourselves for a forgetfulness for which God does not blame us, while he blames us for a forgetfulness for which we blame not ourselves. They did not remember the miracle of the loaves. If through thoughtlessness we come into straits, even then we may trust Christ to bring us out of them. The experience of the disciple is an aggravation to the sin of his distrust. (5) For lack of faith it is easy to fall into errors of doctrine. "Why reason ye among yourselves?" We waste much precious time in profitless reasonings. Reasonings are profitless when they are apart from Christ. "O ye of little faith." There are degrees of faith. Little faith may be the germ of great faith. Want of faith is accompanied by want of quick spiritual discernment. 2. *The influence of error is demoralizing.* (1) It makes the Pharisee a hypocrite. The ancient Pharisee, with all his affectation of sanctity, was but self-righteous; he was proud, unjust, selfish, and worldly. The semblance of piety was the mark of wickedness. The modern Pharisee is like him. (2) As superstition demoralizes the Pharisee, so does scepticism demoralize his complement. When the restraints of belief are removed, the rein is thrown over the neck of appetite and passion and every propensity of the evil heart. Extremes meet. (3) Creed has greater influence upon temper and conduct than men are commonly aware of. Doctrines act in the soul like leaven; they *assimilate* the whole spirit to their own nature. False doctrine is like evil leaven souring the temper, and swelling and inflating with pride. Unsound faith will never beget sound practice. Zeal for purity of doctrine is essential to godliness. (4) Error tends to blasphemy. "It is because we have brought no bread." The disciples here judged unworthily of Christ, viewing him through their own low medium of unbelief. Men are prone to make themselves their standard for Christ rather than making him their standard. As we can view Christ only in our thoughts, the spiritual alone can think justly of him. 3. *The issues of error are*

disastrous. (1) Christ cannot abide with perversity. After suitably replying to the Pharisees and Sadducees at Magadan, "he left them, and departed" (ver. 4). A sinner abandoned by the only Saviour is in a melancholy case. Thereupon he warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees, viz. lest it should land them in a similar state of abandonment. (2) Christ separated himself from them by crossing the sea. Was not this action parabolic? Did it not suggest that "great gulf fixed" by which the righteous are for ever separated from the wicked (see Luke xvi. 26)? (3) The caution to "take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" suggests that their doctrine is especially pernicious, like poisoned leaven. The disciples should beware of any doctrine coming through such hands. "Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (see Rev. xviii. 4).—J. A. M.

Vers. 13—20.—*The true confession.* "Who's who?" This is, generally speaking, a question of very little consequence. When the "Son of man" is concerned, it is of infinite moment. Everlasting issues turn upon the manner in which it is answered. From this important text we learn—

I. THAT THE FAITH WHICH IS HUMAN IS UNCERTAIN. 1. *It may take colour from the distraction of guilt.* (1) "Some say John the Baptist." So said Herod. He has murdered the Baptist (cf. ch. xiv. 1—12). Herod's courtiers would say as Herod said. (2) Herod had not heard of Christ before. Some men never concern themselves with the claims of Jesus until conscience alarms them. (3) Such alarms will come. They come in visitations of judgment—death-bed experiences. (4) The faith so excited is too often uncertain. 2. *It may be influenced by the spirit of the world.* (1) "Some say Elijah." For Elijah was promised as the forerunner of Christ (see Mal. iv. 5, 6). And the time for the advent of Messiah had arrived (see Gen. xlix. 10; Dan. ix. 25). (2) But why say "Elijah" rather than "Messiah"? The spirit of the world blinded them. They expected a secular king. They were too materialistic to see that John Baptist had come "in the spirit and power of Elijah." They now confounded Christ with an Elijah of their own devising, and missed him. In the mists of the world the spiritual Jesus is still fatally missed. (3) They confounded the advents. They are two. Messiah was to come in humiliation. He was also to come in glory. They looked for the glorious appearing to be heralded by Elijah in person. They failed to discern the Christ in his suffering. Yet the advents are intimately related. Those only who confess him in his sufferings can share in his glory. 3. *It may be distorted by the vanity of reason.* (1) "Some say Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." The doctrine of metempsychosis, transmigration, or passing of the soul from one body into another, was accepted among the Jews (cf. ver. 14; ch. xiv. 2; John ix. 2). (2) This doctrine largely entered into the Pharisees' notion of the resurrection. To them the question of the Sadducees would be a real puzzle, which Jesus answered to the astonishment of both (see ch. xxii. 23—33). (3) Herod, though a Sadducee, yet favoured this Pharisaic notion. In this he was inconsistent. But what of that? Unbelief is inconsistent evermore under the excitements of conscience.

II. THAT THE TRUE FAITH OF CHRIST IS A REVELATION FROM GOD. 1. *In its doctrine.* (1) "But whom say ye that I am?" The disciples of Jesus should have it. They had the best opportunity of judging. (2) What, then, was their confession? "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Here Jesus was identified as the Messiah of the nation's hope. His Divinity also was recognized. (3) But this confession had been made before. After the stilling of the storm, "they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (ch. xiv. 33). Nathanael's confession was still earlier (see John i. 49). And still later we have another remarkable confession (see John vi. 69). (4) The disciples of Jesus were, several of them, disciples of John; and from John they had this testimony concerning Jesus (see John i. 35—42). 2. *In its experience.* (1) In this confession of Peter there is a new element, and an element too of great importance; for it had a special commendation. The earlier confessions were more speculative. This was experimental; from the very heart. (2) Miracles cannot carry conviction to the heart. No effort of reason can give it. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto

thee." (3) It is immediately from God. "No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit."

III. THAT HAPPY IS HE THAT CONFESSES CHRIST FROM THE HEART. 1. *He is a living stone in the living temple.* (1) Simon, at his call, received this patronymic (see John i. 42). Literally, *Peter* is a "stone;" metaphorically it is *stability, strength.* The change of name suggests change of nature, or conversion (cf. Gen. xxxii. 28). (2) The firmness of the rock belonged not to Peter in respect to his mental temper (see ch. xxvi. 69; Gal. ii. 11). (3) It belonged to him in connection with his faith. He had the patronymic in anticipation of his confession; for when he made it Jesus said, "Thou art Peter," *q.d.* now thou hast merited thy name. Heart-faith is the principle of Christian firmness. (4) Whoever has the faith of Peter thereby becomes himself a Peter—a living stone. Peter himself witnesses to this (see 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). Translate this figure, and what does it import? 2. *He is founded on the Rock of Ages.* (1) This Rock is not Peter. *Petros* does not signify "a rock" otherwise than as a stone is a rock. *Stone,* not *rock,* is the proper meaning of that term. *Petra* is the name for the living rock. On the *petra* the Church is built. (2) Peter is accordingly found amongst the other apostles, and together with them also the prophets, as one of the many foundation-stones resting upon the Rock (see Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14). (3) Christ, who is the Foundation (see Acts iv. 11, 12; 1 Cor. iii. 11), is also the Builder of his Church. In his hand every stone has its proper place and fitting. 3. *His salvation is secured.* (1) "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." In ancient times the gates of fortified cities were used to hold councils in, and they were usually strong places. This expression means that neither the counsels nor strength of Satan can prevail against the truth of this confession, nor against the Church that is founded on it. (2) Hades is the abode of disembodied spirits, and death is the gate or entrance into that abode. But death does not prevail against the living Church. Its members die, but others take their places. (3) Neither does death prevail against any living member of the Church to remove him out of it. For death does but translate him from that part of the Church which is militant to that other part which is triumphant. For the one true Church of Christ is catholic to the universe and to the ages. "Hell hath no power against faith; faith hath power for heaven."

IV. SIGNALLY BLESSED IS HE THAT IS FOREMOST IN THIS CONFESSION. 1. *Peter had the honour of the keys.* (1) Keys were anciently a common symbol of authority; and presenting the keys was a form of investing with authority; and these were afterwards worn as a badge of office (see Isa. xxii. 22). Peter's authority was to open the gate of faith to the world. (2) He accordingly first preached the gospel to the Jew, on the memorable Day of Pentecost (see Acts ii. 41). He first preached the gospel to the Gentiles also (see Acts x. 44—47; xv. 7). (3) In this honour Peter stood alone. In the nature of the case he could have no successor. In the preaching of the gospel to Jew and Gentile his successors are counted by millions; but in being the first to preach it he has no successor. 2. *He had the power of binding and loosing.* (1) "The term of loosing and binding was customarily applied by Jews to a decision about doctrines or rites, establishing which were lawful and unlawful. Thus of many articles, it is said, 'The school of Shammai, which was the stricter, bindeth it; the school or followers of Hillel looseth it'" (Lightfoot). (2) This Peter was to do *authoritatively,* by plenary inspiration, and therefore so as to be ratified and confirmed in heaven. And in this accordingly Peter took the initiative, declaring the terms of salvation when he first used his keys. (3) But beyond this he had no distinction from the other apostles, who were also inspired authoritatively to set forth these terms. The question which Peter answered was addressed to the whole company of the apostles, "Whom do *ye* say that I am?" and Peter answered it in their name, or as their representative (cf. John xx. 21—23). (4) In this the apostles have no successors. Plenary inspiration has ceased with them. The fruits of that inspiration come down to us in the New Testament canon. To this we have our one and sole appeal. 3. *Every foremost confessor has his honour.* (1) The martyr has his crown. He has his conspicuous place in the better resurrection (see Rev. ii. 10; xx. 4—6). (2) Superior goodness will be signally recognized (see Dan. xii. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42).—J. A. M.

Vers. 21—24.—*Christian self-denial.* After the noble confession of Peter Jesus

"began to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer." This intelligence roused all the devil in Peter, so that he took that Blessed One whom he had just acknowledged to be the "Son of the living God," and began to rebuke him. Simon was not innocent of selfishness in his concern for the life of his Lord, for he shrewdly concluded that the servants might suffer with the Master. Jesus strongly resented this evil spirit of the world, and urged the absolute necessity of self-denial.

I. SELF-DENIAL IS REQUIRED BY OUR RELATION TO GOD. 1. *The will of God is the creature's law.* (1) Ether expands, flame ascends, water finds its level, the blade of grass pushes sunward. Theories may be hazarded to explain these things, but the theories will need explanation. Sooner or later we come back upon the principle that the will of God is the creature's law. (2) Man is no exception. His intellect, conscience, affections, will, are as truly creatures of God as the instincts of animals, the habits of plants, or the properties of matter. (3) God does not coerce the human will, but he gives us a law with sanctions. The very superiority of our endowments should influence our heart to love and serve him to the limit of our ability. 2. *Yet our inclinations cross the will of God.* (1) Originally this was not so. We were created in innocency and uprightness. Our senses let in the evidences of the power, wisdom, and goodness of our Creator. Our intellects were filled with admiration of his perfections; our hearts glowed with love to him; our obedience was loyal and delightful. (2) But in an evil hour this Eden was blighted, and we became earthly, sensual, devilish. 3. *Therefore now the necessity for self-denial.* (1) Without it we cannot regain the forfeited favour of God. Worldliness must be fought and conquered. The flesh with its affections and lusts must be crucified. Waywardness must be resisted. (2) Without self-denial that favour cannot be retained. Let the duty of reproving sin be neglected because it is unpleasant, and the relish for the worship of God will go, and his service will degenerate into formality. Let the duty of giving bountifully to the cause of God and humanity be restrained because the love of gain is pleasant, and the life of God will languish and expire.

II. SELF-DENIAL IS REQUIRED BY OUR RELATION TO MAN. 1. *The human race is one great family.* (1) Polygenists should consider the striking differences in persons confessedly of the same nation and race, and how they might be aggravated by the influence of climate, diet, and habits of life extended over many generations. The same class of dog that in the tropics will grow a thin covering of hair will in the arctic regions grow a thick coat of wool. Let the experiment be fairly made with the negro, and he will flourish in any climate. Let him not be suddenly removed from one extreme of climate to another; but let him pass through gradations in a series of generations so as to give the powers of adaptation a chance. (2) Developmentarians who trace the American Indian to the broad-nosed simian of the New World, the African to the Troglodytic stock, and the Mongolian to the orang, should consider that no two tribes of men differ as the orang and chimpanzee. (3) Moses ought to know what he was writing about, living as he did within a few generations of the origin of our race. If the accepted chronology may be taken as correct, he was contemporary with men who were contemporary with Abraham, and Abraham was contemporary with men who remembered Noah, and Methuselah was at once contemporary with Noah and Adam. Could Moses have imposed on the men of his generation a fanciful account of the origin of their race which the traditions of every family might be presumed to contradict? (4) Sin, not science, is the true origin of polygenism. Sin is dissocializing. It expels brotherly love, generates hatred, variance, emulation, strife, sedition. It originates wars and tyrannies. 2. *The necessities of the family call for self-denial.* (1) Some of these are physical. Should not our luxuries minister to the necessities of the hungry and naked and homeless (see Jas. ii. 15, 16; 1 John iii. 17)? (2) Some are spiritual. What is done for the heathen abroad and at home? For the street Arab? For the inhabitant of the mansion who habitually neglects the means of grace? Do we give money? Do we give personal service to Church work, which is more valuable than money? (3) The temper of the world will tax our self-denial. Meet a hypochondriac, and he will weary you; but you may release yourself by asking after the health of his soul. The subject is unpalatable to the impenitent, but without encountering resentments we cannot clear our consciences of the blood of souls.

III. SELF-DENIAL IS REQUIRED BY THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST. 1. *He stooped to the form of a servant.* (1) Born in a stable; cradled in a manger; associated with poverty. (2) But who is this? The King of glory! (3) Can the sticklers for precedence be the servants of this great Exemplar? How small in his great presence are the artifices of pride! How contemptible is borrowed greatness! 2. *He exercised himself with fasting.* (1) At the entrance upon his ministry he fasted in the wilderness as our Exemplar. If we would be successful in our spiritual conflicts we should in our measure follow him here. (2) In this age of wisdom men see no reason in fasting, and yet here is a kind of devil that will not depart without faith; and here is a kind of unbelief that will not go out but by prayer and fasting. 3. *He took up his own cross.* (1) He went to Jerusalem to suffer. There he "suffered many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes." The false accusation, the shame, the spitting, the scourge. (2) There, at Jerusalem, he literally carried his cross. On it he was "killed." (3) And every man has his cross to lift and carry, and perhaps on it to be killed for Christ's sake. It is not his place to rebuke Jesus for bringing him to it, but, when he finds it, to lift it and shame the devil.—J. A. M.

Vers. 25—28.—*Profit and loss.* As the time of the brief ministry of Jesus drew to its close, he began to show his disciples how he must go to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed, and rise again the third day. The sombre part of this anticipation was a terrible shock to the strong Jewish prejudices of Peter; and he lost sight of the glorious element of the resurrection. So is prejudice blind evermore. He had the presumption to take Jesus to task, and stoutly protested against any such issue. For this temerity Peter merited a terrible rebuke from Christ, who, after administering it, insisted upon self-denial and cross-lifting as essential to his discipleship. Then he proceeded to reason and expostulate in the words of the text.

I. WHAT IS THE GAIN? THE WORLD. 1. *Not the empire of the universe.* (1) "The whole world," in the largest sense, includes not only this globe, but the sun, the planets, and the moons of this solar system; and, moreover, all the firmaments of such systems within the searching power of telescopes and beyond into immensity. (2) The proprietorship of the world in this large sense belongs to God alone. Such a sceptre could be wielded only by the Infinite. 2. *Not the empire of this earth.* (1) Alexander the Great is said to have "conquered the world," and then to have "wept because he had not another world to conquer." Yet was that empire of Alexander but a small portion of the globe after all. And instead of conquering the other world of his own mind, his evil passions conquered him. (2) The Romans were said to be "masters of the world," but there were barbarians beyond they could never subdue. There were vast continents they never knew. (3) The British empire is the most extensive that the sun has seen. Yet are we far from possessing the monopoly of the globe. Universal empire, in this sense, is still reserved for the proper Man. 3. *All the pleasures of the worldling.* (1) In his enjoyment of all *natural* endowments. Health of body; symmetry of proportions; vigour of mind; hilarity of spirits. (2) All *accidental* advantages. The inheritance of wealth, of title, of position. (3) All opportunities of *animal* indulgence. Luxuries of the table—choice wines, rare fruits—all in profusion. Every conceivable gratification for the appetite and passion. (4) All opportunities for *intellectual* gratification. A taste cultivated to appreciate the finest poetry, the most exquisite music, the noblest eloquence, consummate painting and sculpture, and refinements of art, together with all these things. 4. *But hold, the colouring is too high!* (1) Who can have all this with religion? Can it be all indulged if the claims of religion are respected? (2) But who can have all this without religion? For are there not punitive sequences bound up with indulgence? (*a*) Health will not abide it. (*b*) Capacity is limited, and to surcharge is to produce revulsion and disgust. (*c*) Conscience will have its reckoning. (*d*) Fear will intrude with thoughts of the coming of the "Son of man in the glory of his Father with his angels" to "reward to every man according to his deeds." It will bring alarmingly near the judgment in the doom of death.

II. WHAT IS THE LOSS? THE SOUL. 1. *Its greatness is seen in its achievements.* (1) Those of the astronomer. The calculation of the Nautical Almanac. The discovery of the planet Neptune. Light thrown upon chronology. (2) Those of the chemist and electrician. (3) Those of the engineer. (4) What a loss when such great powers

are prostituted, wasted, blighted, damned! 2. *It is evident in its capability of God.* (1) Powers to contemplate his being and attributes; his government and his claims. (2) Enjoying his friendship. Reciprocating his love. Working out his purposes. (3) Hoping in his promises of heaven. (4) But all this capability is capability also of suffering. Awful to the sinner is the very justice of his judgment. Thoughts of the being and attributes of an infinite Enemy. How terrible are the fires of his wrath! 3. *It is seen in God's estimate.* (1) He framed the creation for man (see Ps. viii.). (2) He gave himself for man. Became incarnate in our nature. In that nature suffered and died for us. (3) Carried our nature into heaven. There it is exalted above all principality. (4) In it he will come forth "in the glory of his Father with his angels." (5) The distance between heaven's rapturous height and hell's horrible depth is the measure of God's estimate of man.

III. WHAT IS THE PROFIT? 1. *For what do you barter your soul?* (1) "All that is in the world" is soon summed up. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father" (1 John ii. 16). (2) But what have we here? (*a*) *Sensuality.* Wine. Women. (*b*) *Covetousness.* Gain by meanness. Gain by fraud. Gain by oppression. (*c*) *Ambition.* The esteem of the deceived. Or the esteem of the vain. What does it profit? 2. *What is the profit when life is spent?* (1) What would a damned soul give for the opportunity to retrace his steps? (2) But life is spent before a man is dead. What does the world profit when a man outlives its pleasures—when his energy is spent? 3. *What must we sacrifice for the soul?* (1) Not the world, in its *use.* (2) We must sacrifice the world in its *abuse.* All *sin* must go. (3) *Life* must be sacrificed if necessary. But then "to die is gain."—J. A. M.

Ver. 4.—*The sign of Jonas.* There are many indications of the persistency with which our Lord was worried and hindered by a hostile party from among the Pharisees. They were ever trying new devices for entangling him. They hoped to nonplus him; or to get him to try something in which he would fail, or to say something which they could turn into an accusation. On this occasion the Pharisaic party united with the Galilæan Sadducees (who may be the same as the Herodians) in what seemed a clever scheme. They were to plead that such miracles as he wrought could not prove his Divine claim, because they were all susceptible of natural explanations. They were to say that, if he meant them to believe in him, he must do some really wonderful thing—make thunder in a clear sky, as Samuel did (1 Sam. xii. 18), or bring fire from heaven, as Elijah did (1 Kings xviii. 38). Of course, they intended the people to hear them put this test, and they would make use of his refusal as proof of his inability. Our Lord did refuse. He understood the temper and needs of his time far better than they did; and if *they* wanted manifest signs from heaven, the people did not; or if they did, such signs were not really best for them. What would most help to awaken men was the mystery of his death and resurrection. That was the true sign of his *spiritual* being and mission. These Pharisees might take that sign. It was foreshadowed in the story of Jonah. It was all they would get. They must do the best they could with it.

I. THE SIGN OF JONAS WAS INTENDED TO PUZZLE. Those who knew nothing of the spiritual nature of Christ, or of his redemption by suffering and sacrifice, could make nothing of this sign. It is a good way in which to treat malicious questioners, to answer them by giving them something to puzzle over, a "hard nut to crack." Can we imagine how these Pharisees, who were so clever at "splitting hairs" in argument, discussed this "sign of Jonas"? The people must have smiled when they saw them so answered and so discomfited.

II. THE SIGN OF JONAS WAS INTENDED TO SUGGEST. For *us* it suggests what was then the special burden on the mind of Christ. He was anticipating the time of his suffering and death. For them the sign seemed to say, "Your prejudiced opposition to me will grow until it consummates in securing my death. You will throw me overboard, as Jonas was thrown over. But you will be baffled even then. Like Jonas, I shall rise again."

III. THE SIGN OF JONAS WAS INTENDED TO TEACH. Only one point in the story is recalled by Christ. The only likeness between Jonas and Christ is that "rising

again." The sign of the Divine origin, Divine mission, and Divine nature of Christ is his resurrection from the dead.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Pharisaic leaven.* In their short journeyings among the villages, and when they went east of the lake for the sake of retirement, the disciples were accustomed to carry in their little baskets sufficient food for a day or two. By some mischance the food had been forgotten on this occasion. Their minds were full of this lack of bread; and so they thought their Master's mind must be full of the same thing. He was quite unconcerned about bodily food, and meditating on the mischievous influence, upon themselves and upon others, of the characteristic spirit and disposition of the Pharisees, of which so striking an illustration had just been given. It was an evil force, an active force, and a dangerous force.

I. PHARISAIC DOCTRINE AS AN EVIL FORCE. It was the notion that a good creed will excuse an evil life; that a man may do evil that good may come; that religion is formality; that subtlety is more important than sincerity; that blind prejudice can make honest judgments. The "leaven" will go into the term "hypocrisy," or "religious insincerity;" "the unreality of a life respectable, rigid, outwardly religious, even earnest in its zeal, and yet wanting in the humility and love which are the essence of true holiness." Such hypocrisy and insincerity is a ruinous influence in character. A man cannot be noble who allows any shams. Religion a mere garb is worthless to man and dishonouring to God. Nothing roused our Lord's indignation like the leaven of insincerity.

II. PHARISAIC DOCTRINE AS AN ACTIVE FORCE. Here we find the reason for calling it *leaven*, which is a thing which will not keep quiet, and remain where it is and as it is. Leaven will *act;* it will *grow;* it will push through; it will pervade. Leaven consists of plant-cells, which multiply with extraordinary rapidity under favourable circumstances. A doctrine which allows licence to man's evil passions, and hides it under a show of superior piety, is a doctrine that readily finds a sphere in man's corrupt nature, and there it acts vigorously. A little of such leaven leaveneth the whole lump. We need to see clearly that all error is active; but all error that tends to give *moral licence* is, for fallen man, especially active. You can never hope to keep such error still.

III. PHARISAIC DOCTRINE AS A DANGEROUS FORCE. Therefore our Lord warned his disciples against letting the Pharisaic spirit get into them unawares. It works such havoc in character. Any evil is possible to a man who once permits himself to excuse insincerity. Piety is nourished upon absolute truth and righteousness. Guile, formality, and outward show never can support it.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Opinions concerning Jesus.* It seems strange that our Lord should want to know men's opinions about himself. Two explanations may be given. 1. These disciples mixed more freely with the people than Jesus could, and were more likely to know the common talk. So they could give him information which would materially help his work. 2. Our Lord's question may only have been meant to introduce a conversation, through which he might teach those disciples the higher truth concerning himself. Jesus removed into the district of Cæsarea Philippi for the sake of retirement and safety. His work in Galilee was virtually finished, and something in the nature of a review of that work, and estimate of its results, was befitting. Our Lord's work, in its higher aspect, was a *self-revelation.* What he said, and what he did, were intended to show what he was. The mystery of the Person of Christ is the subject of the gospel. So our Lord, in asking, "Whom do men say that I am?" really proposed to test the results of his self-manifestation in mighty deeds and gracious words and holy example.

I. A POOR OPINION CONCERNING JESUS. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist." This was a poor opinion. There was no personal thought or consideration in it. In a time-serving sort of way, some folk had taken up the excited exclamation of Herod, "It is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." It was foolish, for there was no real likeness between the two men, or their two missions. Jesus could never have even suggested rough, half-clad John. Beware of taking up something somebody else is pleased to say about Jesus. Only very poor opinions of him can be gained in that way.

II. A BETTER OPINION CONCERNING JESUS. "Some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Elijah was a bad guess; for Jesus was in no way like him Elisha would have been better. Jeremias was not a bad guess. And it was an advance to liken Christ to one of the spiritual, teaching prophets. It should be borne in mind that there was an almost universal expectation of the return of Elijah, and that this had grown to be a national mania, so that every unusual man was suspected to be Elijah.

III. A BEST OPINION CONCERNING JESUS. Peter may have been actually in advance of the other disciples in discerning the mystery of Christ; or he may only have been spokesman of a general apprehension. The disciples saw two things; but they involved more than they then saw. 1. Jesus was Messiah; but not the kind of Messiah anticipated. 2. Jesus was Son of the living God; and this involved that Jesus was doing his Father's *moral* work in the souls of men.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Visions of the mystery of Christ.* It was the end and aim of our Lord's life to reveal the mystery of himself to his disciples. But what is so strange and yet so significant is, that he made scarcely any direct declarations on the subject. He evidently wanted it to be the impression left by his presence, his words, and his works. Later on in his life we find more of what may, in a good sense, be called self-assertion. But in his earlier ministry he virtually answered all inquiries as he answered the two disciples sent from John Baptist: "Go and show again the things ye do see and hear." Let him make what he can of them, and of me by the help of them. The impressions of *himself* had been borne in daily, for long months, upon those disciples, and so they had gained visions of his mystery. What is that mystery?

I. IT IS HIS DIVINITY. Because the word "divinity" has been applied to created beings, many persons prefer to speak of the *Deity* of Christ. The opened vision of the disciples found God in a man; they discerned the "Divine-human being, man with God for the soul of his humanity." It is hardly in place to inquire what notions of incarnations of deity prevailed among pagan nations, because such notions could not have reached or influenced these simple disciples. It is to the point to inquire how the Old Testament records and associations would help them. There were "theophanies" of various forms, which must have been helpful and suggestive. St. John the apostle, in his Gospel, finely represents the process which had gone on in his own mind, by the help of which he had grasped the mystery of Christ's Deity. It was the humanity that did it. John gives a series of narratives, and one after another they make on the reader a twofold impression. 1. He says—How manifestly Jesus was a real brother-Man! 2. But then he says—How manifestly Jesus was more than man, a Divine Man! No true notion of Christ's Divinity can ever be attained save in the disciples' way, by actual, constant, living contact with Christ's humanity. It is that extraordinary humanity which convinces of the Divinity.

II. IT IS HIS SONSHIP. A previous homily has dealt with this point. The impression on which we now dwell is that the Divinity of Christ is to be conceived as "equality with God," not subordination or creation. The contrast to son is servant. A servant is told the will; a son shares the will. A servant is at the footstool; the son is on the throne. "I and my Father are one."—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*The rock-truth.* "Upon this rock I will build my Church." There has been grave dispute over this passage. Is the rock-foundation of the Church (1) Peter himself; or (2) Peter's faith; or (3) Peter's confession; or (4) Christ himself, the Son of the living God? Without entering into that discussion, we may simply say that *this* is true—the confession which Peter made expresses the foundation, the rock-truth of Christianity, every doctrine of which rests secure on the Divine-human Sonship of our Lord. Peter is taken as representing this rock-truth, because he was the first distinctly to give it expression. The figure of rock-foundation needs explanation in the light of Eastern modes of building, and ideas of building. Still, we know the importance of sound foundations, though there is no longer more than a poetical interest in foundation-*stones*.

I. THIS CONFESSION WAS THE ROCK-FOUNDATION OF CHRIST'S REVELATION. For Jesus brought a revelation *from* God, which was a revelation *of* God. Search down to

the foundation on which all Christ taught of God rests; refuse to be satisfied until you have discovered its primary truth, its absolutely first and essential principle, and you will find it to be the Fatherhood of God—the permission to think of God through the associations of our human fatherhood. But direct revelations of the Divine Fatherhood cannot be made to men; they come as the correlative of Fatherhood, as *Sonship*. Christ the Son primarily does this—reveal the Father-God.

II. THIS CONFESSION WAS THE ROCK-FOUNDATION OF CHRIST'S MISSION. That mission was, to bring men to God. It included and involved much. Bearing penalty, setting example, teaching truth, offering a self-sacrifice, etc.; but get to the very foundation of it, and we see it was to recover for men their sonship and their proper son-relations with God. Then we see how the Divine and perfect Sonship of Christ is the "rock-truth" of his mission. Only the Son could hope to undertake and carry through the work of recovering sons.

III. THIS CONFESSION IS THE ROCK-FOUNDATION ON WHICH CHRIST'S MISSION IS CONTINUED. Thoughtful readers will be struck by the constancy with which Christ used the term "Father," and the apostles use the term "Son." Those apostles clearly apprehended that the gospel they had to preach was the good news of the Divine Fatherhood; and that whoever received their gospel became sons again, linked in obedience, love, and faith with Jesus, the "Son of the living God."—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The power of the keys.* It is necessary to understand the Eastern associations which help to explain our Lord's figure of the "keys." The key in the East was a symbol of authority; it was made long, with a crook at one end, so that it could be worn round the neck as a badge of office. To "confer a key" was a phrase equivalent to bestowing a situation of great trust and distinction. The expressions "binding" and "loosing" are figurative expressions, which were in familiar use in the rabbinical schools. "The school of Shammai *bound* men when it declared this or that act to be a transgression of the sabbath law. The school of Hillel *loosed* when it set men free from the obligations thus imposed." It should be borne in mind that this passage is a part of Christ's private teaching of the apostles. He was feeling that his own active work was nearly done, and very soon the work of saving men would rest on them. He would prepare them to understand their coming responsibilities; and he would assure them of their competent endowment to meet those responsibilities.

I. THEY WOULD HAVE SERIOUS AND AUTHORITATIVE WORK TO DO. It is remarkable that Jesus never attempted any organization of those who professed to believe in him. But he contemplated that his apostles would have to organize the converts they made. They could not help occupying a position of authority. They would be consulted on doctrines; on the application of doctrines to practical life and conduct; they would have to deal with inconsistent disciples. What they would have to do was illustrated in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, and in the admission of Cornelius. Their Lord would prepare them for undertaking those responsibilities.

II. THEY WOULD HAVE SPECIAL ENDOWMENTS FOR THEIR SPECIAL WORK. That is God's law. He makes the gift fit the service that is called for. Among the gifts in the early Church one is named "governments." That is the gift with which they were endowed. And this distinction needs to be made clear. Their gift came, not because they were apostles, but because this particular work was entrusted to them. Gifts are not possessions or rights; they are *trusts;* and all the honour of them lies in being thus trusted.

III. THEY WOULD HAVE SPECIAL DIVINE RECOGNITION IN THEIR WORK. What they did, in the loyal and faithful use of their gifts of government, would be owned and sealed by God. Illustrate by the Divine judgment on Ananias, following on Peter's condemnation of him; and the Spirit following Cornelius' admission.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*Testing the higher beliefs.* After our Lord had secured the recognition of his Divine claims, he proceeded to test the belief of those apostles, to see whether it was clear of those materialistic notions of his Messiahship which so constantly had hindered them. The test was found in the assurance that his Messiahship would seem to be a failure, and his bodily life end in shame and a cross. If they had grasped the *spiritual* nature of Christ's mission, they would not have felt so much his earth-

failure. If they still held their material hopes, the very mention of failure and a cross would be to them an offence indeed. Compare the record, in John vi., of Christ's testing his disciples by declaring high mystical truths. "Many went back, and walked no more with him." He even appealed unto the twelve, saying, "Will ye also go away?"

I. HIGHER BELIEFS MAY BE IMPULSIVE SENTIMENTS. A sort of vision a man may gain. Something that is a hope rather than an opinion; a sentiment rather than a judgment. Perhaps every man has some sublime but unworkable ideas. There are things we dream, wish they were true, and wonder whether they are. Perhaps the apostolic grip of the Divine Sonship was one of these things that are held convulsively for a moment. Perhaps St. Peter really spoke beyond himself, and no quiet, clear conviction lay behind his impulsive speech. And very probably he was, for the moment, quite beyond the reach of the rest. Our working beliefs and our visions of truth often differ.

II. HIGHER BELIEFS MUST BE MADE WORKABLE PRINCIPLES. No truth is really worth anything to us that will not come as a vital force into our actual life, duty, and relation. Christ will not keep his apostles up in the high realms of mystical truths. "If you believe me to be the Son of God, we had better recognize some facts and truths, and see how the belief will affect them. This Son of God is going to suffer, to fall a prey to his foes, and to be killed. Will you still believe that he is the Son of the living God when you see him on a cross?" This is the point of our Lord's reference, just here, to his sufferings. All our advanced beliefs must be tested. No matter how beautiful they may seem to us, they are of no real value, they are vain dreams, unless they will stand the test of being actually fitted to fact, circumstance, and duty.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*He hinders Christ who would hold him back from his sufferings.* This brings before us another relation in which our Lord's sufferings stand. We have seen their relation as a testing of that higher truth to which St. Peter had given expression. Now we see how they bore on that particular mission which Jesus came to carry out. His sufferings were essential to that mission. He saved the world by his sufferings.

I. OUR LORD'S PURPOSE TO ENDURE SUFFERINGS. It should be clearly seen that our Lord knew beforehand all that was to happen to him; and he might have avoided all the pain and distress. Instead, he voluntarily determined to go steadily along the path, bearing and enduring all, because that was the Father's will for him. Explain in this way: Our Lord had to present to God the living sacrifice of a perfectly obedient Son. But he could not be a perfectly obedient Son if his obedience had not been *adequately tested.* The series of sufferings through which our Lord passed are the various testings of his Sonship. And because Christ was resolved to make the great redeeming sacrifice, he resolved to bear and endure every way in which the Father might be pleased to test his Sonship. A violent and shameful death was the final test.

II. OUR LORD'S OFFENCE AT THOSE WHO WOULD HINDER HIM FROM ENDURING HIS SUFFERINGS. They did the work of the flesh, which shrinks from suffering; they did not help the sanctified will to gain free expression. St. Peter became a tempter, a worker of evil; one who did the work of an adversary, of man's great adversary. Our Lord here uses the word "Satan" as a figure, without reference to the personal devil. Any adversary, any one who works against our best interests, is a Satan. To withdraw Christ from his sufferings was to withdraw Christ from his mission; since he could only be made "perfect," as a Bringer-on of souls, by the experience and testing of suffering. Olshausen thinks that St. Peter forgot himself, and presumed upon the praise which Christ had given him for his noble confession. But it is better, in each case, to treat St. Peter as a mere representative, a mere spokesman, and to see how very imperfect an apprehension of Christ's deeper truth his words involve.—R. T.

Ver. 26.—*The great gain, and the greater loss.* "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" This is an extreme, a paradoxical utterance. No man can, in any precise sense, "gain the whole world." If he could, it would weigh nothing in the scale against the value of his *life.* For on life depends enjoyment of possessions. Illustrate by the parable of the rich farmer who boasted of what

he possessed, and lost it all when he died in the night. Compare our Lord's advice to "lay up treasure in heaven."

I. THE GREAT GAIN IS EARTHLY THINGS. Look over the whole world. Examine the pursuits of every class. Read the story of the long ages. This is clearly men's opinion everywhere. They live to get, to win, to grasp, to hold what they call wealth, earthly valuables—houses, land, jewels, money, fame. Is that really great gain? Test it by one thing—How does it stand related to man's real *soul-life*? Then it is seen to belong only to the body, which man *has* for a while; and in no way to the being that he *is*, and will be for ever. All a man acquires of a merely earthly character belongs to his body, and goes with his body when his body goes; then it is his no more. Treasure on earth is but falsely and unworthily called "great gain."

II. THE GREATER LOSS IS SPIRITUAL CHARACTER. For character is a man's true wealth; it belongs to the being he is, and is for ever. And one application of our Lord's teaching here comes out in a very striking way. Gaining earthly things is only too likely to involve the destruction of spiritual character, because it is so sure to hinder that "self-denial" which is the absolutely essential foundation of noble and enduring spiritual character. A man gains the heavenly treasure by what he *gives up*, and not by what he *holds fast to* (see ver. 24). The sublime illustration is presented in the case of our Lord himself, who acquired nothing earthly, who gave up everything he had that men are wont to esteem as gain, but who gained the eternal treasure of tested spiritual character, perfected Sonship.

In conclusion, meet the difficulty of the apparently unpractical character of such teaching. Show that it is really a question of relativity. Which is to be *first*, possessions or character?—R. T.

Ver. 28.—*The coming of the Son of man.* "Not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." This is immediately suggested. "Christ's coming," and "Christ's coming in his kingdom," must be phrases used with a variety of meanings and with a variety of references. We begin to feel that it must be used as a proverbial phrase. Various explanations of our Lord's meaning have been given. Examine three.

I. CHRIST CAME IN HIS KINGDOM AT THE TRANSFIGURATION. This meaning is suggested by the fact that the narrative of the Transfiguration immediately succeeds, and the evangelist appears designedly to set them in close connection. That was a very sublime manifestation of his glory, but it is difficult to understand how it could be called a "coming of the kingdom." Moreover, there is no point in saying that *some* would be spared to the coming of the kingdom, when *all* were to be spared over the Transfiguration. That explanation cannot be regarded as satisfactory.

II. CHRIST CAME IN HIS KINGDOM AT THE DAY OF PENTECOST. That is properly regarded as the actual starting of Christ's new and spiritual kingdom. In part it may fulfil the reference of our Lord. But here again the difficulty occurs that the apostolic band was intact at the Day of Pentecost, with the exception of the traitor Judas, who had "gone to his own place." It is hardly possible to rest satisfied with this explanation.

III. CHRIST CAME IN HIS KINGDOM AT THE FALL OF JERUSALEM. "This was a judicial coming, a signal and visible event, and one that would happen in the lifetime of some, but not of all, of those present." John certainly lived beyond this event. "In a sense which was real, though partial, the judgment which fell upon the Jewish Church, the destruction of the holy city and the temple, the onward march of the Church of Christ, was as the coming of the Son of man in his kingdom." This is altogether the most satisfactory suggestion; and we need only suppose that Christ was carried away in his thoughts beyond the present, and was helped in thinking of the sufferings that were immediately before him, by comforting visions of the success and glory which would follow his suffering and his sacrifice in the world's by-and-by.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

Vers. 1—13.—*The Transfiguration of Jesus.* (Mark ix. 2—13; Luke ix. 28—36.) This mysterious event was intended primarily to confirm the faith of the three apostles who were to have the chief hand in founding the Church. The Lord had

just announced his future sufferings and death. This prediction had been a grievous blow to Peter, and doubtless to the others also. He had stumbled at the cross, and had brought on himself a stern rebuke for his slowness and worldliness. So to comfort the chosen three under the thought of what awaited their Master, they were shown a glimpse of the glory which he has in heaven; they saw the Law and the prophets yielding subjection to him; they heard the voice of the Father announcing his Sonship. Henceforward they might take courage under all circumstances; the cross would be no infamy or disgrace—would open the way to victory and glory. Here was a foretaste of the blessedness of heaven—to be with Christ and his saints in his kingdom. Such was the Transfiguration to the three witnesses. To the world, when in due time it was made known, it taught lessons of the Incarnation, the resurrection of the body, the glory that shall be the portion of the righteous. For Christ himself it was the culminating point of his earthly life, "the solemn installation of our Lord to his sufferings and their result" (Alford).

Ver. 1.—**After six days.** St. Luke says, "about an eight days after these sayings," either speaking indefinitely, or using the inclusive method of reckoning which we find in the accounts of our Lord's resurrection. The days are counted from the time of Peter's confession and Christ's subsequent announcement. The little company were still in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, though we know not exactly in what place, and nothing is told of the events of this week. The memorable day may be specially noticed as being the same day of the week as that on which the great confession was made in the previous s'nnight; or, if we regard the typical bearing of numbers in Scripture, the six days signify the world and daily labour, the seventh, "after six days," typifies heaven and rest. **Peter, James, and John.** These three, the chosen of the chosen, had already witnessed Christ's power over death in the chamber of Jairus's daughter; later they were present at the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. They who had seen his glory were strengthened to behold his sweat of blood. These men formed the inner circle of his friends; to them he gave the privilege of knowing more of his inner life and nature. They were selected for various reasons—Peter, for his energy, zeal, and love, and the part he was to play in the founding of the Church; John, because he was beloved by Christ, and was to be the recipient of Divine revelation; James, because he was to be the head of the Church of Jerusalem, and soon to drink of Christ's cup and war a good warfare. The James here named is the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, and was put to death by Herod Agrippa (Acts xii.). **An high mountain.** The only tradition concerning the locality of the Transfiguration (which none of the inspired narratives further identifies) affixes it to Mount Tabor, the beautiful isolated mountain, which rises some eighteen hundred feet on the north-east of the Plain of Esdraelon. This tradition, as far as we know, was first published in the fourth century A.D., by St. Cyril of Jerusalem ('Catech.,' xii. 16) and St. Jerome (Ep. xliv. 'Ad Marcell.;' Ep. cviii. 'Ad Eustoch.'), and thence was generally adopted and upheld till the sixteenth century, both by commentators and travellers. Since then more accurate examination and historical criticism have thrown grave doubts on this identification. The summit of Tabor has from a very early age been occupied by habitations. It is spoken of in 1 Chron. vi. 77 as including in its limits a city and its suburbs. Later it was strongly fortified, and the whole area was surrounded with a wall, of which the ruins can still be traced. In our Lord's time the town and the fortress covered the level portion of the hill, and there would have been no place of retirement where he could have withdrawn *apart* for the purpose of the vision. There is another reason that makes Tabor unlikely to have been the scene of the Transfiguration. The last geographical notice left our Lord and his disciples outside Galilee in the neighbourhood of Paneas. It was about a three days' journey thence to Esdraelon; but no mention is made of any such movement during this week, and it is after the Transfiguration that the synoptists intimate that the return to Galilee took place (see ver. 22; Mark ix. 30). We must therefore surrender the old tradition, and look in the vicinity of Cæsarea for the *high mountain* of our narrative. There was no lack of such in that region, and it was doubtless on one of the offshoots of Hermon that the glorious vision was vouchsafed, though more precise identification is impossible. Hermon itself is called by the Arabs *Jebel-esh-Sheikh*, "The Chief Mountain," and the way in which the locality is introduced in the narrative, without further specification, seems to point to some eminence of the most obvious and best-known hill of the district. St. Peter, when in after-years

he alluded to it, called it merely "the holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 18); and we may conclude that we are not intended to know more about it, lest we should be tempted to make more of the material circumstances than of the great reality. St. Luke notifies that the Lord retired to this place in order to pray. It may have been that he prayed for the enlightenment of the apostles—that they might receive the teaching of the Transfiguration and the subsequent sayings.

Ver. 2.—**Was transfigured** (*μετεμορφώθη*); Vulgate, *transfiguratus est*. The verb is used in classical Greek of transformation, as of a man into an animal. Here it refers to a change of countenance, which is the chief index of any change exterior or interior. St. Luke explains the matter with the words, "The fashion of his countenance was altered." The Word of God allows for a brief space his essential glory to irradiate and shine through the form of a servant which he wore. Not that he showed his Divine nature, or laid aside his human body; his bodily nature remained in its entirety, but permeating it was an effulgence which indicated the Godhead. Perhaps it might be said, as an old writer puts it, that the Transfiguration was less a new miracle than the temporary cessation of an habitual miracle; for the veiling of his glory was the real marvel, the Divine restraint which prohibited the illumination of his sacred humanity. **Before them.** In their presence. Jesus probably had withdrawn in order to pray in secret, but returned to the waiting three, that they might behold his glory—be "eye-witnesses of his majesty," as St. Peter says (2 Pet. i. 16). These, indeed, had been heavy with sleep (Luke), but had awoke at his appearance, and beheld the vision in full possession of their senses. St. Matthew mentions specially two points in this transfiguration. **His face did shine as the sun.** This recalls the appearance of the Son of man in Rev. i. 16, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." **And his raiment was white as the light.** The light which emanated from his body shone through and glorified his very garments. The Vulgate has *sicut nix*, and *χιὼν* is read in some few manuscripts in place of *φῶς*: but the word is doubtless introduced here from St. Mark (where, however, it is of doubtful genuineness). If this second evangelist received his account from St. Peter, we recognize the simile in the apostle's remembrance of the snow-clad peak of Hermon, in whose vicinity the event transpired. No candid reader can fail to acknowledge that it is no subjective vision that is here narrated, no merely inward impression on brain or nerve with nothing external to correspond, but a real, objective occurrence, which was beheld by mortal eyes endued with no supernatural or abnormal powers, except in so far as they were enabled to look on this partial emanation of the Divine effulgence.

Ver. 3.—**And, behold.** The exclamation, thrice repeated (ver. 5), marks the suddenness and unexpectedness of the occurrence. They who now appeared were no delusive, imaginary figures, but real personages, objectively presented to the spectators, in such bodies as appertained to their condition. **Moses and Elias.** St. Luke adds, "who appeared in glory," radiant with the light which always accompanies heavenly visitants. Why these two saints were chosen to be present on this momentous occasion may be explained by various considerations. Both these worthies experienced something unparalleled in their departure from this life. Elijah was taken up to heaven without dying; Moses died, indeed, but he was buried by God in an unknown grave, and his body was under the especial care of Michael the archangel (see Jude 9), and we know not that it saw corruption. From the unseen world these were brought to do homage to the Messiah—Moses, a type of those blessed spirits who in Paradise await the final consummation; Elijah, a type of the saints who, after the resurrection, perfect in soul and body, shall enter into glory. Here were the representatives of the Law and the prophets, the principal supporters of the old covenant, honouring him who was introducing the new covenant, which was to fulfil and supersede the previous one. Spurious, degraded Judaism rejected Christ's claims; real, orthodox Judaism acknowledged him and reverenced him as the Christ foretold and foreshadowed, "of whom Moses and the prophets did write" (John i. 45). Now, too, it was made manifest that Jesus was not Elias or one of the prophets, as some erroneously had supposed, but different from and superior to all; that he had power over life and death, and could bring whom he would from the unseen world; that the cross and Passion were not degrading, or proofs of weakness, but glorious and triumphant accomplishments of the will of God. The question is asked—How did Peter and the rest recognize the two heavenly visitants? There may have been something conventional in their garb or appearance, which at once identified them; or the apostles may have known them by spiritual intuition or special revelation; or they may have gathered their knowledge from the conversation which they overheard. Anyhow, it was necessary that the two should be recognized, otherwise their appear-

ance would have lost its significance, and the confirmation which they were intended to afford would fail to be given. Is there here an intimation that in heaven the blessed will know each other, though they never met in the flesh—shall know even as they have been known? Talking with him. St. Luke tells us the subject of this mysterious dialogue—they "spake of his decease (ἔξοδον, *exodus*, *departure*) which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." They conversed, not of the glory which was his before the world began, nor of the kingdom which he came to establish, but of his coming suffering and death, with their tremendous issues. At the very moment of this revelation of Divinity, the discourse is of humiliation and the cross. The apostles had been slow to understand the future that awaited their Master; here the great saints of the covenant bore their testimony to Christ's fulfilment of what had been prophesied and shadowed aforehand, how by the sufferings of his sacred humanity eternal glory should be won. So might the apostles be strengthened to look forward without apprehension or weak shrinking; for through the grave and gate of death lay the road to a joyful resurrection and celestial happiness.

Ver. 4.—**Then answered Peter.** According to St. Luke, it was when the two Divine prophets were disappearing, or were being withdrawn from sight, that Peter spoke. Bewildered, overcome with joy and astonishment, not knowing what to say (Mark), yet in his excitement and ardour unable to keep silence, he cries to Jesus, **Lord, it is good for us to be here**; perhaps equivalent to *to remain here*. He includes Moses and Elias in his eager exclamation. Some commentators confine the reference to the three apostles, as if Peter meant that it was "good" that they were present in order to prepare the necessary habitations. This seems meagre and insufficient. Here were peace, seclusion, safety: might they not last? Was there any need to quit this hallowed spot at once, and lose the heavenly company with which it was blessed? **If thou wilt.** Even at this supreme moment, he will not set his will in opposition to his Master's. **Let us make** (*I will make*, Revised Version) **here three tabernacles** (σκηνάς). Booths, of branches and grass, such as were used by travellers camping out, or such as the people erected when celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. He speaks of but three shelters, regarding only Jesus and the two prophets, and considering himself and his fellow-disciples as mere servitors and attendants, for whom no such provision was needed. In his confusion he thinks that if these three remain, they must have some kind of habitation. Like a child, he would fain prolong indefinitely the joy of this great vision; and with a Jew's hankering for a conquering Messiah and the permanence of the old covenant, he desired that from that secure mountain-top the laws of the kingdom might be issued, and all men might acknowledge the Christ attended and supported by the great lawgiver and prophet. Was there not also a latent hope that thus might be deferred or laid aside that departure to Jerusalem, with its calamitous consequences? But this was not to be. No answer was vouchsafed to Peter's thoughtless request.

Ver. 5.—**A bright cloud overshadowed them.** The cloud spread over and around, not Jesus only and the other two, but in some degree over the apostles also, as St. Luke adds, "They feared as they entered into the cloud." It was the Shechinah, the token of the presence of the Most High, who dwelleth in the unapproachable light. It enshrouded Jesus and his two companions, so that mortal eye could not pierce it or even look upon it; but the apostles, who were outside its immediate contact, were in some sort included in its influence, so that it could be said to overshadow them. St. Peter calls it "the excellent glory (τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης)" (2 Pet. i. 17). The cloud from which on Sinai the old Law was given, was dark and threatening (Exod. xix. 18; xx. 21); this was bright, coming not to terrify, but to teach and to bless. Here is seen the contrast between the two dispensations, the Law and the gospel (comp. Heb. xii. 18—24). **A voice out of the cloud.** It was the voice of God the Father, for he called Jesus, **My beloved Son.** The same voice, saying the same words, had been heard over the waters of Jordan when Jesus was baptized (ch. iii. 17); it spake once again just before his Passion (John xii. 28); at all times witnessing the Father's love and the perfect Divinity of Christ. Now, as before, the Holy Trinity was revealed, the Father speaking with audible voice, the Son standing in radiant light, the Holy Spirit present with the intense brightness of the enveloping cloud. The words heard are found in the earlier Scriptures. Thus in Isa. xlii. 1 we read, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my Chosen in whom my soul delighteth;" and in Ps. ii. 7, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." **Hear ye him.** Not Moses and Elias, but Jesus, the Mediator of a better covenant (Heb. viii. 6). "This voice," St. Peter testifies, "we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. i. 18). As Edersheim remarks, even if this Epistle is not St. Peter's, it still would represent

the most ancient tradition. "God, having of old spoken unto the fathers in the prophets, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Heb. i. 1). The command to hear him recalls the saying of Moses (Deut. xviii. 15), that in good time God would raise up from Israel a Prophet like unto himself, and that unto him they shall hearken.

Ver. 6.—**Were sore afraid.** The vision and the voice overcame them with awe and terror. **They fell on their face.** They tried to shut out the awful radiance that blinded them. Man's weakness could endure no more; prostrate, paralyzed with fear, they lay on the ground. Who could see God, and live? Had they not seen his glory, and heard his voice? What could they do but crouch in abject terror? Thus they knew not that the scene was over, that the tremendous glimpse of unseen realities vouchsafed to them had passed away.

Ver. 7.—**Came and touched them.** Jesus gently and lovingly aroused them from their stupor, showing that he was near, and that they had nothing to dread (comp. Isa. vi. 5—7; Dan. x. 8—10; Rev. i. 17). He adds the assurance of his own beloved and well-known voice, **Arise, and be not afraid.** Such comfort he gave to the affrighted disciples when he came to them treading on the waters of the storm-tossed sea (ch. xiv. 27).

Ver. 8.—**No man, save Jesus only.** Moses and Elias had vanished, Jesus was left alone, and the voice Divine said, "Hear him." When at Christ's touch and word the awestruck apostles dared once more to look around and to bethink themselves of what had passed, those were the facts of which they were conscious. The Law and the prophets, types and predictions, are fulfilled in Christ, and are so far superseded. The former were temporary, introductory to the gospel, which is to last for ever. Many have seen in the Transfiguration an image and earnest of the future glory of the dead in Christ, when the vile body shall be changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body, and they shall shine as the sun, and bear the image of the heavenly. So St. Gregory, "He is clothed with light as with a garment, because in that eternal glory he will be clothed with all the saints, to whom it is said, 'Ye are the light of the world.' Whence also it is said by the evangelist, that when the Lord was transfigured in the mountain, his raiment became as snow. In which Transfiguration what else is announced but the glory of the final resurrection? For in the mountain his raiment became as snow, because in the height of heavenly brightness all saints will be joined to him, refulgent with the light of righteousness" ('Moral.,' xxxii. 6). Unbelief has endeavoured to throw discredit on the historical accuracy of the accounts of this great event. It was a dream, an atmospheric disturbance, an unusual play of light and shade, a myth, an allegory; the two heavenly visitants were two unknown disciples with whom Jesus conversed; the three apostles were rapt in a trance, and the vision was purely subjective; these and such like theories have been started by rationalists and enemies of the supernatural, and even by the partially orthodox, as Tertullian ('Adv. Marc.,' iv. 22). There can be no doubt that the evangelists and the Apostle Peter regarded the event as an objective reality, upon which hung momentous truths; and we are content to let it stand or fall with the rest of the facts of the gospel narrative. There is no reason to separate it from the other items of the story. When once the stupendous miracle of the Incarnation is allowed, other wonders follow in natural sequence.

Ver. 9.—**As they came down from the mountain.** The Transfiguration is supposed to have taken place at night, and the following conversation to have passed in the early morning of the next day. **Tell the vision** (*τὸ ὅραμα, what had been seen*) **to no man.** This was a strict and formal command. The chosen three were at present not to mention the occurrence to any one, not even to their fellow-disciples. Possibly these would hardly have believed the marvellous tale, and their unbelief would have hardened their heart; or, if they fully credited it, they might have been jealous of the preference shown to some of their company. At any rate, neither they nor others were prepared to receive the great lesson of the scene—that the old covenant had done its work, that the Law and the prophets were superseded and must make way for the new dispensation. Had the story been divulged to the people generally, they would have stumbled at the cross and Passion, which would seem no fitting sequel to this glory (see on ch. xvi. 20). **Until the Son of man be risen again** (*ἀναστῇ*) **from the dead.** When this great event happened and was known to be the fact, there could be no doubt that Christ was God, and the tale of the Transfiguration would no longer be incredible. Thomas's confession, "My Lord and my God," would be echoed in the heart and conscience of all disciples. St. Luke, though he does not mention Christ's injunction, notifies that it was carefully observed, "They kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen." (These last words, *οὐδὲν ὧν ἑώρακαν*, explain what St. Matthew above calls "the vision," *τὸ ὅραμα*,

the objective spectacle.) The compliance with the injunction shows that they understood something of the spiritual nature of the transaction. We may also note that the prohibition itself is presumptive evidence against the supposed mythical character of the vision.

Ver. 10.—**Why then (οὖν) say the scribes that Elias must first come?** The illative particle "then" shows that the apostles' question arose from something immediately preceding. The connection seems to be this: Elias had just appeared and then had vanished again; how could this visitation be reconciled with the scribes' interpretation of Malachi's propheoy? If Elias was to come before the advent of Messiah, and Jesus is the Messiah, how is it that he has only now shown himself? If he has a work to do on earth, how could he do that when his sojourn was limited to a few minutes' duration, and to the view of so few witnesses? Malachi had spoken of the Messenger who was to precede and prepare the way for Messiah; he had said, "Before the great day of the Lord, I will send you Elijah the prophet" (Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5); and the learned among the Jews interpreted these two passages of his appearance in person to herald the approach of Messiah. Hence the perplexity of the apostles, they, like the scribes, not distinguishing the two advents of Christ, and the double allusion in the prophet's announcement—the "Messenger" in ch. iii. 1 being a different personage from "Elias" in ch. iv. 5, though of the same power and spirit. Christ explains the difficulty in the two next verses.

Ver. 11.—**Elias truly shall first come (ἔρχεται, *cometh*).** Many of the best manuscripts and editions omit "first." The Vulgate has merely, *Elias quidem venturus est.* It is probably inserted in our text from the parallel passage in Mark, where it is certainly genuine. Christ is here alluding to his own second coming, which shall be preceded by the appearance of Elijah in person. This seems to be the plain meaning of the prophecy in Malachi, and of Christ's announcement, and is confirmed by St. John's statement concerning the two witnesses (Rev. xi. 3, 6). That the paragraph cannot refer to John the Baptist is plain from the tenses used in this verse contrasted with those in the following. To regard ver. 12 as simply a correction of ver. 10 is to do violence to language, and to leave one-half of Malachi's prediction unexplained. **Restore (ἀποκαταστήσει) all things.** The event is still future, and was not fulfilled in the Baptist's preaching, however deep and extensive may have been its influence. Of course, John in a partial degree reproduced the character and acts of Elijah, directing the people to the eternal principles of justice and righteousness, to a reformation of religion and morals; but he could not be said to have reconstituted, re-established all things; though it is possible that, had his message been received and acted upon, some such effects would have been produced. How and in what degree Elijah, again appearing and living on earth, will effect this great achievement, we know not. We can only fall back on the ancient prophecy, which affirms that "he shall turn the heart of the fathers to [or, 'with'] the children, and the heart of the children to [or, 'and'] their fathers" (Mal. iv. 6), and expect that in some way, known unto God, he shall convert one and all, young and old, unto the Lord; or unite the Jews who are the fathers in the faith to Christians who are their children, and thus embrace Jew and Gentile in one fold under one Shepherd.

Ver. 12.—**Elias is come already.** The mystical, not the real, Elias, even John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elias (Luke i. 17). Christ is here speaking of the past, as in the preceding verse he spake of the future. The common Jewish interpretation confused the two events and the two personages, reducing them to one. And this mistake has been committed by many modern expositors. **They knew him not.** They did not recognize his true character and the import of his mission. Though they gathered round him and listened to his preaching and denunciations, very few saw in him the precursor of the Messiah, and many, misunderstanding his austere, self-denying life, deemed him to be possessed by a devil (ch. xi. 18). **They have done unto him.** John suffered a long imprisonment, and was eventually murdered; and though Herod was primarily answerable for these doings, the people were virtually guilty, in that they consented to the injurious treatment and made no effort in his favour. **Likewise . . . also.** Taking occasion from the mention of the Baptist's fate, Jesus foretells his own sufferings and death, endeavouring to make the apostles familiar with the idea of a dying as well as a conquering Messiah.

Ver. 13.—**Then the disciples understood.** Though Jesus had said publicly concerning John, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face," and, "This is Elias which was for to come" (ch. xi. 10, 14); and though the angel Gabriel, in announcing his birth, had avowed that he should go before the Christ in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke i. 17), the apostles hitherto had not taken to heart the truth thus conveyed. Indeed, it was something quite new that they should thus at once apprehend Christ's meaning, so slow were they of faith, so unintelligent

in appreciating the full signification of their Master's instructions.

Vers. 14—21.—*Healing of the demoniac boy.* (Mark ix. 16—29; Luke ix. 37—42.) The account of the miracle is much curtailed in our Gospel; the fullest narrative is given by St. Mark, to whom we must refer for the complete details.

Ver. 14.—**When they were come to the multitude.** St. Luke says this arrival was on "the next day" after the Transfiguration. If this event took place at night, the following morning will be meant. The contrast between the scene on the mountain and that presented by the demoniac below has been seized by Raphael, in his picture of the Transfiguration, at Rome—the last great work that he painted. The upper part of this picture represents Jesus radiant in glory with the heavenly visitants, while the lower panel shows the agonized father, surrounded by the unbelieving crowd, bringing his tortured son to the apostles, who stand helpless and discredited. The painter has, indeed, sacrificed fact to dramatic effect (as the two events were not synchronous); but the lesson enforced thereby is most impressive, and lays holds of the imagination, showing different phases of the life of Christ, and the realms of light and darkness. **There came to him a certain man.** Things had not gone well while Jesus and the three chief apostles were away on the mount. As during the absence of Moses at Sinai the people had fallen into idolatry (Exod. xxxii.), so now, when their Master and their leaders were withdrawn, the nine apostles had faltered in faith and failed in exercising the miraculous powers bestowed upon them. **Kneeling down to him.** Directly the father saw Christ coming, he disengaged himself from the crowd and ran to meet him.

Ver. 15.—This verse in the Vulgate is contained in ver. 14. **Have mercy on my son.** According to St. Luke, the father makes his plea more touching by adding that he was his only son—an appeal to which the Saviour's tender heart was always open, as when he stopped the bier at Nain, and said to the childless widow, "Weep not." **He is lunatic** (σεληνιάζεται). The Revised Version most unnecessarily renders the verb, *he is epileptic.* Doubtless the case in many respects simulated epilepsy, and might have been so described; but it seems inexpedient to conceal the actual word used, which gave the popular and probably correct view of one phase of the complaint. Surely a real fact well known to medical science underlies the term *lunacy.* In the catalogue of the diseased persons who were brought to Christ to be healed (ch. iv. 24), we find a class called lunatics, distinct from the paralytic and possessed. It is by no means an exploded fallacy that the moon has some mysterious influence on certain constitutions, and produces an aggravation of symptoms in accordance with some of its changes. It was from observation of this phenomenon that this form of insanity was termed *seleniasmus* or *lunacy.* In the present instance the disease was complicated and of no ordinary nature. The other synoptists state that the child was possessed by a demon. This was the fact which differentiated the malady from any merely organic sickness. It was in truth epilepsy accompanied by or occasioned by demoniacal possession. St. Matthew does not mention the possession in his introductory account, but he afterwards (ver. 18) speaks of the demon departing. **Sore vexed** (κακῶς πάσχει); *is in evil case;* suffers grievously. He was affected with terrible paroxysms, which are detailed more at length by Mark and Luke. Matthew narrates some of the effects of the mania upon the victim. **Ofttimes he falleth into the fire.** The fits, coming on suddenly and without warning, brought the sufferer into imminent dangers, perhaps produced suicidal tendencies, which urged him to destroy himself.

Ver. 16.—**I brought him to thy disciples.** He had come with the multitude, hoping to find Jesus, and, being disappointed, he had applied to the nine to relieve his misery. When the apostles were sent forth with commission to heal the sick, they returned with joy to report the success of their tour: they cast forth many devils; they noted with glad surprise that the very demons were subject to them in the Name of Jesus (ch. x. 1; Luke ix. 17). It was different now. **They could not cure him.** What means they used we know not; at any rate, they were ineffectual. The writers who record the failure must be allowed to be truthful and honest. There had been much to depress these disciples. Their Master was absent, gone they knew not whither; how long he would be away they could not tell; the boldest and most trusted of their company were no longer present to cheer them with sympathy, to repel attacks, to stand forth as champions. The scribes' uncompromising disbelief (Mark ix. 16) had for the moment obscured their own perfect trust; the atmosphere of infidelity had affected their own breathing; the memory of Christ's words concerning his Passion and death recurred again with dispiriting effect, infusing doubt and disquiet; they had for the time lost the ardour and confidence which had animated them in their first mission; retaining belief in Christ's claims, they felt a hesitation concerning their own

ability; and the conscious weakness in their exorcism nullified its power, and they could do no mighty work.

Ver. 17.—**Jesus answered.** Jesus did not directly respond to the father's appeal, nor repel the Pharisees' scoffs. In sorrow and indignation he goes at once to the root of the evil. **O faithless and perverse generation!** He seems to include in this denunciation all who were present—the father, scribes, people, apostles, especially the nine. Want of faith appertained to all. He often refers to the general body of his hearers by the term *generation* (comp. ch. xi. 16; xii. 29, etc.). *Perverse.* The word is used by Moses in his great song (Deut. xxxii. 5, Septuagint) in reference to those who dealt corruptly; here it applies to persons who took a distorted view of Christ's work and teaching, and against light and knowledge obstinately persisted in their infidelity. **How long shall I be with you? . . . suffer you?** The sad question is not that of one who wants his work finished and his time of departure hastened; rather, it shows his sorrow and regret at the slowness of faith, the hardness of heart, which yet, notwithstanding all his teaching and his miracles, had not been overcome. How much longer was this to continue? Was this forgetfulness of the past, this dulness of comprehension, to last for ever? Did they wish to wear out his long-suffering, to exhaust his condescension? With Divine impatience at man's obduracy, he makes this mournful inquiry. **Bring** (*φέρετε, bring ye*) **him hither to me.** He speaks to the attendants or the crowd, and bids them bring the boy to him, not to the disciples. The prophet's staff in Gehazi's hand could not awake the dead; Elisha himself must undertake the work (2 Kings iv. 31); so if the desired miracle had to be performed, Christ himself must do it. In spite of his grief and disappointment, he does not withhold relief. In the midst of wrath he remembers mercy.

Ver. 18.—**Jesus rebuked the devil** (*αὐτῷ, him*). Some take the pronoun as masculine, and refer it to the diseased boy; but it is more natural that the rebuke should be addressed to the possessing demon. This is the first place where St. Matthew mentions the spiritual aspect of the malady. As the child was being brought to Jesus, a terrible scene ensued, which is described with its horrific details by St. Mark, who also gives Christ's conversation with the father, whereby he desired to arouse faith in his heart, and to draw that assurance from him which could not be obtained from the irresponsible sufferer. **He departed out of him.** In contrast to the faltering exorcism of the apostles, which the devil had disregarded, Jesus orders with the calmness of assured authority, and is at once obeyed. After a final act of defeated malice, the demon quitted his hold of the child. **Was cured from that very hour.** Never more to fall under the devil's influence, restored wholly in body and mind. There is something very mysterious in the sufferings of this poor boy, as there is in those of infants. It is plain that the description, "epileptic mania," will not connote all the features of this case. The evangelists' narrative and Christ's words and actions conclusively prove that it had a demoniacal element, and that this was miraculously eliminated. For epilepsy, I believe, no cure is known. The suddenness and the permanence (Mark ix. 25) of the relief further demonstrate the reality of the miracle. We learn also from this incident that all possessed persons were not morally evil, that often the possession appertained to the physical and psychical nature, and had no ethical relation.

Ver. 19.—**Apart** (*κατ' ἰδίαν*). Jesus had retired to a house (Mark) when the disciples came to him. The question which they desired to ask was one that could not be investigated in the presence of the sneering, unbelieving crowd. **Why could not we** (*ἡμεῖς*, emphatic) **cast him** (*αὐτὸ, it*) **out?** They had keenly felt their impotence and failure, so publicly and distressingly displayed, especially as they had received power to eject demons, and had successfully exercised this authority (Luke x. 17). The Lord's rebuke (ver. 17) had passed over their heads, and not been understood as applicable to themselves. So it was with some bitterness that they asked the question. The nine had not been permitted to witness the Transfiguration; they were not even to be made acquainted with this wondrous transaction at present. More preparation, greater receptivity, was required, before they were fit to be admitted to the full mysteries of the kingdom. They had still much to learn, were still only pupils, and their late failure was permitted in order to help them to attain to self-knowledge and more entire self-surrender.

Ver. 20.—**Because of your unbelief.** The Revised Version adopts the reading, *little faith*, in accordance with the best authorities; but it looks like a softening of the original term "unbelief," which corresponds better with Christ's own censure, "faithless generation." Jesus gives two reasons for the apostles' failure, one connected with their own moral condition, and one (ver. 21) derived from the nature of the demons exorcised. They had, indeed, shown some faith by making even the attempt at the expulsion of the devil, and were not to be classed with the unbelieving scribes; but they had acted in a half-hearted manner, and had not dis-

played that perfect confidence and trust which alone can win success and make all things possible. **Verily I say unto you.** The Lord proceeds to give that lesson concerning perfect faith and its results, which he afterwards repeated in connection with the withered fig tree (ch. xxi. 21, where see note) and elsewhere (Luke xvii. 6). **If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed,** which, as he says (ch. xiii. 32), "is less than all seeds." He means a faith real and trustful, though it be small and weak. The phrase is proverbial, expressive of littleness and insignificance. The mustard seed is quite little, but, grown in favourable soil and under sunny skies, it becomes, as it were, a tree among herbs, so that birds may nestle in its branches. To it faith is compared, because, small at first, it contains within itself power of large development and increase; from minute grains copious results are produced. **Ye shall say unto this mountain.** He points to the hill of Hermon, where the Transfiguration had taken place. **Remove hence.** It is usual to consider the expression here as an Eastern hyperbole, not to be taken literally, but meaning merely that the greatest difficulties may be overcome by faith. This may be true, but it seems hardly adequate to the explanation of our Lord's emphatic words. St. Paul writes in a similar strain (1 Cor. xiii. 2), "If I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains;" where there is nothing necessarily hyperbolical in the supposition. It seems rather that Jesus meant his words to be received literally, implying that if such a removal as he mentioned was ever expedient and in accordance with God's will, it would be effected by the power of faith; not that he hereby sanctioned an arbitrary and wanton display of miraculous power, but he gives an assurance that, were such a measure rendered necessary for the cause of religion, it would be performable at the call of one whose whole trust was centred on God, and whose will was one with God's will. Mediæval writers, followed by later Roman Catholic commentators, give instances of such stupendous effects of faith. The evidence of such miracles is, of course, defective, and would not satisfy modern criticism, but the existence of such legends proves that a literal view was taken of our Lord's saying. **Nothing shall be impossible unto you.** The man of faith is practically omnipotent; moral and material difficulties vanish before him.

Ver. 21.—This verse is omitted in many good manuscripts and by the Revised Version, it being considered to have been introduced from the parallel passage of St. Mark. It gives the second reason for the failure of the nine. **This kind . . . fasting.** Though all things are possible to faith, some works are more difficult of accomplishment than others. *This kind* can mean only this kind of evil spirit, or demons generally. But the latter interpretation is excluded by the fact that the apostles had already exercised successfully their power over devils without special prayer or fasting. The words point to a truth in the spiritual world, that there are different degrees in the Satanic hierarchy (comp. ch. xii. 45); some demons are more malignant than others, and have greater power over the souls of men. In the present case the possession was of long standing; it involved a terrible bodily malady; it was of an intense and unusual character. The mere word of exorcism, or the name of Jesus, spoken with little spiritual faith, could not overcome the mighty enemy. The exorcist needed special preparation; he must inspire and augment his faith by prayer and self-discipline. Prayer invokes the aid of God, and puts one's self unreservedly in his hands; fasting subdues the flesh, arouses the soul's energies, brings into exercise the higher parts of man's nature. Thus equipped, a man is open to receive power from on high, and can quell the assaults of the evil one.

Vers. 22, 23.—*Second official announcement of the Passion and Resurrection.* (Mark ix. 30—32; Luke ix. 43—45.)

Ver. 22.—**While they abode** (*ἀναστρεφομένων, went to and fro; conversantibus,* Vulgate) **in Galilee.** After some weeks spent in the extreme north, Jesus and his disciples had returned secretly to Galilee (Mark ix. 30), and were approaching the neighbourhood of Capernaum. The privacy was connected with the special instruction which he was now giving to his disciples. **The Son of man shall be betrayed . . . men.** There is a reference to the preparation thus mercifully afforded to the twelve in the angel's address to the women at the sepulchre, "Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee" (Luke xxiv. 6). Jesus reiterates the prediction continually in order to familiarize his followers with the unwelcome, the incredible, reality. But the Messiah's Passion, death, and resurrection were ideas that they could not at once receive; so impossible they seemed in the very nature of things, so contrary to all their hopes and expectations. *Shall be betrayed* (*μέλλει παραδίδοσθαι*). Is ordained, in the counsels of God, to be betrayed. *Tradendus est* (Vulgate). *Men.* He had before named the chief priests (ch. xvi. 21), afterwards he mentions the Gentiles (ch. xx. 19), as the agents in his death. So St. Peter, in his great sermon (Acts ii.), says to the Jews, "Ye have taken him, and by wicked hands [' by the hand of lawless men,' Revised Version] have crucified and slain."

Ver. 23.—**Shall be raised again** (*ἐγερθήσεται*); *be wakened.* This was always a subject of perplexity; and indeed, according to the other synoptists, "they understood not the saying; it was hid from them, and they perceived it not, and were afraid to ask him." **Were exceeding sorry.** They no longer rebuke him, as Peter had done (ch. xvi. 22), or try to divert him from his purpose; they begin to realize the position, and to anticipate with poignant sorrow the overthrow of their hopes.

Vers. 24—27.—*The coin in the fish's mouth.* This is one of the three miracles of our Lord which are peculiar to this Gospel. St. Matthew seems to concern himself particularly with matters which present Jesus as King-Messiah; and this occurrence was in his view specially notable, as herein Christ claimed for himself a royal position—Son in his Father's house.

Ver. 24.—**Capernaum.** Once more before the final scene he visited the spot so dear to his human heart—"his own city." **They that received tribute money** (*οἱ τὰ δίδραχμα λαμβάνοντες*). This is an unfortunate rendering, as it may be taken to countenance an erroneous view of the demanded impost, found in many ancient and some modern commentaries, which vitiates their whole interpretation. According to this opinion, the tribute was a civil payment, like the *denarius* of ch. xxii. 19, levied by the Roman government, or a capitation tax imposed by Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee (of which tax, however, we have no historical proof). That this is a misunderstanding is plain from many considerations. In the first place, the collectors are not *τελῶναι*, publicans, but quite another set of people, called *they that received the didrachmas.* Again, the officers of government would not have made their demand mildly in an interrogative form, "Doth not your Master," etc.? but would have exhibited that violent and offensive behaviour which made them so hated among the Jews. The political tax is never termed *didrachma*, but always *census*, as in ch. xxii. 17, 19; nor could Jesus have given the answer which is reported below, if the tax had been one levied in the interest of any earthly monarch, be it Cæsar or Herod. *The didrachmas* is a term denoting a well-known rate, concerning which we have full information from many sources—biblical, Talmudic, and traditional. The *didrachma* was a silver coin equal to two Attic drachms, or, in Jewish money, to one half-shekel of the sanctuary—something under our florin in weight. It was the amount of an ecclesiastical rate levied for religious purposes. Originally (Exod. xxx. 13, etc.) exacted as an acknowledgment and a thank-offering, a ransom, as it were, for the lives rescued from Egypt, it had been used in the wilderness in providing the framework of the tabernacle and the ornamentation of its pillars. Based on this practice arose a custom that every male Israelite of twenty years old and upwards should annually contribute to the temple treasury the sum of a half-shekel. Dr. Edersheim reckons the tribute in our Lord's time to have been equivalent to £75,000 per annum. The money was stored in the temple treasury, and was expended partly in the purchase of the daily sacrifices, victims, incense, etc., in the payment of rabbis and other officials connected with the temple, in maintaining the efficiency of the water supply, and in keeping in repair the vast and magnificent buildings in the temple area. After all this outlay, there was always a large sum in hand, which proved a strong temptation to the greed of conquerors, and the sacred coffers were often plundered; and even after many previous spoliations, we read that Crassus (B.C. 54) carried off no less than two and a half millions sterling. The tax was due by the twenty-fifth of the month Adar (equivalent to February-March), and the collectors who were appointed to or took upon themselves the office, opened stalls in every country town for the reception of the money. For many centuries the rate was of a voluntary nature, considered, indeed, a religious duty, and to be evaded by no one, Pharisee or Sadducee, who wished to be regarded as an orthodox believer, but its payment had not been secured by any legal process. Lately, indeed, the penalty of distraint had been enacted in order to obtain the tax from defaulters; but it is doubtful whether this was generally enforced. Possibly the appointed day had now arrived, and the collectors thought right to stir in the matter. **Came to Peter.** They applied to Peter instead of directly to Christ, perhaps out of respect for the latter, and from a certain awe with which he inspired them. Besides, Peter was their fellow-townsman, and they doubtless knew him well. His natural impulsiveness might have induced *him* to answer the call. It may also have been his own house, the other eleven being apparently staying with other friends, and Jesus with him ("me and thee," ver. 27). We may suppose that Jesus had complied with the demand on former occasions, when sojourning in his Galilæan home, so that the present application was only natural. **Doth not your Master** (*ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν, your Teacher*) **pay tribute** (*the didrachma*)? Perhaps the form of the question might be better rendered, "Your Teacher pays the two drachms, does he not?" The pronoun "your" is plural, because they recognized

that Jesus was at the head of a band of disciples, who would be influenced by his example. We may in this inquiry see other motives besides the obvious one. If Jesus paid the rate now without question, he would prove that he was nothing more than an ordinary Jew, with no claim to a higher origin or a Divine mission. Though not a priest or Levite, Jesus might have claimed exemption as a recognized rabbi, and the collectors may have desired to ascertain whether he would do this. There was, too, at this time a sect which, in its furious patriotism, refused to contribute aught to the temple so long as the holy city was profaned by the presence of the heathen. Did Christ belong to this body? And would he carry out their programme? If from any cause he declined the contribution, this abstention would give a handle to those who were not prepared to endorse his claims; the breach of such a generally recognized obligation would raise a prejudice against him, and weaken the effect of his acts and teaching. Some such motives may have contributed to inspire the question now asked.

Ver. 25.—**He saith, Yes.** Without consulting his Master, or even letting him know of the demand, Peter answered affirmatively. He knew that Christ never withdrew from conscientious obligations; Jesus may have paid the rate in former years, and might be confidently supposed to be ready to do so again. But was there not another feeling that dictated the quick reply, and made him pledge Jesus to the payment? He had a fear at his heart, caused by Christ's late warning and prophecy, that made him morbidly anxious to live at peace with all men at this conjuncture. As far as in him lay he would shield his beloved Master from the dread result which he anticipated; at any rate, he would endeavour to postpone the fatal day; no offence that he could obviate should be given. So, thinking only of present safety, forgetting or wilfully ignoring Christ's true position, he answered hastily, "Yes." **When he (Peter) was come into the house.** The collectors had addressed Peter in the street or at the door, and the apostle, having given his reply, hastened into the house where Jesus was, either to obtain the necessary coins or to make the demand known. **Prevented him.** The Revised Version paraphrases, *spake first to him*, which gives the meaning (though the Greek does not warrant such translation)—Jesus anticipated what Peter was going to say by showing that he knew the apostle's thoughts and all that had passed outside the house. He takes the opportunity of enforcing a needful lesson, making the listener, in the Socratic method, teach himself. **What thinkest thou, Simon?** By such familiar address he claims his attention. **The kings of the earth.** He contrasts these with the King of heaven, to whom a reference is implied in the Lord's subsequent words. **Custom** (τέλη) **or tribute** (κῆνσον). The former of these words (which would be better rendered *tolls*) signifies the customs laid on goods and merchandise and other such payments—*vectigalia*, as the Romans called them; the *tribute* (not the same word as that so translated in ver. 24) is the *census*, the capitation tax (ἐπικεφάλαιον) imposed upon every citizen of the empire. **Strangers** (ἀλλοτρίων). The contrast is between the family of the monarch and those who are not connected with him by any relationship.

Ver. 26.—**Of strangers.** Peter is brought to the desired point. He answers, as any one would, that in earthly kingdoms the children of the ruling monarch are exempt from taxes, which are exacted from all other subjects. **Then are the children free.** The comparison required the use of the plural, though the reference is properly confined to himself. The deduction leads naturally to the lesson of Christ's immunity. He virtually implies (though the inference is not developed in words), "I am the Son of God, as you, Peter, have acknowledged; this tax is levied for the house and service of God, whose Son I am; therefore I am free from the obligation of paying it; it cannot be required that I should pay tribute to my Father." Looked at in its original nature, the impost could not with propriety be demanded from him. It was an offering of atonement, a ransom of souls. How could he give money in expiation of himself—he who had come to give his life a ransom for others? Why should he ransom himself from sin and death, who had come to take away sin and destroy death and open everlasting life to all men? There was need to make the point clear now that Christ had openly asserted his Messiahship and his Divine nature. To pay the demand without explanation, after the statement of his Divinity, might occasion serious misapprehension in the minds of his followers. So he gently but convincingly shows that his claim of Sonship exempted him from all liability of the impost.

Ver. 27.—**Lest we should offend them, *cause them to stumble.*** In his large charity he would not take the advantage of his position to avoid the tax. Though above the Law, he would place himself under the Law. Offence would be given by the non-payment. His motive would be unknown and misunderstood (see on ver. 24). The people would attribute it to caprice, sectarianism, contempt of religion; they would

see in it dishonour to the temple. Suspicion and animosity would be aroused; ill feeling, injurious both to themselves who encouraged it and to the cause of Christ, would weaken the effects of his acts and doctrine. Further offence would supervene if he did not confirm Peter's engagement and execute the promise which the foremost disciple had virtually made in his name; since it might thus appear that he and his followers were not of one mind in this important matter. For such considerations he was content to waive his prerogative, and to provide for the payment by a miracle, which should at once vindicate his royal character and demonstrate that, while he was obedient to the Law, he was superior to it, was the Lord of heaven and earth and sea. **Go thou to the sea.** The Sea of Galilee, on whose shore Capernaum stood, and with which Peter had been all his life familiar. **Cast an hook.** The fisherman was to ply his trade, yet not to use his customary net; he was to fish with line and hook, that the miracle might be more striking. **Take up the fish that first cometh up.** From the deep waters to the bait. **Thou shalt find a piece of money;** *a stater.* This Greek coin, circulating throughout the East, was about equal in value to the shekel, or two didrachms, and therefore sufficient to pay the half-shekel for two persons. That a fish should seize a bright object which might drop into the sea is nothing uncommon. A cod has been found with a watch in its stomach, still going. The miracle is shown in the omniscience which knew what the fish carried in its maw, and in the omnipotence which drew it to the hook. As far as we know, and regarding the present age as the sabbath of creation (see John v. 17), Christ in his miracles created nothing absolutely, always using a natural and existing basis as the support of the wonder. So here he does not create the fish or the stater, but by marvellous coincidences makes them subserve his purpose. Tradition has stereotyped the miracle by assigning to a certain tribe of fish a permanent mark of the occurrence. The *john-dory*, whose name is corrupted either from *jaune doré*, "gold colour," or *adoré*, "worshipped," is called in some countries Peter's fish, and is supposed to retain the impression of the apostle's fingers on its sides. Others assert that it is the haddock which presents this memorial of the miracle. But neither of these fish is found in the Lake of Gennesareth. **Give . . . for me and thee** (ἀντὶ ἐμοῦ καὶ σοῦ). The form of expression recalls the original design of the institution, as a ransom of souls (comp. ch. xx. 28 in the Greek). He does not say, "for us;" for, though he submitted to the tax, it was not on the same ground as his servant. He himself paid, though exempt; Peter paid because he was liable. In the one case it was from humility, in the other from legal obligation. The account ends somewhat abruptly, nothing being said of the result of the Lord's command, what action Peter took, and what ensued thereon. But we need no assurance that all came to pass as Christ directed. The very silence is significant; it is the sublimest language. Neologian criticism has endeavoured to explain away or to throw discredit on the miraculous nature of this "transaction." We are asked to believe that Christ by his command meant only that Peter was to go and catch a fish and sell it for a stater. If this was the case, why did not the evangelist say so? Why did he introduce a story which he must have known to be untrue? Is there any ground for supposing that St. Matthew was a writer of myths and legends, or one who intentionally falsified the records on which he framed his history? Surely no unprejudiced person could judge thus of the writer of the First Gospel; to those who believe in inspiration the notion is sacrilegious. The incident is no embellishment of a natural fact, no mere sailor's anecdote, but the true account of a real occurrence, which the narrator credited and probably witnessed. Another allegation equally unfounded is that Christ was rebuking Peter for precipitancy in promising payment when they had no funds in their possession, as though Jesus was saying ironically, "You had better go and catch a fish, and look for the money in its mouth!" Such attempted evasions of the miraculous are puerile and saddening. And if it be objected, as indeed it is, that the miracle was unnecessary and unworthy of Jesus, who never exerted his supernatural power for his own benefit, it is easy to show that the wonder was required in order to give and enforce a lesson to Peter and his companions. In what better way could Jesus have conveyed to them the truth that, although for the nonce he consented to the Law, he was superior to it and exempt from the obligation, and that if he paid the tax he did so by an exercise of power which proved him to be the Son of God?

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The Transfiguration.* I. THE GLORY. 1. *The attendant circumstances.* Six days had elapsed since the memorable conversation in the parts of

Cæsarea Philippi. That conversation must have filled the hearts of the apostles with strange, awful thoughts. He with whom they had lived so long in the intercourse of familiar friendship was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. They had marked the dignity of his Person, the authority of his words, the power of his miracles; and they had felt that there was something in their Master that was more than human, very holy and majestic. Now he had accepted the homage of Peter, and had asserted the truth of that great confession—he was the Son of God. Very solemn it must have been to be with him those six days, looking into his face, hearing his words, and to know, as the disciples were beginning to know, who he really was. It must have been like the first moments of a true conversion, when the soul first realizes in its depth and blessedness the presence and the love of God. But other also and very different thoughts must have agitated the apostles' minds during those six days. Doubtless they all shared the feelings of Peter; their soul recoiled in unspeakable horror from the prospect which the Lord had set before them; they could not associate the thought of failure and shame and death with the Messiahship; they could scarcely believe that the Christ, the Son of the living God, could suffer such things at the hand of mortal men; they could not bear to think that the Master whom they loved so very dearly was destined to drink the bitter cup of suffering. He had told them so very plainly; but they could not take into their hearts the full meaning of his words. They only half believed them; probably they did not wholly believe till the event proved their truth. But yet those solemn words, even if only half believed, must have caused them exceeding great distress, and must have filled them with restless, torturing anxiety. The Lord, in his thoughtful love, would comfort them, would confirm their faith, would prepare them to face the tremendous shock which awaited them. 2. *The retirement.* The six days were over. We long to know the secrets of those days; they must have been days of deep thought, of intense prayer, of close communion with the Lord. Now they were over; and the Lord took with him Peter, James, and John, the chosen three, who alone had seen the raising of the daughter of Jairus, who alone were to witness the mysterious agony. He carried them up—it is a remarkable word, the same word which is used (Luke xxiv. 51) in describing the Ascension—into a high mountain apart. The locality, the height, the snow alluded to in Mark ix. 3, the simple title used by St. Luke, "*the* mountain," all seem to suggest Hermon, the most conspicuous mountain in Palestine, the snow-clad mountain which, with its towering heights, closed the prospect to the north of Cæsarea Philippi. Thither the Lord carried up the highly favoured three; he took them apart. The holiest manifestations of God's grace and presence are made in secret to those chosen ones who live nearest to God; they are very sweet and precious, but very, very sacred—too sacred to be talked about save in Christian communion with like-minded servants of the Lord. Christian men do well to retire from time to time to the high mountain apart from the world, there to hold close communion with the Lord in companionship with a few proved and humble-hearted disciples. 3. *The glorious change.* The Lord was praying, St. Luke tells us; it was for prayer that he had sought retirement; and "as he prayed" he was transfigured. The effulgent splendour of the Godhead poured itself through the earthly tabernacle in which it dwelt, as in ancient times the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand there to minister (1 Kings viii. 11). The sacred body of the Lord Jesus Christ was the truest temple; "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). That splendour had hitherto been concealed; he had laid his glory by in the tender condescension of his ineffable love; but now, for the more confirmation of the faith of the apostles and, through them, of the Christian Church, he allowed it to appear for a brief space in such measure as the human eye could bear. "None can see my face and live," God had said to Moses when he prayed, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory;" but, hidden in a cleft of the rock, he saw the goodness of the Lord as his glory passed by (Exod. xxxiii. 18—23). Such a glorious vision was now vouchsafed to the three chosen witnesses. Their Master's face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, glistering, exceeding white as snow. He is the Light of the world, he is the Sun of Righteousness; night is not night to the Christian when that Sun shineth upon him. The darkness of that night was dispelled by the radiant glory that issued from the Person of the Saviour. The vivid recollection of that glory

never passed away; the two apostles who remained (St. James went early to his reward) mention it in their writings (John i. 14; 2 Pet. i. 18). It was "as he prayed" that this glorious change took place. The humble, faithful Christian is made by the grace of Christ like unto his Lord. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed ['transfigured;' the Greek verb is the same as that used here] into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18). And surely it is as they pray that that blessed change comes upon the servants of the Lord. Faithful prayer lifts them into his presence, to the holy mount, as it were; they behold by faith his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father; and that glory of holiness exerts a transforming energy over those who in the power of prayer by faith behold the Lord. It is when Christian people present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," that, as St. Paul (Rom. xii. 2) says, using again the same word, they are 'transformed by the renewing of their mind." The transfiguration of the Lord was an anticipation of the glory of his ascension; it was to the apostles a foretaste of the beatific vision; it is to us a parable of the great change which must pass over the soul of every one of God's elect. We too must shine, if by his grace we attain to any measure of real holiness, as lights in the world by his reflected glory; we too must wash our robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Lord, thy Spirit's power transforming
Through our inmost being pour,
Heart and thought and wish conforming
To thine image more and more."

4. *Moses and Elijah.* They were the central figures of the Old Testament, the representatives of the Law and the prophets. They had both been admitted into a very close communion with God, and had both, in the ecstasy of Divine contemplation, been sustained through the miraculous fast of forty days. Now they appeared in glory. Peter recognized them by some power of spiritual intuition. Then surely we may believe that there will be some means of mutual recognition among departed saints. They came from the realms of the blessed to hold intercourse with the Son of God. The angels desire to look into the mysteries of redemption; and if the angels, how much more those glorified spirits who were once compassed with infirmities, and knew by their own experience the power of temptation, and the deep need of atonement and sanctification! They came to commune with him in whom all the ritual of the Law found its fulfilment, of whom all the prophets spake; and they talked with him (St. Luke tells us) "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The precious death of Christ, the death prefigured by the serpent which Moses long ago had lifted up in the wilderness, was the theme of their high discourse. What they said, what they heard from Christ, we cannot tell. The apostles seem in some way to have heard or apprehended in their spirits the sacred words. Thus much we learn, that there can be no higher, holier subject of thought; no higher, holier subject of solemn conversation among Christian men than the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses and Elijah longed to know the awful, blessed meaning of the cross. The Lord unfolded to them the mysteries of his love. May we be filled with the same holy desire; may the same heavenly Teacher teach us the deep things of his salvation! 5. *Peter.* He is eager and impulsive as usual. He and his companions had been heavy with sleep. The dazzling glory of the transfigured Lord aroused them. They kept awake, St. Luke says; they saw in full waking consciousness the celestial sight. They heard, it seems, something of the wondrous conversation; they found that his decease, the mention of which had given them such extreme anguish, was a theme of deep interest and hallowed thought in the mysterious world of spirits. The marvellous interview was drawing to an end, the glorious visitors were departing, when Peter, in his intense excitement, not knowing what he said, addressed the Lord, "Lord," he said, "it is good for us to be here"—beautiful and elevating. It was beautiful indeed to contemplate the glorious form of Christ; it was beautiful to see how those whom the Jews most highly honoured came from their homes of bliss to commune with him. Peter would gladly have shared in that holy intercourse; he longed to hear more, to see more; they were departing too soon, he thought. "It is good for us to be here," he said: "let us make [or, perhaps, according to the reading of three very ancient manuscripts, 'I will

make] three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He knew not what he said. He would have remained on the holy mount in the enjoyment of the heavenly vision; but it might not be. These glimpses of heavenly sweetness are not for long. God has work for his servants upon earth. Sometimes he "bringeth them up into a high mountain apart" for a while. It seems good for them to be there; but they must soon descend, and work for his Name's sake among the poor, the ignorant, and the sinful. 6. *The voice from heaven.* There was no answer given to Peter's words. But there came a bright cloud, a cloud full of light, the Shechinah surely, the tabernacle of light which revealed the presence of God. It overshadowed the Lord and his adoring visitors; the disciples feared as they saw them enter into the cloud. And forth from the cloud there came an awful voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." It was not enough that Moses and Elijah should come to do the Saviour honour. The Father himself bore witness to the dignity, the holiness, of the only begotten Son. The like words had been heard before by John the Baptist, the representative of the ancient Jewish Church. Now the same attestation is vouchsafed to the three apostles, the representatives of the Christian Church. That voice made a deep impression upon them, an impression which was never forgotten. St. Peter alludes to it in a remarkable passage in his Second Epistle (i. 16—18), in which several words are repeated which occur in the description of the Transfiguration. It confirmed their faith; they could doubt no longer. He was indeed the Son of the living God, though he was to be rejected and to suffer and to die. All this had seemed strange and incredible to men brought up among Jewish surroundings, with Jewish hopes and expectations. But it was true. The Father was well pleased in the Son of his love, well pleased in his voluntary humiliation, in his self-sacrifice. The salvation of mankind through the cross and Passion of the Son of God was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but it was the purpose of the all-wise, all-holy God. God was well pleased in the Lord Christ. He is well pleased in those who follow Christ's example. He bids us hear him. The cross is the only way to everlasting life. The cross of the Lord Jesus is the life of the world. We can enter into life only by following him, bearing each of us his cross, denying ourselves, as the Lord bore the cross, and died upon the cross for us, and is exalted to God's right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. 7. *The end of the vision.* The voice of God is sweet to hear, but it must be very awful to sinful flesh and blood. The disciples fell on their faces and were sore afraid. But the Lord came and touched them. It was a human touch—the touch of human, loving sympathy. It told the apostles that the high Son of God, whom they had just seen awful in the majesty of the Godhead, was their own tender human Friend. Still the touch of Jesus felt by faith comforts his people when the terror of the Lord fills their souls with dread. "Arise," he said, "be not afraid." So he had said before, "It is I; be not afraid." So, thank God, he speaks even now to the Christian soul, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." His touch, his gentle words, bring peace and holy calm. It was so with the apostles. They lifted up their eyes, and saw Jesus only. The vision had gone, with all its awful splendour; only the Lord was left, looking on them, as he was wont to look, in love and tenderness, clad in the well-known raiment, speaking in the well-known tones. The vision was gone. Again they were on the lonely mountain-side, the snowy heights of Hermon towering above them, the stars looking down on them from heaven; only Jesus was with them. The Law and the prophets pass away, but Christ abideth a King for ever. Earthly hopes, earthly ambitions, fade away and die. Jesus is still with the soul that trusteth in him. Seasons of high spiritual delight, when the Sun of Righteousness beams upon the heart, fade into twilight. But Jesus is still with his chosen; with them as certainly when they go down into the work and the trials and the temptations of the commonplace routine of daily life, as he was when they were with him on the mount entranced in sacred rapture.

II. THE LORD'S LESSONS. 1. *They were to tell no man.* To tell their fellow-apostles might excite feelings of self-exaltation in themselves, of envy in the rest. Perhaps also the nine were not yet able to receive such a report. They did not yet understand the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom. We must remember, too, that Judas was among them. Still less was the outer circle of the disciples capable of receiving the wondrous story. The experiences o the Christian soul in close communion with

God are very precious, but very, very sacred. They are not to be thoughtlessly divulged; not to be talked about commonly; they are too deep and holy. Free talk on such subjects tends to produce spiritual pride in some, irreverence in others. The true Christian will speak of these blessed tastes of God's graciousness only to the like-minded, and that with deep humility and godly fear, mingled with devout thankfulness. 2. *Elias.* The apostles had much to learn and much to unlearn. They could not understand "what the rising from the dead should mean" (Mark ix. 10), though Christ had twice before spoken of his resurrection on the third day. They were much perplexed also about the appearing of Elijah. Could this transient manifestation which they had just seen be the coming of which they had so often heard from the rabbis? The name of Elijah was often on the lips of the Jews, as indeed it is still. When he comes (they said) he shall restore all things. He shall bring back the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron, and restore Israel to its ancient glory. It was true, the Lord said, that Elijah was to come. But he had come; and they who had so long expected him knew him not when he came, but treated him according to their own evil will. Then the apostles felt that the Lord had spoken of him who had gone "before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." The forerunner of the Christ had met the martyr's death; Christ himself would soon be called to suffer. The Lord sought to draw the thoughts of the apostles from difficult and perplexing questions to what now lay in the near future—his sufferings and death. We cannot think too much on the cross. Difficult matters of controversy may be of great interest, but they do not bear very closely upon the salvation of our souls. Let us keep the cross before our thoughts; let us try to realize its awful and blessed meaning by constant and earnest meditation.

LESSONS. 1. It is good for us to be sometimes alone with God; use such seasons of solitude for prayer and meditation. 2. We need a transfiguration, a transformation of the heart and will; pray earnestly for it. 3. Moses and Elijah talked with Christ of his decease; we should commune with him on that same blessed and awful subject. 4. Flee from spiritual pride; humble silence is better than presumptuous talk.

Vers. 14—21.—*The maniac boy.* I. THE FAILURE OF THE NINE APOSTLES. 1. *The descent from the mount.* The morning had come, and the Lord with the three chosen apostles came down from the Mount of the Transfiguration to rejoin those whom he had left behind. As he drew near to them he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them (Mark ix. 14). It was a strange contrast. He had just left the peace of the mountain-side and the glory of the heavenly radiance. He came down to the jealousies, the controversies, the miseries, of earth. His presence was much needed; the nine apostles had experienced a sad defeat. They had received from him power to cast out devils; but now they had attempted, and had failed. Their Master had left them; he had taken with him the three who were nearest to himself. The faith of the nine had perhaps been weakened by the excitement, the agitation, the distressing predictions, of the last few days. So Aaron had failed in courage and in faith when Moses and Joshua were absent on Mount Sinai, and he was left in charge of the congregation. The apostles had failed now. The scribes were probably exulting over their defeat, arguing, perhaps, that this was a thing which neither they nor their Lord could do. Ah! we are helpless if we have lost our faith; we cannot cast out the evil one. Without Christ we can do nothing. 2. *The meeting with the nine apostles.* The Lord was come at last. He approached the scene of confusion with his wonted dignity. Perhaps some traces of the radiance of the Transfiguration still lingered round him. The people were greatly amazed, St. Mark tells us, when they beheld him; but they were not terrified like the Israelites when the face of Moses shone on his descent from Sinai. The Lord did not hide the glory of his countenance; it attracted, it did not repel. The people ran to him and saluted him. So we should run to Christ in our troubles; so we should salute him. He comes to help his chosen in their weakness. When we feel that he is near, we are amazed at our own want of faith, at his glory and power and forgiving love.

II. THE MIRACLES. 1. *The father.* The Lord's coming brought confidence to the perplexed disciples, hope to the disappointed suppliant. In that presence the miserable

felt instinctively that there was help and comfort. One man disengaged himself from the crowd. He came in haste to Christ. He knelt down before him in the attitude of humble and earnest supplication. "Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. He told all the sad story. His son was lunatic, sore vexed, afflicted with the worst form of epilepsy. The fits came upon him in wild, fierce onslaughts, dreadful to look upon; for the seizures were due, not to natural causes, but to the direct agency of an evil spirit, who had taken possession of the lad, and tormented him with all the hellish malice of intense wickedness. It was a pitiable case, miserable for the poor boy, agonizing to the unhappy father. From his son's childhood he had watched these wild paroxysms in helpless anguish. Now Christ had come into the neighbourhood. He heard of his power and mercy. He brought his afflicted child. But the Lord was absent, on the Mount of the Transfiguration. The nine apostles remained. The poor father brought his son to them, and begged for help. The case was beyond their power; they could not cast out the evil spirit. The disappointment aggravated the father's distress. Now the Lord himself had come; and the father knelt before him. Sorrow brings men to Christ; sorrow brings them to their knees. We must come ourselves straight to Christ in the hour of extremest need. Sometimes his ministers can help us, sometimes they cannot. Christ can always calm the wildest tumults of the soul. Come straight to him, kneeling before him, in your own troubles, in the troubles of those very dear to you. 2. *The Lord's words.* "O faithless and perverse generation!" he said. The scene before him was an illustration of the general character of the men among whom the Saviour lived. It is in some sense an illustration of the state of the Church now. Human nature is the same in all ages. The multitude regarded Christ with some external reverence; they were ready to apply to him in perplexity and sorrow; but they had no depth of conviction, no stability. There were some open unbelievers among them, who questioned Christ's authority and denied his power. There were some followers of the Lord, not without earnestness, not without love; but weak in faith, unable through that weakness to exercise the power which had been given them by the Lord. The evil spirit, too, was there; there were wild excesses caused by his agency; there was intense distress. There was no strength of faith, no energy of trustfulness in Christ. Yet there were three chosen saints, the nearest to the Lord, who had gone up with him into the holy mount, and were now returning with him to the labours and the sorrows of this sinful world. That generation was faithless; it was perverse, crooked, warped by invincible prejudices and inveterate obstinacy. The Lord had been long with them; but how little the result seemed to be! how few had chosen the good part! He would not remain much longer among them; his tender forbearance must have an end at last. We must be patient, when the Lord most holy had so much to bear; we must not repine when our work seems disheartening, unsatisfactory. The servant is not above his Lord. But mark the Saviour's calm consciousness of power. "Bring him hither to me," he said. The disciples might fail; he could not fail when it pleased him to exercise his healing energy, for he was God Almighty. 3. *The evil spirit cast out.* St. Mark gives us, as his wont is, the deeply interesting details: the conversation with the father; the great word, "All things are possible to him that believeth;" the answer of the intensely anxious parent, so often echoed since by trembling souls coming to Christ in earnest entreaty and utter self-abasement, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Then came the word of power, "Thou deaf and dumb spirit" (for the demon had destroyed the poor lad's power of hearing, and his only utterances were wild, inarticulate cries), "I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." We notice the tone of authority, the emphatic "I," especially in the original. The demon despised the nine apostles; he must obey the Lord. He must never again dare to enter the heart from which the Lord himself had driven him. He let loose his fury on the lad; he cried, and rent him sore; but he came out of him at once. The Lord gently raised the poor boy. He was exhausted, and to all appearance lifeless; but Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and delivered him again to his father. We mark the gentleness of the Lord Jesus. Very gentle he was to the unhappy boy, to the afflicted, almost despairing father. We mark his power. He can drive out the devil, even from those over whom he has the firmest hold. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him." Let us come. The father came, though he was almost hopeless; the evil spirit

was so fierce, so strong. So we may pray for cases that seem almost desperate. The poor lad could not pray for himself; the Lord listened to the father's prayer. Let us pray for others, for our relations and near friends, for all who need our prayers. Only let us take heed that our prayers are lifted up in faith. There is no limit to the power of a true and living faith, for it is limited only by the power of God, which is without limit. And if we feel (and who does not?) that our faith is wanting in depth and earnestness, then pray we again in the words of that memorable cry, which seemed wrung from the very heart of the almost despairing father, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

III. THE CONVERSATION WITH THE NINE APOSTLES. 1. *They came to Christ.* They came to him privately, into the house, St. Mark says; and asked him the reason of their failure. He had given them power to cast out evil spirits: why could they not cast this one out? We should come to Christ in our spiritual disappointments, when we have failed to conquer this or that sin in ourselves, to convince this or that sinner of his danger. We should come to him in secret prayer, asking him the reason of our failure. He will tell us, if we come in humility and sincerity. But let us not be satisfied till we have discovered the cause of our want of success, and set ourselves seriously to overcome it. 2. *The Lord's answer.* The cause of their failure was simple; it was want of faith. Possibly the three apostles who were nearest to the Lord might have been able to cast the devil out; the nine could not. Some saints are stronger than others; some can do more than others in converting souls; their strength is in proportion to their faith. Faith is strength; for it is, in truth, the strength of God that worketh in his people, and that strength is manifested in those who trust wholly and absolutely in him. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is only in union with Christ that the Christian can do all things. "Without me ye can do nothing." The victory which overcometh the world is the strength of Christ, but in another sense it is our faith; for faith maintains a living union with Christ, and thus the strength of Christ is ours. Our faith may be small, like a grain of mustard seed, but if it be only true, it can remove mountains (the Lord seems to have pointed to the towering mass of Hermon as he said the words)—mountains of difficulties, mountains of perplexities, mountains of sin. Faith is realized in different degrees. To a true and perfect faith, the Lord says, nothing is impossible; for a true and perfect faith reflects the almightiness of God. "Lord, increase our faith." 3. *The special difficulty of the case.* There was this to be said in palliation of the apostles' failure. The evil spirit was one of exceptional energy and malignity. Christians who would fight against such enemies must be doubly armed; by constant fervent prayer they must keep themselves in the love of God, in that close communion with him which is the secret of spiritual strength; by continued and voluntary self-mortification they must fortify themselves against the temptations of sensual pleasure. In prayer and fasting the Lord overcame Satan for us; in prayer and fasting the true disciple follows the Lord's example and shares his victory. In the sermon on the mount the Lord enumerates almsgiving, prayer, and fasting as three principal exercises of devotion; here he describes prayer and fasting (the reading, however, is doubtful) as the chief weapons of the Christian warrior in the holy fight against the deadly enemy.

LESSONS. 1. We cannot always be on the mount in a rapture of devotion; we must work for Christ among scenes of sin and sorrow. 2. Come to Christ in your troubles, come with tears, come kneeling before him; he can save. 3. Pray for continually increasing faith; pray for yourself, pray for others. 4. Tell Christ of past failures; search out the cause; seek his strength for the future.

Vers. 22—27.—*Return to Galilee.* I. REITERATED PREDICTIONS OF THE COMING PASSION. 1. *The Lord alone with the twelve.* He returns to Galilee, but no longer for teaching. He revisits the old familiar spots with the shadow of death closing round him. He was not followed by multitudes as of old. He "passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it" (Mark ix. 30). He confined his teaching to the little circle of his apostles. He sought to prepare them for the awful scenes which lay before them. 2. *He forewarns them of his death.* He repeats in Galilee the prophecy of Cæsarea Philippi; he adds one important detail, "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men." He hints at the treachery; he tells them not

yet of the traitor. He predicts his approaching death; he predicts his resurrection on the third day. They were exceeding sorry; they understood not that saying, says St. Mark, and were afraid to ask him. The Lord had now told them of his death twice, and that very plainly; but they could not, they would not, take it into their hearts. It so dashed all their hopes, it was so utterly different from all their expectations. It seemed so strange, so impossible, that One who had manifested such wondrous power, whom some of them had lately seen radiant with the glory of heaven, could suffer death at the hands of men. They were exceeding sorry; they could not believe, and yet perhaps they could not wholly disbelieve. They feared to ask him. Their love for him was mingled with a profound reverence and awe which late events had greatly increased. They were filled with grief and mysterious forebodings.

II. THE TEMPLE DUES. 1. *The question put to Peter.* All adult Jews paid a half-shekel yearly for the expenses of the temple service. The payment was originally made (Exod. xxx. 12—16) only when the people were numbered. It was called a ransom for souls. The same sum was paid by all, rich and poor alike, to show that the souls of rich and poor are of equal value in the sight of God. The collectors now came to Peter. They felt, it may be, something of the awful dignity which surrounded the Person of the Lord. "Doth not your Master pay the half-shekel?" they said. Peter at once assented; he thought that his Master, so zealous for the honour of the temple, would readily and gladly pay the temple dues. 2. *Peter's conversation with the Lord.* Peter came into the house, perhaps his own house, which had been usually honoured with the Saviour's presence during his residence at Capernaum. Jesus spoke first to him. He knew what had happened, for he knew all things. He drew from Peter the acknowledgment that the kings of the earth take tribute from their subjects, but not from their own children; the children are free. The inference was obvious. Peter had not long before confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then he was under no obligation to pay the customary dues for the maintenance of the temple service, for he was the only begotten Son of the invisible King, who, though the heaven and the heaven of heavens could not contain him, deigned to regard that temple as his earthly sanctuary. Again, Christ was greater than the temple; he himself was the Temple of God in the fullest, holiest sense. All this Peter had forgotten. 3. *The payment.* It was not of obligation; the Lord was plainly exempt. But he will pay it for example's sake, to avoid wounding consciences. It was right for Israelites to maintain the temple services. It is right that Christians should give freely, cheerfully, for the support of the Church. It would have caused grave offence if the people of Capernaum, who knew the Lord so well, had heard that he refused to contribute for a purpose so sacred. They would not understand the deep reasons which he gave to Peter. They would simply suppose that a great Rabbi, a famous Teacher, declined to pay the temple dues. The example would be evil; it would be seized as an excuse by the avaricious; it would cause idle and malicious talk. The Lord would pay the sum demanded, though he was not really liable. He is here, as always, an Example to us—our great Example. We must avoid shocking the feelings of others, even the prejudices of the ill instructed. We must be careful not to do things which, though lawful in themselves, may lead others astray. We must not stand upon our strict rights when to do so might be misunderstood, and might wound the consciences of weak brethren. We must give willingly, not only to the poor, but also for the service of the Church. The half-shekel paid annually for the service of the temple was regarded as given to God. So are our poor gifts now, if we give in faith and love. We must learn humility of our lowly Lord. He came to be baptized, though he was without sin. He paid the temple dues, the ransom for souls, though he was the Son of God. "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." 4. *The means for providing the payment.* It may be that the bag which Judas kept was empty. It may be, though the sum was so small, that Peter had rashly promised more than the slender means of the little company could then furnish. It may be that the Lord wished to teach Peter that, though he submitted to this demand like an ordinary Israelite, he was indeed the Lord of creation, that even the fishes of the sea would wait upon his will. Peter was to resume his old occupation. He was to go to the sea. The first fish that came up would furnish the necessary money, a stater, enough for both the Lord and Peter. The Lord teaches us a lesson of trustfulness. He bids us fulfil the duties of our calling. In the humble

discharge of those daily duties we shall find all that we need; for he will provide for those who trust in him. We are not told the result. Doubtless the stater was found. The two half-shekels were paid. The Lord does not mock his people with commands which cannot be obeyed. He who gives the commandment enables them to fulfil it. He directed the fish to the hook of Peter. He makes all things work together for good to them that love him. He will help us in small difficulties as well as in great emergencies. He teaches us by this miracle, as he taught afterwards by the mouth of his apostle, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

LESSONS. 1. The apostles were reverent in their relations with Christ; so must we be. 2. They feared to ask him about his approaching death; they understood him not. We know more than they knew then; let us meditate constantly in reverent love upon the Saviour's cross. 3. Let us give freely for all good works; let us not make excuses for ourselves, but imitate the Lord's example. 4. Our almsgiving will not impoverish us; "the Lord will provide."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Transfiguration.* Raphael's famous picture at the Vatican gives us an external representation of this wonderful event. But we want to get behind the canvas and discover the meaning of it, if it is to be something more to us than a theatrical transformation scene, something better than a spectacular display.

I. THE GLORY OF CHRIST. The external splendour had a meaning. If it was not a purely artificial radiance created in order to dazzle the eyes of the disciples, it must have corresponded to a wonderful illumination and glory in the soul of Jesus. Moses' face shone after he had been communing with God on Sinai (Exod. xxxiv. 29). The face of Stephen took on an angelic lustre in view of martyrdom (Acts vi. 15). Jesus had been speaking of his approaching death quite recently (ch. xvi. 21), and of the victory of self-sacrifice (ch. xvi. 25). During the Transfiguration his death was the topic of his conversation (Luke ix. 31). Then we may justly infer that the splendour that shone out from him corresponded to his exaltation of spirit in devoting himself to death. It was the glory of sacrifice. Jesus is most glorious in freely giving himself up for the salvation of the world.

II. THE HEAVENLY VISITORS. It is commonly assumed that Moses and Elijah had come to complete the picture that was displayed before the wondering eyes of the chosen three. But would they have been sent for so slight an object? It is more probable that, like the angels who ministered to him on other occasions, they were sent to cheer Jesus himself. He had looked for sympathy from his disciples when he had confided in them the dark secret of his doom, but he had failed to receive it, and instead he had heard the voice of the tempter in the impatient reply of one of his most intimate friends (ch. xvi. 22, 23). Thus he was left alone in his meditations of death. But the sympathy which failed him on earth was afforded by the founder of Judaism and the leader of the prophets—both men whose end on earth was mysterious—returning from the heavenly world.

III. THE PERPLEXED DISCIPLES. The splendour overwhelmed the three. Two were speechless. The third had not the gift of silence; and wishing to say something when he had nothing to say, he made a foolish remark. This showed, again, how far the Master was above his disciples, how little they could enter into his life. But it also showed a measure of right feeling in St. Peter. It was good to be on the mount with Christ. We cannot retain the ravishing moments of heavenly rapture. But we can cherish them if ever we are visited with them. At least we can learn that it is good to be anywhere with Jesus, good to meditate on his Passion, good to behold his glory.

IV. THE DIVINE VOICE. The voice which had been heard before at the baptism (ch. iii. 17) is heard again on the mount, but with an addition to its message. 1. *God owns his Son with delight.* Was this voice for the cheering of Jesus as well as for the guidance of the disciples? Under the circumstances this seems probable. God was not only pleased with Jesus because he was his Son, but also because his Son

pleased him. At first this was on account of the innocent character of Jesus, and his resolve to dedicate himself to his work in baptism; now it is because of the courage and devotion with which he will face death. 2. *God commends his Son to men.* "Hear ye him." This is the addition. Christ has disciples now; and Christ has proved his right to be heard. It is not enough to adore him in his glory; we must listen to his voice of teaching and obey his word of command.—W. F. A.

Vers. 10—13.—*The Elijah-ministry of John the Baptist.* The disciples were perplexed at what they saw on the Mount of the Transfiguration. There Elijah appeared with Moses in conversation with Christ, and the vision recalled to mind the familiar expectation of the Jews that the prophet should precede the advent of Christ. Was this the coming of Elijah? Surely not, for it was but a momentary visit in a solitary place. Yet if Elijah had not come first, how could the Christ have come? Thus the disciples were troubled in mind till their Master explained the situation by pointing to the mission of John the Baptist.

I. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST NEEDED TO BE HERALDED BY AN ELIJAH-MINISTRY. The word "must" points to more than the fulfilment of prophecy. There was a necessity in the very nature of the case. Except Elijah came first Christ could not come. 1. *Inferior ministries prepare for higher ministries.* Elijah was great, but not so great as Christ. The prophets were all of them less than the Saviour. The Law was not equal to the gospel. Yet the lower and earlier ministries, with which all of these were associated, made the way ready for the coming of Christ. 2. *Awakening must precede regeneration.* Christ came to bring new life to the world. No Elijah could confer such a gift on his fellow-men. But, in order to receive it, men must be awake and attentive. The earlier ministry rouses; it breaks up the fallow ground; thus it prepares for the later seed-sowing. 3. *Repentance must come before forgiveness.* The grace of the gospel is not for the impenitent. Some influence must melt the stubborn heart if the kindly blessings of Christ are to be received into it.

II. THE ELIJAH-MINISTRY MAY COME AND YET BE REJECTED. It was so in the case of John the Baptist, at least on the part of a considerable portion of the Jews. 1. *There is no compulsion in the Divine ministries.* We may accept them, and then they will bring us blessings. But we may reject them, though to our cost. After all, man is more than the soil through which the plough is driven; for he may arrest the instrument that would prepare him for the seed-sowing, or he may harden himself against it. 2. *The most needed Divine ministry may not come in the form we are expecting.* The people looked for Elijah, and Elijah came; yet they did not recognize him. We may read the Bible too literally. Prophecy is not fulfilled in pedantic, verbal exactitude. The spirit of the prediction is verified in the event, but not in the form in which the prediction was first recorded. We blunder in blindness if we fail to welcome the Baptist because we are looking for Elijah

III. CHRIST OPENS HIS DISCIPLES' EYES TO THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSES IN THE ELIJAH-MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. 1. *It is well to bring our difficulties to Christ.* The disciples were not ashamed to own their perplexity, nor too proud to ask for light. Our Lord will accept confidence in regard to the doubts that trouble us. 2. *Jesus Christ understands the Divine purposes.* They were obscure to the disciples; but to him they were quite clear. Therefore when we cannot see all we may trust him. The captain knows the route over the seas that are all unknown to the passengers. 3. *Our Lord reveals needful truths concerning the Divine purposes.* He gave his disciples an explanation. His whole life and teaching are luminous with revelation.—W. F. A.

Vers. 14—18.—*The disciples' failure.* It has often been pointed out—as Raphael has shown in his famous picture—that the distressing occurrence of the disciples' failure happened just when Christ was away from them, transfigured on the mountain. Then clearly it would not have been good to build three tabernacles, and so retain the heavenly vision. The world needs Christ; it was well that he returned to the world.

I. A PARENT IN TROUBLE. This parent is greatly distressed because his son is grievously afflicted, and he seeks relief for him. Parents not only feel for their children;

they will do for them what they would never attempt for themselves. It is not enough to have compassion for a great affliction. Love will search for remedies. 1. *The parent brings his child to Christ's disciples.* He is not to blame for this, because (1) Christ himself was out of reach; and (2) the disciples had received a commission to work miracles (ch. x. 8). The people of Christ should be helpers of the distressed. The Church is the natural home of the helpless. It is sad to see the miserable so disappointed by the failure of the Church to help them that they turn aside to the new offers of "Secularists." 2. *When disappointed, the parent appeals to Christ.* He does not despair; he does not give up all efforts to have his child healed. Nothing in the world is so persevering as love. When the Church fails, Christ may yet be appealed to. It is a great mistake to allow our disappointment with Christians to blind us to the goodness and power of Christ. We have to learn to turn from Christ's imperfect followers to the Lord himself.

II. THE DISCIPLES HUMILIATED. They tried to cure the lunatic boy, but they failed. 1. *Good men are not always successful men.* We may be true Christians, and yet we may meet with bitter disappointments in our efforts. The servant of Christ is often humiliated at the failure of his attempts to serve his Master or benefit his fellow-men. 2. *Christians are weak in the absence of their Master.* If Christ had been with them, the encouragement of his presence would have fortified his disciples. They who would do effective work for Christ must cleave close to Christ. 3. *The failure of work is due to the failure of faith.* St. James tells us that faith without works is dead. The absence of the fruit is the sign of its deadness. If there is no sap in the tree, the branches must wither. To do effective service in this world we must live much in the unseen. 4. *Difficult Christian work is only possible when accompanied by prayer.* The mistake of the disciples may have been that, while they lost faith in God, they were too confident of their own powers. We always fail when we are trusting to ourselves alone.

III. CHRIST TO THE RESCUE. He came when he was most needed. 1. *Christ rebukes unbelief.* He sees a defective condition of mind in the disciples and in the people generally. The atmosphere is not congenial to miracle-working. But this is a sign of something wrong. A general state of unbelief is like the prevalence of a malaria. It must not be acquiesced in as a normal condition. 2. *Christ makes up for the failure of his disciples.* They may fail; he never fails. If he seems to fail in some cases (as at Nazareth, ch. xiii. 58), this is not because his power is insufficient, but because men are not receptive. He takes up our imperfect work, broken and marred as it is, and he perfects it for us.—W. F. A.

Ver. 20.—*The power of faith.* This was the comment of our Lord on the failure of the disciples to cure the lunatic boy, and on his own subsequent success. The difference was accounted for by the fact that the disciples had not faith, while Christ possessed it. On another occasion, when there was no question of any attempt of his disciples, our Lord answered the amazement caused by one of his miracles by pointing in a similar way to the power of faith (ch. xxi. 21).

I. THE FAITH. 1. *Its existence.* "If ye have faith." These words imply uncertainty. Many people have much religion, but no faith. They have a creed, but not faith. They do not really and actively trust God. Faith begins in us when we put our belief into action. 2. *Its smallness.* It may be but as a grain of mustard seed. It is sad to think of its being so minute; certainly there is no virtue in its meagreness. Yet even a small faith may do great things if it is indeed a real faith. The great question is not—How many things do we believe? but—How firm is our grasp upon the objects of faith? The area of belief may be vast as a wind-swept desert, and faith may be small as a shepherd's cot. Then it is that little hut of faith that saves us, while the storm passes overhead. 3. *Its life.* The mustard seed is better than a grain of sand. It is alive, and therefore it can grow. The living faith will not be always small. But even while it is small it is capable of wonderful possibilities.

II. THE WORK OF FAITH. 1. *An active work.* Christ here speaks of what faith does, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews recites achievements of faith (Heb. xi.). Faith not only affords shelter in trouble, it is an inspiration for service. The

man of faith is the man of action, for he has within him a fountain of energy. It is, therefore, an utter mistake to suppose that "believing" is to be *instead of* "doing." Faith is given to enable us to do great things which we could not accomplish without it. 2. *A great work.* This small faith is to accomplish grand results. The mustard seed is to remove a mountain. Only a foolish literalism can occasion any perplexity in the reading of Christ's words. His disciples were too familiar with Oriental metaphors to fall into the absurd mistake of supposing that Jesus really expected them to toss mountains of rock and earth from one place to another. It was customary for the Jews to refer to a great rabbi as a remover of mountains, and therefore Christ was employing proverbial language which would be well understood by his hearers. But this does not mean that his words contained no statement of importance. What it teaches is that faith can accomplish stupendous achievements, such as the strongest men would fail in attempting without it. 3. *A work of removing difficulties.* The forerunner of Christ was to lower mountains in order to prepare the way for the King (Isa. xl. 4). There are many hindrances in the path of Christian work. Some of these seem to be insuperable. Sultans frown on the gospel; empires bar their gates against it. But faith, working by prayer, has removed many such a mountain of difficulty, and it will do so again.—W. F. A.

Vers. 24—27.—*Christ paying tribute.* I. THE QUESTIONING DEMAND. The collectors of tribute asked with uncertainty, but perhaps also with suspicion and a desire to entrap St. Peter, whether Christ paid the regular temple-tribute. This was expected of our Lord because he was a Jew. St. Peter answered in the affirmative without a moment's hesitation. This confidence of the apostle then induced Jesus to discuss the question. It is not reasonable to submit to any demand of men until its claim has been justified. Many people are singularly believing and compliant among men, while they are full of doubts and objections in regard to the demands made on them by God.

II. THE ROYAL LIBERTY. If Christ was indeed the Son of God, it could not be right to require the tribute from him which went from other men as from servants and stewards. 1. *Observe our Lord's calm claim.* It is sometimes assumed that the first three Gospels do not record any great claims on the part of Christ; that his lofty demands are only to be found in the Fourth Gospel. Thus it is attempted both to discredit that Gospel and to reject the claims themselves. But here we have a most exalted assumption of dignity. Could a mere man speak thus? And Jesus, let us always remember, was lowly and unselfish. 2. *Consider his great rights.* He should not be liable even to a tax. He has a right to receive all. Yet he was treated as though he were a subject and an inferior. His submission to indignities should not blind us to the majesty of his rights.

III. THE GRACIOUS ACQUIESCENCE. Though he might have stood upon his rights, Jesus was satisfied with explaining the situation to his over-hasty disciple. Then he yielded. 1. *The lover of peace will not always insist upon his rights.* A man may be perfectly justified in resisting a certain demand, and yet it may be wisest for him to submit. When it is a question of principle there must be no compromise for the sake of peace, and when others are involved we are not at liberty to permit their rights to be trampled on through our meek submission. A Hampden is justly honoured as an unselfish patriot. But when it is only a question of our own personal convenience, it is often wisest and most Christ-like not to stand up stiffly for every rightful claim which we might make. 2. *The unselfish man will sacrifice his rights for the good of others.* Jesus had great rights; but he let them go, because he had not come to please himself, but to give himself up for others. This is the great example and pattern for Christians.

IV. THE STRANGE MIRACLE. We cannot understand this miracle. But, then, we cannot really understand any miracle. It is simplest to think of it as a miracle of knowledge. At all events, it has its lessons. 1. *Christ was poor.* He had not even the half-shekel when this was demanded. 2. *Christ devised a new way of satisfying the demands made upon him.* He put himself about for the sake of peace. He did not wish to provoke opposition. His conduct was most conciliatory. 3. *Christ displayed his kingly power.* While submitting to the wrongful treatment of him as

a subject, he revealed his true kingly supremacy even over nature, in the fish of the sea.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Transfiguration.* The intention of this scene seems to have been to inaugurate the sufferings of Christ, and to set him apart as the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world. Being a public event, it behoved that it should be witnessed, and the same three men are chosen as witnesses of the rehearsal of his sufferings who are afterwards witnesses of the sufferings themselves in Gethsemane—the three most closely bound to him in affection. On both occasions their conduct proved how utterly helpless we are in the matter of our own salvation. One would have expected they would have been forward to aid their Master, or, if not to aid, at least to sympathize with him. But on both occasions they fell asleep. The world's redemption had really to be transacted in spite of the world; the best men of the world were indifferent, were asleep, when the crisis of the battle was passing, when its Redeemer was agonizing on its behalf. To our Lord the strength received from the Father by prayer was more needful than the restoring sweetness of sleep. In it was to be found more real detachment from care, more vital renewal of energy. It was probably for his encouragement and that of the disciples that this earnest was given of his triumph over death, and of his glorified condition. The significance of the reappearance of Moses and Elias is not hard to discern. They came as representatives of the two great economies through which God had dealt with men, and guided them to himself, to lay down their office, and recognize Christ as the One in whom the Law and the prophets were fulfilled. Every acceptable sacrifice of the Mosaic economy was acceptable through the sacrifice of Christ. Every hope kindled by the prophets rested for its fulfilment on him. And how do they testify their homage? "They spake," says Luke, "of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The Law was to find its highest fulfilment in the most lawless of transgressions; prophecy found its richest in that which seemed to destroy hope itself. In the persons of these two our Lord would see as at one view all who had put their trust in God from the foundation of the world; all who had put their faith in sacrifice, believing that God would find a true Propitiation; all who had hoped in his tender mercy, and through dark and troublous times had strained to see the Consolation of Israel. The whole anxiety of guilty consciences, the whole longing sigh for the promised Messiah that had breathed through the ancient Church, at once becomes audible to his ear, and confirms his resolution that their trust shall not be put to shame. Steadfastly does he set his face to go to Jerusalem, more than ever determined that the glorified state which Moses and Elias have attained shall, by his shame and death, be secured to them, and to all those of whom they are the firstfruits. To complete the act of installation it was requisite, not only that the former mediators should resign their office, but that the real Mediator should be definitely nominated; and therefore a voice is heard from the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." And so, with no witnesses but these disciples, the world's history is transacted. It is summed up in these three, God commanding, God encouraging, God fulfilling; and these three are summed up in one—God saving. "When the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

I. First, we learn that CHRIST IS NOW THE ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. The one command now is, "*Hear ye him.*" When Moses and Elias retired, and the disciples saw no man, save Jesus only, the whole burden of legal ceremonial fell from their shoulders. With the one temple of the Lord's body left to view, how simple must all religion and service have seemed, consisting simply in their loving and cleaving to their Lord and Master—the compassionate, considerate, righteous Lord Jesus Christ! We are often satisfied with the means of grace, the things that lead to Christ. But God calls you to come to Christ's self. "Hear *ye him.*" You have a life-and-death question to settle, and for the settling of it there is for you, in the world, "no man, save Jesus only."

II. CHRIST IS OUR SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR. If your troubles and difficulties seem the most real things in the world to you, remember him who chose suffering for his portion, that you might be partakers of his glory. If you are despondent on account of your spiritual condition, remember this sure foundation of all preaching, this procla-

mation of Christ by God himself. The one utterance of God in New Testament times is this intimation, three times heard by Christ, that by laying down his life for sinners God was well pleased with him. Only by coming can you please him. Indifference to the voice would have been guilt in the apostles; it is equal guilt in you.

III. THE CONDUCT OF PETER WARNS US AGAINST TOO MUCH DREAD OF SUFFERING, OR OF BEING CALLED TO ENTER A CLOUD; and against too much desire to rest in any one experience or state. The darkest cloud your Lord calls you to enter will be irradiated by his presence. And if by any experience you have obtained stronger faith or a more lively sense of Christ's worth, be not anxious to build a tabernacle for sweet experiences, while there are countless works of charity, patience, energy, awaiting you. Believe that the whole line of earthly experiences can be lit up with God's present favour.—D.

Vers. 14—21.—*The lunatic lad.* This incident is memorable chiefly on account of three truths it impresses on the mind.

I. THE APPARENTLY UNLIMITED RANGE OUR LORD GIVES TO FAITH. Promise, rebuke, and surprise are mingled in his reply. "If thou *canst, all* things are possible," etc. As if he said, "You do not surely question my power; it is no question of power, it is a question of faith; have you faith to receive, to evoke the power?" As clearly as possible he says to this man, "The cure depends on yourself." We are continually tempted to ask —Why should it be so? Why could not God overcome our unbelief by producing within us such manifest results of his health-giving power that we should find it impossible to doubt? The reason seems to be that our assuming our permanent relation to God is of more importance than any single blessing which results from it. Our trust in God and acceptance of him, as higher than all worldly power, are more than any other help we can receive from him, and therefore he first of all demands faith. And though it seems as if faith would be easier *after* receiving what we need, yet there can be no doubt it is the anxiety and restless thoughtfulness produced by trouble and difficulty which chiefly compel men to strive to ascertain for themselves what is the truth about God in his helpfulness. The visible and tangible blessings he bestowed were so far from being all he had to give, that he allowed no one to go away with only these.

II. THE POWER OUR LORD ASCRIBES TO FAITH. Here, too, are difficulties. God will not, we feel sure, contradict himself by reversing in our favour any law of nature. But it is of the very essence of prayer to ask for such things as we cannot get but by prayer. Prayer is the acknowledgment that we have to do, not with nature only, but with one who can govern and use nature freely, and to whom all things are possible. There is a way of speaking of natural law as if it were a thing sacred and not to be tampered with, whereas a great part of our time is spent in averting the consequences of natural law, and nothing gives ampler scope to our free-will and reason and active powers than the guiding of nature to happier issues. The man who says he cannot suppose God will depart from those great lines of action he has laid down ought on the same ground humbly to submit to sickness and use no remedy against it; for surely it is more presumptuous to fight against the natural law of disease than to pray God that if he sees fit he would fight against it for us. No doubt natural law is one expression, nay, the fundamental expression, of God's will; and when day by day a man sees that the sun rises and sets with a regularity undisturbed by national disasters or personal necessities, he becomes convinced that it is God's will that sunrise and sunset be invariable. But though everything in nature may be as rigidly bound to its own cause as sunrise and sunset, it does not follow that everything is as necessary, as important, as unalterable. By the arrest of the natural course of disease in this boy no shock was given to the needful belief of men in the constancy of nature. While holding fast, on the one hand, to the truth that all things are possible, we cannot but consider, on the other hand, that some things are so extremely improbable that it is vain to ask God to perform them. Scientific men assure us that there is a region into which we cannot see, but in which the most powerful of all causes resides. This is the region we claim for God, and out of which he can send forth influences in answer to those who appeal to him. There are other effects possible than those we contemplate, because there are other causes in operation than those we see. We may always be leaving out of view something that is known to the only wise God, our Saviour.

III. THERE ARE KINDS OF SIN WHICH CALL FOR TREATMENT OF A SPECIALLY SEVERE

KIND. The harping of David may be enough to cast out some devils, but others laugh to scorn the exorcism of nine apostles. What of *your* equipment in this warfare? You have a faith that has proved itself equal to some duty and fit for service of a kind. But are there not sins in you which sometimes assume a very alarming shape; and how are you equipped against these? Look first at the sin, at its inveterate hold on you, at its rootedness in the deepest part of your nature, at the skill with which it assails you all day long and in so many different ways; look with what ease it has survived any assaults you have made on it; and then look at the means you are using for its destruction, and say if it is likely, nay, if it is possible, that such sin can yield to such means. Were we to tell each other our experience, would not some of us have to say, "Unless there be some better remedy than those I have tried, I fear to think what may become of me and my sin"? Learn from this incident that your safety lies, not with subsidiary means, but with the Master, the one living Spring of life.—D.

Vers. 24—27.—*The stater in the fish's mouth.* This was not an entangling question, such as was afterwards put by the scribes, who asked if it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. There was no question of the lawfulness of this tax, and all that the collectors wished to know was whether Jesus wished to pay the tax at Capernaum or at Jerusalem, or whether perhaps he had not some special claim for exemption. Peter, as usual, does not stop to think, but promptly assures them that his Master certainly considered himself taxable. No sooner does Peter come in than Jesus, without further introduction, says, "What thinkest thou, Simon? the kings *of the earth*, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers?" Peter promptly answered, "From strangers." "Therefore," says our Lord, "the sons are free." The heavenly King could obviously require no tax from him whom Peter had only a day or two ago acknowledged to be, in a special sense, the Son of God. He had no intention, however, of standing on his right, and claiming exemption. His whole life was a foregoing of his rights as God's Son. He submitted to this tax, therefore, as he submitted to baptism. But that Peter at least might clearly understand that this payment and every act of his human life was a voluntary humiliation, he provides the money in a manner which is meant to exhibit him as the Lord of nature. When Peter went down to the lake, and found all as his Master had said, he cannot but have thought with himself, "Certainly our Master is as humble as he bids us be. He has all nature at command, and yet makes no sign to these tax-gatherers. He bids us accommodate ourselves to the ignorance and prejudice of those about us, as he himself stoops to the smallest child." This miracle, then, was meant to instruct; especially to illustrate the humility of Jesus. It was intended to follow up the teaching of the Transfiguration and of Peter's confession; and, on the other hand, to put in a concrete and visible form the teaching regarding humility which our Lord at this time gave to his disciples. Peter was to be helped to see that the most Divine thing about our Lord was his becoming man, and submitting day by day to all that was involved in that. And in this miracle he had his first easy lesson; for in it he was himself the instrument at once of his Lord's Divinity and of his submission. Our Lord himself assigns a reason for the payment: "Lest," he says, "we should offend," or become a cause of stumbling. To all followers of Christ, then, this action of our Lord says, "Forego your rights rather than cause any ignorant person to stumble at your conduct." We are very apt to justify ourselves by maintaining that it was not we, but the person who stumbled, who was in fault; if he was so narrow-minded, so weak, he would have stumbled at something else if not at that. "Yes," says our Lord, "it is quite true; it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom they come!" All men die, but murder is not on that account a venial sin. Our Lord miraculously paid Peter's tax as well as his own. He supplied him out of his Father's treasury, giving him an inkling of the truth afterwards to be set in the clearest light, that in Christ we are all children of God, and that in him we *get from* God far more than ever we can give to him.—D.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Transfiguration.* "And six days after." This note refers to the conversation Jesus had with his disciples, in which he said, "The Son of man shall come," etc. (quote ch. xvi. 27, 28). But the apostles are all dead, and the kingdom

is still future. The Transfiguration, then, must be viewed as a symbolic anticipation and pledge of the kingdom, and Peter and James and John were those referred to who should not taste death until they had seen the Son of man coming in his kingdom; and they saw this when they were "eye-witnesses of his majesty on the holy mount." We propose to show—

I. THAT THE SPIRITUAL GLORY OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS SET FORTH IN THE TRANSFIGURATION. 1. *It exhibits the signs of a new dispensation.* (1) Here is humanity the shrine of Deity. This as a fact *existed* in the Incarnation. It is *manifest* in the Transfiguration. This is a new thing. Formerly the Holy Spirit was *with* men, now he is *in* them (see John xiv. 17). The indwelling of the witnessing Spirit characterizes this dispensation. (2) Moses and Elijah shine in the glory of Jesus. The Law is illustrated by the light of the gospel. Its sacrifices and ablutions now become full of glorious meaning. So are the prophets illustrated. Their personal history is seen to have been typical. Their predictions of Messiah are fulfilled. (3) Christ is the source of gospel law. The "voice" rebuked Peter's mistake in proposing to make equal tabernacles. "Hear ye *him*." No longer listen to Moses and the prophets otherwise than as they are heard in the accents of Jesus. 2. *It exhibits the signs of a spiritual dispensation.* (1) Here is a remarkable concurrence. Moses fasted forty days in the wilderness of Sinai. So did Elijah. Jesus likewise fasted forty days in "the wilderness"—probably the same. Of no other is this recorded. Here are all those together in glory. (2) The life of those forty days proclaimed that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word"—the precept and the promise—"of God." This spiritual life may be studied in the history of that remarkable forty days of the life of Jesus after his resurrection. We are "risen with Christ." (3) While they fasted from natural food, they feasted on spiritual. While the Israelites fasted during their forty years in the wilderness, they feasted on the bread from heaven. (4) So the sun-clothed woman—the true Church of Christ—was nourished in the wilderness by the pure Word of God during these "forty and two months" in which she fled from the face of the Jezebel of Rome. The counterpart of this was the feeding of the prophets in the caves by good Obadiah, when they fled from the persecutions of the meretricious Queen of Samaria. 3. *It exhibits the tokens of gospel grace.* (1) However glorified, Jesus still remembers Calvary. The matter of the conversation in the mount of glory was "the decease he should accomplish at Jerusalem." And now he is in the height of heaven he lives there to make intercession for us. (2) Calvary is the theme of celestial rapture. It is the burden of the song of the redeemed. Holy angels take up the strain. (3) Prejudices are dissipated in the light of eternity. "Peter answered," viz. to the conversation about the decease, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." This was the same Peter who, six days earlier, had the presumption to rebuke Jesus for referring to the same decease (see ch. xvi. 22).

II. THAT THE PHYSICAL GLORY OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS SET FORTH IN THE TRANSFIGURATION. 1. *Jesus will yet appear in royal state.* (1) In the visions of the prophets the two advents of Messiah are blended; and it is only in the fulfilment of the circumstances of the first advent in humiliation that we get clear views of those of the second advent in glory. (2) Of this glory there were remarkable prophetic anticipations in the glorious Divine forms or similitudes of Old Testament times. (3) The Transfiguration is a still clearer anticipation. For here we have not only the semblance of a beatified humanity; we have the true humanity of Jesus beatified by the glory of the Godhead. 2. *The bright cloud manifested the presence of angels.* (1) If we compare the passages in which the glorious advent of Christ is described, we shall see that those which mention the "clouds" omit the mention of accompanying *angels*; and so contrariwise, those which mention the "angels" omit the mention of *clouds*. (2) Wherever Christ's presence is promised, the presence of his retinue of angels is understood, if not expressed. They are ever present with him in the assemblies of his saints (see Eccles. vii. 6; 1 Cor. xi. 10). (3) Clouds and angels are promiscuously the chariots of God. The clouds of angels were with him in his ascension (cf. Ps. lxviii. 17, 18; Eph. iv. 8—10; see also Ps. xviii. 10; civ. 1—4). 3. *Moses represented the sainted dead.* (1) His appearance upon the mount was a kind of specimen of the resurrection. He had a grand death when, on the mountain-summit, God bowed his august head out of heaven and kissed away the soul of his servant. His body was

buried. Then there was a contention about this (see Jude 9). Was it with respect to the appearance of Moses in this scene? (2) Was it a sample of the first resurrection. The resurrection of the just will take place in two acts (see Rev. xx. 4—6). In the first resurrection the "ancients" will appear in glory with Christ (cf. Isa. xxiv. 23; Dan. xii. 1—3). (3) May we hope for this distinction (see Phil. iii. 8—11)? Let us strive. 4. *Elijah represented the living who shall be changed.* (1) Paul had special revelation on this subject (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 51—54; 1 Thess. iv. 13—18). (2) These transfigurations will occur during the course of the reign of Christ over the earth. Sinners will die off quickly. Saints will be changed—translated (see Luke xvii. 34—37). (3) Of these, Elijah was a specimen. He was translated to heaven in a fiery chariot, and must have been transfigured in his transit. Flesh and blood cannot enter heaven. (4) What a mingled scene is here! Christ with the glory of the Father. Clouds of angels. Elijah representing the quick. Moses representing the dead. The apostles representing the Church on earth. Heaven and earth will be thus blended in the kingdom of Messiah. (5) Have we not a note of the time of the kingdom in the "six days'" interval? Does it not correspond with the six ages of Barnabas mentioned in his Epistle? Is this wholly without countenance from Scripture (cf. Dan. xii. 12, 13; Hos. vi. 2; Heb. iv. 9; 2 Pet. iii. 8)? There is a wonderful future for the Christian.—J. A. M.

Vers. 9—13.—*The harbinger.* After the Transfiguration, Jesus and his disciples came down the mountain-side. Ecstasies, even in religion, have their sombre interludes. But in these we may still remain in the blessed company of Jesus. As they descended, Jesus "commanded his disciples, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead." This command astonished them. Interpreting the prophets, the scribes expected Elijah to come as the harbinger of Messiah. As Elijah had now appeared, the disciples were eager to proclaim this as the accomplishment of the prophecy. But they were now further surprised to learn that the prophecy had already been fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist. Our Lord had before spoken to this effect (see ch. xi. 14); but these disciples, Peter, James, and John, appear then to have been absent on a preaching excursion. Note: It is the fate of prophecy to be fulfilled without being noticed by the world. "But the wise shall understand." Let us consider—

I. THE COMING OF ELIJAH IN THE PERSON OF THE BAPTIST. 1. *The scribes looked for the Tishbite.* (1) They did so as the recognized public interpreters of prophecy. Isaiah spoke of a harbinger of Messiah (see Isa. xl. 3—5). This harbinger is mentioned again, and distinguished as "Elijah the prophet" (see Mal. iv. 5, 6). The scribes concluded that Elijah the Tishbite literally should appear. (2) They "knew not" John the Baptist in the character of Elijah. He did not answer their expectations as the literal Elijah. Neither did his testimony to Jesus suit their prejudices. Jesus did not come as that secular king whom they fondly hoped to see. So does the spirit of the world blind the spiritual vision. (3) The disciples of Jesus were influenced by the teaching of the scribes. They therefore rejoiced to see here in the holy mount the literal Elijah; and fain would they conclude that this was the fulfilment of the prophecy. They were accordingly eager to bear testimony to what they had seen. It had not occurred to them, any more than to the scribes, to identify the Baptist as the Elijah of the prophet. 2. *Yet was the Baptist the Elijah of prophecy.* (1) Gabriel announced him in this quality. To Zacharias the angel said of John, "He shall go before the face of the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him" (Luke i. 17). The reference here to the Prophet Malachi cannot be mistaken. (2) Zacharias, in the spirit of prophecy, confirmed the testimony of Gabriel. "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways" (Luke i. 76). (3) John came accordingly "in the spirit and power of Elijah." Like that prophet, his dwelling was in the wilderness; his attire was rough; and his habits were simple and severe (cf. 2 Kings i. 8; ch. iii. 4). His preaching was repentance. "To turn the heart of the [believing] fathers to the [unbelieving] children, and the heart of the children to their fathers," and thus to avert the curse of God from the land. (4) John

roundly announced himself to be that voice in the wilderness of which Isaiah spake (see John i. 23). 3. *In this quality John was recognized by Jesus.* (1) He did so practically, for he did not commence his preaching until John had ended his public ministry. Thus: "When he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee," and it is added, "From that time began Jesus to preach" (cf. ch. iv. 12—17; Mark i. 14, 15). (2) The importance of this question of time is evident also from the reference to it again by Peter when he came to preach the gospel to Cornelius (see Acts x. 36, 37). Peter evidently viewed it as an important mark of Messiah. (3) Jesus in his teaching, as well as in his conduct, acknowledged John as the Elijah of prophecy. He did so to the multitude after the retirement from him of certain disciples of John who came to him with a message from John in his prison. "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee. . . . And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come" (see ch. xi. 10—14). In this passage our Lord refers to both the prophets who mention the harbinger of Messiah, Isaiah and Malachi, and applies their prophecies to John. In the text also Jesus declares John to be "that Elijah" as "come already."

II. THE COMING OF ELIJAH AS THE HERALD OF THE JUDGMENT. 1. *Such a coming may be presumed.* (1) For Christ is yet to come in judgment. Before his Transfiguration he announced this solemn fact (see ch. xvi. 27). The Transfiguration was itself a symbolic anticipation of that coming. As the first advent of Christ was heralded by an Elijah, so may we presume that the second advent also will be. (2) Daniel distinguishes the first and second advents of Messiah; otherwise the comings are so blended in the visions of prophecy that they appear as one. The distinction is now fully manifest since the first advent has taken place. By parity of reasoning we may infer that the prophecies concerning the harbinger are to be fulfilled in two acts. (3) Differences may be presumed in the two appearances of the harbinger to correspond to the differences of the two advents of Messiah. The Baptist came in symbols of sorrow, without miracle, to introduce Messiah as a Priest coming to suffer for sin. The coming Elijah may be expected to appear in symbols of power, working miracles, to introduce Messiah in his quality of King. (4) To anticipate this second coming, Elijah appeared in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Trypho objects to Justin Martyr that Messiah can have no power until anointed by Elijah. He overlooked the fact that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost when he was baptized by John (cf. ch. iii. 16; Luke iv. 18; Acts x. 37, 38). That anointing was to inaugurate Christ as a Prophet. But when Elijah was present in the holy mount, Jesus received his further anointing as a King. 2. *The presumption is now confirmed.* (1) John's disclaimer that he was Elijah, while he declared himself to be the voice crying in the wilderness (see John i. 21—23), can only be reconciled on the understanding that Elijah was yet to come in another form. Mede makes John the Baptist to come again instead of Elijah in full form. The disclaimer of John would rather point to Elijah in person. The appearance of the literal Elijah in the holy mount would also point this way. The Jews say, "When Elijah comes he will solve hard questions." His coming will solve this. (2) The coming of the Baptist has not fully satisfied prophecy. He came not immediately "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. iv. 5). For that day is yet future. He came more in pursuance of the prophecy of Isaiah than of that of Malachi. Yet is there a second fulfilment also for the words of Isaiah. (3) In affirming that Elijah had come in the person of John the Baptist, our Lord did not say that there was no future coming of Elijah. When the disciples quoted the scribes, Jesus did not say that they were wrong in expecting Elijah to come, but in not discerning that the Baptist had come in the character of Elijah. (4) Far from this, our Lord says plainly, "Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things." This coming of Elijah in the future is all the more remarkable in that it was spoken after John had been beheaded. (5) This Elijah of the future is to "restore all things." This did not John. He restored *some* things. He preached repentance, and his doctrine is still restoring. But the "time of the restoration of all things" is that of the second advent of Christ (see Acts iii. 19—21).

Why did Jesus command his disciples, saying, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead"? 1. One of the purposes of the vision was to intimate that the Old Testament must give place to the New. The time for the aboli-

tion of the Law of commandments contained in ordinances was not ripe until after the Resurrection. 2. The glory of the Resurrection would render more credible the testimony concerning the Transfiguration. Had the testimony been given earlier, the sufferings of Christ would probably be urged against its credibility. 3. The earlier testimony might imperil the witnesses. The heads of the nation appear to have been implicated in the martyrdom of John. "They knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed." If they did not imprison John, they made no effort to procure his release. They rejoiced in his death. Having tasted the blood of John, they thirsted for the blood of Jesus. "Even so shall the Son of man also suffer of them" (see Acts xii. 1—3). Christ's times are best for us.—J. A. M.

Vers. 14—21.—*The secrets of faith.* A blended good and evil characterizes the present state of man. Ever since our first parents ate of the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" their children have been eating of it. The hovel is found under the very shadow of the palace. What a scene of glory was that of the Transfiguration! What a scene of misery is this at the foot of the mountain! "And when they were come to the multitude," etc. Learn—

I. THAT THE POWER OF FAITH IS UNLIMITED. 1. *For Omnipotence is pledged to it.* (1) Witness the miracle of faith on the waters of the Red Sea (see Exod. xiv. 13, 14). The distance across the arm of the Red Sea at Pihahiroth is about twelve miles; while the average depth of the water there is about eighty-four feet. The weight of the vast ocean sets into it. Yet was that world of waters controlled by the faith of Moses. (2) So, had the disciples of Jesus "faith as a grain of mustard seed," they might have routed the devil from this boy. And the case of the demoniac may be taken as a sample of the moral condition of man under the tyranny of Satan. (3) No limit is set to the promise here given to faith (cf. ch. xxi. 21; Luke xvii. 5). Things great or small are equally easy to the Promiser. Properly speaking, to God nothing is miraculous. A rustic, witnessing the experiments of an electrician, may conclude that he is a magician. To the scientist these experiments have no more of miracle in them than the rustic may see in the furrow he cuts with his plough. "Things impossible with men are possible with God." 2. *But Omnipotence is not pledged to caprice.* (1) In the heathen mythology there is one Phaethon, the son of Apollo, who was ambitious to guide the chariot of the sun, and importuned his father to entrust him with the reins. He soon found his arm too feeble to restrain the fiery steeds; and the sun was rushing down upon the earth. Jupiter, seeing the danger, launched a thunderbolt at Phaethon and dislodged him from his seat, upon which the chariot came back into abler hands, and the world was saved from conflagration. If, then, Omnipotence be pledged to faith, may not ambition and folly destroy the world? (2) The answer is that faith is the gift of God (see ch. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. xii. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 13; Eph. ii. 8, 9; Phil. i. 29; Col. ii. 12; 2 Pet. i. 1). God will not inspire faith in the interests of folly. (3) Hence quality rather than quantity is the thing required. "Faith as a grain of mustard seed." The idea of a grain of mustard seed dislodging a mountain! Abstractedly, faith is impotent; it becomes omnipotent as it is associated with God. A small band slipped over a wheel sets a factory in motion, because it links the machinery with the steam-engine. Faith may link the machinery of the universe to the great power of God. (4) True faith is distinct from mere credence. Some are Christians from the accident of birth, as others are Mohammedans, Papists, or pagans. Some are Christians from conviction, having studied and approved the evidences. But saving faith is a thing of the heart—an inspiration from God; it works by love, and purifies the heart and life.

II. THAT MORAL CONSIDERATIONS DETERMINE THE SUBJECTS OF THE GIFT OF FAITH. 1. *Divine seriousness is a condition of the faith of miracle-working.* (1) This our Lord declared (see Mark ix. 38, 39). And Paul says, "No man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). (2) Simon the magician was mistaken in thinking that the gift of God could be purchased with money (Acts viii. 20). The sons of Sceva found to their cost that they must not trifle with the name of Jesus (see Acts xix. 13—16). (3) The miracle-working faith was given to authenticate the gospel. That end is now answered. Yet may it be given again at any time when God sees sufficient reason. 2. *Repentance is the condition of saving faith.* (1) Christ

came to save his people from their sins. So the promise is, "In the day that ye seek me ye shall find me, when ye search for me *with your whole heart*." (2) Then seize the candle of the Lord, and search your heart to see what has hindered your salvation. Have you made restitution in that you have robbed? Have you made reparation in that you have injured (see ch. v. 23, 24)? (3) The faith that saves is a higher gift than the faith of miracle-working. "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 20). Rejoice not so much that you have the miracle-working faith as that you have the faith that saves. "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 2). Miracle-working faith is as nothing compared with that which is saving. 3. *Godliness is essential to the faith of usefulness.* (1) The *goodness* of Barnabas is significantly associated with his "faith" and *usefulness* (see Acts xi. 24). This also may be noted in respect to persons eminently useful in the Church in following ages. (2) But what are we to say to the usefulness of those who are far from goodness? Not that they are useful in consequence of their faith; for they have none. The *truth* God may bless, whoever uses it. No credit in this case is due to the ungodly; nor will they receive any reward. (3) For the faith of usefulness we must pray. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer." Because without prayer we cannot have that goodness which renders us eligible for the gift of faith. (4) Fasting also is helpful to faith. Our Lord gave us his example in this (see ch. iv. 2). He also gives us directions as to the spirit in which we should fast (see ch. vi. 16). Apostles associated fasting with their special prayer (see Acts xiii. 2, 3).—J. A. M.

Vers. 22—27.—*Greatness in submission.* The originality of Jesus meets us at every turn. The men of this world seek greatness in self-assertion and resistance—by force and cunning. Christ exhibits it in condescension and patience.

I. THE GREATNESS OF JESUS IS SEEN IN HIS PASSION. 1. *His submission there was voluntary.* (1) He foresaw it. (*a*) It was predicted. He was perfectly conversant with the prophets. (*b*) He enlarged upon their anticipations. How circumstantial are his words (see vers. 22, 23)! (*c*) His clear foresight was an ante-Passion. (2) He could have avoided it. (*a*) For he was "the Son of man." As the true Adam—the innocent and perfect Man—he might have claimed Eden. He was under no obligation to suffer. (*b*) But he was also "the Son of God." In this quality he was acknowledged at his Transfiguration (see ver. 5). Under these titles alike equally glorious attributes of Divinity are ascribed to Jesus. He was the Arbiter of life. His own life could not be forfeited without his consent. (3) Yet he died. The "betrayed" of the Old Version is "delivered up" in the New (ver. 22). His manhood was surrendered by his Godhead. The voluntariness of the sacrifice of Christ was superlative, infinite. 2. *Behold now his greatness in the grandeur of his purposes.* (1) In the Passion of Christ we have the most wonderful revelation of God. Where else can we find an equal exhibition of the greatness of his love? It is also the most glorious vindication of his truth (cf. ch. xxvi. 24; Acts ii. 23; iii. 18). (2) Atonement is made for human sin. "They shall kill him." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." (3) The gospel has to be authenticated in the resurrection. "And the third day he shall be raised." Death was the necessary prelude to a resurrection. Note the occasion of the sorrow of the disciples. The prospect of the death of their Master swallowed up as it were that of the resurrection, of which also they had been pre-informed. So do the trials and sufferings of this life so fill our minds as to prevent our rejoicing in the blessedness of the glories that are to follow. (4) To all these great purposes of the Passion of Christ add this, viz. that in it he is our Pattern. The believer is crucified with Christ. And that union with Christ which he finds at the cross carries him back into the life of his earlier history, and forward into the life of his resurrection. Men are at their greatest in this wonderful union with their Lord.

II. THE GREATNESS OF JESUS IS SEEN IN HIS SUBMISSION TO TAXATION. 1. *Look at the fact assuming the tax to have been a Roman impost.* (1) Beza and Jerome were of opinion that the tax here, as in ch. xxii. 7, was paid to Cæsar. On that supposition the inquiry may have been, "Is your Master of the opinion of Judas of Galilee, that tribute should not be paid to Cæsar?" (2) Peter took it as matter of course that his Master would pay the tax; but Jesus put the matter to him in an unexpected

light. We know Christ only as he reveals himself. The revelation was given, not to the tax-gatherer, but to Peter. Truth is variously seen as it is viewed in relation to the world and in relation to Christ. The Word gives a distinct testimony to the worldly and to the spiritual. (3) But where is the point of the reference to the "kings of the earth"? Might not Jesus, as the "Son of David" and rightful Heir to the throne of Israel, have contested the matter of the tribute to Cæsar? As the "Son of man," was he not Heir to the royalty of the whole earth (cf. Gen. i. 26; Ps. viii. 4—6; Heb. ii. 6—9)? In this he is "higher than the kings of the earth." (4) Had Jesus urged these things upon the tax-gatherer and contested the matter with Cæsar, he would have sought greatness as the men of the world seek it. But to that he would not stoop. God is in no haste. At the proper time "he will take to himself his great power." (5) So can the sons of God afford to wait for the great day of their public honour when they shall claim the freedom of the universe. 2. *Look at the fact understanding the tribute to belong to the temple.* (1) This is the sense in which it is generally taken. A half-shekel was expected from every master of a Hebrew family to provide salt for the offerings and other things not otherwise provided for (see Exod. xxx. 11—16; Neh. x. 32). (2) According to this view, then, our Lord refers to the "kings of the earth" as in contrast to the King of *heaven*. The temple for whose service the tribute was expected was the house of God; but Jesus was the Son of God —the Prince (cf. Dan. ix. 25, 26). So was he Lord of the temple, and free (cf. Mal. iii. 1; John ii. 16; Heb. iii. 6). Jesus might have claimed exemption upon higher ground than that on which exemption was conceded to the priests who ministered in the temple. (3) Those who are Christ's share in his rights as the sons of God. Hence the manner in which Jesus associates Peter with himself in this matter of the tribute. "For me and thee" (ver. 27). The disciples of Jesus, like the priests that ministered in the temple, should be free. And here is a hint that disciples of Jesus should be released from Levitical obligations in general. (4) Instead of arguing this question with the collector, Jesus left it to be disposed of by the issue of events. How truly great is he in his calm self-possession! 3. *Now look at the manner of his submission.* (1) He waives his claim in tenderness toward the prejudices of men. "Lest we should offend them." Note: Men occupied in worldly concerns are most ready to be offended with the saints in money matters. Lest these persons, being ignorant of his Divine character, should impute his refusal to impiety. Love will conciliate prejudice. (2) Consider further the extent to which he carried that tenderness. A miracle is wrought to avoid giving offence. How original is the conduct of Christ in this! How great is he in that originality! (3) Here, then, is our Example. The loving Spirit will do anything for peace but sacrifice justice and truth (cf. 1 Cor. viii. 13; Rom. xvi. 13). Note: The business of Christians is with the morals of the world rather than with the politics of nations. In improving the morals of the world they go to the very root of the evils in the politics of nations. 4. *View the greatness of Jesus in his superiority to the world.* (1) He elected poverty. What poverty is this! He has not in possession fifteen pence to satisfy a collector of tribute. Note: The original disciples did not follow him for worldly gain. His high example may reconcile his disciples to privation. (2) But what resources are associated with this poverty! The miracle of the fish showed omnipotence and omniscience in many ways. The fish must be taken; it must be taken immediately; it must bring up money; the *first* fish must bring it up; the coin must be a *stater*. Note: The disciples of Jesus in their poverty may trust his providence. He can as surely supply their needs without as by miracle. (3) The poverty of Jesus was voluntary. The power which commanded that stater could have summoned boundless wealth. It is Christ-like to forego opportunities of wealth for the kingdom of heaven's sake. (4) When will men discern it practically, that there are better things than money?—J. A. M.

Ver. 1.—*The mission of the selected ones.* On three occasions it is reported that our Lord took three of the disciples apart with him; and it was always the same three. We need not, however, assume that the reported cases were the only cases. Observing them, we note that they were representative instances. In the first case, the raising of the little maid, special witnesses were needed for the surprising miracle, the restoration of the dead. In the other two cases—Transfiguration and Gethsemane—we have

glimpses of the *private* life and experience of Jesus with which the ordinary disciples had no direct concern. It need not have been told us how, or when, or where Jesus conducted his private devotions, or what happened on such occasions. Jesus had these three with him for two reasons. 1. For company. 2. That the revelation of his mystery might be kept for a while, and revealed when the life-manifestation was complete, and his Divine Person and mission could be understood. The reason for the selection of these three is to be found in our Lord's estimate of character. He illustrates the Divine *election*, which is always a Divine *selection*, in view of fitness for position. In these three men we can see a power of *faith*, and a power of enthusiastic *personal attachment*, which suffice to account for their selection.

I. THEIR MISSION WAS TO KEEP THEIR SAVIOUR COMPANY. It is strange that in times of distress and excitement we both crave to be alone, and crave to have some one trustworthy with us. We have mingled feelings—we want to be alone; we cannot bear to be alone. In his fellowship with us in this peculiarity we gain a full impression of our Lord's humanity. It comes out even in a more striking way in Gethsemane.

II. THEIR MISSION WAS TO RECEIVE IMPRESSIONS FROM OUR LORD'S PRIVATE LIFE. It would not have been a *private* scene if all the disciples had been on the mount. Our Lord had a private life quite distinct from that public life which was the common property of disciples. Our Lord had right to that private life undisturbed. And yet some of the best revelations of his "Person" and "mission" came to view in such strictly private experiences as Gethsemane and Transfiguration; so a selection from the apostolate was permitted to invade his privacy.

III. THEIR MISSION WAS TO KEEP SECRET FOR A TIME THEIR IMPRESSIONS. The twelve would never have kept such a secret. The three might, especially as they really did not understand the scene. They had to keep it as a mystery which time would unfold.

IV. THEIR MISSION WAS TO REVEAL THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST'S PRIVATE LIFE WHEN THAT COULD BE MADE EFFECTIVE. See St. Peter's use of his experiences (2 Pet. i. 16—18).—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The reappearance of Moses and Elias.* St. Luke materially adds to our knowledge of this scene when he tells us the subject of the conversation of this mysterious company. They "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." It may be seeing deeper into the mystery of the scene if we can apprehend that, for the time, Jesus was out of the bodily and within the spiritual sphere to which Moses and Elias belonged. Instead of thinking that they came down to him, it is better to think he *was with them.* That Transfiguration was the temporary freedom of the Son of God from his body limitations; a temporary resumption of heavenly conditions in a heavenly sphere; a freedom from the human for the sake of a time of Divine and spiritual communion. The scene lay in that region of the supernatural which was the proper, the eternal, sphere of the Son of God. The Transfiguration cannot be understood apart from a careful estimate of Christ's circumstances and moods of mind at this time. He had been virtually rejected in Galilee. His work there was finished. He retired northward, depressed in spirit. The failure in Galilee seemed a foreshadowing of the great failure. He was beginning to tread the pathway at whose end was a cross of shame. But why did Christ anticipate? Why did he not do the duty of the hour, and leave the morrow to take care of the things of itself? Explain that the virtue of Christ's death lay in its being a voluntary surrender; no mere accident—a real sacrifice. Then it must be known, distinctly thought about, and accepted beforehand. The glory came when he, in prayer, was wrestling to gain a full acceptance of this will of God that he should suffer. A part of his comforting came from the communion of representative men.

I. THE LIGHTER VIEW OF THE REAPPEARANCE OF MOSES AND ELIAS. There is a view with which we are so familiar that, maybe, we have never even thought of criticizing it. All the commentaries say, "The representatives of the Law and the prophets," though the reason for choosing Elijah to represent the prophets is never suggested. These two men are assumed to have given the witness of the Jewish Church to our Lord's death.

II. THE DEEPER VIEW OF THE REAPPEARANCE OF MOSES AND ELIAS. "The presence

of Moses and Elias suggests far-off unknown relations to, and vibrations of joy to, the pre-Messianic children of light." "He conversed with his great predecessors, Moses and Elias, who could thoroughly sympathize with him, and whose work his death was to fulfil." These were the two men most profoundly interested in the recovery and redemption of men. And therefore they were so supremely interested in the work of Christ. Even these three disciples could not give Jesus full sympathy. St. Peter's foolish talk showed that they could not. Jesus found sympathy in glorified saints.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*A repetition of the Divine approval.* The Transfiguration does not stand alone in our Lord's life. There are two other scenes with which it may be compared. "The one is the descent of the Holy Ghost on him, under the symbol of a brooding dove, after his baptism." The other is the sound as of thunder, and the responding voice of the Father, saying of his Father-Name, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." And it should be noticed that the first direct manifestation of God to Christ—at his baptism—occurred as the beginning of his active mission as a Teacher. The second—at the Transfiguration—occurred as the starting of Christ on the suffering portion of his mission. And the third—the thunder-voice—as a precise assurance and encouragement when our Lord was entering upon his Passion.

I. THE KEY-NOTE OF CHRIST'S LIFE WAS DOING HIS FATHER'S WILL. See his words at twelve years of age. He would not only do his Father's will, but do it in the Father's way; and bear it, if it involved bearing. Our Lord's meat and drink were to do the will of his Father.

II. THE JOY OF CHRIST'S LIFE WAS TO RECEIVE SIGNS OF THE DIVINE APPROVAL. We can hardly imagine how delightful to the obedient Son must have been these voices out of heaven. And never was the voice more strengthening than when our Lord was proposing to himself a full surrender to the Father's will, which involved humiliation, suffering, seeming failure, and death. Christ purposed to "*accomplish* a decease." The term is a striking and suggestive one. Christ's death was something he *did*, "accomplished;" it was not merely something he suffered. His own will was in it. He laid down his life. He gave himself for us. He offered in sacrifice his obedient Sonship. That saves us. That Moses and Elias approve. That God the Father approves. The Transfiguration was chiefly intended for our Lord himself. "It was a great gift of his Father, an acknowledgment of his faithfulness up to this point, and a preparation for what lay before him." "To Jesus the recognition of his Father's voice must have been a repetition of the transcendant joy of the baptismal greeting. Must we not say that for the moment all else was forgotten, or in that absorbed; that

> "He heard not, saw not, felt not aught beside,
> Through the wide worlds of pleasure and of pain,
> Save the full flowing and the ample tide
> Of that celestial strain"?

R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The transitory and the permanent.* It almost seems as if St. Peter's foolish speech spoilt the scene. It is said that "while he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them." It might be a "bright cloud," but it effectually shut out from view the glorified visitors and the transfigured Lord. True, out of it came the marvellous voice, which so alarmed the disciples that they "fell on their face, and were sore afraid." But when the cloud passed, and Jesus bade them "arise," the glory was all gone; there was only Jesus, and he was just as they were accustomed to see him. It is a peculiarity of Mount Hermon that a cloud will be seen to form with extreme rapidity on its summit, and with equal rapidity disperse and disappear. The point on which we dwell is, that St. Peter made a grave mistake when he wanted a special scene to be made a permanent one. The transitory and the permanent each have their mission and their proper relations. There is no wisdom in wishing to confuse them. Take each in its place. Illustrate this.

I. THE TRANSITORY IS THE GLORIFIED CHRIST; THE PERMANENT IS THE HUMAN CHRIST. Only for a little while could the earth-bonds be loosened, and the glory which Christ was, shine freely out. That was not fitting for the continuous earth-relations.

For the present the permanent thing was the human body, with its limitations, endurances, and sufferings. But the relief-moments must have brought holiest joy. (For Christ's voluntary limitations, see Phil. ii.)

II. THE TRANSITORY IS THE SEASON OF HIGH REVELATION; THE PERMANENT IS THE COMMONPLACE, EVERYDAY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. Christian biographies preserve records of ecstatic scenes and experiences enjoyed by Christ's people. In their very nature such things must be transitory. They would not be what they are if they continued. But what a help and cheer they are to us in the wearing and wearying experience of everyday Christian life! Yet is not this the fact—we might oftener have the cheer of vision and revelation if we set ourselves in the way, and climbed the lonely mount for prayer?

III. THE TRANSITORY IS THE RELIEF-TIME; THE PERMANENT IS THE WORK-TIME. But a man cannot permanently work unless he secures his transitory reliefs. The restings of life are not idlings or wastings. Transfiguration means soul-preparations for Calvary.

IV. THE TRANSITORY IS THE TRIUMPH-TIME; THE PERMANENT IS THE SUFFERING-TIME. What makes life so hard is that successes are so brief. Right upon them we have to be down in the valleys of toil and suffering.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Holy reticence.* Some of those with whom our Lord had to do wrought much mischief by failing in wise reticence. Told to keep their secrets, they blazed abroad their matter, and created a public excitement which our Lord felt bound to avoid. Reserve is said to be the "bane of friendship;" but reserve may be a sign of wise self-control and skilful estimate of circumstances and responsibilities. Reticence must be distinguished from untruthfulness. We should always tell the truth, but it is often our duty to say nothing. This, however, sometimes becomes distressing, because of our fear that saying nothing will leave, or will sustain, a false impression. Here our Lord commanded reticence. The three apostles were not to talk to the rest of the apostolic company of what they had seen and heard. They were to say nothing whatever about it outside their company. Let us see what may make reticence appropriate, right, and wise.

I. RETICENCE RELATIVE TO PRIVACY. It cannot be too forcibly impressed that the Transfiguration is not an event in the *public* life of Jesus. It belongs to his private heart-history and experience, and only for very special reasons is any report of it given. If we do come to know some great passage in a brother Christian's private experience, we properly keep the secret, at least so long as he lives. It would be bad for *him*, and bad for all who know him, if it were talked about. Much mischief is done, much bloom is taken off Christian life, by too great readiness to talk about what belongs to a man's private feeling. Jesus shrank from common talk about his transfiguration.

II. RETICENCE RELATIVE TO TIMELINESS. This is brought out by our Lord's limiting silence "until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." There are times and seasons for everything. The wise man watches, and fits his ways to times; the impulsive man is always upsetting things by simple untimeliness. This was St. Peter's mistake, and our Lord may have designed the caution specially for him. Happy they who can keep silence till the time to speak!

III. RETICENCE RELATIVE TO CAPACITY. The narrative of the Transfiguration might have been given to the other apostles if they had been on a sufficiently high spiritual plane to have entered into it. But it is only too evident that they could not receive any references to our Lord's decease. The report of the vision, if then made, would only have bewildered them. Keep it back. Wait until the complete circle of historical facts relating to Christ is complete; then, maybe, they will see the meaning of the Transfiguration.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*The coming of Elias.* It is difficult for us to realize the general conviction of our Lord's time, that the Prophet Elijah was about to reappear. "Elijah was the prophet for whose return in later years his countrymen have looked with most eager hope. . . . It was a fixed belief of the Jews that he had appeared again and again, as an Arabian merchant, to wise and good rabbis at their prayers or on their journeys. A seat is still placed for him to superintend the circumcision of the Jewish children.

Passover after Passover the Jews of our own day place the Paschal cup on the table, and set the door wide open, believing that that is the moment when Elijah will reappear. When goods are found and no owner comes, when difficulties arise and no solution appears, the answer is, 'Put them by till Elijah comes'" (Stanley). Edersheim tells us that Rabbi Eliezer closes a curious chapter on repentance with these words, "And Israel will not make great repentance till Elijah—his memory for blessing—comes." The question of the apostles was suggested by the fact that, on the mount, Elijah had come, but had not stayed, so as to accomplish anything. Our Lord intimates that the appearance they had seen was not the fulfilment of the prophecy of Elijah's coming; for that they must look elsewhere. John the Baptist reproduced Elijah, and may be thought of as Elijah come again.

I. ELIJAH AND JOHN WERE BOTH PREPARERS. There was nothing like completion in the work of either. Both were mere beginners. Both would have been failures if their work had not been followed up by others. Compare the work of civilizing a new country. The hunter with his rifle goes first; then comes the woodman with his axe; and then the farmer with his plough. So in the moral world. There are men who only prepare. Theirs is trying work, because its results cannot be counted or measured. Yet their praise is sure, if they prepared well. Estimate the work of Elijah as preparing for the return of the people to Jehovah; and of John as preparing the minds of men for receiving a spiritual Messiah.

II. ELIJAH AND JOHN WERE PREACHERS. Proclaimers of messages from God. Both had virtually the same message—Repent, return to God. Change your minds concerning God and the claims of God. But the true preacher is a witness as truly as a herald. Elijah witnesses for the "living God before whom I stand." John witnesses to the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Causes of failure in spiritual power.* "I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him." Now, these very disciples had been able to heal and cure and restore, when on their trial-mission. They had returned to their Lord greatly excited, and saying, "Even the devils are subject to us in thy Name." It does not, however, appear that they had healing powers when their Master was present. True, he was not present on this particular occasion, but he was only temporarily absent, and he had left them with no particular commission. It is easy to find excuses for their failing and their feeling. Jesus does not so much reprove them as mourn over them. They did not come up to the standard he desired; they did not grow spiritually. Their failure showed failure to attain spiritual power. It is plain that the disciples were not fitted to receive news of the glorious but mysterious scene of the Transfiguration. Our Lord suggests two explanations of the failure of the disciples: they were "faithless and perverse."

I. ONE GREAT CAUSE IS SELF-CENTREDNESS. This is the mood which is indicated by their question, "Why could not *we* cast him out?" It really was not a question of *their* casting out. It was a question of their Lord's power to cast out, and of their Lord's gracious willingness to make them his agents in the casting out. They had come to be interested in what *they* could do; and, like the man who walks on a giddy height, they began to turn giddy as soon as they looked down to watch the goings of their own feet. The greatest secret of failure in spiritual power is still the growing up of self-centredness; the turning of our eyes in upon ourselves; the supreme interest in what we can be, or in what we can do. If these disciples had been able to cure, they would have been proud of *their power*; and that would have been ruinous to their Christian standing. Humbling lessons of failure are necessary to break us off from dangerous self-centralizing.

II. ANOTHER GREAT CAUSE IS UNBELIEF. But this is not to be taken in its active form. What is meant here is weakness, ineffectiveness of faith. It was not there, ready for an emergency. An unexpected demand was made on faith, and faith was caught at unawares. It was no question of denying truths. It was a question of daily reliance, mood of trust, the life of faith, the state of mind and heart that finds such noble expression in St. Paul's words, "I can do all things through him who strengtheneth me." These disciples should have had an established faith which linked them to the Divine power of their Master, and would have given them power to use his power to heal.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*Self-discipline the secret of moral power.* "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." There is some uncertainty about the word "fasting." The Revised Version omits the verse altogether. It is found, however, in Mark's Gospel, and introduces a valuable topic, which finds other expression in our Lord's teaching. A man can only be ready for a time of strain by constant and careful training. A man, to be always ready, must be always disciplining himself. And if his work is to take specially serious forms, his trainings and preparations must be specially adapted. Carefully distinguish between the moral character of self-discipline, which aims at gaining acceptance, and of self-discipline, which aims at faithfulness, and power to serve.

I. SELF-DISCIPLINE, ITS CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES. Character is the product of self-discipline. Our natural dispositions are not our character; it needs to be more clearly seen that character is something that a man wins by effort, or fails to win by wilfully making no effort. The measure of a man's self-discipline is the measure of his nobility; it is the sign of his manhood. This is true in the lower sphere, but it is much more true in the higher sphere. Self-discipline provides an infallible test of the Christian man, whose moderation, whose self-restraint, should be known in all things. The terms, "prayer," "fasting," classify the characteristic features of Christian self-discipline. 1. Prayer heads and represents all the *positive* forms. 2. Fasting heads and represents all the *negative* forms. Self-discipline is often misconceived, because it is represented only by fasting. It is thought of as only self-restraints, personal deprivations, bodily austerities, stern dealings even with our pleasant things. Fasting represents bodily subduings and humiliations. The Christian self-discipline is more vigorous on the positive side. Prayer represents putting life into good shape; ordering our habits; making and using all pious opportunities; laying hold of the strength of God. There is so much to *do* as well as so much to *undo*.

II. SELF-DISCIPLINE, ITS CHARACTERISTIC EFFECTS. The weak man is the undisciplined man, who is mastered by himself. A man gains moral power as he gains control over himself. A man never finds a harder foe to conquer, when he has mastered his own habits and passions. And our Lord here shows that no man can possibly have power to influence others unto noble attainments until he has won power over himself. The parent does no good with his children while he keeps his own character undisciplined.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*Hints concerning the coming Resurrection.* "The third day he shall be raised again." Our Lord tried to prepare his disciples for his resurrection by frequent allusions to it, and yet they never seemed to be able to take it into their souls. Perhaps they thought he was only speaking in his usual figurative and paradoxical way, though what he really meant they were unable to guess. The disciples would not allow themselves to contemplate their Lord's violent death; and they could not rise to conceive of his abiding spiritual presence as altogether more important than his temporary bodily presence. Our Lord made much of his coming resurrection. Can we understand what it was to him?

I. THE RESURRECTION INTIMATES THE CLOSE OF A HARD LIFE. Our Lord's human life was a hard life. That is the best word for it, because human life is hard that involves constant humiliation and self-restraint. We should avoid exaggeration in speaking of Jesus as "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Life is hard for the man who is "cribb'd, cabined, and confined," and has always to be forcing his will into subjection to a superior will. Our Lord's trouble was the power of the body to affect the will; but that would be done away with in the Resurrection.

II. THE RESURRECTION LIFTS HIS THOUGHT OVER THE LAST STRUGGLE. Illustrate by the patient anticipating a serious operation. The best thing you can do to cheer him is to lift his thoughts over that time, away beyond that time, to the time of convalescence, and what is to be done then. So Jesus had Gethsemane, judgment-halls, and Calvary to go through, and his best cheer was to slip over them, and think of the glorious resurrection-life beyond.

III. THE RESURRECTION WAS THE SIGN OF THE ACCEPTANCE OF HIS WORK. His release from the grave was the intimation of Divine approval, and the occasion for giving him his trust of the work of saving humanity. To think of that acceptance assured Christ that the Father's smile was on him while he was working and suffering.

IV. THE RESURRECTION WAS THE TIME WHEN HE COULD BECOME THE SPIRITUAL POWER HE WANTED TO BE. This point will open out with some freshness. Jesus always wanted to be a spiritual power in the souls of men. While he was in the body, the body seemed both to help and to hinder both him and them. It was a necessary help for a time, but Jesus longed for the risen and ascended life, in which he could be unhindered spiritual power to redeem and save.—R. T.

Ver. 27.—*The avoidance of needless offence.* The miracle of the stater in the fish's mouth is one of the most difficult miracles to deal wisely with; and that for this reason—it seems to be opposed to the principle our Lord adopted, and so readily carried through, that he would work no miracle for the supply of his own needs. All Christ's miracles are acts of service; sometimes evidently the service of teaching moral and spiritual truth to his disciples. But if this incident be carefully observed, it will be seen that, though the supernatural element is clearly present, the precisely miraculous element is absent. Christ, by supernatural power, knew which fish would first seize St. Peter's hook, and what would be found in that fish; but not a word is said which intimates that Christ put forth miraculous power in order to place that stater in the fish's mouth. There is, indeed, no miracle to explain to those who believe in the Divine-human nature of Christ. The point we take is the reason given by Jesus for allowing this tax-money to be paid—"Lest we should offend them." Those who note the finer shades of language can scarcely fail to trace in these words the tone of what we should describe in a human teacher as a half-playful, half-serious irony.

I. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE DO WELL TO STAND TO OUR RIGHTS. There were such times in the life of Jesus. Standing on our dignity is a very doubtful thing. A man's dignity is but a poor thing if it cannot take care of itself. But every man has rights. He ought to be prepared to assert them on all fitting occasions. A man's rights represent his trust, his mission for God, and he must be jealous of them.

II. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE DO WELL NOT TO PRESS OUR RIGHTS. It may be that men do not recognize them, or do not admit them, as in the case of Christ. Then we do better to live them rather than assert them. It may be that those around us are unsympathetic and prepared to object, as in the case of Christ. Then Christian prudence advises a careful reticence, lest we offend them.

III. THE SKILL OF CHRISTIAN LIVING IS SEEN IN DISCERNING THE TIME TO ACT, AND THE TIME TO REFRAIN FROM ACTING. Many things are not abstractly right, but are relatively right. We have to act in view of existing circumstances, in ways we should not adopt if all the circumstances were according to our mind. A Christian should not hesitate to give offence, but he should avoid giving *needless* offence.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Vers. 1—35.—*Discourse concerning the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and the mutual duties of Christians.* (Mark ix. 33—50; Luke ix. 46—50.)

Vers. 1—4.—*The greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Ver. 1.—**At the same time**; literally, *in that hour.* The narrator connects the following important discourse with the circumstances just previously related. Peter had completed the business of the didrachma, and had rejoined the body of disciples. These, according to St. Mark, had disputed about precedency on the way to Capernaum. Fired with the notion that their Master would ere long publicly assert his Messianic claims, which, in their view, implied temporal sovereignty and secular power, they looked forward to becoming dignitaries in this new kingdom. Three of them had been honoured with special marks of favour; one of them had been pre-eminently distinguished: how would it be when the coming empire was established? This had been the subject of conversation, and had given rise to some contention among them. Christ had marked the dispute, but had said nothing at the time. Now he gives them a lesson in humility, and teaches the spiritual nature of his kingdom, in which earthly pride and ambition find no place. From St. Mark we learn that Jesus himself took the initiative in the discourse, asking the disciples concerning their disputation on the road; and,

when they were ashamed to answer, he added, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." Our Gospel here takes up the story. The paradox seemed incomprehensible; so they put the question, **Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?** The Greek is, Τίς ἄρα μείζων ἐστὶν, κ.τ.λ.; *Who then is greater?* Vulgate, *Quis, putas, major est?* The illative particle "then" refers to what is recorded in St. Mark (ix. 34), or to some such difficulty in the querists' mind. They make the inquiry in the present tense, as though Christ had already selected the one who was to preside; and by *the kingdom of heaven* they mean the Messianic kingdom on earth, concerning which their notions did not yet rise above those of their contemporaries (comp. Acts i. 6). The comparative in the original, "greater," is virtually equivalent to the superlative, as it is translated in the Authorized Version. Such a question as the above could not have been asked had the apostles at this time recognized any absolute pre-eminence in Peter or acknowledged his supremacy.

Ver. 2.—**A little child.** Our Lord teaches, not only by spoken parables, but by symbolical actions also. This was not a mere infant, as Christ is said to have called him unto him. A tradition, mentioned by Nicephorus ('Hist. Eccl.,' ii. 35), asserts that this child was the famous martyr Ignatius. **Set him in the midst of them.** Taking him in his arms, as St. Mark tells. What a picture of Christ's tenderness and human love! From the boy's trustfulness and submission he draws a needed lesson for the ambitious apostles.

Ver. 3.—**Except ye be converted** (στραφῆτε); *i.e.* turned from proud, ambitious thoughts of worldly dignity. There is no question here about what is popularly known as conversion—the change from habitual sin to holiness. The conversion here spoken of is confined to a change in the present state of mind—to a new direction given to the thoughts and wishes. The apostles had shown rivalry, jealousy, ambition: they must turn away from such failings, and learn a different lesson. **Become as little children.** Christ points to little children as the model to which the members of his kingdom must assimilate themselves. The special attributes of children which he would recommend are humility, unworldliness, simplicity, teachableness,—the direct contraries of self-seeking, worldliness, distrust, conceit. **Ye shall not enter.** In the sermon on the mount Christ had said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (ch. v. 3). To all who are not such the gate opens not. That virtue which was unknown to pagan antiquity, the opposite character to which was upholden as the acme of excellence, Christ here asserts to be the only passport to his ideal Church on earth or its eternal development in heaven. Not the self-esteeming, proud man (μεγαλόψυχος) of Aristotle's worship ('Eth. Nic.,' iv. 3), but the humble (ταπεινὸς), the lowly, the self-depreciating, is the man who can realize his position in the spiritual world, and shall be admitted to its blessings and benefits. St. Paul has summarized the ideal character of the members of the kingdom in 1 Cor. xiii., especially vers. 4, 5, and 7.

Ver. 4.—**Whosoever therefore.** This verse gives a direct application of the principle just enunciated, and supplies an answer to the apostles' question. **Shall humble himself.** Not that a child consciously humbles itself, but is humble by nature. The disciple must become that by deliberate choice which the child is by reason of his constitution and natural disposition. **The same is greatest;** rather, *greater* (μείζων), Christ using the same term as the questioners in ver. 1. The more a man annihilates self and casts away pride, conceit, obstinacy, the fitter is he to become a living member of Christ's kingdom. "Quanto humilior, tanto altior," says Thomas Aquinas. But this is a joint work. St. Gregory says well, "The good which a man doeth is both the work of God and the work of man: of God, as being the Author, in giving grace; of man, as being actor, in using grace, yet so that he co-operate with grace by grace" (quoted by Ford, *in loc.*).

Vers. 5—14.—*The treatment due to such.*

Ver. 5.—**Shall receive** (ὃς ἐὰν δέξηται). The word is pregnant with meaning. It includes not only the showing of tender affection and the giving of material succour, such as hospitality, shelter, etc., but also the bestowal of help and support in spiritual things, encouragement in holiness, instruction in Divine lore. **One such little child.** Primarily, Jesus refers to children, pure and confiding as the one he had placed in the midst; but his words are applicable to all who have the childlike spirit and character, the graces which he specially loves and rewards. The expressions here and in the next verse must be understood to belong in some cases to the symbol, and in others to the symbolized. **In my Name** (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου); *for the sake of my Name;* because he belongs to me; not merely from natural affection and pity, but from a higher motive, because the child has in him somewhat of Christ—is the child of God, and a member of Christ. **Receiveth me.** That which is done to his little ones Christ regards as done to himself (comp. ch. x. 40—42). What a blessing waits on those who teach the young, working laboriously in schools, and training souls for heaven!

This "receiving" Christ is a far higher and better thing than being "greatest" in an earthly kingdom.

Ver. 6.—There is an opposite side to this picture. **Shall offend**; *cause to stumble*—give occasion for a fall, *i.e.* either in faith or morals. This is done by evil example, by teaching to sin, by sneers at piety, by giving soft names to gross offences. **One of these little ones.** Whether child or adult, a pure, simple soul, which has a certain faith, though it be not strong enough to resist all attack. Even the heathen recognized the respect due to the young: "Maxima debetur puero reverentia" (Juvenal, 'Sat.,' xiv. 47); and guilelessness and purity, wherever found, win some regard, even from worthless and careless observers. To wilfully lead one such astray is a deadly sin, which the Lord denounces in solemn terms. Christ affectionately calls his disciples "little ones" (ch. x. 42). **Believe in** (*εἰς*) **me.** We must always distinguish between "believe in" (*πιστεύειν εἰς, or ἐν*: *credo in*) and "believe" with the simple dative; the former is applied to faith in God alone. Says St. Augustine, "Credimus Paulo, sed non credimus in Paulum." In the present passage the phrase implies the Divinity of Christ. **It were better**; literally, *it is profitable*. The crime specified is so heinous that a man had better incur the most certain death, if by this means he may avoid the sin and save the soul of his possible victim. **A millstone**; *a great millstone*—such a one as required an ass to move. The upper, or movable, stone is meant, which was usually turned by the hand. **Drowned.** We do not know that the Jews punished criminals by drowning (*καταποντισμός*), though it is probable that it was practised in some cases; but by other nations this penalty was commonly exacted. Among the Romans, Greeks, and Syrians, it was certainly the practice. Commentators quote Suetonius, 'Aug.,' lxvii.; Diod. Sic., xvi. 35; Livy, i. 51; Aristophanes, 'Schol. ad Equit.,' 1360. The punishment seems to have been reserved for the greatest criminals; and the size of the stone would prevent any chance of the body rising again to the surface and being buried by friends—a consideration which, in the minds of heathens, greatly increased the horror of this kind of death.

Ver. 7.—This and the preceding verse occur in St. Luke (xvii. 1, 2) in an inverted order. **Woe unto the world!** The Lord thinks of the deadly evil brought into the world by offences given, such as bad example, unholy lives of Christians, persecutions, scoffs, thoughtlessness—things which lead so many astray. **For it must needs be.** While men are what they are, such consequences must be expected. This is not an absolute, but a relative, necessity. Man's heart is evil, his tendencies are evil, temptation is strong, Satan is active; all these forces combine to bring about a fatal result. Thus St. Paul says (1 Cor. xi. 19), "There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." So these offences of which Christ speaks are overruled and permitted for wise purposes, that by them the righteous may be proved and purified, and the chaff separated from the wheat. **But woe to that man!** Because of this evil principle which is rife in the world, no man is exonerated from the guilt of giving offence. He has free-will; he can choose good; he can use the means of grace; he can strengthen his natural weakness, control his perverseness, overcome corruption, by the help of God always ready to be given to them who seek. The first "woe" is a cry of pity for a world in danger; the second "woe" is a denunciation of the sinner as being responsible for the evil which he introduces. We are all in some sort our brothers' keepers, and are bound to help forward their salvation, and to do nothing which may tend to endanger their souls' health.

Ver. 8.—**Wherefore.** The Lord teaches how to avoid this sin of giving offence, repeating the solemn words already delivered in the sermon on the mount, though with some variation and a different context (ch. v. 29, 30). The reference on the former occasion was especially to breaches of the seventh commandment; here the Lord speaks of offences in general, of that external corruption among mankind which is the fruitful source of temptation and sin. The only remedy for this is the sternest self-denial, the strictest watchfulness. **Or thy foot.** Christ did not name this member in his previous discourse. Literally, the hand or foot leads into sin, when it is directed to forbidden objects, moves towards the acquisition of things contrary to the Law of God. Metaphorically, the expression signifies all that is as dear and as necessary as these important members. Such occasions of sin we must at once and absolutely cast aside. It includes also persons as well as things. Friends the dearest must be parted from if their presence, or conversation, or habits cause evil thoughts or encourage evil acts. In the presence of such offences, ties the nearest must be snapped asunder. Loneliness, isolation, is better than companionship in wickedness. It has been well said by Olshausen that the hand and the foot may denote mental powers and dispositions; and the warning is given that their over-cultivation may prove an obstacle to the spiritual life, and must be accordingly checked. We may also descry in the paragraph an admoni-

tion against making too much of skill, dexterity, and adroitness in business and occupation. There is a subtle snare in them; they may draw the heart away from God, and must be restrained and modified, so as not to interfere with the cultivation of religion and the care of the soul. **Enter into life.** This is an addition not found in the sermon on the mount; it refers to the eternal life which, beginning on earth, is consummated in heaven. **Everlasting fire** (*τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον*). This is the first time that this phrase occurs. Whatever these words may mean, there can be no doubt that they signify, and are intended to signify, some awful kind and extent of punishment, the fear of which may deter from such sins as incur it. It is not morally expedient to minimize the force of such terms by disputing about the exact connotation of "æonian." When we remember that the words are spoken by the loving and pitiful Saviour, we must allow that they point to some dreadful reality, the import of which he knew, and which he thus mercifully veiled from us as not able to bear the full revelation (see on ch. xxv. 46).

Ver. 9.—**Hell fire.** A synonym for the "everlasting fire" of the previous verse, and the "unquenchable fire" of the Baptist's warning (ch. iii. 12), and to be understood in the same sense. It is good to be saved even with the loss of all that makes earthly life happy and precious.

Ver. 10.—From this verse to the end of the chapter we find no parallel in the other evangelists. The Saviour here returns to the subject of children, whether literally or metaphorically so called, and proclaims the high appreciation which is their due. **Take heed** (*ὁρᾶτε, see*) **that ye despise not one** (*ἑνὸς*) **of these little ones.** God's care is minute; it extends to each individual of the class. The contempt denounced might arise in various ways and from various considerations. The advanced believer might despise children as not competent to enter into covenant with God or fit to receive Church privileges, whereas circumcision under the old dispensation and infant baptism under the gospel afford a very different view. Again, to say or do unseemly things in the presence of children is a mode of "despising" which may prove a deadly offence. Or the contempt may be on the side of the ambitious and self-seeking, who cannot understand the simple and childlike spirit which seeketh not its own. The Lord gives two proofs of the high consideration due to his little ones. The first proof is that which follows; the second is given in vers. 11—14. **Their angels.** Not "their spirits after death," as some commentators erroneously interpret (for the term "angel" is not so used, and Christ speaks in the present tense, **do always behold**), but the angels especially appointed to watch and protect them—their guardian angels. This doctrine (which, as of very solemn import, the Lord introduces with his usual formula, **I say unto you**), that each soul has assigned to it by God a special angel, is grounded on this, and supported by many other passages of Scripture (comp. Heb. i. 14; Ps. xxxiv. 7; xci. 11; Luke xv. 7, 10). It has been questioned how angels can be said to succour us on earth, while in heaven they are always looking on the face of the Father. The difficulty has been answered, among others, by St. Gregory, who writes, "They never so go forth apart from the vision of God, as to be deprived of the joys of interior contemplation. They are both sent from him, and stand by him too, since both in that they are circumscribed, they go forth, and in this that they are also entirely present, they never go away. Thus they at the same time always behold the Father's face, and yet come to us; because they both go forth to us in a spiritual presence, and yet keep themselves there, whence they had gone out, by virtue of interior contemplation" ('Moral.,' ii. 3). It is probable that the highest order of angels is here signified, such as among the Jews was called, "the angels of the presence, or of the face." To behold the king's face means, in Eastern parlance, to be admitted to his immediate presence—to enjoy his special favour and confidence (see 2 Kings xxv. 19; Esth. i. 14; Jer. lii. 25). It is to these supreme beings, who draw their knowledge and love directly from Almighty God, and receive their commands from his mouth, that the tender lambs of Christ's flock are committed. This fact demonstrates their dignity and the great heinousness of setting a stumbling-block in their way.

Ver. 11.—This verse is omitted by the Sinaitic and Vatican Manuscripts, and many modern editors, *e.g.* Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, and the Revised Version; but is retained in many good uncials, nearly all the cursives, the Vulgate, Syriac, etc. It is supposed to be an interpolation from Luke xix. 10; but one does not see why, if this is the case, the interpolater should have left out the striking verb "to seek," which would naturally have coincided with "seeketh" in ver. 12. For expository use, at any rate, we may consider the verse as genuine, and take it as the commencement of the second argument for the dignity of the little ones—the simple and humble, whether children or others. This proof is derived from the action of God towards them. **The Son of man is come to save that which was lost** (*τὸ ἀπολωλός*). How can ye despise those whom Christ hath so loved and deemed so precious that he

emptied himself of his glory and became man in order to save them? The general term, "that which was lost," is expressed by the neuter participle, to show that there is no exception to the wide scope of Christ's mercy. The race of man is lost; infants are born in sin; all need redemption. Everybody, poor, helpless, ignorant, tempted, comes under this category, and to save such Christ came down from heaven. Therefore their souls are very precious in his sight.

Ver. 12.—The parable that follows teaches the same lesson as the preceding verse. It is found in Luke xv. 1—7, with some variations, delivered to a different audience and under different circumstances, as Jesus often repeated his instructions and teaching according to the occasion. **How think ye?** What say ye to the following case? Thus the Lord engages the disciples' attention. **An hundred sheep.** A round number, representing a considerable flock. If but one of these stray, the good Shepherd regards only the danger and possible destruction of this wanderer, and puts aside every other care in order to secure its safety. **The ninety and nine.** These must be left for a time, if he is to conduct the search in person. It may be that some idea of probation is here intended, as when Jesus let the disciples embark on the lake while he himself remained on the shore. Many of the Fathers interpret the ninety-nine as representing the sinless angels, the lost sheep as man, to seek and save whom Christ left heaven, *i.e.* became incarnate. This, indeed, may be a legitimate application of the parable, but is inexact as an exposition of the passage, which regards the whole flock as figuring the human race. The sheep that remained safe and true to their Master are the righteous; the errant are the sinners, which, however few, are the special care of the merciful Lord. **Into the mountains** (ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη). There is much doubt whether these words are to be joined with **goeth** (πορευθείς), as in both our versions, or with **leave** (ἀφείς), as in the Vulgate, *Nonne relinquit nonaginta novem in montibus?* In the former case we have a picture of the toil of the shepherd traversing the mountains in search of the lost. But this does not seem to be the particular point contemplated, nor is any special emphasis assigned to this part of the transaction. In the parable as recounted by St. Luke (xv. 4), we read, "Doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go?" So here it is best to render, *Doth he not leave the ninety and nine upon the mountains?* The shepherd is not regardless of the safety and comfort of the flock during his temporary absence; he leaves them where they are sure to find pasture, as they roam over (ἐπὶ with accusative) the hill-tops, which, catching clouds and dew, are never without fresh grass. So Ps. cxlvii. 8, "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." **Seeketh.** The lost sheep would not return of itself. Such erring souls Jesus seeks by the inspiration of his Spirit, by allowing distress and sorrow, by awakening conscience and memory, by ways manifold which may lead the sinner to "come to himself."

Ver. 13.—**If so be that he find it.** The quest is not sure to be rewarded. Man's perversity makes the result uncertain. No one may safely go on sinning, or living in careless unconcern, with the expectation of being finally found and saved. There is a limit to the patience of the Lord. If a man will not open his heart to good inspirations and co-operate with preventing grace, he will not be found and brought home. God forces no one to be saved against his will. **Rejoiceth more.** A natural feeling. Thus a mother loves better an afflicted child whom she has nursed through a long malady, than the strong and healthy children who have caused her no trouble and anxiety. The joy at the recovery of the strayed sheep is proportional to the sorrow occasioned by its loss and the pains and trouble expended in the search; and this pleasure would at the moment be greater than the satisfaction with which the other members of the flock are regarded.

Ver. 14.—**Even so.** The teaching of the parable is summed up; the conduct of the earthly shepherd is a figure of that of the heavenly Shepherd. **The will of your Father . . . perish.** To scandalize one of these little ones, or lead him into sin (which is to cause to perish), is to fight against God's will, who would have all men to be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4). "When the dignity of the little ones was asserted, it was Πατρός μου, 'my Father;' now that a motive directly acting on the conscience of the Christian is urged, it is Πατρὸς ὑμῶν, **your Father**" (Alford). St. Paul teaches that Christ died for the weak brethren (Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 11). With this text (ver. 14) before him, it is inconceivable that any one can hold the doctrine of the eternal reprobation of certain souls. The whole passage is opposed to the theory of irrespective predestination and irresistible grace.

Vers. 15—20.—*Correction of an offending brother.*

Ver. 15.—Hitherto the discourse has warned against offending the young and weak; it now teaches how to behave when the offence is directed against one's self. **Moreover** (δὲ, "now," introducing a new subject) **if thy brother shall trespass against**

thee (*εἰς σέ*). The brother is a brother in the faith, a fellow-Christian. The words, "against thee," are omitted in the Sinaitic and Vatican Manuscripts, and by some modern editors, on the ground that it is a gloss derived from Peter's question (ver. 21). The words are retained by the Vulgate and other high authorities. Without them, the passage becomes one of a general nature, applying to all offences. Retaining them, we find a direction how to treat one who offers personal offence to ourselves—which seems to suit the context best. In the case of private quarrels between individual Christians, with the view of reconciliation, there are four steps to be taken. First, private remonstrance: Go. Do not wait for him to come to you; make the first advances yourself. This, as being the more difficult course, is expressly enjoined on one who is learning the lesson of humility. Tell him his fault; *ἔλεγξον αὐτόν: corripe eum.* Put the fault plainly before him, show him how he has wronged you, and how he has offended God. This must be done in private, gently, mercifully. Such treatment may win the heart, while public rebuke, open denunciation, might only incense and harden. Plainly, the Lord primarily contemplates quarrels between individual Christians; though, indeed, the advice here and in the sequel is applicable to a wider sphere and to more important occasions. Thou hast gained thy brother. If he shall own his fault, and ask for pardon, thou hast won him for God and thyself. A quarrel is a loss to both parties; a reconciliation is a gain for both. The verb "to gain" (*κερδαίνω*) is used elsewhere in this high sense (see 1 Cor. ix. 19; 1 Pet. iii. 1).

Ver. 16.—This gives the second step or stage in discipline. Take with thee one or two more. If the offender is obdurate to secret remonstrance, do not yet resort to public measures, but make a fresh effort accompanied by a friend or two, who will support your view and confirm your expostulation, which might otherwise be considered partial or self-interested. In the mouth of two or three witnesses. The idea is derived from the requirement of the Jewish Law in a case of litigation (see Deut. xix. 15; John viii. 17; 2 Cor. xiii. 1). By the testimony of these witnesses, every word that has passed between you may be fully certified. There will be forthcoming, if necessary, the regular legal evidence, should the matter come to other ears.

Ver. 17.—Tell it unto the Church (*τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*). This is the third step to take. Our Lord is contemplating a visible society, possessed of certain powers of discipline and correction, such as we find in the history of the apostolic Church (see 1 Cor. v. 1, etc.; vi. 1, etc.; 1 Tim. i. 20). Christ had already spoken of his Ecclesia in his commendation of Peter's great confession (ch. xvi. 18); so the twelve were prepared for this use of the word, and would not confound the body here signified with the Jewish synagogue. To the latter the expressions in vers. 18—20 could not apply. The custom and order of procedure in the synagogue would afford an idea of what the Lord meant; but the congregation intended was to be composed of Christians, the followers of Christ, who were delivered from the narrowness of rabbinical rules and definitions. The institution of ecclesiastical tribunals has been referred to this passage, but, as understood by the apostles, it would denote, not so much ecclesiastical rulers as the particular congregation to which the delinquent belonged; and the offence for which he is denounced is some private scandal or quarrel. The course of proceeding enjoined would be impracticable in a large and widely extended community, and could not be applied under our present circumstances. If he neglect to hear the Church. Now comes the final stage in corrective discipline. An heathen man (*ὁ ἐθνικός, the Gentile*) and a publican (*ὁ τελώνης, the publican*). The class, not the individual, is meant. If he turns a deaf ear to the authoritative reproof of the Church, let him be regarded no longer as a brother, but as a heathen and an outcast. Christ, without endorsing the Jews' treatment of Gentiles and publicans, acknowledges the fact, and uses it as an illustration. The obdurate offender must be deprived of Church-membership, and treated as those without the Jewish pale were commonly treated. The traditional law enjoined that a Hebrew might not associate, eat, or travel with a heathen, and that if any Jew took the office of *publicanus*, he was to be virtually excommunicated. In later times, there naturally arose in the Christian Church the punishment of offenders by means of exclusion from holy communion, and excommunication. But even in this extreme case charity will not regard the sinner as hopelessly lost; it will seek his salvation by prayer and entreaty.

Ver. 18.—The following words are addressed, not, as the preceding verse, to the offended Christian, but to the apostles, as possessed of some superior powers above those of any individual congregation. Verily I say unto you. The Lord solemnly confers the grant made to Peter (ch. xvi. 19) on the whole apostolate. The binding and loosing, in a restricted sense, and in logical connection with what precedes, refer to the confirmation and authorization of the sentence of the Ecclesia, which is not valid, so to speak, in the heavenly court till endorsed by Christ's

representatives—the apostles. Whether the verdict was the excommunication of the offender ("bind") or his pardon and restoration ("loose"), the ratification of the apostles was required, and would be made good in heaven. The treatment of the incestuous Christian by St. Paul is a practical comment on this passage. The congregation decides on the man's guilt, but St. Paul "binds" him, retains his sins, and delivers him to Satan (1 Cor. v. 1—5); and when on his repentance he is forgiven, it is the apostle who "looses" him, acting as the representative of Christ (2 Cor. ii. 10). In a general sense, the judicial and disciplinary powers of the Christian priesthood have been founded on this passage, which from early times has been used in the service of ordination. Each body of Christians has its own way of interpreting the promise. While some opine that, speaking in Christ's name and with his authority, the priest can pronounce or withhold pardon; others believe that external discipline is all that is intended; others again think that the terms are satisfied by the ministration of the Word and sacraments, as a physician gives health by prescribing remedies.

Ver. 19.—**Again I say unto you.** The following paragraph has been thought by many to be addressed especially to the apostles in confirmation of the powers conferred on them above; but from ver. 20 we should judge the promise to be general. Herein is set forth the privilege of united prayer. God confirms the sentence of his authorized ambassadors; he gives special heed to the joint intercessions of all Christians. **Two of you.** Two of my followers, even the smallest number that could form an association. **Shall agree** (*συμφωνήσωσιν*). Be in complete accord, like the notes of a perfect strain of music. Here one man's infirmity is upheld by another's strength; one man's short-sightedness compensated by another's wider view; this man's little faith overpowered by that man's firm confidence. **Anything.** Of course, this is to be understood with some restriction. The thing asked must be reasonable, good in itself, expedient for the petitioner; the prayer must be earnest, faithful, persevering. If such conditions are satisfied, the desire will be granted in some form, though, perhaps, not in the way or at the time expected. Thus the Lord sanctions guilds or bodies of Christians united together to offer up supplications for special objects or with some definite intention in which all are agreed.

Ver. 20.—The promise is applied to the public prayer of the congregation, as we see in what is called "the prayer of St. Chrysostom" in the English Prayer-book. **Are gathered together.** For the purpose of worship. It is a simpler form of the word used in Heb. x. 25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." **In my Name** (*εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα*); literally, *into my Name*; i.e. with love to me, yearning for union with me, and acting for my glory. This would imply decent and orderly meeting for the highest ends. **There am I in the midst of them.** Christ promises a real, actual presence, though invisible, as true as when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, as true as when the Shechinah shone in tabernacle or temple. The rabbis had a saying that if two sat at table and conversed about the Law of God, the Shechinah rested upon them. The promise in the text, of course, implies Christ's omnipresence and omniscience. This is his blessing on united, congregational prayer.

Vers. 21—35.—*The pardon of injuries, and the parable of the unmerciful servant.*

Ver. 21.—Peter was greatly struck with what Christ had just said about reconciliation of enemies; and he wanted to know what limits were to be imposed on his generosity, especially, it might be, if the offender made no reparation for his offence, and acknowledged not his wrongdoing. **My brother.** As ver. 15, fellow-disciple, neighbour. **Till seven times?** Peter doubtless thought that he was unusually liberal and generous in proposing such a measure of forgiveness. Seven is the number of completeness and plurality, and our Lord had used it in giving his sentence about forgiveness: "If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn to thee again," etc. (Luke xvii. 4). Some rabbis had fixed this limit from an erroneous interpretation of Amos i. 3; ii. 1, "For three transgressions, and for four," etc.; but the usual precept enjoined forgiveness of three offences only, drawing the line here, and having no pity for a fourth offence. Ben-Sira bids a man admonish an offending neighbour twice, but is silent as to any further forgiveness (Ecclus. xix. 13—17). The Jews were very fond of defining and limiting moral obligations, as if they could be accurately prescribed by number. Christ demolishes this attempt to define by law the measure of grace.

Ver. 22.—**I say not unto thee.** Jesus gives the full weight of his authority to his precept, in distinction from Peter's suggestion and rabbinical glosses. **Seventy times seven.** No specific number, but practically unlimited. There is no measure to forgiveness; it must be practised whenever occasion arises. Some translate, "seventy-seven times," making an allusion to the retribution exacted from Lamech: "If Cain shall be

avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold" (Gen. iv. 24). Christian forgiveness must be extended as far as old-world vengeance. Mercy rejoices against judgment. But the genius of the language supports the rendering of the Authorized Version. St. Paul has caught the spirit of his Master when he writes, "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 32). In the Mosaic dispensation there was some foreshadowing of the doctrine of forgiveness in the enactments which enjoined tender treatment of debtors, and in the terms of the jubilee law; but there were no rules concerning the pardon of personal injuries; the tendency of many prominent injunctions was to encourage retaliation. Herein is seen an important distinction between the Law and the gospel, the institutions antecedent to the death and atonement of Christ, and those subsequent thereto.

Vers. 23—35.—*Christ illustrates his precept by the parable of the unmerciful servant, and the stern lesson which he himself enunciates at its close.*

Ver. 23.—**Therefore**; *i.e.* because such is the infinite nature of the pardon to be meted out to an offending brother. **The kingdom of heaven.** The rule observed in the government of Christ's kingdom with regard to forgiveness is represented by the procedure of a certain earthly king. The picture supposes some great Oriental potentate, with numerous viceroys or satraps, who have to render to him an account of revenues received. These are called servants in the sense that, though they are high officials, they are the monarch's subordinates and dependents. Both Herodotus and Xenophon apply the term "slave" (δοῦλος) to the great officers of state. Immense sums of money would pass through their hands. This accounts for the enormous debt of the officer in the parable. Webster and Wilkinson compare the East India Company's collectors, who are high civil *servants* of the company, that is, now, of the government. If we regard the parable in a general light, as illustrating God's dealings with sinful man, we must see in the "taking account of his servants," not the judgment of the last day, but those many occasions when God makes a man turn his eyes inward and learn how he stands in the sight of his Lord. Such occasions are sickness, misfortune, great change of circumstances, a new year, reproach of conscience, however aroused,—these and such like incidents awaken a man to his true position, show him his delinquencies and misery.

Ver. 24.—**When he had begun to reckon.** This is the same word which is rendered "take account" in the previous verse, and means to compare receipts, expenditure, and balance. **One was brought unto him.** The defaulter did not come of himself and own his delinquency, but was brought into his lord's presence, probably by some who had discovered his defalcations, and desired to see him punished. Otherwise the phrase may refer merely to Oriental etiquette, according to which no one can enter the royal presence without being formally allowed the interview, and ceremoniously introduced. **Ten thousand talents.** It is uncertain what is here meant by a talent, whether of silver or gold, of Jewish, or Attic, or Syriac standard; and, of course, the amount intended is variously understood. We must refer to the Bible dictionaries for an explanation of the term "talent," merely remarking here that the highest estimate would give six millions of our pounds, and the lowest more than half that amount. This huge sum must represent the total revenues of a province, and the debtor must have been a high and much-trusted official. It is used by our Lord to signify the infinite debt the sinner owes to God. Thus in the Lord's Prayer we have, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (ch. vi. 12).

Ver. 25.—**He had not to pay.** He was absolutely bankrupt, and had no means whatever of meeting the deficit. **To be sold.** The Jewish Law ordered such process in the case of an impecunious debtor (see Exod. xxii. 3; Lev. xxv. 39, 41; and the concrete case in 2 Kings iv. 1; comp. also Isa. l. 1; Ps. xliv. 12). But this law was mitigated by the enactment of the jubilee, which in the course of time restored the bondman to liberty. The instance in the parable appertains rather to Oriental depotism than to the proceedings under Mosaic legislation (see ver. 34, which is not in accordance with Jewish practice). The king, by this severity, may have desired to make the defaulter feel the weight of his debt, and to bring him to repentance, as we see that he was ready to accept the submission of the debtor, and to grant him forgiveness (St. Chrysostom). **Payment to be made.** The verb is put impersonally. Of course, the sale of himself, wife, family, possessions, would not produce enough to satisfy the debt; but the command is to the effect that the proceeds should be taken on account of the debt. The parable must not be pressed in all its details; a false impression is often produced by fixing spiritual or allegorical meaning upon the unimportant accessories, which, in fact, merely give vividness to the offered picture. The sale of wife and children is of this character, though it may be said generally and experimentally that a man's sins react on his family in some sort, lowering position and reputation, and reducing to poverty,

etc.; but this result has no bearing on the lessening of the original debt.

Ver. 26.—**Worshipped him.** Prostrated himself before the monarch, and in this abject attitude sued for mercy. **Have patience with me.** Be long-suffering in my case; give me time. **And I will pay thee all.** In his terror and anguish, he promises impossible things; even the revenues of a province would not in any convenient time supply this deficiency. The scene is very true to life. To save himself from a present difficulty, a debtor will make any promise that occurs to him, without considering whether he will ever be in a position to fulfil it. The defaulter in the parable must have thought well of the king's generosity and tenderheartedness to make such a proposition at this extreme moment. If we take the spiritual sense of the parable, we see that no sinner could offer to pay, much less pay, the debt due from him to his Lord, "so that must be let alone for ever" (Ps. xlix. 8).

Ver. 27.—**Was moved with compassion.** The earthly circumstance has its counterpart in God's dealings with sinners. Humility, confession, prayer, are accepted by him as payment of the debt. **Loosed him** from arrest, from being sold as a slave. This was the first favour accorded. The second was even greater. **Forgave him the debt.** The servant had asked only for time; he receives acquittance of the enormous sum which he owed. The king's severity had brought home to the debtor his full guilt and its consequences; when he realizes these, and throws himself on his lord's mercy, he receives more than he had asked or hoped for. But (to revert to the spiritual interpretation) the pardoned sinner must not forget the past; he must live as one forgiven. Says the penitent psalmist, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. li. 3).

Ver. 28.—**Went out**—straightway from his lord's presence, where he had been so mercifully treated, while the remembrance of his free and undeserved forgiveness must have been still fresh. **Found.** Lighted upon by chance, as it were. Here, rather, was providentially offered an opportunity of showing that his lord's goodness was not thrown away, but had entered his heart and controlled his conduct towards others. **One of his fellow-servants.** An official of the king, but probably in an inferior position to that which he himself occupied. Seeing this man, he is reminded of a paltry debt which this person owed him. He remembers this fact; he forgets his late experience. **An hundred pence** (*denarii*; see on ch. xx. 2); equivalent to some £3 of our money, and a sum not a millionth part of his own debt to **his master**; the proportion, as some say, may be stated more accurately as 1 to 1,250,000. The enormous difference between these two amounts represents the disproportion between the offences of our neighbours against us and those of which we are guilty towards God; and how small is the forgiveness on our side compared with that which God freely accords to our infinite debt to him! We must consider also the parties to whom these debts are owing—on one side, the worm man; on the other, Almighty God. **Took** him **by the throat** (ἔπνιγε); *was throttling him.* Thus precluding all prayer and remonstrance. Such brutal treatment was not what he himself had experienced. **Pay me that thou owest**; ὅ τι ὀφείλεις: *quod debes.* Many manuscripts and late editors (*e.g.* Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Alford, Westcott and Hort) soften the demand by reading εἴ τι ὀφείλεις, *si quid debes*, "if thou owest aught," as though the creditor were ashamed of mentioning the paltry sum due; or else it is simply a fashion of speaking, not to be pressed as if any doubt was intimated concerning the debt. It might almost be rendered, "Pay, since thou owest something." Not thus had his lord addressed him in the first instance.

Ver. 29.—**Fell down at his feet.** The fellow-servant repeated the action and the very plea which he himself had but now used so successfully. **Besought.** Not "worshipped," as in the former case, where the superiority was more marked.

Ver. 30.—**And he would not.** The piteous appeal made no impression on his hard heart. "He did not even regard the words by which he himself had been saved (for on saying these same words he had been delivered from the ten thousand talents), nor recognize the port by which he had escaped shipwreck; neither did the attitude of supplication remind him of his master's kindness; but putting aside all such considerations by reason of covetousness, cruelty, and revenge, he was fiercer than any wild beast" (St. Chrysostom, *in loc.*). **He went and cast him into prison.** He either himself dragged the wretched debtor to prison, or was not satisfied till he had seen the door of the gaol close upon him. Far from forgiving the debt, he would not even grant an extension of time; he must have payment immediately, or he will exact the utmost punishment till the debt is fully discharged.

Ver. 31.—**Fellow-servants.** Those in the same condition of life as the incarcerated debtor. Mystically, they would be the angels, who, like those in the parable of the tares, tell the Lord what was done; or the saints who plead with God against oppression and injustice. **They were very sorry.** It is well remarked that anger

against sin is God's attribute (ver. 34), sorrow appertains to men. These have a fellow-feeling for the sinner, in that they are conscious that in their own heart there are germs of evil which, unchecked, may develop into similar wickedness. **Told** (διεσάφησαν); *told clearly*. They took the part of their comrade, and, not in revenge or malice, but as an act of justice, gave their lord full information of what had happened. The just cannot hold their peace at the sight of oppression and wrong, and God confirms their judgment.

Ver. 32.—**After that he had called him.** A second time he is brought before his lord, not now to receive forgiveness, but to have the enormity of his guilt exhibited to him, and to suffer well-deserved punishment. In a mystical sense this call is the summons of death, which is virtually judgment. **O thou wicked servant.** The lord had not so addressed him when he had come cringing into his presence on the former occasion; he had spoken no words of reproach, but simply left him in the hands of justice. Now he calls him "wicked," because he is unmerciful; he deserves the epithet, because he has been guilty of a crime as heinous as theft or murder. Then the lord places in strong contrast the mercy which he had received and the unmercifulness which he had shown. **All that debt.** Great as it was. **Thou desiredst me** (παρεκάλεσας); *besoughtest me*; calledst on me for aid. The debtor had not asked or hoped for remission of his debt, and had been largely and most unexpectedly blessed.

Ver. 33.—**Compassion . . . pity.** The same verb is used in both places. *Shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?* (Revised Version). The man's guilt lies in his unmercifulness in the face of mercy received. The fact is patent; it stands for itself; it needs no amplification or enforcement. The king says no more, and the delinquent is equally silent; he has no excuse to offer. Convicted by his own conscience, he knows it is useless to sue for pardon or to expect further leniency. So in the day of judgment no excuse can be admitted; it is too late to plead or argue when the sentence is past.

Ver. 34.—**Was wroth.** This, as we said above, is the prerogative of God. Man is pained and grieved at sin; God is angry. **Tormentors**; βασανισταῖς: *tortoribus*. These are not the gaolers, prison-keepers, but persons who put prisoners to the torture. Neither Jewish nor Roman law at that time recognized any such officials; neither were those in confinement treated thus in either community. The idea is taken from the practice of Oriental despotism, which might thus punish an offence considered supremely detestable. In a mystical sense these are the ministers of Divine vengeance who carry out the behests of the King. **Till he should pay**; *until he should have paid* (ἕως οὗ ἀποδῷ). Some editors omit or bracket οὗ, but the sense is the same with or without the relative. The debt never could be paid, so practically the punishment would last for ever. Commentators, mediæval and modern, see here an argument for the eternity of future punishment; others see in the clause an intimation that sin may be forgiven in the other world, though not repented of or pardoned in this present life. The words give no support to the latter interpretation. **Until**, etc., does not necessarily signify that the condition specified is certain to be fulfilled. As Bengel says, on ch. i. 25, "Non sequitur ergo post." And in the present case there could be no possibility of payment. A criminal delivered to the tormentors would have no opportunity or means of raising the necessary funds. If this is a picture of the final judgment, it is parallel to our Lord's statement in ch. v. 26, "Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing;" for, as the Preacher says, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (Eccles. ix. 10). **All that was due [unto him]** (πᾶν τὸ ὀφειλόμενον αὐτῷ). Modern editors reject αὐτῷ: Vulgate, *universum debitum*. This is more general than "all that debt" in ver. 32. It is usually taken to refer to the old debt now redemanded. But a difficulty has been found in the fact that this old debt had been freely forgiven and utterly done away, and therefore could not, in equity, be again exacted. Hence some commentators have explained the clause as referring not at all to the former debt, but to a new debt incurred by a new offence, viz. ingratitude and unmercifulness. But the spiritual truth seems to be that, although sins once absolutely forgiven are not again imputed, they make subsequent sins more heinous, as in a human law court previous conviction increases the penalty of a fresh transgression. Falling from grace, a man passes into enmity with God, and so far cancels his pardon, and is in a state of condemnation (see Ezek. xviii. 24, 26).

Ver. 35.—**So likewise.** This points to the moral of the parable intended by Christ. It is not a lesson against ingratitude, but against unmercifulness. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." But want of charity makes a man incapable of retaining God's pardon; the Holy Spirit cannot abide in an unforgiving soul. **My heavenly Father.** He says, not "your" (ch. vi. 14, 26), nor "our," but "my heavenly Father," the Father of Christ, the God of all

mercies. He cannot join himself in mention with such as are not children of God. **From your hearts.** Forgiveness must be real, sincere, not pretended, nor merely outward. There must not only be no outward act of revenge, but no malice in the heart, no storing up of evil passions for future outlet, as occasion may arise. The heart must be in harmony with the conduct, and both must evidence a true spirit of charity. This alone enables one to continue in a state of grace and in reconciliation with God; this alone makes prayer acceptable; and we are assured that, as our heavenly Father requires us to forgive without limit, so his mercy is infinite and will be extended to us in measure unbounded. **Their trespasses.** These words are omitted by many manuscripts, the Vulgate, and most modern editors; and they are not required by the sense. They have been, perhaps, added to obviate a certain abruptness in the conclusion of the parable.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The little ones.* I. THEIR EXAMPLE. 1. *The question of the apostles.* They had not yet learned the great lesson of humility. Perhaps the favour shown to Peter, James, and John had excited jealousies among them. On their way to Capernaum they had disputed who should be the greatest. After all the Lord's teaching they did not yet understand the spiritual nature of his kingdom. There are rivalries and animosities in earthly states; there should be none in that kingdom where the lowliest are the highest. But this is a hard lesson to learn, and the apostles were long in learning it. At Capernaum they asked Christ, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Who should be greater (the words literally mean) than others? Who should stand above others in the hierarchy of the Church that should be built upon the Rock? Who should be nearer than others to the King in the kingdom which Christ had come to establish? 2. *The little child.* The Lord's estimate of greatness differed wholly from that current among men. He had said once before that of all that had been born of women there had never risen a greater than John the Baptist. He put the holy martyr above all the monarchs, warriors, and statesmen of ancient times. But he had then said, "He that is the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." And now, in answer to the question who should be greater than others in that kingdom, he called a little child unto him. The little one came willingly, drawn by the gentle words, the loving looks, of the Master. The Lord set him in the midst, in the place of honour; he took him in his arms, St. Mark tells us. The Lord always loved the little children; he bade them come to him; he watched their innocent play with kindly interest, and drew spiritual lessons from it (ch. xi. 16, 17). Now the little one lay, restful and happy, in the Lord's embrace. Thither we would lead our children—to the Lord, to share his love and tenderness. And, ah! if he should call them away from our sight, we must learn to trust them in faith, though it cannot be without tears, to those everlasting arms. "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." Happy child! we know not whether he grew up, as a late and doubtful tradition says, to be the famous Bishop Ignatius. That holy martyr bore God in his heart, as the name Theophorus imports; doubtless he was borne up in his sufferings by the gracious help of God. We know not whether in his infancy he was borne in the arms of Christ. That child was greatly blessed. He would never forget, one thinks, the encircling arms of Christ. But doth not the Scripture say to us, "The eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"? and, alas! how often we forget the gracious presence of God in our unbelief and selfish fears! Now, the Lord called the attention of the apostles to the little one. 3. *The Lord's answer: the lowliest are the greatest.* (1) The necessity of conversion. The deep and awful question which we ought to put, each one to his own soul, is not—Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? but—Are we ourselves true loyal members of that kingdom? We cannot be in the kingdom at all except in the sense in which the withered fruitless branches still for a short time hang on to the vine; we cannot be in the kingdom in any holy and blessed sense unless we are converted; we cannot enter into the kingdom of glory at the last unless we are converted. The word "conversion" occurs only once in the New Testament; the verb, in its various forms, nine times; but four of those passages are quotations of Isa. vi. 10. Sometimes the passive form of the verb is used, sometimes the active. And it is to be noted that in the four quotations of

Isa. vi. 10, the active ἐπιστρέψωσιν is used three times, the passive στραφῶσιν once. God sometimes commands his people, "Turn ye even to me with all your hearts;" and sometimes we pray to God, "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." There are two aspects of the great change—the human and the Divine. Both are real and true; neither excludes the other. What we need is the actual knowledge of that blessed change from our own inward experience; if we have that, we need not distress ourselves about the deep things of God, the relations between the human and the Divine, between the sovereignty of God and the free-will of man. We must turn with all our hearts unto the Lord, praying earnestly and humbly, "Turn thou us, O Lord." The apostles must turn, the Lord said, from their earthly ambition, from their rivalries and jealousies. We must turn, each one, from his besetting sin, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We must all turn away from the world to God, away from self to Christ. We must look, not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen; the line of vision, so to speak, must be changed; the eye of the soul must be directed, not to the earth, but to heaven. The circumstances of this great change vary in different individuals; in some it is sudden, in others slow and gradual. Some, like St. Paul, can point to a great startling crisis in their spiritual life; some few, like Samuel, have lived from childhood in the felt presence of God, growing continually in grace,—not without many sins, not without continual repentance, but without any strong boundary-line marking the decisive change from evil to good. But in some form or other, in some way or other, that change must take place in every true Christian life. We may not be able to describe it exactly, to fix its exact moment, its circumstances. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." But the change must be felt in its results ("thou hearest the sound thereof"), if we cannot define its action. We must be conscious that our heart is turned towards God, that our thoughts, desires, motives, hopes, point towards heavenly things. If we have that happy consciousness, we may humbly hope that he which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. If we have it not, let us not rest until by God's grace we gain it; for, except we be converted, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and oh! what must be the misery of those who lose that great reward! (2) The necessity of childlike humility. There is no true conversion without humility; a man whose thoughts are filled with self cannot turn to Christ. Pride concentrates the regards of the soul on self; and while the soul is occupied with self it cannot see the surpassing beauty of the Lord, it cannot turn to him. Those who would follow Christ must become as little children; they must be like the little ones in their simplicity, their trustfulness, their humility. The little child is simple; it shows its true nature; it has no hypocrisy, no desire to seem other than it is; it is humble and modest; it does not aim at display and show; it is full of affectionate trustfulness in those whom it loves. And, the Lord Jesus says, they shall be greater than others, they shall have the higher places in the kingdom of heaven, who humble themselves as that little child who then lay in his arms was humble; that is, with an unaffected humility, with a simple and genuine lowliness. Then the Christian must not set his heart upon gaining the high places of life; if God puts him there he must do his duty simply and humbly; if others are set above him he must be willing to take the lowest place, content and happy, remembering the blessed Master's words.

II. THE DIGNITY OF CHRIST'S LITTLE ONES. 1. *The blessing of receiving them.* Christ loved the little children; he proposes their character to his followers as a model for imitation. His words shed a new dignity, a new glory, on innocent childhood. He was thinking probably not only of children in years, but also of the childlike in heart and mind. He deigns to regard such as, in some sense, representatives of himself. Those who care for little children because Christ cared for them, in his name and for his sake, care for Christ. These words give a very holy meaning to single-hearted work in Sunday schools; they shed a blessing upon orphanages, upon all Christian work done for children's sake, all Christian love and thought for little children. And they pronounce a blessing upon all those who in Christ's name receive into their affections or into their homes true Christian men who have learned of Christ the childlike simplicity and lowliness which he exalts so highly. Those who receive such receive Christ, as

Abraham received angels unawares. Let us love and cherish Christian-minded friends; they bring a precious blessing to our houses, for they bring the gracious presence of Christ. 2. *The guilt of causing them to stumble.* A heathen poet tells us that the greatest reverence is due to childhood; he bids us exclude carefully from the sight of children everything that is coarse and evil. The Lord enforces the same duty under more awful sanctions. The simplicity, the receptivity, of little children expose them to evil influences. In Christian homes they are taught to believe in Christ. Among their companions, in their schools, they are sometimes exposed to manifold temptations. But woe to those who purposely set stumbling-blocks in their way! Woe to those, schoolfellows or others, who try to entrap the innocent and simple-hearted into profanity and neglect of their souls! Such are acting the part of the devil; they are doing his work; they are the enemies of Christ, the murderers of souls for which Christ died. Better that they had died before they came to this pitch of guilt. For souls are very precious in the sight of Christ; he shed his precious blood for them. How must he regard those who entice them to ruin and death? 3. *There must be offences.* Human nature being what it is, the power of the devil being what it is, there must be always in the world men who set an evil example, who are as stumbling-blocks, as snares. It is a necessity, part of the great mystery of the existence of evil. This necessity is not absolute; it follows from the existence of sin; and sin is voluntary, or it would not be sin. Sin is voluntary in individuals; but while the world remains as it is, there must, as a fact, be sin in the world, as there must be heresies (1 Cor. xi. 19); and where there is sin there must be offences. But woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! The guilt of sin is increased by its contagious character. The sinner sins against his own soul; he sins also against the souls of others; for his sin becomes a centre of evil influence, spreading its foul attractions among hearts rendered only too susceptible by the inherited corruption of human nature. None can tell the mass of moral disease which may spring from one source of infection. Then woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! He knows not what fearful mischief may follow from his wicked or thoughtless act. He may repent, thank God; but his repentance must be deep, his sorrow great; he may be saved, yet so as by fire. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." 4. *They must be avoided at all costs.* Those who ensnare others, who cause them to stumble, have first been ensnared, have stumbled themselves. The first occasion of stumbling must be avoided. The danger is great, the consequences are fearful; better any sacrifice, any self-denial. Self-denial leads to heaven, self-indulgence to hell. We must cut off the causes, the occasions of sin, though they be as closely bound up with our life as the hand, or foot, or eye. The Lord repeats the lesson which he had already given in the sermon on the mount (ch. v. 29, 30). There are some cautions which must be given again and again—enforced with all manner of illustrations, "precept upon precept, line upon line." And surely this warning of the deep necessity of real self-denial is one which needs the most constant repetition, one which must be urged again and again, even unto weariness. And it must be urged very strongly and forcibly. The hand, the foot, the eye, are very valuable to us. The loss of one such member would be very serious. To cut it off or to pluck it out would be a great sacrifice, involving much pain, requiring very stern self-denial. But any self-denial, the Lord himself tells us, is better than the risk of suffering that eternal fire which must be the end of sin and self-indulgence. Eternal fire! soften the awful words as far as you dare; say that there is a possibility, a bare possibility, that the word "eternal" may not necessarily involve that endlessness which is the proper meaning of the less correct rendering "everlasting;" say that the word "fire" is figurative, that the Lord did not mean a material fire, corporeal torments;—after all, there remains enough of most fearful meaning in the words of Christ (and let us remember that it was Christ, the most gentle, the most loving Saviour, who used those words) to make us feel what must be the dreadful danger of those who entice others into sin, to make thoughtful, believing Christians willing to deny themselves in every way, if so be they may escape from the wrath to come, and save their souls alive in the great day of God. 5. *Offences come from contempt; contempt of the little ones is a grievous sin.* To despise others was characteristic of the Pharisees; it is very sinful in Christians. The Lord is loving unto every man; the Saviour died for all. Christians may not dare to despise those whom the Lord loved,

for whom he gave himself to die. To speak contemptuously of those whom we think beneath us in rank, in riches, in intellect, in refinement, is sinful in the sight of God. "Honour all men," is the lesson of Holy Scripture; for all were made by God the Father; all were redeemed by God the Son; all may, if they will, come to God in faith and prayer, be sanctified by God the Holy Ghost. Men think that there is no harm in contemptuous thoughts and words; but these things are sins against the law of love, sins against God, who bids us love our neighbour as ourselves; they greatly injure the soul. Then honour all men; especially take heed that ye despise not one of the little ones, the little children whom the Lord loves, or the childlike in heart whom he commends. Despise them not, for they are dear to Almighty God; he cares for them; he giveth his angels charge over them; he assigns to them their angel-guardians; "*their* angels," the Lord says, the angels appointed to watch over them, whose special duty it is to keep them in all their ways, who are sent forth to minister for their sake. Men may despise these little ones; but holy angels tend them—angels great in power and might, angels who are near to the throne, who stand in the presence of God, who in heaven do always behold the face of God. The Lord's words, "I say unto you," give an emphatic sanction to this sweet and blessed doctrine of the ministry of angels. As the angel Gabriel watched by God's appointment over the holy Child Jesus, so surely do the angels of God watch over the little children now; so surely do they watch over us, if we are childlike in heart, if we are among those little ones who believe in Christ. To the believer this world is still a Bethel, the house of God, the gate of heaven. The ladder which Jacob saw in the vision of the night is still set on the earth, and the top reacheth to heaven; and still do the angels of God ascend and descend, bringing help and strength, messages of peace and love to the little ones of Christ, bearing the prayers of the saints into the Divine presence, carrying the souls of the holy dead into the paradise of God. 6. *The little ones are precious in the sight of God.* They must be so, for the Son of man came to save them. None are so small, so insignificant, as to be left out of the Lord's loving care; for it was to save the lost that he came—to save that which seemed utterly lost, lost beyond the power of saving (τὸ ἀπολωλός). (See Luke xix. 10, where the words are certainly genuine; they are of doubtful authority in this place.) It was an evil time when the Saviour came into the world. All flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth; the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life were everywhere dominant. The world seemed lost to all that was good—a mass of corruption. But to save that lost world the Son of God came down from heaven and became the Son of man. His incarnation, his sacrifice of himself upon the cross, has given a new value, a higher dignity, to human nature. None may dare to despise those souls of men which the Lord Jesus loved so dearly. The blessed angels care for Christ's little ones; they encamp around them to protect them, because they are his angels, his messengers (ch. xiii. 41), and they must care for those who are so very precious in the sight of their blessed Lord. 7. *Parable of the hundred sheep.* One is gone astray. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine upon the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray. Does it mean that the Lord leaves the countless host of angels on the heavenly heights, and goeth after the one lost sheep of humanity (comp. Heb. ii. 16)? So many have understood it. But it seems more natural to interpret the parable as intended mainly to teach the deep love of God for each individual soul. "The Son of man came to save that which was lost." His great love was not merely a general love for sinful humanity as a mass; it was an individual love for each perishing soul. If all but one had been gathered in, he would have gone after that one lost sheep, seeking on and on until he found it. Human love is limited in its range. We cannot love all mankind as we love one who is very dear to us. It is not so with the infinite Love. The love of God is all-embracing in its extent and fulness, perfect and complete in its individual affection. He loves all and each. "God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The shepherd, if so be that he finds the lost sheep, rejoiceth more of that one than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. The ninety and nine are precious to the shepherd; in some sense they must be more precious than one. But they are safe. They do not awaken the same emotion, the same intense longing, as the one that went astray. The joy of recovery is proportioned to the sorrow of the loss. Such would be the feelings

of a human shepherd. It is an illustration (as far as Divine truths can be shadowed by human things) of the love of God for each separate human soul. It is not his will that one should perish; he willeth that all men should be saved. Then let not any Christian man dare to despise one of those whom God so greatly loved. The Lord repeats this precious parable in Luke xv. under different circumstances, with a somewhat different application. It cannot be repeated too often or studied too deeply.

LESSONS. 1. Even apostles had their rivalries: how earnestly we ought to strive against envy and jealousy! 2. A true conversion is of all blessings the greatest; seek it with all your might. 3. There is no true conversion without a humble, childlike spirit. 4. An evil example involves fearful guilt; avoid it at any cost. 5. Honour all men, especially believers; each one is precious in the sight of God.

Vers. 15—20.—*The method of dealing with offences.* I. THE DUTY OF PRIVATE CHRISTIANS. 1. *Secret admonition.* The Lord had warned the apostles that offences must come; he had urged the necessity of exceeding carefulness against giving offence to others; now he tells us how to act when others put a stumbling-block in our way by their trespasses. Go and tell thy brother his fault, he says; speak to him secretly, do not publish his transgression, do not make a talk of it; charity endureth all things, charity hideth a multitude of sins. Speak to him; it is better to tell him his fault than to brood over it. But speak to him gently for his own soul's sake. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother—gained him to Christ, gained his soul; for he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. And oh! what is the exceeding great privilege of gaining a soul which Christ loved, for which he came down from heaven that he might seek it! 2. *The second step, admonition before two or three witnesses.* If the first attempt fails, still publicity should be avoided as far as possible; a second should be made with the help of one or two Christian friends. They may bring the erring brother to a sense of his own guilt, of the offence which he is causing to others, of the wrong which he is doing to the Church of which he is a member by his wilfulness and obstinacy.

II. THE OFFICE OF THE CHURCH. 1. *Its discipline.* If the sinful brother again and again refuses to listen to Christian reproof in private, the sin which is causing offence to the brethren must be brought before the Church. By the word "Church" the Lord must mean the Christian Church, that Church of which he had spoken for the first time at Cæsarea Philippi, which he was building upon the Rock. He was speaking prophetically, looking forward to the growth and increase of the Church. "Tell it unto the Church." This is the last resort; if he neglect to hear the Church he must be regarded as a heathen man and a publican, no longer a brother in the full Christian sense of the word. But we must remember that the Lord's mercy extended to heathen and publicans. He came to call sinners to repentance. The sinful brother may repent, he may be forgiven and saved. The censure itself is inflicted not only for example's sake, not only that the cause of offence may be removed, but also for the sake of the offender, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. v. 5). 2. *Its authority.* The Lord here confers upon all the apostles as representatives of the Church that authority which he had already (ch. xvi. 19) given to St. Peter as the representative of the apostolic college. The Church, then, hath authority in controversies of faith—authority to declare what is of faith and what is not, what is of obligation and what is indifferent, what is allowed and what is forbidden. Christians are bound to regard the decisions of the Church with respect and reverence, for if rightly made they are ratified in heaven. Yet St. Peter certainly erred (Gal. ii. 11); Churches may err, and alas! have erred. It is only while the Church stands firm upon the Rock, which is Christ; only when the two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, and he himself according to his promise is in the midst of them; when those two or three are men who have turned to God in the simplicity and lowliness of little children; it is only then that the conditions are fulfilled on which this promise depends. What a tremendous responsibility rests upon those who are called to guide and rule the Church of God! All Christian men should feel for them in the many difficulties of their arduous work, should pray for them constantly and earnestly. 3. *The strength of the Church.* That strength lies in prayer. The power of united prayer

is such that if any two true believers agree as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them. They pray on earth, our Father hears in heaven. United prayer brings to their help the almighty power of God. That union of human wills into concordance with the holy will of God must be the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the suppliants; and when the Holy Spirit prompts the prayer, the prayer is always heard, the petition is always granted. Only let us not misunderstand the Lord's promise, as perhaps the sons of Zebedee did at the time (comp. Mark x. 35, where they almost quote these words of Christ's). Instructed Christians will ask for spiritual blessings, which alone are blessings always and under all conditions; or, if they sometimes ask for earthly things (and they are encouraged to do so in the Lord's Prayer itself), it will always be with the Lord's own condition, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." The strength of the Church lies in prayer, and the strength of prayer lies in the presence of Christ. The union of only two Christians in real earnest prayer represents the Church. For Christ himself is present wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, or rather, as the literal rendering is, into his Name. Christians are united by the one Spirit into one body, into that spiritual unity which is called by the one name (1 Cor. xii. 12). Believers are gathered together into that name, into that spiritual fellowship which can only be realized by those who walk in the light as he is in the light (1 John i. 7). And wherever that fellowship is, there is Christ the Lord manifesting himself to those who meet in his name and are gathered together into his name. He is in the midst of that little gathering, for he is God, omnipresent, ready to hear his servants in whatever corner of the world they lift up their prayers to him, ready to grant their petitions, to guide their counsels, to ratify the decisions, to give effect to the sentence issued in his name by those who met together in his name in the simple earnestness of childlike Christians, in the energy of that faith which has turned wholly to the Lord.

LESSONS. 1. It is a difficult task to reprove a sinful brother; it is sometimes our duty; it must be done with gentleness and wisdom. 2. To gain a brother's soul is an exceeding great reward; it is worth much prayer, much thought, much time. 3. The Lord bids us hear the Church; the Christian must respect the authority of the Church.

Vers. 21—35.—*The law of forgiveness.* I. THE CONVERSATION WITH ST. PETER. 1. *Peter's question.* The Lord had intimated the duty of gentleness in dealing with offences. Every effort was to be used to reconcile the offending brother; he was to be approached with all gentleness, with all Christian tact, if so be that he might be won back to Christ and to the Church. Peter wished for a definite rule to guide him in carrying out the Lord's directions. According to the rabbis, an erring brother should be forgiven three times. Peter suggested a larger number, the sacred number seven, as the limit of Christian forgiveness. 2. *The Lord's answer.* "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." There seems to be a reference to the words of Lamech (Gen. iv. 24). Lamech desired a seventy and sevenfold vengeance. The Lord commands a seventy and sevenfold forgiveness. There is some doubt as to the numerical value of the words. But it is of little importance which rendering we adopt, "seventy times seven," or "seventy-seven times," for the Lord certainly means that acts of forgiveness are not to be counted. It is a question not to be settled by arithmetic, but by Christian love and by the grace of God. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

II. THE PARABLE OF THE KING AND THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT. 1. *The account.* The Lord illustrates the duty of forgiveness by the parable of a human king and his servants. The king would take account of his servants. God takes account from time to time. There are preliminary reckonings preparatory for the great day of account. In the visitations of his providence, in dangerous sickness, in the hour of deep and heartfelt penitence, the Lord brings home to our hearts the exceeding guilt of our sins, the greatness of our debt. A servant was brought who owed ten thousand talents. The reckoning had only just begun; there may have been other even greater debts to come. It was a terrible beginning. The servant was brought; he would not have come of his own will. The sinner shrinks in terror from the awful presence of the Judge. Adam and Eve hid themselves when first the King came to take account.

But he was brought. We cannot escape, we must come, when he requires our presence. The debt was enormous, far more than we can even represent to our imagination. Such is the awful debt of sin; we may well say every day, and many times every day, "Forgive us our debts." 2. *The mercy of the king.* The servant was to be sold, he and his family, and all that he had. In his agony he fell down before his lord and worshipped him; "Lord," he said, "have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." He could not pay, he never could have paid, that vast debt. But in his presumption, or in his deceitfulness, or, it may be, in the frenzy of his abject terror, he promised the impossible. The king was moved with compassion; he loosed him, and forgave him the debt. It is a parable of the infinite compassion of the heavenly King; "he pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 3. *The cruelty of the servant.* He went out from the king's presence. We are only safe while we abide in union with the Lord. He is the Source and Fountain of love, and apart from him there is no true and holy love. When men go out from his presence, from the sphere of his influence, they cease to love; they become selfish, hard, unfeeling. That forgiven servant found a fellow-servant who owed him a hundred pence, a trifling sum compared with his own enormous debt. He caught him by the throat; he would not listen to his prayer (though the prayer was that very same prayer which he himself had just before poured forth in the bitterness of his soul); he cast him into prison till he should pay the debt. So now men forget their own guilt, their own danger; they are hard and unforgiving to others, forgetting their own deep need of mercy and forgiveness. 4. *The condemnation.* His fellow-servants were very sorry. The sins of others will cause real sorrow to the true Christian; he will grieve over the hard-hearted and impenitent, as the Lord wept over Jerusalem. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes," said the psalmist, "because men keep not thy Law." They told their lord. The all-seeing God needs no information from men or angels; yet in their prayers his saints lay before him the oppression and sufferings of his people, as Hezekiah laid the letter of Sennacherib before the Lord, as the disciples "went and told Jesus" of the death of the holy Baptist. The king was wroth: "O thou wicked servant," he said. He had not called him wicked because he owed the ten thousand talents; he pitied him then; now he upbraids him. His want of mercy showed the utter hardness and selfishness of his heart; it showed that his own cry for mercy implied no sense of the greatness of his debt, but only fear of punishment. The king was wroth; he delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due to him. His cruelty cancelled the forgiveness which had been granted him. His last state was worse than the first. Those who, having been once enlightened, fall away from grace are in awful danger. "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The unhappy man could never pay that tremendous debt; he could not had he remained free, how much less when he was in the hands of the tormentors! Those words are very awful; they represent awful possibilities; they sound in our ears in tones of awful warning. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." The unloving cannot abide in Christ, who is Love; the hard-hearted and unmerciful cannot continue in union with him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor; the unforgiving cannot dare to use the prayer which the Lord himself hath taught us, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." There is no mercy for the merciless. We may repeat again and again the words of prayer, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" but countless repetitions will not win mercy for those who have not mercy in their hearts. And oh! we shall need mercy in the great day. Then let us be merciful now: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

LESSONS. 1. Let us always remember the great account; God has given us work to do, let us work out our own salvation in fear and trembling. 2. Our debt is immense; let the remembrance of our sins keep us humble. 3. God's mercy is infinite; let us trust in his forgiving love. 4. He is wroth with the unforgiving; let us learn mercy of the most Merciful. 5. We say the Lord's Prayer daily; let us ever strive by God's

grace to translate that prayer into practice, to live as we pray, to forgive, as we hope for forgiveness.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The kingdom of the childlike.* Jesus Christ not only resorted to parables in order to make his teaching vivid; sometimes he made use of object-lessons. Thus he answered the question as to who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven by pointing to the little child whom he had called to himself, and set up in the midst of his disciples. The child himself was a visible embodiment of the reply our Lord wished his questioners to receive.

I. THE TYPE OF THE KINGDOM. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of the childlike. When we look on a little child we see a typical citizen of that glorious kingdom. Let us consider what there is in childlikeness to be thus representative. We must approach this subject from the ground from which Christ and his disciples came to it. The question of primacy being in the minds of the disciples some contrast to their feelings and dispositions is vividly suggested by the sight of the simple, unconscious, unworldly child. 1. *Unambitious simplicity.* This would be the first impression produced by the sight of the child, when suddenly he was called by Jesus to confront self-seeking ambition. Even if we may believe that there was no self-seeking in the minds of the disciples, and that their inquiry was general, not personal, still the spirit of ambition was roused by it. But the little child does not possess ambition. The subtle calculations by which men scheme for pre-eminence are all unknown to him. He is pre-eminent without knowing it. They are the highest saints who think least of their own sanctity. 2. *Unworldliness.* The little child is quite unconventional. He knows nothing of the ways of the world. Of course, it is not desirable to imitate his defects, to go back to childish ignorance. But knowledge is dearly bought when it is acquired at the cost of spirituality. Wordsworth tells us that heaven lies about us in our childhood. 3. *Trustfulness.* The child came to Jesus as soon as he was called. A look of the Saviour was enough to dispel fear. We need the innocent confidence of the child to come into right relations with Christ.

II. THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM. 1. *The entrance.* The disciples had forgotten this. Busying themselves about the rank of those who were in the kingdom, they neglected to consider how to enter it. Yet this is the first question, and all else is unpractical till this step has been taken. But when it has been taken, all else becomes unimportant. It is everything to be privileged to enter the kingdom, even though in its lowest region. Moreover, the true citizen of the kingdom will have lost the ambition that busies itself about questions of pre-eminence. 2. *The turning.* We are all selfish and self-seeking until we learn to repent and take a better course. No one can enter the kingdom of heaven while he remains worldly and ambitious. The very spirit which seeks a first place in the kingdom excludes from the kingdom. We need grace to turn back to childlikeness. We must be converted into little children. The greed and ambition must be taken out of our hearts, and the simplicity, unworldliness, and trust of the child received in place of those ugly attributes.—W. F. A.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The offending member.* A moment's reflection will convince us that these stern sentences of Christ's are unanswerable. If the alternative lay between losing a limb and losing his life, who would hesitate with his decision? "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR WHAT IS VERY NEAR TO US TO BE FATALLY HURTFUL TO US. It would be a mistake to suppose that our Lord meant that under any circumstances self-mutilation would be a duty. The causes of stumbling are not bodily, although the body may be the instrument of temptation; they are in the thoughts and desires of the heart (Jas. i. 14, 15). But there may be things precious as parts of our very selves, or friends dear as the apple of the eye, or useful as the right hand, and yet spiritually hurtful to us. Our own daily occupation, to which we have grown until it has become as a part of ourselves, may be a source of temptation and danger. Our habits, which are our second nature, may be a very bad second nature.

II. IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO LET LOWER INTERESTS BLIND US TO OUR HIGHEST GOOD. Eyes, hands, and feet are good and useful things in themselves. A maimed creature who has lost any of these valuable organs and limbs is certainly a pitiable object. Naturally and rightly we desire to keep our body sound and whole. Many possessions, though less intimately connected with our persons, are still justly valued when considered by themselves. But this valuation only touches a part of life, and that the lower part. If the enemy can seize the outworks and turn them against the citadel, it is desirable to demolish them, excellent as they may be in form and structure, because the principal object is to keep the citadel. The great necessity in spiritual things is to guard the very life of God within. If anything threatens this it threatens our highest interest. Selfish people are their own worst enemies, because, while pandering to the outer self, they starve and poison the true self.

III. IT IS WISE TO MAKE ANY SACRIFICE TO SAVE THE TRUE LIFE. We admit this in bodily disease. The shattered limb must be amputated to preserve the patient's life. The same principle applies in spiritual regions. The pain of losing what is very near and dear to us may be great. But we dare not be cowardly. A greater evil is the alternative. We may spare our friendship, our wealth, our pleasure, and yet destroy our souls. Then at best these things can but decorate the tomb of the dead spiritual nature. We have to rise to the stern severity of life. Sin is so terrible that it cannot be laid aside as one would put off a superfluous garment. It has eaten its way like a cancer into our very being. We shrink from the knife, but we must submit to it if we would live. Desperate efforts are needed—or rather a patient submission to the great Deliverer of souls who sometimes saves by terrible means. Yet he does save!—W. F. A.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The lost sheep and the good shepherd.* This parable is here associated with Christ's care for little children (see vers. 10—14). But in St. Luke it is applied to the recovery of publicans and sinners (Luke xv. 1, 4—7). There can be no doubt that St. Luke connects it with its most evident and general lesson. Still, there is an *à fortiori* argument in the use of the parable in St. Matthew. If Christ cares for the most abandoned sinners, much more will he save little children when they begin to wander, especially as this is too often the case just because the negligence or evil example of older people causes them "to stumble."

I. THE SHEEP. 1. *The hundred.* We start with the picture of a complete flock. All men belong by nature to God. We begin life with God. If we sin we fall. Sin is losing our first estate, wandering from the fold. 2. *The ninety and nine.* Many are here represented as faithful. We might think of many worlds of angelic beings in contrast of our own fallen world, or of many members of a Church or family when contrasted with a single defaulter. A parable cannot be pressed in all its details in order to extort from it the exact statistics of a religious census. It is enough that under certain circumstances one is seen to fall away from the fidelity preserved by his companions. Now the ninety and nine are left. Absolutely Christ does not leave his true sheep. But a special care is needed to find the lost one. There is a common selfishness in religious people who would enjoy the luxuries of devotion in such a way as to hinder the work of saving the lost. Churches are filled with worshippers, who in some cases hold their pews as private possessions, so that the wayfaring man and the stranger feel that they are not welcome. Yet if the gospel is for any one, it is for them. 3. *The lost sheep.* There is but one. Yet it is a great trouble that one should go astray. (1) This shows the value of an individual soul. (2) It reveals the awful evil of sin. The lapse of but one man into so fearful a fall is enough to disarrange the whole order of the community.

II. THE SHEPHERD. 1. *His departure.* He leaves the flock; but they are safe; for they are in the fold. Moreover, the sight of his departure to save the lost is a warning to those left at home of the evil of straying. 2. *His journey.* He must travel far in a waste and difficult country. Sin leads its votaries into hungry solitudes and among fearful dangers. Christ follows the wandering soul. His advent to this world was his following, and his hard life and death his journeying over wild mountains. He follows each one now. He will not leave the lost to their fate. 3. *His success.* He finds the lost sheep. He is a good Shepherd—energetic, persevering, self-sacrificing. Therefore

he succeeds. Christ brings back souls who have wandered into the lowest abysses of sin. 4. *His joy.* This is proportionate (1) to his love for the lost sheep; (2) to its distress, danger, evil condition; (3) to the toil and difficulty involved in finding it. The joy of Christ is the joy of saving the lost.—W. F. A.

Vers. 15—18.—*The offending brother.* The wise advice which our Lord here gives is rarely followed, and yet it is not at all impracticable, and if obeyed it would prevent an immense amount of distress and ill feeling. Let us consider, first the general principles of his advice, and then its special details.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES. 1. *The fact of the brother's offence is admitted.* This is very important. Too often men quarrel and accuse one another without justly apportioning the faults. The innocent man is blamed by his guilty brother. We must not put in force the process indicated by Christ until we have discovered that our brother is really in the wrong. 2. *The aim must be to recover the offending brother.* It is not to crush and humiliate him. It is not to have our revenge on him. It is to restore him to a better condition of mind, and to bring about a reconciliation. 3. *The method must be kind and generous.* The slowly advancing stages show a reluctance to proceed to extreme measures. Inasmuch as our end is not to vindicate our own rights, but to recover our brother, our method must be tender and considerate.

II. SPECIAL DETAILS. It is important to observe that Christ is treating of the relation of true Christian people to one another. If either party does not recognize the claims of Christian brotherhood, the process must be different, although the generous spirit of Christ's method must be observed with all men. Let us now note the successive steps. 1. *We are to see the offending brother alone.* This is just the very last thing some people will do. In pride or fear they shun the very person they should seek. They refuse to speak to him, when it is their duty to be frank with him. Yet too often they spread the tale of their wrong among their neighbours. Thus a train of idle gossip is started, and vast mischief originated. He who so behaves reveals himself in an unchristian light; he becomes an offending brother, and gives the man who has offended him a just cause of complaint. Immense mischief would be stayed if Christ's method were pursued. We have to seek out the person who has wronged us, and be simple and frank with him; then very often a little quiet talk will bring us to a mutual understanding and end the quarrel. 2. If the first step fails, we are *to call in the help of two or three other Christians.* This is also to be private. The calm impartiality of outsiders may settle the dispute. The gravity of their advice may convince the offending brother that he is in the wrong. 3. If this process fails, *we are to appeal to the Church.* Christ assumes the exercise of Church discipline. With us this has fallen very much into abeyance. It can only be restored in a Christ-like spirit. 4. Finally, if all these processes fail, *we must cease to regard the offender as a Christian brother.* He has excommunicated himself. God does not forgive the impenitent, and he does not expect us to do so. Yet we should never hate the offender, but always desire to restore him—as we should desire to convert "the Gentile and the publican."—W. F. A.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The power of united prayer.* The point of this verse is in the idea of the association of two people in prayer. Elsewhere we often read of the value of prayer in general. Here a special efficacy is ascribed to the united prayer of two Christian people. Let us consider the meaning of this. Why is Christ most present to help in united prayer?

I. IT IS UNSELFISH. Two people might be plotting together for some mutual advantage of a low order. But we cannot conceive of their having a prayer-meeting about it. Many of our personal prayers are shamefully selfish. They do not seek that God's will may be done; they simply demand a concession to our own will. The same fatal evil *may* be found in a united prayer, but it is less likely there.

II. IT IS BROTHERLY. We must be on friendly, even on brotherly terms before we can really pray together. The union of two alone in prayer implies very deep mutual confidence. They must agree together. The reason why earth is so cut off from heaven is that earth is too often a scene of discord. When there is agreement on earth, earth is more like heaven, and the wish expressed on earth may be granted in heaven.

III. IT IS DELIBERATE. The conference and agreement of the two imply a careful consideration of the subject of the prayer. Many prayers are too hasty and inconsiderate to deserve any attention. But the grave conference in prayer here described by our Lord would give the weight of deliberation to the petition. Probably it would be less foolish than many private prayers.

IV. IT HONOURS THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH. Christ encouraged secret prayer in private devotion (ch. vi. 6). This should be a daily practice. But there are reasons when more is required, viz. in general public worship and in prayer for special objects. Now, while Christ deals with individual souls in the first instance, he is also interested in social religion. He did not found an order of hermits, he founded a Church. He is present in his Church in a peculiar way. This is the real secret of the answer to united prayer. It is difficult to break through the reserve which too often keeps us back from the prayer which our Lord here encourages. But it is our duty to do so.

V. IT SHOWS THE POWER OF THE FEW. We are not heard for our much speaking, our many words; neither are we heard on account of our numerical strength. In listening to prayer God does not count heads; he weighs hearts. One Elijah stands for more in prayer than a cathedral-ful of listless worshippers. The ideal Church is not the large Church, but the Christ-like Church. Religious statistics encourage a most unspiritual way of valuing Christian work and estimating Church progress. The Church of but two members cannot be a weak Church, if those two members are united in prayer. Further, it is to be noted that the value of a prayer-meeting cannot be measured by the numbers that attend it. A small meeting may be a very real one, and if it is truly united it must have power with God. It is foolish, therefore, to despair of such a meeting because it is sparsely attended. The prayer-meeting of but two is here commended by Christ. If it be a meeting at all, though reduced to the numerical minimum, it may issue in incalculable results.—W. F. A.

Vers. 21, 22.—*The duty of unlimited forgiveness.* Jesus once required forgiveness to be repeated seven times (Luke xvii. 4). St. Peter now asks what is to be done when these seven times of pardon are passed. Our Lord simply multiplies them by seventy. There is to be no arithmetic in the matter; there is to be no limit to forgiveness.

I. IT IS A MISTAKE TO SEARCH FOR THE MINIMUM OF DUTY. Why should St. Peter want to know what to do when he had forgiven seven times? Was there any law which he might transgress if he went too far in the generosity of pardon? His question was one that should never have been asked. It savours of rabbinical casuistry. Now, one of the great defects of casuistry is that it is too often pursued in the interest of those who wish to do no more good than is absolutely required of them. But the spirit of such a desire is immoral. He who seeks a limit to forgiveness has not really a forgiving spirit at all. He only forgives under compulsion, that is to say, he does not really forgive in his heart. So it is with all other duties. When we ask how far *must* we go, with how little will God be satisfied, we betray a spirit out of sympathy with our duty. If we loved it we should not anxiously search for the line of obligation, we should rather press on to the utmost with an enthusiastic desire to do our best.

II. FORGIVENESS CANNOT HAVE A LIMIT. Some duties are limited, although we are free to exceed the limit. This is the case with honesty. We have simply to pay what we owe, to give a just price for what we buy, to refrain from stealing, and we have discharged the whole of our obligation in this direction. Thus, at all events in the pecuniary world, it is possible to be absolutely honest, and hosts of people have reached the stage of absoluteness in regard to this duty. But there are other duties that run out to the infinite; we can never entirely compress them. All our spiritual education only enables us to reach towards a little more of their boundless possibilities. Of such a nature is forgiveness. We may be called at any moment to carry this further than we have yet gone.

III. THE LIMITLESS CHARACTER OF FORGIVENESS SPRINGS FROM ITS DIVINE ORIGIN. Forgiveness is God-like. It belongs to the ethics of heaven. It cannot be enforced in the law courts of earth, where Shylock is awarded his pound of flesh. In strict right and law, forgiveness cannot be enacted. Forgiveness is above law, as the sovereign who pardons in clemency is above the judge who is compelled to condemn in justice. God forgives without limit. He requires the condition of repentance, and this we

have a right to demand also (see Luke xvii. 3). But when that is present he forgives hardened old offenders, who have grieved his Spirit many and many a time before. It is only the limitless forgiveness of God that makes it possible for us to be pardoned by him. Then it is incumbent on us to show the same spirit towards our fellow-men.—W. F. A.

Vers. 23—35.—*The hard debtor.* This parable follows our Lord's answer to St. Peter's question about the limits of forgiveness. The great reason why we should forgive freely is that we have been freely forgiven much more than any men owe to us.

I. THE GREAT DEBT. This represents what the sinner owes to God. We pray that God will forgive us our debts (ch. vi. 12). Deficiencies of duty are like debts considered as arrears of payments. Positive transgressions are like debts, through our having wilfully appropriated what was not our own without paying for it. The accumulated omissions and offences make up the one consolidated debt of guilt. 1. *Its immense size.* Christ names a fabulous sum. There is no counting the accumulated sins of a lifetime. 2. *Its full exposure.* The miserable debtor had been postponing the evil day. Perhaps, as he had been left long to himself, he had begun to hope that he would never be called to account. But the day of reckoning came. That day will come for every soul. Long delay means an aggravated debt.

II. THE DREADFUL PUNISHMENT. It was according to the stern legislation of antiquity, and Christ bases his parables on familiar aspects of life without thereby justifying the facts and usages that he describes. In the spiritual world great punishment is the due of great sin. A reaction against the physical horrors of the mediæval hell has blinded our age to this fearful truth. Yet Christ frequently affirms it in calm, terrible language.

III. THE GENEROUS FORGIVENESS. In his dismay the debtor grovels at the feet of his lord, and foolishly offers to repay all if only the king will be patient and give him time. That is impossible, and the king knows it. We can never repay what we owe to God. If his mercy only took the form of staying execution, at best it would only lead to a postponement of our doom. But the king forgave the debtor—forgave him completely. God forgives freely and fully. He acts royally. He does not spoil his gift by making it but half a pardon. The great debt is completely cancelled to the penitent soul.

IV. THE SUBSEQUENT CRUELTY. The debtor's conduct was doubly odious. He had just been forgiven himself, and his debt was vastly greater than his fellow-servant's. Yet he treated the poor man with brutal insistence, with cruel harshness. Nothing could be more odious than this conduct. But is it not just the conduct of every Christian who will not forgive his brother? The Christian should be melted by the sight of God's boundless clemency, by his own reception of it, and by the knowledge that God has forgiven him far more than anything he can ever have to forgive his brother.

V. THE FINAL DOOM. The king is justly angry. He recalls the pardon. He even has his wretched debtor put to torture. There are degrees of punishment in the future world, and the worse torment is reserved for those who, having accepted the mercy of God for themselves, have had no mercy on their brother-men.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—14.—*Necessity of becoming like little children.* To discuss in the abstract the question who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, is a profitable employment. But when discussed with personal reference, and in view of present competing claims, there must inevitably be jealousies and rivalries, vanity and hatred. That his reply might lodge in their minds, and be audible to all generations, our Lord gives it dramatically. He calls a little child to him, perhaps one of Peter's children. "Here," says he, "is the one excellence on which my kingdom is founded, and by which alone it can be extended—the excellence of not knowing you have any excellence at all." It was, in short, a true humility—an humility that did not know itself to be humility, and was thereby humble. To become humble is a change that must be wrought upon you while yourself unconscious; it is like a new birth. A man feels that of all things this is beyond him. We cannot humble ourselves to serve a purpose; if we do so our humility cannot be genuine. Look at one or two instructive features of childhood. 1. What delights us in children is very much their inability to conceal their thoughts,

their artless love, *their general simplicity.* "They are naked, and not ashamed;" assume no disguise, because they are unconscious of the need of any. 2. Their *ready belief* in everything they are told. The child hears of the world and its wonders with a reverential awe. As we grow older we clothe ourselves in scepticism, and guard ourselves against deception, till, as the climax of wisdom and safety, we believe nothing, and are like the heavy-mailed knights of old, stifled in our own armour. We train our spirits to believe in nothing but the most obvious commonplace physical things, which by their own nature are destined to decay. And the end is, we cannot, if we would, believe in the most tremendous realities. Well may we pray that God would dip us in the waters of his regeneration, that so the hard, foul crust in which this world encases us may drop off, and our flesh become soft and fresh as a child's again. 3. Their *readiness to receive* instruction, information, gifts. The whole life of a child is reception. He takes gifts naturally, and without distressing himself as to his right to them. He is to be fed because he is hungry, made happy because his nature craves it. Whereas we must ever be trying to give to God what will satisfy him. But God *sells* nothing. The highest and best things he has to give we must accept at his hand, simply because we need them, and he is willing to give. In Christ's own life we see this childlike dependence beautifully exemplified. Clearly apprehending his own position and work, he was yet as one under age. Carrying into manhood the faith of the child, he lived as one who was well cared for, and on whom the care of providing for himself did not rest. 4. It is, above all, the child's unconsciousness that he has anything to commend him that makes him our model. The production of this humility is an invariable and essential accompaniment of conversion. Formerly a man lived on his own strength and for himself. Now he feels he is not his own, but God's; born of God, kept by God, for God's uses, beginning from God and ending in God. In presence of that Being, glorious in holiness and love, he abhors his own sensual and selfish life, and abases himself utterly. He has no claims to urge, no promises to make, no pretensions, nothing at all to show. What this child seemed to say to these helpless disciples, he says to all—You must turn, you must strive with your whole souls, you must pray, but convert yourselves you cannot; it is God only can give you a new heart. Have you been brought to a true dependence on God, so feeling the guilt of your past life and the evil of your natural character that you can but leave yourself in the hand of God and his grace for pardon and renewal?—D.

Vers. 21—35.—*The unmerciful servant.* The form of Peter's question shows that he still considered that to forgive was not the law of the kingdom, but a tentative measure which might at any moment be revoked, that underneath the forgiveness there lies the right to revenge. We also know this feeling of Peter's, that in forgiving we are doing something more than could be demanded of us. And this feeling, wherever it exists, shows that we are living with retaliation for the law, forgiveness for the exception. It is to mark with reprobation the unforgiving and self-seeking spirit that our Lord utters this parable.

I. The first result of this spirit is that IT LEADS TO DISHONOURABLE OUTLAY UPON OURSELVES OF WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN US FOR BETTER USES. The man whose great motive in life is the desire to get all the good out of it he can for himself will contract debt to God, that is, will contract real guilt, exactly in proportion to his opportunities of doing good and playing a high part in life. Whether the power be great or little, the guilt contracted is the same, if we lay out on ourselves what should in simple honesty have been laid out on God, if we habitually divert from God the revenues which truly belong to him.

II. But still more strongly does the parable point to THE HATEFULNESS OF AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT. The man was not softened by the remission of his own great debt. So it often is with the sinner deadened by long sin. There is no deep contrition in his cry for pardon, only a desire to escape, as selfish as the desire to sin was. If the forgiving love of God does not humble, it hardens us. If we take it as a mere trifle, and are not thoroughly humbled by it, we are only too apt to show our zeal in exposing and reproving the faults of other men, or by violent and unrelenting condemnation of those who offend us. The hatefulness of this spirit is signalized by one or two added particulars. 1. *The petty amount of the debt he exacts as set over against*

the enormity of that which had been remitted to himself. There is something almost incredibly mean as well as savage in this man's quick remembrance of the pence that are due to himself, while he so easily puts from his mind the ten thousand talents he owes. But our incredulity gives way when we think of the debt we owe God and the trifles committed against us which we find it so hard to forget. What are the causes of quarrel among men? Often a word, a look, an expression unwittingly dropped. Or measure even the deepest injury that has ever been done to you; the wrong that has darkened or obstructed your whole life with that for which you yourself need to ask forgiveness of God, and say whether you ought still to be implacable. No doubt you may detect in the injuries done to you more malice and intention to wound than in your own sins against God; but you will certainly not find more dishonouring neglect, more culpable repudiation of what was due. And what was the harm done in comparison with giving false impressions about God or counterworking his will? Is our shame for sin against God as intense and as real as our indignation at injuries done to ourselves? 2. But the chief aggravation of this man's conduct lay in the fact that *he had just been forgiven.* He thought mercy a good thing so long as he was the object of it, but in the presence of a debtor he is deaf to the reasons that filled his own mouth immediately before. And how hard do we all find it to deal with others as God has dealt with us! We go from his presence, where we have felt it is mercy, which is the most needful gift in a world like this—it is mercy which gives us hope at all—and we go straight to our fellow-servant and exact all our due. Here, then, our Lord enounces the law of unlimited forgiveness as one of the essential laws of his kingdom. Men are to be held together, not by external compulsion, but by the inward disposition of each member of the society to forgive and be on terms of brotherly kindness with every other member. We lose much of the power and practical benefit of Christ's teaching by refusing to listen to what he says about his kingdom as cordially as to what he says about individuals. We are not, perhaps, too much, but too exclusively taken up with the saving of our own souls, neglecting to consider that the Bible throughout takes to do with the Church and people of God, with the kingdom; and with the individual only as a member of the kingdom of God. And so it is not for the individual Christ legislates. To unite us individually to God he recognizes as only half his work. Our salvation consists, not only in being brought into reconciliation with God, but in our becoming reconciled to men. The man who is content if he is sure his own soul is safe has great cause to believe it in danger, for in Christ we are knit one to another. But how are we to get into a right state of feeling towards other men; to find it natural to forgive always, not to stand on our rights and exact our dues, but to be moved by the desire to promote the interests of others? The true way to a forgiving spirit is to be forgiven, to go back again and again to God, and count over our debt to him, though the man, whose mind is filled with a true view of his own wrong-doing, always feels how much more he has been forgiven than he can ever be called on to forgive. We must begin, therefore, with the truth about ourselves.—D.

Vers. 1—5.—*Heavenly greatness.* As they journeyed to Capernaum the disciples of Jesus, like their countrymen, ever disposed to regard the kingdom of Messiah as secular, reasoned and disputed together as to which of them should be the greater in that kingdom (cf. Mark ix. 33, 34). The knowledge of this contention probably influenced the conduct of Jesus in the matter of the tribute, in which he astonished them with an exemplification of supreme greatness in submission (see ch. xvii. 22—27). A similar lesson is embodied in the discourse now before us. Note—

I. THE DISCIPLES KNEW THAT THERE ARE GRADES OF HEAVENLY GREATNESS. 1. *This was assumed in their reasoning.* (1) It was the basis of that reasoning and the stimulus of the ambition which prompted it. (2) It was itself based upon the analogy of secular kingdoms in general, in which there are princes and nobles, ministers of state and civic magnates. 2. *The fact was not disputed by the Lord.* (1) He did not say they were mistaken, much less assert that all saints in light stand upon an equal platform. (2) The arguments urged in favour of this view are far from being satisfactory. There is no relevancy in the inference from the fact that every Hebrew gathered an omer of manna, neither more nor less. Every labourer receiving exactly a penny, whether he had worked one hour or had borne the burden and heat of the

day, looks more like an argument; yet this element was introduced into the parable for another purpose, viz. to evince the absolute sovereignty of God. 3. *On the contrary, he recognized it.* (1) For he asserted it, though in a sense very different from that in which the disciples had conceived of it. (2) It is the very doctrine of the parable of the talents. Christ, like David, his type, has worthies of various grades of merit. (3) The anticipations of the great judgment make this very clear (cf. Dan. xii. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42).

II. THEY HAD TO LEARN THAT THE HIGHER GRADES OF GREATNESS ARE REWARDS OF CHILDLIKENESS. 1. *They were influenced by secular ideas, in which goodness has little to do with greatness.* (1) In the kingdoms of this world some are born to greatness. So Simon and Jude may have based their hopes of future distinction upon their near relationship to Christ. (2) Some have promotion through length of service. So Andrew, the first called to the discipleship of the kingdom, might have hoped for precedency on the ground of that priority. (3) Some have greatness thrust upon them. So the natural covetousness of Judas may have led him to exaggerate the importance of his money trust, as keeper of the bag. Much of the greatness of this world is imaginary. Peter had the keys, and may have rested his contention for greatness upon that distinction. His fellows, however, were unwilling to accept that as conferring permanent dignity, much less supremacy. (4) James and John sought the chief place in the kingdom by petition and influence, after the custom of the world. The ten were displeased with them, probably because they cherished the same desire to be superior (see ch. xx. 20—24). It is unworthy in those to contend for privileges who shrink from work and suffering. 2. *Jesus humbled them before the greatness of a little child.* (1) Jesus taught, like the ancient prophets, impressively by signs. His lesson here was the greatness of humility. The lesson was difficult, for the world sees no greatness in lowliness. The teaching must be impressive. (2) The great Teacher sought not his symbol of greatness in the warrior, like Cæsar, to make whom great millions of men must die. His sign was not the statesman, the philosopher, the poet, or even the theologian. It was the infant. How original was his teaching! (3) Great men should not disdain the company of children. They may receive instruction from infants. Whenever we look upon a little child we may remember the teaching of Jesus. 3. *He preached an impressive sermon from his text.* (1) He insisted upon the necessity of conversion: "Except ye turn," etc. (ver. 3). Note: Conversion makes men like little children. (*a*) Not foolish, nor fickle, nor sportive, but (*b*) innocent, humble, and docile. (2) To become like little children, sinners must be born anew. The love of dominion, which led the disciples to contend for the higher places in the kingdom, unfitted them even for the lower. The new man is exalted upon the humiliation of the old. (3) Heaven most intimately dwells in innocency. All heavenly virtues crystallize round innocency. The Lord so dwells in innocency that whoever receives a little child receives him. (4) As innocency is the essence, so is humility the soil of every grace. True humility is the only way to advancement in the kingdom of Christ (cf. Luke xiv. 11). "Climbing is performed in the same posture as creeping" (Swift). (5) As the world sees no greatness in lowliness, so are those who do see it greater than the world. The humble are therefore fittingly honoured with the rewards of greatness. (6) They have the special care of Christ. The best men have often the worst treatment from the world. But Christ promises recompense to those who show kindness to him in his humble followers, and retribution to those who refuse it.—J. A. M.

Vers. 6—9.—*Occasions of stumbling.* To stumble is so to trip as to be hindered in faith or to be turned out of the way (cf. ch. v. 29, 30; xi. 6; xiii. 21; xv. 12; xxiv. 10; xxvi. 31, 33; John vi. 61, 62, 66; xvi. 1). Occasions of stumbling are evil influences —allurements, persuasions, temptations, bad example, calumnies, insults, persecutions. The text teaches—

I. THAT CHRIST HOLDS THE WICKED RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INJURY THEY MAY OCCASION TO THE GOOD. The addition of the words, "which believe on me," shows that Christ is here speaking, not of "little ones" in age, but of his disciples, who are of a humble spirit. Observe: 1. *There is no infallible final perseverance of the saints.* (1) The recognition of this truth is the very inspiration of this pathetic discourse.

These woes would never have been denounced upon men for the doing of what, otherwise, would be impossible. (2) Let not the believer in Christ be high-minded. Let him fear. Let him watch. Let him pray. 2. "*It must needs be that the occasions come.*" (1) They are permitted as part of the necessary discipline of our probation. They come from the abuse of free agency. (2) To the faithful they prove blessed means of grace. They educate passive virtues. The habit of resisting temptation makes a strong character. 3. *The instigator to evil is still responsible.* (1) Where he succeeds in causing the saint to stumble he will have to answer for the soul damaged or ruined. There is no impunity for those who turn the simple from their integrity by teaching them to imbibe sentiments subversive of the doctrines of genuine truth, or to indulge in evil practices which destroy or injure the capacity for receiving the graces of the kingdom. (2) Where the tempter fails he is still responsible for his wickedness. 4. *These things need to be emphasized.* (1) Because the wicked are too apt to transfer the blame of their irreligion to the account of the good, by accusing them of apathy and negligence. The good are undoubtedly responsible for the faithfulness of their testimony. They are not, however, beyond this, responsible for results. Noah's testimony was at once his own justification and the condemnation of the world. (2) Because the wicked are too slow to recognize their responsibility, not only for their own non-reception of Christ, but for the injury they do in hindering others, and especially for damaging the good. To offend the innocent is to offend innocence.

II. THAT SUCH OFFENDERS ARE WARNED BY THE TERROR OF FORMIDABLE PUNISHMENT. 1. *The sufferings of antichristian nations are admonitory.* "Woe unto the *world* because of occasions of stumbling!" (1) The Jews filled up the measure of their iniquity in crucifying Christ and persecuting his disciples, and wrath came upon them to the uttermost. (2) Degradation and ruin have overtaken or are pursuing those nations which have persecuted the witnesses for Christ. The atheism of France, with its horrors and the decadence of that nation, are the reaction of the superstition and wickedness of earlier persecutions. Prosperity smiles upon the nations that have accepted the Reformation. They have been enriched by industries brought to them by Protestant refugees. (3) All antichristian nations are doomed in the anticipations of prophecy. "Woe" hangs over "the world" in the larger sense. 2. *Individuals also are admonished.* "Woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!" (1) The retribution upon those who offend the disciples of Christ is worse than death. Jerome says that Christ here speaks according to the custom of the province in punishing the greatest criminals with drowning. The woe here denounced is worse (ver. 6). (2) The retribution is as crushing as it is sudden. The culprit had no strength to release himself from the weight of the "great millstone," to turn which, supported in position, required the strength of an ass. "It seems to have grown into a proverb with the Jews for total ruin" (Doddridge). (3) The more terrible punishment is described as a "Gehenna of fire," in allusion to the sufferings of the victims of Moloch (cf. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6). Burning there is more dreadful than drowning in the Lake of Galilee hard by (cf. Rev. xix. 20). Those who play the devil in tempting saints may tremble with the devils. 3. *But there is yet space for repentance.* (1) The offending *hand* must be cut off. Wrong-*doing* must cease. However useful as the *right* hand. However dear. (2) The offending *foot* must be cut off. Wrong-*going* must cease. However natural it may have become through habit as the use of the *right* foot. (3) The offending *eye* must be plucked out. Illicit *desire* must cease, whether instigated by covetousness, envy, pride, or passion (see Mark vii. 22). (4) These must be cast away. The hand or foot or eye refer to those sins of honour, interest, or pleasure, which men are prone to spare. The godly in this world are lame, deaf, dumb, blind, both to themselves and to others (see Ps. xxxviii. 14). The members most mortified here will shine with the greater lustre hereafter.—J. A. M.

Vers. 10—14.—*Warning for the contemptuous.* The "little ones" here are childlike followers of Christ (cf. ver. 6). Reference to the infants to whom humble Christians are likened is not excluded. The infant seed of the faithful are of the family of Jesus. Neither the disciple nor the infant must be despised.

I. THEY ARE THE REVERSE OF DESPICABLE WHO ARE THE SPECIAL CHARGE OF HOLY ANGELS. 1. *The universe is dual, having material and spiritual complements.* (1)

Matter has characteristic properties. The properties of spirit are no less characteristic and distinct. (2) Between the complements subsist mutual relations and interactions. The conflicts of the moral and invisible are propagated outward into the physical and visible. So contrariwise. 2. *In this system holy angels have special relations to good men.* (1) Angels have a commission of guardianship (cf. Ps. xxxiv. 7; xci. 11; Heb. i. 14). Probably they see the countenance of the Father in the countenance of the children. Note: Evil angels sustain corresponding relations to bad men. (2) The ancient notion may have countenance here, viz. that each individual has a peculiar guardian angel. Corresponding to the holy guardian is the "familiar spirit" of the wicked. 3. *They cannot with impunity be despised whose guardians are so influential.* (1) Special favourites only, according to Oriental custom, came into a monarch's presence (cf. 1 Kings x. 8; xii. 6; Esth. i. 14; Ps. ciii. 21; Jer. ii. 15; Tobit xii. 15; Luke i. 19). (2) It is perilous to be at enmity with those who are so attended. "Angels that excel in strength." The stronger angels have charge of the weaker saints. Those who would not offend the holy angels should imitate them in their care of little ones.

II. THEY ARE THE REVERSE OF DESPICABLE WHO ENJOY THE SPECIAL FAVOUR OF GOD. 1. *Those who have the angels of God for their angels have the God of angels for their God.* This honour is superlative. 2. *Some interpret the "angels" of the "little ones" to be the disembodied spirits of the saints, which "do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven."* (1) They argue that guardian angels cannot "always" be "in heaven" and yet ministering to their charge on earth. (2) What the disciples in John Mark's prayer-meeting thought to be Peter's spirit, they called "his angel" (Acts xii. 15). (3) The reason why we should not despise the little ones, viz. that their angels see God, reminds us that the pure in heart alone can see God. (4) In this view the "angels of God," in whose presence "there is joy over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10), will be "the spirits of just men made perfect." For the context in Luke shows that this is a parallel case. 3. *Those whose disembodied spirits would be honoured with the vision of God cannot be despised with impunity.* (1) The little ones of Christ are despised by corrupting them. By failing to edify them. They are despised when innocency and simplicity are treated as weaknesses. (2) Those guilty of despising them will encounter the resistance of the will of God. "It is not the will," etc. (cf. ver. 14; Ezek. xviii. 23). If there be joy in heaven for the finding of one of the little ones turned out of the way, there is wrath in heaven for the offending of them. (3) "As God will be displeased with the enemies of his Church if they wrong any of the members of it, so he is displeased with the great ones of the Church if they despise the little ones" (Henry).

III. THEY ARE THE REVERSE OF DESPICABLE WHO ARE THE SPECIAL SOLICITUDE OF CHRIST. In the parable of the sheep we have: 1. *The flock.* (1) Holy angels are included in its unity (cf. Heb. xii. 22). These are by some accounted to be the "ninety and nine who went not astray." (2) The ministration of angels is founded on the mediation of Christ. This is expressed in the words, "*For* the Son of man," etc., relegated, however, to the margin in the Revised Version. So in the vision of Jacob's ladder (cf. Gen. xxviii. 12; John i. 51). Through Christ the holy angels are reconciled to us. (3) The ninety and nine who went not astray may be such as the scribes and Pharisees of the better sort; not the hypocrites, but those who, like the elder brother, never left their Father's house—those whose respect for the Law kept them from committing gross offences. 2. *The wanderer.* (1) The sheep sees better herbage at a distance, and wanders after it; then discovers more yet further off; wanders by degrees further and further; mistakes the way back, and is lost in the wilderness. So the soul wanders from pleasure to pleasure, and gets lost. (2) Now the sheep is exposed to the dangers of the lion or the wolf, the ditch or the precipice, and is in wretchedness and terror. 3. *The Shepherd.* (1) He cares for those in the fold. They have his care in the provision of food, as well as shelter and protection. We should sympathize with Christ in striving to keep his sheep (see Rom. xiv. 15; 1 Cor. viii. 11, 12). As he is the great Shepherd, having many sheep, so is he the good Shepherd, knowing each lamb. (2) He cares especially for the wanderer. It is the shepherd's duty to look more particularly after the stray sheep than after those abiding in the fold. Jesus, who came to save a world, makes special efforts to save even one. The whole flock suffers when one sheep wanders. (3) "If so be that he find it." The finding of a

sinner is a contingent event. Grace is not irresistible. Yet the wanderer should know that the Shepherd is very near him. Are we as anxiously seeking Jesus as he is seeking us? (4) The tender sheep is not driven, but carried by Christ. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders" (see Luke xv. 5). He carries us and our sins. (5) Jesus rejoices over the conversion of a sinner, as a shepherd over a recovered sheep; as a woman over a recovered piece of silver; as a father over a recovered son. The rejoicing affects heaven as well as the Church on earth. It is natural to feel uncommon joy at the fortunate accomplishment of an unexpected event. 4. *The enemy.* Those who would injure the sheep of Christ are special objects of his displeasure. (1) The nations that injured Israel of old were severely reckoned with. (2) The antichristian nations who persecuted his people are doomed to a fearful retribution. (3) Every contemptuous son of pride will be confronted at the judgment of the last day.—J. A. M.

Vers. 15—20.—*Christian judgment.* From dealing with the offended, our Lord here passes on to the offending, and he shows us how we should deal with a guilty brother, for our own sake, for his sake, for the sake of the Church, and ultimately for the sake of the world. Christian judgment should be faithful, loving, spiritual.

I. FAITHFUL. 1. *The Christian will tell his brother his fault.* (1) "If thy brother sin *against thee.*" By fraud, defamation, affront, contempt (see Lev. vi. 1—7). (2) "If thy brother *sin.*" Some ancient authorities omit "against thee" (see New Version margin; see also Lev. xix. 17). (3) "Tell him his fault." This is fidelity to thyself, also to thy brother. How salutary to David was the reproof of Nathan! 2. *He will tell it him before witnesses.* (1) Not in the first case. But he will not consider his soul clear if the offending brother be not gained by the private reproof without proceeding further. (2) The witnesses chosen should be persons of credit and reputation. True men will not refuse to serve as witnesses in the interests of justice. (3) This precaution is due to the Church. The courts of the Church should not be trifled with by moving them with cases which are not ripe. 3. *He will tell it to the Church.* This when the minor means have been tried and failed. (1) But what is the Church? Amongst the Jews ten men were deemed sufficient to constitute a synagogue. Any number of persons met in the name or by the authority of Christ will constitute a Christian Church (see ver. 20). Tell it to the wise among the Church. Paul speaks ironically when he says, "Set them to judge who are least esteemed in the Church." (2) Tell it to the Church in justice to the Church, that its purity may be preserved. Scandalous persons must be separated from the Church on earth, which is the type of the purer Church in heaven. (3) Tell it to the Church in justice to the obstinate offender, that he may be reproved before many and repent. (4) That if he be excommunicated he may be treated as a heathen and publican. Those cast out of the kingdom of Christ belong to the kingdom of Satan. Church discipline is for Church members. The Christian is not forbidden to use civil courts against outsiders.

II. LOVING. 1. *Love's reason for telling a brother his fault is to gain him.* (1) This is love's reason for going to the offender rather than waiting for him to come. "Go and tell him." It will give him opportunity for explanation. The sense of injury is often the result of sensitive self-love. (2) This is love's reason for going to him *privately.* It will save him the exasperation of an unnecessary public reproach. (3) The manner will accord with the object. The truth is told in love. The fault is not unduly magnified. There is no resentment. 2. *Love's reason for calling witnesses is still to gain the brother.* (1) "Take with thee one or two more." To avoid unnecessary publicity, the smallest number required to attest evidence is called in (cf. Deut. xix. 15; John viii. 17; 2 Cor. xiii. 1). (2) The witnesses may add persuasion. The offender may listen to the pleadings of disinterested persons. (3) The witnesses have the double function of seeing that the reproof is administered without malignity, and that, in rejecting it, the reproved is incorrigible. 3. *Love also has reasons for then telling it to the Church.* (1) The offender may hear the Church and be gained. (2) Church courts are preferred to those of the world, as more competent to deal with offences against Christian law. The more so when civil rulers were notoriously enemies of the saints. (3) The purity of the Christian brotherhood must be preserved. The Church that condones things

scandalous transgressors the reason for its existence. (4) A scandalous Church can be of little service to the world.

III. SPIRITUAL. 1. *It recognizes the presence of God.* (1) The sanctuary of God is the assembly of his saints (cf. Exod. xl. 24; 2 Chron. v. 14; Ps. cxxxii. 14; ch. xxviii. 20; Rev. ii. 1). (2) That presence is here promised in relation to maintenance of discipline. God is with his Church to quicken prayer, to answer petition, to guide in counsel. (3) "If two of you shall agree," etc. "God sometimes stands upon a number of voices for the carrying of some public mercy, because he delighteth in the harmony of many praying souls, and also because he loves to gratify and oblige many in the answer" (Flavel). 2. *It recognizes his ratification.* (1) "Binding and loosing." When the Jews set apart any to be a preacher, they said, "Take thou liberty to teach what is bound and what is loose," *i.e.* what is binding or obligatory and what is not. (2) Here the question has relation to discipline rather than to doctrine. It is concerned also with things rather than persons. "Whatsoever," etc. "In the primitive Church absolution meant no more than a discharge from Church censure" (Wesley, *in loc.*). (3) The ratification in heaven of the decisions of the Church, in the strict sense, applied to apostolic times when plenary inspiration was with it (see John xvi. 24—26; Acts ix. 29—31). (4) In a qualified sense it still holds good, viz. when the rules laid down in Scripture are observed. (5) If through error or envy any be cast out of the Church, Christ will find that soul in mercy (cf. John ix. 34, 35). The instructions of the text come to us with the force of law. We have no option to pursue any different course with an offender, or any different order to that here prescribed. In the whole compass of pagan ethics there is no rule at once so manly, so benevolent, so wise, so practical. —J. A. M.

Vers. 21—35.—*The limits of mercy.* Peter's question here was suggested by his Lord's doctrine concerning Christian judgment (vers. 15—20). "*Then* came Peter," etc. The form of Peter's question may have been suggested by the custom of the rabbins who from Amos i. 3—"For three transgressions, and for four, I will not turn away wrath"—held that three offences were to be forgiven, and not the fourth; or, uniting the two numbers, made "seven times" the extreme limit of their forgiveness. The Lord's reply teaches us—

I. THAT THE CLAIMS OF BROTHERHOOD ARE THE LIMITS OF MERCY. 1. *Forgiveness should never be refused when sought with repentance.* (1) That repentance is understood here is evident from the illustrative parable of the two debtors (vers. 26, 29). Also from the parallel place (see Luke xvii. 4). (2) To gain a brother is more noble than to ruin him. Mercy is nobler than sacrifice. (3) The gaining of a brother is greater than the recovery of property. Life is more than meat. How much is a man better than a sheep? 2. *Forgiveness is no mercy to the impenitent.* (1) It leaves his evil nature still unchanged. (2) It encourages and hardens him in his perversity. (3) It offends public justice. The fellow-servants of the oppressor were "exceeding sorry." They looked to their lord for his judgment upon the tyrant.

II. THAT THE MERCIFULNESS OF THE LORD IS OUR INCITANT TO MERCY. 1. *God's mercy is boundless.* (1) Offences against God, as compared with offences against our fellows, are as "ten thousand talents" to "one hundred pence." We should regard ourselves as debtors to God in all we have and all we are. (2) It is folly in us to say to him, "I will pay thee all." He that goes about to establish his own righteousness is guilty of this folly of attempting with nothing to pay all (cf. ver. 25; Rom. x. 3). (3) The parable teaches that the only way to forgiveness is to acknowledge our debt and appeal only to mercy. The promise to pay may express the desire of the contrite heart to make amends. (4) The Lord does not exact; he forgives (cf. Ps. lxxviii. 38, 40). His mercy is limited neither to "seven times" nor to "seventy times seven." 2. *We must forgive as we are forgiven.* (1) This is required (cf. ch. vi. 12; Mark xi. 25, 26). It was at the close of the great Day of Atonement that the jubilee trumpet sounded a release from debts (see Lev. xxv. 9). (2) To the merciless God will show no mercy. A claim pushed to an extremity becomes a wrong. Mercilessness is great wickedness. "Thou wicked servant!" "To be beggars to God and tyrants to our brethren is the height of depravity" (Helfrich). 3. *Forgiveness must be "from the heart."* (1) God's reasons of mercy are from himself. "He will have mercy upon

whom he will have mercy;" "He was moved with compassion." (2) So the wisdom which is from above, true religion, is "easy to be entreated." The returning prodigal child will find a relenting heart. The insolvent debtor, a compassionate creditor. The distressed tenant, a lenient landlord. Gratitude to God will make it so. "I am thy servant; for thou hast loosed my bonds." (3) This is a forgiveness which leaves no pique behind, no refusal of friendship. We should keep no account of the offences of a brother, but pass them over, and so forgive and forget until it becomes a habit to do so.

III. THAT THE MAGNITUDE OF GOD'S MERCY IS ALSO THE MEASURE OF HIS WRATH. 1. *There is a time for reckoning with the King.* (1) The King reckons with his servants when their regeneration commences. Then they reflect upon their spiritual state, and upon their liability to ruin. (2) There are retributions and rewards in the order of God's providence in this world. (3) The grand reckoning will be in the day of judgment at the end of the age. To this end God keeps account (see Deut. xxxii. 34). Every sin we commit is a debt to God. The aggregate is the "ten thousand talents." 2. *His pardons will be retracted from the unmerciful.* (1) The same servant went out and throttled his fellow-servant. "Went out." How different may be our conduct when we go out into the world from what it is when we go into our closet! Went out; not immediately, perhaps, but when by degrees the spirit of the world replaced the grateful emotion. (2) Those who have experienced God's mercy have the greater reason to deprecate his wrath. They will find the "seventy times seven" of the mercy transformed into wrath (cf. Gen. iv. 24). How serious, then, may be the consequences of the difference between the attitude of the closet and that of the world! 3. *How fearful are the treasures of wrath!* (1) There are the sufferings of loss. The debtor is sold up. He forfeits wife, children, property. All ennobling excellences of his nature are removed. His talents, his trusts, are taken away (cf. ch. xxv. 15, 28). "Those who sell themselves to work wickedness must be sold to make satisfaction" (Henry). (2) The sufferings of reproach. "Thou wicked servant." This expresses a perception which God will give to the sinner of the enormity of his conduct. "I forgave thee all that debt." It is terrible to be upbraided with the mercy we have abused. "Shouldst not thou also," etc.? What a contrast is here with the mercy that is given liberally without upbraiding (Jas. i. 5)! (3) Torment. Eastern prisons were places of torment (cf. ch. xxv. 46; 2 Pet. ii. 4, 17; Jude 6). The prison-keepers are the tormentors (cf. Rev. xiv. 10—12). The tortures are the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. (4) The sufferer has no voice to reply.—J. A. M.

Ver. 3.—*Christ's type of the truly great.* We treat this as an abstract question. What is true greatness? Who is the truly great man? But the disciples asked a practical question, bearing immediate relation to their temporal expectations. They, and their conversations, can never be understood unless we keep in mind their earthly ideas of their Lord's mission. Judas, with the grasping disposition, was anticipating his chances in the new kingdom; and even James and John were scheming to secure a promise of the right and left hand places in the new court. Over the expected offices in the new kingdom those disciples quarrelled, until at last they brought their dispute to Jesus, for him to decide it by his authority. When they asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" they meant, "Who is to have the principal office in the new Davidic kingdom which thou art about to set up?" Their question was *childish;* it would have been framed very differently if it had been *childlike.* As Christ corrected false notions, we look at those false notions first.

I. MEN'S IDEAS OF GREATNESS. "The things that men deem glorious were of no account with Christ. He did not measure a man's eminence by the height of the pedestal on which he stood, nor by the stars that shone on his breast; he had no admiration for purple and gold, for the flash of jewels, for lofty titles, or any of the thousand things that dazzle the eye and impose on the carnal heart." "Does true greatness belong to the lion-hearted, to the righteous, to the martyr, to the ascetic, to the saint? Is Thomas on the way to it, with his strong, logical intellect that will take nothing on credit without evidence and his sturdy fidelity of purpose?" Greatness must associate either with (1) class; (2) office; (3) wealth; (4) intellect; (5) genius; or (6) success, in order to be appreciated by men.

II. CHRIST'S IDEA OF GREATNESS. Here our Lord is not dealing with *all* greatness; only with *that* greatness which is relative to the ideas then in the minds of disciples. Their greatness meant "being served," guilefully watching for the attention conceived to be their due; self-assertion. His greatness meant "serving;" guilelessly watching for the opportunity of doing something kind; meekness that is the opposite of self-assertion. Of this a child is the type. A man ought not to be in *everything* like a child. Experience of life makes it impossible for him to be a child. What was needed by the disciples, and what is needed by us, is that "they should *turn* from their self-seeking ambition, and regain, in this respect, the relative blamelessness of children."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*True dignity gained by humbling the self.* "As *this* little child." "We shall miss Christ's meaning if we set about thinking of children in general—of their trustfulness, teachableness, humility, unassuming disposition, 'sweet simplicity,' and kindred things. The truth is, there is human nature (and a good deal of it too) in children as well as in men and women. Winsome as childhood is, and often rarely beautiful, with many a wile and witchery, even the fondest mother cannot help seeing in the child she loves best some tokens of waywardness, self-will, temper, caprice, and other things prophetic of ill. Jesus did not mean the disciples to think of children in general; it was not any child, taken indiscriminately and at random, that would have suited his purpose." It is *this* child, one who left his play, and came forward at once when Jesus called, *this* child who could *put self aside*, who illustrates the true dignity.

I. HUMBLING THE SELF IS NOT MAKING FALSE ESTIMATES OF OUR CHARACTER. Good people often think that it is. Saying, thinking, and writing bitter things against themselves, that are untrue and unfelt, is often confounded with humility. True "humility" always goes hand-in-hand with "truth;" and demands expression which precisely represents feeling. Two schools of religion are in special peril of falling into this mistake. 1. Those who make much of "experiences." There is always a tendency towards the manufacture of experiences. 2. Those who make much of "confessions." There is always the peril of getting credit for humility by exaggerating the confession. What is true of false estimates is in measure true of all imperfect estimates.

II. HUMBLING THE SELF IS REFUSING TO ALLOW OUR LIFE TO BE GUIDED BY SELF-PLEASING CONSIDERATIONS. This is the point in our text. The disciples were scheming to advance their self-interests. The little child promptly and cheerfully gave up his self-interests when Jesus called him. Those disciples had been called by Jesus, but they could not put away the self. In this sense, "humbling the self" will include (1) giving up your personal opinion in order to accept Christ's revealed truth; (2) putting aside your own preferences when they conflict with Christ's will; (3) giving up what may mean your own profit or advantage, when you are called to engage in Christ's work. Self-humbling means Christ-exalting.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The severity of spiritual discipline.* Cutting off a right hand and plucking out a right eye are extreme measures, types of the severest dealing with one's self. They bring into thought those cases of disease in which signs of mortification are shown, and the limb must be promptly surrendered or the life will be lost. Our Lord's counsel rests upon the recognized fact that bodily organs are the agents of sin. The palate is the agency of drunkenness and gluttony, the eye of sensuality, and the hand of dishonesty. We do not really cure a moral evil by merely removing the agency through which it gains expression, but resolute dealing with the organ that is the agent shows that we are dealing with the inner evil, weakening it by taking away its food and exercise. See some of the things which account for spiritual discipline taking such severe forms.

I. BIAS TO SPECIAL EVILS IN NATURAL DISPOSITIONS. This bias belongs to the mystery of hereditary influences. Through a deteriorated bodily organization, a man is born with a bias in favour of drink, cheating, pride, sensuality. The members of one royal family are all born gluttons. Possibly, some bias to evil is found in every disposition, and the life-problem is—What will the man do with just that tendency

influencing all relations? Acquired evils may be effectually dealt with. Evils that belong to our bodily constitution make the moral struggle of a whole life.

II. WEAKNESS OF WILL IN NATURAL DISPOSITIONS. This is the real cause of the necessary severity of spiritual discipline. The man is not strong enough to get and to hold the mastery over his evil self, and so he is worried and worn by a struggle which has to be continually kept up, because he is not strong enough to make any victory decisive. The hardest moral lives are lived by the weak-willed.

III. INDULGENCE OF THE EVIL BIAS UNTIL IT GROWS MASTERFUL. This may be illustrated by the difference in the tone of the moral struggle in the case of a man converted in youth, and of a man converted in advanced life. In the one case the bias is a mere tendency, and can be easily checked; in the other it has become a fixed habit, and must be dug out. When a man in middle life has vigorously taken in hand his conduct and relations, and wisely reshaped them, he often has the bitter lesson to learn that the evil *in him* remains untouched.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Despising the little ones.* We may well assume that our Lord included in his term "little ones," both children and childlike disciples. "Looking to the frequency with which our Lord's words were addressed to the thoughts of his hearers, it seems likely that the faces of some at least of the disciples betrayed, as they looked on the child, some touch of half-contemptuous wonder, that called for this prompt rebuke." Limiting the reference of the expression to the children, we may notice some of the ways in which we may come to despise them.

I. WE MAY UNDER-ESTIMATE THEIR VARIED INFLUENCE FOR GOOD. It is a small, almost silent, influence; one that cannot be put in common earth scales and measured, or laid out on a bank-counter and checked. Man is interested in big things and noisy things; but the really great forces are pervasive gravitation and silent light. 1. The child exerts a high moral and educational influence on its father and mother. Every child is a Divine testing of parental character; and may be a Divine culture of it. 2. The child is a moral power in a home. Illustrate from times of strain and sorrow. 3. The child often proves to be a minister of Christ in a neighbourhood. Illustrate from Norman McLeod's "Wee Davie;" or the more recent clever tale entitled "Bootle's Baby."

II. WE MAY FAIL TO RECOGNIZE WHAT TRAINING THEM DOES FOR US. No man who is resolutely set upon soul-culture will ever make the mistake of "despising the little ones." Think of the self-restraints which training children demands. Think of the examples that must be set. Think of the practical wisdom that must be gained. Think of the perseverance that may be called for. Many a man and many a woman have been ennobled by having family life and claims grow up around them.

III. WE MAY, ONLY TOO EASILY, DO INJUSTICE TO THE LITTLE ONES. If we "despise them" we shall fail to observe or meet their peculiarities. We shall repress their strange thoughts and questionings. We shall over-estimate their failings. We shall be out of sympathy with their play. Injustice to the little ones means spoiling the chances of their manhood and womanhood. It is bad if the despising takes the form of "neglect;" it is far worse if it is "moral hindering."

IV. WE MAY PUT OFF, UNTIL THE BY-AND-BY THAT NEVER COMES, THE INFLUENCE ON THE CHILDREN WHICH IS THE NEED OF THEIR CHILD-TIME. That kind of despising the little ones is perhaps one of the grave sins of the family life of the day.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The joy of recovering lost things.* Dr. M. Dods, writing on the parable of Luke xv., has the following suggestive passage. Each of the three parables "illustrates the fact that a more active interest in any possession is aroused by the very circumstance that it is *lost*. The sheep that is lost is not on that account disregarded by the shepherd, but receives for the time greater attention than those which remain in the fold. The piece of money that has gone a-missing becomes on that very account of greater immediate importance to the woman than all she has safe in her jar in the cupboard. If one of a family turns out ill, it is a small mitigation that all the rest turn out well; it is after the lost the parent's heart persistently goes. So is it with God. The very circumstance that men have strayed from him evokes in him a more manifest and active solicitude in their behalf. The attitude of God

and of Christ towards sinners is reduced to the great principle that anything which is lost and may be regained exercises our thought more, and calls out a more solicitous regard than a thing of equal value which rests securely in our possession."

I. MAN AS LOST. The word as applied to men is a figure. A lost sheep is one beyond the shepherd's control. A lost piece of money is one that has got out of the woman's reach. This suggests that a lost man is one who has got himself out of the Divine hands, and has taken the ordering of life into his own hands. As the sheep is the shepherd's; as the coin is the woman's; so man is God's. The sheep is lost through animal perversity; the coin is lost through accident; man is lost through moral wilfulness.

II. MAN AS RECOVERABLE. There would be no effort of shepherd, or woman, if they had no reasonable hope of regaining their lost things. And we may never conceive of men as lost in any sense that puts them beyond moral reach. There is a hardening through wilfulness; but we must never think of that save as a *process*. In the case of no brother-man may it be thought of as complete. The man beyond recovery does not exist.

III. MAN AS RECOVERED. That is the work of God in Christ; it is accomplished for the race, and it is an infinite joy to the Recoverer. That is the work of the Christ-man and of the Christian Church. They should prove what joy is found in saving the lost.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Christian ways with trespassers.* This counsel seems to indicate that the dispute among the disciples as to who should be the greatest had gone a considerable length, had led to hard words, and even heart-divisions. Our Lord made this the occasion for advice in relation to misunderstandings among Christians. It should be distinctly seen that his advice concerns cases of Christians, each party professing strict loyalty to Christ.

I. TALK TOGETHER. Not just at once, while there is heat of feeling; but presently, when both have had time to grow calm, and give room to those regretful feelings which are sure to come when the more difficult passages of life are reviewed. When offence is given, the evil to dread is the disposition of each to stand aloof from the other. This can soon widen into hopeless separation. In common life it is the work of friends to bring such separated ones together; in the Christian life we find Christ expects both the offended and the offender to be seeking each other. Talk in a Christian spirit will often correct misunderstandings, smooth difficulties, and put things straight. But Christ puts the chief burden of seeking reconciliation on the *injured one*. The one against whom the trespass is committed is to act.

II. BEING PRIVATE CHRISTIAN FRIENDS IN. There arise cases in which the judgment of one party may be blinded; and the correction may be beyond the power of the other party interested. Then it is wise to bring in independent and unprejudiced persons, who may help to unite the disputing parties. This will lead on to a consideration of the principle of "arbitration," and its possible adaptation, not only to Christian, but also to social and national disputes. For such arbitration the men of character and weight are sought. They gain power, in all phases of life, who culture character.

III. LET THE CHURCH DEAL WITH THE MATTER. The point is this—do not make a public thing of private disputes save as a last extremity. There will be different opinions as to what is referred to by the term "Church." Most probably our Lord was thinking of the recognized officials of the synagogue, who formed an "ecclesia," or Church, and acted, on consultation, representatively and authoritatively. Christ says, "Do everything by brotherliness; bring in the officials only as a last resort."—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Power gained by agreement in prayer.* This verse is part of a digression from our Lord's point. Perhaps it is suggested by the *disunion* occasioned by the disputing of the disciples, and our Lord takes the opportunity of pressing the importance and value of preserving mutual agreement. The disunited feeling spoils everything in Christian life; it spoils even prayer. Harmony, unity, mutual trustfulness, make up the atmosphere in which everything Christian can thrive. Our Lord makes prayer a representative of every phase of Christian life and relation. This text

is, with ver. 20, a very familiar promise, often used in acts of public prayer, but almost always misquoted. (It is remarkable how many scriptural texts have non-scriptural ideas attached to them, through misquotation.) It is always right, and always best, to take God's Word as it precisely is. Ver. 19 appears to be an unconditional promise, but it is not. What we ask *shall* be done for us, but only if two of *you, my disciples*, join to ask; and only if *you two* are really *agreed* in the matter about which you ask. It will at once be seen that, simple as these conditions sound, they really are searching conditions, and were especially searching to those disputatious disciples.

I. THE AGREEMENT OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES. This suggests what is the primary foundation-principle of Christ's Church. We know what it has developed to; it is well to see what it has sprung from. It is the voluntary union, for worship, fellowship, and prayer, of two or three. They must be disciples; they must meet together; then we may apply the term "Church" to them. They must agree on some special points of interest, if they allow large liberty of opinion in other matters. The real uniting bond must be their common love to Christ, and purpose to secure the honour of his Name. And the Divine seal set upon their fellowship will be the spiritual presence of Jesus, and all that for them, and by means of them, which his spiritual presence involves.

II. THE PRAYER-POWER WHICH COMES OUT OF SUCH AGREEMENTS. It is a meeting of necessary conditions. It is a persuasion with God. Such agreement differs from personal prayer in two things: 1. It represents interest in others. 2. It indicates thoughtful consideration. Many a private prayer cannot be answered because it is only the utterance of a passing impulse, and had better not be answered. What we consult over becomes intelligent. Well-considered prayer cannot fail to gain the Divine regard.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*The conditions of Christ's sensible presence.* "There am I in the midst of them." Familiarity with this sentence, and a circle of fixed associations gathering round it, prevent our observing what a striking and revealing sentence it is. He who spoke the words was standing in the midst of the disciples, in the necessary limitations of a human body. And yet he says to them that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is actually with them; in the midst of them; and this seems to imply that his presence might actually be realized and felt by them. This was a hopelessly extravagant declaration for any mere limited man to make. Already Christ could present himself as he really was, and soon manifestly would be—an unlimited spiritual presence.

I. THE FIRST CONDITION IS SINCERITY. The two or three must meet in Christ's name, distinctly as his disciples, to whom his honour is the supreme interest. The one thing that our Lord most severely rebuked was "hypocrisy." The one thing from which he turned away was "insincerity." Poverty of means or mind was no hindrance to him; but he could only show himself to the true-hearted. It is the ever-working law of Christ. He comes only to the sincere.

II. THE NEXT CONDITION IS CULTURE. Precisely, the culture of the spiritual faculties and susceptibilities. This is not adequately apprehended. Our Lord put it very strongly to his select disciples, when he said to them, "The world shall not see me, *but ye see me.*" Their spiritual culture enabled them to see. The higher faculties of the soul are quickened by personal relation to Christ "who is our Life;" but those quickened faculties need culture, then the soul breathes in a spiritual atmosphere, sees spiritual things, handles spiritual realities, and recognizes the presence of the spiritual Lord. It is suggested that the gathering together of the disciples involves their helping one another to secure this spiritual culture; those of the fuller and higher attainments inspiring and aiding their brethren.

III. THE NEXT CONDITION IS UNITY. It might seem as if unity in request were all that was necessary; but the true unity lies in the soul-conditions of which the request is but an expression and illustration. And it will be found that the true unity lies in the spiritual growth and culture of each one; just as the health of a tree is found by the growth and enterprise of all the branches.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*The Christian limit of forgiveness.* "Until seventy times seven." This

is no fixed number. It is a figurative way of saying that there is, and there can be, no limit to Christian forgiveness. To understand the point and force of St. Peter's question, it is necessary to know the rabbinical rules of forgiveness with which he would be familiar. It was a settled rule of the rabbis that forgiveness should not be extended more than three times. Edersheim says, "It was a principle of rabbinism that, even if the wrong-doer had made full restoration, he would not obtain forgiveness till he had asked it of him whom he had wronged, but that it was cruelty in such circumstances to refuse pardon." It says much for St. Peter's apprehension of his Master that he was sure he would not limit forgiveness to the rabbinical "three times." From his point of view, making the three times into seven times was a splendid piece of liberality. But he could not measure the generosity and nobility of his Lord, who took the "three times" and made it "seventy times seven." "It did not occur to St. Peter that the very act of numbering offences marked an externalism which had never entered into, nor comprehended, the spirit of Christ. He had yet to learn, what we, alas! too often forget, that as Christ's forgiveness, so that of the Christian, must not be computed by numbers. It is *qualitative*, not *quantitative*. Christ forgives *sin*, not sins; and he who has experienced it follows in his footsteps."

I. THE ULTIMATE LIMIT IS THE DIVINE EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS. "As Christ forgave you, so also do ye." What do we expect from God? Can we conceive of a limit to the times when we may hope for the mercy of God? What would life be worth if we could? The fear of outstretching the limit would fill us with misery. Man can never lose the hope in God. If he does he becomes fixed in sin. "There is forgiveness with thee;" a man must be able to say that in full view of the provocations of a long life, when he comes to his dying day. To the Divine forgiveness there is no qualification of degrees or numbers.

II. THE PRACTICAL LIMIT IS OUR CHRISTLY LOVE FOR OUR BROTHER. If we are Christly, we want to do him good. It does not matter about ourselves, and injury done to us. It does matter to a Christly man that a brother has *done a wrong*. The Christly man is set upon his recovery from the wrong; and if that means his forgiveness over and over again, until patience is tried unto the uttermost, the Christly man will forgive and bear, if only he may win back his erring brother at last.—R. T.

Ver. 35.—*Moral fitness for receiving Divine forgiveness.* Upon his earnest petition, the man gains a full and free forgiveness; but the question arises—Did he deserve it? Was he in a state of mind fit to receive it? Was the forgiveness any real moral good to him? This is soon answered. The man, fresh from his great forgiveness, finds a fellow-servant who owes him but a trifling sum, and his severity with him shows clearly enough that his heart was untouched. The *unforgiving* manifest that they are unfitted to receive *God's forgiveness*. The Christian limit of forgiveness is—Forgive your fellow-men as freely and as fully as God has forgiven you. The Christian law of forgiveness is—Expect God to forgive you only when you are in such a penitent, humble, and sympathetic frame of mind that you can easily forgive your fellows.

I. SEE WHAT A MARVEL OF GRACE THAT DIVINE FORGIVENESS IS. Estimate it aright, and you will feel that there must be some preparedness for receiving such a blessing. 1. Think of the greatness of the sin to be forgiven us. Take Christ's figure of the immense debt. See sin as ingratitude; and as disobedience. 2. Think of the aggravations of sin. The wilfulness of many sins. They are sins against light and knowledge. They are even committed after forgiveness. 3. Think what love is shown in the conditions of forgiveness. The objective ground of remission is the gift and sacrifice of God's well-beloved Son. 4. Think of the freeness and fulness of God's forgiveness. There is no possibility of purchasing it; it must come to us as a gift of infinite love. It is no limited blessing. God blots out the record utterly, as a cloud is blotted from the sky, and flings our sins away into the depths of the sea.

II. SEE WHAT IS THE STATE OF MIND BEFITTING THE RECIPIENTS OF THE DIVINE FORGIVENESS. We can see plainly enough that the man introduced by our Lord was wholly unworthy of the forgiveness of that debt. It did him no sort of moral good. He was in no sense ready for the forgiveness. So there are many who cannot be forgiven because they are not in such moral states as would make forgiveness any blessing to them. A humbled, regretful, gracious spirit is necessary. Such a spirit

would be tested at once by an opportunity of showing a forgiving mind. Tender, melted, kind. The feeling of being undeserving, unworthy. Christ's teaching on this point has even a severe side—even his forgiveness may be revoked, if he finds, by our behaviour after forgiveness, that we were morally unfitted to receive it.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX.

Vers. 1—12.—*The beginning of the last journey to Jerusalem. The question concerning divorce.* (Mark x. 1—12.)

Ver. 1.—**When Jesus had finished these sayings.** This is the beginning of a new section of the history, commencing, as usual, with the formulary, **And it came to pass.** "These sayings" must refer to what was recorded in ch. xviii. But St. Matthew's narrative omits many events that happened in the interval between the account of the Galilæan ministry and the history of these last days, that is, from the autumn of one year to the spring of the next. The transactions of this time, which are omitted also by St. Mark, are given by St. Luke (ix. 51—xvii. 11) and St. John (vii. 2—xi. 54), comprising many things that occurred at Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles and on other occasions. **He departed from Galilee.** Not visiting it again till he appeared there after his resurrection. There was no part of the Holy Land in which he did not at some time sojourn, and now, as the final consummation drew nigh, he resolutely set his face towards Jerusalem. **Came into the coasts of Judæa beyond Jordan.** *Coasts* should be *borders*. Judæa was bounded by the river, and there was no part of it beyond, that is, on the east of Jordan. The words, "beyond Jordan," belong to the verb "came," and the clause signifies that the object of Christ's journey was the vicinity of Judæa, and that, instead of entering the province by the direct road through Samaria, he took the more lengthy but safer route through Peræa. This was the name of the region on the east of the Jordan (*πέραν, beyond*), extending at this time from the river Hieromax, or Jarmouk, on the north, to the Arnon on the south, *i.e.* to the middle of the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. The ruler of this district was Herod Antipas, and it was at this era in a most flourishing condition, notably fertile, and containing many fine towns ornamented with magnificent buildings. Here the simple, pastoral country people were less influenced by the narrow bigotry of the Pharisaic party, and in the towns the ban which excluded Jesus from the synagogues of Galilee and Judæa was either not recognized or not enforced. A quiet opportunity for preaching the gospel was thus offered. This may possibly be the sojourn in Peræa mentioned by St. John (x. 40—42).

Ver. 2.—**Great multitudes followed him.** He was favourably received by the unprejudiced Peræans. **Healed them.** Those of the multitude who had need of healing (Luke ix. 11). **There.** In the "beyond Jordan" region. St. Mark observes that he taught them. Thus, "at one time teaching, at another working miracles, he varied his means of salvation, that from the miracles faith might be given him as a Teacher; and by his teaching he might urge to edification the miracles which he wrought" (St. Chrysostom, *ap.* I. Williams).

Ver. 3.—We have now to listen to our Lord's teaching respecting divorce and marriage. **The Pharisees.** The article is better omitted. Our Lord was not long left in peace by these inveterate enemies, who, if they could not openly persecute him, might hope to extract something from his words and sentiments which might be used to his disadvantage. They were probably envoys sent from Jerusalem to entrap and annoy him. **Tempting him.** Trying to get him to give an answer which would in any case afford a handle for malicious misrepresentation. The question proposed concerned divorce. **To put away his wife for every cause;** *κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν: quacumque ex causa; for any cause whatever.* This was a delicate question to raise in the domains of Herod Antipas (see ch. xiv. 3, 4), and one greatly debated in the rabbinical schools. Our Lord had already twice pronounced upon the subject, once in the sermon on the mount (ch. v. 32), and again when reasoning with the Pharisees on the due observance of the Law (Luke xvi. 18). Two opposite opinions were held by the followers of Hillel and Schammai, the heads of antagonistic schools. The school of Hillel contended that a man might divorce his wife for various causes quite unconnected with infringement of the marriage vow, *e.g.* because he had ceased to love her, or had seen some one whom he liked better, or even because she cooked his dinner badly. The school of Schammai was more strict, and permitted divorce only in case of fornication, adultery, or some offence against chastity. Between these contending parties the Pharisees desired to make our Lord give a decision, thinking that they had fixed him

in a dilemma. If he took the popular lax view, they could deride his claims as a Teacher of superior morality; if he upheld the stricter side, he would rouse the enmity of the majority, and possibly, like John the Baptist, involve himself in trouble with the licentious tetrarch. There was a chance also that the high tone which he had already taken might prove to be at variance with Mosaic enactments. The easiness with which divorce was obtained may be seen in Josephus, who thus writes: "He who for any reason whatsoever (and many such causes happen to men) wishes to be separated from a wife who lives with him, must give it to her in writing that he will cohabit with her no longer, and by this means she shall have liberty to marry another man; but before this is done it is not permitted her to do so" ('Ant.,' iv. 8. 23). Josephus himself repudiated his own wife because he was not pleased with her behaviour ('Vita,' § 76). And Ben-Sira gives the curt injunction, "If she go not as thou wouldest have her (*κατὰ χειρά σου*), cut her off from thy flesh, . . . and let her go" (Ecclus. xxv. 26).

Ver. 4.—**He answered and said.** Our Lord does not directly reply in the negative, but refers to the original institution of marriage. All his auditors agreed in holding the legality of divorce, though they differed in their estimation of the causes that warranted separation. It was quite a new idea to find the propriety of divorce questioned, and to have their captious question met by an appeal to Scripture which they could not gainsay, and an enunciation of a high ideal of matrimony which their glosses and laxity had miserably perverted or obscured. **He which made them.** Manuscripts vary between *ὁ ποιήσας* and *ὁ κτίσας*. The latter is approved by Westcott and Hort. It is best translated, *the Creator*. The Vulgate gives, *qui fecit hominem*. **At the beginning** (*ἀπ' ἀρχῆς*). These words should be joined to the following verb **made** (*ἐποίησεν*), and not with the preceding participle, as it is intended to show the primordial design in the creation of man and woman. God made the first members of the human family a male and a female, not a male and females. The lower animals were created separately, male and female; "mankind was created in one person in Adam, and when there was found no help meet for Adam, no companion in body, soul, or spirit, fit for him, then God, instead of creating a wholly new thing, made Eve out of Adam" (Sadler). Two individuals of opposite sexes were thus formed for each other; one was the complement of the other, and the union was perfect and lasted as long as life. There was in this original institution no room for polygamy, no room for divorce. It was a concrete example of the way in which God unites man and wife.

Ver. 5.—**And said.** The words that follow are assigned to Adam in Gen. ii. 23, 24, but he spake by inspiration of God, as he knew nothing of "father and mother" by personal experience, and therefore they can be rightly attributed to the Creator. It was, in fact, a prophetic utterance of which Adam was the mouthpiece; as St. Augustine says, "Deus utique per hominem dixit quod homo prophetando prædixit." **For this cause.** Because of this Divine appointment, and especially of the peculiar creation of Eve. She was not formed separately of the dust of the earth, but directly from the substance of Adam; so she was one with her husband, nearer than all other human relations, superior to the tenderest ties of nature and birth. **Shall cleave** (*προσκολληθήσεται*, or *κολληθήσεται*); literally, *shall be glued to; adhærebit*. The word expresses the closest possible union, stronger and higher than that towards parents. **They twain shall be one flesh**; *the two shall become one flesh* (*ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν*). The Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch insert "the two," which is not in the present Hebrew text. Our Lord adopts the addition as conveying the correct sense. In marriage there is a moral and physical union, so that two persons become virtually one being. Originally, man contained woman in himself before she was separated from him; she was a corporeal unity with man; or, as others put it, man, as a race, was created male and female, the latter being implicitly contained in the former; the previous unity is thus asserted. In marriage this unity is acknowledged and continued. St. Paul quotes this text in Eph. v. 31; and in 1 Cor. vi. 16 uses it as an argument against fornication.

Ver. 6.—**Wherefore** (*ὥστε*); *so that*. This follows from the quotation just given. Our Lord explains and confirms the original dictum by an assertion of his own and a general law. **What God hath joined together.** The institution of marriage is God's appointment. Christ says *ὃ*, *what*, neuter singular, not "those whom," plural and concrete, that he may make it clear that he is here speaking in the abstract, not specially of Adam and Eve. What he enunciates is true of all wedlock, not simply of the case of our first parents. **Let not man put asunder.** Man does thus infringe the primitive rule when he divorces his wife. Herein he opposes God and acts against nature. He and his wife are one; they can no more separate from one another than they can from themselves. If we regard our Lord's language in this passage without prejudice, and not reading into it modern notions, we must consider that he here decrees the indissolubility

of the marriage tie. His hearers plainly understood him so to speak, as we see from the objection which they urged.

Ver. 7.—**Why did Moses then command?** If, as you assert, God ordained that marriage should be indissoluble, how comes it that Moses commanded (ἐνετείλατο) us to practise divorce, and prescribed rules as to its conduct? They are referring to Deut. xxiv. 1, 2. Jesus had escaped the trap which was laid for him, and foiled them by the very words of Scripture and the plain intention of the first institution. But they see their way to opposing the authority of the great lawgiver to the dictum and interpretation of this new Teacher. It cannot be supposed, they argue, that Moses would enjoin a practice condemned by the Word of God; therefore, if you abide by your exposition, you contradict Moses. **A writing of divorcement.** The man who desired to divorce his wife could not effect this separation by mere word of mouth or by violent ejectment; he must have a written document formally prepared and witnessed, necessitating certain delay and publicity. In regulating the method of divorce and giving rules which prevented it from being undertaken rashly and lightly, Moses could not justly be said to have *commanded* it. There were also two cases in which he absolutely forbade divorce (see Deut. xxii. 13—19; xxii. 28, 29).

Ver. 8.—**Moses because of** (πρὸς, *with a view to*, to meet) **the hardness of your hearts**; your obstinacy, perverseness. You were not honest and pure enough to obey the primitive law. There was danger that you would ill treat your wives in order to get rid of them, or even murder them. The lesser evil was regular divorce. But the enactment is really a shame and reproach to you, and was occasioned by grave defects in your character and conduct. And it is not true to say that Moses *commanded;* he only **suffered you to put away your wives.** This was a temporary permission to meet your then circumstances. Divorce had been practised commonly and long; it was traditional; it was seen among all other Oriental peoples. Moses could not hope at once to eradicate the inveterate evil; he could only modify, mitigate, and regulate its practice. The rules which he introduced were intended, not to facilitate divorce, but to lead men better to realize the proper idea of marriage. And Christ was introducing a better law, a higher morality, for which Mosaic legislation paved the way (comp. Rom. v. 20; viii. 3; Heb. ix. 10). **From the beginning.** The original institution of marriage contained no idea of divorce; it was no mere civil contract, made by man and dissoluble by man, but a union of God's own formation, with which no human power could interfere. However novel this view might seem, it was God's own design from the first. The first instance of polygamy occurs in Gen. iv. 19, and is connected with murder and revenge.

Ver. 9.—**And I say unto you.** Our Lord here enunciates the law which was to obtain in his kingdom, which, indeed, was simply the reintroduction and enforcement of the primitive and natural ordinance. **Except it be for fornication;** εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ: *nisi ob fornicationem* (Vulgate). This is the received reading. Tregelles, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort omit εἰ. The parallel passage in St. Mark (where Christ is stated to have made the remark to his disciples "in the house") omits the clause altogether. Lachmann, following some few manuscripts, has introduced παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας, "saving for the cause of fornication," from ch. v. 32. The interpretation of this verse has given occasion to acute controversy. There are some questions that have to be considered in expounding this matter. (1) What is here meant by πορνεία? Does it bear its usual meaning, or is it equivalent to μοιχεία, "adultery"? Those who affirm that the sin of married persons is never expressed by the word *porneia*, hold that it here signifies ante-nuptial unchastity, which would make the marriage void *ab initio;* post-nuptial transgression would be punished by death, not by divorce. In this view, our Lord would say that no divorce is allowable except where the wife is proved to have been unchaste before marriage. In such a case, the union being void from the first, the man is free to marry again. But there are difficulties in this interpretation. Why, at the end of the verse, is it called adultery to marry the divorced woman, if she was never really and lawfully married? Again, it is not correct to say that *porneia* denotes solely the sin of unmarried people. All illicit connection is described by this term, and it cannot be limited to one particular kind of transgression. In Ecclus. xxiii. 23 it is used expressly of the sin of an adulteress. We may also remark that metaphorically idolatry is often called by this name, whereas, since Israel is supposed to be married to the Lord, the breaking of this bond by the worship of false gods might more strictly be named adultery. And yet again, there is no proof that the discovery of previous immorality in a wife did *ipso facto* vitiate the marriage (see Hos. i. 2, etc.). The passages that are thought to bear on this matter are Deut. xxii. 13—21 and xxiv. 1—4. In the former there is no question of divorce,—the offender is to be stoned; in the second passage the ground of divorce is "some uncleanness," or some unseemly thing, whether immorality or

personal defect is meant cannot be decided, the rival schools taking different sides. But it is quite certain that adultery is not intended, and ante-nuptial unchastity is not even hinted. The interpretation, therefore, given above cannot be maintained. (2) Omitting for the moment the limiting clause, may we say that the general teaching of Christ makes for the indissolubility of the marriage bond? The majority of the Fathers from Hermas and Justin Martyr downwards affirm this. Those who admit that divorce is permissible in the case of the wife's adultery are unanimous in asserting that, by Christ's ordinance, remarriage is prohibited to the husband during the culprit's life; so that, practically, if divorce *a mensâ et toro* is allowed, divorce *a vinculo* is refused. All Christ's utterances on the subject, saving the apparently restrictive clause (ch. v. 32) and here, absolutely and plainly forbid divorce, on the ground of law and nature. The words in Mark x. 11 and Luke xvi. 18 are given without any limitation whatever. St. Paul draws from such his conclusion of the indissolubility of the marriage tie, as may be seen in 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11, 39; Rom. vii. 2, 3. There could never have been a doubt about this subject had it not been for the difficulty in interpreting the parenthetical clause. (3) Are we, then, to suppose that Christ, by those words, modifies his general statement, and allows absolute divorce in the case of a wife's misconduct? Such is the view taken by many theologians, and practically endorsed by the civil law of many countries. Neither the Roman nor the Anglican Churches support this laxity. Ecclesiastical and civil laws are here antagonistic. It is said that Christ allows the wronged party to marry again. If so, if the oneness of the parties is wholly destroyed by the sin of the woman, why is it not permitted to a man to marry a divorced woman? This cannot be called adultery unless she is still one flesh with her husband, although separated. We must argue from this that divorce in such a case does not destroy the *vinculum matrimonii*, the marriage bond, and if not under this circumstance, surely under no other; for any other ground must be always less serious than adultery. If the clause in question enunciated an exception to the absolute rule elsewhere given, Christ would seem to stultify himself, to give two opposite decisions, and to introduce uncertainty in a most important verdict. The principle on which he based his dictum would be overthrown, and his hearers might have accused him of inconsistency. The solution offered for this difficulty is this—that Christ is contemplating merely what we call judicial separation; he considers that no trivial cause justifies this, in fact, nothing but fornication, and that this modified divorce does not free the man so that he may marry again; he is bound by the Law as long as his wife lives. Our Lord seems to have introduced the exceptional clause in order to answer what were virtually two questions of the Pharisees, viz. whether it was lawful to "put away a wife for every cause," and whether, when a man had legally divorced his wife, he might marry again. To the former Christ replies that separation was allowable only in the case of fornication; in response to the second, he rules that even in that case remarriage was wholly barred. **And whosoever marrieth her which is put away** (*ἀπολελυμένην*, without the article); *her, when she is put away* (Revised Version); or, *a divorced woman*. The clause is wholly omitted by ℵ and some other manuscripts, and some modern editors, as Westcott and Hort. But it has very high authority in its favour. Alford renders, "her, when divorced," and restricts the application to a woman unlawfully divorced, not extending it to one separated for *porneia*. But the language is too indefinite to admit of this interpretation as certain (see Luke xvi. 18, and the note on ch. v. 32, where the popular view is expressed). The clause, pondered without regard to foregone conclusions, surely contains an argument for the indissolubility of the marriage tie, as we have said above. Marriage with a divorced wife can be rightly termed adultery only in consideration of the continuance of the vinculum. **Doth commit adultery.** The binding nature of marriage does not depend on the will or the acts of the persons, but on its primal character and institution. By the repeal of the Mosaic relaxation and the restoration of marriage to its original principle, Christ not only enforces the high dignity of this ordinance, but obviates many opportunities of wickedness, such, for instance, as collusion between husband and wife with a view to obtain freedom for marriage with others.

Ver. 10.—**His disciples say unto him.** Our Lord appears to have repeated privately to the disciples what he had said publicly to the Pharisees. **If the case** (*ἡ αἰτία*) **of the man be so with his wife.** Some commentators take *αἰτία* to signify *guilt*: "if such guilt appertains to the married state." But the meaning is plain enough anyway, and the word, as here used, corresponds to the Latin *causa*, and the Hebrew *dibrah*, which may denote "case," "condition," etc. The disciples reflect the feeling of their day. Marriage without any possibility of essential release (for they see that this is Christ's law) seems to them a severe and unbearable connection. It were better never to marry

at all than to fetter one's self with such an inexorable obligation. Such a doctrine was entirely novel in that age, and most unpalatable; and even the apostles receive it with wonder and hesitation. They have not yet learned that in Messiah's kingdom grace conquers natural inclination, and strengthens the weak will so that it rises superior to custom, prejudice, and the promptings of the flesh.

Ver. 11.—Our Lord makes a gentle reply to this observation of the disciples concerning the inexpediency of marriage under some circumstances. **You say true, he seems to mean, but all men cannot receive this saying**; *i.e.* their words, "It is not good to marry." But he endorses these words in a different signification from theirs. Their objection to marry arose from the impossibility of putting away a wife for any cause. Christ passes over these ignoble scruples, and enunciates the only principle which should lead a man to abstain from marriage. They to whom it is given. They to whom are given the call and the grace to abstain from marriage. These persons' practice forms an exception to the general view of the propriety and blessedness of the marriage state.

Ver. 12.—Our Lord proceeds to note three classes of men to whom it is given to abstain from marriage. **There are some eunuchs, which were so born.** The first class consists of those who are physically unable to contract matrimony, or, having the power, lack the inclination. They are compulsorily continent, and are not voluntary abstainers. Neither is the second class: those **which were made eunuchs of men.** Such were common enough in the harems and courts of Orientals. The cruel and infamous treatment which such persons underwent was practised against their will, and consequently their continence had no sort of merit. The third is the only class which of choice and for high reasons lived a celibate life: **which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.** This is not to be understood of excision; for this would be a contravention of the order of nature and the good work of creation. Origen, who took the passage literally, and with his own hands mutilated himself, was justly condemned by the verdict of the Church. The verb is to be understood in a metaphorical sense of the mortification of the natural desires and impulses at the cost of much pain and trouble, the spirit conquering the flesh by the special grace of God. The motive of such self-denial is high and pure. It is practised "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," that is, to be free from distraction and the cares and dangers involved in a married life. St. Paul carries forward the Lord's teaching when he writes (1 Cor. vii. 32, 33), "He that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married is careful for the things of the world, how he may please his wife" (comp. Isa. lvi. 3, 4). The celibate life, deliberately embraced for religion's sake, is here approved by Christ, not to the disparagement of matrimony, but as a counsel which some are enabled to follow to their soul's great benefit. It may be added that the counsel applies also to married persons who sacrifice conjugal endearments for spiritual reasons—"have wives as though they had none" (1 Cor. vii. 29). **Let him receive it.** This is not an injunction, but a permission; it is no universal rule, prescribed to all or to the many; it is a special grace allowed to the few, and by few attained. "Each man," says St. Paul, "hath his own gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. vii. 7, 26). Some think the Essenes are here referred to; but it is not likely that our Lord would endorse the practices of a sect which in some of its tenets was by no means commendable. Rather he is laying down a limitation that, while self-sacrifice and self-dedication to God are acceptable and fraught with peculiar blessings, none should attempt to win heaven in this way, unless they are specially prepared for such a life by the grace of God mastering the human will and controlling every earthly desire. The pre-eminent value set on celibacy by the early Church was learned from this and similar passages; but Christ institutes no comparison between the single and married states; and it would have been wiser to imitate his reserve in estimating the spiritual merits of the two conditions.

Vers. 13—15.—*Benediction of little children.* (Mark x. 13—16; Luke xviii. 15—17.)

Ver. 13.—Christ, having laid his blessing on marriage, now blesses its fruit. **Then.** This happened directly after the preceding conversation. Mothers were won to his side by his elevation of woman to her true position, and his marked tenderness to children. **Little children** (παιδία). St. Luke calls them τὰ βρέφη, "their infants." These were babes whom the mothers carried in their arms, and who were too young to understand the meaning and importance of the act of Christ in blessing them. It was a custom to take infants to the synagogues, that they might receive the prayers and blessings of the rabbis, or holy men. For this reason they were brought to Christ as a holy and revered Teacher. **That he should put his hands on them, and pray.** The laying on of hands was symbolical of blessing (see Gen. xlviii.

14; Numb. xxvii. 23). From the Jewish it passed into the Christian Church (Acts vi. 5), and continues unto this day to be used on various solemn occasions. **The disciples rebuked them.** More definitely in St. Mark, "rebuked those that brought them." Why they did so is not quite obvious. Either they thought that it was beneath Christ's dignity, and a waste of his precious time to attend to these babes; or, being still of imperfect faith, they did not realize that any spiritual good could proceed from the imposition of Christ's hands upon unconscious and irresponsive infants. They had seen him cure bodily diseases with a touch, and they would have welcomed these little ones if they had been brought to be healed of some obvious maladies; what they could not understand was that these irrational creatures, not possessed of faith, could be the recipients of Divine blessing. Christ, by word and action, teaches another lesson. St. Mark adds that Jesus was "much displeased" at the disciples' faithless interference. St. Luke tells us that he "called them [the babes] unto him," making his followers desist from their officious remonstrance, and said the memorable words which are given almost without variation by the three synoptists.

Ver. 14.—**Suffer** [*the*] **little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me.** He speaks as though the infants were ready and eager to come to him, if they were not prevented. He thus intimates the truth that, though incompetent to understand God's blessing, children were not incompetent to receive it. There was no natural impediment to bar the way. Unconscious infants, under the Mosaic dispensation, were admitted to the privileges of the Jewish Church by the rite of circumcision; in Christ's kingdom analogous mercies were to be extended to them. From this passage has been derived a cogent argument for infant baptism, because Christ herein showed, not only that tender age and immaturity of reason put no obstacle in the way of his blessing, but that children were the standard by which fitness for his kingdom was to be tested. **For of such is the kingdom of heaven.** They who would enter Christ's kingdom must be pure, simple, obedient, as little children (comp. ch. xviii. 3). That is why he says, "of such," not "of these," intimating that it is not to the age, but to the disposition and character, that he refers. Some, not so suitably, confine the saying to such as are dedicated to God in baptism. It is well said that what children now are is God's work; what they shall be hereafter is their own.

Ver. 15.—**He laid his hands on them.** He was not influenced by the captious objections of the disciples. St. Mark tells us that "he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Thus far he complied with the wishes of the parents who brought the babes to him. But we do not read that he prayed, as they had asked. Doubtless there was meaning in this omission. In conferring blessing he was acting in his Divine nature, and had no need of prayer. Sometimes, indeed, he prayed for the sake of bystanders (see John xi. 42; xii. 30); here he prays not, that he may teach a lesson of his Divinity. Departed thence. Set out from Peræa, journeying towards Jerusalem.

Vers. 16—22.—*Answer to the inquiry of the rich young ruler concerning eternal life.* (Mark x. 17—22; Luke xviii. 18—23.)

Ver. 16.—**And, behold.** The exclamation, as usual, denotes the suddenness and unexpected nature of the occurrence. It took place probably on the next day after the blessing of the children. **One came** (εἷς προσελθών). This is more emphatic than the enclitic τις, and we learn from St. Luke that he was "a ruler," *i.e.* of the synagogue, and he must have been of noted piety and worth to have arrived at this dignity while still a youth (ver. 22). St. Mark gives more details—he "came running, and kneeled to him." He was eager for an answer to his question, and recognized in Jesus a Rabbi worthy of all honour and veneration, though he saw in him nothing more. He comes with no sinister intention, as the Pharisees did, but in all good faith, hoping to have a religious difficulty solved. **Good Master.** Thus the received text in the three synoptists. The epithet "good" is omitted by many excellent manuscripts, and has been expunged by most modern editors. It is required if the received text of the next verse is retained. It occurs in Mark and Luke without variation. The young man may have used the expression with the view of winning Christ's favour, or, at any rate, with the idea of showing the light in which he regarded him. **What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?** His notion was that eternal happiness was obtained by the performance of certain acts, and he is not sure that he has done enough for the reward, and wishes to know particularly what further good work will secure it. The other synoptists have merely, "What shall I do?" but of course, "good work" is implied, if not expressed. This was a question much mooted in the rabbinical schools, and one to which the answers were as various as they were puerile. Some taught that the commandments were not equally important, and that what they deemed the lesser might

be violated with impunity, if the others were observed. Some made the gift of perfection to depend on the daily recitation of certain prayers or psalms, others on giving due honour to the aged. Amid such perplexing rules, the youth desires an authoritative decision, which he may put in practice, and thus be sure of a happy place in Messiah's kingdom—be, as the Jews termed it, "a son of the age to come."

Ver. 17.—**Why callest thou me good?** Such is the reading of the received text here, and without any variation in the parallel passages of Mark and Luke. Our Lord takes the ruler to task for applying this epithet to him, unless the youth believed in his Divinity. You think of me only as a learned Teacher: how, then, can you speak of me in a term which can really be predicated of no child of man? Christ answers the ruler's address before he touches the subject of his interrogation, reproving him for using a form of words without realizing its full import. This is all plain enough; but many good manuscripts, including ℵ, B, D, etc., Vulgate, and other versions, read, *Why askest thou me concerning the good?* Most modern editors and the Revised Version have adopted this reading, which they hold to be genuine, and to have been altered subsequently in order to conform it to the other synoptists. If this is so, it is difficult to see whence Mark and Luke obtained their wording, unless—which is improbable—our Lord used both interrogations on the same occasion. The revised reading expresses Christ's astonishment at having this question asked; and it may be taken, as Bengel suggests, "He who is good ought to be interrogated about the good;" or, "What is right to do, you ought to know; it can only be obedience to the Author of all goodness." **There is none good but one, that is, God.** Here again the reading varies. The other synoptists agree with the received text of Matthew, except that Luke has εἷς Θεὸς instead of εἷς ὁ Θεός. Late editors, following ℵ, B, D, etc., have printed, ἐστὶν ὁ ἀγαθός: *one there is who is good*, or *one is the good*. God alone is the absolutely good; he alone can instruct you and put you certainly in the right way. Persons have been found to argue from this sentence that Christ renounces all claim to be God Almighty. But it is not so. He replies to what was in the young man's mind. The ruler regarded Jesus as man only; Jesus intimates that, in comparison with God, no man is good. He does not deny the applicability of the epithet to himself, but turns the questioner's thoughts to the Source of all good. He will not have himself regarded simply as a pre-eminently good man, but as Son of God, one with the Father. **If thou wilt** (θέλεις, *willest to*) **enter into life**; *i.e.* enjoy eternal life. Christ uses a term equivalent to that of the ruler in ver. 16. So Christ said on another occasion to a lawyer who tempted him. "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke x. 28). There is no real life without obedience. Keep the commandments of him who is good. The Law was given to prepare men to receive Christianity, and in proportion as they carefully observed it, so were they made ready to inherit the life which Christ gives. No mere external compliance without faith is here approved, but it is laid down that, in order to win eternal life, there must be strict observance of God's laws—not some one extraordinary performance, but constant attention to known duties from the highest motive. Faith, indeed, is belief in action, and is dead and profitless if inoperative; so that true obedience is the outcome of true faith.

Ver. 18.—**Which** (ποίας)? Christ's answer was disappointing to the inquirer; it was too vague and general to satisfy his thought. He expected to hear (as the rabbis taught) of some special precept or precepts, difficult of accomplishment, and not usually regarded, by observance of which he could obtain his great reward. So he asks with laudable persistence, "*Of what sort* are these commandments which I have to obey?" He is far from thinking of the common duties of the Decalogue, though doubtless he had been taught that these varied greatly in meritoriousness. Christ, in reply, notifies, as examples, the chief enactments of what we call the second table of the Decalogue, quoting the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and fifth. He enunciates nothing uncommon, nothing new; and, by prefixing the definite article τὸ to the enumeration, he makes the whole a substantial unity, comprising the moral law of duty to one's neighbour. Perhaps Christ confines his list to the second table in order to make the man feel his imperfection in these ordinary matters, or to bring out his self-righteous spirit. There could be no doubt that infringement of the first table involved the loss of eternal life. Ver. 17 virtually includes the spirit of this table. It was round these last six commandments chiefly that rabbinical traditions and interpretations had gathered, so that their plain meaning was obscured or depraved. Whoever observed the second table in spirit and truth, kept also the first (Rom. xiii. 9, 10); and it is easier to love one's neighbour than to love God, as the apostle witnesses (see 1 John iv. 20); and without love of our neighbour there cannot be true love of God.

Ver. 19.—**Honour, etc.** Lange considers that in this verse we have a summary of the two tables, "Honour thy father and mother," summing up the commandments

of the first; and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," those of the second (Lev. xix. 18). **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** St. Mark and St. Luke omit this clause; the latter adds, "Defraud not." According to our text, Christ gives four negative and two positive commands; the last being a summary taken from Lev. xix. 18 (comp. Rom. xiii. 9, 10; Gal. v. 14). It has been questioned why our Lord omits the tenth commandment (as we call it) from the catalogue. Virtually he introduces it in ver. 21; but he may have refrained from formally mentioning it because covetousness was the ruler's besetting sin, and the marked omission of this precept might force the man to reflect upon this failing, which would wreck his spiritual life. On the other hand, it may be that Christ is not intending to give an epitome of man's duty; but affording merely an outline of the same, he naturally passes over some portion without special mention.

Ver. 20.—**All these things have I kept [from my youth up].** The bracketed words are omitted in some good manuscripts, and by most modern editors; but they have high authority, and are found in most versions, and in the parallel passages of Mark and Luke. They accurately express the ruler's view of his conduct. He could say without hesitation or mental reservation that he had scrupulously observed the duties of the Decalogue from the time that he knew right from wrong. Of course, we accuse one who could make such a statement of self-righteousness, of ignorance of the spirit of the Law which he claimed to have obeyed; and if one of us spoke thus presumptuously, we should rightly condemn him; we should say that outward service and legal notions of duty were of little worth, and could not secure eternal life. But our Lord treated the young man differently. He did not blame him as boastful and self-deceiving; he had no reproof for his seemingly presumptuous assertion; he recognized his simplicity, honesty, and sincerity, and St. Mark tells us that "Jesus beholding [looking upon, or into] him, loved him." He read the youth's heart, saw how pure and guileless it was, recognized in him the possibility of great things, and that he was worthy of the saintly life. The ruler felt that there was more to come; hence he asks, **What lack I yet?** Τί ἔτι ὑστερῶ; In what respect am I still deficient? How do I come short of eternal life? He had still a sense of want. All that he had done had not given him peace of mind. Hence his inquiry. From a Christian the question would savour of ignorance and unspirituality; but this man asked it in all sincerity, desiring earnestly to know what more was required of him, and being ready, as he thought, to undergo any pain, make any, even the most painful effort, if by so doing he might win the prize on which his soul was set.

Ver. 21.—**If thou wilt** (θέλεις) **be perfect.** I believe what you tell me. You have led a religious life in the ordinary way; now you aspire to higher things; you have a noble ambition to serve God more completely; you have the power, if you have the will, to do so; I will tell you how. To be "perfect" is to be lacking in nothing that is required for life eternal. It is spoken of Noah and Job; it is required of Christ's disciples (ch. v. 48). Christ is here giving a counsel of perfection, as it is called, not of obligation on all men, but suited to the idiosyncrasy of this particular inquirer, and of others who are capable of such absolute self-surrender and trustfulness. **Go and sell that thou hast.** Go back to thy home, and sell all thy substance, all thy possessions. This was the counsel which Jesus gave, denoting the stumbling-block which lay in the way of the ruler's endeavours after perfection. He was voluntarily to deprive himself of the earthly thing to which he fondly clung, his wealth, and to embrace a life of poverty and hardship. **Give to the poor.** The money obtained by the sale of his possessions he was to distribute, not to relations and friends, who might make some return, but to the poor, from whom he could expect no recompense. **And thou shalt have treasure in heaven** (ch. v. 12; vi. 20). Thou shalt obtain that which thou desirest, eternal life. Not that stripping one's self of goods and giving to the poor does necessarily ensure the great reward, but, in this youth's case, such a sacrifice, such a victory over the besetting sin, would be the turning-point in his character, and enable him to conquer all lesser temptations, and win the prize of his high calling. Here was to be proved love of man. But there was one more element in the required perfection, viz. love of God. **Come and follow me.** St Mark adds, "take up the cross." If he would have apostolic perfection, he must embrace the apostolic life. He must give up wealth, position, earthly ties, earthly occupations, must cast in his lot with the despised Jesus, suffer with him, and, if necessary, die with him. The twelve apostles had accepted Christ's call on these terms; from him was demanded the same sacrifice, the same test of sincerity. He had wished to be exceptionally good; exceptional conduct was required from him in order to reach this high standard. The condition imposed, severe as it undoubtedly was, exactly suited the case, showed the weak spot in the ruler's character, and, if

accepted fully and heartily, would have led him to perfection. Reading these words of our Lord, St. Anthony was so stricken in heart and conscience that he obeyed them literally, stripped himself of everything that he had, distributed to the needy, and went forth poor and naked, trusting to God to provide for him. Many in all ages, inspired by ardent love of life eternal, have done the same. We shall do well to recognize that there are two ways of serving God acceptably—there is the good life required from all religious Christians, and there is the life of perfection to which some, by God's special grace, are called, and which they embrace and fulfil. It was the latter life that Christ put before this young man.

Ver. 22.—**When the young man heard that saying.** Such an injunction was wholly unexpected; it completely staggered him; it appealed to the one point in his character which was weak and imperfect. He would have endured any amount of legal requirements or of vexatious and painful observances; he would gladly have become a disciple of Christ; but the previous sacrifice was too great; he could not make it; not that he was specially covetous or avaricious, but his heart was set on his riches; he had a wealthy man's tastes and position and self-confidence, and he could not bring himself to cast away these even at Christ's word. Such supreme self-denial, such absolute devotion, he would not embrace. **So he went away sorrowful.** He saw the right road, but he turned away from it. Without any further word, casting aside all hope of the saintly life, yet grieved and dejected at the thought of what he was losing, he returned to his home. It was hard to disobey the wise and loving Teacher who had endeavoured to lead him to the noblest aims and the highest ambition; but it was harder to follow his severe counsels. The evangelist gives the reason of this unhappy decision. **For he had great possessions;** ἦν γὰρ ἔχων κτήματα πολλά: *erat enim habens multas possessiones; he was one that had many possessions*, or *had and continued to have*, implying possession and retention (comp. Luke v. 16, "he continued in retirement"). This fact was the snare that trapped him, the stumbling-block over which he fell. The possession of riches proved fatal to saintliness. It is this truth that our Lord emphasizes in the following discourse. They who are unconscious of having been tried as this young man was tried may condemn him as worldly, covetous, and insincere. A true Christian, who knows his own heart, may well feel that he can throw no stone at this defaulter; that he, any more than the Jew, could not give up all that he held dear for Christ's sake; that, had the alternative been set before him in this blunt, palpable fashion, he too would have gone away sorrowful.

Vers. 23—30.—*The dangers of riches and the blessings of self-denial.* (Mark x. 23—31; Luke xviii. 24—30.)

Ver. 23.—**Then said Jesus.** He derives an important lesson from the sad result of the above incident. St Luke connects it with what had just preceded: "When Jesus saw that he [the ruler] was very sorrowful, he said." It was a strange and most emphatic assertion, quite alien from general opinion and sentiment. **A rich man shall hardly** (δυσκόλως, *with difficulty*) **enter into the kingdom of heaven.** Remembering that Christ had just invited the young ruler to range himself on his side and become his disciple, we see that the primary meaning of the term, "kingdom of heaven," here is the Christian Church, the society which Jesus came to establish. It was indeed difficult for a man wealthy, honoured, dignified, to strip himself of his riches and rank, and openly cast in his lot with the despised Jesus and his followers, voluntarily surrendering all that hitherto had made life beautiful and worth living. It is difficult for a rich man in any case to serve God acceptably, as Christ shows with reiterated emphasis.

Ver. 24.—**Again I say unto you.** The disciples, St. Mark notes, "were astonished at his words," so he proceeds to state the startling proposition more unreservedly and energetically. **It is easier for a camel,** etc. This is a proverbial expression for an impossibility. A similar proverb is found in many countries, only substituting another great animal instead of the camel, *e.g.* the elephant. From taking a too literal view of the passage, some commentators have invented a gate at Jerusalem, low and narrow, designed only for foot-passengers, which was called "the needle's eye." Others have remedied the supposed absurdity by reading κάμιλος (if, indeed, there is such a word) "rope," for κάμηλος, as if we were to say *cable* instead of *camel*. But there is no difficulty in the expression. Such hyperboles and paradoxes are common in all languages (comp. ch. xxiii. 24). The impossibility, indeed (as ver. 26 shows), is relative, but the warning is none the less real and terrible. The Lord says that the possession of riches prevents the owner from following him, and endangers his eternal salvation; for that is what it comes to. In St. Mark (whether the words are genuine or not is uncertain) we find a limitation introduced: "How hard it is for them that trust in riches!" Now, this is the effect of riches; men learn to trust in them, to deem that their earthly state is secure,

that change and chance will not affect them, that they are, so to speak, independent of Providence; they love the world which is so good to them and so pleasant in their eyes, and they have no earnest longing for a better home. Such is the natural consequence of the possession of wealth, and that which makes the impossibility of entrance into the kingdom.

Ver. 25.—**Exceedingly amazed.** The stern teaching of vers. 23 and 24 thoroughly dismayed and perhaps offended them. Temporal prosperity had in their Law been held forth as the reward of righteousness and obedience, a foretaste of future happiness. They must unlearn this principle. Here, as they understood it, was a doctrine novel, unheard of, unnatural! Fancy the astonishment that would be displayed nowadays if such a sentiment were solemnly propounded in the Stock Exchange, the bank, the market! The apostles could not minimize its import, or say that it might suit other days and other states of society, but was inapplicable to their age and nation. We can do this in the case of many seemingly stringent requirements of the gospel; but they accepted the announcement in its full and simple meaning, and asked in sorrowful wonder, **Who then can be saved?** If the way to heaven is barred to the rich man, how shall the poor pass therein? The difficulty seemed to apply to everybody. All who are not rich are hoping and struggling to become rich, and therefore fall under the same category. If the apostles thought not of themselves in this question, they were grieved at the reflection that, under the circumstances, the majority of mankind were recklessly endangering their eternal salvation. With their views of a temporal kingdom, the apostles probably were thinking of their own prospects.

Ver. 26.—**But Jesus beheld them** (ἐμβλέψας, *looking upon them*). He turned on his disciples a look full of earnestness, sympathy, and love, soothing their fears and claiming their full attention for a spiritual truth. **With men** (παρὰ ἀνθρώποις) **this is impossible.** Men in their own strength, relying on their own natural powers, cannot save their souls or rise superior to the snare of riches. From the entanglements occasioned by wealth, and the lowering effects of its pursuit and enjoyment, the natural man is wholly unable to extricate himself. **With God all things are possible.** Here is the only solution of the difficulty. With the grace of God, and embracing the calls of his providence, the rich man may be delivered from his dangers, may keep a heart unspotted, may use his wealth to God's glory and his own eternal good. So the impossibility is a conditional one, to be overcome by due recourse to the help of God and the strong hope of the future life. How a rich man may be disciplined and elevated we see in the case of Zacchæus (Luke xix. 8). Many such instances have occurred in our own days, as in all Christian times.

Ver. 27.—**Then answered Peter.** This was not so much a reply to any direct word of Jesus, as to the general purport of his late utterances. He had intimated that self-renunciation was the passport to eternal life; that a just reward awaited those who gave up all for Jesus' sake. This, Peter says, is exactly what the apostles had done. **We have forsaken all, and followed thee.** It was not much that they had left, but it was all they had, their whole means of subsistence, old habits, old associations, to which the poor cling as tenaciously as the wealthy. All this, at a simple word of Christ, they had relinquished unreservedly, without regret or complaint. They had reduced themselves to the condition which Christ had enjoined. **What shall we have therefore?** The question showed the usual ignorance of the nature of the kingdom of Messiah. Peter is thinking chiefly of temporal advancement and promotion, of success and dignity in an earthly realm. Even after their Master's crucifixion and resurrection they had asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6). It was not till after the effusion of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that their imperfect view was corrected, and they understood what Christ meant when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world." But what a revulsion of feeling must have taken place in those who a few minutes before had despairingly thought that salvation was unattainable, and now asked what their reward would be for the sacrifices which they had made! The older commentators have regarded Peter's inquiry as referring to eternal life after death, to which their acts had given them a claim. But it must be remembered that the Jews had very vague ideas about the beatified state in the other world, which, as many thought, was to be inaugurated at the close of the Messianic era, and which others put off indefinitely to the unknown day of judgment. It was never generally and popularly anything more than an uncertain hope, and was not regarded as a stimulant to life and action on earth. While, on the other hand, the terrestrial proceedings of the Messiah were a subject of the keenest expectation, and the ground of national aspirations. It is not probable that the apostles' notions had at this time risen superior to the popular view. Peter's question, therefore, was doubtless prompted by the national conception of Messiah's reign.

Ver. 28.—**Verily I say unto you.** Christ does not reprove the apostle for his seemingly bold self-assertion, but, replying to Peter's question, he gives a grand promise to him and his fellow-disciples. **Ye which have followed me,** excluding all the half-hearted, the self-seeking, the Judaizers. **In the regeneration** (τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ). The word means "new birth," or "renovation, renewal." It occurs in Titus iii. 15 in reference to baptism, "through the washing [laver] of regeneration." It has been variously interpreted in the present passage. Some have connected it with the participle preceding, "ye who have followed me in the regeneration," and explained it to mean the reformation and spiritual renovation commencing with the preaching of John the Baptist, and carried on by the ministry of Christ. But more generally and correctly it is taken with what follows, **Ye shall** sit, etc. The meaning, however, is still disputed. Some say that the Christian dispensation is intended, and an intimation is given of the work of the apostles in the unseen world in directing and guarding the Church. But this seems hardly to satisfy the language of the promise. Others regard the term as signifying the resurrection, when the mortal shall put on immortality, and we shall be changed, remade, reconstituted. This is true; but it seems more suitable to refer the term to the new creation, the new heaven and the new earth spoken of by Isaiah (lxv. 17) and by St. John (Rev. xxi. 1, 2; cf. 2 Pet. iii. 10, 13). This is the reparation of the whole creation described by St. Paul (Rom. viii. 19, etc.), which is to take place at the great consummation, and which, remedying all the evils which sin has impressed on the material and spiritual world, on man and his habitation, may well be called new birth. This is the mysterious period when Christ's promise shall be accomplished. **Shall sit.** It is not "when he shall come," but when he shall have taken his seat (ἐπί, with genitive) as Judge upon his glorious throne. **Ye also** (ὑμεῖς . . . καὶ ὑμεῖς). The pronoun is repeated to give greater emphasis to the amazing assertion. **Shall sit upon** (καθίσεσθε ἐπί, with accusative); *shall be promoted to*, taken and placed upon. **Twelve thrones.** Judas forfeited his position; Matthias and Paul and Barnabas were afterwards added to the apostolic band; so that the number *twelve* must not be pressed as defining and limiting. Rather it expresses the completeness of the judicial body, regarding not so much the persons as the position of its members. With reference to papal claims, it may be observed that Peter has no pre-eminence here, no throne to himself; he merely shares with his colleagues in the session. The apostles and those who have been proved to be of like mind with them (for the number is not limited) shall be assessors with Christ, as in an earthly court, where the judge or the prince sits in the centre, and on either side of him are posted his councillors and ministers. **Judging.** So in Daniel we hear of thrones being placed, and judgment given to the saints (Dan. vii. 9, 22); "Know ye not," says St. Paul (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3), "that the saints shall judge the world . . . that we shall judge angels?" (comp. Rev. xx. 4). Of course, the great Judge is Christ himself. What part his assessors shall take is not revealed. The verb "judge" sometimes signifies "govern or direct," and perhaps may be here used to denote that the saints shall, in the new Messianic kingdom, be Christ's vicegerents and exercise his authority. **The twelve tribes of Israel.** There is considerable difficulty in interpreting this portion of the promise. If it means that the beatified apostles shall judge the actual descendants of Abraham, then we must believe that the distinction between Jew and Gentile will be maintained in this *regeneration*—an opinion which seems to be opposed to other texts of Scripture (see 1 Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 28, etc.). The judging in this case would be condemnation of them for not receiving the gospel. One does not see how this can be held forth as a great and happy reward, however high a position it may imply. More probably *Israel* means the spiritual Israel, or the whole body of the Church; and the number twelve (as above) imports the complete number of those who are to be judged. They who have followed Christ devotedly and sincerely, as his disciples, shall be placed next to him in his glory, shall have pre-eminence over all others, and be associated with him in assigning their due portion to all believers, or in governing the Church. Nothing is here said about the final judgment of unbelievers and heathen.

Ver. 29.—**Every one that hath forsaken.** The Lord extends the promise. Even those who have not risen to the utter self-sacrifice of apostles, who have not surrendered so much as they, shall have their reward, though nothing to be compared to the unspeakable recompense of the twelve. **Houses . . . lands.** Some manuscripts, followed by some modern editors, omit **or wife,** the omission being probably first made by some critical scribe, who deemed that a wife should never be left. The Lord enumerates the persons and objects upon which men's hearts are most commonly and firmly fixed. He begins and ends the list with material possessions—houses and lands, and between them introduces in gradation the most cherished members of the family circle.

"Forsaking wife and children" may be understood as abstaining from marriage in order the better to serve God. **For my Name's sake.** In consequence of belief in Christ, rather than do despite to his grace, or in order to confess and follow him more completely. In times of persecution, under many different cases of pressure, or where his friends were heathens or infidels, a Christian might feel himself constrained to relinquish the dearest ties, to cast off all old associations, to put himself wholly in God's hands, freed from all worldly things; such a one should receive ample reward in the present life. **An hundredfold.** Some read "manifold," as in Luke xviii. 30. The spiritual relationship into which religion would introduce him largely compensates for the loss of earthly connections. He shall have brothers and sisters in the faith—hundreds who will show him the affection of father and mother, hundreds who will love him as well as wife and children. And if he suffer temporal loss, this shall be made up by the charity of the Christian society, all whose resources are at his command; and he shall enjoy that peace and comfort of heart which no worldly possessions can give, and which are superior to all changes of fortune. And it may well be that the relief from the cares and distractions caused by wealth brings a hundredfold more real happiness than its possession ever supplied. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). **Everlasting life.** The hope of future happiness is in itself sufficient to lighten and dissipate all earthly troubles, and to stimulate severest sacrifices.

Ver. 30.—**Many that are first.** This proverbial saying, which Christ uses more than once (see ch. xx. 16; Luke xiii. 30), is illustrated by the parable in the next chapter, and would be better placed at its commencement Here it conveys a warning that man's estimation is liable to error, and it must not be thought that those who are first in privilege are therefore highest in God's favour. The Lord may have had in view the case of Judas, who was an early apostle, and had the care of the bag, and fell by reason of covetousness; and that of one like St. Paul, who was called late, and yet laboured more abundantly than all that were before him. The application may be made with perfect truth to many professors of religion.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The sanctity of marriage.* I. CONVERSATION WITH THE PHARISEES. 1. *Work in Peræa.* The Lord had now finally left Galilee; the restless hostility of the Pharisees had driven him from the province in which at first he had met with such great success, and which was regarded as his own country. Judæa, too, was now unsafe for him. His hour was almost come; he would work while it was day; but he would not expose himself to unnecessary danger before the time appointed. Peræa was for a short season open to him; it was less overspread by Pharisaic influence than Galilee or Judæa. He would work there while he might. Multitudes followed him, and he healed them there. The Lord is an example of patience and perseverance; he would not throw up his work in weariness and disgust, as men too often do when they meet with failure and opposition. He neglected no opening for work, no opportunity of preaching the blessed gospel. Oh that we might imitate him in this as in all things! 2. *The question of the Pharisees.* They found him, even in Peræa; they followed him everywhere during the latter part of his ministry with their ensnaring questions and malicious persecutions. And now they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" It was common to consult great teachers on points of controversy; but this question was not asked honestly; they were tempting him, seeking to entangle him in his talk, to bring him into collision with one or other of the two great schools, or with Herod Antipas himself, the ruler of the country in which they were. The famous Hillel had taught that divorce was allowable for any cause; Shammai, that it was lawful only in the case of adultery. Herod was guilty of shameful violations of the law of marriage, and had murdered the holy Baptist, who rebuked him for his sin. The Lord had taught the strict view of marriage in his sermon on the mount; would he dare to maintain the same doctrine in the dominions of Herod? The Pharisees seemed to ask for information; they had malice and envy in their hearts. Controversy is full of danger to the soul; those who are called to engage in it ought to look most carefully into their own consciences to see that their motives are pure and good. 3. *The Lord's answer.* He refers them to the Scriptures. "Have ye not read?" he says, as he had said before. He points to the study of the

Scriptures as the source of religious knowledge. "Have ye not read?" We ought to be always reading, always learning lessons of Divine truth from the holy Word of God. He goes back to the original principle of marriage. "He which made them at the beginning made them male and female." They were created for one another. "They twain shall be one flesh. . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The wedded pair are one; the Lord does not say "those which," but "that which God hath joined." They are no longer two, but one flesh, one unity. Man may not dare to part that which God by matrimony hath made one. So true is the old saying that marriages are made in heaven. Marriage is an honourable estate, instituted by God in the time of man's innocency; declared by God himself, speaking through Adam of things which Adam could know only through Divine inspiration, to be more sacred and binding even than the love of parent and child, the holiest surely and deepest of all other forms of human love; ennobled in the New Testament by a yet holier consecration, so that it becomes the symbol, the representation, of the mystical union that is between Christ and his Church. Marriage is a very holy thing, not to be taken in hand lightly and wantonly; not to be dissolved for any cause, according to the views of these Pharisees of Hillel's school, but to be undertaken reverently and in the fear of God, as a bond which is to unite husband and wife in holy love unto their lives' end. 4. *The Mosaic rule.* The Pharisees were not convinced; they quoted Deuteronomy against our Lord. Why did Moses, they said, command to give a bill of divorcement? The Lord first corrected their quotation. Moses did not command; he permitted. So eager controversialists misquote Scripture and bend it to their own purpose. Let us be careful to deal always truthfully and sincerely with the Word of God. It was true that Moses permitted divorce; but it had not been so from the beginning; it was permitted by the Law of Moses for temporary reasons, because of the hardness of the people's hearts. The Law of Moses was not final; it was adapted in large measure to the circumstances of the times—to the manners, capacity, spiritual condition of the Israelites. It was added because of transgressions; it was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The high spiritual requirements of the gospel would not have been suited to the rude, uncultured natures of the ancient Israelites. There was need of a long preparation, a preliminary training. Such a training was furnished by the Law. The Law was very high above contemporary moral teaching; it was imperfect in comparison with the gospel which was to come, but very far in advance of the moral standard prevalent in Gentile countries. The permission of divorce was one of the points in which allowance had been made for the customs of the time, for the character of the Israelites. It had not been so from the beginning; it was not intended to remain so. The Lord distinctly forbids divorce, "except it be for fornication." He does not sanction remarriage even in that case.

II. THE DISCIPLES. 1. *Their inference.* If it be so, if divorce is allowable only on that one ground, then, the disciples thought, it is not good to marry—the risk would be too great, the prospect of happiness too uncertain; better to remain unmarried than to enter upon a union which could not be dissolved. They spoke from the Jewish point of view, in accordance with their old associations and habits of thought. Their objection seems to us very strange. The fact of their making it shows the immense change which Christianity has produced in the estimate of marriage. 2. *The Lord's answer.* "Not all can receive this saying." Some can serve God best in the married state; some in a single life. Some, like the holy apostle St. Paul, have chosen to live unmarried for the kingdom of heaven's sake, that they may have fewer hindrances, more time, more opportunities for the blessed work of preaching the gospel of Christ. But the Lord leaves it open for the Christian conscience to determine in each man's case whether the married or the single life will serve better to godliness.

LESSONS. 1. Marriage is indissoluble; enter upon it discreetly, with serious thought and earnest prayer. 2. Marriage is a holy thing; let the husband love his wife as Christ loved his spouse, the Church. 3. The Lord raised woman to her proper place; Christians must aim at a high standard of purity. 4. The Lord laid the foundation of the sanctity of Christian homes and Christian family relations; let us cherish his high and holy teaching.

VERS. 13—15.—*The little children.* I. THEY WERE BROUGHT TO CHRIST. 1. *The*

reason. It seems to have been customary to bring young children into the synagogues to be blessed by the elders. The Lord was regarded with reverence as a great Rabbi now in Peræa, as he once had been in Galilee. Wives and mothers were naturally drawn to him by the high view of marriage which he taught. The frequency of divorce destroyed the sanctity of the marriage bond, degraded woman, interfered grievously with the true ideal of home and family life. It was Christianity, or rather it was the Lord himself, who raised woman to her proper dignity, who surrounded wedded life with an atmosphere of purity and mutual trustfulness, who gave unto men all the blessed charities, all the pure and holy joys, all that happy discipline of self-denial for the sake of wife, or husband, or children, which consecrate Christian family life, and make the family on earth a place of training and preparation for the family in heaven (Eph. iii. 15). The Lord's teaching touched the hearts of these Hebrew matrons; they brought their little ones to him; they wished him to lay his hands upon them, in token that his blessing should rest upon their lives; they wished him to pray for them; they were sure that his prayer was holy and effectual. These children were infants, at least some of them (*βρέφη*, Luke xviii. 15). The mothers doubted not, but earnestly believed that the prayer, the blessing of Christ, would be profitable to those unconscious infants. So we should bring our little ones to Christ in holy baptism, in Christian education. Christian mothers can do much—much that no one else can do so well, for the spiritual good of their children. The simple teaching of a believing mother, the simple prayers learned from a mother's lips, often exert a hallowing influence over a whole life; even if forgotten for a time among the toils and temptations of the world, they often return to the memory in later years. Those holy memories are by God's grace a powerful help in restoring that childlike spirit which is so precious in the sight of Christ. 2. *The rebuke of the disciples.* The conduct of the disciples seems strange. They had soon forgotten the incidents of their last visit to Capernaum (ch. xviii. 1—14). Then the Lord had himself taken a little child, and, bringing him into the midst, had made him the subject of his discourse, and had proposed the childlike character as the model for their imitation. One who so loved the little ones, who regarded them with such affectionate interest, who saw in childhood so many beauties, so much that was precious, would not be likely to repel the children now. But the disciples thought, perhaps, that they were mere infants, unconscious, incapable of learning anything from Christ. They did not suppose that his touch, his prayer, could benefit babes who could not pray for themselves. They thought that his time should be given to older people, who might gain more from his instructions. Their Master was very great and holy; his lessons were very sacred and precious. It was not right, they thought, to waste the time that was so valuable by claiming his attentions for these helpless infants. Such things seemed beneath his dignity, unworthy of his regard. And they rebuked those who had brought the children.

II. THE LORD'S RECEPTION OF THE LITTLE ONES. 1. *His reproof of the disciples.* "He was much displeased," St. Mark tells us; he blamed those who would have kept the little ones from him. The apostles were displeased with the mothers who brought the little ones to Christ; the Lord was displeased with the apostles themselves. It was a true spiritual instinct that prompted these Hebrew mothers; they were right, the apostles were wrong. The apostles had yet to learn those deep lessons of true Christian lowliness and true Christian sympathy with the young and simple and ignorant which only Christ can teach. Sometimes the ignorant feel instinctively what is right when the more instructed are led astray by prejudices or pride. Sometimes, it may be, the Lord is much displeased with us when we think that we are acting for his honour. Let us watch carefully over our motives, remembering always that his eye is ever on us, and that no secrets of the heart are hidden from him. 2. *His words.* "Suffer little children." The Lord had used the same words when he came unto John to be baptized of him, "Suffer it to be so now." As John then obeyed the voice of Christ, and "suffered him;" so Christ bids his disciples to "suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me." Christians must not keep them back, they must not rebuke those who bring them; for the little ones are very dear to Christ; he cares for them all; the Father cares for them: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." We must bring them to Christ in their

infancy, dedicating them to him in holy baptism, asking him to embrace them with the arms of his mercy, to put his hands upon them and bless them. We must bring them to him in prayer, praying for them ourselves, as the poor father prayed for the lunatic boy, teaching them to lift up their own childlike hearts to God as soon as their lips can utter the words of prayer. We must bring them to Christ by the training of a Christian home, by holy example; carefully avoiding the danger of laying a stumbling-block in the way of the little ones by any word or deed of ours. The responsibilities under which we lie towards the children of our families should be a strong additional motive for the cultivation of holiness. We must bring them to Christ by a Christian education, giving them that inestimable privilege which Timothy had received from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice—the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures from childhood—from infancy (ἀπὸ βρέφους, 2 Tim. iii. 15). The Lord is pleased with those who thus bring the little ones to him; he is displeased with those who would keep them from him; for, he saith, of such is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them, as it belongs to the poor in spirit, and to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs; they are by the gift of God entitled to its privileges. Surely, then, they will be received into the kingdom of glory if they are taken hence in the comparative innocence of childhood. We cannot doubt but that he who said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me," will gather the lambs into his bosom in the kingdom of his Father. The kingdom is theirs, but not theirs only. "Of *such* is the kingdom of heaven." The childlike in heart are true children of the kingdom; they receive the kingdom of God as a little child; they believe with the simple earnestness of children; they are poor in spirit, like the little ones; they are truthful, unaffected, real. Let us seek for that childlike simplicity and transparency of heart; let us pray, let us strive after it. It is the character of Christ's chosen, his beloved. "He laid his hands on them, and departed thence." He gave the desired blessing: "He took them up in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them." Happy children! Happy those who by the grace of Christ and the cleansing, quickening power of his Spirit, retain, or recover, the freshness, the simplicity, the comparative purity, of childhood!

LESSONS. 1. Imitate the Peræan parents; bring the little ones to Christ. 2. Let none dare to despise children; the Lord cares for them and loves them. 3. Teach them at home, in Sunday schools; the Lord is pleased with those who help to train them for him.

Vers. 16—30.—*The young ruler.* I. HIS INTERVIEW WITH CHRIST. 1. *His question.* Christ was "gone forth into the way" (Mark x. 17); he was leaving Peræa; his ministry there was ended. But there was a young man, a ruler of the synagogue, a man of large possessions and of blameless life, who came running and kneeled to him. Perhaps he had already felt the supreme goodness of Christ, the holiness of his teaching; but his position, his Jewish prejudices, had hitherto prevented him from becoming a disciple of the Lord. Now the Lord was departing; if he hesitated longer, he would be too late. He had lived an upright, honourable life, but he felt that there was something lacking yet; there was a void in his heart, a yearning which he could not satisfy. Perhaps this great Teacher might help him. There was no time to lose; he hastily made up his mind, and ran after Christ. Thus far he is an example to us. Earthly rank, earthly riches, will not fill the heart; we need something more—we need Christ. We may be late in seeking him; we have wasted much time and lost many opportunities. The Lord is long-suffering; he is still near at hand; but it may soon be too late. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." Come running, kneeling to him in lowly supplication; he will tarry on his way; he will listen to the suppliant's prayer. So the young ruler came now. "Good Master," he said, "what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" It sounds like the question of the jailor at Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" But it was not so genuine, so natural, so heart-felt. There was an element of truth, some real desire; but there was something of ostentation, of self-confidence; little of that childlike spirit which the Lord had so highly commended. He thought too much of his past uprightness. He thought, apparently, that eternal life might be earned by some great and noble deed. 2. *The Lord's answer.* "Why askest thou me

concerning that which is good? One there is who is good!" God only is good. Love him; do his holy will; take him for thy Portion. Eternal life is his gift; it is given to them who walk with God, who live in and for God, who keep his commandments. St. Mark and St. Luke have the words which some ancient authorities read in St. Matthew also, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but One, that is, God." The Lord had forbidden the apostles to tell men that he was the Christ, because the Jews looked for a human Messiah, an earthly king. In the same spirit he would not accept the title "Good" from this ruler, who regarded him simply as a wise Teacher, a great Rabbi. He bade him keep the commandments. The young ruler had been expecting to hear something lofty and extraordinary from so great a Prophet; he was surprised at a direction so simple and commonplace, as he doubtless thought it. He was disappointed again when, in answer to his inquiry, the Lord simply recited five commandments of the Decalogue, adding that general principle in which the whole second table is briefly comprehended, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The Lord had indicated the first and great commandment of the Law in his first answer. He now mentions those duties towards our neighbour which flow out of our duty towards our God. He would lead the young man to examine himself, to discover his deficiencies, to see for himself that he had not yet entered on the way that leadeth to eternal life. 3. *The young ruler's rejoinder.* He had done all this, he said; he knew it all; he wanted something more than elementary teaching. "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" He spoke the truth according to his light. He had been brought up in the narrow school of the rabbis, and, according to the mechanical interpretations of the scribes, was, like Saul the Pharisee, "touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless." He had lived all his days a life of external obedience, and he did not understand the spiritual meaning of these commandments as taught by our Lord in his great sermon on the mount. He did not realize the wide range, the deep reach of that second commandment, which became, when illustrated by our Lord's example, the new commandment, the mark and test of Christ's disciples. He had kept the commandments as far as he understood them, as far as he had been taught; but he was conscious of a deficiency. He felt that something, he knew not what, but certainly something higher than this external obedience, was necessary for the attainment of that eternal life which he sought. "What lack I yet?" he said. It was a fine character as far as it went; unspotted moral rectitude joined with aspirations for something better and nobler. The Lord saw the promise of much good. "He beheld him," St. Mark says. It was a deep searching look that read his heart; and he loved him—he regarded him with something of that esteem which any degree of real goodness produces in the good. "Goodness," Bishop Butler says, "implies the love of itself, an affection for goodness. The really good recognize any spark of goodness in others, and cannot fail to love it." This special drawing forth of the Lord's love was a great honour to the young ruler; it showed the natural excellence of his character. 4. *The Lord's commandment.* "Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." It is not a counsel of perfection, not advice, but a commandment. This self-sacrifice was necessary for the young man—necessary for the attainment of that eternal life which he sought. "One thing thou lackest," the Lord said, according to the report of the conversation given by St. Mark and St. Luke. It must mean that when the Lord read the young man's soul, he saw much that was lovable; but he also saw that the love of money, which is the root of all evil, was poisoning what should have been a very fine and noble character. It was necessary for him to make this great venture of faith. He perilled his salvation by not doing so at the time; he may have done it afterwards. The Lord had a high reward for him—treasure in heaven hereafter, and in this life a place near to himself: "Come, follow me," he said. It may be that the Lord saw in that young ruler the making of an apostle. He might have stood high in the roll of saints; perhaps afterwards he did. Can he have been lost whom the Lord Jesus distinguished with his love? But now he went away. He could not make the sacrifice required of him. He had thought that he might do some great thing, some noble deed, to gain eternal life, and the Lord had taken him at his word; but this was too great, too difficult; he could not bring himself to it. He went away sorrowful, not angry; he felt that the Lord was right. There was something good and noble in his character which responded to the Lord's invitation. He felt the

supreme holiness of Christ, the powerful attraction of his gracious love. He owned in his heart that to be near to Christ the Lord, to follow him, to live in close communion with him, was a privilege exceeding precious, a privilege not too dearly bought at the cost of all earthly riches, all earthly comforts. He knew that the Lord had not asked too much; his heart told him so; but he had not the strength, the courage. He could not part with his large possessions; he could not take up the cross (Mark x. 21). He was sad at that saying, "Take up the cross." It was a strange and dreadful word; even the apostles could not reconcile themselves to it. And he went away sorrowful, vexed with himself; he had made the great refusal, and he felt that he done a weak and cowardly thing. He had judged himself unworthy of that eternal life which he had sought, and he despised himself. He knew that those riches for which he had turned away from Christ could not compensate him for the tremendous loss. He was not blinded. He felt the value of the love of Christ, and the unutterable preciousness of eternal life. He knew that these great possessions of his were as nothing in comparison with that priceless treasure which Christ had offered him. He sinned against light, and he was miserable. Perhaps his misery brought him afterwards to a better mind. We hope it was so. We cannot but feel a very deep and real interest in a character so touching, so engaging, in one whom the Lord Jesus Christ loved. We are not all called to make the sacrifice which was required of the young ruler. The Lord did not say the like to Nicodemus or to Joseph of Arimathæa. But all true Christian men must be willing to do so if need be. "Not my will, but thine be done" was the Lord's own prayer in his agony. "Thy will be done" is the Christian's daily, it should be his hourly, prayer. And that prayer pledges us to the spirit of ready self-sacrifice for Christ's sake. We must be ready to give freely, liberally, in proportion to our means, for all holy works. We must be ready to take up our cross; for the Lord says that without the cross we cannot be his disciples. It is not enough to have the word often in our mouths, to have the picture of the cross upon our walls, or to wear the cross for an ornament. The mark of the Christian is the real cross, the inner spiritual cross; and that means self-denial for Christ's sake, self-denial which is real, which is painful, which is hard to bear; even as the cross which the Lord bore for us was hard and heavy and painful exceedingly. But the cross leadeth to the crown. The conditions of eternal life are unvarying; they are the same now, in their real spiritual meaning, as they were when they were presented by the Lord himself to the young ruler in Peræa.

II. THE LORD'S CONVERSATION WITH THE APOSTLES. 1. *The warning.* "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is a hard thing, and his temptations are so great; there is so much to draw him to the world. Indeed, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven *as* a rich man; he must become poor, that he may be rich indeed. He must become poor in spirit, poor in the willingness to consecrate all his wealth to the service of Christ; he must give largely, denying himself in many things that he may give the more; learning to do God's will, not his own; and regarding himself simply as the steward of what really belongs to God. For otherwise his danger is exceeding great. The gate of eternal life is always strait; it becomes like the eye of a needle to the rich man who stands before it, burdened with his riches, like a heavily loaded camel. "They that trust in riches" (see Mark x. 24, though the reading is somewhat doubtful) "cannot enter in;" and it is very hard for a rich man to cast off his trust in his riches. Yet the strait gate shall be thrown open wide to them that overcome—to the poor who are rich in faith, and to the rich who are poor in spirit, true disciples of him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. 2. *The amazement of the apostles.* They were startled, almost terror-stricken; it seemed so hard a saying; it seemed to make salvation so very difficult to attain. Perhaps St. Peter was thinking of it when long afterwards he wrote, "If the righteous *scarcely* be saved" (1 Pet. iv. 18). "Who then can be saved?" they said in their astonishment. All men, they knew, share the like peril; it is not only the rich who are in danger of trusting in riches. The poor often care for money quite as much as the rich. The fault lies, not in the fact of having great possessions, but in the trust reposed in them; and there are poor men who trust in their little store quite as much as some rich men trust in their great wealth. "The love of money is the root of all evil," and that love is a common temptation to all, rich and poor alike. "Who then

can be saved?" The Lord saw the perplexity of his apostles; he felt for them in his sacred heart. He looked at them; those holy eyes were fixed upon them with an earnest, loving, sympathizing look—a look full of human tenderness and Divine compassion. "With men this is impossible," he said; "but with God all things are possible." The disciples were right; they might well say, "Who then can be saved?" Man cannot save himself; he is too weak, too sinful. "With men this is impossible"—with all men alike, whether they are rich or poor, whatever may be their advantages or their temptations; they cannot save themselves; the thing is impossible. But (we may well thank God as we read the words, and fall down before him in adoring gratitude) it is not impossible with God. And Christ is God; "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." His incarnation, his blessed death upon the cross, has made that possible which was impossible. "With God all things are possible;" he can bring a clean thing out of an unclean; he can cleanse us from all unrighteousness—from the degrading love of money, from the defiling lusts of the flesh, from the subtle temptations of pride and self-righteousness. Only we must trust in him, not in riches, or what seem to be riches, not in our own fancied merits, not in works of righteousness which we have done, but only in the cross. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

III. THE REWARD OF THE TRUE DISCIPLE. 1. *St. Peter's question.* The apostles had done what the young ruler shrank from doing—they had forsaken all. Indeed, they had not so much to give up as he had; but such as it was, it was their all; they had left all, and had followed Christ. The Lord had promised treasure in heaven to his followers. "What shall we have therefore?" Peter said. He was still too eager; there was too much self-assertion; he laid too much stress on the reward that was to come. The highest desire of the soul is to serve Christ for himself.

"Not for the sake of gaining aught,
Not hoping a reward;
But as thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord."

Peter knew afterwards that the love of Christ is its own reward (1 Pet. i. 8). Yet he was not wholly wrong; the Lord had promised treasure in heaven; and that blessed hope is an exceeding great help to fainting Christians; it is an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast. Moses had respect unto the recompense of the reward. St. Paul looked forward to the crown of righteousness laid up in heaven for all who love the appearing of the Lord. Christ himself, our great Example, when he looked back on his perfect life, said, "Now, O Father, glorify thou me." Peter, perhaps, regarded that heavenly blessedness too much in the light of a reward due to self-denial here; our Lord seems to imply this in the parable of ch. xx., though he now repeats his promise and acknowledges the self-sacrifice of his followers. 2. *The Lord's answer.* (1) The promise to the apostles. He bade them look forward to the great regeneration, the time of restitution of all things (Acts iii. 21). The regeneration of individual Christians (of which the Lord speaks in John iii. 3, 5; and St. Paul in Titus iii. 5) is the gradual beginning, the preparation for the regeneration of the world, when God will make all things new, when there shall be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Then shall the Son of man, whose throne on earth was the cross, sit in that new creation upon the throne of his glory. And they who followed him nearest upon earth, who first bore the cross for his Name's sake, the twelve chosen apostles, they should sit, he said, upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It may be that we shall not certainly understand the meaning of this promise (and other similar passages, such as Luke xxii. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3) till it is fulfilled in the kingdom of heaven. But perhaps it is safest to adopt the ideal interpretation. Twelve is the ideal number of the apostolic college. Judas went to his own place. By the twelve tribes of Israel we are probably to understand the Israel of God, the great Christian Church in all its branches. As the judges ruled Israel in the days of the theocracy, so shall the twelve apostles rule the Israel of God in the regeneration. They shall be nearest to the King, on his right hand and his left, in the highest places of honour. (2) The promise to all believers. The circle of promise is widened. The

apostles had forsaken all for Christ's sake; but there were multitudes who would afterwards make the like sacrifice; multitudes more who would be willing to make it if it were required of them. To all such the Lord promises a hundredfold reward—"a hundredfold," "manifold more," St. Mark and St. Luke say—in this present time, and in the world to come, eternal life. "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." That holy joy, that peace of God, which is granted unto those who have yielded up their wills to God's holy will, passeth all understanding, and altogether outweighs the temporal losses which they may endure for Christ's sake. Such men, like St. Paul, count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. To such to live is Christ, and to die is gain. A life of holiness and self-denial for Christ's sake is very blessed, for it hath the presence of Christ. A holy death is by much far better; for such a death is the gate of everlasting life. They who would live that life and die that death must watch and pray, seeking earnestly the grace of perseverance; for many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Judas was near to Christ when these words were said. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall."

LESSONS. 1. We still ask the same question, "What shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" And still the answer is the same, "Keep the commandments." 2. Let us not say, "All these have I kept from my youth up." Let us imitate the publican rather than the young ruler: "God be merciful to me a sinner." 3. "The love of money is the root of all evil;" "Love not the world;" "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." 4. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It is a difficult work, beyond the strength of man; but we can do all things through him that strengtheneth us. 5. Let us have respect unto the recompense of the reward; he who by faith discerns the crown may well endure the cross.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 3—9.—*Divorce.* The readiness with which the marriage tie is dissolved in some countries, and the daring questions on the subject that have been raised in England, make it important for us to see clearly how divorce should be regarded in the light of the teachings of Christ. Plainly he sets his face against any divorce except in the most extreme case. Let us consider some of the pleas for a laxer rule, and then look at the duty of resisting them.

I. PLEAS FOR A GREATER FREEDOM OF DIVORCE. 1. *The happiness of the home.* It is urged that some husbands and wives are hopelessly at variance. Though married outwardly, in soul they are not wedded at all. They live together as enemies compelled to occupy the same prison, which a miserable conventionality falsely names home. Undoubtedly, this may be so. But then happiness is not the chief end of life. Moreover, the immediate relief of freedom would have to be purchased at the cost of an invasion of the settled social order. 2. *The rights of liberty.* A more daring position is taken up by those who claim liberty to dissolve the marriage bond. These people deny that we have any right to enter into a lifelong contract of marriage; or rather, they plead that such a contract should be subject to revision.

II. THE OBLIGATIONS OF IRREVOCABLE MARRIAGE TIES. Jesus Christ saw the terrible evils that resulted from great freedom of divorce in his day, and he distinctly opposed this dangerous licence. Let us consider some of the grave objections to it. 1. *It is contrary to nature.* On the surface of it, marriage may seem to be an artificial arrangement, and absolute freedom the state of nature. But our Lord pointed out that marriage was instituted at the Creation, and that it was associated with the very constitution of human life. There is a higher nature than that of the animal world. There is a certain best arrangement which only those who have intelligence to perceive it and conscience to follow it can enter into. This corresponds to Nature, not in her lowest instincts, but in her highest aspirations. 2. *It is contrary to the law of God.* The arrangement of nature was supplemented by the word of revelation. In marriage men and women carry out a law that God has revealed. In free divorce they break that law. This is of no consequence, perhaps, to people who are "emancipated;" but it should be all-authoritative for Christians. 3. *It leads to numberless evils.* (1) It

ruins the home. Discordant sentiments may also ruin it; but they indicate failure to reach an ideal. Freedom of divorce destroys the very ideal. The home which may be broken up at any moment is no home. (2) It is unjust. It cannot always happen that both husband and wife desire to be separated when one is tired of the union; and if the wish is on one side only, injustice is done by divorce, and a wrong inflicted. Even if the divorce cannot be carried out without mutual consent, the one person who does not wish for it is placed in a cruelly distressful position. (3) It lowers the idea of marriage. Instead of studying to make the best of the marriage union, people who have freedom of divorce are tempted to be looking abroad for new attractions. This is immoral; it tends directly to degrade the thoughts, and to throw open the flood-gates of unrestrained desires.—W. F. A.

Vers. 13—15.—*Christ blessing little children.* This incident, familiar to us from our childhood, not only throws light on the character of our Lord and his interest in child-life. It reveals something in all who took part in it.

I. THE MOTHERS. The word "then," with which the paragraph opens, is deeply significant, because it closely connects this paragraph with that which precedes. Jesus had been vindicating the sanctity of marriage. The degenerate Jews had come to regard the subject too much, if not exclusively, in regard to the relations of man and wife. Here we see its bearings on the great and wonderful fact of motherhood. Marriage should be protected for the sake of the children. True parents do not live chiefly for their own happiness. They live for their children. The unselfish love of motherhood is one of the most striking facts in nature. It softens the tigress when she is playing with her cubs; it gives ferocity to the hen when she is protecting her chickens. Now mothers, naturally yearning for the good of their children, can do nothing better for the little ones than to bring them to Christ, and train them for him. Yet some parents, who study the bodily health of their children with deepest solicitude, scarcely give a thought to their souls' welfare.

II. THE CHILDREN. They showed certain traits of character. 1. *Obedience.* The children came at their mothers' bidding. Obedience to parents is the root of obedience to God. 2. *A perception of the attractiveness of Christ.* Obedience would bring the children with their mothers. But more was wanted to induce them to go up to Christ and permit him to take them in his arms. There are some people who only terrify children, although they try to coax them into favour. Jesus, however, was evidently one who won children by his own gentleness, kindness, and childlikeness. Pharisees were uncomfortable in his presence, but children were quite at home.

III. THE DISCIPLES. They rebuked the mothers. Why? 1. *For Christ's sake.* They would not have him troubled. They wished to serve Christ, but they did not understand his mind; therefore they blundered. We must know his will and do it, if we would serve him acceptably. 2. *For their own sakes.* They would keep Christ to themselves. The advent of these mothers and children interrupted a discussion which was very interesting to them. But Christ preferred to turn from a subject which was distressing to him to the innocent simplicity of the little children. Further observe: (1) Children will come to Christ if we will suffer them. It is our part to remove every hindrance from their approach to him. (2) All children need Christ's blessing. (3) Very young children are old enough to receive it.

IV. CHRIST. He appears as the children's Friend and the Champion of their mothers. This well-known incident reveals him to us in his most winning grace. 1. *Love of children.* We should give the children a good place in our arrangements for Christian work, if we would please our Lord, who is their Friend. 2. *Childlikeness.* Jesus is drawn to the children by a natural affinity. 3. *Gracious kindness.* He blesses the children. This he does with personal touch, putting his hands upon them. Christ will take trouble to help and save children.—W. F. A.

Vers. 16—22.—*The great refusal.* The young man who won the love of Christ by his ardour and enthusiasm, and who grieved our Lord by his refusal to make an unexpected sacrifice, stands before us in vivid portraiture—an example, and yet a warning. Let us consider the successive traits of his character revealed by his conduct.

I. HIS WISE QUESTION. It is much for a man to have a definite object before

him; it is more for him to choose a worthy pursuit. Of all personal things the young ruler chose the very best. He had wealth, but that did not satisfy him. He had the means of acquiring pleasure; but he rose above the idea of making worldly amusement the end and aim of existence. He craved the life of God, which is eternal. Surely we may imitate him in this. Moreover, he did well in inquiring of Christ. Jesus is the Way to life, and we can find its source in him, as he told the woman of Samaria (John iv. 14). It is right to come to Christ for this boon.

II. HIS MISTAKEN ADDRESS. He called our Lord "Good Master." Jesus takes up the phrase at once, and asks what it means. This was no act of captious criticism. The young man did not really know the deep signification of the word "good." He used language conventionally. There is a great danger for those who are brought up among religious associations that they will employ the greatest words without entering into their true meaning.

III. HIS MORAL CONDUCT. Christ began with the first elements of morality. We cannot go on to perfection until we have mastered these elements. It is impossible to be a thief in the world and a saint in the Church. Yet there is a subtle temptation that dogs the footsteps of those who aspire after superior spiritual attainments—a temptation to fall away from common morality. The young man had avoided this temptation. He was no hollow sentimentalist. His virtue was solid. Yet it was not enough.

IV. HIS NEW DUTY. He is told to renounce his wealth—a hard, a startling requirement. Jesus does not give this commandment to all rich men, though he never encourages the acquisition of wealth. But he saw that the young ruler's snare was his riches. It was necessary, therefore, that the riches should be given up. Now, although it was not his duty before this thus to renounce all he possessed, the word of Christ—if he would become a disciple—made it his duty. Whenever Christ tells any man to sell all he has and give the proceeds to the poor, that man is under an obligation to obey if he would own the Lordship of Christ. The essential duty is not poverty, but obedience. The duty may take the same form with any of us if we are convinced on good grounds that Christ desires us to make the same sacrifice. But whether absolute poverty be required or not, whatever we own is only ours subject to the bidding of Christ to use it as he directs—and he is not altogether an easy Master to serve.

V. HIS SAD FAILURE. The young ruler could not rise up to the sacrifice. His wealth was his undoing. It was not a golden key opening the kingdom of heaven, but a golden bar holding the gate shut. The young ruler might have become a great Christian leader, saint, or martyr. His refusal dropped him into obscurity. We cannot but pity him, for his was a hard test. Could we stand it? Have we shrunk back from even a milder test?—W. F. A.

Vers. 23, 24.—*The rich man's difficulty.* Jesus draws a lesson of sad warning from the failure of the young ruler who could not bring himself to make the great sacrifice required as a condition of his obtaining eternal life. He points out the exceeding difficulty of a rich man's entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

I. THE EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFICULTY. It is wholly on the side of the man who is hindered and hampered by his wealth. God has opened the gate and invited all who will to enter. He is no respecter of persons. He does not favour the rich to the neglect of the poor; and he does not favour the poor and deal harshly with the rich. He is just and fair with all. But the rich man has hindrances in himself. 1. *The absorbing interest of riches.* The danger is that the wealthy man should be satisfied with his possessions; or, as that is impossible unless he is partially stupefied by them, that they should so fill his life that he should not have time or thought for better things. He may be buried under the load of his own goods, lost in the mazes of his forest of possessions. 2. *The deceitful promise of riches.* Jesus spoke of the deceitfulness of riches as one of the weeds that spring up and choke the Word (ch. xiii. 22). If wealth does not yet satisfy, still it promises future satisfaction. The rich man comes to think he can buy all he wants, if only he can find the right market. 3. *The foolish pride of riches.* If ever a man has a right to be proud, it is on account of what he is, not because of what he has. The owner of millions may be a miserable coward, a

sensual sot, a senseless fool. Yet the disgraceful sycophancy of the world teaches him to regard himself as a superior person. Now, pride is the most effectual barrier to the entrance of the kingdom of heaven. Only the lowly and humble and childlike can creep through its humble doorway. 4. *The hardening selfishness of riches.* Wealth, though it gives the means of helping others, tends to seal up the fountains of generosity and destroy the springs of sympathy. The self-indulgent man cannot enter that kingdom, the citizens of which have to deny themselves and carry the cross.

II. THE LESSONS OF THE DIFFICULTY. 1. *The folly of covetousness.* Why should we make haste to be rich, if riches may become a curse to us? If in any case they are likely to bring fresh difficulties, should we be so anxious to acquire them? How is it that so many Christian people are to be found eagerly pursuing the race for wealth? 2. *The duty of contentment.* We may never get riches. What of that if we have the kingdom of heaven, which is far better? Perhaps we are spared a dangerous temptation. 3. *The need of sympathy with the difficulties of rich men.* Jesus did not denounce the young man who made the great refusal. He loved him and pitied him. If rich men fail, we should remember that they were beset with temptations that do not fall to the lot of most of us. 4. *Faith in the power of God.* The rich man is gravely warned. He is in serious danger. He may fail miserably, crushed by the load of his own wealth. His salvation would be a miracle. But God can work miracles. Though it be as hard for a rich man to save himself as for a camel to pass like a thread through a needle's eye, God can save him. Therefore (1) the rich should have the gospel preached to them; (2) we should pray for the rich; (3) we should rejoice greatly that there are rich men in the kingdom of God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 26.—*The impossible made possible.* This is the solution of the rich man's difficulty; and it is the solution of many another difficulty. When we look away from man to God, the impossible becomes possible.

I. MEN CANNOT SAVE THEMSELVES. The disciples are made to see this truth in the case of the rich, whose difficulties are peculiarly great. But that is only the extreme instance of what really applies to people in all conditions of life. 1. *In experience we see that men do not save themselves.* We may preach the dignity and capacity of humanity. We may argue on the faculty and scope of free-will. But when we leave the pulpit and the lecture-room, what we see is a world of continuous bafflement and failure. The young man starts well, but if he is left to himself and trusts to himself, he soon discovers his weakness. Good resolutions seem only to be made in order to be broken. 2. *The indwelling sin of men prevents them from saving themselves.* The evil is within. The prisoner might cut his way out of a stone dungeon, and the exile might escape from the ocean island; but the man whose own nature is his dungeon and his place of exile cannot escape from himself. In himself man has no lever by which he can lift himself above himself. 3. *The depth of ruin prevents men from saving themselves.* The Fall is so awful, the offended Law is so majestic, that self-salvation is hopeless. 4. *The circumstances of life prevent men from saving themselves.* Riches keep back the wealthy. Poverty, with its cares and anxieties, oppresses the destitute. Various calls and distractions, fascinations and delusions, hinder other men.

II. GOD CAN SAVE WHERE MAN FAILS. 1. *He does save.* This is his work. He creates, and he renews. He gives life, and he regenerates. The Creator is the Saviour. We have not got a glimmer of the meaning of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" until we have begun to perceive this great truth. All the doctrines and ethics of Christianity are of little use while we are blind to its fundamental principle. This principle is not to be lost in any figure of speech. We have to see that God puts forth real power to change and renew his children. Helpless and ruined in themselves, when they turn to his grace his strong arm saves them. This is as actual a fact as the fact that the summer sun makes the vegetation of the earth to grow and ripen. Every true Christian can testify to it from personal experience. 2. *There is no limit to his saving power.* There can be no limit if he is God, for God is Almighty. We see difficulties, but they all vanish as smoke when he puts forth his power. The Divine method of salvation is not as simple and easy as we might have expected. It involves the expenditure of God's only begotten Son. Christ must come to earth, and Christ

must die, if man is to be saved. But Christ has come and died; God has done all that is necessary. The salvation is perfect. Now it only rests with us to open our hearts to receive its renewing grace. There is one thing that God never does—he never overrides a rebellious will. If we refuse, he cannot save us. It is for the willing that there is no limit to his saving power.—W. F. A.

Vers. 27—30.—*The great reward.* St. Peter's question strikes us as a little low in tone. It often happens that this disciple, who has been exalted as the prince of the apostles, betrays some human weakness. And yet it is nowhere suggested to us in Scripture that all consideration of future rewards are to be suppressed, though certainly Paley's feeble conception of Christianity as morality with the added sanctions of future rewards and punishments revealed in the teaching and confirmed by the miracles of Christ, is far below the New Testament standard. Christ claims our service, and unless enthusiasm for Christ draws us on, mere hopes of payment or fears of penalties will not succeed. But for those who are won to Christ by the purest influences, all innocent motives are needed to assist in the difficult task of maintaining their fidelity. Our Lord, therefore, condescends to encourage us by mentioning some of the rich rewards of self-denying service. It must be borne in mind that these rewards are gracious favours, like school prizes, not wages due and paid on demands of justice. The rewards are both heavenly and earthly.

I. THE HEAVENLY REWARD. This is presented to us in two forms. 1. *A glorious throne.* The minds of the disciples are full of vague but splendid Messianic dreams, and Jesus approaches them along the lines of their own imaginations. The splendour of the throne will not be enjoyed on earth. Here there is to be sacrifice, toil, poverty, martyrdom. But there will be a throne in the future world. Not only will Christ reign. His apostles will reign with him. Similarly, all Christians are to have a kingly status—to be both "kings and priests." This means more than future joy, a mere elysium of delights; it involves power, honour, responsibility—like the man who had gained ten pounds being appointed to rule over ten cities (Luke xix. 17). 2. *Eternal life.* The first reward was external; it pointed to status, function, honour. The second is wholly internal and personal. It is more than bare existence in the future. It is a new order of life—exalted being, enlarged capacity. To live in the vast ages of eternity, to *live* really and truly, not to dream for ever in an indolent paradise,—this is the exhilarating prospect of the faithful servant of Christ. We do not know what life is as yet. When we die we shall begin to live.

II. THE EARTHLY REWARD. Their reward is to be a great reward on earth. In St. Mark the words, "now in this time," are added (Mark x. 30). He who gives to a generous king will certainly receive back far more than he sacrifices. The difficulty is to see how this can be on earth. Now, we cannot take the words of Christ literally, for no one would wish to have hundreds of fathers and mothers. But as Christ owned kinship with all who do God's will (ch. xii. 50), so may Christians. The Church should be the new family for those who have been cast out of their old home on account of their Christian confession. The pearl of great price, the inward life and joy of pardon and renewal and communion with God,—this is a great possession, and it may be a present possession. It is better to have the peace of God in a life of sacrifice, than houses and acres with a heart in selfish unrest.—W. F. A.

Ver. 20.—*The rich young man.* "What lack I yet?" Plainly the young man who put this question was in earnest. He was not one of those who approached Jesus merely from curiosity, or for the sake of measuring themselves with this renowned Dialectician and Teacher. With him the search for life eternal was an important personal matter. He went away sorrowful, with no heart to prolong the conversation, as soon as his own case was pronounced upon. Probably he had an idea that our Lord would recommend him to build a synagogue, or ransom some of his countrymen who were slaves, or do some striking religious act. For when our Lord replies, "Keep the commandments," he asks, "What commandments?"—fancying he might refer to some rules for the attainment of extraordinary saintliness not divulged to the common people. And so, when Jesus merely repeated the time-worn Decalogue, the young man was disappointed, and impatiently exclaimed, "All these have I kept

from my youth up," not so much vaunting his blamelessness of life as indicating that he had had these commandments in view all his life, and that to refer him to them was to give him no satisfaction. All the help they could give he had already got. "What lack I yet?" He belonged to the "Tell-me-something-more-to-do-and-I-will-do-it" class of Pharisees. He thought he was ready to make any sacrifice, or do any great thing which would advance his spiritual interests. Remark—

I. HOW ENTIRELY EVEN AN INTELLIGENT MAN MAY MISAPPREHEND HIS OWN SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT. It was natural this young man should over-estimate himself. He was not only well-disposed, very much the model of what a rich young man should be, but was interested in religion, as too few wealthy young men are. He was generally esteemed, and had already become a ruler of the synagogue. He came to Jesus, not to be taught the rudiments, but to receive the finishing touches of a religious character—and he is told he is wrong to the foundation. He is in the position of a person who goes to his medical adviser complaining of a slight uneasiness which he supposes a tonic will remove, and is told that he has heart-disease or cancer. Or he is in the position of a sanguine inventor, who has spent years on the elaboration of a machine, and at last puts it into the hands of the practical man, merely to get steam applied and the fittings adjusted, and is told by the practical man that the whole thing is wrong in conception, and can by no possibility ever be made to work. He sees himself as he never saw himself before. He never knew how much he loved his money till he found he would risk his soul rather than part with his money. He never knew how little he cared for the poor till he found he was not prepared to help them by becoming one of them. He never dreamt he was ungodly till he found he preferred his few acres of land to that Person whom he had confessed to be Incarnate Goodness.

II. A MAN MAY NOT ONLY MISAPPREHEND HIS ATTAINMENT, BUT HIS WILLINGNESS TO ATTAIN. This young man fancied he would welcome any light upon duty. He thought himself willing to do anything that would advance his spiritual condition. He finds he is by no means willing. Thousands are in this state. "Give us," they would say, "something tangible to do, and we will do it; but religion seems always so much in the clouds, we do not know where to begin." Put present duty to such persons in an attainable form, and it is not always so welcome as they expected. Tell them that to be holy is, in their case, to say ten words of apology to some one they have injured, to set apart some fixed time daily for thought and prayer, to abandon some indulgence, or spend money for a relative; and they turn sullenly away, like this young man.

III. BETWEEN OUR PRESENT ATTAINMENT AND PERFECTION THERE MAY BE A SACRIFICE EQUIVALENT TO CUTTING OFF A RIGHT HAND OR PLUCKING OUT A RIGHT EYE. This young man was plainly told that, in order to attain life eternal, he must abandon his pleasant home, his position in society, all his comforts and prospects, and become a poor wanderer. It seems a hard demand to make of a well-intentioned youth. But it was no doubt justified by his state. Riches are not the only hindrance to attainment, and we may ourselves be in need of treatment as sharp. To begin the world with a penny would be no great trial to some of us; it would, indeed, be precisely what some of us are already doing; and there are probably few who would not gladly sell all they have if the price would buy perfection of character and life everlasting. But it is no such bargain our Lord means. He merely means that to us, as to this young man, salvation is impossible if it be not the *first* thing. This young man's possessions happened to be that which prevented him from following Christ; but some pursuit of ours, or some cherished intention, or some evil habit, or mere indifference, may be as effectually preventing us from holding true fellowship with him and becoming like him. And discipline as penetrating and sore may in our case be required.

IV. FOR THE ONE THING ESSENTIAL, IF WE ARE TO ATTAIN PERFECTION, IS THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST. This young man respected Christ, and was no doubt willing to do much to please him. He would probably have given up half his possessions, but he could not give up all for Christ. He did not scoff or argue: he "went away sorrowful," feeling that the demand of Christ was reasonable, and that by not responding to it he was condemned. But he had not love enough to obey. It is not our judgment, but our affections, our real tastes and likings, which make us what we are, and determine

where we shall ultimately be. Love to Christ, which will compel us to cleave to him in preference to all else,—that alone is security that we shall reach perfection. This is the answer to the question which we all ask, "What lack I yet? What is it that prevents me from becoming a purer, stronger, holier, more useful man than I am? I desire growth, and I pray for it; but still it is chiefly my natural propensities that appear in my life. I do not seem to get the help promised; I do not make the growth required. Why is this? What is it always keeps me at the same point? What is it that always thwarts and baffles me?" Radically, it is the lack of deep and genuine devotedness to Christ.

V. OTHER THINGS MAY ALSO BE LACKING, AS, FOR EXAMPLE, DETERMINATION TO BE HOLY. It is in religion, in growth of character, as in other things, we succeed when we are determined to succeed; we fail when this determination is awanting. In certain physical and mental attainments, indeed, determination carries no efficacy. No amount of determination will make you as tall as some other man, or as long-sighted, or as imaginative, or as witty. But to determine to be holy is already to be holy in will, that is, in the spring of all amendment of character and conduct. Determination is everything, on the human side, in the matter of sanctification. It is needless, therefore, seeking for mysterious causes of failure, if this first and last requisite be awanting. Are you determined to be holy? Are you bent upon this? Because if you are not determined, common sense should forbid you to wonder why you do not grow in character. If you are not determined to be holy, the very root of the matter is still lacking in you.

VI. Remark, in conclusion, that THE LACK OF ONE THING MAY MAKE ALL OTHER ATTAINMENTS USELESS. *One* mistake vitiates a whole calculation. One disease is enough to kill a man; his brain may be sound, his lungs untouched, all his organs but one may be healthy; but if one vital organ be attacked, all the other healthy organs will not save him. So it is in character. One vice destroys the whole. If a man is malicious, it does not avail that he is temperate. If his heart is set on the world, attention to religion or domestic virtue will not save him. Many do cultivate all points but one. How often do we say, "What a pity so good a man should give way in this or that one respect!" So may it be said by others of ourselves. To some this question, "What lack I yet?" may come with a tone of irony. "What *lack* I?" we are tempted to say, "What *have* I, rather, that is not stained with sin, spotted by the world, unsafe, unproductive? When shall the time come when I shall be able in sincerity to say, 'What lack I yet?' when so much good shall have been achieved by me that I shall be at a loss to see whether further attainment is possible? My youth was very different from this young man's. Instead of the ingenuousness, the unbroken hope and ardent aspiration of youth, there was its passion, its untamed desires, its selfish love of pleasure, its impatience, its folly." There is, at least, the same choice now laid before you that was laid before him. To you Jesus says, "Follow me." He will infallibly lead you to perfection; he sees to it that every one who forsakes aught for his sake receives in this life a hundredfold, and in the world to come life everlasting.—D.

Vers. 1—12.—*The ethics of marriage.* Note here a contrast: multitudes following Christ for healing, Pharisees pursuing him for mischief. Satan will be among the sons of God. Jesus turns the contradiction of sinners into instructions for his disciples. Let us consider—

I. THE PHARISEE'S QUESTION RELATING TO CAPRICIOUS DIVORCE. 1. *The occasion.* (1) It was commonly practised. Josephus recites Deut. xxiv. 1, and relates that he divorced his own wife because he was not pleased with her manners and behaviour ('Ant.,' bk. iv. c. 8). (2) The practice had the sanction of scribes. While the school of Schammah were strict in their interpretation of the Law, the school of Hillel were lax. (3) The temptation was to embroil Jesus with one or other of these schools. The plot was similar to that in the question of the tribute (see ch. xxii. 15). "In evil things Satan separates the end from the means; in good things the means from the end" (Philip Henry). 2. *The reply.* (1) Note: It takes no notice of the scribes. Human authority is nowhere when put into competition with the Word of God. (2) It appeals immediately to the Word: "Have ye not read?" Matrimonial cases are

made intricate by leaving the Law of God and following the leading of human passion and folly. (3) "He that made them from the beginning made them male and female." It is profitable to reflect upon our genesis. Man was created in the image of God, woman after the likeness of man. The true marriage is the union of wisdom and love. One man and one woman, leaving no room for divorce and remarriage, so intimating the perpetual obligation of the marriage tie. Note: This argument is equally conclusive against polygamy. (4) "And said"—God said—"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife." But these words of God were spoken by the lips of Adam (see Gen. ii. 23, 24). Adam, then, who had no "father and mother," spake prophetically under Divine inspiration. Marriage, then, is a sacred, not a mere civil, institution; and no legislature has power to alter its law. The relation between husband and wife is nearer than that between parent and child. If, then, a parent may not abandon his child, or a child his parent, by so much less may a husband put away his wife. (5) "And the twain shall become one flesh"—as if one person. What can be less dissoluble? His children are of him, his wife is as himself. One flesh with his wife, "one spirit with the Lord." "One flesh," viz. while in the flesh. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh." "They *twain* shall be one;" so there must be but one wife (cf. Mal. ii. 15). (6) "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." But this the scribes had presumed to do. God is the Author of union; man, of division. Man would sunder soul and body, sin and punishment, holiness and happiness, precept and promise.

II. THEIR CITATION OF THE MOSAIC CONCESSION OF DIVORCEMENT. 1. *The concession.* (1) "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement?" It is usual for sinners to justify their conduct by the perversion of Scripture. The "command" of Moses applied solely to the manner of the divorce; the *thing* was *permissive* simply. A toleration is strangely converted into a command. (2) The reason of the toleration was the reverse of creditable to the Jews. "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives." The permission was to prevent the cruelty of vicious husbands to their wives, which was murderous. The bill of divorcement had to be drawn and witnesses procured, and afforded time to obviate the effects of sudden impulses of passion. God's permission of lesser evil is evermore to prevent greater. 2. *Its repeal.* (1) This is prefaced by an appeal. "But from the beginning it hath not been so." The appeal here is from Deuteronomy to Genesis; so from Moses still to Moses (cf. Luke xviii. 17, 18). God who gave the law had a right to relax it. (2) But the relaxation applied only to the Jews, and was conceded to them in judgment for the hardness of their hearts; for the original was the more excellent way. (3) This relaxation is, however, now removed. "I say unto you." Here is an authority superior to Moses, equal to God. By Divine authority the law of marriage is now explicitly stated (see ver. 9). Note: The grace of the gospel is superior to that of the Law. The Law considered the hardness of the heart; the gospel cures it (cf. Gal. iii. 19).

III. THE QUESTION OF THE DISCIPLES ON CELIBACY. 1. *They viewed it in the light of selfishness.* "If the case of a man is so," etc. (ver. 10). God said, "It is not good for man to be alone," *i.e.* unmarried; the disciples, blinded by the prejudices of their race, said, "It is not good to marry." 2. *Jesus put it in its true light.* (1) The principle of expediency is admissible. "All men cannot receive this saying;" for there are some who are disqualified for marriage, so that the question for them is settled without their option. (2) Others have not the gift of continence. For such celibacy is not expedient. "It is better to marry than to burn." (3) For those who have this gift celibacy may be expedient in times of persecution and suffering (cf. 1 Cor. vii. 26). (4) It is commendable in those who are celibates "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," viz. that they might walk more closely with God, and be more serviceable to the salvation of men (cf. 1 Cor. vii. 32; ix. 5, 12).—J. A. M.

Vers. 13—15.—*The children of the kingdom.* Here we have the kingdom of heaven, its children, and its King.

I. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. 1. *This is a name for the invisible Church of God.* (1) It is the Catholic Church. It exists throughout the universe, comprising the "whole family" of God at once in heaven and on earth (see Eph. iii. 15). The head-

quarters and enrolment are in heaven (see Heb. xii. 23). (2) It is the one Church of all the ages. It comprises the aristocracy of virtue under every dispensation. Christians from all climes sit down in the kingdom of God with all the prophets of the Mosaic dispensation, and with the patriarchs of still more ancient times (cf. ch. viii. 11; Luke xiii. 28, 29). 2. *This is also a name for the collective Christian Church.* (1) In this restricted sense it does not include the kingdom of Israel or the Mosaic Church. The Baptist spoke of it as future to him; so also did the seventy disciples speak of it as future to them (see ch. iii. 2; iv. 17; x. 7). (2) The gospel dispensation is the kingdom of heaven as bringing heaven near to us. Christ is "the Lord from heaven." The spirit of the gospel is the very spirit of heaven. It brings us also near to heaven. We are spiritually risen with Christ, and sit with him in heavenly places.

II. THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM. 1. *These are the disciples who are childlike.* (1) Those who are without this resemblance have no place in this kingdom (see ch. xviii. 1—4). (2) In the innocence and simplicity of childhood we see in outline what a man will become when born again and created anew. 2. *These are also little children proper.* (1) Such were the "little children" brought to Christ. They were "brought," viz. by their parents. They were so "little" that Jesus "took them into his arms" (see Mark x. 16). They are described as "babes" (see Luke xviii. 15). (2) These he received as belonging to the kingdom of God. There would be no good reason in rebuking the disciples for forbidding such little children to come to him, because childlike grown persons had a right to admission into the kingdom. (3) This blessedly disposes of the dreadful doctrine of non-elect infants' damnation. The parents in this case were in some sense believers in Jesus, else they would not have brought their children to receive his blessing. Yet his grace comes to all infants through his relation to them as the second Adam (see Rom. v. 14, 15; 1 Cor. xv. 22). Christ loves little children, because he loves simplicity and innocence. (4) The prominent place infants have in the gospel is in keeping with the incarnation of innocence itself in the infant Saviour.

III. THE KING OF SAINTS. 1. *Jesus is present to welcome the little ones.* (1) Infants belonged to the Church of the covenant under its more exclusive dispensations of the past. By circumcision they were anciently admitted. (2) Are they now to be excluded from the same Church of the covenant under the more liberal Christian dispensation? Baptism is the circumcision of Christianity (see Col. ii. 11, 12). (3) If little children belonged to the kingdom of heaven in the invisible sense of which the visible Church is the type, why should they not also be welcomed into the typical kingdom? Why should water be forbidden to those who have received the Holy Ghost (cf. Isa. xliv. 3; Acts x. 47)? 2. *Present to rebuke those who would keep them from him.* (1) He who had recently defended the rights of marriage (vers. 3—12) now defends those of children. In rebuking his disciples he commended the parents. (2) There are still those who would keep the little ones from Christ, not only through their irreligion and neglect, but also under false zeal for the dignity of the Lord. (3) Notably those disciples who refuse them baptism because they cannot voluntarily believe. May not those baptized in infancy believe when they grow up? "The strongest believer loves not so much by apprehending Christ, as by being apprehended of him" (cf. Gal. iv. 9; Phil. iii. 12). 3. *He is there to bless them.* (1) The little ones were brought to Jesus expressly for this purpose. The Jews to this day bring their young children to their rabbis for their blessing. The custom seems to have been very ancient (cf. Gen. xlviii. 14, 20). (2) Jesus is not said to have prayed, as he was asked to do (ver. 13); probably because those who asked him had no knowledge of his *Oneness* with the Father. (3) But it is recorded that he "blessed them" (see Mark xi. 16). Little children, then, are capable of receiving blessing from Christ. (4) Let us humble ourselves to the simplicity of the child, that we also may receive the blessing of the Lord.—J. A. M.

Vers. 16—22.—*The perfection of goodness.* To attain to this should be the aim of every rational being. In quest of it we should be willing to do anything and to sacrifice anything. "Who will show us any good?"

I. CHRIST IS THE IMPERSONATION OF PERFECT GOODNESS. 1. *The ruler, in a sense, discerned this.* (1) He addressed him as "good Master" (cf. Mark x. 17; Luke xviii. 18). He also evinced his veneration by "kneeling," as stated in Mark. (2) He

sought to Jesus for instruction as to how he might attain to "eternal life," viz. by finding that perfect goodness of which eternal life is the reward. His question was, in effect, "How may I become like thee?" Note: What the young man calls "eternal life," Christ calls "life," for eternal life is the only true life. Without this, "in the midst of life we are in death." 2. *But he discerned it falsely.* (1) He did not recognize the Divinity of Christ. Hence the question, "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?" Suppose an emphasis on the word *thou*. So he proceeds, "One there is who is good;" equivalent to "None is good save One, even God" (Mark x. 18; Luke xviii. 19). (2) The rebuke here is for ascribing goodness to Christ without discerning his Divinity as its source. The title is not *inapplicable*, for our Lord calls himself the "good Shepherd" (John x. 11). The fault was that it was improperly *applied*. (3) The teaching, then, is that it is vain to seek goodness apart from God. He alone is good essentially, originally, everlastingly. "God" is "good." Therefore we should transfer to God all praise which is given to us. All crowns must lie before his throne (see Jas. i. 17).

II. THE LAW OF GOD IS THE RULE OF GOODNESS. 1. *This is expressed in the instruction of Christ.* (1) "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." This is not irony, but sober truth. To keep the commandments from a principle of loving faith is undoubtedly the way to eternal life. Those who are justified by faith must keep the commandments before they can enter into life and be finally saved. (2) Keeping the commandments must, however, include faith in Jesus Christ (see 1 John iii. 23). Moses gave it amongst his commandments that we should hear the great Prophet to be raised up like unto him. 2. *The ruler observed the commandments in the letter.* (1) The inquiry "Which?" was probably occasioned by the confusion introduced by the scribes, who mixed up the traditions of the elders with the precepts of Moses; and who magnified the ritual observances so as to neglect the moral rules—the "weightier matters of the Law," justice, mercy, and charity. (2) The answer put the moral law in the foremost place. The particular commandments which our Lord selects are but adduced as *instances* of moral, in opposition to ritual, obedience. Nor does he cite the commandments in their order, probably to show, as the Jews themselves express it, "that there is neither first nor last in the Law"—that every precept is so perfect that it matters not whether it be taken first or last. He mentions only the duties of the second table, summing them up, however, with the precept from Lev. xix. 18, for the love of God can only be made manifest by love to our neighbour (cf. 1 John iv. 20, 21). "Our light *burns* in love to God, but it *shines* in love to our neighbour" (Henry). (3) "All these things have I observed" (cf. Phil. iii. 6). 3. *He failed to keep them in the spirit.* (1) "What lack I yet?" He was convinced that he yet needed something. He had too much of that boasting which is excluded by the law of faith, and which excludes from justification (Luke xviii. 11, 14; Rom. iii. 27). (2) The Lord soon discovered to him the covetousness and earthliness of his heart. He found how he over-estimated his obedience when he was unwilling to part with his possessions for the benefit of the poor, and preferred earthly to heavenly treasure. Note: Worldly men prefer heaven to hell; Christians prefer heaven to earth. (3) We cannot become perfect without becoming spiritual. So a man may be free from gross sin, yet come short of the life of grace and glory.

III. THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS THE WAY OF GOODNESS. 1. *It promises eternal life in Christ.* "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." (1) In the school of Christ we learn the doctrine of justification by faith in his sufficient atonement. (2) The connection with that atonement of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. (3) His teaching, moreover, shows us the connection between faith and obedience unto the fulfilling of the Law. 2. *But it exacts an absolute submission.* (1) "Sell all." This was literally required in the case of the ruler. Christ did not lighten his cross, because "he loved him." Note: This reason should sustain us under our crosses. (2) Virtually we have to sell all. We must be willing to part with everything that may hinder our salvation. 3. *Those who refuse submission accept sorrow.* (1) "He went away sorrowful." What an opportunity he missed! The offer to him was to become one of Christ's more intimate disciples; to be specially trained by him in the knowledge of spiritual things, and to preach his gospel (cf. ch. iv. 19; viii. 22; ix. 9; Mark ii. 14; x. 21). (2) Many are ruined by the sin they commit with reluctance.

What would be the ruler's sorrow in the sequel to find his wealth gone and eternal life along with it! Mariners act prudently when, to save their lives, they throw overboard rich bales of silk and precious things.—J. A. M.

Vers. 23—30.—*Possessions and life.* "Behold, *one* came" to Jesus (see ver. 16). Multitudes of poor persons had followed him from the beginning; at length "one" rich man came, and, sad to say, this one retired sorrowful and unsaved. So, turning to his disciples, the Lord said, "Verily I say unto you," etc. Learn—

I. THAT THE SALVATION OF A RICH MAN IS A SPECIAL MIRACLE OF MERCY. 1. *That it is outside the range of ordinary probability is evinced in the case of the ruler.* (1) His circumstances were exceptionably favourable. Observe: (*a*) The seriousness of his inquiry after eternal life. (*b*) The respectfulness of his approach to Christ. (*c*) The excellence of his moral character. (*d*) The affection with which our Lord regarded him. (*e*) The sorrowful struggle of spirit with which he departed. (2) Yet for all this he was overcome by the influence of his "great possessions." (3) The silence respecting him afterwards renders it probable that, in gaining the world, he lost his soul. 2. *That it is outside the range of ordinary probability is declared by Christ.* (1) "It is hard," etc. (ver. 23). And this is emphasized by a "verily." (2) The assertion is strengthened by what follows (ver. 24). "I incline to the opinion that at the time the Redeemer spake this parable, he was with his disciples in one of the public *khans*, there being no other resting-place for them; and there, seeing the people mending their camel-saddles, for which purpose they use a long needle like a straight packing-needle, he pointed to them and said as it were, 'These camels can as soon pass through the eye of those needles as a rich man can enter into the kingdom of God'" (Gadsby). Note: The way to heaven is fitly compared to a needle's eye, which it is hard to hit; and a rich man to a camel—a beast of burden. For he has his riches *from* others, spends them *for* others, leaves them *to* others, and is himself the *carrier*. (3) What our Lord adds does not soften his earlier words (see ver. 26); for it makes the salvation of the rich an utmost effort of omnipotence. 3. *The salvation of the rich is imperilled by the deceitfulness of riches.* (1) It is not riches themselves, but the sordid love of them, that our Lord condemns (cf. Mark x. 24). So, in the bad sense, a man is *rich* in proportion to his *attachment* to worldly possessions. A rich man, according to this definition, cannot be saved. (2) But those who have riches naturally love them and trust them (cf. ch. vi. 21; Col. iii. 5). They tend to increase pride, covetousness, and self-indulgence. They purchase flattery and exclude faithful reprovers. They prejudice the mind against the humbling truths and self-denying precepts of Christ. They increase the number and force of the obstacles which must be broken through (cf. Ps. xlix. 6, 7; lii. 7; 1 Tim. vi. 17). (3) Yet how few see that to be rich is a misfortune! Even when Christ intimated this, his own disciples were "astonished exceedingly" (ver. 25); and he had to "look upon them," penetrating their feeling of astonishment and perplexity, to convince them that such feelings as theirs were the peril of the rich; for they were deceived into the notion that riches gave singular advantages towards salvation. 4. *Still with God the salvation of the rich is possible.* (1) It needs more than human power to wean the heart of man from worldly things. No perfection of science can enable him to discern spiritual things; these are above the natural man. God alone can destroy the love of the world in us. (2) Omnipotence is displayed in grace as well as in nature. God can effectually plead the cause of the rich in the presence of the poor, by pleading the cause of the poor in the presence of the rich (see ver. 21). (3) The possibility is evinced in the examples of Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathæa, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and many more. Man fails when he begins with himself; succeeds, when he begins with God.

II. THAT FOR WHATEVER WE SACRIFICE IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST WE SHALL BE WONDERFULLY REWARDED. 1. *In this present life.* (1) Peter said, "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." The disciples had but little; yet it was their all (cf. Mark xii. 43, 44). (2) Peter speaks of their *giving up all* (ver. 27); Jesus speaks of their *following* him (ver. 28). "To obey is better than to sacrifice." Obedience *includes* sacrifice. "The philosopher forsakes all without following Christ; most Christians follow Christ without forsaking all; to do both is apostolic perfection" (Bengel).

(3) Christ did not estimate the attachment of his disciples to him by the quantity of things they relinquished, but from the mind and intention with which they relinquished them. "And every one that hath left houses," etc., viz. either by giving them up when they could not retain them with a clear conscience, or by refraining from acquiring them, "*for my Name's sake*" (ver. 29; see 2 Cor. viii. 12). (4) The compensation then is "a hundredfold," viz. not in kind, but in spiritual blessings. Here is cent. per cent. multiplied a hundred times. Such, even in this life (see Mark x. 30), is the advantage of the spiritual value gained in this blessed exchange! 2. *In the life to come.* (1) "The regeneration" commences in the millennium. That will be the great day of judgment, or reigning. It will be a theocracy, as in the times of the ancient judges (cf. Isa. i. 26). Irenæus says that the reward of the hundredfold is to happen in the millennium (cf. Isa. xxxii. 1; Dan. vii. 18, 27; ch. xxvi. 29; Acts iii. 20, 21; Rev., xx.). (2) The Lord's glorification is the pattern of human regeneration here; for those who follow him are morally risen with him and resemble him. Hereafter also, for we shall in our regeneration from the power of the grave be in the likeness of his resurrection. So the "redemption of the body" will be the "manifestation of the sons of God" (cf. Luke xx. 36; Rom. viii. 23; 1 John iii. 2). (3) The "regeneration" which commences in the millennium will culminate in the "new heaven and earth" in which the "new creation," under the headship of the second Adam, will be finished. The reward of that glorious state is "life everlasting."—J. A. M.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Natural laws and human infirmities.* The law of marriage must be thought of as fixed for human beings before the Fall. Natural laws are not fixed in view of man's wilfulness and sin. They remain natural laws after man has sinned; but their application and practical working are modified by the new conditions and relations which sin has introduced. God made man male and female. God designed single pairs. God proposed lifelong faithfulness of the wedded pairs. There is no natural provision made for divorce, because such a thing has no place in the natural order. In the Divine idea human society is based on the mutually helpful relation in which one man and one woman may stand. Instability of human society comes when the family bond can be easily broken. The human infirmities which have necessitated modifications of the natural marriage laws are—

I. CRUELTIES. It became necessary for woman to have some defence against man's violence. Natural law makes man and woman equals. They are different; but their faculties and sympathies are relative, and each is head in a way. But sin took first shape as masterfulness; and man, the stronger, took advantage of woman, the weaker, and made her his slave. There had to be adjustment of law to meet this condition and give due protection to the weaker one. "But for the possibility of divorce, the wife would have been the victim of the husband's tyranny; and law—social law—which has to deal with facts—not with what ought to be, but with what is—was compelled to choose between two evils." Woman's lot, even in civilized times, would often be intolerable but for the possibility and the fear of divorce.

II. INFIDELITIES. This subject needs to be touched very wisely in a general audience; and yet there is no subject on which wise words are more pressingly demanded. It is one of the most serious of the mischiefs wrought by sin, that it has loosened men's control of bodily passion. And the mischief is wrought, not in man only, but also in woman. Infidelities make the continuance of natural relations impossible, though the modification of law, which permits divorce, makes no attempt to deliver man or woman from the power of their infirmity.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Varieties in receptiveness.* "All men cannot receive this saying." It is not quite clear to what the term "this saying" refers. It may be the rule laid down by our Lord in ver. 9. It may be the exclamation of the disciples in ver. 10. It may be that our Lord refers generally to marriage, and intends to say that the question of entering into the marriage state is one which each man must settle for himself, according to natural capacity, material circumstances, and cultured disposition. It is one thing to give good and wise counsels; it is quite another thing to receive them and act upon them. It is easy to say, "It is good to marry;" but it is not everybody who can receive the saying.

I. RECEPTIVENESS DEPENDS ON NATURAL DISPOSITION. There is, in this, a marked distinction between men and women. As a rule, by nature, women are receptive, and not critical; men are critical, and not receptive. Sometimes we find the womanly receptiveness in man; but it is a sign of a weak disposition. Strong men only receive on compulsion. Receptiveness may hinder rather than help education; and it prevents activity. He who is satisfied to receive makes little effort to attain. True education deals with natural receptivity, and is anxious about its effective limitation. It makes teaching easy, but too easy. He who can only receive becomes only a crammed storehouse.

II. RECEPTIVENESS DEPENDS ON MORAL DISCIPLINE. While the receptiveness which we have as an element of our natural disposition may prove a perilous weakness, the receptiveness which we gain by self-discipline becomes an effective power in our life. It is a qualifying receptiveness. It is related to the will. It is held in control. The man who is not subject to influence, who cannot be persuaded, who is as a hard field-path into which no seed can sink, is a manifestly undisciplined man, self-centred, self-satisfied—a man who can learn nothing, and grow no better.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The folk who are interested in the children.* It is difficult for us to conceive of the good man who does not love flowers, song, spring-time, and children. We might be quite sure that the "best of men who e'er wore earth about him" loved the children. But in the East all children are kept in the background; female children are despised by their fathers, and even male children are in the women's hands until quite big. So our Lord's interest in children seemed new and strange to his disciples. At this time, his mind was filled with the thought of coming sorrows, and it was relief and comfort to be made to think of simple, guileless childhood. If Jesus honoured the children, it is also true that the children comforted Jesus. Beware of exaggeration in representing Christ's dealings with children. Very few instances are recorded. On one occasion he "set a child in the midst" of the disciples; then there is the incident of the text; and also the "hosannah" of the children at the triumphal entry. Fixing attention on the persons prominent in the incident of the text, see—

I. WHAT THE MOTHERS WANT FOR THEIR CHILDREN. 1. Their physical health. Subtle connection between health and character. Relation of health to success in life. Importance of laying foundations of health in early years. 2. Their mental culture. Age of education; danger of overstrain; and of thinking learning more important than character. 3. Their social position. So they try to secure for them right companions, good society, advantageous connections. 4. Their moral character. This ought to come first. Beginnings of character and piety are reverence, truthfulness, obedience, trustfulness.

II. WHAT DISCIPLES MAY WANT FOR THE CHILDREN. These disciples, in their conduct on this occasion, may represent all who have narrow and limited views of the sphere of God and religion. They wanted these children to run away and play, and not trouble or hinder the Master. Deal with the once-prevailing idea that religion is only the concern of grown-up folk. There has been over-pressure of the idea of "conversion." There is an unfolding into the service of Christ.

III. WHAT THE LORD JESUS WANTS FOR THE CHILDREN. 1. To come to him for their own sakes. And "coming to Christ" is simply this—setting our love upon him. 2. To come to him for their mothers' sakes; because, through them, he can get a gracious influence on the mothers. 3. To come to him for the sake of what he can teach with their help. Bring out the reproofs and lessons, for the disciples, involved in our Lord's act.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The ruler's mistakes.* The assumption that this ruler was a youth has no foundation. The man could not have been a *ruler* if he had been a youth. He must have been in what we should call the prime of life; but he evidently retained something of the impetuousness of youth. His mistakes suggest the impulsive temperament, that readily yields to emotion, and is wont to *act* before it thinks. Our Lord skilfully dealt with individuals. "He needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." He was "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In the ruler's abrupt and impulsive question we may trace three forms of mistake.

I. A MISTAKE ABOUT CHRIST. He applied the word "good" to him, and yet he had no adequate ideas concerning goodness. If he had really meant anything worth meaning, he would have recognized in Christ the infinitely Good One, the Son of God; for none is good save God. This mistake Jesus corrected in two ways. 1. By reference to God. "None is good save one, that is, God." You do not call God good because he *does* good, but because he *is* good. 2. By a severe and searching test, which reveals to the man the imperfectness of his own goodness. He would never be able to get right ideas of God or Christ from himself.

II. A MISTAKE CONCERNING HIMSELF. This took a twofold form. He thought he *was* good; and he thought he could *do* good, if only he was told what to do. Jesus showed him a good thing that he could *not do*; and so set his conscience suggesting, that perhaps he *was* not as good as he had thought. We may think ourselves good while *we* arrange the forms that our goodness shall take; but we may learn our mistake when God arranges the forms for us. The question betrays the man's self-righteous spirit. He is indirectly paying a compliment to *himself*—to his own goodness; or, at any rate, to human goodness, that idol which he worshipped with his whole soul.

III. A MISTAKE CONCERNING THE FUTURE. Feeling himself well provided for in all that concerned this life, he wanted to be as safely and as well off in the next life. He would *inherit* eternal life; he would have it as something coming to him; he wanted as much right to it as he had to his worldly possessions. How much he had to learn! A man's life here "consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesses." A man's wealth is his *character*; that is true of this life, but much more true of the life to come.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*Right attitude towards parents.* "Honour thy father and thy mother." It is significant that the old Law did not say, "Obey thy father and mother," or even "Love thy father and mother." Perhaps we are intended to see that obeying and loving have no *will* necessarily in them. We obey in simple yielding to the force that commands; we love our parents in the animal sort of way that characterizes all young creatures. "Honour thy father" suggests active intelligence, careful estimates, operative will, personal decision. Reverence, and show reverence for, thy father, both because he is thy father, and because of what he is in his fatherliness.

I. RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARDS PARENTS IS THE BEGINNING OF MORALS AND RELIGION. Our father and mother represent the power above us that we first know. We know parents before we know God. And we know God through our parents. He begins life with an almost overwhelming disability who has parents whom he cannot "honour." Honouring includes: 1. Cherishing high thoughts concerning. To a child, father and mother ought to be embodiments of all excellence. 2. Loving dependence on. The confidence that the goodness will be adequate to all emergencies. 3. Perfect response to. Involving the putting of the parents' will before the child's own. 4. Tender care of. Expressed in all thoughtful and self-denying attentions. It may be shown how this attitude prepares the child to gain right thoughts of God, who should be to us our glorified, idealized father and mother; not father only, not mother only, but a Being realizing in himself the perfections of both.

II. RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARDS PARENTS ENSURES OBEDIENCE INSPIRED BY FEELING. Obedience is not just one thing. It is various, according to the motive inspiring it. We should obey our Master from a sense of duty, whether he be gentle or froward, and whether we like to obey or not. But obedience to parents belongs to a higher type of obedience. It is prompted by feeling: it is inspired by love. And it is through the obedience of our parents that we learn true obedience to God.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The hindering power of worldly possessions.* "He went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." "A rich man shall hardly [or, 'with difficulty'] enter into the kingdom of heaven." The figure of the "camel and needle's eye" is a proverbial one, and no precise facts answering to it need be sought for. There are other proverbs very similar. It strikingly expresses that which is almost impossible, but not quite impossible. This sentence is taken from the Koran: "The impious shall find the gates of heaven shut; nor shall he enter there till a camel shall pass through the eye of a needle." Our Lord teaches that the rich man may enter the kingdom, but he

will surely find that his riches will stand in his way, and make it very hard work for him, as they made it hard work for this rich ruler. What is it in worldly possessions that makes them such hindering things?

I. RICHES HAVE A SEPARATING INFLUENCE ON MEN. They tend to put men in classes; those having the riches claiming to be a superior class, and demanding special consideration and treatment. This tends to induce the idea that the way of salvation for rich people ought to be a special provision. The rich man does not care to be saved just as the poor man is. He finds the gospel too levelling. If he cannot have a way of his own, he will have no way. It is difficult for him to realize that God takes no count of riches; and whoever would come to him must come in at the one strait gate, which is big enough to take the man, but not big enough to take anything that he would carry in with him.

II. RICHES HAVE A SATISFYING INFLUENCE ON MEN. They bring with them a sense of security. The rich man can have all he wants, and there will be no future, he thinks, in which he will have any needs that cannot be met. The poor have a basis for religion in their daily need and daily dependence. The rich have no basis for religion. It is their misery, that body, mind, and soul never have any wants. They have got the riches: what more can they want? This kind of feeling provides the gravest of hindrances to entrance into the kingdom.

III. RICHES HAVE A HARDENING INFLUENCE ON MEN. This is most true, most strange, and most sad. It can be illustrated in cases we all know, of self-sacrificing generosity while persons were poor, which changed at once into selfish meanness when wealth came to them. It is that *hardening* which makes it so difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom.—R. T.

Ver. 26.—*Salvation possible because it is God's work.* As the disciples understood their Lord, he seemed to them to make it *impossible* for a rich man to become a Christian; and if a rich man could not be a Christian, who could be? They mistook their Master, who, as an effective Teacher, sometimes stated things very strongly, and withheld the qualifications in order to excite thought. The "immensely difficult" is not the "impossible." The impossible, if you can only reckon upon *human* forces, is not impossible, if you can bring in *Divine* forces. And, in relation to moral salvations, you have to take account of what God can do. "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." This very large and unqualified statement concerning the absolute ability of God has often been misrepresented and misused, because it has been applied to things of which our Lord was not thinking. It is said—God cannot make two things fill one space, or make two and two count five. But these are not "impossibilities;" they are "absurdities," proved such by the conditions of human language. God cannot do what is manifestly absurd in the very statement. Our Lord was speaking strictly of moral possibilities and impossibilities.

I. GOD CAN SAVE RICH MEN, BECAUSE HE CAN TAKE AWAY THEIR RICHES. And so remove their hindrance. Man cannot do this; but all wealth is absolutely in the Divine control. This is forcibly illustrated in the story of Job; all whose worldly possessions take wings and fly away in a single overwhelming day. The rich ruler would not put his possessions away in order to enter the kingdom; but, if it had pleased Christ so to do, he *could* have *taken* them away, and so have given him his opportunity. Many a man has been brought to God by losing the riches in which he had trusted.

II. GOD CAN SAVE RICH MEN BY TAKING THEM AWAY FROM THEIR RICHES. Drawing them away from their confidences. God has power over the minds and souls of men. By his Spirit he can awaken such soul-anxieties that a man may become indifferent to death, put his fingers in his ears, and cry, "What must I do to be saved?" God, by his Spirit, can "convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;" and under that convincement a man will surely be liberated from the enslaving of worldly possessions.—R. T.

Ver. 28.—"*The regeneration.*" This may be but another name for the setting up of the kingdom of heaven. As the apostles were to be directly connected with it, the final "restitution of all things" can hardly be meant. It is usual to refer such expressions to the "second coming of Christ;" but he appears to have had in mind

the starting of the Messianic kingdom at Pentecost. Understanding Christ to be using Eastern figures of speech, we may see his meaning to be simply this—Those who truly and self-sacrificingly follow him shall occupy the chief places of influence in the new kingdom which he proposed soon to establish.

I. THE REGENERATION TREATED AS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM. Christ sat upon the throne of his glory when he ascended into "heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." Then was "all power given to him in heaven and in earth;" and then the glorious work of regenerating the world was initiated. The new creation, to be completed finally in "the restitution of all things," was commenced. The outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the miracles performed by his apostles, the destruction of Jerusalem and of "those his enemies who would not that he should reign over them," and the abolition of the Mosaic economy, were the palpable proofs of his exaltation.

II. THE REGENERATION TREATED AS INDICATING THE MISSION OF THE KINGDOM. The "kingdom" was to be *the* supreme renovating, renewing, regenerating force in the world. The "regeneration" may be taken as the time following on our Lord's resurrection. "1. It was primarily centred in our Lord's own renovated Person; for he then put off the servant form, and put on his immortality. 2. That renovation overspread and included his followers, especially his twelve apostles. By the Pentecostal Spirit they were endowed with power from on high; they entered on possession of the kingdom appointed. 3. The Church was renewed and regenerated from the old to the new dispensation. The types and shadows had departed, the reign of the kingdom of God with power was begun." There is to be a *new birth* for mankind. Christ exalted and living, Christ working through his Church and in the might of his Spirit, is now established as the regenerating force of humanity; and these are the times of the "regeneration."—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*The Christian possession and Christian heritage.* "Shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." St. Peter (1 Epist. i. 4, 9) speaks of "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls;" and of our lively hope of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." We may unduly fix our thoughts on that which we gain now by becoming Christians. But many fail of due appreciation of present blessings, because they are absorbed in anticipation of the good things that are to come. Our Lord had to deal with disciples who were very easily led to think about what they should *get* by being disciples. In this passage he seeks to deliver them from *material* notions of getting, and to help them in forming worthy estimates of the *spiritual* blessings of discipleship.

I. THE SPIRITUAL THINGS A DISCIPLE NOW HAS. Things answering to "houses and lands," and to "wife and children." Man here on earth has two supreme satisfactions—they are found in "things possessed," and in "objects of affection." Discipleship to Christ provides no sort of guarantee for a hundredfold more in *number* of possessions or objects of affection. It does guarantee a hundredfold better in quality. There are answering *soul*-possessions; there are answering *soul*-affections. How firmly St. Paul declares of the Christian, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's"! Riches and objects of affection depend on the faculties wakened in us. Discipleship wakens new and nobler faculties; and these Christ provides for.

II. THE SPIRITUAL THINGS A DISCIPLE EXPECTS. Lest there should be any mistake, our Lord distinctly speaks of the future as higher, nobler, sublimer *life*—"everlasting life." We are in danger of materializing the heavenly, because we can only get apprehensions of it with the aid of sensible figures—"many mansions," "crowns," "harps," "palms." But the apostles help to liberate and raise our thoughts, for they speak of a "crown of *righteousness*," a "crown of *life*," a "crown of *glory*." "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The Christian makes "the best of both worlds."—R. T.

Ver. 30.—*Reversion of present estimates.* "Many that are first shall be last." There is a story of a poor man who, in distant ages, had stood aloof from the sacrifices to

Varuna, the goddess of the waters, but had been eventually signalized by her as her most devoted worshipper—his omission to join in a certain rite having only arisen from the intensity of his heartfelt adoration. So the last proved to be first. There may be a designed allusion to the rich ruler who, in his own estimate stood first, but soon was put last, when he came under the searchings of the Divine Teacher. And there is a more immediate reference to those disciples who bragged about how much they had given up, and assumed their claims to first places in the kingdom. Maybe that, at last, "publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom in front of them."

I. PRESENT ESTIMATES ARE SPOILED BY SELF-CENTREDNESS. Men make themselves their standards; and then easily make themselves better than their neighbours; and put their neighbours low down. Certain phases of religious doctrine encourage self-centredness, and make a man think that *he* is a special favourite of Heaven; and of all disagreeable people, favourites—court favourites and others—are the worst. A man never estimates either himself or others aright until he makes *God* his standard.

II. PRESENT ESTIMATES ARE SPOILED BY JEALOUSIES. Who of us is fully and honourably free from jealousy in forming our estimate of our fellows? How many are, we think, where we ought to be, if only we had our rights? All jealousy-tinged estimates will have to be reversed. Our last may be put first.

III. PRESENT ESTIMATES ARE DEPENDENT ON APPEARANCES. Men are always taken with *showy* gifts. The fluent man is always overpraised. A cynical writer says, but with some truth in his saying, "So, in current literature, we find ourselves in an inverted world, where the halt, and the maimed, and the blind are the magnates of our kingdom; where heroes are made of the sick, and pets of the stupid, and merit of the weak man's nothingness." A wise man avoids fixing men in order and place, as first or last; refuses to have a place for himself, and is content to wait for the Divine appraising.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XX.

Vers. 1—16.—*Parable of the labourers in the vineyard.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.)

Ver. 1.—**For.** The following parable is intended to illustrate the apophthegm at the end of the last chapter, which is repeated almost in the same words at the close, "Many that are first," etc., and "The last shall be first," etc. It taught the apostles a lesson in answer to Peter's question (ch. xix. 27), "What shall we have therefore?" and the primary lesson was that the reward of the kingdom is not of debt, but of grace. There are many difficulties in the parable, which may be better noticed after we have expounded its literal bearing and details. **The kingdom of heaven is like.** That is, what happens in the kingdom of heaven is parallel to the case of a householder, etc. The kingdom of heaven is the Church of Christ, whether militant on earth (when the labourers are hired) or triumphant in heaven (when the reward is bestowed). We may refer to ch. xiii. 24, 45, where an analogous comparison is found. **Early in the morning** (ἅμα πρωΐ); *i.e.* at the end of the last night watch (see on ver. 3), wishing to secure labourers, who at vintage-time were probably in great request. **Vineyard.** The Church is elsewhere so called by our Lord (ch. xxi. 28, 33, etc.), and in the Old Testament (see Ps. lxxx. 8; Isa. v. 1; Jer. xii. 10).

Ver. 2.—**When he had agreed with the labourers.** With those first hired he makes a special agreement for the pay of the day's work; with the others he acts differently. **For a penny a day** (ἐκ δηναρίου τὴν ἡμέραν). The denarius (always translated "a penny" in our version) was a silver coin about equal in value to the French franc, but of course in its buying capacities worth in those days a great deal more. We learn from Tacitus ('Annal.,' i. 17) that it was the usual pay of a Roman soldier. It was equivalent to the Greek drachma, which Tobit (v. 14) offered to Azarias as daily wages. Our rendering of "a penny" conveys a very erroneous impression to unlearned hearers, both in this passage and in other places where it occurs.

Ver. 3.—**The third hour.** It seems that at this time the Jews divided the day, reckoned between sunrise and sunset, into twelve equal parts, the length of these divisions varying according to the season. The day in Palestine at longest consisted of fourteen European hours twelve minutes, and at shortest of nine hours forty-eight minutes, so that the difference between the

longest and shortest division of the so-called Jewish "hour" was twenty-two minutes. It is usual to consider the Hebrew day as lasting from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., the sixth hour corresponding to our noon, the first hour being 7 o'clock and the third 9 a.m. This estimate, though not absolutely correct, is near enough to the fact to serve all expository purposes. The four periods mentioned in the parable are quarters of the working day, in which a proportional part of the day's wages might be earned. **Standing idle in the market-place.** The Greek agora, the Roman forum, and the Eastern market-place, was the usual place where idlers and expectant labourers gathered together. Such a scene may often nowadays be witnessed in Oriental cities, and indeed at our own docks, and in many of our small country towns. It must be supposed that the labourers now hired either were not present when the householder first went forth, or that they had then rejected his offer, but now thought better of it. And so, in the case of the others later on.

Ver. 4.—**Ye also**; implying that he had already set some to work at fixed wages. **Whatsoever is right** (δίκαιον); just and fair. He offers these no definite sum as remuneration, assuring them only that he will deal equitably with them; *i.e.* doubtless, according to their view, that he will give them three quarters of a day's wages, paying them *pro rata*. But at the end he treats them much more generously. Lightfoot notes that the Talmudists had tracts on the payment and regulation of labourers, and in their canons distinguished between being hired for a day and for some hours. **They went their way**, quite satisfied to leave their remuneration to the householder, with whom probably they were acquainted.

Ver. 5.—**Sixth and ninth hour.** At midday and 3 p.m., which would give respectively about half a day's and a quarter of a day's work.

Ver. 6.—**The eleventh hour**; the hour before sunset, say about 5 p.m., leaving only one hour for work, when it would be most unusual to engage labourers. **Idle.** The word is omitted in some manuscripts. There is some reproach in the master's question. Where were they earlier in the day, when he was hiring labourers for his vineyard? Why were they not in the market-place, like their comrades, looking out for employment? Such questions, like many others in the parable, are left unanswered. We see from the universal use of the term, "the eleventh hour," to express the close of the day of grace, how widely has prevailed the interpretation of the parable which applies it to the various stages of the life of the individual. (See on this below.)

Ver. 7.—**No man hath hired us.** A poor excuse, because, had they been at their post earlier, work would have been offered them. **Go ye also into the vineyard.** The householder accepts the excuse, and, now that they are desiring to labour, engages them as the others, promising to give them what is fair. Their present willingness seems to compensate for their previous tardiness. The clause, "whatsoever is right," etc., is omitted by some good manuscripts, the Vulgate, and other versions. Thus no mention of reward is made to these—they were satisfied by being employed at all.

Ver. 8.—**When even was come.** According to Mosaic Law (Deut. xxiv. 15), a hired labourer was to be paid his wages at sunset, *i.e.* at the twelfth hour. **Steward.** The lord himself is said to have hired the labourers, but he commits the payment of them to his steward, as his representative, to whom such matters of detail were entrusted. **From the last.** Those last hired were first to receive their hire (τὸν μισθόν), that which it had been agreed to pay them, in one case "a penny," in the others "that which was just." Why the last are rewarded first is one of the difficulties of the parable. To say that this is done because in their one hour's work they did more than all the rest, is a solution which is supported by nothing in the story itself. It should, in the primary interpretation, rather be conceived as depending on the lord's good pleasure.

Ver. 9.—**They received every man a penny.** The steward, of course, was acting according to his master's instructions (though nothing is said of any previous orders on the subject) when he thus bounteously remunerated those that had been hired at the eleventh hour. Some commentators have endeavoured to show that the "penny" allotted to each set differed greatly in value; but this is an unwarrantable conjecture, and it is indispensable to the purport of the parable that the wages should be alike to all.

Ver. 10.—**They supposed that they should have received more.** The text varies between πλεῖον (*plus*, Vulgate) and πλείονα, the former implying "a greater sum" than the stated hire, the latter hinting indefinitely at "more" things, more in number. Seeing the liberal payment given to the others, they expected some increase in the wages offered to themselves, or an additional remuneration of some kind.

Ver. 11.—**They murmured.** They complained aloud of the injustice to which, as they thought, they were subjected. This is one of those traits in the parable which,

whatever its spiritual meaning may be, is most natural and life-like.

Ver. 12.—**These last have wrought but one hour**; μίαν ὥραν ἐποίησαν: *una hora fecerunt* (Vulgate); *have spent but one hour* (Revised Version). The verb ποιεῖν is used with nouns of time in the sense of "spend," "pass," as in Ruth ii. 19 (Septuagint); Acts xv. 33, etc. They speak of the late workers contemptuously (οὗτοι οἱ ἔσχατοι), "these fellows who are last." They do not allow that they laboured—they "made" one hour nominally. **Equal unto us.** Bengel notes, "Envy does not demand more for itself, but wishes that others should have less." Their complaint is that others who have worked less are not docked of their wages in due proportion. **Burden and heat of the day**; τὸ βάρος τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τὸν καύσωνα: *the burden of the day and the scorching heat* (Revised Version). The latter word is used for the hot dry wind which, blowing from the east, was fatal to vegetation and prejudicial to human comfort, if not to life. The remonstrance of these men may be compared with that of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv. 29, 30). They show somewhat of the spirit of the apostles when they asked, "What shall we have therefore?" (ch. xix. 27).

Ver. 13.—**He answered one of them.** The Lord condescended to show, not to all the labourers, but to one of them—the ringleader probably—the futility of the ground of his murmur. Christ often explains himself to his friends, while he refuses further elucidation to enemies and the hardened. **Friend** (ἑταῖρε). Not a term of affection, or special good will, but one of indifference, addressed to an inferior. It was the word used to Judas (ch. xxvi. 50) when he came to betray his Lord, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" **I do thee no wrong.** The labourer had really nothing to complain of in strict justice; he had received the full amount of the stipulated wages. But he very naturally felt that he had not been fairly dealt with. He would say to himself, "If one hour's work, and that in the cool of the evening, is deemed worth a penny, surely a whole day's labour, in the full heat of the sun, ought to deserve a higher remuneration." The difficulty here must be felt by every one. Nor is the master's solution perfect; it would scarcely commend itself to the dissatisfied murmurer. And doubtless it is not intended to be complete.

Ver. 14.—**Take that thine is**; *thine own.* Take your agreed wages, and go; there is nothing more to be said. **I will** (θέλω δέ) **give**; *but it is my will to give.* The lord defends his conduct on the ground that such is his will and pleasure. By it he injures nobody, he benefits many; who should presume to censure him?

Ver. 15.—**With mine own**; ἐν τοῖς ἐμοῖς: *in the case of what is mine own.* These words are omitted by the Vulgate, which has, *Aut* (ἢ) *non licet mihi quod volo facere?* **Is thine eye evil?** The evil eye is here expressive of envy, as Prov. xxviii. 22. The Latin word *invidia*, Cicero informs us ('Tusc. Disp.,' iii. 9), "ductum est a nimis intuendo fortunam alterius." For *nimis* Bentley conjectures *limis*, "with sidelong glances." The idea is the same, envy being indicated by the look of the eye. **Good**; generous. Why should you view with disfavour my liberality? The master says no more; he gives no further account of his determination.

Ver. 16.—**So the last, etc.** The parable concludes with the saying with which it began (ch. xix. 30), but with some inversion in the order of the words. There it was, "Many first shall be last; and last first;" here it is, **The last shall be first, and the first last.** The circumstances of the parable necessitate this change. The last called were first paid, and were equal to the first in recompense; the first were behind the others in time of payment, and in the spirit with which they received their wages; they were also treated with less generosity than the others. **For many be called . . . chosen** (ch. xxii. 14). This clause is omitted by ℵ, B, and other manuscripts; but it has good authority, and is most probably genuine. It is added in explanation or justification of the preceding statement. From not seeing its applicability, and regarding it as opposing the intention of the parable, some transcribers and some editors have expunged it from the text. But it would seem that Christ takes occasion from the particular case in the parable to make a general statement, that not all who are called would receive reward, because many would not answer the call, or would nullify it by their conduct; not, as Theophylact says, that salvation is limited, but men's efforts to obtain it are feeble or negative. In other words, many outwardly members of the kingdom of God are unworthy of, and shall not share in, its spiritual blessings. **Chosen.** Many, that is virtually all, are chosen; but there is an election within the election, and they only who are of this inner circle shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

The interpretation of the parable.—As in all parables, so here, we are to regard the general scope, and not lay too much stress on details, which often, while adding to the vividness of the picture, contribute nothing to its spiritual side. The explanation of this difficult parable has greatly exercised

the minds of commentators in all ages of the Church, and various have been the views with which its bearing has been regarded. We may, however, select two expositions which seem to embody most of the suggestions advanced, and are in themselves most reasonable. The first considers it as of individual application—the call of God coming to the soul at different ages of life. Thus the householder is God, the market-place the world, the vineyard the visible Church, the labourers are men who have to do their work therein, the steward is Christ, who superintends and rewards the faithful workers. The hours of the day represent the various periods of men's life at which they hear and answer God's call to a closer walk with him, when, as modern theology terms it, they are converted. Some, at the first hour, from their very infancy, live a pure and holy life; some at the third hour, in early youth, begin to serve God effectually; others at midday, in full maturity; others at the ninth hour, when old age is creeping on them; and lastly others obey the call only at the eleventh hour, at the very approach of death. And all who have laboured at all, without regard to the length of service, receive the "penny," *i.e.* not some indefinite temporal benefit, but eternal life, which in a general sense (without considering the difference of degrees which shall exist) is the same for all. The apparent unfairness of this recompense, if we take a merely human view of the transaction, is obvious. They who have lived a life of holiness, and they who have given to God only the dregs of their ill-spent days, receive the same salvation. The difficulty is removed in two ways. We may say that the capacity for receiving and enjoying the reward depends on the recipient, and that what to one would be infinite bliss and satisfaction, to another would offer far inferior enjoyment. Or we may take refuge in the mysteriousness of God's arrangements, and hold that the considerations in accordance with which God apportions his rewards are known only to him, and are truly, and are intended to be, beyond human understanding. Further, if the hours represent the stages of human life at which Christians are called, surely, to make the parable concinnous, they ought to be the *same* persons who are invited on each occasion, not different ones. We should be told, not that the householder found *others* wanting work, and sent all thus found into the vineyard; but that some of those called at the various hours refused the work and scoffed at his offer, while others after a time accepted it, and at the approach of the night all the idle remnant consented to labour, thankful at last to win wages for little trouble. But the parable says nothing of all this, and would need much alteration to make it speak so. There is another difficulty which has to be met, if the above interpretation is adopted. How are we to explain the murmuring of the discontented labourers? There can be no envy and displeasure in heaven. It is not conceivable that any who have obtained the gift of eternal life should be dissatisfied with their reward or jealous of others. This is not a mere accessory which is outside the spirit of the story, and adds no item to its mystical signification; it is really the leading feature, and the householder's own interference and reproof are based entirely on this behaviour of the first called. If the "penny" signifies eternal life, and the labourers are all the called, there is no satisfactory explanation of this part of the parable. The murmur is heard after the reception of the reward, and is censured accordingly; these things could not be found in the Church triumphant; none can murmur there; if they did feel envy and discontent, they would not be worthy of a place in the kingdom. Therefore another interpretation must be advanced which will allow the proper importance to this detail of the parable. The only one that does this is that which gives a national, not simply an individual, bearing to the story. According to this exposition, it applies to the calling of the Jews and the Gentiles, though there are still particulars which do not entirely or without some violence suit the application. The "penny" which all receive is the favour of God, the privileges that crown and reward the members of his kingdom. God's ancient people were first called to work in his vineyard. The various hours of the day cannot be accurately explained. Many interpreters follow St. Gregory in defining the first hour as extending from Adam to Noah, the third from Noah to Abraham, the sixth from Abraham to Moses, the ninth from Moses to the coming of Christ, the eleventh from the coming of Christ to the end of the world. During all the day, up to the eleventh hour, the call was confined to the Jews and their progenitors; in the eleventh hour the Gentiles are called, and, accepting the call, receive the same privileges as the Jews. It is better to forego any attempt to interpret the various hours and the various sets of labourers definitely, except to observe that the first called, with whom a covenant was made, plainly represent the Jews, the people called under the covenant of works, who were to be rewarded according to their service; the other workers are not paid stipulated wages; they receive ("I will give") reward of free grace in accordance with God's inscrutable appointment. That the Jews murmured at the admission of the

Gentiles to the kingdom of God and the Father's favour, we are taught in many places. The discontent of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son is a case in point. So in Acts xiii. 45, 46, the Jews are filled with envy that the Word should be spoken to and accepted by heathens, and St. Paul (1 Thess. ii. 16) complains that the Jews forbade him and his fellow-apostles "to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." Our Lord looks forward to and prepares his disciples for this envious and ungenerous behaviour, as he continually teaches that the gospel is for all men everywhere, confined to no people or country, but free as the air of heaven or the light of the all-fostering sun. These Gentiles are the last in time, but by their willing service and obedience in the faith are made first; while God's ancient people, once the first, become by their jealousy and hatred of others the last. "There (*ἐκεῖ*) shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke xiii. 28, 29). This momentous change in the relation of the peculiar people to the rest of the world was thus foretold and prepared for. And the lesson ends with the mournful fact, read by the eye of the Omniscient, that though virtually all the Jews were called, yet but a small remnant will accept the gospel—the elect of grace, a little flock. By this parable, regarded in its primary application as a reply to Peter's question (ch. xix. 27), "What shall we have therefore?" the apostles are warned that they are not to expect as their due something supereminent over those called later than themselves; that the reward is not of merit, but of free grace. This last thought pervades the whole similitude, and must be borne carefully in mind, whether we take the individual, or the national, or any other mixed interpretation.

Vers. 17—19.—*Third and fuller prediction of Jesus' sufferings and death.* (Mark x. 32—34; Luke xviii. 31—34.)

Ver. 17.—**Going up.** This is the usual expression for travelling to the capital, and was particularly appropriate to a journey to Jerusalem, which was set among hills. This last journey of the Redeemer was indeed a steep ascent, the end of which was Calvary. **Took** (*παρέλαβε, took to himself*) . . . **apart** (*κατ' ἰδίαν*). He was accompanied by many followers, but what he had now to impart was not intended to be divulged to all, but was reserved for the chosen twelve. The mass could not have heard it without offence. **In the way.** The Vulgate omits these words. The Revised Version, on good authority, alters the received order, reading, *and in the way he said unto them.* Thus Christ prepared the apostles for the coming time of trial, after they had shown fuller faith in his Godhead.

Ver. 18.—**Behold.** This exclamation would seem to indicate that the events predicted were very near at hand, as it were, already in sight. **Shall be betrayed;** *παραδοθήσεται: shall be delivered;* the same word as in the next verse. God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32). The special agent of this betrayal is not here named. Of his future crime, Judas, one of the twelve, had probably no thought, the devil not having yet put it into his heart. **The chief priests** (see on ch. xvi. 21). **Shall condemn him.** This was the act of the Sanhedrin, who could doom, but could not execute (John xviii. 31). The announcement of his death and resurrection had already been made at least twice before—once after Peter's great confession (ch. xvi. 21), and again at the Transfiguration (ch. xvii. 12, 22; Mark ix. 9, 12).

Ver. 19.—**The Gentiles.** Pilate and the Romans (ch. xxvii. 2). This fact would show the treatment he was to expect, and the death he was to die. **To mock, and to scourge** (see ch. xxvii. 26, 28—30). **To crucify.** This is the first time that Jesus distinctly announced his death by crucifixion. The fact of his death he had impressed upon his apostles, but the mode had not been mentioned; such an unexpected, awful, and ignominious close was incredible, and needed special preparation ere it could be received as true. Intimations, indeed, of such a death had been given darkly, when his disciples were told that they must take up the cross and follow him, or when he spoke of being "lifted up" like the serpent in the wilderness (John iii. 14); but his words were not understood; they fell upon ears prejudiced to a certain erroneous conviction, which events alone could eradicate. **He shall rise again** (see on ch. xvi. 21). It seems to us almost incredible that, after all that Christ said here and elsewhere, his resurrection should have come upon his followers as a surprise which they could not believe without tangible proof. But when we read of their dulness and unbelief, we are constrained to admire the candour and sincerity of narrators, who record such facts to their discredit without evasion or apology. As St. Luke says, "They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid

from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."

Vers. 20—28.—*Ambitious request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee.* (Mark x. 35—45.)

Ver. 20.—**Then.** The incident seems to have arisen from the promise of the twelve thrones in ch. xix. 28, and is significant as showing how utterly misunderstood was the true nature of the Messianic kingdom. **The mother of Zebedee's children.** The mother of James and John was named Salome (ch. xxvii. 56 compared with Mark xv. 40; xvi. 1); she had left her husband Zebedee (Mark i. 20) in Galilee (unless, as is more probable from the terms in which she is introduced, he was now dead), and followed Jesus in the band of holy women who attended on him and ministered to him of their substance. Some have thought that she was the sister of the Virgin Mary, so interpreting John xix. 25. St. Mark makes the two apostles present their own request; and doubtless they put their mother forward, coming with her to the presence of Jesus, and using her agency in this somewhat delicate matter. Our evangelist was present on the occasion, and his precision may be relied on in this detail. **Worshipping** him. Making the customary prostration before a superior. **A certain thing** (τι). She did not at first make any definite request, but endeavoured to get Jesus to promise to grant her what she asked. According to St. Mark, the sons say plainly, "We would that thou shouldest do for us whatever we shall desire." Thus Bathsheba addressed David, "I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay" (1 Kings ii. 20). Salome is plainly intending to ask some great thing.

Ver. 21.—**What wilt thou?** Jesus will make no unconditional promise; he compels her to formulate her petition. **Grant;** εἰπέ: *command.* **These my two sons.** She points to them, as they stood or knelt behind her. **May sit . . . in thy kingdom.** The right and left hand would be the places occupied by those next to the sovereign in dignity and consideration. There is here no thought of St. Peter's pre-eminence (comp. 1 Kings ii. 19; 2 Chron. xviii. 18; Ps. xlv. 9; cx. 1). The petition was urged at this moment, because it was felt that a great crisis was at hand. This visit to Jerusalem must have momentous results; here Jesus was about to set up his throne; now was the moment to secure the highest places in his court. He had announced his death; he had also announced his glory; they balanced one declaration against the other, and seized on that which was most consonant to their national prejudices and their own ambitious views. Probably they interpreted the unintelligible resurrection to mean the establishment of the kingdom of Messiah (Luke xix. 11). If this was imminent, no time was to be lost in making their claims known. So thought the "sons of thunder," and acted with energy and haste.

Ver. 22.—**Ye know not what ye ask.** Jesus addresses, not the mother, but the two brothers who had prompted and virtually made the request. They indeed merited a rebuke for their preposterous demand; but the Saviour deals mildly with them. They had spoken ignorantly, perhaps fancying that some favour might be shown to them on the ground of their relationship to the Virgin Mary, or because of their nearness to Jesus, and certainly not in the least realizing the nature of the kingdom, the qualifications of its inheritors, or the difficulties that have to be surmounted by those who would win eminent positions therein. Things that we deem most desirable would often be the very worst for our spiritual progress; and in praying for really good things, we are apt to forget to count the cost we must pay for their attainment. Jesus sets before the ambitious brethren the obstacles that would meet them. **Are ye able to drink of the cup?** Joy and sorrow, blessing and affliction, in Holy Scripture are often denoted under the metaphor of a cup (comp. Ps. xi. 6; xxiii. 5; Isa. li. 17; Jer. xxv. 15). Here the cup signifies the internal, mental, and spiritual sufferings which Christ endured (ch. xxvi. 39, 42). **That I shall drink of;** ὃ ἐγὼ μέλλω πίνειν: *which I am about to drink;* or am purposing to drink. Christ expresses his voluntary intention of suffering bitterly, and asks if they are prepared to do the same. **To be baptized,** etc. The baptism is significant of the external pains and persecutions, in the sea of which he was to be sunk (comp. Ps. lxix. 2, 15). The cup and the baptism adumbrate the two sacraments by which we are made one with Christ. Many of the best manuscripts, the Vulgate and other versions, omit this last clause, and the corresponding one in the following verse; and many modern editors, with the Revised Version, expunge it also. It is supposed to have been introduced from the parallel passage in St. Mark. *There* it is undoubtedly genuine; so we have good warrant to believe that our Lord spoke the words, whether St. Matthew really reported them or not. **We are able.** They came forward now and answered in simplicity, not understanding that to which they pledged themselves. They loved their Master, they knew that trials awaited him, and they were willing to share his lot. Ere long they were put to the proof, and in the end came out victorious.

Ver. 23.—**Ye shall indeed drink**, etc. Jesus accepts their venture of faith, and prophesies its fulfilment. St. James first shared in Christ's baptism of blood, being murdered by Herod (Acts xii. 2). He was a martyr in will and deed. St. John did not, indeed, undergo a violent death, but he stood by the cross and felt his Master's sufferings; he lived a long life of persecution, banishment, and distress; he saw all his companions drop off one by one, till in extreme old age he was left solitary, with nothing to comfort him but the memory of vanished years, and the hope of an eternal future. Truly he was a martyr in will, if not in deed. The story that he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil by Nero's command, and that, coming forth unhurt, he was afterwards banished to Patmos, is one which, except as regards the banishment, has not been accepted by modern criticism. The event is mentioned by Tertullian ('De Præscript.,' xxxvi.), Jerome ('Adv. Jovin.,' i. 26; and 'Comm. in Matt.' xx. 27), and is commemorated in the Church Calendar on May 6, under the title of "S. Joh. ante Port. Lat.;" but it appears to have been a legend that first appeared in Tertullian's work, and was copied from him by other writers without examination. **Is not mine to give, but** it shall be given to them **for whom** (ἀλλ' *οἷς*) **it is prepared.** The Authorized Version inserts δοθήσεται; the Revised, "But *it is for them* for whom it hath been prepared." The Vulgate has, *Non est meum dare vobis, sed quibus paratum est a Patre meo.* Probably ἀλλά here is equivalent to εἰ μή, as in ch. xvii. 8 and Mark ix. 8, and means "except," "unless." The Lord does not mean that he was not able to give it, if so he thought fit, or that the boon was solely at his Father's bestowal, not his (which he might have said, speaking in his human nature). What he affirms is this: The prize is awarded, not by favour or on any earthly considerations, but by absolute justice, and only to those who prove themselves worthy to receive it. Christ assigns to the Father the revelation of mysteries and the election to eternal life (see ch. xi. 26; xvi. 17). *It is prepared; it hath been prepared* (ch. xxv. 34), according to certain impartial laws ordained by God, who is no respecter of persons. "The throne," says St. Bernard, "is the price of toils, not a grace granted to ambition; a reward of righteousness, not the concession of a request."

Ver. 24.—**Were moved with indignation against** (περί); *concerning.* "The ambition of one creates envy in others who partake of the same feeling" (I. Williams). The displeasure of the ten arose from their sharing in the ambitious desires which had prompted the request of the brothers. Peter does not appear prominently here, as guarding the position which Romanists assign to him.

Ver. 25.—**Called them** unto him. The two had stood apart when they made their request, but the ten had overheard it, or judged of its nature from Christ's answer and their own feelings. Jesus now gathers them all round him, and gives them a lesson which they all needed, first, concerning worldly greatness and pre-eminence, and secondly (ver. 26), concerning Christian greatness and pre-eminence. **Ye know.** He appeals to common experience. **Exercise dominion over them**; *i.e.* over the Gentiles. Κατακυριεύουσιν, *lord it over*—significant of an absolute and oppressive domination. **Exercise authority upon them**; *i.e.* over the Gentiles (κατεξουσιάζουσιν); use authority harshly and severely. The heathen, when they are raised to pre-eminence, employ their power cruelly and in order to gain their own ends and purposes, and aspire to superiority only with such objects in view. Such ambition is essentially a heathen passion, and wholly alien from the spirit of Christ.

Ver. 26.—**It shall not be so among you.** There is good authority for reading "is" instead of "shall be." The new order of things was already prepared. In Messiah's kingdom a contrary rule holds good. There the governors rule solely for the good of the flock, with no self-seeking, and serving no private interests. **Whosoever will be** (ὃς ἐὰν θέλῃ . . . γενέσθαι: *whosoever would fain become*) **great among you . . . minister** (διάκονος). Taking for granted that there will be ranks and gradations of office in the Church, Christ lays down the rule that men become governors therein in order that they may serve their brethren, be the ministers of those who are subject to them. So the pope, in his official documents, with a verbally proper humility, terms himself, "Servus servorum Dei."

Ver. 27.—**Whosoever will be** (θέλῃ . . . εἶναι) **chief** (*first*, πρῶτος) . . . **servant** (*bond-servant*, δοῦλος). The characteristic of the Christian ruler should be humility. Christ enforces the teaching of the previous verse more emphatically by altering the terms in which it was stated. "Great" now becomes "first;" "minister," "slave." Of these two last words the former would imply rather occasional service, to meet some temporary call; the latter, the regular business of a slave bound to his master at all times. We do not gather from this passage that the Christian minister, called by God, is to take his doctrine from his congregation, or to be directed by them in his labours; but he is to devote time, talents, faculties, to the good of his flock, to spend and be spent in their

service, to let no private interests or pursuits interfere with his manifold duties to those whom he oversees. The same sentiment is found in ch. xxiii. 11.

Ver. 28.—**Even as.** Christ adduces his own example as a pattern of profound humility. **To minister.** By his incarnation Christ assumed the lowliest life of man. He took upon himself the form of a servant, and was ever active in ministering to others' wants, going about doing good, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, casting out demons; always accessible, sympathetic, merciful; never weary of teaching, however fatigued in body; a servant to the race which he came to save. **A ransom for many;** λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν: *instead of many.* The crowning example of his humility is that he gave his life as a ransom for the souls of men. This is the atonement, the sacrificial act, which (as the Mosaic sacrifices did in a partial and temporary manner) reconciled God and man. Whatever may be the way in which this atonement acts on the Divine mind, the expression here shows that it was vicarious and propitiatory, energizing, not by example, as an effort of superhuman self-denial, courage, and patience, but by an inherent power, as mysterious as it is efficacious. We can only say that, being the act of one who is God, its effects must necessarily be incomprehensible and infinite. The difficulties that beset this doctrine are increased by the fact that Jesus himself says little about the atoning nature of his sufferings and death—a topic which would not at this time have been properly received by friends or enemies, the former refusing to credit his approaching death, the latter being totally unable to conceive how such death could supersede Jewish sacrifices and reconcile the whole world to God (Sadler). Christ certainly died for all, as St. Paul says, "He gave himself a ransom for all (ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων)" (1 Tim. ii. 6), but all do not accept the offered salvation; hence arise the two expressions, "all" and "many," referring to the same object; "not," as an old Father says, "that salvation is limited, but men's efforts to obtain it are limited." The same expression was used by our Lord at the Last Supper, when he said, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (ch. xxvi. 28). A comparison of the passages in which the death of Christ is connected with the salvation of men would show a similar interchange of terms, depending on the view which the writer is taking of the doctrine, whether an objective one or a subjective. In the former case we may cite Rom. v. 15; 2 Cor. v. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 John ii. 2; in the latter, Rom. iii. 25, 26; Eph. v. 2.

Vers. 29—34.—*Healing of two blind men at Jericho.* (Mark x. 46—52; Luke xviii. 35—43.) The miracle narrated in this passage is common to the three synoptists, but with some remarkable differences, not one of them agreeing altogether in details. St. Matthew speaks of two blind men, St. Luke and St. Mark of one only, and the latter mentions this one by name as Bartimæus. St. Matthew and St. Mark make the miracle performed as Jesus quitted Jericho; St. Luke assigns it to the approach to the city. Thus the number of the cured and the locality of the miracle are alike variously stated. It is an easy solution to say, with St. Augustine, Lightfoot, and Greswell, that two, or perhaps three, distinct facts are here related; and it is not absolutely impossible, though altogether improbable, that in the same locality, under identical circumstances, like sufferers made the same request, and received the same relief in the same manner. But we are not driven to this extravagant hypothesis; and the unity of the narrative can be preserved without doing violence to the language of the writers. As to the number of the blind men, we have seen the same discrepancy in the case of the demoniacs at Gadara solved by supposing that one of the two was the more remarkable and better known than the other. Hence, in this incident, the tradition followed by some of the synoptists preserved the memory of this one alone, who may have become known in the Christian community as a devoted follower of Jesus, the other passing into obscurity and being heard of no more. Another hypothesis is that a single blind man first addressed Christ as he entered Jericho, but was not cured at that time. Jesus passed that night in the city at the house of Zacchæus (Luke xix. 1—10); and on the morrow, when leaving Jericho, was again entreated by the blind man, who meantime had been joined by a companion, and healed them both. There are other solutions offered, *e.g.* that there were two Jerichos—an old and a new town—and that one blind man was healed as they entered one city, and the other as they left the other; or that the term rendered "was come nigh" (Luke xviii. 35) might mean "was nigh," and might therefore apply to one who was leaving as well as to one entering the city. But we weary our-

selves in vain in seeking to harmonize every little detail in the Gospel narratives. No two, much less three, independent witnesses would give an identical account of an incident, especially one which reached some of them only by hearsay. Inspiration extends not to petty circumstances, and the credibility of the gospel depends not on the rectification of such minutiæ.

Ver. 29.—Jericho. The Lord was on his way to Jerusalem to meet the death which he was willing to undergo, and to win the victory which he was by this path to accomplish. His route lay through Jericho, as the march of his forerunner Joshua had led. Joshua had set forth to conquer the promised land; Jesus sets forth to win his promised inheritance by the sword of the Spirit. "The upland pastures of Peræa were now behind them," says Dr. Geikie, speaking of the approach to Jericho ('The Life of Christ,' ii. 384), "and the road led down to the sunken channel of the Jordan, and the 'divine district' of Jericho. This small but rich plain was the most luxuriant spot in Palestine. Sloping gently upwards from the level of the Dead Sea, 1350 feet under the Mediterranean, to the stern background of the hills of Quarantana, it had the climate of Lower Egypt, and displayed the vegetation of the tropics. Its fig trees were pre-eminently famous; it was unique in its growth of palms of various kinds; its crops of dates were a proverb; the balsam plant, which grew principally here, furnished a costly perfume, and was in great repute for healing wounds; maize yielded a double harvest; wheat ripened a whole month earlier than in Galilee, and innumerable bees found a paradise in the many aromatic flowers and plants, not a few unknown elsewhere, which filled the air with odours and the landscape with beauty. Rising like an amphitheatre from amidst this luxuriant scene, lay Jericho, the chief place east of Jerusalem, at seven or eight miles distant from the Jordan, on swelling slopes, seven hundred feet above the bed of the river, from which its gardens and groves, thickly interspersed with mansions, and covering seventy furlongs from north to south, and twenty from east to west, were divided by a strip of wilderness. The town had had an eventful history. Once the stronghold of the Canaanites, it was still, in the days of Christ, surrounded by towers and castles. A great stone aqueduct of eleven arches brought a copious supply of water to the city, and the Roman military road ran through it. The houses themselves, however, though showy, were not substantial, but were built mostly of sun-dried bricks, like those of Egypt; so that now, as in the similar case of Babylon, Nineveh, or Egypt, after long desolation, hardly a trace of them remains." **A great multitude.** A vast crowd of pilgrims, bound for Jerusalem to keep the Passover, accompanied Jesus and his disciples. The number of people that this great festival attracted to the central place of worship seems to us incredibly large. Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' vi. 9. 3) reckons them at three millions. Doubtless our Lord was followed by many of those whom he had benefited, and others whom he had won by his teaching; and these, at any rate, would witness the ensuing miracle.

Ver. 30.—**Two blind men.** St. Matthew is doubtless accurate in this statement. Tradition might easily drop one of the sufferers in the course of time, but it is not likely to have multiplied one into two. These sufferers had heard of the miracles of healing performed by Jesus in his various circuits, and especially of the late cure at Jerusalem of one born blind, and they were ready to believe in his power and to profit by his mercy. **Heard.** The beggars (Mark x. 46), debarred from sight, had their attention aroused by the tread of numerous feet, and the voices of the excited crowd, and naturally asked the bystanders to tell them what it all meant. When they heard that Jesus was there, the hope of relief immediately rushed into their mind. **Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!** "O Lord" is only the usual respectful address of an inferior to one in higher station; but to call on Jesus as "Son of David" was virtually to acknowledge him to be the Messiah, who, as old prophets foretold, was to open the eyes of the blind (Isa. xxix. 18; xxxv. 5). The same cry had been raised by the blind men who were cured earlier in the ministry (ch. ix. 27), and by the Syro-Phœnician woman (ch. xv. 22, where see note). How these men had learned the truth we know not; they could not see or read for themselves; their faith must have come by hearing, and the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Ver. 31.—**Rebuked them, because** (*ἵνα, in order that*) **they should hold their peace.** The motive of the crowd, in thus silencing the blind men, has been explained in two ways—either they grudged that Christ should be addressed by the high title of "Son of David;" or they desired to spare him unseemly importunity and unreasonable interruption in his journey. As the multitude show no signs of hostility at this time, the latter suggestion seems most probable. **They cried the more.** The attempted check only made them more earnest in their entreaty. The opportunity now offered might never present itself again. The

officious interference of unsympathizing bystanders was at once brushed aside. They could attract Christ's attention only by their passionate cry, and this they continued to utter with renewed energy. Faith resists opposition and triumphs over all impediments.

Ver. 32.—**Jesus stood still.** He acknowledged the title of "Son of David," and, as the blind men could not follow him, he stopped his progress; their perseverance won his acceptance; he was ready to listen to their appeal and to grant their request. **Called them.** The gracious summons left them in no doubt as to the happy issue of their prayer. St. Mark speaks of the joyful alacrity with which the blind man obeyed the call; how he "cast away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus." **What will ye that I shall do unto you?** The Lord knew the desire of their hearts, but he wished to draw forth the public confession of their needs, and the distinct blessing which they craved, that all the bystanders might acknowledge the miracle, and the sufferers themselves might be incited more vehemently to urge their plea, and thus become more worthy of relief. So God knows all our necessities before we ask, but he will have our prayers, that we may co-operate with him in the work which he purposes to accomplish.

Ver. 33.—**That our eyes may be opened.** So another blind man said, when asked the same question (Mark x. 51). They had at first asked vaguely for mercy, now they prayed definitely for sight—an example to all to make their supplications for particular graces and mercies, and not to be content with general terms which do not describe their special wants.

Ver. 34.—**Touched their eyes.** Only St. Matthew mentions this action of our Lord; but in all other cases of the cure of blindness the healing touch of the Man accompanied the word of the God (comp. ch. ix. 29; Mark viii. 23; John ix. 6), and Christ did not now depart from his usual practice. Thus, as we have noticed before, he connected the cure with himself. He proved that his flesh taken unto the Godhead was life-giving, remedial, efficacious; and he confirmed the faith of the sufferers and bystanders by showing that there was no deceit or collusion. The other synoptists give Christ's assurance to the men, that the restoration of their sight was the reward of faith—a faith exhibited by the invocation of Jesus as "Son of David," by continued importunity amid surrounding difficulties, by confidence in his power and willingness to heal brought to a point by Christ's question, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" **They followed him.** A fact only less remarkable than the miracle that led to it. The impulse of a grateful heart drew them along the road which the Saviour travelled. They may have accompanied him to Jerusalem, and joined the applauding multitude which escorted him to the holy city, and employed their new power of sight in observing that wonderful spectacle which the next few days afforded. One, at any rate, of these men, Bartimæus, seems to have become known in the early Church as a devoted follower of Christ, and hence his name is recorded for all time in the sacred narrative.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—16.—*Parable of the labourers in the vineyard.* I. THE HIRING. 1. *The connection.* The parable is very closely connected with the last four verses of ch. xix. It is plainly intended to illustrate our Lord's saying in ch. xix. 30, "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first." St. Peter's question in ver. 27 contained an element of error. The Lord had promised a great reward to his faithful servants, and he would give it. It was their due, in a sense; but not as a debt, not as of merit ("the *gift* of God is eternal life"), but only of promise, because God, in the free bounty of his sovereign grace, has given unto us "exceeding great and precious promises." God will remember his holy promise; he is faithful. But his people must understand that the rewards of his kingdom are his to give—to give according to his own will. His will is not arbitrary; it is holy and just and good. He cannot deny himself; the determinations of his will must always be in accordance with his own infinite goodness, love, wisdom, justice. His people must learn to say, "Thy will be done." They must trust absolutely and wholly in his love and bounty. They must not prescribe their own reward. They must not venture to estimate it upon the basis of so much reward for so much work. They must not make jealous comparisons of themselves with others. Each Christian man must do his duty, not grudgingly, nor of necessity, but out of love, in simple trustfulness. God is faithful. 2. *The first hiring.* The householder went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. The House-

holder is God; the vineyard is his kingdom; the labourers are men called by him to do his work. The parable was addressed to the apostles, and was part of the answer to St. Peter's question; so it would seem that, in the first and strictest meaning, the labourers first called must be the apostles themselves. The householder went out early in the morning; the Lord came forth from heaven; it was to hire labourers, to send forth men to carry on the great work which he himself began. He agreed with them for a penny a day. The penny must mean the prize of the high calling—that treasure in heaven which the Lord had offered to the young ruler, that eternal life which he promised to all who deny themselves for his Name's sake. The labourers hired later in the day must, on this theory, be the holy men (such as St. Stephen, St. Paul, and others) who were called to the work after the twelve, but still in the apostolic times. Those called at the eleventh hour will be Gentile Christians called later yet to the work, such as the fellow-labourers of St. Paul. The context seems to suggest this explanation as the first and most obvious meaning of the parable. But it may be fairly understood also of the Jews, God's ancient people, who were first called into covenant with God; and of the Gentiles, called in the last times into a covenant of grace. And, again, the parable illustrates in a touching and striking manner the dealings of God with individual souls; some are called in childhood like Samuel, some in middle life, some in advanced age. They differ indefinitely from one another in early training, in talents, in opportunities. But all have their appointed work; all have the like blessed hope to cheer them on in their daily task. Each must do his best according to his powers, according to the time allowed him. All must trust in God. He is gracious and merciful, just and large in his generous bounty. But he is sovereign in the exercise of his goodness. None may presume to murmur; envies and jealousies are excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The last shall be first. St. Paul, the last of all, the least of the apostles in his own sight, laboured more abundantly than they all. "Yet not I," he says, "but the grace of God which was with me." That is the true Christian temper, which ascribes all its energy and all its labours to the assisting grace of God, which never murmurs, which gladly recognizes the goodness, the work of others, which rejoices with them that do rejoice, in the successes of others, in the praises, the honours, the rewards bestowed upon them. 3. *The intermediate hirings.* Again the householder went out when nearly a quarter of the working day was gone; there were others standing idle in the market-place; he bade them go and work in his vineyard. He made no definite agreement with them, as he had done with the first hired labourers; they were satisfied with his promise to give whatever was right, and they went their way. Again at noon, and again when only a quarter of the working hours remained, he did the like. All went, none refused; none tried to bargain with the householder; none asked, "What shall we have therefore?" We must not stand idle when God calls us to work for him. We must go at once whenever we hear that gracious call, whether it be early or late, whatever be our circumstances and employments; all other work is but idleness in his sight, compared with the great work, the work which God has given us to do. We must trust him implicitly. We have the blessed word of Holy Scripture, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It is enough for us. 4. *The last hiring.* The day was now nearly ended; only one hour remained. For the last time the householder went into the market-place. God, in his long-suffering mercy, calls us again and again, at different periods of our lives, in different ways. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The market-place is the world; it is a bustling, noisy scene; yet, alas! many stand there all the day idle. Their idleness may be laborious idleness. There was one who said on his death-bed, "Heu! vitam perdidi laboriose nihil agendo." Their life may be restless, eager in the pursuit of pleasure or riches, filled every hour with this or that engagement, this or that amusement. Yet, if the great end of life be neglected, all is but a laborious doing nothing; for nothing real is gained. "Man walketh in a vain shadow," if he is not working for God; this life, with all its varied occupations, is no better than idle play, if it has no conscious relation to the life beyond the grave. Men think that they are working hard when, in the eye of God, they are standing idle all the day, for they are not working out their own salvation, the only work that is real, earnest, abiding. God doth not leave such idlers to perish. He calls them again and again, by his Word, by his ministers, by his providence. He

calls then at the eleventh hour, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" "The night cometh, wherein no man can work," and the work to be done before nightfall is of momentous importance. They that then stood idle gave a reason for their idleness, "Because no man hath hired us." The excuse was true in the mouth of those Gentile fellow-labourers who were gathered into the Church late in the apostolic times. God "in times past," said St. Paul (Acts xiv. 16), "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (comp. also Acts xvii. 30 and Rom. xi.). They had not been called into the Church, the kingdom of heaven. It can be true only in a very partial sense of Christians now. Men do not heed the call; the loud noise and bustle of the world drown the still small voice of the blessed Spirit. Their deafness is wilful; the voice comes again and again; they will not listen, and it becomes fainter and less distinct. Sometimes it is unheeded to the end; sometimes at last it swells into a trumpet-note, and rouses the thoughtless to repentance. Yet, alas! even in Christian countries there are many, brought up among evil surroundings, in all the misery of godless training and wicked examples, without instruction, without the means of grace; of whom (it sometimes seems to us, when we face sadly and helplessly these perplexing problems of life) those words may still be said, "No man hath hired us." But God, we know, is not willing that any should perish; we may not doubt but that in some way his voice makes itself heard even to such as these, if not earlier, yet at the eleventh hour, as life is drawing near to its close. "Go ye also into the vineyard," the householder, said, though so short a time for work was left. No stipulation was made; perhaps, in this case, the reward was not even mentioned; the promise of giving whatsoever was right is omitted here in some of the most ancient manuscripts, which the Revised Version follows. The men trusted the householder implicitly; they went even at that late hour into the vineyard. There was yet work to be done; and, if there was work, there was hope. They went, they worked; and, we shall find, their trust was not in vain.

II. THE RESULT. 1. *The reward.* When even was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, "Call the labourers, and give them their hire." Christ himself is the Steward, as a Son over his own house (Heb. iii. 6). All power is given unto him; it is he who will say to the redeemed, "Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you." The steward called the labourers; he began, as his lord had bidden him, with the last hired. They had wrought but one hour, and that without any definite agreement. They knew not what to expect; they had done their best, it seems; but the time was short, very short. What could they look for? They came in doubt and anxiety. But they received every man a penny—the full day's wages. They were, we may be sure, full of joy and gratitude; it was far more than they had expected. They had not earned it, they knew; it was of grace, a free gift, a proof of the generous bounty of the lord of the vineyard. The rewards of heaven are not calculated by the methods of earth. Men called late into Christ's service might rank with the first chosen twelve. Paul the persecutor would sit on one of the twelve thrones; Judas the apostle would forfeit his place in the apostolic hierarchy. Gentiles would be called into the kingdom on an equal footing with God's ancient people. Throughout the history of the Church it would happen again and again that men called late in life, sometimes on the very bed of death, would receive the full reward. Work is not always measured by time; life itself is not measured by time. A short life has sometimes far more of real living, more of deep spiritual energy, and even sometimes of outward work, than a very long life spent without earnest purpose ("He being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time," Wisd. iv. 13). We may well believe that in the dying hours of the penitent thief there was concentrated a depth of repentance, an intensity of love, an energy of victorious faith, which he marked and rewarded who measures life, not by time, not by outward work, but by faith and love. The labourers were called in order from the last unto the first. All received the like reward—the penny, covenanted to the first called, given, it seems, without covenant to those sent later into the vineyard. The parable contemplates a portion only of God's dealings with mankind; its point of view does not extend to the disobedient, mentioned elsewhere, who went not to the vineyard. Here all the labourers had worked, and all received their hire. But that reward, though in itself the same, varies according to the spiritual capacity of the receiver. Eternal life is

promised to all the blessed; God himself is their Portion. Yet we read of ten cities and of five (Luke xix. 17, 19). There will be first and last, greatest and least, in the kingdom of God; all the stars shine in the heavens, but one star differeth from another star in glory. All the blessed will, by the grace of God, be admitted into the exceeding great rapture of the beatific vision. That vision of love and glory will fill every heart with unutterable gladness; the saints will be changed into the same image from glory to glory, drawn ever nearer, received into an ever-closer nearness, an ever-deepening blessedness, increasing in proportion to the powers, the love, the fervour, the devotion of each glorified spirit. All will receive the blessed promise, eternal life; the realization of that promise will depend in some measure on the capacities of the receiver. All will be blessed. Holy Scripture seems to teach that there will be degrees of blessedness in heaven, as there are degrees of holiness on earth. 2. *The murmurs.* The first-hired labourers had borne the burden and heat of the day; they now received the covenanted reward. It was their just due according to the original agreement. But they murmured, not because they had received too little, but because others, as they thought, had received too much. These last had wrought but one hour, and yet the good man of the house had made them equal to those who had worked from morning until evening. The Jews showed this narrow spirit of unworthy jealousy towards the Gentiles; we see it throughout the New Testament. It was this that caused the rejection of our Lord at Nazareth (Luke iv. 25—29). It was this that excited the fierce wrath of the Jews against St. Paul (Acts xxii. 21, 22). They were God's chosen people; the adoption was theirs, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises (Rom. ix. 4). They could not endure the thought that the despised Gentiles were to be admitted to an equality of privileges. St. Peter had just showed something of this spirit in his question, "Behold, we have left all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" The primary intention of the parable was, it seems, to teach him and his brother apostles that the rewards of God's kingdom are not of debt, but of grace; and to rebuke that desire of pre-eminence, those jealousies and rivalries, which we meet with so often in the history of the apostles, and, alas! in the whole history of the Church. There must be no jealousies in the kingdom of God. Each Christian must learn of him "who is meek and lowly in heart" the great grace of humility; we must all learn "in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves." We must learn this great lesson now; for murmurers have no place in the kingdom of glory. Heaven is the home of love; no jarring notes of envy or discontent may disturb its Divine harmonies. It is the home of blessedness; there can be no complaints in heaven; for, if there are degrees of blessedness, yet each redeemed soul is blessed to the full extent of its capacities, and is disturbed by no unsatisfied longings. Then if we apply the parable to the circumstances of individual Christians, and understand the penny as meaning the unspeakable gift—Christ now, eternal life hereafter—we must regard this portion as belonging to the scenery, so to speak, of the parable, to its setting, as conveying a warning of what might happen on earth, not a prophecy of what will happen hereafter. On earth the murmurers receive the penny; they have worked for it. There is no intimation in the parable that they worked less strenuously than those called later; it would not be just to withhold it, though they marred their industry by their envy and ill temper. In the world to come such men would lose their reward; in this world they knew not how to value it. The reward offered was the gift of Christ, Christ himself, Christ present to his people's hearts; but, alas! though they seemed to begin well, they envied others who afterwards outstripped them in the Christian race; and that envy of the progress, of the successes, of the rewards of others marred their own religious service, destroyed the value of their work, poisoned and killed out of their hearts the holy life of faith and love. To such heaven would be no heaven if they were allowed to enter there, for to the unloving there can be no joy in the love of heaven. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." 3. *The reply of the householder.* "Friend," he said. The Greek word is not one which implies affection or friendship, but only knowledge and companionship; it is used by the king in the parable to the man who had not on a wedding garment, and by our Lord in addressing Judas at Gethsemane. The man had received the penny; the payment was according to the agreement; he had no right to more. The apostles would receive the promised

reward; but they ought not to seek great things for themselves; they ought not to desire pre-eminence; they ought to trust the bounty and the justice of God. They ought not to boast of what they had done; they ought not to say, "Behold, we have left all, and followed thee;" but rather, as St. Paul said afterwards, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Implicit faith in God's justice and love is the proper attitude of the Christian soul. His will is sovereign; he distributeth to every man severally as he will; but it is not arbitrary; it is holy and just and good. He knows, as none else can know, all the circumstances, all the surroundings, all the temptations, all the advantages and disadvantages, which must be taken into consideration in any accurate estimate of character. Without this knowledge it is impossible to weigh one man against another, or to balance the relative preponderance of good or evil in each. We cannot have this knowledge. God has it; we must trust his ruling. We must not dare to complain if others, whom we regarded as our inferiors, are put above us or on an equality with us. God has his reasons; he doeth all things well. Perhaps the householder in the parable knew that any addition to the stipulated reward was not deserved; perhaps he knew that it would be misused, that it would in some way do harm rather than good. God, who knows all things, certainly acts always for the best. The Lord is loving unto every man. He maketh all things work together for good to them that love him. This is enough for us to know. We must learn the blessed grace of humility, the holy lesson of contentment. Murmuring there must not be; it shows at once the unworthiness of the murmurers. Envy is an evil thing; it comes from the evil one; it has no place in the kingdom of heaven, for the law of that kingdom is love. 4. *The conclusion.* The Lord sums up the parable in the words which he had used before (ch. xix. 30). The parable was intended to illustrate their meaning. He now repeats them, "So the last shall be first, and the first last." He does not mean that it will be so in all cases; but that the fact of being first called, or first in other senses, first in station, first in the esteem of men, or even first in outward works, will not necessarily save a man from being last at the end. "*Many* that are first shall be last." The first hired in the parable were last in several respects. They received their reward last; that reward was least in proportion to the time of service; and they were last in good feeling. All the rest were contented; they only were dissatisfied and ungrateful. Then the first places in the kingdom are for those who are first in humility, first in self-abasement, who are willing to be last of all and the servants of all; who recognize their own sinfulness, their unworthiness of the least of God's mercies; who, far from putting forward a claim to pre-eminence, are content to take the lowest place. Such men may seem last in the eyes of men; they may have been called late in life; they may be very inferior to others in showy qualities; but they are first now in the sight of God; they will be first one day in the sight of men and angels. If the last clause of ver. 16 is genuine in this place, it cannot be taken in the same sense as in ch. xxii. 14. There the guest who had not on a wedding garment was called indeed to the marriage, but not chosen unto life eternal; he was cast into outer darkness. Here all receive the reward; but few are chosen out, as pre-eminent in holiness, for the highest places in God's kingdom, to sit on the right and left of the King, or to occupy the twelve thrones of the rulers of the spiritual Israel. God gives these highest distinctions to whom he will, to the lowliest and the most self-denying. But there is no room for ambition in the kingdom of heaven; all the faithful must be content, all will be content with the place assigned to them, for the very lowest place there is a prize unspeakably glorious, blessed above all that we can ask or think.

LESSONS. 1. God's rewards are of grace, not of debt. 2. Christians must be humble and thankful, not jealous of others. 3. The very lowest place in God's kingdom is far higher than the best of us deserves. 4. We must obey the calling of God. He has work for every one of us; let us earnestly try to do it. 5. Let us not despair if we are called at the eleventh hour. Only let us do our best. The last may be first.

Vers. 17—19.—*Predictions of the Passion.* I. JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. 1. *The Lord.* He was going up now for the last time to the holy city. His work in Galilee, in Peræa, was over; it seemed to have ended in disappointment. His popularity was

not what it had been; his enemies had to a large extent succeeded (or seemed to have succeeded) in undermining his influence. He was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." A few days of thankless labour awaited him at Jerusalem, and then the awful cross. He knew it all. We cannot discern the secrets of the future; God has mercifully shrouded them in darkness. The shadow of the cross fell along the whole life of the Lord. And now he knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father. The thought gave an awful dignity to his mien, a Divine majesty to his figure, a strange stateliness to every gesture (Mark x. 32). He was going to meet his death. He saw it plain before him in all its circumstances of shame and anguish; but he shrank not. He went forwards with a sweet and holy calmness, with a more than heroic courage, which shone through his features and illumined those clear holy eyes with a light that spoke of heaven. 2. *The disciples.* The Lord went before them, leading them to the fearful conflict. They followed in silent awe; they watched the Lord's demeanour; they had never before seen such a strange high glory of steadfast resolve even on that blessed face, and they were amazed, terror-stricken. They regarded him with the deepest reverence—reverence not diminished by familiar intercourse, but constantly increasing; and now, it seems, they feared to intrude upon his meditations; but they were troubled and anxious. They felt that some momentous crisis was at hand. The Lord cared for them. He was not so absorbed in the intense contemplation of his coming sufferings as to forget his followers. He is our great Example. We think that the excitement caused by the expectation of great joy or great sorrow is an excuse for the neglect of our ordinary duties. It was not so with Christ our Lord. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." He took them apart in the way. He would in his loving tenderness prepare them for the dreadful trial. Twice already he had predicted his death, but they seemed unable to take it into their minds; he would tell them a third time, more plainly now, in greater detail. And so he took them apart. Perhaps the roads were crowded; there were multitudes going up to the Passover. He would not tell them the dreadful secret within the reach of unsympathizing ears; they would best hear it alone, where none were present save those most deeply concerned—the blessed Master, and the little company who so dearly loved him. Mark the tender delicacy of his dealings with them.

II. WHAT WAS TO BE EXPECTED. 1. *The betrayal.* "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," the Lord said. It was a glad thought commonly. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." And they were now going up to the Passover. It may be that the disciples, like other Jews, were looking forward to that great festival with feelings of joy; and very probably they were cherishing the hope that their Master would then manifest himself openly as the Messiah, that he would be welcomed as the great King, the Deliverer that was to come. He was to be manifested, but upon the cross; he was to reign, but from the tree. He told them calmly of the double betrayal that was coming. He should be betrayed (he did not say by whom; they could not bear yet to hear that) unto the chief priests and scribes. They would not acknowledge him as the Christ (as perhaps the disciples were hoping); they would condemn him to death, and betray him to the Gentiles. His own disciple would betray him to the priests; his own nation, nay, the priests, who knew where the Christ should be born (ch. ii. 4), one of whom "prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John xi. 51), would betray him to the Gentiles. 2. *The manner of his death.* He told them very plainly now. It would be the act of the Gentiles, but the guilt would rest mainly with the Jews (John xix. 11). He predicted the harrowing details of his Passion; he would be mocked, scourged, crucified. He had mentioned the cross already (ch. x. 38: xvi. 24), but it was in figurative language; the spiritual cross of self-denial was to be the test of his true disciples. Now he told them plainly what it was that was to give a new meaning to the hated word, and make it another name for the holiest and loftiest self-sacrifice. He himself was to die upon the cross, not in figure, but in reality. He, the Christ, the Son of the living God, he whom the three chosen apostles had seen glorious with the radiance of heaven, he was to die that death which hitherto had been regarded as of all things horrible the most horrible, of all things ignominious the most intensely shameful. Yet the future was not all dark; he

was to rise again the third day. He had raised others already from the dead: he himself would rise, for he is the Resurrection and the Life; it was not possible that he could be holden of the grave. It was now the third warning; yet, St. Luke tells us, the apostles "understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." It seems strange; but is it not much the same now? In spite of warnings, men will not understand that their own death is at hand; they think all men mortal but themselves; they will not speak of death; they carefully avoid the subject. Christ teaches us a different lesson. We should often think of death, we should often speak of it, of our own coming death, and that calmly, with the Christian's hope of a blessed resurrection.

LESSONS. 1. Mark the awe and reverence with which the apostles regarded the Lord, though they loved him so well. Reverence becomes the true Christian. 2. How often, when we look for joy, there comes great sorrow! Let us be prepared. 3. Think much of the cross of the Lord Jesus; it cannot be too much in the Christian's thoughts.

Vers. 20—28.—*Salome and her sons.* I. THEIR CONVERSATION WITH CHRIST. 1. *The request.* Salome was one of the Lord's most faithful followers; she was present at the cross; perhaps she was his mother's sister. Her sons had been admitted into the innermost circle of the apostles; they with Peter were the three nearest to the Lord. But even the chosen three could not receive the Lord's predictions of his death. Their hearts were so preoccupied with thoughts of the kingdom, the twelve thrones, the coming glories, that they seemed quite unable to take the thought of the cross into their minds. They had seen the grandeur of the Transfiguration; like Peter, they recoiled in horror from the prospect of the cross. They could not think that that height of glory and that depth of shame could meet in one Person; they could not believe it at all; and, as men do still, or try to do, they put away such distressing thoughts. And now Salome came, doing lowly reverence to Jesus as to the King Messiah, and making her request. She prayed, not for herself, but with a mother's love for her sons, that they might sit, the one on the Lord's right hand, the other on the left, in his kingdom. 2. *The Lord's reply.* "Ye know not what ye ask." They thought of an earthly kingdom. He knew what they would not know, though he had told them thrice. Salome would soon see, one at least of her sons would see, the Lord not sitting on a royal throne, but hanging on the cross. They would see on the right hand and on the left not two great officers, two ministers of state, but two crucified malefactors. We often know not what we ask when we seek in our folly great things for ourselves. We do not know the future; we do not know ourselves. The best prayer is the Lord's own prayer, "Not my will, but thine, be done." "Not my will." We wish for this or that honour, this or that post of pre-eminence for ourselves, for our children, for those nearest and dearest to us. We know not what we ask; we do not rightly estimate our own powers; we do not think of the dangers and temptations which lie before us, the envies and the jealousies which we provoke. Ambition is rash always; most perilous is its rashness when it aspires to the highest places in the Church. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" None can tread safely in those places save those who can drink of the Saviour's cup; none can endure those tremendous responsibilities save those who have been baptized with his baptism. And that cup is the cup of self-denial, and that baptism is the baptism of blood, the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin, which maketh those only white and clean who have come out of great tribulation, the spiritual tribulation of contrition and self-abasement, if not the outward tribulation of suffering for the sake of Christ. "We are able," said the sons of Zebedee. They were true and faithful; it was not a mere vulgar ambition which prompted them; they were devoted, heart and soul, to the service of their Lord. They were ready to follow him through danger and through suffering, though now they failed to understand the meaning of that kingdom which was so much in their thoughts. The Lord recognized their truth and loyalty; they had the high courage which they professed; they should be united very closely with him by the sacraments of suffering and martyrdom in deed or in will. But those highest places in the kingdom of glory were not to be given by partial love, at the request of mother or of sons; they were to be bestowed according to the eternal election of God the Father upon those who were nearest to the Lord in lowliness and entire self-sacri-

fice. Let us pray for the holy courage of the sons of Zebedee. "We are able." It is a noble word if it issues out of a true and real faith, if it is uttered in humility and dependence upon Christ; it is a pure and holy word when it is spoken by Christ's faithful followers. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." Otherwise it is presumptuous and profane. "Without me, ye can do nothing."

II. THE TEN APOSTLES. 1. *Their indignation.* Salome and her sons had, it seems, approached the Lord privately, without the knowledge of the other apostles. When they heard of the request that had been made they were much displeased. The two had sought pre-eminence over the rest, even over Peter. Peter does not, as at other times, put himself prominently forward; possibly the twice-repeated warning of our Lord, "Many that are first shall be last," kept him back. The displeasure of the ten was natural, but it was wrong. They had forgotten the lessons of the eighteenth chapter; they still harboured those unworthy jealousies which ought to have no place among the disciples of Christ. 2. *The Lord's warning.* (1) The commandment. The Church must not imitate the world. The rulers of the nations lord it over them; but (as St. Peter wrote afterwards, echoing, it seems, the Saviour's word) Christian presbyters must not lord it over the charge allotted to them. The way to true greatness is lowly service. He is greatest in the Christian ministry who realizes most the meaning of the word "minister," as St. Paul understood its meaning and illustrated it in his life (comp. 2 Cor. vi. 3—10; xi. 23—30). He is greatest who stands waiting day and night on Christ, who follows him most closely in self-denying ministrations. He will be first in the great day who is willing now to be the last of all, who regards himself as the servant of Christ, and as the servant of all men for Christ's sake; as St. Paul made himself the servant of all that he might gain the more. He will be chief then, who, though his labours may be abundant, like the labours of St. Paul, yet, like St. Paul, owns himself to be the least of all, seeking no pre-eminence over others, but simply and unaffectedly attributing all that is good in himself or in his work to the grace of God: "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (2) The great Example. The Lord does not only teach; he illustrates his teaching by his life; especially when he gives the most difficult lessons, he calls our attention to his own example. He bids us become the servants of all; he took upon him the form of a servant. He bids us minister to others; he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He came from heaven, from his true home, to this lower earth of ours, and that not to display the glory of his majesty, not to be ministered unto as Messiah the King. Angels did minister unto him, so did holy women and others; but that was occasional, incidental. The purpose of his coming was to minister—to minister to the deep wants of humanity, to the cravings of those who hungered after God, to the mortal sickness of countless dying souls. He came to feed the hungry with the Bread of life, which is himself; to cleanse the sin-defiled with the fountain opened for sin and for iniquity, which is his precious blood; to heal the broken-hearted, to give rest to all that labour and are heavy laden,—for he is the great Physician; he is our Peace, the only Rest of the weary soul. He came to minister; those who would be nearest him in his glory must be nearest him in his ministry. His ministers must imitate him who was "a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God." But he came to do more than to minister—he came to do that one great deed which stands alone in the world's history, which none could do save only the Son of God, who became for our sake the Son of man. He came to give his life a ransom for many. He gave it; it was his free gift, a spontaneous act of mysterious love and bounty, generous above the reach of human thought. What he gave was his life—that human life which he had taken into his Divine Person. That human life was pure and holy; the one only human life that came not under the curse of the Law. "The soul [the life] that sinneth it shall die." He needed not to die; but in his generous love he gave that pure and holy life as a ransom for the many sinful lives. He gave "himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God" (Eph. v. 2). The ransom was given to God. The atonement belongs to the region of very high and sacred mysteries; its reasons, its necessity, its wide-reaching and awful meaning, are high above us. Human words are inadequate to express it; human illustrations at the best are partial and incomplete; human thought cannot grasp it in its fulness. It becomes us to speak of these high mysteries with reverence and solemn reticence. "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: there-

fore let thy words be few." But thus much we know for certain, and that from the Lord's own lips, his death was a sacrifice, and it was vicarious. He gave his life a ransom for many, in their place, in their stead. Such is the only possible meaning of the words; he took upon him our punishment, he suffered in our stead, blessed be his holy Name! One died for many; but that One was God, God and Man in one Person, infinite in love and power, as that sacrifice was infinite in preciousness. For many, and yet for all, as St. Paul says, when he repeats the precious words (1 Tim. i. 6); for all who will believe and come to him in faith; for he is the Saviour of the world, "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

LESSONS. 1. Seek not great things for yourselves, for your children; pray for humility. 2. Try more and more to work into your heart that holiest prayer, "Not my will, but thine, be done." 3. Abase yourselves. The lowliest here shall be the highest there.

VERS. 29—34.—*The two blind men.* I. JERICHO. The Lord had come to Jericho, the famous city of the palm trees, the first city taken by Joshua in his career of conquest. Now in Jericho a greater Joshua opened the eyes of the blind, and brought the good news of peace and reconciliation with God to the house of the publican; and from Jericho he went up to the holy city to meet a mightier foe than any who ever fell before the sword of Joshua—to triumph over sin and Satan by the power of the most holy cross.

II. THE MIRACLE. 1. *The prayer.* Two blind men sat by the wayside. One was Bartimæus, the son of Timæus. He was well known in Jericho; he had sat there begging long, perhaps for years. They heard the multitude pass by; they asked what was the meaning of the crowd, the tramp of many feet. It was Jesus, they were told—Jesus of Nazareth. They had heard of him; every one had heard of him. He had given sight to the blind; nay, he had opened the eyes of one who was born blind. They begged for the like mercy now: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!" 2. *The rebuke of the multitude.* There was a brief revival of the Lord's popularity; men hoped that he would at last openly announce himself as the Messiah, and claim the throne of David. A vast multitude attended him in his royal progress. The crowds, absorbed in great expectations, cared not for the blind beggars. They were disturbed by their cries; perhaps they thought that the interruption would annoy the King. They rebuked them, that they should hold their peace; but they cried the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!" Christians meet sometimes with similar difficulties now, when they first wake to the sense of their spiritual blindness, when they first begin to follow Christ in earnest supplication. Others, who are content with a mere formal religion, find fault with their earnestness; it is felt by the indifferent and apathetic as a reproof to themselves. They must not be discouraged; they must cry the more, "Have mercy on us, O Lord!" The Lord will listen; the Lord will save. 3. *The Lord's compassion.* He heard the cry of the supplicants through the noise of the multitude; it arrested his attention. He stood still and called them. He could think of the wretched even now, surrounded as he was by an applauding crowd, on his way to his last dread conflict, the shadow of death gathering round him. He will listen to us when we pray. He seems, perhaps, to be passing by; but the cry of earnest supplication will detain him. Only let us pray, as the blind men prayed, with all intensity of entreaty, not ceasing till he hears us, and stands still and calls us. He is passing by; a crowd of worshippers follow, gazing on him in adoration. He will listen to those who feel the misery of spiritual blindness, and weep for their want of faith. Only let them persevere in their prayer, "Lord, increase our faith," lest he pass on out of the reach of their cries. 4. *The answer.* "What will ye," he said, "that I should do unto you?" "Lord," they said, "that our eyes may be opened." At once the Lord had mercy. He touched their eyes, and immediately they received their sight, and followed him. His touch hath still its ancient power; still he can open the eyes of the blind; and still they who with eyes opened by his touch look up upon the Lord, must follow him on the way that leadeth to the cross.

LESSONS. 1. The Lord opened the eyes of the blind; he will open our eyes if we come to him in faith. 2. We must not heed the objections which men make to

religious earnestness. We need Christ; we must find him. 3. The Lord is ever passing by, ever ready to hear the prayer of strong desire. 4. His touch can shed the light of heaven upon our souls. Shine into our hearts, O Lord!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—16.—*The labourers in the vineyard.* This parable is closely connected with our Lord's remarks in describing the rewards of the kingdom, and it may have been intended to convey a mild rebuke, or at least a gentle warning, to St. Peter, who had asked, "What then shall we have?" The apostles are to receive great rewards. But those who, like St. Peter, were called first, are not to assume that they will have any more than those who came in later.

I. CHRIST SEEKS LABOURERS FOR HIS VINEYARD. There is work to be done in winning the world for Christ, and in training the Church that its fruit may be brought forth in abundance. For this work our Lord requires labourers. His servants are not to be satisfied with receiving his grace. That grace is given for the express purpose of its being used in his service. Christ calls us that we may serve him.

II. CHRIST OFFERS A FAIR REWARD FOR LABOUR. The so-called "penny" was evidently the regular wages of the ordinary day labourer. Although Christ might exact service on royal authority, he does not put forth this authority. He accepts each labourer on the man's free consent, and he offers him all that he could ask for. We talk of the sacrifice and toils of a Christian life. We should be honest to reckon up its gains on the other side.

III. CHRIST HIRES LABOURERS AT THE VARIOUS HOURS. The Church did not start fully equipped. By degrees the requisite forces have been drawn into the service of the kingdom. Those late hired may represent various classes. 1. *The later called apostles.* St. Peter will not have pre-eminence because he was called earlier than St. Jude. When St. Paul came his case would be obviously met here. And yet the parallel is not exact, because the later apostles did not have a shorter season of work. 2. *The Gentiles.* These were called later than the Jews; but they were not assigned an inferior place in the kingdom. 3. *The heathen.* Even to-day, at the eleventh hour, some nations are being called in. 4. *The aged.* One who did not receive the gospel in youth will not necessarily be lower than one who had the privilege of knowing it in his early days.

IV. CHRIST REWARDS IN AN UNEXPECTED MANNER. Here we have a description of an equality of payment. Elsewhere there is an idea of diversity, *e.g.* Luke xix. 24—26. Each representation has its own lesson. In the case before us we learn that the final division may not be at all according to our expectation. The obscure may be on a level with the eminent—the Gentiles with the Jews, the new mission Churches of India and China with the old Christian Churches of Europe.

V. CHRIST HAS A RIGHT TO DEAL GENEROUSLY AFTER HE HAS ACTED JUSTLY. The payment looked unfair. But no one could complain, because every one had what he had agreed to take, and because no one had less than fair wages. Beyond this the householder was free to be as generous as he pleased in the disposal of his own property. Still, one can quite understand the dissatisfaction People are hurt when generosity does not seem to be equal and fair. It should be noted, however, that the later comers had excused themselves on the plea that no man had hired them. Possibly they were as willing to work all day as those who had done so. Now, Christ judges by the heart and the intentions.—W. F. A.

Ver. 16.—*A great reversal.* This is an often-repeated saying of our Lord's; perhaps he uttered it more often than anything else—a fact which shows its importance and also the difficulty people have in believing it and acting on it. We are not to suppose that there is a Nemesis that mocks at good fortune and delights in reversing it. Prosperity is not punished as such, for it is not in itself an evil thing. God is gracious and generous. He would not torment his children with needless disappointments. Let us, then, look for the causes of the great reversal.

I. GOD DOES NOT JUDGE MEN BY THEIR WORLDLY POSITION. He does not punish rank.

He takes no account of it, except in so far as it brings with it obligations, etc. We see men in honour because of their riches or their success. Such things mean nothing to God. He only looks at the naked characters of the men themselves. These are all that he puts in his scales. If these are found wanting, they are condemned, and no riches or honours can be thrown in as "make-weights." On the other hand, poor, obscure, oppressed, misunderstood, or persecuted people suffer nothing whatever in God's judgment on account of those circumstances which bring on them the contempt of the world. If they have real worth they are understood and appreciated in heaven.

II. WORLDLY PRE-EMINENCE DOES NOT USUALLY SPRING FROM THOSE GRACES OF CHARACTER WHICH GOD VALUES. Sometimes, indeed, it is the reward of real merit. But too often it comes from most inferior qualities. The accident of birth confers the highest honours and the greatest wealth by the artificial law of primogeniture. Successful scheming and good fortune bring a man money and influence. A Napoleon forces his way to the head of Europe by the exercise of enormous mind and will powers at the expense of every moral consideration.

III. THERE IS A TENDENCY IN WORLDLY PRE-EMINENCE TO INJURE THE BETTER QUALITIES OF THE SOUL. Christ spoke of the difficulty of rich men in entering the kingdom of heaven (ch. xix. 23). Other forms of pre-eminence besides that of wealth also have their difficulties. One great hindrance to spiritual progress is pride, and high rank fosters pride. Self-will is incompatible with spiritual excellence, and the great and exalted are tempted to indulge self-will. Lowliness and obedience, unselfishness and a spirit of serving, are the qualities which Christ honours. It is very difficult to cultivate these graces in high places—difficult, but possible to those who seek the help of God—as we see in a Margaret of Navarre and a Cardinal Contarini.

IV. ULTIMATELY GOD WILL TREAT ALL ACCORDING TO THEIR TRUE CHARACTERS. The irony of judgment will be terrible, just because it will be just. At the great revelation the fictitious glory of worldly pre-eminence will fade and all its tawdry tinsel will be shown in hideous distinctness. Then true worth will shine as the sun bursting forth from the clouds. That day is coming. Therefore let not the favoured boast of their temporary exaltation; and let not the lowly and oppressed despair. There will be a great reversal.—W. F. A.

Vers. 20—23.—*A mother's ambition.* In St. Mark we are only told that the two sons of Zebedee came, asking for the first places in the kingdom. St. Matthew's account shows that the request originated with their mother. It is natural that a mother should dream of a great future for her children. The mother's ambition is an inspiration for her training of them. In the present instance it seemed to overstep the bounds of modesty. Yet when we consider all the circumstances, we shall see that there was something really grand about it.

I. THE DARING REQUEST. 1. *Its selfishness.* This is the first thing that strikes any reader of the narrative. On a mother's part it is not so selfish, however, as if the two brothers had come alone. Yet there is a family selfishness. Moreover, the brothers shared in their mother's request. 2. *Its naturalness.* These two disciples belonged to the most intimate group of the friends of Jesus. Possibly the request was only that there might be a continuance in heaven of the privilege already accorded on earth. We know that one of the brothers, St. John, sat on the right hand of Jesus on earth (John xiii. 25); it is not at all unlikely that St. James sat on the other side of the Master. If so, the request is for the continuance of a present privilege. Will Jesus, when in glory, abandon his old friends? or will he own the fishermen and honour them in proportion to their present privileges? 3. *Its faith.* This daring request was made just after Christ had spoken of his approaching death. The gloomy prospect might have checked the hopes of the most ardent. Nevertheless, Zebedee's wife is sure that Christ will triumph and reign in his glorious kingdom. In full view of the greatest approaching disaster, she speaks of the division of the spoil after the ultimate victory. Here is a marvel of faith!

II. THE SEARCHING QUESTION. Jesus answers the request with a question. Only they can receive the heavenly privileges who attain to them in the right way. Are the two brothers prepared for this? 1. *Prayer is often offered in ignorance of what it involves.* These simple people had little conception of the road to greatness in the

kingdom of heaven. We may seem to be uttering most harmless requests, yet we know not what we ask. Therefore prayer should be submissive. It is well to leave our prayers to God's discriminating judgment. 2. *They who would reign with Christ must suffer with him.* It is vain to think of sharing the final victory if we will not share the previous conflict. The two brothers assent to the condition. In doing so they atone for much of the selfishness of their request. They had their grand destiny of suffering. St. James drank of Christ's cup in being the first martyr-apostle; St. John in enduring longest, and in suffering exile and other hardships for his Lord's sake. There is no escaping this condition, although it may assume various forms. 3. *The ultimate destiny of souls is with God alone.* It is not for Christ to settle on grounds of friendship or favour. It belongs to the awful and mysterious counsels of God. Here we see the secondary rank of the Son compared with his Father. Yet the main lesson is not one concerning the nature of the Trinity. It is to teach us to renounce even the highest selfish ambition. That cannot help us. The future is with God.—W. F. A.

Vers. 25—27.—*True greatness.* The daring request of the mother of Zebedee's children roused the jealousy of the other disciples. This was natural, and quite in accordance with the customs of the world. Nevertheless, Christ disapproved of the feeling. It showed something of the same selfish ambition that the two brothers had displayed.

I. WORLDLY DIFFERENCES OF RANK ARE NOT TO BE ALLOWED IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. 1. *The necessity of this rule.* It springs from the essential characteristics of Christianity. (1) Brotherhood. In Christ rich and poor, high and low, are brothers, members of one family. We are to call no man master in the Church, because we are all brethren. No institution of man is more democratic than the Church of Christ—when it realizes his idea. (2) The supremacy of Christ. One is our Master, even Christ (ch. xxiii. 8). For a man to exercise lordship is to usurp the kingly office of Christ. Not only is he supreme; he deals directly with every soul in his kingdom. (3) The worthlessness of external pre-eminence. Christ cares for nothing of this sort. Of titles and offices he takes no account. Character and conduct are the only things that he observes and judges us by; and character and conduct are quite independent of official position and nominal rank. 2. *The application of this rule.* It has been and it is now so grievously neglected and outraged that we ought to expose the wrong with a reformer's courage. (1) In hierarchical pretensions. The papal claims are here out of court. Therefore the friends of the papacy do not favour the reading of the New Testament by the people. But all domineering priestliness is equally excluded. (2) In worldly position. Differences of rank that have nothing to do with ecclesiastical order are also quite out of place in the Church. They may have their use in the world. But they cannot confer any privileges in spiritual and religious matters.

II. CHRISTIAN GREATNESS IS GREATNESS OF SERVICE. It is not hierarchical power and dignity. It is not secular wealth and titles. It is a purely moral greatness—the result of conduct. They stand highest in the kingdom of heaven who best serve their brethren. 1. *The grounds of this greatness.* (1) It is Christ-like. They will be most honoured by Christ who best resemble him; they will come nearest to him in rank who follow him most closely in conduct. Christ was the servant of all. (2) It is inherently excellent. God honours Christ himself for this very reason. He humbled himself and took on him the form of a servant—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him" (Phil. ii. 9). To serve is to manifest energy in unselfishness and kindness—the best of all things witnessed on earth. 2. *The pursuit of this greatness.* The words, "and whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant," are not the threat of a punishment for ambition. They are an indication of the way to true greatness. This is not, like worldly greatness, reserved for the privileged. It is within the reach of all. If any wish to approach the honours coveted for the brothers James and John, the way is open. It is to be first in service, to excel in self-sacrificing toil for the good of others.—W. F. A.

Ver. 28.—*Christ the Servant and the Ransom.* The immediate application of these words is to confirm the previous assertion of the nature of true greatness in the kingdom

of heaven. But they are so intensely significant that they claim our attention on their own account.

I. CHRIST THE SERVANT. This startling conjunction of titles is suggested even in the Old Testament, in the latter part of Isaiah. Jesus realizes the singular prophecy in deeper humility and self-denial. In the prophet the Messiah is the "Servant of the Lord." In the life of Jesus we see him as this, but also as the Servant of man. Consider the negative and positive aspects of this wonderful fact. 1. *Its negative aspect.* Christ did not come to be ministered unto. He did not ask for a prince's courtly rights; he did not expect them. He came in lowly guise. Although a few obscure friends delighted to give him the means of support in their gratitude, the great world's ministry of honour was never his. 2. *Its positive aspect.* Jesus came to minister. Service was an object of his life, not an accident that came upon him with surprise. He speaks of his coming into the world as though this had been deliberately fixed and the service of man part of its great purpose. Here we see the humility, the unselfishness, the love, and the practical spirit of our Lord. In this ministry (1) he deserves our adoring gratitude; (2) he invites our trustful confidence,—for it is on our behalf; and (3) he is the example for our diligent imitation.

II. CHRIST THE RANSOM. Here is a great thought flashing out of the darkness that broods over the cross. Previously, Jesus had spoken of his approaching death; now he suddenly reveals the purpose of it. It was more than a necessity resulting from faithful living, more than a martyrdom. It was the paying of a ransom. 1. *The price paid.* Jesus gave his life. He came for the express purpose of doing so. One object of his birth was that he might be able to die. It is to be observed that our attention is always directed more to the fact of Christ's death than to the pain he suffered—to his cross rather than to his Passion, though doubtless both were of value in the great redeeming work. "The wages of sin is death." Jesus tasted death for every man. He gave all he could give—his very life-blood. 2. *The liberty effected.* Men ransom from captivity. What was the captivity from which Christ brought liberty? Origen and other Fathers regarded it as bondage to Satan, and they thought the ransom was actually paid to the devil. This is a coarse way of regarding a great truth. The ransom could not have been paid to the devil, because Christ fought the prince of evil as a deadly foe; he did not bargain with the fiend. But he came to deliver from the power of Satan, *i.e.* from sin, and that object involved his death. He died to save us from sin. We must not press the analogy of the ransom further. 3. *The people freed.* The ransom is for "many." It is a harsh, ungenerous criticism that would fix on the apparent limitation of the word "many"—many rather than all. There is no such antithesis here. The many saved are contrasted with the one Saviour. His life-blood is so valuable a ransom that it purchases, not the liberation of one or two captives of sin only, but a large multitude—the host of the redeemed.—W. F. A.

Vers. 29—34.—*The blind men of Jericho.* Jesus is now at Jericho on his last journey to Jerusalem. When he visited the sacred city a few months before, he cured a blind man, and the miracle led to an important investigation and vindication of the powers of Christ (John ix.). It is likely that the fame of it reached to Jericho, and that this inspired the faith and hope of the blind beggars. Let us follow them through the course of the incident.

I. THEIR HELPLESS CONDITION. 1. These afflicted men were "*sitting.*" They could but grope about when they attempted to walk. The glad activities of life were not for them. They sat apart in their misery. 2. They were "*by the wayside.*" St. Mark tells us that one of them, at least, was begging (Mark x. 46). While the throng of country pilgrims passed by on their way to the Passover, a harvest of charity might be reaped. Yet at best this was a wretched way of gaining a livelihood. 3. They were *together.* St. Mark only tells us of one man—Bartimæus (Mark x. 46). Probably he was the more energetic and the better known of the two. Yet his obscure friend is with him. Sufferers can sympathize with their brothers in suffering. The more active and confident should bring their diffident friends to Christ.

II. THEIR PRAYER OF FAITH. 1. *They acknowledged Christ.* They named him "Son of David." Thus they anticipated the hosannas of Palm Sunday. Perhaps they helped to inspire those hosannas. 2. *They cried for mercy.* Mercy was all they

could seek, for they could not afford to pay an oculist's fees. When we come to Christ the richest among us must approach him as beggars. The only plea of the sinner is in the mercy of his Saviour.

III. THEIR TRYING DISCOURAGEMENT. 1. *The multitude rebuked them*—as the disciples rebuked the Perœan mothers (ch. xix. 13). Their eager cries were irritating. They were but beggars; any one could take it upon him to reprimand such humble creatures. They who would come to Christ are sometimes discouraged by the servants of Christ. 2. *Jesus did not respond immediately.* (1) Perhaps he did not hear. (2) Perhaps he was occupied with some important teaching. (3) Perhaps he would try the faith of the poor men. The answer to prayer is sometimes delayed.

IV. THEIR UNDAUNTED PERSEVERANCE. Now is their opportunity. Soon Jesus will have passed, and it will be too late for them to seek his aid. Yet great is their need. So eagerly do they long for sight, that no discouragement of impertinent strangers shall hinder them. It is the persevering faith of such men as these that conquers in the end—like the perseverance of the Syro-Phœnician woman.

V. THEIR CLEAR DECISION. 1. *Jesus asked what he should do for them.* This shows willingness to help. But he must have a clear statement of need. Perhaps he spoke with a smile of amusement at the intensity of their eager cry. As though there were any doubt as to what they needed! His question will calm them. 2. *They answered promptly and without hesitation.* They know what they want. We should know what we want from Christ.

VI. THEIR PERFECT HEALING. 1. *It sprang from the compassion of Christ.* The blind men asked for mercy. They got more—deep sympathy. This is the root and source of Christ's saving grace. 2. *It was immediate.* There was delay in finding Christ; there was no delay when he was found. 3. *It was just the thing required.* They asked for sight, and they received it. We do not always get exactly what we seek for, but if we seek aright we get its better equivalent.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—16.—*The labourers in the vineyard.* This parable is one from which we are liable to draw some erroneous inferences unless we mentally hold it in strict connection with the circumstances in which it was originally spoken. When the rich young man turned away sorrowful, our Lord, sympathizing with the severity of his temptation, said, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." Peter, seeing that he thus appreciated the difficulty of giving up property and detaching one's self from the world, suggests that those who overcome that difficulty are peculiarly meritorious. "Behold," he says, "*we have* left all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" But in so speaking, Peter revealed precisely that disposition which most thoroughly vitiates all service for Christ—the disposition to bargain, to work for a clearly defined reward, and not for the sake of the work itself, and in generous faith in the justice and liberality of the Master. Read in this light, it is obvious that the parable directs attention to the fact that, in estimating the value of work, we must take into consideration, not only the time we have spent upon it or the amount we have got through, but the motive that has entered into it. An hour of trustful, loving service is of greater value to God than a lifetime of calculating industry and self-deceiving zeal. While men are applauding the great workers who ostentatiously wipe the sweat from their brows and pant so that you can hear them across the whole field, God is regarding an unnoticed worker, who feels he is doing little, who is ashamed that any one should see his work, who regrets he can do no more, who could not name a coin small enough to reward him, but who is perfectly well assured that the Master he serves is well worth serving. It is thus that the last becomes first, and the first last. That we are meant to see this difference of spirit in the workers is obvious from the terms of their engagement. Those hired early in the day *agree* to work for the penny. At four or five in the morning no man in the market engages without making his own terms, and striking hands with his hirer as his equal. If he thinks one master's pay too little, he waits for a better offer; he is not going to work all day to oblige a neighbouring proprietor, but to make a good wage for himself. But in the evening the tables are turned—the masters have it all their own way. Possibly these men were the proudest in the morning, and missed their chance; but now pride gives place to hunger and anxious thoughts of the coming night. In no condition to bargain, they go, glad to

get work on any terms, not knowing what they are to get, but trusting and grateful; the others went proud, self-confident, mercenary. This prepares us for the striking scene which ensued at the close of the day. Those who had barely got their work begun were *first* paid, and were paid a full day's wage. There must, of course, have been a reason for this; it was not mere caprice, but was the result and expression of some just law. It could not be that these late-hired labourers had done as much in their one hour as the others in twelve; for the others are conscious of having done their work well. We are thrown back, therefore, for the explanation on the hint given in the hiring, namely, that the men who bargained are paid according to their bargain; while the men who trusted got far more than they could have dared to bargain for. The principle is more easily understood, because we ourselves so commonly act upon it. It is work done with some human feeling in it that you delight in; that of the man who works not for you, but for his wage, is the work of a hireling, with whom you are quits when you pay him what he contracted to receive. Our Lord does not affirm, however, that *all* the last shall be first, and the first last, but only that *many* shall exemplify this reversal. "Many are called, but few chosen."

I. IT IS THE FACT THAT MANY WHO ARE FIRST IN MAN'S ESTEEM ARE LAST IN GOD'S RECKONING. We see plainly enough that many who are most diligent in the Lord's vineyard have a complacency, a consciousness that *they* are the good workers, which does not at all resemble the humble, trustful, self-ignoring spirit of these late-hired labourers. Perhaps they have once in their life made a great sacrifice as Peter had done, or perhaps they have quickly apprehended the duty peculiar to their own generation, whether it be caring for the sick, aiding the poor, or carrying the gospel to the masses, or subscribing liberally to Church objects. Or perhaps they do the work, not for the sake of the vineyard, but for their own sake—either that they may advance their own spiritual state, or win a good reputation, or maintain in their own minds the impression that they are indubitably good labourers. Now, if you deduct all who are working in one or other of these ways, you will come to the conclusion that "many are called, but few chosen;" many working hard, spending and being spent, and yet withal few choice workers, few who appeal to the Lord's heart and draw out his affectionate response by their lowly, unexpectant service.

II. MANY FIRST, BUT NOT ALL THE FIRST, SHALL BE LAST. Some at least of the best-known workers in the vineyard, some who entered it early, and never left it for an hour, some who scarcely once straightened their backs from toil and dropped asleep as they came to the end of their task, knowing nothing but God's work their whole life through, have also wrought in no bargaining spirit, but passed as humble a judgment on their work as the least of their fellow-labourers on theirs.

III. AND THERE ARE SOME LAST WHO REMAIN LAST. Not all who do little do it well; not all who enter the vineyard late enter it humbled. Mercenariness is not confined to those who have some small excuse for it. Late entrance into the vineyard is to be on every account deprecated, and receives no encouragement from this parable rightly read. Do not think of the work of Christ as a mere extra, which can at any convenient time be added to your other work. It covers the whole of our life. All outside his vineyard is idleness.

This parable may be viewed as the great Physician's prescription for envy in whatever sphere it is manifested, and may be applied in two ways. 1. Every man of us has as much at least as he deserves. Were God to say, "Take that thine is," in the strictness of just and exact retribution, which of us would willingly stand upon our right? 2. The second is found in these words, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" You are none the less because another is greater. You are what God sees best to make you, and what the other is he is of God's goodness. It is at God's expense, not at yours, that any man is blessed. But the teaching special to this parable is that our Lord measures our work, not solely by the amount done, nor by the skill we show in doing it, but by the spirit we are of in the doing of it. Many of us are called. Many of us are in the vineyard, and have long been so. In what spirit have we laboured?—D.

Vers. 20—28.—*Salome's petition for Zebedee's sons.* This strange petition must have operated in a twofold way upon our Lord. On the one hand, it must have made it

more clear than ever to his mind that nothing but his death and departure from this earth could dissipate the hopes of an earthly kingdom cherished by even the best of his followers. On the other hand, it gave him a most melancholy exhibition of the kind of men whom he must leave behind him to found his Church. Yet in our Lord's reply there is no trace of anger, of contempt, or even of disappointment, but only of tenderness. It is the language of a father to his child, who begs to be allowed to go with him on a perilous expedition. No man can by any possibility make this life easy to himself and yet find himself next to Christ in all that constitutes the glory of his character and work. Nothing daunted, the two brothers promptly declare that what Jesus can endure they also can endure. They were prepared for any risks such as they considered were inevitable in a popular rising; they had made up their minds to follow their Master to the end. Our Lord's answer might seem to imply that it is possible for men to share his experience here, and yet not be with him eternally. Manifestly this is an impossible meaning. What our Lord meant was merely to direct the thoughts of his disciples to the fact that he was not an arbitrary Prince who might rule as he pleased, advancing his own favourites to high posts, and bestowing large rewards on those he loved, but was rather the Administrator of an inflexibly righteous and impartial government, in which all things were regulated according to fixed law. He has in his gift all that is worth working for; but all he has he must give to those who in the judgment of the Supreme (that is *really*) are worthy of them. No doubt he was exceptionally attached to James and John; all that friend can ask of friend he was delighted to give; but he could not reverse moral law and upset moral order in their favour. We argue as these men did: "Christ loves us; all will be well. He wishes to honour us; we shall be honoured." We refuse to consider that in God's government high position simply means high character, and nearness to Christ is but another name for likeness to Christ. A father may desire nothing more earnestly than that his two sons take their places in life at his right hand and at his left; but he knows perfectly well that this can only be if his sons fall in with certain conditions. So Christ cannot promote you irrespective of what you are. Our neglect of this law appears in our prayers. Character has an organic integrity and a consecutive growth as a tree has. But we ask God to give us fruit without either branch, blossom, or time. We wish ability to accomplish certain objects before we have the fundamental graces out of which that ability can alone spring. When we are suddenly put to shame through our lack of Christian temper, courage, or charity, we as suddenly ask Christ for the grace we need, apparently supposing that we have just to give the order and put on the ready-made habit. In such a case we might hear our Lord's voice saying to us, "Ye know not what ye ask. These things I can give only to those who are prepared for them, and for whom they are prepared." Can you endure all that is required for the formation of these habits? You ask for humility: do you consider that in doing so you pray for humiliation, for failure, mortified vanity, disappointed hopes, the reproach of men, and the feeling that you are worthy of darker accusations than any that men can bring against you? You ask to be useful in the world: but can you drink of Christ's cup? can you take your stand by his side, abandoning your own pleasure and profit for the sake of the ungrateful? And yet he does not daunt you with impracticable requirements, he would not discourage you from high aims, but would have you count the cost, so that, understanding something of the difficulties before you, your resolve to succeed may become more determined and eager, your prayer more real and urgent. In our prayers we are sometimes too general. Through indifference or want of thought, we pray in general terms for blessings which are recognized by all as the proper subjects of prayer. The fault of the sons of Zebedee lay in an opposite direction; and yet with all this definiteness of naming the precise posts they aspired to in the new kingdom, they had not been at pains to fathom the real purport of their request. We also have sometimes the appearance of definite knowledge without the reality. But our Lord takes occasion further to tell his disciples (vers. 25—28) that greatness in his kingdom consists not in getting service, but in doing service; not in having servants, but in being servants. In the kingdom of Christ the throne was really the cross; it was that deepest humiliation and most devoted service of men which gave Christ his true power over us all. The greatness he won for himself, and to which he invites us, is power to do without the things we naturally crave; to forego worldly

honour and the applause of men, to hold comfort and ease very cheap, and to make nothing of money and possessions; it is power to put ourselves at the disposal of a good cause, and to be of service to those who need our service.—D.

Ver. 22.—*Ignorant prayers.* "Ye know not what ye ask." If some one were to say to us, as we rose from our knees or after public worship, "What is it that you now expect to receive? Of all the blessings men have been known to receive at the hand of God, which have you been asking for?" should we not frequently be forced to own, "I know not what I asked"? We seem to expect little more than that somehow our tone may be elevated and the temper of our spirits improved by our worship. But communion with God can never supersede simple prayer; so long as we are encompassed with infirmities we must ask God's help, and when we do so we should know what it is we ask. There are four ways in which the text pointedly rebukes us.

I. WHEN WE UTTER THE LANGUAGE OF PRAYER WITHOUT ATTACHING ANY MEANING TO IT. We do not dream of waiting for an answer, because we have no desire to receive one. Aim at such definiteness that if, when you say, "Forgive me my sins," God were to say, "*What* sin?" you would be able without hesitation to name those transgressions that are written on your conscience. Be as sure what you have to complain of as when you go to consult your physician.

II. WHEN WE PRAY FOR SOME DEFINITE BLESSING WHICH WE DESIRE, NOT SO MUCH FROM A PERSONAL APPRECIATION OF ITS WORTH, AS FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS ONE OF THE THINGS GOD IS MOST READY TO GIVE. These sons of Zebedee named the precise boon on which their hearts were set, and yet what could they have told you of the real purport of their request—of the requirements of the position they aspired to? No one who prays can acquit himself of this very charge. Take so common a request as that for the Holy Spirit: have you thought that you were inviting a Person, and that Person absolutely holy and almighty, to dwell within you? We are to covet earnestly God's best gifts, but we are to limit ourselves by his promises, and to learn the meaning of these promises as far as we can. By asking such things as we know our need of, even though they be less valuable than some other gifts, we may be led on to richer blessings than we looked for.

III. WHEN WE PRAY FOR WHAT IS IN ITSELF GOOD, BUT TO US WOULD BE EVIL. If God, who sees the effect these things would have upon you, were to translate your prayer, it might be, "I beseech thee grant me complete delight in this world, and forgetfulness of thee; I pray thee humble me no more, but grant me of thy mercy vanity and pride of life; I pray thee increase to me the cares of this life, so that I may not be disposed to worship thee nor to remember my own need of thee. Send me no more chastening and discipline, remove from me all restraints and crosses, and graciously suffer me so to fall away from thee, that I may be in danger of everlasting woe." Yet this is not a reason for restraining prayer, but for laying each of our petitions before God with an accompanying resignation of our will to his.

IV. WHEN WE PRAY FOR SOME GOOD THING WITHOUT TAKING ACCOUNT OF WHAT WE MUST DO AND SUFFER IN ORDER TO OBTAIN IT. Many of the gifts we ask at God's hand are such qualities of soul as can only be produced by long and painful processes. You ask for humility: do you know that herein you ask for failure, disappointed hopes, mortified vanity, the reproach of men, and the feeling that you are worthy of deeper accusations than any they can bring against you? You ask to be like Christ: but can you drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism? These words of your Lord are not spoken to dishearten you, to discourage you from high aims; but he would have you pray with deliberation, with a mind made up, with a devoted and solemn apprehension of the difficulties before you.

Two remedies may be suggested for this evil of vagueness and ignorance in prayer, the first connected with the form, the second with the matter, of prayer. 1. It seems to have been the practice of the devout in all ages to use the voice in their private devotions. Where it is possible, speech is a great help to an orderly method of thinking. Besides, so long as we merely think, we fall into the idea that it is only a frame of our own spirits we have to do with; and speech, the ordinary mode of realizing another's presence, enables us at once to realize the presence of God. 2. The great remedy against ignorance in prayer is to be found in meditation. And no man will

ever make much of meditation who does not make much of the Word of God. Realize that this is not just a book to read, but a voice speaking to you, that it has a Person behind it addressing you. This, without any mystic influence, but on the most natural principles, works a change in our devotions. This gives us a real communion with God.—D.

Vers. 1—16.—*The astonishment of precedence.* The text of this parable is found in the last verse of the preceding chapter. The words are repeated as the conclusion of its argument (ver. 16). Hence the critics say the last verse of ch. xix. ought to have been the first of ch. xx. Yet the last verse of ch. xix. is evidently connected with Christ's discourse upon the case of the ruler (cf. Mark x. 31). Note—

I. THAT PRECEDENCE IS ASTONISHED IN GOD'S GIFTS AND CALLINGS. 1. *The Jews were the people of ancient privilege.* (1) Theirs was the "adoption." Nationally they were separated from all the peoples of the earth, and adopted by God as his peculiar treasure. (2) Theirs was the "glory." In the pillar of cloud. In the cherubim. (3) Theirs were the "covenants." The first from Sinai—the Law. The second from Zion—the gospel (cf. Isa. ii. 3; Luke xxiv. 47). (4) Theirs was the "service of God." For ages "Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship." Levitical rites were instituted and sanctioned against all Gentile abominations. (5) Theirs were the "promises," viz. on which the covenants were established. They were given to the fathers, and renewed and amplified by the ministry of the prophets. By these God, "rising up early," went into the market-place to hire labourers for his vineyard (cf. Jer. vii. 25). As the day of their visitation wore on, the prophets invited the people at the third, sixth, and ninth hours. (6) Theirs were the "fathers." They were sprung from Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. They were "beloved for the fathers' sakes." (7) Theirs was "Christ, as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 4, 5). 2. *Their presumption upon their precedence was rebuked* (1) They believed themselves by it secured against rejection. They overlooked the conditions of their promises. They missed the lessons of their history. They filled up the measure of their iniquity in rejecting Christ. (*a*) In his Person. (*b*) In his gospel offer of salvation. Then Christ rejected them. Their place and nation were taken away by the Romans; and they have ever since suffered in captivity. (2) That the Gentiles should become "fellow-heirs" with them so as to leave no difference (cf. Acts xv. 1, 9; Eph. iii. 3—6), was a mystery they would not comprehend. Their anger at the mercy of God to the Gentiles is expressed in the murmuring and evil eye (see Deut. xv. 9; Prov. xxiii. 6; Mark vii. 22) of the labourers first called, against the lord of the vineyard, for his goodness to those called at the eleventh hour. Note: The labourers first called bargained (ver. 13) for hire in the spirit of the Law; and the murmur was in keeping with the spirit of the bargain. Those afterwards called worked in faith and love, viz. in the spirit of the gospel (cf. Rom. iv. 4, 5). God is now taking out of all nations "a people for his Name." (3) The Christian Churches were first formed among the believing Jews, but since the destruction of Jerusalem, these have become absorbed in the Gentile Churches afterwards founded. (4) Amongst the Gentile nations there is one destined in the order of providence to stand out in contrast to the rejected Jewish nation (see ch. xxi. 43). Can Britain be that distinguished nation?

II. THAT PRECEDENCE IS ASTONISHED IN GOD'S RECKONINGS. 1. *Consider the lessons of the market-place.* (1) All sinners are "idle," or do nothing to purpose, before God calls them to work in his vineyard. (2) Those who desire to labour in his cause should be found in the market-place where the Master seeks his labourers—in the appointed means of grace. God does not commonly find his labourers in the slums of the city. Another master finds his willing slaves in the walks of wickedness (see Josh. xxiv. 15). (3) Some are called in the morning of their days, as the Baptist and Timothy (see Luke i. 15; 2 Tim. iii. 15). Some in the meridian of life. Nicodemus may be born again when he is old. (4) Let not the sinner plead to his destruction the mercy of the "eleventh hour." Can the pleader say, with the men in the parable, "No man hath hired us"? The thief on the cross was a singular and extraordinary example, and may be in his conversion accounted with the miracle of the rending rocks and opening graves. 2. *Consider the lessons of the vineyard.* (1) There is work

in the Church for every qualified labourer. All are qualified by accepting the Householder's conditions. (2) The work is pleasant. We are called into the vineyard of the Church to weed and dress, to plant and water, to fence and train. The training of living growths is not dull work. The production and maturing of immortal fruits for the service and glory of a gracious Master is inspiring service. (3) The time for vineyard work is short. One day, at most, to be followed by the "night in which no man can work." The eleventh hour of life may be earlier or later. It was early to Thomas Spencer, Henry Martyn, Kirk White, Robert McCheyne. (4) Every labourer has his hire. 3. *Consider the lessons of the reckoning.* (1) God gives to every one his *right* under the *agreement* he has made with him (see Rom. iii. 5, 6). The heavenly reward will be given to all who seek it in God's *way*, without reference to *time* or *accidents*. Further than this we must not insist upon the equality of wages (see Luke xix. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 8). (2) God exercises a free and sovereign grace beyond his *engagements* of promise. It would be sad for the best of us were he to limit us to our merits. Then the highest creature must go away into nothing; the wicked into misery. (3) The goodness of God will astonish some who have come in late to find themselves preferred before others who have laboured long. Some who followed Christ when first he preached afterwards became offended and walked no more with him. Paul was as one chosen out of due time, yet he came not behind the chiefest of the apostles, and took the throne forfeited by Iscariot. (4) Many who occupy the first rank here for culture, standing, and influence, will there be last. Galilæans, in these respects inferior to the scribes and priests, were chosen to be the inspired teachers of the gospel. The lowest will in many cases be preferred to the self-righteous Pharisee (see ch. viii. 11, 12; xxi. 31, 32; Luke vii. 29, 30; xiii. 28—30). The disciples evidently thought the advantages of the rich in favour of salvation were such that if they should fail, there could be little hope for the poor; but were "astonished exceedingly" to hear the teaching of Christ (see ch. xix. 23—26). John Newton said, "When I get to heaven I shall see three wonders. The first will be to see many persons there whom I did not expect to see; the second will be to miss many whom I did expect to see; the greatest wonder of all will be to find myself there."—J. A. M.

Vers. 17—19.—*Prophetic anticipations.* The roads are now crowded with people journeying to Jerusalem to celebrate there the great annual Feast of the Passover (see Deut. xvi. 1—7). Jesus separated his disciples from the crowd, probably by retiring into some sylvan shade to rest, that he might discourse to them privately of his approaching Passion. His discourse evinces—

I. A DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE. 1. *It anticipated his betrayal.* (1) He was able to read its history in that of Ahithophel (cf. 2 Sam. xv. 12; Ps. xli. 9; lv. 12, 14, 20; John xiii. 18). (2) As yet he had not named Judas; but, had Judas already meditated his infamous act, what must have been his feelings when Jesus now said in his hearing, "And the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes"? No disciple of Christ can apostatize from him unwarned. 2. *It anticipated the malignity of the rulers.* (1) Delivery "unto the chief priests and scribes" is a periphrasis for the Sanhedrin, which sat at "Jerusalem" (see Luke xiii. 33). (2) The corporate conscience is proverbially elastic; yet who but God could have foreseen that the Sanhedrin would agree to condemn Jesus to death? (3) The Sanhedrin might "condemn" to death under the Mosaic Law, but the Romans had deprived it of the power to carry out the sentence (see John xvii. 31). In this note a symptom of the departure of the sceptre or magistracy from Judah, which was to be preceded by the coming of Shiloh (see Gen. xlix. 10). 3. *It anticipated the violence of the Romans.* (1) This is now the third time that Jesus clearly predicted his sufferings (cf. ch. xvi. 21; xvii. 22, 23). But here, for the first time, the part the Gentiles were to take in that tragedy is indicated. It was meet that the Saviour of a sinful world should suffer from the combined malice of Jew and Gentile (see Eph. ii. 16). (2) "And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock." This was done by Herod and his Roman soldiers (see Luke xxiii. 11). (3) "And to scourge." This was done by Pilate (see John xix. 1). And his soldiers followed up the scourging with many dreadful insults. (4) "And to crucify." The punishment of the cross was Roman, not Jewish. It was, originally considered, more probable that Jesus should be privately slain or stoned to death in a tumult,

as was Stephen. And when he was delivered back to the Jews by Pilate, with permission to judge him according to their Law, it is wonderful that he was not stoned. The foreknowledge that saw it otherwise was manifestly Divine. How little did those cruel actors know that they were offering up the great Sacrifice for the world's salvation! How does God make the wrath of man to praise him! 4. *It anticipated his resurrection from the dead.* (1) No fact, originally considered, could be more unlikely than this; yet it is circumstantially predicted, and fulfilled to the letter. (2) This element in the prediction was assuring to himself. The joy of its anticipation sustained him in his preparatory sufferings. In it he was "straightway glorified" (cf. John xiii. 31, 32; Heb. xii. 2). (3) It was also assuring to the disciples. When they heard of his approaching sufferings they were "amazed" and "afraid" (Mark x. 32), and the more so as they "understood none of these things" (Luke xviii. 34). Yet afterwards they remembered them as most memorable things.

II. A DIVINE PREDESTINATION. 1. *Jesus could have avoided his sufferings.* (1) He was not surprised into them. He foresaw them all. Every thorn of his crown was fully in his vision. (2) He could have avoided Jerusalem. His boldness in going up there amazed his affrighted disciples (Mark x. 32). (3) At Jerusalem, were he so minded, he might have had "twelve legions of angels," any of which could have frustrated the purposes of the Jews and the resources of the Romans. 2. *But he resolutely faced them.* (1) Because he would fulfil all righteousness. He must therefore keep the Passover; and he must go to Jerusalem to keep it (see Deut. xii. 5). The moral here is that consequences must never be considered in competition with the will of God. (2) Because he would fulfil all benevolence. He went up to that Passover that he might himself become the world's salvation. (3) This the multitude could not see. Note: The action of Jesus was allegorical, when he separated his disciples from the crowd on their way to the legal Passover, that he might unfold to them the mysteries of his Passion. The spirit of the Law is a special revelation. (4) What the disciples had heard they were in due time to testify. Not yet; events were not ripe. Hence also their separation from the crowd on the road (cf. ch. x. 27; xvii. 9). (5) The Scriptures must be fulfilled (cf. Luke xviii. 31). The Divine power of Jesus in fulfilling the predictions uttered by him is as conspicuous and real as the Divine prescience which prompted their utterance.

REMARKS. 1. It is good to converse with Jesus in the way. 2. It is good to anticipate so as to become familiar with our dying. 3. It is good to connect with our meditation upon death the matter of our resurrection.—J. A. M.

Vers. 20—28.—*Distinction in the kingdom.* In the company of Jesus and his twelve apostles, as they went up to Jerusalem to the Passover, were probably other disciples, their relatives and friends. For here is "the mother of the sons of Zebedee," who came "worshipping, and asking a certain thing" of Jesus. The reply and discourse following show—

I. THAT DISTINCTION IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS NOT THE DISTINCTION OF LORDSHIP. 1. *This is the distinction of earthly kingdoms.* (1) "The princes of the Gentiles lord it over them." They have titles, insignia, robes, retinues, and ceremonies, to invest them with an air of superiority. The spirit of the world is ostentation—vanity and pride. (2) "Their great ones exercise authority over them." Their distinction is more than pageantry. They wield power civil and military. This they often use tyrannically. (3) "They are called benefactors" (see Luke xxii. 25). Their patronage is courted. Their favours are applauded. They are worshipped and imitated by courtiers, sycophants, and slaves. 2. *Christians sometimes mistake it for the distinction of Christ's kingdom.* (1) These, however, are imperfect Christians, as the apostles were before the Day of Pentecost. The sons of Zebedee were evidently of this way of thinking when they sought places of distinction. For degrees of dignity in Eastern customs were denoted by proximity to the throne (see 1 Kings ii. 19; Ps. xliv. 9). They still cling to the notion of an earthly monarchy. Note: To desire to be preferred before a brother is to reflect upon him. Their fellow-disciples were no less vulgarly ambitious. Ambition was the source of their indignation against the sons of Salome. (2) Christ discerns the subtle pride that eludes the vision of its subject. On an earlier occasion Jesus rebuked James and John, and said, "Ye know not what

manner of spirit ye are of" (see Luke ix. 55). Here again, "Ye know not what ye ask." Ye know not the true quality of my kingdom (see 1 Pet. v. 3). Neither know ye what is pre-required. "Are ye able," etc.? (ver. 22). We know not what we ask when we desire the glory of the crown without the grace to bear the cross. (3) Ambition may too much presume upon influence. The mother of the sons of Zebedee was probably a near relative of our Lord; some think she was the daughter of Cleophas or Alphæus, and sister or cousin-german to Mary (cf. Mark v. 40; xvi. 1; John xix. 25). They availed themselves, therefore, of their mother's influence. They may have encouraged their ambition also by the favours they had already enjoyed. Jesus had called them "sons of thunder" (see Mark iii. 17); and with Peter they were on three occasions specially favoured (see Mark v. 37; ch. xvii. 1; xxvi. 37). Yet were none so reproved as these. Whom Christ best loves he most reproves (see Rev. iii. 19). (4) In the reproof there is still recognition of distinction proper to the kingdom of Christ. He refers to his kingdom of glory what they understood of a kingdom of the earth. He had already promised to his apostles the distinction of the twelve thrones. There is a "measure of stature" both of grace and glory (Eph. iv. 13). (5) The whole passage may be taken as a prophetic allusion to and condemnation of that spirit of domination which so early manifested itself in the Apostasy (see 2 Thess. ii. 4).

II. THAT DISTINCTION IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS THE DISTINCTION OF SERVICE. 1. *The service of suffering.* (1) This is implied in the question, "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" Christ obtained not his crown by wars and victories, but by shame and death. Very different from the sons of Zebedee were those whom our Lord was first to have on his right hand and on his left (see ch. xxvii. 38). (2) "We are able." This was the language of self-confidence; its vanity was soon made manifest (see ch. xxvi. 31, 56). Christ did not rebuke that self-confidence then; he left the rebuking to events. History has its admonitions as well as its revenges. (3) "My cup indeed ye shall drink." Here note the spirit of prophecy. James suffered martyrdom from Herod (see Acts xii. 2). John was banished to Patmos (see Rev. i. 9). Both sympathized with Jesus in his suffering. Religion, if worth anything, is worth everything; and if worth everything, then it is worth suffering for. "Christ will have us know the worst, that we may make the best of our way to heaven" (Henry). (4) Yet did not this drinking of the Redeemer's cup of necessity entitle the sons of Salome to the distinction corresponding to that which they had sought. The other apostles shared with them in the suffering. So did the noble army of the martyrs. The lowest place in heaven is a full recompense for the greatest sufferings on earth. (5) For the more worthy the higher distinctions are reserved. And who but God can distinguish the most worthy? Obedience is perfected in suffering. So was the obedience of Christ perfected (see Heb. ii. 10). So is that of his followers (see Jas. i. 4). Who but God can distinguish among the perfected? But Christ is God (cf. John xvii. 2). 2. *The service of ministry.* (1) The theory of this service is here propounded (ver. 27). The minister of Christ must not lord it over God's heritage (1 Pet. v. 3). Even Paul the apostle disclaims dominion over the private Christian's faith (2 Cor. i. 24). Christians should serve one another for mutual edification (see Rom. xiv. 19; xv. 2; 1 Cor. ix. 19; 1 Pet. v. 5). In such loving service lies the truest dignity. (2) The practice of this service is encouraged by the most illustrious example (ver. 28). Jesus in his youth and early manhood appears to have been familiar with labour (see Mark vi. 3). The years of his public ministry were years of self-sacrificing toil for the good of others. This also was the end for which he died. (3) Note here especially that Jesus speaks of himself as a piacular Victim. This is the first instance in which he is reported by this evangelist to have done so; though John shows that he had done so earlier both publicly and privately (see John iii. 14, 15; vi. 51). The sacrificial nature of the death of Christ was shadowed forth in sacrifices from the beginning (see Gen. iv. 4; viii. 20; xxii. 7, 8). In after-times it was yet more largely and significantly prefigured in the Mosaic ritual (see Lev. xvii. 11; Heb. ix.). Still later it was foretold by the prophets (see Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 26). Then by the Baptist (see John i. 29). By Jesus himself. Ever since it is the fundamental truth of the gospel preached. (4) Wakefield's translation, viz. "a ransom instead of many," teaches that Christ's one sacrifice once offered was to supersede the many sacrifices of

typical anticipation. (5) By his dying "for many" we must not infer that he did not die for all, for that would be to contradict other Scriptures (see Ezek. xviii. 23; xxxiii. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 4—6). The *One* for "many" sets forth the infinite nobility of the One. —J. A. M.

Vers. 29—34.—*Community and unity.* Journeying to Jerusalem to the Passover, Jesus, with his apostles and other disciples following, was also followed by a crowd. This grew into "a great multitude" as he moved out from the populous town of Jericho. In the scene here described we may study—

I. COMMUNITY IN VARIOUS PHASES. 1. *We see it here in excitement.* (1) "A great multitude." In numbers there is a strange sympathy. This occasions the panics which frequently occur in crowds. They are also subject to fits of passion—sometimes generous, sometimes violent, often insane. We should beware of the spirit of the crowd. (2) The presence of Jesus was the occasion of this excitement. The multitude "followed him." Christ is followed from various motives. Some follow him from love: his apostles and disciples were moved by this holy inspiration. Some follow him from curiosity: the mixed multitude had heard of his character, claims, teaching, and miracles. Many still follow him for the loaves and fishes. 2. *We see it here also in suffering.* (1) "Two blind men"—Bartimæus and a companion in affliction. Friendships spring of community in suffering. The multitude who enjoyed their vision had little sympathy with those who were deprived of it. (2) They are sitting by the wayside, viz. in company, and for the same purpose, viz. to beg (see Mark x. 46). The privation of sight reduced them to this dependence. Sufferings bring with them entailments of suffering. Partnerships come with the entailments. (3) But privations have their compensations. These blind companions had the use of their ears. Blind persons generally enjoy acute hearing and sensitive touch. We do well, when we meditate upon our afflictions, to meditate also upon our mercies. 3. *And we see it in contention.* (1) The blind men cried to Jesus for mercy. Affliction has a voice to Christ. (2) But "the multitude rebuked them, that they should hold their peace." Probably they thought the cry for mercy was an appeal for alms, and that the blind men might be troublesome to Jesus. Men too readily judge of Christ by themselves. The multitude will ever rebuke those who cry after the Son of David. (3) But the blind men "cried out the more." So must all who would not come short of a moral cure. We must never heed the counsel that would keep us from Christ. When a true sense of misery urges, neither men nor devils can stop the cry for mercy. (4) In the prayer of these men we note: (*a*) Importunity. The stream of fervency, if stopped, will rise and swell the higher. (*b*) Humility. They sought not gold, but "mercy." The cry for mercy disclaims all merit (see Ps. cxxx. 7; Heb. iv. 16). (*c*) Faith. They called Jesus "Lord" (see 1 Cor. xii. 3). They identified the Messiah (cf. ch. xii. 23; xxi. 9; xxii. 44). (*d*) Persistency (see Luke xviii. 1). Now or never: Jesus is passing; will soon have passed. Christ did not return to Jericho. "Now is the accepted time." (*e*) Here was that concurrence in prayer which is especially pleasing to Christ (see ch. xviii. 19).

II. UNITY IN VARIOUS CONTRASTS. 1. *One leading many.* (1) "A great multitude followed him." Note here the ascendency of a great character. (2) Note here also the subordination of the physical to the spiritual. The multitude, as compared with Christ, were as an aggregation of physical units. 2. *One compassionating suffering.* (1) "Jesus stood still." His standing rebuked and silenced the thoughtless clatter of the unsympathizing throng. Wherever there is suffering there the Blessed One stands. (2) He "called" to the blind. What a contrast to the multitude who would have silenced their cry to him for mercy! Jesus invites those whom the world repulses. (3) The one condition of mercy, viz. to those who are prepared for it, is—Ask. "What will ye that I should do for you?" Like as the waterman in a boat who hooks the shore does not so much draw the shore to him as himself to the shore, so do we in prayer draw ourselves to the mercy of the Lord. 3. *One wonder-worker.* (1) The blind men raised their voices, not to inquire who was with Jesus, but to cry to him for mercy. (2) What a sequel (see vers. 33, 34)! (3) Spiritual blindness is ignorance of the truth. Many who say, "We see" are spiritually blind (see John ix. 41). Blindness of heart is a disease of which the patient too seldom complains. This too can be cured only by

the one great Light of the world. (4) Christ is the one Illuminator of eternity. "Earthly blindness may be borne; it is but for a day; but who could bear to be blind through eternity?" (Beecher). (5) Attendance upon Christ evinces the condition of spiritual illumination. Bartimæus and his companion now "followed," now only requiring the one great spiritual Guide. No longer are they dependent upon alms. Religion has the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. It fulfils that promise by opening the eyes of its subjects.—J. A. M.

Ver. 2.—*Fair labour-agreements.* Van Lennep describes the Eastern customs to which our Lord alludes in this parable. "During the whole season when vineyards may be dug, the common wrokmen go very early in the morning to the *sook*, or market-place of the village or city, where comestibles are sold. While 'waiting to be hired,' they take their morning cup of coffee, and eat a morsel of bread. The owners of vineyards come to the place and engage the number of labourers they need. These immediately go to the vineyard, and work there until a little while before the sun sets, which, according to Oriental time, is twelve o'clock, so that the 'eleventh hour' means one hour before sunset. We have often seen men standing in the market-place through the entire day without finding employment, and have repeatedly engaged them ourselves at noon for half a day's job, and later for one or two hours' work in our garden. In such a case the price has to be particularly bargained for, but it is more often left to the generosity of the employer to give what *bakshish* he feels disposed." There is now a very grave danger, of which we need to be on our guard. Men are talking as if our Lord made himself an authority on social questions. The truth is, that he distinctly refused to bear any relation to social, political, and legal disputes. He revealed unknown or hidden truths to men; he resettled the great principles of morals; he quickened men with a new and Divine life; but he refused to guide in detail the applications of the principles he taught. In this parable, which seems to deal with the questions of capital and labour, the thing our Lord teaches is that every man is a free man, but if, voluntarily, he enters into engagements, he must loyally keep his engagements.

I. THE MAN WHO HAS WORK TO OFFER MUST KEEP HIS ENGAGEMENTS. Religion does not need to come in and say that he who wants work done must offer fair terms for the doing of it. Common humanity and honesty demand that. No man has any right to "go beyond," "take advantage of," or "defraud" his neighbour in anything.

II. THE MAN WHO HAS SKILL TO DO THE WORK MUST KEEP HIS ENGAGEMENTS. If he agrees for a penny a day, nothing can happen to make that unfair. He may make a new bargain to-morrow, but he must carry through his bargain to-day. Strikes are very often sinful repudiations of agreements.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The eleventh hour a type of old age.* This treatment illustrates the suggestiveness of Scripture figures. They start thought on lines that lead away from their immediate connections.

I. AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR THERE IS STILL WORK TO BE DONE. Froude says, "Beautiful is old age—beautiful as the slow-dropping mellow autumn of a rich and glorious summer. In the old man Nature has fulfilled her work; she loads him with her blessings; she fills him with the fruits of a well-spent life; and, surrounded by his children and his children's children, she rocks him away to a grave, to which he is followed with blessings. God forbid we should not call it beautiful!" If old age were only beautiful, it would be a power we could ill afford to lose. For all beauty is akin to truth, and all truth is akin to God; and so all beauty is a shadow of him, a message from him, a help towards him. This sin-filled world wants *all* the truth, *all* the love, *all* the beauty it can get, in order to dispel the darkness, the hate, and the ugliness of its evil. We become as the things on which we look, and God keeps old men and women among us in order that we may see, and feel, and be lifted higher by their grace. The aged are kept among us because of the work they can do. One thing—they can check our hurry. Young folk want everything at once. The aged seem to say, "Quietly. One thing at a time. Good things are worth waiting for." And they are kept in order to link together the generations. What a world it would be if the people came and went in complete generations, and there was no blending of one with

the other, so that experience might tone ardour! And the aged among us witness for God. They tell us of the God who "fed them all their life long; the God who redeemed them from evil."

II. AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR GOD DOES CALL MEN TO HIS SERVICE. He proves the riches of his grace in the conversion of old men and old women. A marvel of grace, indeed, when all the long ten hours of the day of life have been spent in the service of self. A saved old man is the witness that God can "save unto the uttermost."

III. AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR IS AN ALMOST HOPELESS TIME FOR BEGINNING A LIFE-WORK. It is unsuitable for any beginnings. The sun is in the wrong quarter of the heavens. "The night cometh when no man can work." And the ability is low. The "eleventh hour" is time to be weary, and go to the long rest.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The social difficulty of the workless.* Civilization works cruelly for some classes of society. It improves the condition of the few; it multiplies the miseries of the many. One thing it does—gathers great masses of people into the cities, where the demand for workers must be limited, and the thousands must be "workless." Scatter the people over the land, and every man can find work which will provide him with a simple living. Mass the people in a few centres, and, as they cannot earn by work, all they can do is prey on one another, either in the bad sense of criminality, or in the very doubtful sense of scheming to take all advantage of philanthropy and charity.

I. THE WORKLESS WHO CANNOT WORK. 1. These include persons born into disability—blind, deaf and dumb, lame, weak in intellect, etc. Of such it is only necessary to say that they are society's charge; and society is bound to provide for all who are physically incapable of work. This is simple citizen duty, society duty; it is the claim of the human brotherhood. 2. These include persons who are able to work, but cannot find work to do. They divide into: (1) Skilled workmen, whose trade has gone out of fashion or has left the country. (2) Unskilled workmen, labourers, only a limited number of whom can ever be required in one district. (3) Workmen whose trade is hopelessly overstocked, such as clerks, who can do nothing but write and sum. These workless classes make the great social problem of the day. Some would say that the Church of Christ must solve the problem. But it is not her mission; nor has she, in any sense, capacity for so doing. It belongs to national government. It is a society evil, with which society must deal. And in some way the nation must find out how to turn the stream of population that has long set strongly toward the great cities, and make it flow back upon the land. Village industrial centres provide the only hope for the million workless ones among us.

II. THE WORKLESS WHO WILL NOT WORK. "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat." We might reasonably desire that legislation should deal rigorously with all such. Every man who can work and will not should lose his right of personal liberty, should be treated as a lunatic, cared for by the state, and kept from all chance of propagating his miserable species.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Generosity may go beyond agreement.* Business men are often misunderstood, because, while they are sometimes nobly generous, they are also strict and precise in carrying out, and in requiring to be carried out, all business engagements. A man does no wrong to his fellow-man who has made precise terms with him, if he deals fairly with the man who has made no terms with him. In this case the sum agreed was one penny for a day's labour, and because the half-day man received a penny, the whole-day man set up a claim to more than a penny.

I. EVERY MAN HAS A RIGHT TO MAKE TERMS. Society is based on the principle that every man is absolutely free to buy or to sell. There is the open market for goods, and there is the open market for physical power, and the open market for cultured skill. There should be no sort of restrictions on free purchase and sale. Combinations to raise prices are perilous, whether they belong to capitalist or workman, to buyer or seller. They are, at the best, necessities of over-civilization, which has disturbed all natural relations. The man who has money to put to use has precisely as great a right to make the best terms he can as the workman who has a cunning right hand to sell. If social relations were more simple and natural, it would be possible for the man with money, the man with brains, and the man with hands, to

meet and negotiate their conditions of mutual service, making fair and honourable terms for each. All combinations are unhealthy interferences with the markets that should be absolutely open and free to everybody.

II. EVERY MAN HAS A RIGHT TO BE GENEROUS. If a man pleases, he may accept less work for his money from some. If a man pleases, he may pay for his work more than he agreed. If a man pleases, he may pay for doing nothing. But no man has any *claim* upon his brother's generosity. It ceases to be generosity if he has claim upon it. This needs to be vigorously asserted in our day, because a confused notion is growing up that the poor have *claims* on a distribution of the money of the rich. A man has a right to be generous, and an equal right to be ungenerous. He is only noble and Christly as he uses well his right to be generous.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Anticipations of betrayal.* It is not often set out prominently that the chief ingredient in our Lord's sorrowful anticipations was his betrayal by one of his disciples. There is no greater distress comes to us in life than the unfaithfulness of trusted friends. The psalmist wails in this way (Ps. lv. 12—14): "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it . . . but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." The dealings of our Lord with Judas need careful study. Our Lord had to act so as not to interfere with Providence. The fact that he *knew* what would happen must not be used to prevent it from happening; and yet that knowledge filled him with anxiety concerning Judas, and constrained him to make attempts to influence the man who, on the road of his covetousness, was fast hastening to his crime.

I. ANTICIPATIONS OF BETRAYAL TESTED THE LORD JESUS. Even *that* was in the Father's will for him. There could hardly be anything in his cup of woe more bitter. Probably Judas had been chosen an apostle because of his business capacity. Our Lord had trusted him. His face was familiar to him. He had grown interested in Judas, and it was hard indeed to think he would, one day soon, turn traitor. Our Lord would not have been fairly tested by all forms of human anxiety if he had not known failing, forsaking friends. Could he take up, and bear, *this* yoke of the Father? Knowing it was coming, could he go on, quietly, steadily, in the path of duty? Could he bear to have Judas close beside him day by day? This gives us a deep sense of the reality and severity of our Lord's struggle to preserve a perfect, Son-like obedience and submission. Even here he won and held his triumph.

II. ANTICIPATIONS OF BETRAYAL TESTED THE DISCIPLES. It must have led to heart-searching inquiries. Some, no doubt, felt our Lord's words more than the others. Some would think it only a melancholy mood that the Master was in. Some would feel quite certain that the words would never apply to them. What did Judas think about the possible betrayal? We know well. The man who is deteriorating, as Judas was, becomes insensible to such suggestions. None could have been more positive than Judas in denying that the term "traitor" could ever apply to him. But Judas *was* the betrayer.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*Motherly ambitions.* It is certainly surprising to find James and John presenting such a request as this. We cannot but think that they ought to have known their Lord better. If any of the apostolic company had insight of their Master's spiritual mission, it surely was the first group, which included James and John. Perhaps Matthew lets the light in when he explains that they were prompted by their mother. "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him." If it was *her* idea, we can understand it. Woman-like, she was practical; she understood only the material aspect of Messiah's mission; and she had not come into such association with Christ as served to correct and spiritualize her ideas; and she knew the value of forethought, of "taking time by the forelock," and so she schemed to secure an early promise of the best places in the new kingdom for her sons. A motherly mother indeed!

I. WORTHY MOTHERLY AMBITIONS. Illustrate how directly the great men, in all the various spheres of life, have been dependent on their mothers. Explain the ambition in the heart of every Jewish mother to become the mother of Messiah. A possible poet, artist, thought-leader, statesman, age-reformer, hero, is in every child

that lies on woman's bosom; and she is a poor mother who does not look into her child's face, and dream for him high position and ennobling influence in the days of unfolded manhood. But ambitions are not worthy that rest with worldly success. True motherhood is more anxious that the child shall be *worthy of* success, than that he should *win* success. Character alone is the worthy ambition. Mothers aim at nobility and piety.

II. MISTAKEN MOTHERLY AMBITIONS. These are illustrated in the passage before us. This mother wanted office, rank, and wealth. In these days motherhood often aims at imperfect and unworthy things. Illustrate by the modern despising of trade, and pressing of the sons into overstocked professions; despising of retail trade, and pressing into overstocked wholesale commerce; or by anxiety to secure advantageous marriage settlements. A child's material well-being is a proper subject of motherly concern; but moral and spiritual character and health ought always to be held as the supreme things.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Inconsiderate petition.* "Ye know not what ye ask." That is, you have not thought seriously about it; have not looked it well round, so as to be quite sure what your petition means and involves. One is a little surprised to find James and John acting so impulsively. It is the sort of thing that better suits Peter. "Boanerges" is a strange name for John; perhaps it was specially adapted to James, the elder brother. This James seems to have been somewhat of a zealot, and he paid the penalty by becoming the first apostolic martyr.

I. AN INCONSIDERATE PRAYER. Evidently these men had no higher idea of Christ's mission than that he had come to found a temporal kingdom. They asked an impossible thing, simply because they did not know how impossible it was. If they had spiritually entered into the teachings of Jesus, they never could have asked it. Their prayer lacked "humility" because it lacked "thought." Prayer is a serious thing. It is the approach of the erring creature to the All-holy, if All-merciful, One; it can never be undertaken lightly. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We should "take with us words," carefully chosen, when we "turn unto the Lord." Prayer may lose tone by its frequency, and become unduly familiar. So often we go to God with nothing special to say. We go because it is time to go; the hour of prayer has struck. Distinguish between (1) acts of adoration; (2) acts of communion; (3) acts of petition; (4) acts of intercession. Our daily spiritual converse with God is only in a conventional sense called "prayer;" for there need not be any element of petition in it. How many of our prayers would have been offered, if we had seriously thought about them beforehand? Thought takes in what may be *right* for us to ask, and what we may suppose God can give.

II. DIVINE TREATMENT OF INCONSIDERATE PRAYER. Jesus answered kindly, but firmly. James and John were wrong, and must be shown that they were wrong. Our Lord endeavoured to quicken thought, and so help James and John to correct their own mistake. And their great mistake was that they had misapprehended his royalty. He was to be King of the obedient, who would be willing to suffer for their obedience. If they had known what they asked, they would have seen that they asked a special share with Christ in his sufferings.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Imperfect self-estimates.* "They say unto him, We are able." The words of our Lord "come to us as spoken in a tone of infinite tenderness and sadness. That nearness to him in his glory could be obtained only by an equal nearness in suffering. Had they counted the cost of that nearness? There was enough to lead them to see in their Master's words an intimation of some great suffering about to fall on him, and this is, indeed, implied in the very form of their answer. 'We are able,' say they, in the tone of those who have been challenged and accept the challenge. That their insight into the great mystery of the Passion went but a little way as compared with their Master's, lies, of course, in the very nature of the case" (Dean Plumptre). Over a Greek temple was placed the inscription, "Know thyself;" but every man finds that to be the very hardest work ever given him to do.

I. A MAN IS EVER INCLINED TO EXAGGERATE HIS OWN EXCELLENCES. Vigorous

as he may be in criticizing the virtues of others, a man is weak at self-criticism. There is a fondness for his own things which prevents his appraising them aright. He judges others by a standard, but, unfortunately, the standard is his own attainment. It is only when he is willing to take Christ as the standard of moral excellence that he discovers the imperfection of his self-estimates. "Let another praise thee, and not thine own self."

II. A MAN IS EVER INCLINED TO EXAGGERATE HIS OWN DEFICIENCIES. They loom large to the sincere man, because they are *his*; he knows them so well, and he feels so keenly the difficulties and troubles into which they bring him. "Who can understand his errors?" There are some types of religious thought which exaggerate the sense of deficiency, frailty, and sin; and make forced and manufactured confession a sign of piety. There is as much real pride in exaggerating deficiencies as in exaggerating excellences. He must be taught of God who would know his own sinfulness aright.

III. A MAN IS EVER INCLINED TO EXAGGERATE HIS OWN ABILITIES. Because, while he can form a good idea of the ability, he cannot estimate the demand that is made on the ability. It may seem a big ability, but it may be very small as seen in its relation to the claims coming on it; as in this case of James and John.—R. T.

Ver. 27.—*The moral greatness of service.* There was nothing more characteristic of the teaching of Jesus, perhaps we may even say, nothing more novel in his teaching, than his reversion of the common notions of service. All the world over, and all the ages through, the ordinary man has seen dignity in "being served," and has seen a kind of indignity in "serving." This has come about in two ways. 1. Through the exaggerated importance given to *self*. A man has come to be of more interest to himself than his brother can ever be to him. Yet God made man male and female in order to prevent this egoism, and start man upon working the altruistic principle, each finding his or her own best blessing in caring for the other. Christianity is the recovery of the primary altruistic principle, and the mastery of that egoism which has proved the prolific parent of all the vices. 2. Through the absorbing interest of appearances; of material things—state, wealth, luxury, show of greatness. True greatness lies in character; let us once see this clearly and receive it fully, and then the kindliness and thoughtfulness which sweetly blend with humility, and ever make us ready to serve, will seem to be surpassingly valuable. The moral greatness of service may be seen if we consider—

I. IT IS THE HIGHEST AND NOBLEST VIEW WE CAN GET OF GOD. Thoughts of majesty, dignity, authority, are properly encouraged; but we must have felt, as the psalm-writers felt, that only when we conceive of God as the *all-ministering* One do we bow in fullest reverence of love before him. "The eyes of all wait on thee. Thou givest them their meat in due season."

II. IT IS THE INFINITE ATTRACTION OF THE LORD JESUS. The charm of Christ would be gone for ever if any one could show us that he ever got anything for himself. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He was among us as "One that serveth." His character is the ideal character; his life was the ideal life; but its glory lies in its self-denying service—its all-ruling "altruism."

III. IT IS THE UNIVERSALLY ADMIRABLE THING IN GOOD MEN. The man who lives to get is despised. The man who lives to give and serve is commended. Christ has affected the standard of moral greatness. We are no longer dazzled by appearances. *Service* to our human brother is now the only true nobility.—R. T.

Ver. 31.—*Importunity revealing character.* Eastern beggars are very clamorous and persistent. But there seems to have been something unusual in the energy and determination of these blind men. They had their opportunity, and they made the best possible use of it. There are many cases which indicate that our Lord was a keen and skilful observer of character. The actions, movements, expressions, and words of men and women revealed to him the measure of their receptivity for that double blessing—temporal and spiritual—which he was prepared to bestow. One of the most striking instances is the response he made to those four friends who carried the paralyzed man, and broke up the house-roof in order to get him into the

presence of Jesus. Reading character in their act, "seeing their faith," Jesus gave the sufferer a higher blessing than they sought, but included with it what they asked.

I. IMPORTUNITY REVEALS WILL. Many of the gravest troubles of life have their real cause in "weakness of will." Men cannot decide. If they decide, they cannot do anything with their decisions. No doubt many sufferers lost Christ's healing because they were too weak of will to seek him or cry to him. The man who can keep on is the man who has made a firm resolve; who means something; who has an end before him. This "weakness of will-power" may be a natural infirmity; but it is largely remediable by skilful educational influences; and yet to this precise work, "strengthening the will-power," how few parents, and how few teachers, bend careful attention! The world yields its treasures to those who show they have wills, by *keeping on*, fixing firm hold; and refusing to let go. Illustrate Jacob, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

II. IMPORTUNITY REVEALS FAITH. This leads in the more familiar way of treating such incidents as this of the text. What Jesus noticed in such cases was "faith." If these men had not believed that he *could* heal them, and if their faith had not blended with hope that he *would* heal them, they would have been repressed by the rebukers, and would have ceased to cry. The man in earnest is the man of faith, who is open to receive.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI.

Vers. 1—11.—*Triumphal entry into Jerusalem.* (Mark xi. 1—11; Luke xix. 29—44; John xii. 12—19.)

Ver. 1.—We have come to the last week of our Lord's earthly life, when he made his appearance in Jerusalem as Messiah, and suffered the penalty of death. If, as is believed, his crucifixion took place on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, the triumphal entry must be assigned to the ninth, which day was reckoned to commence at one sunset and to continue till the following evening. This is regarded as the first day of the Holy Week, and is called by Christians from very early times Palm Sunday (see on ver. 10). He had probably gone straight from Jericho to Bethany, and spent the sabbath there with his friends (ch. xxvi. 6; John xii. 1). **Bethphage.** The name means *House of figs*, and was appropriate to a locality where such trees grew luxuriantly. The village has not been identified with certainty, though it is considered with great probability to be represented by *Kefr-et-Tur*, on a summit of Olivet, within the bounds of Jerusalem, *i.e.* two thousand cubits' distance from the city walls. Bethany is below the summit, in a nook on the western slope and somewhat further from the city. The Mount of Olives is separated from Jerusalem by the valley of the Kedron, and has three summits, the centre one being the highest; but though it is of no great elevation in itself, it stands nearly four thousand feet above the Dead Sea, from which it is distant some thirteen miles. **Then sent Jesus two disciples.** Their names are not given, and it is useless to conjecture who they were, though probably Peter was one of them. Alford suggests that the triumphal entry in Mark xi. is related a day too soon, and that our Lord made two entries into Jerusalem—the first a private one (Mark xi. 11), and the second, public, on the morrow. But there is no sufficient reason to discredit the common tradition, and St. Mark's language can be otherwise explained. The deliberate preparation for the procession, and the intentional publicity, so contrary to Christ's usual habits, are very remarkable, and can be explained only by the fact that he was now assuming the character and claims of Messiah, and putting himself forward in his true dignity and office as "King of the Jews." By this display he made manifest that in him prophecy was fulfilled, and that the seeing eye and the believing heart might now find all that righteous men had long and wearily desired. This was the great opportunity which his mercy offered to Jerusalem, if only she would accept it and turn it to account. In fact, she acknowledged him as King one day, and then rejected and crucified him.

Ver. 2.—**The village over against you.** Bethphage, to which he points as he speaks. He gives their commission to the two disciples, mentioning even some minute details. **Straightway.** "As soon as ye be entered into it" (Mark). **Ye shall find an ass** (*a she-ass*) **tied, and a colt with her.** St. Matthew alone mentions the ass, the mother of the foal. This doubtless he does with exact reference to the prophecy, which, writing for Jews, he afterwards cites (ver. 4). St.

Jerome gives a mystical reason: the ass represents the Jewish people, which had long borne the yoke of the Law; the colt adumbrates the Gentiles, as yet unbroken, "whereon never man sat." Christ called them both, Jew and Gentile, by his apostles. **Loose them, and bring them unto me.** He speaks with authority, as One able to make a requisition and command obedience.

Ver. 3.—**Say aught unto you.** This might naturally be expected. Christ foresaw the opposition, and instructed the disciples how to overcome it with a word. **The Lord;** *ὁ Κύριος*, equivalent to "Jehovah," or the King Messiah. Doubtless the owner of the animals was a disciple, and acknowledged the claims of Jesus. His presence here was a providentially guided coincidence. If he was a stranger, as others suppose, he must have been divinely prompted to acquiesce in the appropriation of his beasts. **He will send them.** Some manuscripts read, "he sends them," here, as in St. Mark. The present is more forcible, but the future is well attested. The simple announcement that the asses were needed for God's service would silence all refusal. The disciples, indeed, were to act at once, as executing the orders of the supreme Lord, and were to use the given answer only in case of any objection. Throughout the transaction Christ assumes the character of the Divine Messiah, King of his people, the real Owner of all that they possess.

Ver. 4.—**All this was done;** *now (δὲ) all this hath come to pass.* Many manuscripts omit "all," but it is probably genuine, as in other similar passages; *e.g.* ch. i. 22; xxvi. 56. This observation of the evangelist is intended to convey the truth that Christ was acting consciously on the lines of old prophecy, working out the will of God declared beforehand by divinely inspired seers. The disciples acted in blind obedience to Christ's command, not knowing that they were thus fulfilling prophecy, or having any such purpose in mind. The knowledge came afterwards (see John xii. 16). **That it might be fulfilled** (*ἵνα πληρωθῇ*). The conjunction in this phrase is certainly used in its final, not in a consecutive or ecbatic sense; it denotes the purpose or design of the action of Christ, not the result. Not only the will of the Father, but the words of Scripture, had delineated the life of Christ, and in obeying that will he purposed to show that he fulfilled the prophecies which spake of him. Thus any who knew the Scriptures, and were open to conviction, might see that it was he alone to whom these ancient oracles pointed, and in him alone were their words accomplished. **By** (*through*, *διά*) **the prophet.** Zech. ix. 9, with a hint of Isa. lxii. 11, a quotation being often woven from two or more passages (see on ch. xxvii. 9).

Ver. 5.—**Tell ye the daughter of Zion.** This is from Isaiah (comp. Zeph. iii. 14). The passage in Zechariah begins, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem." The "daughter of Zion" is Jerusalem herself, named from the chief of the hills on which the city was built. Of course, the term includes all the inhabitants. **Behold;** marking the suddenness and unexpected nature of the event. **Thy King.** A King of thine own race, no stranger, one predestined for thee, foretold by all the prophets, who was to occupy the throne of David and to reign for ever. **Unto thee.** For thy special good, to make his abode with thee (comp. Isa. ix. 6). **Meek.** As Christ himself says, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (ch. xi. 29), far removed from pomp and warlike greatness; and yet, according to his own Beatitude, the meek shall inherit the earth (ch. v. 5), win victories which material forces can never obtain, triumph through humiliation. The original in Zechariah gives other characteristics of Messiah: "He is just, and having salvation;" *i.e.* endowed with salvation, either as being protected by God, or victorious and so able to save his people. **Sitting upon an ass.** Coming as King, he could not walk undistinguished among the crowd; he must ride. But to mount a war-horse would denote that he was leader of an army or a worldly potentate; so he rides upon an ass, an animal used by the judges of Israel, and chieftains on peaceful errands (Judg. v. 10; x. 4); one, too, greatly valued, and often of stately appearance in Palestine. **And** (*καὶ*) **a colt the foal of an ass;** such as she-asses bear, and one not trained. It is questioned whether the conjunction here expresses addition, implying that Christ mounted both animals in succession, or is merely explanatory, equivalent to videlicet, *an ass, yea, even the foal of an ass.* It seems unlikely that, in accomplishing the short distance between Bethphage and Jerusalem (only a mile or two), our Lord should have changed from one beast to the other; and the other three evangelists say expressly that Christ rode the colt, omitting all mention of the mother. The she-ass doubtless kept close to its foal, so the prophecy was exactly fulfilled, but the animal that bore the Saviour was the colt. If the two animals represent respectively the Jews and Gentiles (see on ver. 2), it seems hardly necessary for typical reasons that Jesus should thus symbolize his triumph over the disciplined Jews, while it is obvious that the lesson of his supremacy over the untaught Gentiles needed exemplification. The prophet certainly contemplates the two animals in the procession. "The old theocracy runs idly and instinc-

tively by the side of the young Church, which has become the true bearer of the Divinity of Christ" (Lange). No king had ever thus come to Jerusalem; such a circumstance was predicted of Messiah alone, and Christ alone fulfilled it to the letter, showing of what nature his kingdom was.

Ver. 6.—**As Jesus commanded them.** They simply obeyed the order, not yet knowing what it portended, or how it carried out the will of God declared by his prophets.

Ver. 7.—**Brought the ass.** The unbroken foal would be more easily subdued and guided when its mother was with it; such an addition to the ridden animal would usually be employed to carry the rider's luggage. They **put on them** (ἐπάνω αὐτῶν) **their clothes** (ἱμάτια). The two disciples, stripping off their heavy outer garments, abbas, or burnouses, put them as trappings on the two beasts, not knowing on which their Master meant to ride. They **set him thereon** (ἐπάνω αὐτῶν). Thus the received text, and the Vulgate, *Et eum desuper sedere fecerunt.* But most modern editors, with great manuscriptural authority, read, "he sat thereon." Some have taken the pronoun αὐτῶν to refer to the beasts, and Alford supports the opinion by the common saying, "The postilion rode on the horses," when, in fact, he rode only one of the pair. But the analogy is erroneous. The postilion really guides and controls both; but no one contends that Christ kept the mother-ass in hand while mounted on the colt. The pronoun is more suitably referred to the garments, which formed a saddle for the Saviour, or housings and ornamental appendages (comp. 2 Kings ix. 13). He came invested with a certain dignity and pomp, yet in such humble guise as to discountenance all idea of temporal sovereignty.

Ver. 8.—**A very great multitude;** ὁ δὲ πλεῖστος ὄχλος: Revised Version, *the most part of the multitude.* This interpretation has classical authority (see Alford), but the words may well mean, "the very great multitude;" Vulgate, *plurima autem turba.* This crowd was composed of pilgrims who were coming to the festival at Jerusalem, and "the whole multitude of the disciples" (Luke xix. 37). **Spread their garments** (ἱμάτια) **in the way.** Fired with enthusiasm, they stripped off their abbas, as the two disciples had done, and with them made a carpet over which the Saviour should ride. Such honours were often paid to great men, and indeed, as we well know, are offered now on state occasions. **Branches from the trees.** St. John (xii. 13) particularizes palm trees as having been used on this occasion; but there was abundance of olive and other trees, from which branches and leaves could be cut or plucked to adorn the Saviour's road. The people appear to have behaved on this occasion as if at the Feast of Tabernacles, roused by enthusiasm to unpremeditated action. Of the three routes which lay before him, Jesus is supposed to have taken the southern and most frequented, between the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offence.

Ver. 9.—**The multitudes that went before, and that followed.** These expressions point to two separate bodies, which combined in escorting Jesus at a certain portion of the route. We learn from St. John (xii. 18) that much people, greatly excited by the news of the raising of Lazarus, when they heard that he was in the neighbourhood, hurried forth from Jerusalem to meet and do him honour. These, when they met the other procession with Jesus riding in the midst, turned back again and preceded him into the city. St. Luke identifies the spot as "at the descent of the Mount of Olives." "As they approached the shoulder of the hill," says Dr. Geikie ('The Life of Christ,' ii. 397), "where the road bends downwards to the north, the sparse vegetation of the eastern slope changed, as in a moment, to the rich green of garden and trees, and Jerusalem in its glory rose before them. It is hard for us to imagine now the splendour of the view. The city of God, seated on her hills, shone at the moment in the morning sun. Straight before stretched the vast white walls and buildings of the temple, its courts glittering with gold, rising one above the other; the steep sides of the hill of David crowned with lofty walls; the mighty castles towering above them; the sumptuous palace of Herod in its green parks; and the picturesque outlines of the streets." **Hosanna to the Son of David!** "Hosanna!" is compounded of two words meaning "save" and "now," or, "I pray," and is written in full *Hoshia-na*, translated by the Septuagint, Σῶσον δή. The expressions uttered by the people are mostly derived from Ps. cxviii., which formed part of the great Hallel (Ps. cxiii.—cxviii.) sung at the Feast of Tabernacles. "Hosanna!" was originally a formula of prayer and supplication, but later became a term of joy and congratulation. So here the cry signifies "Blessings on [or, 'Jehovah bless'] the Son of David!" *i.e.* the Messiah, acknowledging Jesus to be he, the promised Prince of David's line. Thus we say, "God save the king!" This, which Ewald calls the first Christian hymn, gave to Palm Sunday, in some parts of the Church, the name of the "day of Hosannas," and was incorporated into the liturgical service both in East and West. **Blessed . . . of the Lord!** (Ps. cxviii. 26). The formula is taken in two ways, the words, "in the Name of the Lord," being connected either with "blessed" or with "cometh." In the former case the cry

signifies, "The blessing of Jehovah rest on him who cometh!" *i.e.* Messiah (ch. xi. 3; Rev. i. 8); in the latter, the meaning is, "Blessing on him who cometh with Divine mission, sent with the authority of Jehovah!" The second interpretation seems to be correct. **In the highest** (comp. Luke ii. 14). The people cry to God to ratify in heaven the blessing which they invoke on earth. This homage and the title of Messiah Jesus now accepts as his due, openly asserting his claims, and by his acquiescence encouraging the excitement. St. Matthew omits the touching scene of Christ's lamentations over Jerusalem, as he passed the spot where Roman legions would, a generation hence, encamp against the doomed city.

Ver. 10. — **Was come into Jerusalem.** Those who consider that the day of this event was the tenth of Nisan see a peculiar fitness in the entry occurring on this day. On the tenth of this month the Paschal lamb was selected and taken up preparatory to its sacrifice four days after (Exod. xii. 3, 6). So the true Paschal Lamb now is escorted to the place where alone the Passover could be sacrificed. Taking A.D. 30 to be the date of the Crucifixion, astronomers inform us that in that year the first day of Nisan fell on March 24. Consequently, the tenth would be on Sunday, April 2, and the fourteenth was reckoned from sunset of Thursday, April 6, to the sunset of Friday, April 7 (see on ver. 1, and preliminary note ch. xxvi.). **Was moved** (*ἐσείσθη*); *was shaken*, as by an earthquake. St. Matthew alone mentions this commotion, though St. John (xii. 19) makes allusion to it, when he reports the vindictive exclamation of the Pharisees, "Behold, the world is gone after him!" Jerusalem had been stirred and troubled once before, when the Wise Men walked through the streets, inquiring, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (ch. ii. 2, 3). But the excitement was far greater now, more general, composed of many different elements. The Romans expected some public rising; the Pharisaical party was aroused to new envy and malice; the Herodians dreaded a possible usurper; but the populace entertained for the moment the idea that their hopes were now fulfilled, that the long-desired Messiah had at last appeared, and would lead them to victory. **Who is this?** The question may have been put by the strangers who came from all parts of the world to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem, or by the crowds in the streets, when they beheld the unusual procession that was advancing.

Ver. 11.—**The multitude**; *οἱ ὄχλοι*: *the multitudes.* These were the people who took part in the procession; they kept repeating (*ἔλεγον*, imperfect) to all inquiries, **This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth.** They give his name, title, and dwelling-place. They call him "the Prophet," either as being the One that was foretold (John i. 21; vi. 14), or as being inspired and commissioned by God (John ix. 17). The appellation, "of Nazareth," clung to our Lord through all his earthly life. St. Matthew (ch. ii. 23) notes that the prophets had foretold that he was to be called a Nazarene, and that this prediction was in some sort fulfilled by his dwelling at Nazareth. We know not who were the prophets to whom the evangelist refers, and in this obscurity the attempted explanations of exegetes are far from satisfactory; so it is safer to fall back upon the inspired historian's verdict, and to mark the providential accomplishment of the prediction in the title by which Jesus was generally known. Says Isaac Williams, "Friends and foes, chief priests in hate, Pilate in mockery, angels in adoration, disciples in love, Christ himself in lowliness (Acts xxii. 8), and now the multitudes in simplicity, all proclaim him 'of Nazareth.'"

Vers. 12—17.—*The second cleansing of the temple.* (Mark xi. 15—19; Luke xix. 45—48.)

Ver. 12.—**Went into the temple.** The event here narrated seems to have taken place on the day following the triumphal entry; *i.e.* on the Monday of the Holy Week. This can be gathered from St. Mark's narrative, where it is stated that, on the day of triumph, Jesus was escorted to the temple, but merely "looked round about on all things," and then returned for the night to Bethany, visiting the temple again on the following morning, and driving out those who profaned it. St. Matthew often groups events, not in their proper chronological order, but in a certain logical sequence which corresponded with his design. Thus he connects the cleansing with the triumphal entry, in order to display another example of Christ's self-manifestation at this time, and his purpose to show who he was and to put forth his claims publicly. In this visit of Christ we see the King coming to his palace, the place where his honour dwelleth, the fitting termination of his glorious march. This cleansing of the temple must not be confounded with the earlier incident narrated by St. John (ii. 13, etc.). The two acts marked respectively the beginning and close of Christ's earthly ministry, and denote the reverence which he taught for the house and the worship of God. The part of the temple which he now visited, and which was profaned to secular use, was the court of the Gentiles, separated from the sanctuary by a stone partition, and considered of lesser sanctity, though really an integral part of the temple. **Cast out all them that sold and bought.** In this large open space

a market had been established, with the connivance, and much to the pecuniary emolument, of the priests. These let out the sacred area, of which they were the appointed guardians, to greedy and irreligious traders, who made a gain of others' piety. We find no trace of this market in the Old Testament; it probably was established after the Captivity, whence the Jews brought back that taste for commercial business and skill in financial matters for which they have ever since been celebrated. In the eyes of worldly-minded men the sanctity of a building and its appendages was no impediment to traffic and trade, hence they were glad to utilize the temple court, under the sanction of the priests, for the convenience of those who came from all regions to celebrate the great festivals. Here was sold all that was required for the sacrifices which worshippers were minded to offer—animals for victims, meal, incense, salt, etc. The scandalous abuse of the holy precincts, or the plain traces of it (if, as it was late in the day, the traffickers themselves had departed for a time), Christ had observed at his previous visit, when he "looked round about upon all things" (Mark xi. 11), and now he proceeded to remedy the crying evil. The details of the expulsion are not given. On the first occasion, we are told, he used "a scourge of small cords;" as far as we know, at this time he effected the purification unarmed and alone. It was a marvellous impulse that forced the greedy crew to obey the order of this unknown Man; their own consciences made them timid; they fled in dismay before the stern indignation of his eye, deserted their gainful trade to escape the reproach of that invincible zeal. **Money-changers.** These persons exchanged (for a certain percentage) foreign money or other coins for the half-shekel demanded from all adults for the service of the temple (see on ch. xvii. 24). They may have lent money to the needy. **The sellers also** probably played into their hands by refusing to receive any but current Jewish money in exchange for their wares. It is also certain that no coins stamped with a heathen symbol, or bearing a heathen monarch's image, could be paid into the temple treasury. **The seats of them that sold** (*the*) **doves.** These birds were used by the poor in the place of costlier victims (see Lev. xii. 6; xiv. 22; Luke ii. 24). The sellers were often women, who sat with tables before them on which were set cages containing the doves.

Ver. 13.—**It is written.** Jesus confirms his action by the word of Scripture. He combines in one severe sentence a passage from Isa. lvi. 7 ("Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples"), and one from Jer. vii. 11 ("Is this house, which is called by my Name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?"). He brings out in strong contrast the high design and use of the house of God (an allusion specially appropriate at the coming festival), and the vile and profane purposes to which the greed and impiety of men had subjected it. **Ye have made it;** Revised Version, *ye make it;* and so many modern editors on good manuscript authority. These base traffickers had turned the hallowed courts into a cavern where robbers stored their ill-gotten plunder. It may also be said that to make the place of prayer for all the nations a market for beasts was a robbery of the rights of the Gentiles (Lange). And Christ here vindicated the sanctity of the house of God; the Lord, according to the prophecy of Malachi (iii. 1—3), had suddenly come to his temple to refine and purify, to show that none can profane what is dedicated to the service of God without most certain loss and punishment.

Ver. 14.—**The blind and the lame came to him in the temple.** This notice is peculiar to St. Matthew, though St. Luke (xix. 47) mentions that "he taught daily in the temple." An old expositor has remarked that Christ first as King purified his palace, and then took his seat therein, and of his royal bounty distributed gifts to his people. It was a new fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah (xxxv. 4—6), which spake of Messiah coming to open the eyes of the blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, to make the lame man leap as an hart. For acts of sacrilege which profaned the temple precincts, he substituted acts of mercy which hallowed them; the good Physician takes the place of the greedy trafficker; the den of thieves becomes a beneficent hospital. How many were the acts of healing, we are not told; but the words point to the relief of numberless sufferers, none of whom were sent empty away.

Ver. 15.—**The chief priests.** This term is generally applied to the high priest's deputies and the heads of the twenty-four courses, but it seems here to mean certain sacerdotal members of the Sanhedrin, to whom supreme authority was delegated by the Romans or Herodians (see Josephus, 'Ant.,' xx. 10. 5). They formed a wealthy, aristocratical body, and were many of them Sadducees. They joined with the scribes in expressing their outraged feeling, whether simulated or real. **The wonderful things** (τὰ θαυμάσια); an expression found nowhere else in the New Testament. It refers to the cleansing of the temple and the cures lately performed there. **Children crying in the temple.** This fact is mentioned only by St. Matthew. Jesus loved children, and they loved and followed him, taking up the

cry which they had heard the day before from the multitude, and in simple faith applying it again to Christ. While grown men are silent or blaspheming, little children boldly sing his praises. **Were sore displeased.** Their envious hearts could not bear to see Jesus honoured, elevated in men's eyes by his own beneficent actions, and now glorified by the spontaneous acclamations of these little ones.

Ver. 16.—**Hearest thou what these say?** They profess a great zeal for God's honour. They recognize that these cries implied high homage, if not actual worship, and appeal to Jesus to put a stop to such unseemly behaviour, approaching, as they would pretend, to formal blasphemy. **Yea.** Jesus replies that he hears what the children say, but sees no reason for silencing them; rather he proves that they were only fulfilling an old prophecy, originally, indeed, applied to Jehovah, but one which he claims as addressed to himself. **Have ye never read?** (ch. xii. 5). The quotation is from the confessedly Messianic psalm (Ps. viii.), a psalm very often quoted in the New Testament, and as speaking of Christ (see 1 Cor. i. 27; xv. 27; Eph. i. 22; Heb. ii. 6, etc.). **Sucklings.** This term was applied to children up to the age of three years (see 2 Macc. vii. 27), but might be used metaphorically of those of tender age, though long weaned. **Thou hast perfected praise.** The words are from the Septuagint, which seems to have preserved the original reading. The present Hebrew text gives, "Thou hast ordained strength," or "established a power." In the Lord's mouth the citation signifies that God is praised acceptably by the weak and ignorant when, following the impulse of their simple nature, they do him homage. Some expositors combine the force of the Hebrew and Greek by explaining that "the strength of the weak is praise, and that worship of Christ is strength" (Wordsworth). It is more simple to say, with Nösgen, that for the Hebrew "strength," "praise" is substituted, in order to give the idea that the children's acclamation was that which would still the enemy, as it certainly put to shame the captious objections of the Pharisees.

Ver. 17.—**He left them.** The chief priests had nothing to say in reply to this testimony of Scripture. They feared to arrest him in the face of the enthusiastic multitude; they bided their time, for the present apparently silenced. Jesus, wasting no further argument on these wilfully unbelieving people, turned and left them. The King had no home in his royal city; he sought one in lowly Bethany, where he was always sure of a welcome in the house of Martha and Mary. It is somewhat doubtful whether he availed himself of his friends' hospitality at this time. The term "Bethany" would include the district so called in the vicinity of the town, as in the description of the scene of the Ascension (Luke xxiv. 50). **Lodged** (ηὐλίσθη). This word, if its strict classical use is pressed, would imply that Jesus passed the night in the open air; but it may mean merely "lodge," or "pass the night," without any further connotation; so no certain inference can be drawn from its employment in this passage. This withdrawal of Jesus obviated all danger of a rising in his favour, which, supported by the vast resources of the temple, might have had momentous consequences at this time of popular concourse and excitement.

Vers. 18—22.—*The cursing of the barren fig tree.* (Mark xi. 12—14, 20—26.)

Ver. 18.—**In the morning** (πρωΐας, which implies a very early time of the day, and is a term used for the fourth or last watch of the night, Mark i. 35). St. Matthew has combined in one view a transaction which had two separate stages, as we gather from the narrative of St. Mark. The curse was uttered on the Monday morning, before the cleansing of the temple; the effect was beheld and the lesson given on the Tuesday, when Jesus was visiting Jerusalem for the third time (vers. 20—22). Strauss and his followers, resenting the miraculous in the incident, have imagined that the whole story is merely an embodiment and development of the parable of the fruitless fig tree recorded by St. Luke (xiii. 6, etc.), which in course of time assumed this historical form. There is no ground whatever for this idea. It claims to be, and doubtless is, the account of a real fact, naturally connected with the circumstances of the time, and of great practical importance. **He hungered.** True Man, he showed the weakness of his human nature, even when about to exert his power in the Divine. There is no need, rather it is unseemly to suppose (as many old commentators have done), that this hunger was miraculous or assumed, in order to give occasion for the coming miracle. Christ had either passed the night on the mountain-side in prayer and fasting, or had started from his lodging without breaking his fast. His followers do not seem to have suffered in the same way; and it was doubtless owing to his mental preoccupation and self-forgetfulness that the Lord had not attended to bodily wants.

Ver. 19.—**When he saw a** (μίαν, *a single*) **fig tree in the way.** The tree stood all alone in a conspicuous situation by the roadside, as if courting observation. It was allowable to pluck and eat fruit in an

orchard (Deut. xxiii. 24, 25); but this tree, placed where it was, seemed to be common property, belonging to no private owner. The sight of the leaves thereon, as St. Mark tells us, attracted the notice of Christ, who beheld with pleasure the prospect of relieving his long abstinence with the refreshment of cool and juicy fruit. **He came to it.** Knowing the nature of the tree, and that under some circumstances the fruit ripens before the leaves are fully out, Jesus naturally expected to find on it some figs fit to eat. Further, besides the fruit which comes to maturity in the usual way during the summer, there are often late figs produced in autumn which hang on the tree during winter, and ripen at the reawakening of vegetation in the spring. The vigour of this particular tree was apparently proved by the luxuriance of its foliage, and it might reasonably be expected to retain some of its winter produce. **Found nothing thereon, but leaves only.** It was all outward show, promise without performance, seeming precocity with no adequate results. There is no question here of Christ's omniscience being at fault. He acted as a man would act; he was not deceived himself, nor did he deceive the apostles, though they at first misapprehended his purpose. The whole action was symbolical, and was meant so to appear. In strict propriety of conduct, as a man led by the appearance of the tree might act, he carried out the figure, at the same time showing, by his treatment of this inanimate object, that he had something higher in view, and that he does not mean that which his outward conduct seemed to imply. He is enacting a parable where all the parts are in due keeping, and all have their twofold signification in the world of nature and the world of grace. The hunger is real, the tree is real, the expectation of fruit legitimate, the barrenness disappointing and criminal; the spiritual side, however, is left to be inferred, and, as we shall see, only one of many possible lessons is drawn from the result of the incident. **Let no fruit grow on thee** (*let there be no fruit from thee*) **henceforward for ever.** Such is the sentence passed on this ostentatious tree. Christ addresses it as if replying to the profession made by its show of leaves. It had the sap of life, it had power to produce luxuriant leaves; therefore it might and ought to have borne fruit. It vaunted itself as being superior to its neighbours, and the boast was utterly empty. **Presently** (*παραχρῆμα*) **the fig tree withered away.** The process was doubtless gradual, commencing at Christ's word, and continuing till the tree died; but St. Matthew completes the account at once, giving in one picture the event, with its surroundings and results. It was a moral necessity that what had incurred Christ's censure should perish; the spiritual controlled the material; the higher overbore the lower. Thus the designed teaching was placed in visible shape before the eyes, and silently uttered its important lesson. It has been remarked (by Neander) that we are not to suppose that the tree thus handled was previously altogether sound and healthy. Its show of leaves at an unusual period without fruit may point to some abnormal development of activity which was consequent upon some radical defect. Had it been in vigorous health, it would not have been a fitting symbol of the Jewish Church; nor would it have corresponded with the idea which Christ designed to bring to the notice of his apostles. There was already some process at work which would have issued in decay, and Christ's curse merely accelerated this natural result. This is considered to be the only instance in which our Lord exerted his miraculous power in destruction; all his other actions were beneficent, saving, gracious. The drowning of the swine at Gadara was only permitted for a wise purpose; it was not commanded or inflicted by him. The whole transaction in our text is mysterious. That the Son of man should show wrath against a senseless tree, as a tree, is, of course, not conceivable. There was an apparent unfitness, if not injustice, in the proceeding, which at once demonstrated that the tree was not the real object of the action—that something more important was in view. Christ does not treat trees as moral agents, responsible for life and action. He uses inanimate objects to convey lessons to men, dealing with them according to his good pleasure, even his supreme will, which is the law by which they are controlled. In themselves they have no fault and incur no punishment, but they are treated in such a way as to profit the nobler creatures of God's hand. There may have been two reasons for Christ's conduct which were not set prominently forward at the time. First, he desired to show his power, his absolute control, over material forces, so that, in what was about to happen to him, his apostles might be sure that he suffered not through weakness or compulsion, but because he willed to have it so. This would prepare his followers for his own and their coming trials. Then there was another great lesson taught by the sign. The fig tree is a symbol of the Jewish Church. The prophets had used both it and the vine in this connection (comp. Hos. ix. 10), and our Lord himself makes an unmistakable allusion in his parable of

the fig tree planted in the vineyard, from which the owner for three years sought fruit in vain (Luke xiii. 6, etc.). Many of his subsequent discourses are, as it were, commentaries upon this incident (see vers. 28—44; ch. xxii. 1—14; xxiii.—xxv.). Here was a parable enacted. The Saviour had seen this tree, the Jewish Church, afar off, looking down upon it from heaven; it was one, single, standing conspicuous among all nations as that whereon the Lord had lavished most care, that which ought to have shown the effect of this culture in abundant produce of holiness and righteousness. But what was the result? Boasting to be children of Abraham, the special heritage of Jehovah, gifted with highest privileges, the sole possessors of the knowledge of God, the Israelites professed to have what no other people had, and were in reality empty and bare. There was plenty of outward show—rites, ceremonies, scrupulous observances, much speaking—but no real devotion, no righteousness, no heart-worship, no good works. Other nations, indeed, were equally fruitless, but they did not profess to be holy; they were sinners, and offered no cloak for their sinfulness. The Jews were no less unrighteous; but they were hypocrites, and boasted of the good which they had not. Other nations were unproductive, for their time had not come; but for Israel the season had arrived; she ought to have been the first to accept the Messiah, to unite the new with the old fruit, to pass from the Law to the gospel, and to learn and practise the lesson of faith. Perfect fruit was not yet to be expected; but Israel's sin was that she vaunted her perfection, counted herself sound and whole, while rotten at the very core, and barren of all good results. Her falsehood, hypocrisy, and arrogant complacency were fearfully punished. The terms of the curse pronounced by the Judge are very emphatic. It denounces perpetual barrenness on the Jewish Church and people. From Judæa was to have gone forth the healing of the nations; from it all peoples of the earth were to be blessed. The complete fulfilment of this promise is no longer in the literal Israel; she is nothing in the world; no one resorts to her for food and refreshment; she has none to offer the wayfarer. For eighteen centuries has that fruitlessness continued; the withered tree still stands, a monument of unbelief and its punishment. The Lord's sentence, "for ever," must be understood with some limitation. In his parable of the fig tree, which adumbrates the last days, he intimates that it shall some day bud and blossom, and be clothed once more with leaf and fruit; and St. Paul looks forward to the conversion of Israel, when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Rom. xi. 23—26).

Ver. 20.—**They marvelled, saying.** The apostles' remark on the incident was made on the Tuesday, as we learn from St. Mark's more accurate account. After Christ had spoken his malediction, the little band went on their way to Jerusalem, where was performed the cleansing of the temple. On their return to Bethany, if they passed the tree, it was doubtless too dark to observe its present condition, and it was not till the next morning that they noticed what had happened. St. Matthew does not name the apostle who was the mouthpiece of the others in expressing astonishment at the miracle; he is satisfied with speaking generally of "the disciples" (comp. ch. xxvi. 8 with John xii. 4). We learn from St. Mark that it was Peter who made the observation recorded, deeply affected by the sight of this instance of Christ's power, and awe-struck by the speedy and complete accomplishment of the curse. **How soon is the fig tree withered away!** better, *How did the fig tree immediately wither away?* Vulgate, *Quomodo continuo aruit?* They saw, but could not comprehend, the effect of Christ's word, and wonderingly inquired how it came to pass. They did not at present realize the teaching of this parabolic act—how it gave solemn warning of the certainty of judgment on the unfruitful Jewish Church, which, hopelessly barren, must no longer cumber the earth. Christ did not help them to understand the typical nature of the transaction. He is not wont to explain in words the spiritual significance of his miracles; the connection between miracle and teaching is left to be inferred, to be brought out by meditation, prayer, faith, and subsequent circumstances. The total rejection of the Jews was a doctrine for which the apostles were not yet prepared; so the Lord, in wisdom and mercy, withheld its express enunciation at this moment. In mercy too he exemplified the sternness and severity of God's judgment by inflicting punishment on an inanimate object, and not on a sentient being; he withered a tree, not a sinful man, by the breath of his mouth.

Ver. 21.—**Jesus answered.** To the apostles' question the Lord makes reply, drawing a lesson, not such as we should have expected, but one of quite a different nature, yet one which was naturally deduced from the transaction which had excited such astonishment. They marvelled at this incident; let them have and exercise faith, and they should do greater things than this. Christ had already made a similar answer after the cure of the demoniac boy (ch. xvii. 20, where see note). **If ye have faith, and doubt not** (μὴ διακριθῆτε). The whole phrase

expresses the perfection of the grace. The latter verb means "to discriminate," to see a difference in things, hence to debate in one's mind. The Vulgate gives, *Si habueritis fidem, et non hæsitaveritis.* What is here enjoined is that temper of mind which does not stop hesitatingly to consider whether a thing can be done or not, but believes that all is possible—that one can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. So the apostles are assured by Christ that they should not only be able to wither a tree with a word, but should accomplish far more difficult undertakings. **This** which is done to the fig tree (τὸ τῆς συκῆς); as, "what was befallen to them that were possessed with devils (τὰ τῶν δαιμονιζομένων)" (ch. viii. 33). The promise may intimate that it was to be through the preaching of the apostles, and the Jews' rejection of the salvation offered by them, that the judgment should fall on the chosen people. Thus they would do what was done to the fig tree. And in the following words we may see a prophecy of the destruction of the mountain of paganism. Or it may mean that theocratic Judaism must be cast into the sea of nations before the Church of Christ should reach its full development (Lange). **This mountain.** As he speaks, he points to the Mount of Olivet, on which they were standing, or to Moriah crowned by the glorious temple. **Be thou removed;** *be thou taken up;* ἄρθητι, not the same word as in ch. xvii. 20. **The sea.** The Mediterranean (see a similar promise, Luke xvii. 6). **It shall be done.** It was not likely that any such material miracle would literally be needed, and no one would ever pray for such a sign; but the expression is hyperbolically used to denote the performance of things most difficult and apparently impossible (see Zech. iv. 7; 1 Cor. xiii. 2).

Ver. 22.—**All things.** The promise is extended beyond the sphere of extraordinary miracles. **In prayer;** ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ: *in the prayer;* or, in your prayer. The use of the article may point to the prayer given by our Lord to his disciples, or to some definite form used from the earliest times in public worship (comp. Acts i. 14; Rom. xii. 12; 1 Cor. vii. 5; Col. iv. 2). **Believing, ye shall receive.** The condition for the success of prayer is stringent. A man must have no latent doubt in his heart; he must not debate whether the thing desired can be done or not; he must have absolute trust in the power and good will of God; and he must believe that "what he saith cometh to pass" (Mark xi. 23). The faith required is the assurance of things hoped for, such as gives substance and being to them while yet out of sight. **The words had their special application to the apostles, instructing them** that they were not to expect to be able, like their Master, to work the wonders needed for the confirmation of the gospel by their own power. Such effects could be achieved only by prayer and faith. (On the general promise to faithful prayer, see ch. vii. 7—11.)

Ver. 23—ch. xxii. 14.—*Our Lord's authority questioned: he replies by uttering three parables.* (Mark xi. 27—xii. 12; Luke xx. 1—18.)

Vers. 23—27.—*First attack, referring to his late actions; and Christ's answer.*

Ver. 23.—**When he was come into the temple.** The conversation recorded here belongs to the Tuesday of the Holy Week, and took place in the courts of the temple, at this time filled with pilgrims from all parts of the world, who hung upon Christ's words, and beheld his doings with wonder and awe. This sight roused to fury the envy and anger of the authorities, and they sent forth sections of their oleverest men to undermine his authority in the eyes of the people, or to force from him statements on which they might found criminal accusation against him. **The chief priests and the elders of the people.** According to the other evangelists, there were also scribes, teachers of the Law, united with them in this deputation, which thus comprised all the elements of the Sanhedrin. This seems to have been the first time that the council took formal notice of Jesus' claims and actions, and demanded from him personally an account of himself. They had been quick enough in inquiring into the Baptist's credentials, when he suddenly appeared on the banks of Jordan (see John i. 19, etc.); but they had studiously, till quite lately, avoided any regular investigation of the pretensions of Jesus. In the face of late proceedings, this could no longer be delayed. A crisis had arrived; their own peculiar province was publicly invaded, and their authority attacked; the opponent must be withstood by the action of the constituted court. **As he was teaching.** Jesus did not confine himself to beneficent acts; he used the opportunity of the gathering of crowds around him to preach unto them the gospel (Luke xx. 1), to teach truths which came with double force from One who had done such marvellous things. **By what authority doest thou these things?** They refer to the triumphal entry, the reception of the homage offered, the healing of the blind and lame, the teaching as with the authority of a rabbi, and especially to the cleansing of the temple. No one could presume to teach without a proper commission: where was his authorization? They were the guardians and rulers of the temple: what right had he

to interfere with their management, and to use the sacred precincts for his own purposes? These and such like questions were in their mind when they addressed him thus. Wilfully ignoring the many proofs they had of Christ's Divine mission (which one of them, Nicodemus, had long before been constrained to own, John iii. 2), they raised the question now as a novel and unanswered one. **Who gave thee this authority?** They resolve the general inquiry into the personal one—Who was it that conferred upon you this authority which you presume to exercise? Was it some earthly ruler, or was it God himself? Perhaps they mean to insinuate that Satan was the master whose power he wielded—an accusation already often made. They thought thus to place Christ in an embarrassing position, from which he could not emerge without affording the opportunity which they desired. The trap was cleverly set, and, as they deemed, unavoidable. If he was forced to confess that he spoke and acted without any proper authorization, he would be humiliated in the eyes of the people, and might be officially silenced by the strong hand. If he asserted himself to be the Messiah and the bearer of a Divine commission, they would at once bring against him a charge of blasphemy (ch. xxvi. 65).

Ver. 24.—**I also will ask you one thing**; λόγον ἕνα: *one word, question.* Jesus does not reply directly to their insidious demand. He might have asserted his Divine mission, and appealed to his miracles in confirmation of such claim, which would have been in strict conformity with the old-established rule for discriminating false and true prophets (see Deut. xviii. 22; Jer. xxviii. 9); but he knew too well their scepticism and malice and inveterate prejudice to lay stress on this allegation at the present moment. Before he satisfied their inquiry, he must have their opinion concerning one whom they had received as a prophet a few years ago, and whose memory was still held in the highest respect, John the Baptist. The manner in which they regarded him and his testimony would enable them to answer their own interrogation.

Ver. 25.—**The baptism of John** (τὸ βάπτισμα τὸ Ἰωάννου). By "the baptism which was of John" Christ means his whole ministry, doctrine, preaching, etc.; as by circumcision is implied the whole Mosaic Law, and the doctrine of the cross comprises all the teaching of the gospel, the chief characteristic connoting all particulars. **From heaven, or of men?** Did they regard John as one inspired and commissioned by God, or as a fanatic and impostor, who was self-sent and had received no external authorization? Now, two facts were plain and could not be denied. The rulers and the people with them had allowed John to be a prophet, and had never questioned his claims hitherto. This was one fact; the other was that John had borne unmistakable evidence to Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God!" etc. (John i. 32—36), he had said. He came and asserted that he came as Christ's forerunner; his mission was to prepare Christ's way, and had no meaning or intention but this. Here was a dilemma. They had asked for Jesus' credentials; the prophet, whose mission they had virtually endorsed testified that Jesus was the Messiah; if they believed that John spoke by inspiration, they must accept Christ; if now they discredited John, they would stultify themselves and endanger their influence with the people. **They reasoned with themselves** (παρ' ἑαυτοῖς). The somewhat unusual introduction of this preposition instead of the more common ἐν implies that the reflection was not confined to their own breast, but passed in consultation from one to another. They saw the difficulty, and deliberated how they could meet it without compromising themselves, seeking, not truth, but evasion. **Why did ye not then** (διατί οὖν: *why then did ye not*) **believe him?** *i.e.* when he bore such plain testimony to me. This appeal could be silenced only by denying John's mission, or asserting that he was mistaken in what he said.

Ver. 26.—**We fear the people.** They dared not, as they would gladly have done, affirm that John was a false prophet and impostor; for then, as according to St. Luke they said, "All the people will stone us." Public opinion was too strong for them. Whatever view they really took of John's position, they were forced, for the sake of retaining popularity, to uphold its Divine character. **All hold John as a prophet.** Even Herod, for the same reason, long hesitated to put the Baptist to death (ch. xiv. 5); and many of the Jews believed that Herod's defeat by Aretas was a judgment upon him for this murder (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 5. 2); comp. Luke vii. 29, which shows how extensive was the influence of this holy teacher, who indeed did no miracle, but persuaded men by pure doctrine, holy life, genuine love of souls, courageous reproof of sin wherever found. Others had drawn the very inference which Christ now demanded (see John x. 41, 42).

Ver. 27.—**We cannot tell**; οὐκ οἴδαμεν: *we know not*; Vulgate, *nescimus.* The Authorized Version seems, at first sight, to be intended to give a false emphasis to "tell" in Christ's answer; but our translators often render the verb οἶδα in this way (see John iii. 8; viii. 14; xvi. 18; 2 Cor. xii. 2). The questioners could find no way out of the dilemma in which Christ's unerring wisdom

had placed them. Their evasive answer was a confession of defeat, and that in the presence of the gaping crowd who stood around listening to the conversation. They had every opportunity of judging the character of John's mission and that of Christ; it was their duty to form an opinion and to pronounce a verdict on such claims; and yet they, the leaders and teachers of Israel, for fear of compromising themselves, evade the obligation, refuse to solve or even to entertain the question, and, like a modern agnostic, content themselves with a profession of ignorance. Many people, to avoid looking a disagreeable truth in the face, respond to all appeals with the stereotyped phrase, "We cannot tell." F. M. appositely quotes the comment of Donatus on Terent., 'Eunuch.,' v. 4, 31, "Perturbatur Parmeno; nec negare potuit, nec consentire volebat; sed quasi defensionis loco dixit, *Nescio.*" **And he said unto them**; ἔφη αὐτοῖς καὶ αὐτός: *he also said unto them.* The Lord answers the thought which had dictated their words to him. **Neither tell I you**, etc. With such double-minded men, who could give no clear decision concerning the mission of such a one as John the Baptist, it would be mere waste of words to argue further. They would not accept his testimony, and recognizing their malice and perversity, he declined to instruct them further. "Christ shows," says Jerome, "that they knew and were unwilling to answer; and that he knew, but held his peace, because they refused to utter what they well knew."

Vers. 28—32.—*The parable of the two sons.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.)

Ver. 28.—**But what think ye?** A formula connecting what follows with what has preceded, and making the hearers themselves the judges. By this and the succeeding parables, Jesus shows his interlocutors their true guilty position and the punishment that awaited them. He himself explains the present parable in reference to his hearers, though, of course, it has, and is meant to have, a much wider application. **A certain man** (ἄνθρωπος, *a man*) **had two sons.** The "man" represents God; the "two sons" symbolize two classes of Jews—the Pharisees, with their followers and imitators; and the lawless and sinful, who made no pretence of religion. The former are those who profess to keep the Law strictly, to the very letter, though they care nothing for its spirit, and virtually divorce religion from morality. The latter are careless and profane persons, whom the Lord calls "publicans and harlots" (ver. 31). **The first.** Westcott and Hort, relying on no very weighty authority, reverse the order of the sons' answers, altering ver. 31 in agreement with this arrangement. Christ's reply countenances the received text, setting the repentant before the professing son. It is a matter of small importance (see Tischendorf, *in loc.*). "The first son" here typifies the evil and immoral among the Jewish people. **Go, work to-day.** Two emphatic imperatives. Immediate obedience is required. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. xcv. 7, 8). God called his sons to serve in his vineyard—the Church. He called them by the prophets, and more especially by John the Baptist, to turn from evil ways, and to do works meet for repentance (ch. iii. 8). Christ gives two examples, showing how this call was received.

Ver. 29.—**I will not.** The answer is rude, curt, and disrespectful, such a one as would naturally issue from the lips of a person who was selfishly wrapped in his own pleasures, and cared nothing for the Law of God, the claims of relationship, the decencies of society. **Repented, and went**; *i.e.* into the vineyard to work. The worst sinners, when converted, often make great saints. There is more hope of their repentance than of the self-righteous or hypocrites, who profess the form of religion without the reality, and in their own view need no repentance.

Ver. 30.—**The second.** He typifies the Pharisees, the scrupulous observers of outward form, while neglectful of the weightier matters—judgment, mercy, and faith (ch. xxiii. 23). **I go, sir,** Ἐγώ, κύριε: *Eo, domine.* This son is outwardly respectful and dutiful; his answer is in marked contrast to the rough "I will not" of his brother. He professes zeal for the Law, and ready obedience. **And went not.** Such men did no real work for God, honouring him with their lips and outward observances, while their heart was far from him, and their morality was unprincipled and impure.

Ver. 31.—**Whether of them** (*the*) **twain?** Christ forces from the unwilling hearers an answer which, at the moment, they do not see will condemn themselves. Unaccustomed to be criticized and put to the question, wrapped in a self-complacent righteousness, which was generally undisturbed, they missed the bearing of the parable on their own case, and answered without hesitation, as any unprejudiced person would have decided. **The first**; *i.e.* the son who first refused, but afterwards repented and went. **Verily I say unto you.** Jesus drives the moral home to the hearts of these hypocrites. **The publicans and the harlots.** He specifies these excommunicated sinners as examples of those represented by the first son. **Go into the kingdom of God before you**; προάγουσιν ὑμᾶς: *are preceding you.* This was the fact which Jesus saw and declared. He does not cut off all hope that the Pharisees might

follow, if they willed to do so; he only shows that they have lost the position which they ought to have occupied, and that those whom they despised and spurned have accepted the offered salvation, and shall have their reward. We must remark that the Lord has no censure for those who sometime were disobedient, but afterwards repented; his rebuke falls on the professors and self-righteous, who ought to have been leaders and guides, and were in truth impious and irreligious.

Ver. 32.—**For John came unto you.** This gives the reason for Christ's assertion at the end of the last verse. John came with a special call to the rulers of the people, and they made some show of interest, by sending a deputation to demand his credentials, and by coming to his baptism; but that was all. They did not alter their lives or change their faulty opinions at his preaching, though they "were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (John v. 35). **In the way of righteousness.** In that path of strict obedience to law, and of ascetic holiness, which you profess to regard so highly. If they had followed the path which John indicated, they would have attained to righteousness and salvation. John preached Christ who is "the Way" (John xiv. 6). (For "way," meaning doctrine, religious tenet and practice, see ch. xxii. 16; Acts ix. 2; xix. 9, 23; 2 Pet. ii. 21.) **Ye believed him not,** to any practical purpose, even as it is said elsewhere (Luke vii. 30), "The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, not having been baptized of him." Those who did receive his baptism were the exception; the great majority stood aloof. **Believed him.** Though these sinners may have first rejected him, yet his preaching softened their hearts; they repented, confessed their sins, and were baptized (see for examples, Luke iii. 10, etc.; vii. 29). This was another call to the Pharisees to go and do likewise. **When ye had seen it;** *i.e.* the fruits of true repentance in these sinners, which conversion was indeed a loud appeal to the rulers to consider their own ways, and to bow to God's hand. **Repented not** (see ver. 29). They profited not by this miracle of grace. **That ye might believe him.** The end and result of repentance would be to believe in John's mission, and to attend to his teaching. Christ offers the above explanation of the parable (vers. 31, 32) in view of the purpose for which he uttered it. It has been, and may be, taken in different senses, and in wider application. "What is set forth in individual cases is but a sample of what takes place in whole classes of persons, and even nations" (I. Williams). Many expositors consider the two sons to represent Gentiles and Jews; the former making no profession of serving God, and yet in time being converted and turning to him; the latter making much outward show of obedience, yet in reality denying him and rejecting salvation. It is obvious that such explanation is allowable, and coincides with the letter of the parable; but it does not satisfy the context, and fails in not answering to Christ's intention in uttering this similitude. Others see herein a picture of what happens in Christian lands, and is the experience of every Christian minister—how the irreligious and apparently irreclaimable are by God's grace brought to repentance unto life; how the seemingly pious often make much show, but fall away, or bring no fruit unto perfection. And as the parable involves a general principle, so it may be applied universally to those who make great professions of religion, and are for a time full of good resolutions, but in practice fall very short; and to those who have been the slaves of lust, covetousness, or some other wickedness, but have been recovered from the snares of the devil, and have learned to lead a godly, righteous, and sober life.

Vers. 33—46.—*Parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen.* (Mark xii. 1—12; Luke xx. 9—19.)

Ver. 33.—**Hear another parable.** The domineering and lately imperious party are reduced to the position of pupils; they have to listen to teaching, not to give it; to answer, not to put questions. This parable sets forth, under the guise of history, the Pharisaical party in its official character, and as the representative of the nation. It also denounces the punishment that surely awaited these rejecters of the offered salvation; thus exemplifying the teaching of the withered fig tree (vers. 17—20). As applicable to the Jewish nation generally, it represents the long-suffering of God and the various means which, in the course of their history, he had used to urge them to do their duty as his servants; and it ends with a prophecy of the coming events, and the terrible issue of impenitence. We must take the parable as partly retrospective, and partly predictive. **There was a certain householder;** *a man* (*ἄνθρωπος*) *that was an householder.* Christ in his parables often, as here, introduces God in his dealings with mankind as a man. **His house** is the house of Israel in particular, and in general the whole human family. **A vineyard.** God's kingdom upon earth, and particularly the Jewish Church. The figure is common throughout Scripture (see on ch. xx. 1). **It was planted** when God gave Israel a law, and put them in possession of the promised land. The parable itself is

founded on Isa. v. 1—7, where, however, the vineyard is tended by the Lord himself, not by husbandmen, and it bears wild grapes, not good grapes. By these differences different developments of declension are indicated. In the earlier times it was the nation that apostatized, fell into idolatry and rebellion against God, the theocratical Head of their race and polity. In later days it is the teachers, rabbis, priests, false prophets, who neglect the paths of righteousness, and lead people astray. In the parable these last come into painful prominence as criminally guilty of opposing God's messengers. **Hedged it round**; *put a hedge around it.* The fence would be a stone wall —a necessary defence against the incursions of wild animals. This fence has been regarded in two senses—first, as referring to the physical peculiarities of the position of the Holy Land, separated from alien nations by deserts, seas, rivers, and so isolated from evil contagion; second, as intimating the peculiar laws and minute restrictions of the Jewish polity, which differentiated Judaism from all other systems of religion, and tended to preserve purity and incorruption. Probably the "hedge" is meant to adumbrate both senses. Many, however, see in it the protection of angels, or the righteousness of saints, which seem hardly to be sufficiently precise for the context. **Digged a winepress.** The phrase refers, not to the ordinary wooden troughs or vats which were used for the purpose of expressing and receiving the juice of the grapes, but to such as were cut in the rock, and were common in all parts of the country. Remains of these receptacles meet the traveller everywhere on the hill-slopes of Judæa, and notably in the valleys of Carmel. The winepress is taken to signify the prophetic spirit, the temple services, or all things that typified the sacrifice and death of Christ. **A tower**; for the purpose of watching and guarding the vineyard. This may represent the temple itself, or the civil power. Whatever interpretation may be put upon the various details, which, indeed, should not be unduly pressed, the general notion is that every care was taken of the Lord's inheritance, nothing was wanting for its convenience and security. **Let it out to husbandmen.** This is a new feature introduced into Isaiah's parable. Instead of paying an annual sum of money to the proprietor, these vine-dressers payed in kind, furnishing a stipulated amount of fruit or wine as the hire of the vineyard. We have a lease on the former terms in Cant. viii. 11, where the keepers have "to bring a thousand pieces of silver for the fruit." The husbandmen are the children of Israel, who had to do their part in the Church, and show fruits of piety and devotion. **Went into a far country**; ἀπεδήμησεν: *went abroad.* In the parabolic sense, God withdrew for a time the sensible tokens of his presence, no longer manifested himself as at Sinai, and in the cloud and pillar of fire. "Innuitur tempus divinæ taciturnitatis, ubi homines agunt pro arbitrio" (Bengel). God's long-suffering gives time of probation.

Ver. 34.—**When the time of the fruit drew near.** The vintage season, when the rent, whether in money or kind, became due. In the Jewish history no particular time seems to be signified, but rather such periods or crises which forced God's claims upon men's notice, and made them consider what fruits they had to show for all the Lord's care, how they had lived after receiving the Law. Such times were the ages of Samuel, Elijah, the great prophets, the Maccabees, and John the Baptist. **His servants.** The prophets, good kings, priests, and governors. "I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings" (Jer. xxxv. 15). **To receive the fruits of it** (τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτοῦ); or, *his fruits*, as rent.

Ver. 35.—**Took his servants.** The exaction of rent in kind has always been a fruitful source of dispute, fraud, and discontent. In the Jewish Church God's messengers had been ill treated and put to death (see ch. xxiii. 34—37). "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" cried St. Stephen; "and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been the betrayers and murderers" (Acts vii. 52). **Beat . . . killed . . . stoned.** A climax of iniquity and guilt. The statement is probably meant to be general; some, however, endeavour to individualize it, referring the "beating" to the treatment of Jeremiah (Jer. xx. 1, 2), "killing" to Isaiah (Heb. xi. 37, "sawn asunder"), "stoning" to Zechariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21). Doubtless, the incidents in such persecutions were often repeated.

Ver. 36.—**Other servants.** God's loving-kindness was not wearied out with the husbandmen's cruelty and violence. Each step of their wickedness and obstinacy was met with renewed mercy, with fresh calls to repentance. **More** (πλείονας). More in number. In the latter days the number of God's messengers was much greater than in earlier times; so it is unnecessary to take πλείονας in the sense of "more honourable," "of higher dignity," though such interpretation is supported by its use in ch. vi. 25; Mark xii. 33; Heb. xi. 4. **Likewise.** They resisted these new envoys as they had resisted those first sent, treating them with equal cruelty and violence.

Ver. 37.—**Last of all**; ὕστερον: *afterwards*, later on. The parable now allegorizes the near present, and future, in such a way as for the moment to conceal its bearing, and to lead the hearers to pronounce their own condemnation. **His son.** Even Jesus Christ, who was now among them, incarnate, teaching, and demanding of them fruits of righteousness. Here was the authorization which they had required (ver. 23). God sent his Son. **They will reverence my Son.** God condescends to speak in human language, as hoping for a good result from this last effort for man's salvation. He, as it were, puts aside his foreknowledge, and gives scope to man's free-will. Though the sad issue is known to him, he often acts towards men as if he had hope that they would still use the occasion profitably. In the present case, whereas the immediate result of the last measure was disastrous, the expectation was ultimately realized in the conversion of many Jews to Christianity, which led to the bringing of all nations to the obedience of the faith.

Ver. 38.—**When the husbandmen saw the Son.** As soon as they recognized this new and important messenger. This is the great element in the guilt of his rejection. They might have had the same consciousness of Christ's Divine mission as Nicodemus (John iii. 2), having possessed the same opportunities of judging. Ancient prophecy, the signs of the times, the miracles and teaching of Christ, the testimony of the Baptist, pointed to one evident conclusion; evidence had been accumulating on all sides. A latent feeling had grown up that he was the Messiah (see John xi. 49—52), and it was obstinate prejudice and perversity alone that prevented his open acknowledgment. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Christ, "they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin" (John xv. 22; comp. John ix. 41). **They said among themselves.** They plotted his destruction (see John xi. 53). We are reminded of the conspiracy against Joseph, his father's well-beloved son (Gen. xxxvii. 20). **Let us seize on** (κατάσχωμεν, *take possession of*, keep as our own) **his inheritance.** It would have been a wild and ignorant scheme of the husbandmen to consider that by murdering the heir they could obtain and hold possession of the vineyard. Here the parable bursts from the allegorical form, and becomes history and prophecy. In fact, the possession which the rulers coveted was supremacy over the minds and consciences of men; they wished to lord it over God's heritage; to retain their rights and prerogatives in the present system. This ambition Christ's teaching and action entirely overthrew. They felt no security in their possession of authority while he was present and working in their midst. Were he removed, their position would be safe, their claims undisputed. Hence their conspiracy and its result—a result very far from what they expected. They had their own way, but their gain was ruin. Says St. Augustine, "Ut possiderent, occiderunt; et quia occiderunt, perdiderunt."

Ver. 39.—**Cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.** This is prophecy, and alludes to a particular circumstance attending the death of Christ, viz. that he suffered without the city Jerusalem, Calvary being outside the walls (see John xix. 17, and the parallel passages in the other evangelists, and especially Heb. xiii. 11, 12, where it is significantly noted that Jesus "suffered without the gate"). The words may also contain a reference to the fact that he was excommunicated and given over to the heathen to be judged and condemned, thus suffering not actually at the hands of "the husbandmen" (comp. Acts ii. 23; iv. 27). Christ, in his Divine prescience, speaks of his Passion and death as already accomplished.

Ver. 40.—**When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh**; *when therefore the lord*, etc. Christ asks his hearers, who are both rulers and people, what in their opinion will be the course taken by the lord when he visits his vineyard, knowing all that has transpired. So Isaiah (v. 3) makes the people give the verdict: "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard."

Ver. 41.—**They say unto him.** The Pharisees probably made the reply, not at the moment apprehending the sense of the parable. Or the words were spoken by some of the bystanders, and taken up and emphatically repeated by our Lord with an unmistakable application (ver. 43). The conclusion was a necessary consequence, and this will account for Mark and Luke apparently making them a part of Christ's speech. By their answer they blindly condemn themselves, as David did at hearing Nathan's parable (2 Sam. xii. 5). **He will miserably** (κακῶς) **destroy those wicked men** (κακούς, *miserable men*); or, *he will evilly destroy those evil men*; Vulgate, *Malos male perdet*. He will make their punishment equal their crime. The slaughter and mortality at the siege of Jerusalem accomplished this prediction to the letter. **Unto other husbandmen**; *i.e.* the Christian ministry, which took the place of the Jewish priests and teachers. As the husbandmen in the parable were rather the rulers and rabbis than the whole nation (which, indeed, only followed their guides), so these others are not the whole

Gentile world, but those who sustained the ministerial offices in the Christian Church. **Which** (*οἵτινες*); *of such kind as*, denoting a class of servants. The clause is peculiar to Matthew. The speakers did not clearly apprehend the bearing of this detail of the parable. **In their seasons.** The times when the various fruits are ripe and ready for harvesting. These would vary in different climates and under differing circumstances; but the good husbandmen would be always ready to render to their Lord the fruits of faith and obedience, at every holy season and in due proportion. This parable, spoken originally of Israel, applies, like all such similitudes, to the Christian Church and to the human soul. How God deals with individual Churches we see in his words to the seven Churches of Asia (Rev. i.—iii.). Ecclesiastical history furnishes similar examples throughout all ages. God gives privileges, and looks for results worthy of these graces. He sends warnings; he raises up apostles, preachers, evangelists; and if a Church is still unfaithful, he takes away his Spirit, and lets it lapse, and gives its inheritance to others. In the other case, the vineyard is the soul of man, which he has to cultivate for his Master's use. God has hedged it round with the law, external and internal, given it the ministry and sacraments and the Scripture, and looks to it to bring forth the fruits of obedience, service, worship. He sends times of visitation, teaching, warning; he speaks to it by secret inspiration; he calls it in loving tones to closer union. If it hearkens to the call, it walks in the way of salvation; if it refuses to hear, it casts away the hope of its calling, and must share the lot of Christ's enemies.

Ver. 42.—**Did ye never read?** It is as though Christ said, "Ye have answered rightly. You profess to know the Scriptures well; do you not, then, apprehend that Holy Writ foretells that concerning Messiah and his enemies which you have just announced?" The imagery is changed, but the subject is the same as in the preceding parable. **The vineyard is now a building**; the husbandmen are the builders; the Son is the stone. **In the Scriptures.** The quotation is from Ps. cxviii. 22, 23—the same psalm which was used on the day of triumph when Christ was saluted with cries of "Hosanna!" and which, as some say, was first sung by Israel at the Feast of Tabernacles on the return from Captivity. **The stone.** This figure was generally understood to represent Messiah, on whom depended the existence and support of the kingdom of God. Many prophecies containing this metaphor were applied to him; *e.g.* Isa. xxviii. 16; Dan. ii. 34; Zech. iii. 9; so that the Pharisees could be at no loss to understand the allusion, seeing that Jesus claimed to be that Stone. **Rejected**; as being not suitable to the building, or useless in its construction. So the husbandmen rejected the Son. The ignorance and contempt of men are overruled by the great Architect. **The head of the corner.** The corner-stone, which stands at the base and binds together two principal walls (see St. Paul's grand words, Eph. ii. 19—22). We learn that Christ unites Jew and Gentile in one holy house (comp. 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7). This (*αὕτη*), being feminine, is thought by some to refer to "head of the corner" (*κεφαλὴν γωνίας*); but it is better to take it as used by a Hebrew idiom for the neuter, and to refer generally to what has preceded, viz. the settlement of the corner-stone in its destined position, which is effected by the Lord himself. The ultimate victory of the rejected Son is thus distinctly predicted (comp. Acts iv. 11; Rom. ix. 33).

Ver. 43.—**Therefore I say unto you.** Having denounced the sin, Christ now enunciates the punishment thereof, in continuation of his parable. Because ye slay the Son, reject the Corner-stone, the vineyard, *i.e.* **the kingdom of God, shall be taken from you.** Ye shall no longer be God's peculiar people; your special privileges shall be taken away. **A nation.** The Christian Church, the spiritual Israel, formed chiefly from the Gentile peoples (Acts xv. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 9). **The fruits thereof** (*αὐτῆς*); *i.e.* of the kingdom of God, such faith, life, good works, as become those thus favoured by Divine grace.

Ver. 44.—Christ proceeds to show the positive and terrible results of such unbelief. **Whosoever shall fall** (*πεσὼν, hath fallen*) **on this stone shall be broken** (*συνθλασθήσεται, shall be shattered to pieces*). This may refer to the practice of executing the punishment of stoning by first hurling the culprit from a raised platform on to a rock or stone, and then stoning him to death. The falling on the stone has been explained in more ways than one. Some think that it implies coming to Christ in repentance and humility, with a contrite heart, which he will not despise. But the subject here is the punishment of the obdurate. Others take it to represent an attack made by the enemies of Christ, who shall demolish themselves by such onslaught. The original will hardly allow this interpretation. Doubtless the allusion is to those who found in Christ's low estate a stone of stumbling and rock of offence. These suffered grievous loss and danger even in this present time. The rejection of the doctrine of Christ crucified involves the loss of spiritual privileges, moral debility, and what is elsewhere called "the scattering abroad" (ch. xii. 30; comp. Isa. viii. 14, 15). **On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder** (*λικμήσει αὐτὸν, it*

will scatter him as chaff). The persons here spoken of are not those who are offended at Christ's low estate; they are such as put themselves in active opposition to him and his kingdom; on them he will fall in terrible vengeance, and will utterly destroy them without hope of recovery. The idea is repeated from Dan. ii. 34, 35, and 44, 45. Christ in his humiliation is the Stone against which men fall; Christ in his glory and exaltation is the Stone which falls on them.

Ver. 45.—**Pharisees.** They have not been specially mentioned hitherto, but they formed the majority in the Sanhedrin, and are properly here named by the evangelist. **He spake of them.** They could not fail, especially after ver. 43, to see the drift of the parables; their own consciences must have made them feel that they themselves were herein signified, their motives and conduct fully discovered. But, as bad men always act, instead of repenting of the evil, they are only exasperated against him who detected them, and only desire the more to wreak their vengeance upon him.

Ver. 46.—**They feared the multitude.** They did not dare to lay violent hands on Jesus in the presence of the excited crowd, which would have withstood any such attack at this moment. **A Prophet** (see ver. 11). If they did not recognize him as Messiah, they regarded him as one inspired by God, and having a Divine mission. This accounts for the joyful acquiescence of the Pharisaical party in the offer of Judas, when he proposed to betray his Master in the absence of the multitude

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The entry into Jerusalem.* I. THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY. 1. *Bethphage.* The Lord had spent the sabbath in that holy home at Bethany, where he was always a welcome Guest, with that family which was now more than ever devoted to his service, and bound to him by the ties of the very deepest gratitude. On the Sunday morning (Palm Sunday) he made his solemn entry into the holy city. He set out from Bethany on foot; but he intended to enter Jerusalem as the King Messiah. He had hitherto avoided anything like a public announcement of his office and his claims. When the multitude wished to "take him by force to make him a King, he departed again into a mountain himself alone." Not long ago he had forbidden his disciples to tell any man that he was the Christ. He had charged them to tell no man of the heavenly glory of the Transfiguration. The earthly view of the Messiah's kingdom was universal. The apostles themselves, warned as they had been again and again of its untruth, again and again reverted to it. So strong was the hold which it had upon their minds, that even after the awful scenes of the Passion, "they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The Lord would do nothing to sanction this vain expectation. His kingdom was not of this world. But now his hour was come—the hour that he should depart out of this world. It was time for him now to make a public assertion of his claims. That assertion, he knew, would lead to his death, and, through his death, resurrection, and ascension, to the establishment of his spiritual kingdom over the hearts of men. He was drawing near to Jerusalem. He was come to Bethphage, on the Mount of Olives. He sent two disciples, bidding them fetch an ass and a colt whereon yet never man sat. He described the place minutely. If any man interfered, they were to say, "The Lord hath need of them." The Lord, the Lord of all; all things are his; he claims them when they are needed for his service. The words were simple, but they seem to convey a great meaning, to imply far-reaching claims. "The Lord hath need of them." The Saviour describes himself simply as the Lord, just as the Septuagint writers express the covenant name of God. The words would be understood as meaning that the ass was wanted in some way for God's service. The owners knew not how; but they saw the solemn procession passing by; they saw the lowly majesty of Christ. They must have known him. He had been a frequent visitor at Bethany. But a short time ago he had raised Lazarus from the dead. Possibly they may have been among the number of his disciples. Even if not so, they must have felt something of the enthusiasm and excited expectation which were so widely diffused. They sent the ass. We must give readily and cheerfully when the Lord calls upon us; we must keep nothing back which he requires. "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." 2. *The prophecy.* (1) It must be fulfilled. "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."

The apostles were not consciously fulfilling the prophecy. They understood not these things at the first; they did not consider that they were doing the things that had been written of the Christ (John xii. 16). They knew it afterwards; the Lord knew it now. The prophecy came through the prophet, but it came from God; and now God, the Author of the prophecy, brought about its fulfilment. The prophecy announced the coming of the Christ as King. God brought it to pass, for that coming to Jerusalem as Messiah the King was the beginning of the great series of events by which the redemption of the world was wrought. (2) Its substance. It is taken from the Prophet Zechariah, but prefaced by a few words from a similar prophecy in Isaiah (lxii. 11), "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh." Prophets, apostles, evangelists, all proclaim the advent of the King. All his people must swell that proclamation, telling of his presence, sometimes with their lips, always in their lives. "Rejoice greatly," the prophet said (Zech. ix. 9). The coming of Christ brings exceeding great joy to the Christian heart. Those who know that joy must declare its sweetness to others, that their joy, too, may be full. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee." The earthly Zion had not been the usual dwelling-place of the incarnate Lord. Yet he cometh now to Zion; he is the King of Zion, her King from the times of old. He is our King now—King of the Israel of God. He cometh to us—to each individual soul, as on that first Palm Sunday he came to the earthly Zion. Let us receive him with joy; and oh! let us take heed lest we fall away like so many of those who then shouted, "Hosanna to the King!" He is meek; not, like earthly kings, proud and haughty. He is lowly, bowed down by much affliction, a Man of sorrows. The Hebrew word means "afflicted," "poor;" the Greek word expresses that meekness which is the blessed fruit of affliction borne in faith and patience. The King is meek; his followers must learn of him. Pride and violence are hateful in his sight. Blessed are the meek; for they are like the Lord. He sat upon an ass. He approached Jerusalem as a King, but not as one of the kings of the earth; in festal procession, but not with pomp and magnificence; riding, but not as earthly kings would ride—riding meekly on an ass. He was a King, indeed, surrounded with a halo of sweet dignity, and something of unearthly majesty that enforced reverence and repelled presumptuous liberties. But his kingdom was not of this world. The procession of Palm Sunday set forth both sides of the truth. He was a King; he claimed no earthly crown. (3) Its fulfilment. The two disciples obeyed at once. The owners of the asses recognized the mandate of the Lord. The disciples put their clothes upon the colt whereon never man sat, and they set the Lord thereon.

II. THE PROCESSION. 1. *The approach to Jerusalem.* The modest procession climbed the road that slopes up the Mount of Olives till, as they passed the shoulder of the hill, Jerusalem lay clear before them, the temple glittering in all its glory of gold and marble. The Lord wept as he gazed upon it. He, the Prince of Peace, was coming to the holy city; but that city, Jerusalem, the inheritance of peace, had not known the things that belonged to her peace; now they were hid from her eyes. There were outward demonstrations of joy; in some that joy was deep and true; in others it was, though not insincere, founded on mistaken hopes which would soon be dissipated; in very many it was mere excitement, worthless and unreal,—one of those transitory bursts of apparent enthusiasm which are so contagious for a time, which run through unthinking crowds. The Lord was not dazzled by the popular applause; he estimated it at its true value. He wept as he looked upon Jerusalem; his eye gazed through the future, resting, not on his own approaching sufferings, but on the fearful doom which awaited the impenitent city. 2. *The multitudes.* The tidings of the Lord's approach reached Jerusalem; crowds of pilgrims, who had come thither for the Passover, went out to meet him. There were pilgrims from Galilee, who could tell of many mighty deeds; there were others who were present when he called Lazarus out of his grave (John xii. 17). That last wondrous miracle had for a time rekindled the old enthusiasm. The crowd issuing from Jerusalem joined the procession which came from Bethany; they swelled its numbers and increased the excitement. They hailed the Lord as King, spreading their garments in the way, as men had done to welcome kings (2 Kings ix. 13); they strewed his path with branches from the trees; they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they hailed the Lord as the Messiah. The Pharisees had agreed that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put

out of the synagogue (John ix. 22). But they were powerless that day; they felt that they could prevail nothing; the world, they said, had gone after him. The multitude owned him to be the Messiah, the Son of David, the King of Israel. They raised the shout of "Hosanna!"—originally a prayer, "Save us now!" (comp. Ps. cxviii. 25); but now, it seems, a cry of triumphant welcome; a cry, however, which recognized him as the Saviour, and ascribed salvation to him. That prayer, they hoped, would reach the heavens; that cry would be heard there; they prayed for blessings upon him, using again the words of Ps. cxviii.; they prayed that God's blessing might rest upon him, and bring to pass that salvation which was the real meaning of the hosanna cry. "Hosanna in the highest!" In the highest the hosts of angels need not lift the prayer, "Save us now!" for themselves; but they rejoice, we know, over each repentant sinner, over each lost sheep brought home to the fold on the shoulders of the good Shepherd; they may well re-echo the suppliant hosannas as they add the heavenly incense to the prayers of the saints which go up before God (Rev. viii. 3, 4). We may well believe that, on that great Palm Sunday, the heavenly host bent in reverent adoration from their thrones of light, watched that lowly procession as it escorted the King of heaven into the holy city, listened to the earthly hosannas that welcomed his approach, and repeated with more solemn tones, more awful expectations, the high chant of praise which celebrated the Nativity, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Let us make that welcome our own. He who then came to Jerusalem comes now to us. Each day he cometh to expectant hearts, to souls craving peace and mercy. He cometh in the name of the Lord; himself the Lord, he cometh from the Lord, to do his Father's will, "to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant." "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Let us welcome him into our hearts with the hosanna cry of adoration and earnest supplication, "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity!" 3. *The inhabitants.* "All the city was moved"—stirred, shaken (so the Greek word means), at the approach of the jubilant procession. It was filled with crowds waiting for the celebration of the Passover—eager, excited crowds, ready to be stirred into commotion by any sudden impulse. "Who is this?" they said. The form of the Lord must have been well known to most of the dwellers in Jerusalem. Perhaps the question was asked by strangers (see Acts ii. 5, 9—11); perhaps it was asked with something of scorn, "Who is this who comes with such a retinue, with all this festal applause?" The multitude, mostly perhaps Galilæans, understood the suppressed contempt of the proud Pharisees, and answered with something of provincial pride, "This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee." He belonged to them in a sense; the Pharisees had maintained, with ignorant scornfulness, that "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Even Nathanael, the Israelite in whom there was no guile, had asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The Galilæans had a Prophet now, a Prophet mighty in word and deed; nay, more than a Prophet, the Messiah that was to come. They were proud of his eminence, they shouted their hosannas. Before the week was ended, some of them, it may be, would change that cry to "Crucify him! crucify him!" All would forsake him and leave him to his death. Popular excitement is a poor thing; the Christian must trust neither in crowds nor in princes, but only in God. "Who is this?" the world still asks, some in the spirit of anxious inquiry, some in scorn and unbelief; and still the Christian answers in faith and adoring love, "This is Jesus, the Prophet, the great High Priest, the King of kings and Lord of lords." He cometh to claim his kingdom in each human heart. Receive him; he bringeth peace.

LESSONS. 1. The King cometh; he is lowly. Only the lowly heart can receive the lowly King. 2. Greet him with holy joy; pray that that joy may be deep and true, founded on a living faith. 3. Seek to know him, to say, "This is Jesus," out of a true personal knowledge.

VERS. 12—16.—*The temple.* I. THE LORD'S ACTIONS THERE. 1. *His entrance.* Jesus went into the temple of God. It was a fulfilment of the great prophecy of Malachi, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple." He came, but, alas! they delighted not in him. He came to "purify the sons of Levi, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." But, alas! they would not be

purified. The Lord might cleanse the temple; the priests who ministered there would not yield up their hearts to him, that he might cleanse them. He looked round about upon all things (according to St. Mark, the actual cleansing of the temple was deferred till the Lord's second visit, on the Monday). So the Lord comes to his temple now, so he looks round about upon all things; he notes the formal services, he notes the careless hearts. It is right that the house of God be kept in decent order and beauty, but far more deeply necessary that all who minister and all who worship there should offer up their hearts to him cleansed, purified through faith in him; a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice. 2. *His ejection of the buyers and sellers.* He had cleansed the temple once before, at the beginning of his ministry (John ii. 13—17). The irreverent practices which he then checked had been resumed. The court of the Gentiles had again become a market for the oxen, sheep, and doves, which the worshippers needed for the various sacrifices. Again the money-changers had established themselves there to exchange the foreign money brought by the worshippers from many lands for the sacred shekel of the sanctuary, which alone could be accepted in the temple. Probably now, in the Passover week, the traffic was busier than ever, the noise more unseemly, the bargaining more eager than at other times. It was a sad scene, an unholy intrusion of earth and earthly doings into the house of God. The Saviour's holy soul was moved within him. Filled with that zeal for the house of God which had so much struck the apostles on the former occasion, he cast out all that sold and bought in the temple. There was a majesty in his look and bearing which could not be resisted; they fled before him, conscience-stricken. They felt that he was right; he was vindicating a great truth; God's house must be held in honour; they who reverence God must reverence his temple. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwelleth." 3. *His rebuke.* He told them what the temple should be—a house of prayer; it should be pervaded with an atmosphere of prayer; those who came there should come in the spirit of prayer; they should go up into the temple to pray. But how was prayer possible amid this noise and hubbub? This unseemly trafficking unsettled the minds of the worshippers as they passed into the inner courts. The court of the Gentiles was like a den of robbers now; they were robbing God of the honour due to him; they were driving this unholy traffic in his courts, their thoughts bent on dishonest gains. It must not be so, he said; God's house is a sacred place. We dishonour God's house if we allow worldly, covetous thoughts to occupy our minds when our bodies are present there. When the heart is like a den of robbers, the prayer of the lips will not reach the mercy-seat. We must do each of us our part to make God's house indeed the house of prayer by praying ourselves, and that in spirit and in truth. 4. *His miracles.* The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. He would do works of mercy in the temple courts, as he would do them on the sabbath; for, indeed, such deeds done in faith and love are acts of worship, pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father (Jas. i. 27). It does our churches no dishonour to use them, as sometimes they have been used in times of special need, for the service of the sick and suffering. Still in the temple the Lord performs his miracles of grace; there he opens the eyes of those who came praying, "Lord, increase our faith;" there he gives strength and energy to the hands that hang down and the feeble knees.

II. THE DISPLEASURE OF THE CHIEF PRIESTS. 1. *Their remonstrance.* They saw the wonderful things that he did. The miracles were wonderful; wonderful, too, was that strange majesty which so impressed the crowd of dealers and money-changers that they obeyed him, as it seems, without a word. It was a wonderful thing indeed that one Man, and one without any recognized position in the temple, without any official character, could overawe that concourse of traders. They heard the children crying in the temple, repeating the hosannas of the festal procession. They were sore displeased. They called the Lord's attention. They did not regard him as the Messiah. He ought not, they thought, to allow those untaught children to hail him with such a title. 2. *The Lord's reply.* He would not check the little ones. He ever loved children, and children ever loved to flock around him and to listen to his voice. Besides, the children were right; their childlike hearts recognized the dignity of Christ. Their hearts taught them, with an intuitive knowledge, lessons which the learned rabbis, the dignitaries of the temple, could not reach. So now holy children often utter profound

truths in their simple, innocent talk. Still God perfecteth praise out the mouths of babes and sucklings. He accepts the children's prayer; he listens to the children's hymn. Nay, the prayers and praises of children are our example; for they are offered up in simplicity and truth.

LESSONS. 1. "The Lord is in his holy temple:" enter it with reverence. 2. His house is a house of prayer; drive out worldly thoughts; hush your hearts into solemn attention. 3. Bring the little ones early to church; teach them the words of prayer and praise; their praises are acceptable unto God.

Vers. 17—22.—*The return to the temple.* I. THE WALK TO AND FROM BETHANY. 1. *The Sunday evening.* The Lord left the temple "when he had looked round upon all things." He had no home in the royal city. He went out unto Bethany, and there he lodged, perhaps in the house of Lazarus, perhaps, as many pilgrims did, in a booth on the hillside, or under the shelter of the trees. "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head." 2. *Monday.* Very early the Lord returned to the city. It seems he had eaten nothing; he hungered on the way. He was poor in this world. Let us learn of him to be content in poverty and hardships.

II. THE BARREN FIG TREE. 1. *The curse.* It stood alone, a conspicuous object. It was full of leaves. The time for figs was not yet, but this tree was singularly forward, precocious; the leaves promised early fruit, "hasty fruit before the summer" (Isa. xxviii. 4). It had none; it was barren. The Lord said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever;" "and presently the fig tree withered away." The miracle was symbolical, an acted parable. The priests and scribes whom the Lord was about to confront were like that fig tree—fair to look upon. They were held in honour, some for their official rank, some for their supposed righteousness, but they brought not forth the fruits of holiness. Such must wither when the Lord's searching eye is fixed upon them, when he comes seeking fruit. Leaves will not take the place of fruit, outward profession will not atone for the absence of holiness of heart and life. That fig tree was a meet emblem of the hypocrite. There were other trees without fruit; but they made no show of special forwardness—they were leafless still. This one tree was conspicuous for its foliage, but it had no fruit hidden beneath its leaves. The other trees might yet bring forth fruit in due time; this one had exhausted itself in leaves. Such a show of life is worthless in the sight of God; it is not life, it is only a false appearance; it may deceive men, it cannot deceive God. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Many professing Christians seem to us like that fig tree. Take we heed to ourselves. The Lord passed on, his hunger unappeased. The whole world was his, the cattle on a thousand hills; yet he hungered, for he had taken our flesh. He suffered as we suffer; he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He went on to Jerusalem, to the temple. Now apparently (according to the more exact order of St. Mark) took place that expulsion of unhallowed traffic, the miracles, the hosannas of the children, and the interference of the priests, which have been already related by anticipation in St. Matthew's Gospel. "When even was come, he went out of the city." 2. *The astonishment of the disciples.* The words of the Lord produced an immediate effect. The life of the tree, such as it was, was at once arrested; the sap ceased to circulate, the leaves began to wither. But it seems from the more minute account in St. Mark, that the disciples did not observe the result till they passed the tree again in going to Jerusalem on the Tuesday morning. Then they marvelled, saying, "How soon is the fig tree withered away!" We wonder at their wonder. They had seen many wondrous manifestations of the Lord's mighty power: why should they wonder now? They were still weak in faith—as the nine had been when they sought in vain to cast out the evil spirit beneath the Mount of the Transfiguration. The Lord repeats the lesson which he gave them then, "Have faith in God;" doubt not. Doubt destroys the strength of prayer. He that doubteth will not receive anything of the Lord; but if we ask in steadfast, undoubting faith, then there is the blessed promise, "All things are possible to him that believeth," for the prayer of undoubting faith availeth much with God. What was done to the fig tree, the Lord said, was a small thing for faith to do; faith could do things greater far. The psalmist had sung of the Mount Zion, "It cannot be removed: it abideth for ever." But the Lord said, pointing, it may be, to the mountains round Jerusalem,

"If ye shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done." Faith can remove mountains; difficulties vanish before the prayer of faith. Set the Lord's promises before you when you pray; claim them as your own; realize them, trust in them; pray with persevering importunity, and, doubt not, you shall receive what you ask in faithful prayer. This or that sin may seem like a mountain, rooted deep in the heart, immovable; but pray against it, pray that it may be cast out; pray in faith, believing in God's power, believing in his love, and it shall be done. It is our want of faith which makes our prayers so weak. If we fully believed that God is able and willing to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, to make us whiter than snow, we should, in our own actual lives, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and be more than conquerors through him who loved us.

LESSONS. 1. Let it be our most earnest effort to be true and faithful, not to seem to be so. Hypocrisy is hateful in the sight of God. 2. Pray for a strong, undoubting faith; it is God's most precious gift. 3. Pray always; believe in the power of prayer.

Vers. 23—46.—*The controversy in the temple.* I. THE LORD'S AUTHORITY CALLED IN QUESTION. 1. *The intervention of the chief priests.* St. Luke tells us that they had resolved to destroy our Lord. He had now allowed himself to be saluted openly as the Christ, the Son of David. He had accepted the hosannas of the multitude in the city, in the temple itself. He had assumed a paramount authority in the temple. The chief priests regarded themselves as rulers there; the market in the court of the Gentiles was held by their licence; it was a source of profit to them. They now determined to interpose publicly. They sent an official deputation, composed of members of the three classes of the Sanhedrin—chief priests, scribes, and elders—to demand the Lord's authority for his conduct. What right had he thus to intrude, as they deemed, into their province, to interfere with the administration of the temple? What right had he to teach publicly in the temple courts without licence from the rabbis? What right had he to the titles of "King of Israel," "Son of David," which he had accepted from the people as his due? 2. *The Lord's reply.* His enemies had hoped to ensnare him. They expected, doubtless, that he would openly assert his Divine mission, and they might then make his claims the basis of a formal accusation. But in that wonderful calmness and self-possession which we note so often in the history of our Lord, he answered at once with another question, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" They could not deny his right to ask this; it was closely connected with their question. John had repeatedly asserted in the strongest terms the authority, the Divine mission of him whose way he had come to prepare. They dared not deny openly the prophetic character of the Baptist; they feared the people, for the belief in John's sanctity was universal and enthusiastic. "All the people will stone us," they said. They were completely foiled. They could only say, in confusion and disappointed malice, "We cannot tell." It was a bitter humiliation. They were masters of Israel, and yet could not guide the people in a matter which had so profoundly stirred the religious thought of the time. They could only answer, "We cannot tell" to a question of such great spiritual importance. They were as ignorant as "the people of the earth," whom they so much despised. Alas for a country whose spiritual rulers are like those priests and scribes! Let us pray that our teachers may be taught of God.

II. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS. 1. *The story.* It is very simple. One of the sons, when bidden to work in the vineyard, rudely refused to obey his father; the other respectfully promised obedience. The first afterwards repented and went. The second broke his promise and went not to the vineyard. 2. *The spiritual meaning.* There are open and notorious evil livers, who make no profession of religion, and exhibit in their lives an open and wilful disobedience. Some of these are brought to repentance by the grace of God. They learn to see the guilt, the awful danger, of disobedience; a great change is wrought in their souls; they do their best to redeem the time; they go at last and work for God; and God, in his sovereign grace and generous bounty, accepts their service, though, it may be, they have wrought but one hour in their Father's vineyard. There are others, brought up, perhaps, in Christian families, among good examples and surroundings, who maintain a respectful attitude towards religion, and regularly observe all the outward ordinances of the Church. But, alas! there are

many such who have not given their hearts to God; they say from time to time (at Confirmation, for instance), "I go, sir," and perhaps at the moment they really have a sort of intention to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life. But they have no strength of purpose, they have not attained to the spirit of self-sacrifice; and when they are called to do work for God (whether inward or outward) which requires effort and self-denial, they shrink back from the Master's service. The yoke which the Lord calls "easy" seems to them hard and rough; the burden which the Lord calls "light" seems to them heavy and crushing; the cross terrifies them. They go not into the vineyard; they do not keep their promises; they do not work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, and so they do no real work for God. 3. *The application.* The Lord gives his testimony to John the Baptist, as he had done before; John came from God, a preacher of righteousness. He came "in the way of righteousness;" he had the righteousness of strict Levitical purity and the loftiest asceticism; he told men their duty plainly and sternly. Many notorious sinners, publicans and harlots, who had lived in open disobedience to God, heard him and repented. These priests and scribes and elders saw and heard him; they felt the holiness of his life, the power of his preaching; they had asked him if he was the Christ, or Elijah, or the prophet that was to come. But they repented not; they believed not. The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before the priests and scribes. They ought to have led the way; they ministered in the temple of God; they were the recognized teachers of the people. Yet the Lord does not shut out all hope. "The publicans go before you;" they might follow, if they would humble their proud hearts into self-abasement and lowly obedience. Pride hardens the heart in disobedience and wilfulness; humility opens it to repentance, to the gracious voice of the Saviour. Oh that we may listen, and repent, and work for God before it be too late!

III. THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN. 1. *The story.* It was the well-known parable of Isaiah (v. 1—7), related again with more authority and in greater detail. The lord of the vineyard asks again, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" Hedge, winepress, tower,—everything needful had been carefully provided. But the husbandmen were rebellious; they beat and murdered the servants who were sent to receive the fruits of the vineyard, and at last they cast out and slew their lord's only son. The end of those men must be utter destruction. Judæa was a land of vineyards. The Lord often drew his parables from surrounding circumstances; in Galilee, from the corn-land or the lake; in Judæa, from the vine or the fig tree. So Christian teachers should try to give life and interest to their teaching by connecting it with matters of daily life. 2. *The meaning.* Isaiah tells us, "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant." The hedge must be the Law, with its ordinances, circumcision, and other rites which served to separate Israel, as God's peculiar people, from other nations. The tower and winepress have been interpreted of the temple and the altar. But it is enough, without pressing these details, to understand the parable as meaning that God had given his people all things necessary for their spiritual welfare. The latter part of the parable differs from that in Isaiah. There the men of Israel are reproved: they brought forth wild grapes, not the fruits of righteousness. Here the Lord rebukes the husbandmen, the spiritual rulers of his people. The Lord of the vineyard went into a far country. God did not always manifest himself as he had done on Mount Sinai. He sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of the vineyard. Those servants were the prophets, sent again and again, to supply the deficiencies of the ordinary ministry, to warn both priests and people of their sins, to call both priests and people to repentance. "I sent unto you," God said, by the mouth of Jeremiah (xliv. 4), "all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" Some of these were persecuted, some were slain. "They cast thy Law behind their backs" (we read, in the confession of the Levites in Neh. ix. 26), "and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them unto thee." But now the Lord's eye, which had ranged over the past history of the nation, turns towards the future. The lord of the vineyard had yet one son, his well-beloved; he sent him last, saying, "They will reverence my son." The parable veils the awful mysteries which hang around the

relations between the infinite foreknowledge of God and the free-will of man. Human thought cannot grapple with these mysteries; human words cannot express them. God gave his only begotten Son; the Son of God came to give his life a ransom for many. The purpose, the fore-knowledge of God, did not destroy the free agency or remove the guilt of those who crucified the Lord of glory. These priests had already taken counsel to put the Lord to death. Caiaphas had already "prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation" (John xi. 47—53). They had already said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." They wished to keep possession of their old authority, their old exclusive privileges. Those privileges had been given them for a time; their priesthood was transitory. Christ was the Heir of all things; he was the Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord knew what was coming; they would cast him out (Heb. xiii. 12), they would kill him. How calmly he prophesies his own death! how simply he asserts his own Divine character! yet in words which his enemies could not take hold of. He was the Son, the one only Son, the well-beloved, of the Lord of the vineyard. They felt his meaning, but the parable afforded no ground for accusation. 3. *The warning.* "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" Christ puts the question to the guilty men themselves, and forces them to pronounce their own condemnation. Perhaps they pretended not to see the drift of the parable, and to regard it as a story, and nothing more. Perhaps (and this surely is more probable) they were overawed by the Lord's dignity, by the solemn power of his words, and so, like Caiaphas, became prophets against their will. "He will miserably destroy those miserable men." They prophesied their own doom. Alas, that the approaching danger did not lead them to repentance! They prophesied also the loss of those exclusive privileges which they guarded so jealously. "He will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." The Gentiles were to succeed to the privileges which the Jews possessed; they had been strangers and foreigners, but soon they would become fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord" (Isa. lxvi. 21). They would tend the Church of God; they would render the fruit in due season to the Lord of the vineyard.

IV. THE CHIEF CORNER-STONE. 1. *Its exaltation.* The parable, like every other parable, was inadequate to express the whole spiritual truth. The heir was slain; he could not appear again in the story as the judge. The Lord adds another illustration, quoting the psalm (the hundred and eighteenth) from which the "Hosanna!" of Palm Sunday had been derived: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." The priests and scribes were the builders; it was their duty to rear up the spiritual temple. One stone they had rejected; it was mean and poor in their eyes. God himself would raise that stone to the highest place of honour. It should become the head stone, with shoutings, "Grace, grace unto it!" (Zech. iv. 7). This is the Lord's doing. God highly exalted him whom the Jews rejected. 2. *The application.* The Lord now applies both parables directly and distinctly to the priests and scribes. They were the husbandmen, he told them—the rebellious husbandmen. The vineyard was the kingdom of God; it should be taken from them; they should no longer possess its privileges. The spiritual Israel, the Israel of God, is the nation to whom the kingdom should be given; not one earthly nation, but the nations of the saved; of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. And that nation, the great Catholic Church of Christ, would bring forth the fruits which the vineyard ought to yield, not wild grapes, but good grapes, the precious fruit of the Spirit. The priests and scribes were also the foolish builders. They had rejected the chief Corner-stone, elect, precious, which the Lord would lay in Zion; it was becoming to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. The low estate of Christ was a stumbling-block now; the cross of Christ would be a stumbling-block afterwards. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken," the Lord said, referring again to Isaiah (viii. 15), where we observe that the stone of stumbling (vers. 13, 14) is the Lord of hosts himself. The Jews were now incurring this guilt and this danger (comp. Luke ii. 34; Mark vi. 3; ch. xi. 6). But a greater danger remained; when the stone is become the head of the corner, when it is raised to its place of honour, it shall grind to powder those on whom it will fall. When the ascended Lord is exalted to the judgment-throne, utter destruction will overtake those hardened, impenitent sinners who reject his offers of

mercy unto the end, and will not know him as a Saviour, but must at last see him, when every eye shall see him, upon the great white throne. 3. *The anger of the priests.* They perceived that he spake of them; they felt the stern rebuke of his words; they felt, too, their truth. Their own consciences smote them. They blazed into fierce anger; they sought to seize him; but for the moment they were powerless; they could do nothing while the multitude regarded him as a prophet. May God give us grace to take reproof in a becoming spirit! It should produce, not anger, but repentance.

LESSONS. 1. Profession without obedience is worthless. God bids us work in his vineyard; let us obey him. 2. God has a right to the fruits of vineyard. His ministers must tend the vineyard. They must see, as far as lieth in them, that the fruit is rendered to the Lord. 3. Christ is the chief Corner-stone; the living stones of the spiritual temple must be built upon that one Corner-stone, elect, precious.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The ass of Bethphage.* We cannot tell whether our Lord's exact description of the locality where the ass and colt were to be found was derived from his superhuman knowledge, or whether, as seems more likely in so simple a case, he had agreed with one of his Judæan disciples to have the animals in readiness at an appointed time. However this may be, we can see from the whole incident that Jesus paid especial attention to the arrangements for his entry into Jerusalem. This was very unlike his usual habit. Let us consider its significance from two points of view.

I. THE LORD'S NEED. 1. *Jesus needed one of God's humblest creatures.* (1) This throws light on the lowliness of Jesus. In his Divine glory all the wealth of the universe was at his disposal. But in his earthly humiliation he had very simple wants. He required bread, water, rest. It is a mark of a genuinely low estate to have need of what the great despise. (2) This shows how what is most humble may yet serve the highest. The ass is needed by the Christ. If a very lowly animal can be thus honoured, much more may the most obscure of men and women, Christ's own brothers and sisters, render him valuable service. 2. *Disciples obtained what their Master needed.* He told his need; at once the two chosen messengers set off to have it supplied. It is not enough that we serve Christ in our own way. We have to discover what he really wants. Sometimes it may not be at all what we have chosen. But if it is serviceable to our Lord, that should be enough to determine our course of action. 3. *The unknown owner of the animals was obedient to the message of Christ's need.* "The Lord hath need of them" was the talisman to silence all remonstrances. Jesus may claim what is far more precious to us than any dumb animal. Yet if he calls, he needs; and if he needs, his claim is paramount. He may want a child in the other world; or he may require the child in the mission field. Then it is not for us to withhold our dearest from him.

> "Why should I keep one precious thing from thee,
> When thou hast given thine own dear self for me?"

II. THE USE OF THE ASS. Why did the Lord need the ass and its colt? 1. *To fulfil prophecy.* We do not often come across the conscious and intentioned fulfilment of prophecy. Usually the prediction comes true in spite of the ignorance of the actors in the fulfilment, or while they are aiming at something else than simply carrying out what a seer of old foretold. But now Christ sets himself deliberately to put into practice an idea of Zechariah (see again John xix. 28). What is best in the Old Testament is followed by Christ in the New. 2. *To aid in a solemn triumph.* Jesus had long forbidden a public confession of his Messiahship. But now he will make it for himself; for now it can do no harm. He is to ride in triumph, but in triumph to the cross. That glad entry to Jerusalem was to be just marching into the jaws of death. 3. *To express the peaceful and gentle character of Christ's Kingship.* Jesus did not choose the spirited war-horse. Following the idea of the prophet, he selected the lowly ass, an animal which, although it was very superior in the East to the ill-treated ass of the West, was still associated with quietness and simplicity. It was to be a rustic triumph, an old-world triumph, quaint and antique, and therefore a protest against the vulgar fashion of earthly glory.—W. F. A.

Vers. 6—11.—*The triumphant ride.* This was arranged by Christ, and enthusiastically promoted by his disciples. Here was a last glint of sunshine before the storm. The gladness of the scene is in strange contrast with the awful sequel. Palm Sunday ushers in Passion Week. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." While the evil day has not yet come, gladness and the assurance of victory may be the best preparation for it.

I. THE KING'S TRIUMPH. Few spectators would see anything kingly in this rustic *fête*. To the ruling classes of Jerusalem it would seem but child's play. But to the childlike followers of Jesus it had a deep meaning. These Galilæan pilgrims recognized in it the acceptance by Jesus of his royal rights. The question arises—Were they mistaken? He was riding in triumph to Jerusalem. But it was a simple, homely, unconventional triumph. Moreover, it did not lead to the throne, but its promise ended at Calvary, or seemed to end there. We know that the issue was disappointing to the early disciples (Luke xxiv. 21). Nevertheless, we also know that, with Jesus, the way to death was the way to victory. He was most kingly when he suffered most. His Passion was his coronation. He reigns now in the hearts of his people, just because he died for them.

II. THE PEOPLE'S ENTHUSIASM. Long-suppressed emotions now break forth into unrestrained utterance. It seems to be impossible to do too much, in the hastily improvised procession, to show devotion to the Christ. This is expressed in two ways. 1. *By actions.* Garments laid on the animal he rides, garments flung on the road for the honour of being trampled on, sprigs from the wayside trees scattered on the ground, palm branches waved overhead,—these things show the utmost enthusiasm. Strong feeling must manifest itself in action. 2. *By words.* The people quoted a well-known Messianic psalm, praying for a blessing on the Christ. Their words had nearly the same meaning as our "God save the king!" and they were prompted by an overmastering passion of enthusiasm. This is not at all wonderful. The only wonder is that there was but one Palm Sunday, and that our Lord's last Sunday on earth before his death. To know him is to see grounds for unbounded devotion, for love beyond measure, for glad praises which no words can contain. This is the great distinction of our Christian faith, its key-note is enthusiasm for Christ.

III. THE CITY'S WONDER. The happy, noisy procession was heard in Jerusalem, and the citizens looked up from their trades and forgot their bargaining for a moment, in surprise at the unexpected commotion. We may preach the gospel by singing the praises of Christ. One reason why the world is apathetic about Christianity is that the Church is apathetic about Christ. A fearless enthusiasm for Christ will arouse the slumbering world. But we want to go further. In Jerusalem the effect was but slight and transitory. A deeper and more permanent impression was made at Pentecost; for it is the coming of the Holy Spirit, and no merely external excitement, that really touches and changes the hearts of people. Yet even this did not move the greater part of Jerusalem. Rejecting the peaceful coming of Christ, hardened sinners await his next coming, which is in wrath and judgment.—W. F. A.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Christ cleansing the temple.* According to St. Mark's more detailed account, Jesus "looked round" on the day of his triumphant entrance to Jerusalem, and effected his drastic reformation of temple abuses on the following morning. Thus we see that his action did not spring from a hasty outburst of passion. It was the result of deliberation. He had had a night in which to brood over the shameful desecration of his Father's house.

I. THE DESECRATION. 1. *The nature of it.* It would be a mistake to suppose that the temple was being used as a common market. The animals sold were not to be treated as meat at the shambles. They were for sacrifices. The money-changing was not for the convenience of foreigners wanting to be able to do business in the city with the current coin. This was carried on in order to provide for visitors the Hebrew shekel with which to pay the temple dues. Therefore, it was thought, the business was of a religious character, and could be carried on in the temple as part of the sacred work. Animals were sacrificed there: why should they not be sold there? Money was collected there: why should it not be exchanged there? 2. *The evil of it.* (1) It interfered with worship. The outer courts of the temple were used for private prayer.

But the confusion of a market was most distracting to the spirit of devotion. (2) It was unjust to the Gentiles. This traffic seems to have been carried on in the court of the Gentiles. The Jews still reserved their own court in decorum. The prophecy from which our Lord quoted says that God's house "shall be called a house of prayer *for all people*" (Isa. lvi. 7). Thus the rights of the Gentiles were scornfully outraged. (3) It imported dishonest dealing. The keen eye of Christ detected wrong-dealing. It was not only trade, it was cheating that dishonoured the temple.

II. THE CLEANSING. 1. *An act of holy indignation.* Jesus was angry; he could be angry; sometimes he was "moved with indignation." It is no sign of sanctity to be unmoved at the sight of what dishonours God and wrongs our fellow-men. There is a guilty complacency, a culpable silence, a sinful calm. 2. *An act of Divine authority.* It was his Father's house that Christ was cleansing. He spoke and acted as the messenger of God even to those who did not know that he was the Son of God. Christ has power and authority. 3. *An act of righteousness.* He used force, but of course, if he had met with resistance, the merely physical power he put forth would soon have been overborne. Why, then, did he succeed? Because he had an ally in the breast of every man whom he opposed; the consciences of the traders fought with Jesus against their guilty traffic. He who fights for the right has mighty unseen allies.

Do not *we* need a temple-cleansing? The trade spirit desecrates religious work. Finance takes too prominent a place in the Church. It is possible to crush the spirit of private worship in low, unworthy ways of providing the means of public worship. We want the scourge of small cords to drive out the worldly methods of Christian work.—W. F. A.

Ver. 19.—*The fruitless fig tree.* We may wonder how Jesus could have hungered during the short walk over the Mount of Olives from Bethany, if he had just left the hospitable roof of Martha. Had she taken his mild rebuke too literally when she was busying herself in providing a bountiful table on a former occasion? Or may we not think with more probability that Jesus, who was an early riser, had left the house before breakfast? If so, this would have been a trial to Martha; but it would have shown her and all the disciples how eager he was to be about his Father's business. Yet he is a man, and the fresh morning air on the hills awakens the natural appetite of hunger. A few verses back it is said that Jesus had need of an ass and its colt (ver. 3). Here we see that he had need of a few wild figs—commonest of wayside fruit, so real was his human nature, so perfect the lowliness of his earthly state.

I. THE CONDITION OF THE TREE. 1. *It had promise.* This was a forward tree as far as leaves were concerned. Earlier than others of the same species in putting forth its foliage, it gave promise of an early supply of fruit, because the figs appear before the leaves. It is dangerous to make great pretensions. To stand out from our brother men with some claim to exceptional honour is to raise expectations of exceptional worth. We should do well to avoid taking such a position unless we are sure we can sustain it without disappointing the hopes we raise. 2. *It was not true to its promise.* This was the unhappy thing about the tree. If it had been like the backward trees, nothing would have been expected of it. But by giving a sign which in the course of nature should follow the putting forth of fruit, it made a false pretension. Possibly the vigour of the foliage absorbed the sap which should have helped the fruit-buds. Great attention to display directly injures the cultivation of really worthy qualities. Religious ostentation is generally barren.

II. THE DOOM OF THE TREE. It is to wither. The fig tree is only valued for the sake of its figs. If these are wanting, the tree is worthless. Its luxuriance of leaves is worse than useless, because it prevents other plants from growing where the fruitless branches overshadow the ground. 1. *What is fruitless is worthless.* (1) The nation. Here was typified the miserable state of Israel. The splendid temple, with its gold so dazzling that no one could look steadily at it when the sun shone on it, was in full view of Jesus as he passed the fruitless fig tree. There on the opposite hill were the signs of the unbounded claims and pride of Israel. Yet what had come out of them all? (2) The Church. A Church exists for the glory of God and the good of men. If it bears no such fruit, though it may flourish numerically and financially, it is quite worthless. (3) The individual man or woman. God cares absolutely nothing for our

professions of piety; the showy religion that imposes on men is an abomination in the sight of God. He looks for fruit in deeds of useful service. All else is but a mass of worthless leaves. 2. *What is worthless must be destroyed.* The fruitless Jerusalem was destroyed. Barren Churches have been swept away from Asia Minor and North Africa; barren Churches will be swept from other parts of Christendom in the future. Fruitless souls will be cast out of the garden of the Lord.—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*The boundless possibilities of prayer.* Read literally, this is a very difficult verse. We cannot see how it is verified in experience. We should be horrified at its exact and verbal fulfilment, because this would be handing over the control of the universe to the praying mortal. The coachman would not put the reins in the hands of his infant son, however much the child begged for them; yet the disaster which would follow such an action would be nothing in comparison with the unspeakable calamities which would visit the universe if we, in our blindness, our ignorance, our folly, could have done for us whatever we chose to wish for, and that merely for the asking. We may indeed be thankful that no such fearful power has been entrusted to us. But then how are we to interpret the very clear and emphatic words of our Lord?

I. IT IS FAITH THAT GIVES EFFICIENCY TO PRAYER. Many prayers are absolutely void and useless because they are not borne upon the wings of faith. They grovel in the earth-mists of unbelief, and never see the light of God's presence. The connection of the verses seems to imply that it was his faith that gave Christ power to bring its doom to the barren fig tree (ver. 21). It is reasonable to suppose that God will give many things to those who trust him, which he will deny to people who will not rely upon him. At all events, the setting forth of faith as a condition of the prayer that is to be answered shows that it is absolutely useless to practise an experiment with prayer by testing its efficacy in order to dispel doubt. The purpose of the experiment, and the grounds on which it is made, presuppose the absence of an essential condition of successful prayer. Therefore, if prayer is heard, as Christ tells us it is, such an experiment is foredoomed to failure. We want grounds for faith, but we cannot find them here; or rather we cannot have our first grounds here. The response to prayer will doubtless confirm and strengthen the faith which prompted the prayer. But there must be this prior faith.

II. THE PRAYER OF FAITH HAS BOUNDLESS EFFICACY. We get slight answers to prayer because we have little faith. Yet we cannot expect to have just what we choose to ask for, even though we ask in faith. No; but observe: 1. *Faith is not confidence in our own prayer, but trust in Christ.* Now, when we trust him we are led near to him, we begin to understand him, we learn to think as he thinks and to desire what he desires. Thus faith brings us into sympathy with Christ. But our foolish desires are quite un-Christlike. We shall no longer cherish them when he is by our side. Thus faith chastens prayer, purges it, elevates it, and brings it into harmony with the will of God. The prayer of faith will be such a prayer that God can hear, just in proportion as the faith is a spiritual power that unites us with God. 2. *The prayer of faith will certainly be answered, though not necessarily in the way in which we expect.* Jesus promised to those who lost lands and friends for the gospel's sake, more lands and friends (ch. xix. 29), and his disciples did not receive a literal fulfilment of this promise. But they had a good equivalent. The prayer of faith is answered in God's large, wise way—answered to the full, but by the gift of what he sees best, and not always of what we happen to name.—W. F. A.

Vers. 23—27.—*Question met by question.* Perhaps we shall best gather up the lessons of this incident if we look first at the form it assumed, then at the underlying substance.

I. THE FORM. 1. *The question of the rulers.* (1) An insulting question. What right had they thus to challenge One before whom they should have bowed in humble adoration? Technically, they were in the right in so far as they acted as guardians of the Law and religion of Israel. Yet they had proved themselves false to their trust by their permission of the desecration of the temple, and by the too common hypocrisy of their religion. Some people put the same question to-day without a shadow of the claim of the Jewish leaders. The human intellect has a right to search for truth; we

all ought to look for good grounds of faith. But the attitude of humility will be that of an inquirer, not that of a judge. (2) An irrelevant question. The charges Christ made were true; the things he denounced were wrong. Why, then, care so much about the question of his authority? People raise technical questions and abstract difficulties, but often these only obscure the plain moral truths which cannot be denied. (3) An insincere question. Did these rulers thirst for knowledge concerning the mission of Christ? Were they troubled with grave doubts? We know that they were only anxious to entrap our Lord. Flippant doubt is culpable, but the most deadly doubt is that which hates the light. 2. *The counter-question of Christ.* He postpones his reply to a question he desires to have answered by the rulers. (1) Showing his skill and wisdom. Christian apologists have acted too much on the defensive. It would be wiser to follow the example of Christ, and carry the war into the enemy's territory. (2) Proving the weakness of the rulers' position. They challenged Christ's status. What was theirs? People who reject Divine revelation, and the larger number who simply ignore it, will have to account for their conduct. At least they should be prepared to justify themselves. (3) Turning from a formal to a moral inquiry, John the Baptist was an embodiment of the national conscience. How was such a man to be treated? We make too much of questions of rank and office, and too little of those that touch right and wrong conduct.

II. THE SUBSTANCE. That was indeed an important question which the rulers put to Christ. If it were asked humbly and sincerely, it might be regarded as most just and reasonable. When it is so asked, Christ does answer it. Indeed, if the rulers had not been blind, they would have found a twofold reply close at hand. Christ justifies and confirms his claims: 1. *By the authority of conscience.* When he startled the people in the temple by an unwonted exercise of authority, they submitted without an attempt at resistance, because their consciences confirmed his action. Christ speaks to the conscience, and the conscience echoes what he says. 2. *By the authority of knowledge.* Who are the authoritative teachers? Surely the only teachers who can speak to us with authority are those who know the subjects they undertake to teach. Jesus "spoke with authority" (ch. vii. 29), because he spoke out of knowledge. There was a self-evidencing truthfulness and clearness of vision in him. 3. *By the authority of God.* The rulers could not see this. If their blindness had not been morally culpable, they would have been excused for rejecting the claims of Christ, because those claims were so great that no mere man could have a right to put them forth. When we perceive the Divine nature of Christ, all his words and deeds are justified, and his authority comes upon us with more than kingly power.—W. F. A.

Vers. 28—32.—*The two sons.* In this parable our Lord illustrates the great principle which he more than once enunciated—that "many shall be last that are first; and first that are last." It has a special reference to the Pharisees and publicans of Christ's time. But there are publicans and Pharisees in our own day. Let us consider the parable in its bearing on ourselves and the present conduct of people.

I. THE SON WHO REFUSED AND REPENTED. 1. *His hasty refusal.* Doubtless he spoke in impatience. His temper was hot, and the call to work amazed him. Thus he began the day badly, as many people begin life badly. This is altogether deplorable, because no subsequent amendment can obliterate the fact that the beginning was spoilt. 2. *His later repentance.* We need not be the slaves of our own past. If we started wrong, we are not forced to continue in the path of evil. "It is never too late to mend." There is a pride of consistency which only comes of folly; and there is a noble inconsistency, a sublime inconsequence. The change in the son showed (1) reflectiveness; (2) humility; (3) a willingness to own himself wrong; (4) a desire to do better in future. These are all hopeful qualities. 3. *His obedient action.* He "went." That was everything. He may not have said another word; but he obeyed his father, though in silence. The one thing God looks for is obedience. The way to make amends for past negligence is not to promise better things for the future, but just to do them. 4. *His improving conduct.* We see this son in two stages, and the second is better than the first. He was evidently moving in the right direction. The most important question is not—To what have we attained hitherto? but—Which way are we moving? towards the light or from it? 5. *His accepted obedience.* This was

the obedient son. His insolent words were forgiven when his subsequent conduct was penitent and obedient. God forgives the bad past in his penitent children. If they are now in the right path, he accepts them, although they were once far from it.

II. THE SON WHO CONSENTED AND DISOBEYED. 1. *His ready assent.* This was good in its way. But, being only verbal, or at best an intention not yet executed, it was of slight worth. God does not value religious professions as men prize them. 2. *His courtesy.* The second son was courteous to his father, addressing him as "sir," while his brother was rude and insolent. Now, it is our duty to be courteous to all men, and to be especially respectful to parents. Yet there is an hypocritical tone about good manners when they are not accompanied by good actions. God prefers rude obedience to polite disobedience. 3. *His subsequent disobedience.* We need not suppose that this second son had lied to his father, promising in smooth words what he never intended to perform. It is more probable that our Lord would have us think of him as honest in his profession. He really intended to obey. But he did not count the cost, or the good mood of acquiescence passed away, or some other more fascinating attraction led him to forget, or at least to neglect, his promise. There is an enormous step to be taken from good resolutions to good actions. Many a hindrance, many a temptation, comes between. 4. *His just condemnation.* Jesus appealed to the by-standers for their verdict. He wished to convince their conscience; he desires now to make us see and feel the truth of what he says. Could there be a question as to the verdict? Good promises count for nothing, or rather they count against the man who disobeys in conduct. God judges by conduct alone.—W. F. A.

Vers. 33—41.—*The parable of the vineyard.* The vineyard is a favourite image in the Bible, and the mention of it by Christ would call to mind in his hearers the Old Testament illustrations of Israel. But more than Israel the nation must be intended by our Lord, because the vineyard is to go on after the destruction of the Jewish state. Our thoughts are therefore directed to the kingdom of heaven, partially realized in Israel, more fully realized in the Christian Church, but always a spiritual vineyard.

I. GOD HIMSELF FOUNDS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. The owner of the vineyard has it properly planted and all its arrangements completed before he sends husbandmen into it. They have not to begin in the wilderness. God does not behave like the Pharaoh who ordered the Israelites to make bricks without straw. He plants. Therefore he has a right to look for fruit.

II. GOD ENTRUSTS THE WORK OF HIS VINEYARD TO MEN. There is work for God to be done in his kingdom. This is a high privilege, and it carries with it a grave responsibility. God will not have the just return for all his gifts if his husbandmen are not faithful in his service. The Jewish leaders were God's husbandmen. So are Christian workers to-day.

III. GOD EXPECTS FRUITS FROM HIS VINEYARD. God gives freely; but he looks for a return. It is not that he needs anything. But he does not desire his work to be wasted. He asks for grapes where he has planted a vine. This, then, is the one question for the Church,—Is it bearing fruit? By so doing it can glorify God (John xv. 8).

IV. THE MESSENGERS OF GOD HAVE BEEN SHAMEFULLY TREATED. Evidently the servants represent the prophets of ancient Israel, ending with John the Baptist, who was beheaded, though not by the Jews. The reason for this ill-treatment is here explained. It is selfishness. The leaders of Israel governed for their own advantage, and not for the glory of God. The leaders of the Church have too often shown a self-seeking spirit, and therefore they have rejected God's true servants, such as Savonarola, Huss, Latimer, Wesley.

V. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST IS A MARK OF GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING PATIENCE. The owner of the vineyard would try a last means. He would see if the husbandmen would reject his son. It was a great risk to run; but the fruit was precious, and the vineyard was worth rescuing from those who usurped the rights of ownership. God would not cast out Israel till Christ had come. But now Christ has come to us as God's last Messenger.

VI. THE REJECTION OF CHRIST IS A FATAL SIN. After the husbandmen had killed the heir to the estate, no more patience could be shown to them. They had filled up

their cup of guilt to the brim. They had rejected the last and greatest message from their Master. To be cast forth and destroyed is their rightful doom. This doom came upon the leaders of Israel in the overthrow of Jerusalem by Titus. It awaits those false and traitorous leaders of the Church who repeat the sin of the Hebrew hierarchy. It awaits all who work in the midst of the privileges of Christendom without rendering any fruit to the glory of God.

VII. THE DOOM OF THE FAITHLESS IS FOLLOWED BY THE APPOINTMENT OF NEW WORKERS. Gentiles took the place of Jews. God's work cannot stand still. He will have fruit—if not through our agency, then by other means. When the official leaders of the Church are unfaithful, God sets them aside, so that, though their doom is postponed, they are really no longer entrusted with any powers by God. Then he raises up men from outside the ranks of office—a John Bunyan or a George Fox. Thus the vineyard is saved, and God has the fruit of true service.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—22.—*Entry into Jerusalem.* Our Lord had now entered on the last week of his life upon earth, but, save in his own heart, there is no premonition of his death. Having spent the sabbath in Bethany, he proceeds on Sunday morning to the city. That was the day, four days before the Passover, on which the Jews were commanded to choose the Paschal lamb. Our Lord, conscious of his calling to die for his people, puts himself into their hands. He now feels that his hour has come, and proclaims himself as the promised Messiah, the King of Peace, by entering into Jerusalem, the metropolis of peace, in a manner which no one could fail to interpret, as One who would certainly furnish men with that which would not give one strong race power over others, but which would weld all men together and give them common feelings and interests, and restore in truth the unity of men. The points in the entry which Matthew considered significant are—

I. OUR LORD'S PROCLAMATION OF HIMSELF AS KING OF PEACE BY RIDING INTO JERUSALEM ON AN ASS. He did not choose a horse, because that animal would have suggested royalty of quite another kind from his—royalty which was maintained by war and outward force. 1. *What is it, then, that Christ claims?* No one could have the slightest doubt that he claimed to fulfil Old Testament prophecy, and to be that very Person who was to come and bring with him to earth everything which the love of God could bestow. He professes his willingness to take command of earth, not in the easier sense of being able to lay down a political constitution for all races, but in the sense of being able to satisfy every individual, to give peace to every soul, however distracted by trouble and overwhelmed by sin. And some have through him actually entered into such peace that they are impregnable to this world's assaults, and have gained the mastery over its temptations. They have found him to be all he claims to be. 2. *They proclaimed him as the Saviour and King of men, and he accepted these offices in a very different spirit from that in which they were ascribed to him.* He knew that to be the King of a people so down-trodden with sin, so entangled in ancient evils, was full of danger and suffering; that in order to deliver such a people he must die for them. And it is his expectation that we on our side should open our eyes to what he has done, and acknowledge him as our King. We must not grudge if it comes in the way of our duty to him to make real sacrifices. 3. *It must, indeed, have been a humbling experience for our Lord to have himself ushered into Jerusalem by a crowd through whose hosannas he already heard the mutter of their curses.* Such is the homage a perfect life has won.

II. ALTHOUGH OUR LORD MAKES NO MOAN OVER HIS OWN FATE AS THE REJECTED MESSIAH, HE QUITE BREAKS DOWN AT THE THOUGHT OF THE DOOM OF HIS REJECTERS. Terrible, indeed, must the responsibility often have seemed to him of being set as the test of men, of being the occasion of so many being found wanting. Are we in a condition so full of hazard and foreboding that it might justly bring tears to the eyes of Christ?

III. THE WITHERING OF THE FRUITLESS FIG TREE WAS A SYMBOLIC ACT. Our Lord saw in it the very image of Jerusalem. There was there an exuberant display of all kinds of religious activity, with absolutely nothing that could feed the soul or satisfy God. And the withering of the fig tree reveals the other side of our Lord's character in connection with this rejection by the Jews. He wept, but he also pronounced doom.

To calculate our own future we must keep in view not only the tears of Christ, but also his judgment. Throughout his life the one is as prominent as the other. Words which were rarely or never heard from the sternest Old Testament prophet are common on his lips. There is a day of visitation for each man—a day in which to us in our turn there appears a possibility and an invitation to enter into the presence of God, and be for ever satisfied in him and with his likeness. Picture to yourself the shame of being a failure, such a failure that the truest love and most inventive wisdom must give you up and pronounce you useless.—D.

Vers. 33—44.—*Parable of the wicked husbandmen.* The priests and elders already stood convicted of having incapacitated themselves for recognizing the Divine in Jesus. But theirs was not the guilt of common unbelievers. It was not merely their personal, but their official duty to keep themselves awake to the Divine, by righteousness of life. It was the duty for which their office existed. They are as agents whom a man has appointed to manage his business, and who use their position only to enrich themselves. The parable under which this judgment is carried home to them is one they could not fail to understand. The vineyard was Israel—the small section of humanity railed off from the degrading barbarism around, as if to try what could be done by bestowing every advantage that could help men to produce the proper fruit of men. Nothing was wanting which could win them to holiness, nothing which could enlarge, purify, fertilize human nature. The result was that they were content, as many professing religion are content now, with *receiving* and *doing nothing*. They measured themselves by the care God spent on them, not by the fruit they yielded; by the amount of instruction, the grace they received, not by the use that they made of it. Again and again God sent to remind them he was expecting fruit of his care, but his messengers speedily found that they were willing enough to live *upon* God, but not to live *to* him. But it is the keepers of the vineyard who are here censured for unfaithfulness, and that on two grounds. 1. They used their position solely for their own advantage. They had failed to remember they were servants. The religious leader is as liable as the political or military leader to be led by a desire for distinction, applause, power. Success may be the idol of the one as truly as of the other. It is not the sphere in which one's work is done that proves its spirituality or worthiness, nor even the nature of it, but the motive. 2. They are censured for their zeal in proselytizing—a more insidious form of the temptation to use their position for their own ends. The indignation of our Lord was roused by the same element in their zeal, which so often still taints zeal for the propagation of religious truth. It was the desire rather to bring men to their way of thinking than to bring them to the truth. How widespreading and deep-reaching this evil is those well know who have observed how dangerously near propagandism is to persecution. The zeal that proceeds from loving consideration of others does not, when opposed, darken into violence and ferocity. If we become bitter and fierce when contradicted, we may recognize our zeal as springing from desire to have our own influence acknowledged, rather than from deep love of others, or regard for the truth as truth. The condemnation of the parable our Lord enforces by reference to the Scriptures of which they professed to be guardians. Rejection by the builders was one of the marks of the Foundation-stone chosen by God. They cavilled at his allowing the hosanna psalm to be applied to himself, but this was itself proof that he was what the crowd affirmed him to be. Note: (1) That Jesus claims to be the Heir of God. In acting for God he acted for himself. (2) He implies that this was known to the Jewish leaders. It was because they knew he was the Heir they were so eager to remove him. Their state of mind is intelligible and very common. There are thousands who have a haunting suspicion that Jesus deserves very different kind of recognition from what they give him, but who will not let their minds dwell on the conviction, lest it should urge them to unwelcome action. (3) The very fact that Christ is rejected by so many is proof that he is Divine. The higher the blessing the fewer there are who acknowledge and accept it. Our Lord completes the warning, abandoning the figure of the parable, and making use of the figure of the stone. (1) Christ is a Stone of stumbling to those to whom he is presented. The gospel once heard *must* henceforward be an element in the condition of the hearer. No man who has heard can be as if he had not heard. Men are often conscious that he is the one Foundation

on whom life can be safely built, and yet they try to pass on in life as if he were not there. While they do so they are held back, distracted; their life is a mere make-believe Or habitual falseness of spirit is produced, it may be unconsciously to themselves. But the frost that has only lasted a few minutes is as surely frost as when it has formed a strength of surface the hammer cannot break. Each refusal to determine regarding Christ leaves the conscience a little blunter. It is thus men are bruised on this Stone of stumbling. (2) The second action of the Stone is final. Those who determinedly oppose Christ lie at once slain and buried by what should have been their joy. Their dwelling and refuge become their tomb. Things are to move on eternally in fulfilment of the will of Christ. To oppose his course, to attempt to work out an eternal success apart from him, is as idle as to stand on the path of an avalanche of stone in order to stem it. Acceptance or rejection of Christ is the determining element in human destiny. Without him we can make nothing or worse than nothing of life. "Better," will a man say—"better that a millstone had been hanged about my neck, and that I had been cast into the sea, than that I should have lived to reject him." Think of it more, go closer to him, keep yourself in the light of his words and life, and you will see that it is so, and must be so, that he is the Hand of God stretched out to us, the Word of God spoken to us out of the silence.—D.

Ver. 45—ch. xxii. 14.—*The marriage of the King's Son.* This parable, taken along with the parable of the two sons and the parable of the wicked husbandmen, forms a climax to them. In the first, God is represented as a Father issuing a command; in the second, as a Householder who expects the performance of a contract; in the third parable, God appears as a King, not commanding, but looking for acceptance of an enviable invitation. Already the kingdom of God had been likened to a feast, but here prominence is given to the circumstance of the host being a King, and the occasion the marriage of his son, and it is impossible to avoid the impression that our Lord meant to indicate that he was the King's Son. He and John had both familiarized the people with the title Bridegroom as applied to the Messiah. But it is rather from God's side than from man's the Bridegroom is here viewed. In Christ God and man *are* made one. No union can be so close. And in this, the greatest event in God's reign, and the indestructible glory of humanity, God might well expect that men should rejoice with him. Proclamation had been made, invitation given, and people remained wholly indifferent. The earnest sincerity of God in seeking our good in this matter is marked by one or two unmistakable traits. 1. By the King's willing observance of every form of courtesy. One of these is the sending of a second messenger to announce the actual readiness of the feast. And so God had not only sent the prophets, bidding the Jews expect this festival, but sent John to remind and bring them. And so he still offers his blessings in ways which leave the reluctant without apology. He considers your needs and your feelings, and what he offers is that in which he has his own chief joy—fellowship with his Son. 2. By his wrath against the murderers. You may be so little in earnest about God's invitation that you scarcely seriously consider whether it is to be accepted or not, but nothing can so occupy *him* as to turn his observation from you. To save sinners from destruction is his *grand* purpose, and no success in other parts of his government can repay him for failure here. The last scene in the parable forms an appendix directed to a special section in the audience. Seeing the gates of the kingdom thrown open, and absolute, unconditioned freedom of entrance given, the ill living and godless might be led to overlook the great moral change requisite in all who enter God's presence and propose to hold intercourse with him. The refusal of the wedding dress provided was not only studied contempt and insult, but showed alienation of spirit, disaffection, want of sympathy with the feelings of the king. The guest must have lacked the festive spirit, and was therefore "a spot in the feast." He sits there out of harmony with the spirit of the occasion, and disloyal to his king. Therefore is his punishment swift and sudden. The eye of the king marks the intruder, and neither the outer darkness of an Eastern street, nor the pitchy blackness in which he lies unseen and helpless, can hide him from that gaze of his Lord which he feels to be imprinted on his conscience for ever. In applying this parable, we may mark: (1) That there is no way of accepting God's invitation without accepting his spirit, character, and ways. There is no real acceptance, no abiding in

God's favour, where there is no growing likeness to him. Conformity to God, ability to rejoice with God and in God, humble and devoted reverence,—these are great attainments; but these constitute our wedding garment, without which we cannot remain in his presence or abide his searching eye. No associating of yourself with those that love him, no outward entrance into his presence, will avail; it is the heart you bear towards him that will determine your destiny. (2) There is abundant encouragement to all who are willing and desirous to put on the Lord Jesus. It is the first duty of every host to make his guest feel at home, and therefore does God provide us not only with great outward blessings, but with all that can make us feel easy and glad in his presence. He offers not only enjoyment, but power to enjoy. If you are conscious that you could not be easy in God's presence without great alterations in your character, your invitation is guarantee that these will be made. If you could not be easy in his presence without knowing that he was aware of all you had thought and done against him, and forgave you; if you could not eat at the table of one against whom you harboured ill will, nor enjoy any entertainment without genuine love of your host;—then this will be communicated to you on your acceptance of God's invitation. Does your unfitness, even more than your unworthiness, deter you? Here you see that God invites you *as you are*.—D.

Vers. 1—11.—*The triumph of Christ.* In his journey to Jerusalem Jesus rested at Bethany, where, stopping at the house of Simon the leper, Mary anointed his feet (cf. ch. xxvi. 6; John xii. 2). His progress on the day following is here recorded. Observe—

I. THAT JESUS ENTERED THE CAPITAL IN THE ROYALTY OF MEEKNESS. 1. *He came in sacred character.* (1) Animals which had never borne the yoke were employed for sacred purposes (see Deut. xxi. 3). The colt upon which Jesus rode was such (see Mark xi. 2). Specially acceptable to Christ is the consecration of virgin youth. (2) His sacred character was recognized in the acclamations of the multitude. "Hosanna!" was a form of acclamation used at the Feast of Tabernacles, when the people carried boughs (see Neh. viii. 15). "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord!" equivalent to "Hosanna, O Lord!" (see Ps. xx. 9). "Hosanna *in the highest!*" i.e. in the heavens, which is an invitation to holy angels to join with the sons of men in praising the Messianic King (cf. Ps. cxlviii. 1, 2; Luke ii. 14; xix. 38). (3) That a colt never before ridden should have borne Jesus amidst the shoutings of the multitude was a miracle (cf. 1 Sam. vi. 7). That miracle set forth the power by which Christ can subject to his will the unruly heart of man (see Job xi. 12). (4) While Jesus entered Jerusalem as a King, he showed that his kingdom was not of the world. So Pilate acquitted him of treason against Cæsar. 2. *He came as the "Prince of Peace."* (1) He rode not upon the warlike horse. To have done so would have been unbecoming him as King of Israel (cf. Deut. xvii. 16; Ps. xx. 7). Has his royalty peacefully entered in triumph into your soul? Has he received a welcome—a hosanna, in your heart? (2) As "the Judge of Israel" he rode upon the colt of an ass (cf. Judg. v. 10; x. 4; xii. 13, 14). The kingdom of heaven is not force, but righteousness. (3) His coming was therefore the triumph of pure joy. This the multitude expressed by acclamation and by spreading their garments and palm branches (cf. 2 Kings ix. 13; Ps. cxviii. 25; John xiii. 13; Rev. vii. 9). (4) The hosannas of earth are the prelude to the hallelujahs of heaven. 3. *He came in humble state.* (1) He condescended to have "need" of the ass's colt. If he is pleased to have need of our poor services, this is reason sufficient for any sacrifice. To render service needed by the Lord is at once the highest honour and the greatest blessing. (2) He condescended to accept his praises from the lips of "babes." Not from the heads and rulers of the nation, but from his poor disciples. Their greatness is childlikeness (cf. ch. xviii. 1—4). (3) He condescended to come in meekness to those who plotted his destruction. Lo! the King comes to be murdered by his creatures, and in his death to redeem them from wrath! (4) What triumphs are here! He triumphs over pride in his humility, over affluence in his poverty, over rage and malice in his meekness. "Was it a mean attitude wherein our Lord appeared? Mean to contempt? I grant it. I glory in it. It is for the comfort of my soul, for the honour of his humility, and for the utter confusion of all worldly pomp and grandeur" (Wesley).

II. THAT JESUS ENTERED THE CAPITAL FOR THE TRIUMPH OF DESTINY. 1. *He*

came for the fulfilment of prophecy. (1) This last journey of our Lord from Jericho to Jerusalem was in the same line as the triumphant march of the children of Israel from the time of their first entry into the holy land to the taking of Jerusalem. The spiritual progress is from the lowest to the highest, from the place accursed to the place of the Name of our Lord. (2) He came as the very Paschal Lamb. It was now the tenth day of the month, when the Law appointed that the Paschal lamb should be taken up (see Exod. xii. 2; 1 Cor. v. 7). (3) He rode in triumph to his death. The priest according to the order of Melchizedek suffers as a Priest and triumphs as a King. His victory is moral, viz. over sin, death, and hell. He is the King in his death, according to the inscription on his cross (see ch. xxvii. 37). How appropriate upon this occasion, then, was the "Hosanna"—"Save *now*"! (4) The history of this remarkable progress was pre-written (see Isa. lxii. 11; Zech. ix. 9). Known unto God are all his *ways* from the beginning. 2. *His coming was itself a prophecy.* (1) It suggested, by what Elliot calls "allusive contrast," the ascension of Jesus into the heavenly Jerusalem. Some of the multitude "went before him," viz. those who met him from the city, as the angels met Jesus in his ascension. Some "followed after," viz. those who came with him from Bethany, as the risen saints ascended with their risen Lord (cf. Ps. xxiv.; ch. xxvii. 52, 53). Those who would follow Christ in his ascension must follow him now in his lowly state. (2) It suggested also the second, glorious, advent of Messiah to this earth. Then coming forth to vengeance, he is described as riding upon a *horse* (see Rev. xix. 11). Coming forth in glory, without a sin sacrifice, he will descend upon a throne of white light. He will come with the sound of the great trumpet, which shall wake the very dead. Instead of the retinue of poor Galilæans, he will come with a myriad retinue of mighty angels. Then will be understood the "Hosanna *in the highest!*" (3) The Lord's day is the Christian type of the everlasting sabbath. As the day of the triumphal entry of Christ into the earthly Jerusalem was the tenth of the month, so was it also the *first* day of the week. It was the first of that series of events which took place on the first day of the week, entitling that day to be called "the day of the Lord." Is there no prophetic reference to this in the words of the psalm which was evidently in the minds of the disciples: "*This is the day which the Lord hath made;* we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee [הושיעה נא, *hoshiah nna*, from which the disciples had their *hosanna*]," etc. (see Ps. cxviii. 24—26)? —J. A. M.

Vers. 12—17.—*The Lord of the temple.* "The temple of God" (ver. 12) Jesus calls "my house" (ver. 13), asserting himself to be the Divine Lord of the temple. And quoting as he does from Isa. lvi. 7 and Jer. vii. 11, he identifies himself as "Jehovah." Acting in this quality, he surveyed the characters he found in the temple and dealt with them accordingly. But the temple stands forth as a type of Christ's Church (cf. 1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21, 22; Heb. iii. 6), so the subject has its lessons for us. We may ask, then—

I. WHAT SORT OF PERSONS DOES JESUS FIND IN HIS CHURCH? 1. *He finds the secularist there.* (1) The secularist is in his place in the world. The calling of the money-changer is lawful when honestly fulfilled. So is that of the vendor of doves (see Deut. xiv. 24). (2) The calling of the secularist is a desecration in the "house of prayer." Lawful things become sinful when ill-timed and ill-placed. The temple of God is defiled by merchandise. (*a*) By that scandalous traffic in holy things, which is so largely carried on within the borders of the professing Church, in simoniacal presentation, fraudulent exchanges, preferment obtained through flattery. (*b*) By that worldly, covetous, money-getting spirit which dwells in so many of its members. This spirit is demoralizing. It is also distracting to worship. (3) Worldly gain must not be made the end of godliness (see 1 Tim. vi. 5). Men should not enter the membership or seek office in Churches with a view to increasing their business. 2. *He finds the afflicted there.* (1) "The blind and the lame" are *in the world.* Sin begets suffering. The prevalence of suffering evinces the prevalence of sin. But there must be qualification here (see John ix. 3). (2) "The blind and the lame" are *in the temple.* The Church on earth is not so perfect as to be free from afflictions. (3) The afflicted are where they should be in the Church. Christ the Healer is still in his temple. Religion has its remedies. Religion has its reliefs. 3. *He finds the true disciple there.* (1) The

Christian in the world is not of it. (2) In the Church he is at home. (3) He meets Jesus there. (4) He see his "wonders" there—miracles of moral healing, miracles of wholesome discipline. (5) He raises the "Hosanna!" there. The "babes and sucklings," who perfected praise, were not infants literally, but childlike disciples (cf. ch. xviii. 1—6; xi. 25; 1 Pet. ii. 2). 4. *He finds the ritualist and the traditionalist there.* (1) "The chief priests and the scribes" (ver. 15). Ritualist and traditionalist are frequently met in company. (2) They saw, but could not interpret, the wonders wrought by Christ. They could not see his Godhead in the wonderful submission of the traffickers. Neither could they see this in his miracles of healing. (3) They were angry with those who could interpret the wonders. They were scandalized that the disciples should shout "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Proud men cannot bear that honour should be given to any but themselves. To hypocrites everything that is not commonplace and traditional is extravagant. (4) Prejudice could censure "the blind and the lame" for coming into the temple to be healed, but could see no evil in the traffickers stalling their oxen there. Superstition is often the companion of irreverence. The priests probably had a pecuniary interest in the traffic, particularly in those animals sold for sacrifice which they had to examine and approve. Interest blinds.

II. WHAT SORT OF TREATMENT HAVE THEY TO EXPECT FROM HIM? 1. *What has the secularist to expect?* (1) To be violently ejected from the Church. See the tables and seats overthrown and the money scattered. What a different estimate of its value has Jesus to that cherished by men of the world! (2) To have their characters exposed. "Robbers!" Extortioners and cheats, viz. in their business, are *robbers*. The slyness of the fraud does not diminish its villainy. How monstrous the sin when the very Church of God is made a "den of thieves"! (3) Those who are not admonished by the *searchings of truth* must suffer the *retributions of power*. On the first day when Jesus entered the temple he "*looked* round about upon all things." It was not until the second day that he gave the sterner rebuke (cf. Mark xi. 11, 15). (4) This was the second time that Jesus purged the temple. The first was about three years earlier (see John ii. 14). Note: Secularists ejected from the Church will return. They must be expelled again. (5) As our Lord purged the temple first at the commencement of his ministry and now again at the close of it, so at the beginning of the Christian dispensation the Jewish anti-Messiah was driven out by the Romans, and at the end of it the Gentile antichrist will be cast out. (6) Never, until the antichristian secularism is purged out of the temple of the Lord, will the glory of the Lord come into it as in ancient times. The millennial reign will set in with the return of the Shechinah. 2. *What have the afflicted to expect?* (1) Miracles of healing. The physical miracles have their moral counterparts. The "blind" come to spiritual conception. The "lame" come to render moral obedience in a steady, even walk. (2) Christ alone wrought miracles in the temple of the Lord. He only can work out spiritual marvels. (3) Note: Christ brought in the afflicted as he turned out the secularists. Concession to the spirit of the world is not the way to win men to Jesus. We have too many sensuous "entertainments." (4) Spiritual glory is grander than material splendour. By his healing mercy Jesus made the glory of the latter house to surpass that of the former. 3. *What have the true disciples to expect?* (1) Mutual encouragement. The hosannas were in chorus. If "children," literally taken, raised their voices, it was in imitation of the childlike disciples. (2) The defence of Christ. The expulsion of the traffickers was for the defence of pious Gentiles; for it was in the court of the Gentiles the traffic was carried on. The privileges of the Gentile believer must not be diverted from him. Jesus also defended his disciples against their enemies, the ritualists and traditionalists. (3) His commendation. God makes the wrath of men to praise him. But his praise is "perfected" by his disciples. With them his praise is intelligent, generous, and free. 4. *What have the haughty to expect?* (1) Rebuke from Christ. There is a keen sarcasm in the question, "Did ye never read?" when addressed to the "chief priests and scribes." (2) Abandonment by Christ. "And he left them." He had no sympathy with their spirit. He found a more congenial lodging in the olive-shade of Bethany. (3) The great Redeemer is a great Reformer.—J. A. M.

Vers. 18—22.—*The omnipotence of faith.* The miracles of Jesus were generally

miracles of mercy. There are a few exceptions. Conspicuous amongst these is the withering of the fig tree with a word. When the disciples marvelled Jesus expounded to them his astonishing doctrine of the power of faith. We learn—

I. THAT BELIEVING IS ESSENTIAL TO PREVAILING PRAYER. 1. *There can be no prayer without faith in a personal God.* (1) The atheist cannot pray. The reason is obvious. He has no God to pray to. His is a melancholy orphanage. (2) The pantheist cannot pray. His god is an infinite *It*, unsusceptible to prayer. "He that cometh to God must believe that *he* is" (Heb. xi. 6). (3) The Christian can pray. He believes in a personal God, who created us after his image. As a man can intelligently speak to his friend, so, etc. (see Exod. xxxiii. 11). 2. *There can be no prayer without faith in a Person susceptible to human appeals.* (1) The deist cannot pray. His god is too far removed from his works to notice the specks upon a tiny planet. (2) The Christian can pray. For he has loftier views of God. He is so great that nothing can escape him. While he rules firmaments of suns and systems of worlds, he feeds the animalculæ. (3) The Christian, moreover, is encouraged to pray by his faith in the mediation of Christ. Without such mediation the sinner might shrink from approaching the infinitely Holy. In it mercy in harmony with justice is assured. 3. *Faith is active in successful prayer.* (1) The power of faith is like that of water, impotent in quiescence, but efficient when in motion. It is like heat, impotent when latent, but whose energy when molecules are in motion is tremendous. (2) It is the active faith of saints that alarms Satan. It stirs three worlds, viz. heaven, earth, and hell.

II. THAT BELIEVING PRAYER IS INFALLIBLY EFFECTIVE. 1. *Because God has pledged himself to it.* (1) He is able to do whatever he will. The power of the Promiser was exemplified in the withering of the fig tree. The moral is drawn from this example: "If ye have faith, and doubt not," etc. (vers. 21, 22). (2) He is willing to do whatever he promises. He cannot deny himself. "Heaven and earth *may* pass away." The Creator may reverse his act of creation. But the Uncreate cannot annihilate himself. But to falsify would be to annihilate Infinite Truth. 2. *But how is the infallible effectiveness of believing prayer reconciled with the wisdom of God?* (1) If omnipotence is pledged to faith, may not omnipotence be put into commission to folly; for man is confessedly fallible? (2) Faith, in the nature of the case, presupposes a promise. Where has the God of wisdom promised a foolish thing? (3) But is there not here an open cheque: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"? The particular promise is still implied in the term "believing;" for faith itself is the gift of God. The God of wisdom cannot inspire faith in the interests of folly. 3. *But how can efficacy in prayer comport with the uniformity of nature's processes?* (1) So undeviating is the order in the revolutions of the spheres that eclipses, occultations, conjunctions, epacts, and other matters may be calculated with certainty. In like manner, chemical changes never vary when the conditions are the same. Can prayer disturb these things? (2) Who wants it to do so? There is no need to disturb matter when prayer is made for spiritual blessings. What relation is there to eclipses and epacts in answering the cry for mercy? A whole millennium of spiritual glory may flood this earth in answer to prayer, without touching the properties of a molecule of matter. (3) But how does the argument stand in relation to providence? There is a sphere in nature for human providence. The farmer does not violate the order of nature when he grows corn in response to the cry of a nation for food. By draining and tillage he can alter the climate of his country and alter its flora and fauna, and all this without altering the properties of a single molecule of matter. In like manner, on a far grander scale, God also has reserved to himself a sphere for his providence in nature, within which he can answer every prayer he pleases to inspire.

III. THAT PRAYER FAILS THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF CONDITIONS INIMICAL TO ACTIVE FAITH. 1. *As when the matter of the suit is unwise.* (1) "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (Jas. iv. 3). In such a case God will in mercy withhold his gift of faith. (2) Or he may honour the sincerity of the prayer by conferring an equivalent to that which his grace withholds. So he dealt with Paul when he sought the removal of his "thorn in the flesh." (3) Honest prayer is never vain. Its very exercise ennobles. As the domestic animal is ennobled by his conversation with man, infinitely more is man ennobled by conversing with his Maker. 2. *As when*

the motive is unworthy of the suit. (1) Is our prayer for business prosperity? But is the motive good? Else the answer may come in anger. To how many is the accession of material wealth the wasting of the infinitely more precious moral properties! (2) Is our prayer for the spiritual conversion of a child? The end here is undoubtedly good. But what is the motive? Is it that his consequent dutifulness may increase the comfort of the home, rather than bring glory to God and save a soul from death? Feather the arrows of prayer with the very best motives. 3. *As when the disposition of the suppliant is inconsistent with sincerity.* (1) Such is the case when the lazy pray for a revival. Work for it while you pray. (2) When the impenitent seek salvation. This is like a rebel suing to his sovereign for pardon with a loaded revolver in his hand. The salvation of the gospel is a salvation from sin. Repentance is therefore indispensible (see Ps. lxvi. 18; Isa. i. 15—20; ch. v. 23—26). There is no mercy for the implacable (see ch. vi. 12—15).—J. A. M.

Vers. 23—32.—*The authority of Jesus.* The "things" in reference to the doing of which this question of the authority of Jesus was raised by the chief priests and elders, were his purging the temple from the traffickers, his publicly teaching and working miracles of healing there. Mark, by more clearly placing the miracle of the withering of the fig tree in order before these things, brings them into closer connection with the passage before us. We may profitably consider the authority of Jesus—

I. AS IT IS EVIDENT IN HIS CONDUCT. 1. *His questioners were not ignorant of his claims.* (1) He had long before plainly told them who he was (see John v. 36, 43). (2) He had but the day before claimed to be the Lord of the temple. He called it the "temple of God," and spoke of it as his own house (see vers. 12, 13). And the passages he quoted in connection with this claim spake of the temple as the house of Jehovah (see Isa. lvi. 7; Jer. vii. 11). (3) Their object was now to get him to assert this again, that they might make it a pretext to fix upon him the charge of blasphemy; for they had plotted to destroy him (see Mark xi. 18). 2. *His conduct vindicated his claims.* (1) His expulsion of the traffickers was a miracle. It was a work which an army might hesitate to undertake. Yet single-handed he did it effectually. (2) He wrought miracles of healing which, the rulers and Pharisees themselves being witnesses, no man could do unless God were with him (see John iii. 1, 2). (3) Moral miracles also attended his ministry. Publicans and harlots—unjust and immodest persons—notorious sinners, were converted into reputable citizens and exemplary saints. These were the people represented by the son in the parable who "said, I will not; but afterwards repented, and went" (ver. 29). The life of the sinner is an actual clamour of "I will not." But as there are those who promise better than they prove, so are there those who prove better than they promise.

> "Seest thou yon harlot, wooing all she meets;
> The worn-out nuisance of the public streets;
> Herself from morn to night, from night to morn,
> Her own abhorrence, and as much your scorn?
> The gracious shower, unlimited and free,
> Shall fall on her when Heaven denies it thee."
>
> (Cowper.)

3. *Note here the gospel call.* (1) It is a call to work for Christ. "Go, work in my vineyard." It is charged upon the Pharisees that they say, and do not (ch. xxiii. 3); upon the chief priests and rulers here that they said, "I go, sir, and went not." Buds and blossoms are not fruit. (2) It is a call to work for Christ *now.* "Go, work *to-day* in my vineyard." (3) It is a call from the common Father. It comes to the "two sons," and these represent the two great classes of sinners, viz. the openly irreligious and the hypocritical professors. (4) But though coming equally to all, it differs in its effects. There is more hope of the openly irreligious than of the hypocritical professor. (5) True repentance is practical. When he repented "he went."

II. AS IT IS EVIDENT IN THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN. 1. *John's baptism was proved to be "from heaven."* (1) By the scope of his ministry. He "came in the way of righteousness." He came walking in it as well as preaching it. He did not affect the "soft clothing" of the courtier, as he might have done, being the son of a notable

priest, had he been moved by a vulgar ambition. Neither did he flatter princes, but lost his head for his fidelity. (2) By the success of his ministry. (*a*) "The baptism of John" is here put for his doctrine. (*b*) Jesus, by submitting to John's baptism, accepted and sanctioned his doctrine. (*c*) The vast multitudes who came to his baptism thereby professed faith in his teaching. Hence the general expression, "All hold John as a prophet." The defeat of Herod's army in the war with Aretas, King of Arabia, was esteemed by the Jews a judgment for the death of John (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 7). 2. *John's testimony therefore should be conclusive.* (1) Prophecy indicated him to be the harbinger of Messiah. Thus Isaiah spake of him (cf. Isa. xl. 3; ch. iii. 3; John i. 23). So Malachi (cf. Mal. iv. 5; ch. xi. 14). So Zecharias (see Luke i. 17). (2) He indicated Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world. (3) The questioners had no reply to this argument. "They reasoned with themselves," not what was true to be believed, but what it was safe to acknowledge. Note: Truths appear in the clearest light when taken in order. The resolving of the *previous* question will be the key to the *main* question. If the questioners answered Christ's question, they would answer their own.

III. AS IT IS EVIDENT IN THE DISCOMFITURE OF HIS ENEMIES. 1. *They set up their authority against his.* (1) They claimed the right to rule in the temple. They were "chief priests"—judges in the ecclesiastical courts, "and eldors"—judges in the civil (see 2 Chron. xix. 5—11). They should therefore have been the promoters of the kingdom of Messiah which they opposed. (2) They questioned the right of Jesus to teach in the temple, he being neither priest nor Levite. They were more concerned about the right of our Lord to preach than about the character of his preaching. (3) Their question, "Who gave thee this authority?" suggests that they were offended because he not only taught without their permission, but contravened their concession to the traffickers when he drove them out. (4) Here, then, is human authority disputing with the Divine—office in conflict with wisdom. Those who take upon themselves to act with authority should ask themselves the question, "Who gave thee this authority?" Those who run before their warrant run without their blessing (see Jer. xxiii. 21, 22). 2. *He treated their presumption with contempt.* (1) He convicted them as hypocrites. They had wit enough to see that reason was against them; for the Divinity of Christ was evident from the testimony of John. They knew that their "We cannot tell" was a lie for "We will not tell." The son who said, "I go, sir," and went not, dissembled and lied. What sort of truth-seekers are those who refuse the evidence whose cogency they see? They were typical infidels, whose heart is at fault rather than the head. Those who are engaged against the truth are abandoned to the spirit of falsehood. (2) He exposed them as incompetents. They affected to be judges as to the authority of Jesus. Jesus forced from them the confession, "We cannot tell," in relation to the previous question of the authority of John. The "Neither do I tell you" was a merited repulse in which Jesus in his authority triumphs. (3) He humbled their pride by proving them to be slaves to the fear of the people. But for the fear of the multitude, they would have questioned the authority of John. Many who are not influenced by the fear of sin are influenced by the fear of shame. (4) He shamed them by the example of the publicans and harlots, who believed John, but the lesson of whose reformation was lost upon them. Examples of the power of truth are of little avail to the perverse.—J. A. M.

Vers. 33—46.—*Goodness and severity.* In this parable Jesus sets forth the privileges, the sins, and the impending ruin of the Jewish people. It brings before us for our admonition—

I. WHAT THE LORD DID FOR HIS PEOPLE. 1. *He became a Father to them.* (1) By virtue of creation he is the Father of the whole family of man. (2) By the Sinai covenant he became especially the Head of the house of Israel. (3) By the everlasting covenant of his gospel he is now the Father of all believers everywhere. 2. *He gave them a rich inheritance.* (1) The land of promise was as "a vineyard" in distinction from the surrounding countries (cf. Isa. v. 1—7). They were morally as well as physically distinguished. (2) God himself "planted" them as "a vine from Egypt" (cf. Ps. lxxx. 8—15; Isa. lxi. 3; Jer. ii. 21). 3. *He made every provision for their benefit.* (1) "He set a hedge about it." (*a*) By the "law of commandments contained in

ordinances" he separated his people from the idolatrous nations surrounding. (*b*) His providence was as a wall of fire for their defence (see Zech. ii. 5). (2) "He digged a winepress," or vat for the reception of the wine. To conserve the purposes of their planting he gave them the services of the sanctuary—daily offerings, sabbaths, new moons, annual festivals. (3) "He built a tower" whence to watch the approach of robbers. Jerusalem with its temple was the watch-tower of the vineyard.

II. THE RETURN HE RECEIVED FOR HIS GOODNESS. 1. *The husbandmen kept from him the fruits.* (1) The rent is paid in produce. The fruits are those of righteousness and love. When the people entered upon the inheritance they gave verbal and intellectual acknowledgment of their obligations. The practical acknowledgment is the test of principle. (2) God does not require rent paid in advance. He is not unreasonable. There is a time in which he looks on in silence. In this interval he looks for preparatory labour. (3) He does expect the fruit in its season, in "the time for gathering the fruit." God claims the firstfruits of all our increase. (4) The husbandmen were here radically at fault. The righteousness of the priests and elders was selfishness and pride. Their goodness was hypocrisy. 2. *They maltreated his messenyers.* (1) After they demanded a king, and the Lord their God withdrew his Shechinah, he sent them his earlier prophets, down to the time of the Assyrian captivity which ended the kingdom of Israel. (2) To the remaining two tribes "he sent other servants, more than the first." The later prophets were more in number and greater in the clearness of their predictions. These ended with John the Baptist. (3) But these they beat, as Jeremiah, and killed, as Isaiah and John, and stoned, as Zechariah the son of Jehoiada (see 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16; Neh. ix. 26; Jer. xxv. 3—7; Heb. xi. 36, 37). (4) The priests and rulers were the descendants of the race that had killed the prophets (see ch. v. 12; xxiii. 34—37; Acts vii. 52; 1 Thess. ii. 15). 3. *They murdered the heir.* (1) "They will reverence my Son," armed with Divine credentials, and fully representing the Householder. The Son of David, and Heir to the kingdom. The Son of God, and "Heir of all things" (see ch. iii. 17; xvii. 5; John iii. 35; Heb. i. 1, 2). (2) "They cast him forth out of the vineyard." Christ was cast out of the synagogue as a profane person, and delivered to the Romans to be executed, and relegated to Calvary for that purpose, "outside the gate" of the city. (3) There they "killed him." So they filled up the measure of their iniquity.

III. THE SEVERITY OF HIS RETRIBUTION. 1. *God dooms the sinner to the judgment of his sin.* (1) The priests little suspected whither Jesus was leading them when he led them to say, "He will bring these wretches to a wretched death." The truth, unpractised, which we carry with us into the other world, will judge us to perdition. Jesus expressed this in those words, "I judge no man: the word that I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day." So the clearer our light the darker our condemnation. (2) The priests first pronounced their condemnation in the words cited; Jesus seems to have afterwards pronounced it in the same terms (see Luke xx. 16). "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee." 2. *He brings confusion upon his schemes.* (1) He excludes him from the inheritance. The inheritance was the very thing the priests sought to retain (ver. 38). Sin is the direct way to frustrate the sinner's designs. (2) He puts another in his place. Nothing so angered the inveterate Jew as the proposal to carry the gospel to the Gentile. Little did the priests estimate the significance of their sentence, "And he will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Persecution may destroy the ministers, but cannot destroy the Church. (3) They will exalt the stone which the builders rejected. The disciples fetched their hosannas from the context of the passage quoted from Ps. cxviii. 22, 23, which carries conviction and terror to the enemies of Christ. (4) The words of the psalm were first spoken of David, who, after suffering persecution from Saul and rejection from the chiefs of Israel, at length triumphed over his enemies, and rose to unexampled prosperity. David, that rejected stone which became the head of the corner (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 38), was therein a type of Christ. In his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation as the Head of his Church, the temple of the living stones, the cope-stone was brought up with the shoutings of angels. What a confusion to the murderers of the Heir was his triumphant resurrection! 3. *He brings judgment upon them to destruction.* (1) Falling upon the stumbling-stone (Jesus in his humiliation), the offender is "broken" (see Isa. viii.

14, 15; 1 Pet. ii. 8). Jerusalem became a desolation. The nation was broken. The spiritual judgment of blindness and obduracy is more terrible than the temporal suffering (see Rom. xi. 8—10; 1 Thess. ii. 15). Instead of being humbled, the sinner is exasperated when his sin is pointed out. (2) The stone becoming active and falling upon the sinner, he is crushed into dust (see Isa. lx. 12; Dan. ii. 44). The same stone, Christ, now however coming, not in humiliation, but in the glory of his majesty and power. "How shall we escape, if we neglect his great salvation?"—J. A. M.

Ver. 3.—*Ready response to Divine claims.* "Straightway he will send them." It does not at once appear whether our Lord made a claim on this animal, in a general way, for the service of God, or in a particular way, as a personal favour to himself. He must have been well known in the neighbourhood of Bethany, and it is quite conceivable that the man distinctly lent the animal to Jesus. It was not a working animal, and there was no loss of its labour, or its mother's, in this use of it by Jesus. What stands out to view, as suggestive of helpful thoughts and useful lessons, is the ready response of this good man. Think of it as a Divine claim, and he presents an example of prompt, trustful, unquestioning obedience. Think of it as a request from the great Teacher, and then you have revealed a secret disciple, or at least one who felt the fascination of our Lord's presence.

I. READY RESPONSE TO DIVINE CLAIMS AS AN EXAMPLE. There was no questioning or dispute; no hesitation or doubt; no anxiety, even, as to how the animals would be brought back again. There was no anxiety as to what was to be done with them; no fear as to any injury coming to them; the man did not even suggest that the colt would be of no use, for he had not been "broken in." It is beautiful and suggestive that the simple sentence, "The Lord hath need of them," sufficed to quiet and satisfy him. He could shift all the responsibility on the Lord. "He knows everything; he controls everything. What I have to do is to obey. Depend upon it, the rest will all come right." So away at once, and away cheerfully, went the animals. That is a noble example indeed. We spoil so much of our obedience by criticizing the things we are called to do, or give, or bear. Then we hesitate, question, doubt, and do languidly at last what we do. If we know what God's will is, that should always be enough. We have nothing to do with the *how* or the *why*. Send the animals at once if you know that "the Lord hath need of them."

II. READY RESPONSE TO DIVINE CLAIMS AS A REVELATION OF CHARACTER. I like this man. I seem to know this man. His act reveals him. A simple-hearted sort of man, whose natural trustfulness has not been spoilt. An open-hearted, generous sort of man, with very little "calculation" in him. He reminds one of Nathanael, "in whom was no guile." And simple souls somehow get the best of life.—R. T.

Vers. 5, 8.—*Signs of meekness and signs of joy.* "Thy King cometh unto thee, meek;" "And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way." The word "meek" is used in Scripture for "not self-assertive," "not seeking one's own." It is not to be confounded with "humility." The apostle puts "humbleness of mind" and "meekness" alongside each other in such a way that we cannot fail to observe the distinction between them. Moses was the "meekest of men," but certainly not the most humble. It is usual to associate our Lord's "meekness" with his riding on so lowly an animal; but this is to transfer our Western ideas of asses to Eastern lands; and it also fails to observe that in ver. 5 there are two assertions, each distinct from the other. Our Lord was "meek;" and our Lord was "sitting upon an ass." If we take the word "meek" here in its usual meaning, "not self-assertive," we may find fresh suggestion in the passage. The signs of joy given in vers. 8, 9 are characteristically Eastern. Bishop Heber thus describes his march to Colombo: "The road was decorated the whole way as for a festival, with long strips of palm branches hung upon strings on either side; and whenever we stopped we found the ground spread with white cloth, and awnings erected, beautifully decorated with flowers and fruit, and festooned with palm branches. These remnants of the ancient custom mentioned in the Bible, of strewing the road with palm branches and garments, are curious and interesting."

I. THE MEEKNESS OF JESUS. This is not the thing which first arrests attention. Indeed, on this one occasion Jesus seems to be asserting himself. Look deeper, and

it will be found that he is not. He is not in any of the senses men put into that term. There, riding into Jerusalem as a King, he has no intention of setting up any such kingdom as men expect; he does not mean to use any force; you could never mistake him for a conqueror. There is *submission*, there is no *self-assertion*.

II. THE JOY OF THE PEOPLE. In calling Jesus the "Son of David," the people recognized him as the long-promised Messiah; and, without clear apprehensions of what his work was to be, they could rejoice in the realization of the national hope. Their joy made it clear to the Jerusalem officials that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. There could be no mistake. They must accept or reject the claim.—R. T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The fitting and the unfitting in God's house.* "My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." Selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and changing foreign money into temple shekels, was right enough *in its place*; but the point is, that all this was being done *in the wrong place*. The sense of the appropriate, of the becoming, was lost; it was covered over and hidden by the greed of the trader, and the avarice of the money-changer. Trade is not wrong, if it be honest trade, and buyer and seller pass fair equivalents. Banking is not wrong in itself, though it gives great opportunities to the covetous. Our Lord never interfered with tradesfolk or with money-changers; he only taught principles that would ensure their bargaining fairly. His righteous anger was roused by the offence these traffickers gave to his sense of the fitting, of the becoming. The true consecration of a building is no mere ceremony, it is the feeling of consecration that is in all reverent souls in relation to it. The consecration should have been *in* these traders, it was fitting to the *place* where they were; if it had been *in* them, they would never have thought of bringing the beasts, the cages, and the tables inside the gates of the temple of Jehovah.

I. THE SENSE OF THE FITTING AN IMPULSE TO JESUS. We might properly expect that this "sense" would be at its keenest in the case of Jesus. The honour of the Father-God was the one all-mastering purpose of his life. He could not bear any slight to be put on God, on anything belonging to God, on anything associated with his Name. He was specially jealous, with a sanctified Jewish jealousy, of the temple where God was worshipped. He felt what was fitting to it—stillness, quiet, prayer, reverent attitudes. He felt what was unfitting—noise, dirt, quarrellings over bargains, shouts of drovers, and the greed and over-reaching of covetous men. So the consecration of our worship-places is really the response to our quickened, spiritual, Christly, sense of what is fitting. The one thing we ask for is the sustained sense of harmony.

II. LACK OF THE SENSE OF THE FITTING GAVE LICENCE TO THE TRADERS. In them the spiritual was hidden. Custom had covered it. Greed had covered it. They were thinking about themselves and their gettings, and so lost all sense of the becoming. They must learn, by a hard, humbling, and awakening lesson, that God's temple is for God.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The ministry of the children.* Children are always delighted with a little public excitement, and readily catch up the common enthusiasm; but we do not look to children for calm and intelligent judgments on great issues. To our Lord children always represented simple, guileless, unprejudiced souls, who put up no barriers against his teachings, or against the gracious influences which he strove to exert. These children would be lads from twelve years old upward. They caught up the words of the excited disciples, and kept up the excitement by shouting, even in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

I. THE CHILDREN COMFORTED JESUS BY WHAT THEY DID. It was a bit of simple, honest, unrestrained enthusiasm. The young souls were carried away by the joyous excitement of the day. It comforted Jesus to hear some people speaking of him who were unquestionably sincere; who just uttered their hearts; who were glad, and said so. For it must have been a heavy burden to our Lord that, even to the last, his disciples were so guileful; they seemed as if they could never rise above the idea that they were about to "get something good" by clinging to the Lord Jesus. "Hosanna!" from the lads who wanted nothing from him must have been very comforting to our Lord, That is always one of the chief elements of pleasure in children's worship; it is guileless.

genuine, the free unrestrained utterance of the passing mood. It is not the highest thing. That is the worship of the finally redeemed, who have won innocence through experience of sin; but it is the earth-suggestion of it. Children's praise is still the joy of Christian hearts.

II. THE CHILDREN COMFORTED JESUS BY WHAT THEY REPRESENTED. For to him the children were types. "Babes and sucklings" are types of simple, loving, trustful souls, and to such God's revelations come. Now, there are two kinds of trustful, humble, gentle souls. 1. Those who are trustful without ever having struggled. Some are naturally trustful, believing, receptive, and in all spheres of life they are loved and loving souls. 2. Those who are trustful as the victory out of struggle. These are the noblest ones, the true child-souls, the true virgin-souls; these walk the earth in white, and it is white that will never take a soil. In *their* praise Christ finds his supreme joy.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The tree-type of the hypocrite.* "Found nothing thereon, but leaves only." The attempted explanations of the condition of this fig tree bewilder us. Some say our Lord expected to find some stray figs on the tree left from the last harvest. Others say that, as he saw leaves, he naturally expected fruit, because the figs appear on the trees before the fruit. We must suppose that it was the custom to eat green figs, for it is certain that at this season of the year the fresh figs could not be ripened. What is clear is—

I. OUR LORD TAUGHT BY SYMBOLIC ACTIONS. There are spoken parables and acted parables; both were used in all teachings, especially in Eastern teachings; both were used by our Lord. All suggestion that our Lord was personally vexed at the failure of the tree must be carefully eliminated. With the genius of the teacher, our Lord at once saw, and seized, the opportunity for giving an impressive object-lesson, which he completed by consummating at once the destruction of the tree. Explain that the tree must have been diseased, or it would have borne fruit. Its destruction was certain. The tree did not sin in being diseased or having no fruit; but the teacher may take it to represent one who sins in making outward show that has no answering goodness within it. Our Lord only took beasts or trees to illustrate Divine judgments.

II. WHAT OUR LORD TAUGHT HERE WAS THE CERTAIN DOOM OF THE HYPOCRITE. Christ never spoke so severely of any one as of the hypocrites. Insincerity was the fault most personally offensive to him. The tree seemed to represent a hypocrite. It had leaves. There was fair outward show. It seemed to say, "Come to me if you are hungry; I can refresh you." And when Christ came he found the leaves were all it had to give. His thoughts were much occupied at this time with the Pharisees, who were making outside show of superior piety, but had no soul-piety opening their hearts to give him welcome. Perhaps our Lord meant to picture Judas Iscariot. Fair-showing as any disciple, but rotten-hearted. Let Pharisees learn, let Judas learn, let disciples learn, from that fig tree. It is dying; Christ hastens the corrupting process, and it dies in a day. The hypocrite is corrupting. He is under the curse of God. There is no hope in this life or the next for the man who is consciously insincere. —R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Believing, the condition of acceptable prayer.* The immediate lesson which Christ drew from the incident was not taken from the tree—that lesson he left the disciples to think out for themselves—but from their surprise at the result which followed his words. Our Lord seems always to have spoken of prayer in a large, general, and comprehensive way; and yet we may always discern some intimation of the qualifications and limitations which must always condition answer to human prayer. It is true that "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer ye shall receive;" but it is also true that we must meet the appointed condition, and be "believers"—those who cherish the spirit of openness and trust. "It was rather the power and wonder of their Lord's act, than the deeper significance of it, that moved the disciples. Yet Jesus follows the turn their thoughts take, and teaches that prayer and faith will remove mountains of difficulty."

I. BELIEVING AS GOD'S CONDITION. God's conditions are never to be thought of as arbitrary; they are always necessities, always sweetly reasonable. The term

"believing" represents that state of mind and feeling in a man which alone fits him to receive, and make the best of, God's answer to his prayer. God might give, but his gift could be no real moral blessing if there was no *fitness to receive*. It is the "right state of mind for receiving" that is expressed in "believing." This includes humility, dependence, reliance, and hopefulness. It is opposed to the critical spirit that questions, and the doubting spirit that fears. Even we in common life make believing a condition. We gladly do things for others when they trust us fully.

II. BELIEVING AS MAN'S DIFFICULTY. Self-reliance is the essence of man's sin, seeing that he really is a dependent creature. Man does not care to trust anybody; he trusts himself. Other people may lean on him; he leans on nobody. And so long as a man has this spirit, all prayer must, for him, be a formality and a sham; because prayer is the expression of dependence which he does not feel. Keeping the spirit of full trust is the supreme difficulty of the Christian man all through his Christian course. He has to be always on the watch lest he should lose the right to answer because he is failing to believe, to trust.

III. BELIEVING AS THE CHRISTLY TRIUMPH. The man who has altogether abandoned self-trust, and given himself wholly into the hands of Christ for salvation, has won the power of trusting, and has only to keep it up.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*Christ become a Questioner.* Those who came to Christ on this occasion were distinctly *officials*, representatives of the Sanhedrin, the council which claimed and exercised authority in all matters related to religion. "Before its tribunal false prophets were arraigned. It dealt with questions of doctrine, and, when occasion arose, could exercise the functions of a council." "In the New Testament we see Christ before the Sanhedrin as a *blasphemer* (ch. xxvi. 65); the Apostles Peter and John, as false prophets and seducers of the people; the Deacon Stephen, as having blasphemed against God; and the Apostle Paul, as subverting the Law." This was, no doubt, a very imposing deputation. Schemes to entangle Christ in his talk had miserably failed; now the officials resolved to act straightforwardly and imposingly. They would demand to know the authority on which Jesus acted. The three elements of the Sanhedrin—chief priests, elders, and scribes—were all represented, and we seem to see the confident haughtiness of their approach.

I. CHRIST ASSERTING A SUPERIOR AUTHORITY. "He knew what was in man." He was not in the least alarmed. He knew their guilefulness so well that he was not in the least deferential. The prophet was never submissive to the temple officials. His authority was his commission direct from God. They had been pleased to decide that no one could be permitted to teach who had not passed through a rabbinical school. Jesus knew that every man has a right to teach who is himself taught of God. He, moreover, was more than a prophet; he was, in the highest and holiest sense, the Son and Sent of God. They had no right to question him. He would recognize no such right, and give to their questionings no answer. He would exert his authority and question them; and never was official deputation more humiliated than when these men found themselves questioned, and hopelessly entangled by the question put to them. All putting Christ to the test implies a wrong state of mind. He speaks in the name of God, and as God, and our duty is unquestioning obedience.

II. CHRIST DISCOMFITING HIS FOES BY HIS SUPERIOR AUTHORITY. They *felt* his authority, and did not for a moment attempt to dispute it. They did not think of saying, "We came to question you, and cannot allow you to question us." They were mastered by his calmness, by his manifest superiority, by the skill of his question, which put them into the most awkward and humiliating position. They retired defeated and angry.—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*Speech tested by deed.* To see the point of this parable, it is necessary to observe the connection in which it stands. Our Lord was dealing with men who proposed to entangle him in his talk, and, out of what he said, find accusation against him. He had turned the tables on them, by putting to them a question which they dared not answer; and now, in this parable of the two sons, he presents to them a picture of themselves, which they could not fail to recognize. They were like the son who made great professions of obedience, but *did not obey*. "The parable is too plain-

spoken to be evaded. They cannot deny that the satisfactory son is not the one who professes great respect for his father's authority, while he does only what pleases himself, but the one who does his father's bidding, even though he has at first disowned his authority. These men were so unceremoniously dealt with by our Lord because they were false. They may not have clearly seen that they were false, but they were so" (Dods).

I. SPEECH SHOWN TO BE WORTHLESS BY DEEDS. Professions are good and right; they ought to be made. But professions must not stand alone. They ought to express *purpose*. They ought to be followed by appropriate action. The peril of religion in every age lies in the fact that credit is to be gained and confidence won by making profession; and so the insincere man, and the man who can deceive himself, are tempted to make religious profession hide their self-seeking. And it must also be said that religious profession, and observance of mere religious rites, becomes a prevailing custom, by which men are carried away, and relieved of anxiety about making deeds match words. The Pharisee class are evidently pictured in this son. They were extremely anxious about *speaking* right and *showing* right, but they were sadly indifferent about *doing* right. What needs to be continually re-impressed is, that supreme importance attaches to *being* right and *doing* right; these will find natural and proper expression. If we are right, our profession will match ourselves.

II. SPEECH PUT TO SHAME BY DEEDS. The son is in no way to be commended who refused obedience. It was a bad profession, and found expression for a bad mind. But when he came to a good mind, and went and obeyed, the obedience put to shame the hasty and unworthy words. No doubt our Lord referred to the publican class, who had taken their own wilful and self-pleasing way, but now they had come to a better mind, and were even pressing into the kingdom.—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*The wicked husbandmen.* This parable belongs to the series in which our Lord shows up his enemies, and reveals to them at once their own shameless schemings, and his complete knowledge of their devices. But while the relation of the parable to those Pharisees should be recognized, it is necessary also to see that the man of God can never let the evils of his age alone. Those Pharisees were holding men in creed and ceremonial bondage; Christ did not attack them because of their personal enmity to him. It was this—a liberator of human thought can never let the thought-enslavers alone. Illustration: Luther, or C. Kingsley. In this parable we have the dealings of God with men illustrated in the dealings of God with the Jews, and pictured in the parable of the vineyard-renters. Explain the first references of the parable. *Vineyard*, God's chosen people. *Husbandmen*, the ordinary leaders and teachers of the nation. *Servants*, the prophets or special messengers. *Destruction*, the final siege of Jerusalem. *Others*, the transfer of gospel privileges to the Gentiles.

I. THE REASONABLENESS OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MEN. Illustrate this: 1. From the vineyard-figures. (Compare the more elaborate description in Isa. v.) Chosen ground. Planted. Nourished. Guarded. Pruned. And a wine-vat prepared in expectation of fruit. What could have been done more? 2. From the historical facts of God's dealings with Israel. God's call, redemption, provision, guidance, and prosperity. The final seeking fruit was Christ's coming. 3. From our own personal experience, as members of the spiritual Israel of God. Recall the graciousness of the Divine dealings with us.

II. THE UNREASONABLENESS OF MEN'S DEALINGS WITH GOD. Illustrate this: 1. From the vineyard-figures. The shame, dishonesty, ingratitude, and rebellion of these husbandmen. See to what length it goes. 2. From the historical facts. The resistance, again and again, of Jewish prophets, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos. The wilful casting out of the Son. 3. From our own personal experience. Take the case of one unsaved. Up to this resisted motherhood, friendship, Bible, inward call of Christ, etc. How must man's unreasonableness be divinely met? (1) The sinfulness by Divine chastisement. (2) The unworthy response to privilege by the loss of privilege. (3) The persistent wrong by judgment. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."—R. T.

Ver. 42.—*The history of the Corner-stone.* Foundations are not now laid as in

olden times. Foundation-stones are now mere ornaments. There is no sense in which buildings now *rest* on them. Memorial-stones are taking the place of foundation-stones. Probably the figure of the "corner-stone" is taken from the corner of Mount Moriah, which had to be built up from the valley, in order to make a square area for the temple courts. Dean Plumptre says, "In the primary meaning of the psalm, the illustration seems to have been drawn from one of the stones, quarried, hewn, and marked, away from the site of the temple, which the builders, ignorant of the head architect's plans, had put on one side, as having no place in the building, but which was found afterwards to be that on which the completeness of the structure depended, that on which, as the chief corner-stone, the two walls met, and were bonded together." Take this suggestion, and consider—

I. CHRIST AS THE PREPARED CORNER-STONE. Describe the work done on the lime-stone block in order to fit it for its place as a foundation-stone. The apostle permits us to think of the experiences of our Lord's human life as fitting him to be the Saviour he became. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, for his work as the "bringer-on of souls." "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." The Corner-stone was being chiselled and bevelled for its place. Work out this figure.

II. CHRIST AS THE REJECTED CORNER-STONE. When our Lord spoke, the Corner-stone was almost ready; and there were the men who prided themselves on being the builders of God's temple of religion. And they were, then and there, rejecting that "tried Stone, that precious Corner-stone." They would put nothing on it. It was not to their mind. It may lie for ever in the quarry for all they care. But happily they were only like overseers, or clerks of works. The Architect himself may order this Stone to be brought, and made the "Head of the corner."

III. CHRIST AS THE HONOURED CORNER-STONE. The Architect himself did interfere, brushed those petty officials aside, had the tried Stone brought out, and on it he has had built the new temple of the ages. That temple is rising into ever richer and nobler proportions, and it was never more manifest than it is to-day, that the "Corner-stone is Christ."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

Vers. 1—14.—*Parable of the marriage of the king's son.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.)

Ver. 1.—**Jesus answered and spake unto them.** After they had heard our Lord's words at the end of the last chapter, the Pharisees, according to St. Mark, "left him, and went their way," so that this parable was spoken in the audience of the disciples and the attendant multitude alone, without the former disturbing element. This fact may account for its exhibiting certain merciful and gracious features, setting forth the privilege rather than the duty of obeying the gospel call. The term "answered" often does not signify a reply given to some distinct question, but is equivalent to "took occasion to observe" (comp. ch. xi. 25, etc.). Here the occasion was the insidious schemes of his enemies. **Again.** With reference to the two parables in the preceding chapter. **Parables.** The plural denotes the class to which the discourse belongs; or it may refer to the many parabolic details contained herein. Only one parable follows. This bears great resemblance to the parable of the great supper (Luke xiv.), which, however, was spoken at an earlier period, in another locality, and with a different object, and disagrees in many details, especially in the absence of the wedding garment. Christ, doubtless, often repeated his parables with variations in particulars to suit time, audiences, and circumstances.

Ver. 2.—**The kingdom of heaven is like** (comp. ch. xx. 1). This parable supplements that of the wicked husbandmen. As that referred to Jewish times, so this refers to gospel times. The householder in the one becomes the king in the other; one demands work and duty, the other bestows gifts and blessings; one is angered at ingratitude for favours received, the other punishes for contempt of offered bounty. **A certain king;** *ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ: a man a king,* even God the Father, the expression denoting "the Almighty's wonderful condescension, as assimilating himself to our infirmities in his dispensations towards us" (I. Williams). **Made a marriage;** *γάμους: marriage festivities;* the plural perhaps denoting the days consumed in the celebration (see

Gen. xxix. 27; Judg. xiv. 12; Tobit viii. 19, 20). Morison compares our English word "nuptials." In the Old Testament, Jehovah is the Husband of his Church; in the New, Christ is represented as married to the spiritual Israel, which takes the place of the older dispensation. **For his son.** Jesus Christ, whose intimate union with his Church is often represented under the figure of a marriage (see ch. ix. 15; John iii. 29; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 23, 32; Rev. xix. 7).

Ver. 3.—**Sent forth his servants.** In the East, the original invitation to a solemn festivity is followed by reminders as the day approaches (comp. Esth. v. 8; vi. 14). The servants here are John the Baptist, the twelve apostles, the seventy, who first preached the gospel to the Jewish people. **Them that were bidden.** The Jews had already been invited to come in; to them already belonged "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants . . . and the promises" (Rom. ix. 4). These early missionaries were sent to bring such things to their remembrance, and to bid them obey the call. **They would not** (*οὐκ ἤθελον*) **come.** Their reasons for refusal are not given here—a fact which differentiates this parable from that of the great supper. A general disinclination or aversion is denoted; no actual outrage is perpetrated as yet, but the invited guests are ripening for this stage, in that they despise the King's Son, and believe not in his Divine mission. This backwardness and obduracy recall Christ's lamentation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" (Luke xiii. 34, 35).

Ver. 4.—**Other servants.** The apostles and their immediate followers after the death and resurrection of Christ, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost. A fresh call was mercifully given with new graces and new degrees of revelation. **My dinner** (*τὸ ἄριστόν μου*). This is the lighter midday meal, which was the commencement of the festivities, and was followed by the supper (*δεῖπνον*) in the evening. **Are killed.** The great Sacrifice has been offered, the Victim slain (John vi. 51—59), the Holy Spirit has made all things ready. Here are grace, health, abundance, to be had for acceptance. We may compare the invitation of Wisdom in the Old Testament (Prov. ix. 1, etc.) with this of Christ. In Jewish minds the blessings of Messiah's kingdom are constantly connected with the idea of a sumptuous feast, as in Luke xiv. 15; and our Lord himself uses the same image (ch. viii. 11; Luke xxii. 30).

Ver. 5.—**They made light of it, and went their ways.** They who refused the invitation are divided into two classes—the first mentioned in this verse, the second in the following. These are simply careless, indifferent scorners, who are too busy with their worldly concerns to attend to the claims of the gospel. So we read, "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him" (Luke xvi. 14; comp. ch. xix. 23, 24). **His farm;** *τὸν ἴδιον ἀγρόν*; *his own farm*, or estate. This is the landed proprietor, who goes to the selfish enjoyment of his possessions. **His merchandise.** This is the busy trader, who is engrossed in the pursuit of wealth (compare the excuses in Luke xiv. 18, 19).

Ver. 6.—**The remnant.** These form the second class of recalcitrant guests. They are actively hostile to the King and his messengers, rejecting them not merely for worldly or interested motives, but from intense hatred to the doctrines which they taught. Such were the scribes and Pharisees, who could not endure to see the Law superseded, and the Gentiles raised to their level; such were the Sadducees, who scoffed at a faith founded on the resurrection, and refused credit to the miraculous with which the gospel was interwoven. **Took his servants.** The narratives in the Acts give many instances of the seizure and imprisonment of apostles and believers (see Acts iv. 3; ix. 2; xii. 4, etc.). **Entreated** (*treated*) **them spitefully** (see Acts v. 40; xiv. 19; xvi. 23, etc.; 2 Cor. xi. 23—25). **Slew** them; *e.g.* Stephen (Acts vii. 58), James (Acts xii. 2). All but one of the apostles died violent deaths at the hands of those who rejected the gospel; and there must have been numbers of martyrs of whom history has preserved no record, though their names are written in heaven, which is far better.

Ver. 7.—**When the king heard** thereof. The text varies here. Some manuscripts have "that king," to whom the rejection of his messengers was a personal insult (comp. 2 Sam. x. 4, etc.). The Sinaitic, Vatican, and other authorities omit *ἀκούσας*, "heard thereof," and it may well be a gloss from the human view that the king, not being personally present, must have been informed of the incidents. At the same time, the King, regarded as God, needs no report to acquaint him with what is going on. **He was wroth.** The injury was done to him, and he resents it (comp. Luke x. 16; John xii. 48). **His armies.** The Romans, under Vespasian and Titus, the unconscious instruments of his vengeance. So the Assyrians are called "the rod of God's anger" (Isa. x. 5; xiii. 5; comp. Jer. xxv. 9; li. 20). Some regard the "armies" as angels, the ministers of God's punishment, especially in war, famine, and pestilence, the three scourges which accomplished the ruin of the Jews. Probably both angels and men are included in the term. **Destroyed . . . burned up their city.** No longer his city, but theirs, the

murderers' city, Jerusalem. So a little later, foretelling the same fate, Jesus speaks of "your house" (ch. xxiii. 38). The Romans, in fact, some forty years after, put to the sword the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and burned the city to ashes.

Ver. 8.—**Then saith he.** This is supposed to take place after the destruction of the murderers and their city; and, indeed, the final rejection of the Jews and the substitution of the Gentiles were consummated by the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Hebrew polity. **The wedding is ready.** God's great design is not frustrated by the neglect of those first invited, only the guests are changed. **Not worthy.** Their unworthiness was proved by their rejection of the gracious call, as the worthiness of those subsequently called consisted in their acceptance thereof. The passage is well illustrated by the language of Paul and Barnabas (Acts xiii. 46, 47).

Ver. 9.—**The highways;** *τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν: exitus viarum; the partings*, or *outlets of the ways.* The places where roads meet, beyond the city bounds in the country, which would naturally be a centre of concourse. The city where the marriage feast was now held is not named, because it is no longer Jerusalem, but somewhere, anywhere, in the Gentile world; for the call of the Gentiles is here set forth. **As many as ye shall find.** The invitation is no longer confined to the Jews; the whole human race is called to the marriage of the Lamb, to participate in the fruits of the Incarnation. This general evangelization was begun in apostolic times (see Acts viii. 5, 38; x. 28, 48; xiii. 46), and has been carried on ever since. The apostles' special ministrations to the Jews seemed to have ended at the martyrdom of St. James the Less, A.D. 62 (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xx. 9. 1).

Ver. 10.—**Highways;** *ὁδούς: the roads.* Not "the partings of the ways," whither they had been ordered to go. Some see here an intimation of the imperfection of the work of human agents; but it is very doubtful if any such allusion is intended. More probably *τὰς ὁδοὺς* is only a synonym for *τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν.* **Both bad and good.** The visible Church contains a mixed company, as Christ indicated by more than one parable; *e.g.* the draw-net, the tares, etc. (ch. xiii.). The bad are named first, in order to show the infinite graciousness of the king. In the earliest times converts were baptized with very little preparation and without any probation, as we see in the case of the eunuch, the jailor, and many more mentioned in the Acts; and doubtless many were insincere and soon lapsed. When we read of whole households being baptized, and in later times of whole nations receiving Christian initiation, there must have been little individual preparation of heart or cleansing of conscience, and the missioner had to take for granted much which more careful examination would have proved to be fallacious. The mention of this mixture of bad and good in the company introduces the final scene. **The wedding.** The Sinaitic, Vatican, and other manuscripts read "marriage-chamber" (*νυμφὼν*). So Tischendorf and Westcott and Hort. But the received text is well founded, and seems more natural. **Guests;** *ἀνακειμένων*: literally, *recliners;* Vulgate, *discumbentium;* so called from the customary attitude at meals.

Ver. 11.—**The king came in to see the guests,** who by this time had taken their appointed places at table. This second portion of the parable teaches that admission to the visible Church is not all that is required; there is also a scrutiny to be undergone and an award to be made. And that this investigation is keen and searching is denoted by the verb used, *θεάσασθαι*, which means not merely, to see casually, but to gaze upon with the intent of seeing the real nature and character of an object. The king makes his appearance in the banqueting-hall, not to feast with the guests, but to welcome them, and to examine if they are properly ordered, served, and fitted for the high honour accorded to them. How close and personal is this inquiry is shown by the immediate detection of one unseemly guest among the multitude. The time when he thus comes is, in one view, the day of judgment; but such visitation and scrutiny are always recurring, as at solemn seasons, in days of trial, sacred services, holy communion, when he searches men's hearts, and sees if they are prepared for his presence. **Which had not on a wedding garment;** *οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου: not garbed in wedding garment*, the genitive expressing the peculiar character or quality of the garment. Wordsworth compares similar phrases: Luke xvi. 9; 2 Thess. ii. 3, 9; Jas. i. 25; 2 Pet. ii. 1, etc. It is said to have been an Oriental custom to present each guest invited to a royal feast with a festive robe to be worn on the occasion, as nowadays persons admitted to the royal presence are clothed with a caftan. Traces of the custom have been found in Gen. xlv. 22; Judg. xiv. 12; 2 Kings v. 22; x. 22; but they are not very convincing. The Romans seem to have had such a custom, the robes being called "cenatoria." Thus Martial, x. 87. 11, writes—

> "Pugnorum reus ebriæque noctis,
> Cenatoria mittat advocato."

But the fact remains that this guest had not presented himself in attire befitting the solemnity; in his everyday garb, and with

no proper preparation, he had dared to come to this great festival. What is the spiritual meaning of the wedding garment is much disputed. It is evidently some virtue, or quality, or mark which conditions admission to the enjoyment of the kingdom of God. On the one hand, it is said that both bad and good guests wear it, and its possession does not alter the character of the wearer. Dress is something external and visible, therefore the garment cannot represent an inward grace or feeling, but some outward token by which Christians are distinguished, such as open reception of baptism and sacraments, and public profession of the faith. On the other hand, it is contended that the whole matter is spiritual, though veiled in material forms, and is concerned with man's moral and spiritual nature. Hence it by no means follows that the wedding garment is not intended to have a spiritual signification. Ancient commentators universally look upon it in this light. Some regard it as an emblem of faith in Christ; others, of faith and love combined. "Habete fidem cum dilectione," writes St. Augustine, 'Serm.,' xc., "ista est vestis nuptialis." But it must be observed that faith of some sort was shown by accepting the invitation; so this could not be represented by the special garb which was absent. Others, again, see in it good works, or humility, or the purity effected by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Some moderns take it of "imputed," others of imparted, righteousness, bringing their controversies into the King's presence-chamber. The English Church, taking the marriage feast as a figure of the Holy Communion, applies the wedding garment to that cleansing of the conscience which enables persons to come holy and clean to that heavenly feast (see the first Exhortation to Holy Communion). This is legitimate, but too restricted in its reference. The feast denotes the present and future kingdom of God; the entrance to this is a matter of free grace; the garment is moral fitness, the life and conduct dependent on the due use of God's grace. This is in the power of all who have received the call; they have to act up to the high calling, to be wholly, heartily, really what they profess to be. The scrutiny, whether made in this life or in the life to come, shows how grace has been used, if we have put on Christ, if we have kept our soul pure and white, unsullied by sin, or washed clean by penitential tears and the blood of Christ (see Rev. xix. 8). The metaphor concerning this robe of righteousness is found in Isa. lxi. 10, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Commentators compare (but with doubtful appositeness) Zeph. i. 7, 8.

Ver. 12.—**Friend**; ἑταῖρε, as ch. xx. 13. It was thus that Christ addressed Judas in the garden (ch. xxvi. 50). The term here has in it something of distrust and disapprobation. **How camest thou in hither?** The question may mean—How couldst thou presume to approach this solemn festival without the indispensable requisite? Or, how couldst thou elude the vigilance of the servants, and enter in this unseemly garb? The former is doubtless the signification of the inquiry. The contemptuous rejection of propriety is an outrage offered to the majesty of the king, and one worthy of severest punishment. **He was speechless**; ἐφιμώθη: literally, *he was muzzled*, tongue-tied, as if his mouth were closed with a muzzle (comp. ver. 34; and Luke iv. 35). He could make no reply; he had no excuse to offer. His silence condemned him. It is observed that gags were used for rebellious slaves or criminals on their way to execution (Webst. and Wilk.).

Ver. 13.—**The servants**; τοῖς διακόνοις: *ministers*, or *attendants*—not the same as the servants (δοῦλοι) who originally carried out the invitations. They are not preachers, but the guards of the throne, meaning probably the ministering angels who execute the King's commands (see ch. xiii. 41, 49). **Bind him hand and foot.** By hand and foot men sin, by these they are punished. All hope of escape is thus removed. There is no trial; the offence is too gross and evident to need any further examination; the sentence is at once passed and carried out. He who strives against God is helpless, and immediately condemned. **Take him away.** The offender is thus deprived of all good. This clause is omitted by most authorities, and has probably been introduced into the received text with the view of explaining the stages and progress of the ejectment. (*The*) **outer darkness.** Far away from the glory and brightness of the banquet into the gloom and blackness of the outer world, which represents the misery of lost souls (see ch. viii. 12, where the same expressions occur). "There are no longer feet to run to God's mercy or to flee from his justice; no longer hands to do good or make amends for evil; no longer saving light, whereby to know God or one's own duties. Nothing but darkness, pain, grief, tears, rage, fury, and despair, for him who is not in the wedding hall. This is the fruit of sin, and especially of the abuse of faith and grace" (Quesnel).

Ver. 14.—**Many are called . . . chosen.** The rejected guest is a type of a numerous class (see ch. xx. 6). All the Jews had

first been called; then all the Gentiles; many were they who obeyed not the call; and of those who did come in, many were not of the inner election, of those, that is, whose life and character were worthy of the Christian name, showing the graces of faith, holiness, and love. Applying the parable generally, Origen (*ap.* I. Williams) says, "If any one will observe the populous congregations, and inquire how many there are who live a better kind of life, and are being transformed in the renewing of their mind; and how many who are careless in their conversation and conformed to this world, he will perceive the use of this voice of our Saviour's, 'Many are called, but few chosen;' and in another place it has been said, 'Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able' (Luke xiii. 24); and, 'Strive earnestly to enter in by the narrow gate; for few there be that find it' (ch. vii. 13, 14)."

Vers. 15—22.—*Second attack: The question concerning the tribute to Cæsar.* (Mark xii. 13—17; Luke xx. 20—26.)

Ver. 15.—**Then went the Pharisees.** After they had heard the parables, and were for the time silenced, they departed from the public courts of the temple, and betook themselves to the hall of the Sanhedrin, that they might plot some stratagem against Jesus. **How they might entangle** (παγιδεύσωσιν) **him in his talk.** The verb (not elsewhere found in the New Testament) means "to lay a snare for" an object. The Pharisees did not dare to use open violence, but they now endeavoured by insidious questions to make him compromise himself either with the Romans, their political masters, or with the national and patriotic party.

Ver. 16.—**Their disciples.** Men of their own party, or students in the rabbinical schools, like Paul, "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel" and such-like teachers. They sent those unknown and apparently simple-minded persons, that they themselves, who were open and bitter enemies of Christ, might not appear in the matter. **With the Herodians.** The two bodies hated one another, but made now an unholy alliance for the purpose of attacking Jesus. Hatred, like poverty, makes men acquainted with strange companions. The Herodians were a political sect which supported the dynasty of Herod, and were more or less favourable to the dominion of Rome, as that which preserved their authority in the country. In religious opinions they were mostly Sadducees. The Pharisees, on the other hand, in their nominal zeal for God, were violently opposed to the claims of Rome, and ready to rebel at the first favourable opportunity. They regarded the Herodians as little better than the heathen whom they favoured, but sunk their differences in the face of a general peril. Between these antagonistic elements an impious league had been formed earlier in Christ's ministry (see Mark iii. 6). **Master;** Διδάσκαλε: *Teacher*, equivalent to "Rabbi;" owning him for the nonce as one possessed of teaching authority, though they willed not to be his disciples. **True;** truthful. Thoroughly misapprehending the character of Jesus, they began by flattery. Nicodemus had spoken in sincerity when he said (John iii. 2), "Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God;" but these make the admission in hypocrisy; it was a *captatio benevolentiæ*, prompted by the spirit of evil. **The way of God.** The precepts and rules which men must follow if they would please God. The phrase is common in the Old Testament (Gen. xviii. 19; Deut. x. 12; Ps. xviii. 21, etc.). **Neither carest thou.** What men think or say of thee is no concern to thee. They cannot influence thy actions or disturb thy serenity. **The person of men.** Thou art thoroughly impartial; no considerations of rank, station, power, bias thy judgment, words, or actions. This is said with the view of encouraging him to answer without fear of offending the Roman authorities.

Ver. 17.—**Tell us therefore.** Because you are so truthful and impartial, give us your unprejudiced opinion about the following much-disputed question. These people assume to be simple-minded inquirers, who came to Jesus to have a perplexity resolved. St. Luke gives their real character, "They sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words." **Is it lawful** (ἔξεστι) **to give tribute** (κῆνσον, *censum*) **unto Cæsar, or not?** The tribute is the poll-tax levied by the Romans. Cæsar at this time was Tiberius; the title was now applied to the emperors, though its subsequent use was different. By asking concerning the lawfulness of the payment, they do not inquire whether it was expedient or advisable to make it, but whether it was morally and religiously right, consistent with their obligation as subjects of the theocratic kingdom. Some, as Judas of Galilee (Acts v. 37; Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 1. 1, 6), had resorted to violence in their opposition to the tax; and indeed, the question here put was much debated between opposite parties. The Pharisees were strongly opposed to foreign domination, and thought it derogatory and sacrilegious for the people of Jehovah to pay impost to a foreign and heathen authority. The Herodians, on the other hand, submitted without reserve to the supremacy

of Rome, and, for political reasons, silenced all nationalist and ultra-patriotic feeling. By putting this question, the disputants thought to force Christ into a dilemma, where he must answer directly "Yes" or "No," and where, whichever reply he made, he would equally offend one or other of the parties into which the state was divided. If he affirmed the lawfulness of the tax, he would lose his popularity with the mass of the people, as one who disowned the sovereignty of Jehovah, and would give the death-blow to his own claims as Messiah-King. If he gave a negative reply, he would be deemed an enemy of Rome and a promoter of seditious views, and be liable to be handed over to the civil power for the punishment of disaffection and treason (see Luke xx. 20). They falsely brought this charge against him before Pilate (Luke xxiii. 2).

Ver. 18.—**Wickedness.** The malice and hypocrisy which prompted the inquiry. **Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?** They were hypocrites because they falsely assumed the guise of conscientious men, who had no sinister motive, and desired merely to hear the decision of a much-esteemed Rabbi. Christ's words proved in a moment that he saw through them, understood the meaning of the temptation to which they had subjected him—how they were trying to involve him in a political difficulty, from which they deemed no escape was possible. The character which they had flatteringly given to Jesus (ver. 16) he here fully responds to.

Ver. 19.—**The tribute money;** *τὸ νόμισμα τοῦ κήνσου: the coin of the tribute;* that is, the coin in which the tribute was paid. The reply to the question was wholly unexpected. The Pharisaic "disciples" had hoped that Christ would have taken part against the Herodians; but he gives no decision about the matter in dispute, such as they desired. He virtually rebukes their dissimulation, and makes their own action supply the verdict which they demanded. Not seeing the drift of his request, **they brought unto him a penny;** *a denarius* (see on ch. xviii. 28). This was the amount of the capitation tax, and it was paid in Roman, not Jewish, coinage. Just at this period the Jews had no mintage of their own, and were forced to use Roman coins, which might well be called "tribute money."

Ver. 20.—**Image and superscription.** The figure and inscription on the denarius. Jesus takes the coin, and points to it as he speaks. It must have borne a likeness of the emperor, and, therefore, as Edersheim remarks, must have been either a foreign one (Roman) or possibly one of the Tetrarch Philip, who on some of his coins introduced the image of Tiberius. The coins struck by the Romans in or for Palestine had, in accommodation to Jewish prejudices, no representation of any personage upon them. The Roman denarius at this date had on the obverse side the head of Tiberius, crowned with laurel leaves, and bore the legend, "TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS," and on the reverse, a seated female figure, with the inscription, "PONTIF MAXIM."

Ver. 21.—**Cæsar's.** They are constrained to answer that the coin bears the effigy of the Roman emperor. **Render** (*ἀπόδοτε, give back,* as a due) **therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's** (*τὰ Καίσαρος*). Rabbinism ruled that the right of coinage appertained to the ruler of a state, and was a proof of *de facto* government, which it was unlawful to resist. The current coin, which they used in their daily transactions, showed that the Jews were no longer independent, but set under and acquiescing in a foreign domination. Being subjects of Cæsar, it was their duty to submit to his demands, and to pay the taxes which he had a right to levy. This was an answer to the insidious question propounded. Christ does not take either side in the controversy; he makes no question of the mutual rights of conquered and conquerors; he utters no aspiration for the recovery of independence; he uses facts as they are, and points to habitual practice as a sufficient solution of the difficulty. No reply could be wiser or simpler. Herein he gives a lesson for all time. No plea of religion can hold good against obedience to lawful authority. "Render to all their dues," says St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 7): "tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." **The things that are God's;** *τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ.* The things of God are ourselves—our life, powers, faculties, means; to use these in God's service is our duty and our privilege. There need be no conflict between religion and politics, Church and state. Let a citizen do his duty to God, and he will find his obligations to the civil power are coincident and harmonious. Let the state respect the rights of God and of conscience, and there will be no collision between itself and the Church, but both will peaceably co-operate for the good of the community. Had the Jews rendered to God his dues, they would never have been reduced to their present state of subjection and debasement; would never have had to pay tribute to a foreign nation.

Ver. 22.—**They marvelled.** Well might they marvel. Their carefully laid plot, which had seemed so irresistible, was utterly frustrated. The view of the relations of Church and state set forth by Christ was novel and incomprehensible. Hitherto the two provinces had been considered identical.

The emperor, as we see impressed on his coins, was Pontifex Maximus; the Jewish priesthood had a political character, and the civil power was its instrument. In Christ's theory the spheres were distinct and not to be confounded. The state compelled obedience to its enactments; the Church left the conscience free, and obedience was voluntary and enforced by no external powers. The new society stood aloof from all political interests, and was responsible alone to God, while it performed its duties. **Left him.** They had no answer to give. There was nothing in Christ's words that they could lay hold of; nothing treasonable, nothing unpatriotic. Baffled, though not convinced, the questioners sullenly withdrew; but they or their comrades afterwards had the effrontery to accuse Jesus of forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar (Luke xxiii. 2).

Vers. 23—33.—*Third attack: The Sadducees and the resurrection.* (Mark xii. 18—27; Luke xx. 27—40.)

Ver. 23.—**The same day**; *on that day.* This is still the Tuesday in the Holy Week. **The Sadducees.** There is no definite article here in the original. **Which say**; οἱ λέγοντες. Many good manuscripts and some modern editors (Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort) read λέγοντες, "saying." The received reading historically describes the Sadducees' opinions; the other makes them come boldly stating their sentiments. Where authorities are pretty evenly balanced, we must decide the wording of a passage by other than literary considerations; and there can be no doubt that the reading which denotes the characteristic of the sect is more appropriate than that which represents them offensively parading their views as a preparation for the coming question. We have had notice of the Sadducees before (ch. iii. 7; xvi. 1). The popular account of their religious belief is given in Acts xxiii. 8, "The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit." They were rationalists and sceptics, who denied many old-established truths, and scorned many prevalent observances. They acknowledged most of the Old Testament, though, curiously enough, they, like our modern neologians, stumbled at the supernatural upon which the Scriptures were built. Tradition and traditional interpretations found no favour with them. The future life of the soul they utterly repudiated, and the resurrection of the body, when it was brought before them, met with contemptuous ridicule. The claims and doctrine of Christ were, in their eyes, puerile and unworthy of philosophic consideration. At the same time, they recognized that the people were with him for the moment, and that it was expedient that his teaching, so utterly opposed to their own opinions, should be discredited and repressed. So they came forward asking an imaginary question, which, as they thought, would reduce to an absurdity the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the flesh. Doubtless they were members of the Sanhedrin, and it was at the instigation of this body that they proposed the presumed case of conscience.

Ver. 24.—**Moses said.** They quote the substance of the law of the levirate (*i.e.* the brother-in-law) in Deut. xxv. 5, 6, by which it was enacted that if a married man died without a son, his brother or the next of kin should marry the widow, and the firstborn son of this union should be regarded and registered as the son of the deceased. This was a law not peculiar to the Hebrews, but prevalent from immemorial times among many ancient peoples, *e.g.* Persians, Egyptians, and found in force among some nations in modern times, as Arabians, Druses, Circassians, etc. It seems not to have been enforced in any case, but to have been left to the good will of the survivor, who might escape the obligation by submitting to a certain social obloquy (Deut. xxv. 7—10). The motive of the regulation was the maintenance of a family and the non-alienation of property. Many authorities assert that the law did not apply in the case of a man who left daughters (Numb. xxvii. 8), but only in that of a childless widow. Later rabbinism limited the obligation to a betrothed woman, not yet actually married. But whatever may have been the limitations allowed in these days, the question of the Sadducees took its stand on the old legal basis, and endeavoured to draw therefrom a ridiculous inference. **Shall marry**; ἐπιγαμβρεύσει. The verb, found in the Septuagint, is used properly signifying "to take a woman to wife as the husband's kinsman" (γαμβρός), and generally, "to contract affinity by marriage." **Raise up seed.** The firstborn son of such a marriage was the legal heir of the deceased brother, and bore his name. The natural and the legal paternities are seen in the genealogies of our Lord, and occasion some difficulties in adjustment.

Ver. 25.—**Seven brethren.** If the word "brethren" is to be taken in the strictest sense, and not as equivalent to "kinsmen," the case is indeed conceivable, though extremely improbable, especially as at this time the custom had fallen into abeyance, and its rigorous fulfilment was neither practised nor expected. There is a levity

and a coarseness in the question which is simply revolting.

Ver. 26.—**Unto the seventh**; *ἕως τῶν ἑπτά, unto the seven*—to the end of the seven.

Ver. 27.—**The woman died also.** This last word is omitted by Alford, Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort, and seemingly with good reason. Then, according to these Sadducees, arose the difficulty which they deemed insurmountable.

Ver. 28.—**In the resurrection**; *i.e.* in the life beyond the grave, to which the resurrection is supposed to lead. **Whose wife shall she be of the seven?** *Of which of the seven shall she be wife* (γυνή, without the article, predicate)? The evil question stands in its naked absurdity. Had the woman a son by either of the husbands, the difficulty would have been less pronounced. In their coarse materialism, these persons carry their conceptions of the present visible world into the future spiritual world; they confuse the conditions and relations of one with those of the other, and would argue that if such insoluble complications arise in the new life, the resurrection must be an unfounded figment. **Had her.** All were lawfully married to her, and therefore all had equal rights. When a woman was twice married, the rabbinical gloss declared that in the other world she would belong to her first husband; but this opinion was not generally received, and the present suppositious case had never been contemplated and fell under no allowed rule.

Ver. 29.—**Ye do err.** Jesus does not condescend to answer directly to the contemptuous question proposed. He goes to the root of the matter, and shows the great error in which it originated. These disputants are treated with patience and calm argument, because they are not hypocrites like the Pharisees, but have the courage of their opinions, and do not seek to appear other than they are. They erred, said Christ, for two reasons: first, **not knowing the Scriptures.** Whatever might be the lax opinions which they held respecting the prophets, there was no dispute about the supreme authority of the Pentateuch, and these Scriptures (as Christ proceeded to prove) plainly implied the doctrine of the resurrection. Secondly, they ignored **the power of God,** to whom nothing is impossible, and who, in the resurrection, would perform a work very different from what they supposed—changing the natural into the spiritual, and transforming the characteristics of the life that now is into a different and higher sphere, yet preserving identity.

Ver. 30.—**For.** The Lord proceeds first to show the power of God as displayed in the resurrection. The Sadducees would limit and control this power by conceiving that it could not change the qualities of the body or alter the conditions and relations of the human consciousness. **In the resurrection** (see on ver. 28). **Marry**; as men. **Are given in marriage**; as women. Marriage is an earthly relationship, and can have no place in a spiritual condition. All that is of the earth, all that is carnal and gross, all human passions, all that is connected with sin and corruption, shall pass away. The risen life is no mere reproduction of the present, but a regeneration, a new life added to the old, with new powers, acting under new laws, ranged in a new community. On earth men are mortal, and marriage is necessary to perpetuate the race; no such necessity obtains in the other life, where men are immortal. As an old Father says, "Where the law of death is abolished, the cause of birth is abolished likewise." **Are as the angels of God in heaven**; *i.e.* as the angels who dwell in heaven. The words, *τοῦ Θεοῦ, of God,* are omitted by some manuscripts and editors. The Vulgate has, *angeli Dei in cœlo.* Thus Christ, in opposition to the Sadducees' creed, admits the existence of angels. Glorified men are like the angels in these characteristics especially. They are immortal, no longer subject to human wants, passions, failings, or temptations; they serve God perfectly without weariness or distraction; they have no conflict between flesh and spirit, between the old nature and the new; their life is peaceful, harmonious, satisfying. Our Lord says nothing here concerning mutual recognition in the future state; nothing about the continuance of those tender relations which he sanctions and blesses on earth, and in the absence of which we cannot imagine perfect happiness existing. Analogy supplies some answer to such questions, but they are foreign to Christ's statement, and need not be here discussed.

Ver. 31.—**As touching** (*περί*) **the resurrection of the dead.** Christ, in the second place, shows how these disputants were ignorant of Scripture. They may have known the letter, they certainly knew nothing of the spirit of the Word of God, its depth and fulness. The key to the interpretation of the Scripture is faith. It is not enough to be acquainted with the literal signification; this is always inadequate, and denotes not the chief matter intended. To know the Scripture, in the sense of Christ, is to have a clear apprehension of its spiritual aspect, to feel and own the moral and mystical bearing of facts and statements, and to recognize that herein lies the real signifi-

cance of the inspired record. The want of this discernment vitiated the Sadducees' treatment and reception of Holy Writ, and involved them in lamentable error. Christ proceeds to demonstrate how the very Pentateuch (reverenced unquestionably by their party), which they deemed to be entirely silent on the subject of the life of the soul, spoke plainly on this matter to all who had faith to understand and appreciate the words of Divine wisdom. **That which was spoken unto you by God.** To our minds Jesus might have adduced stronger arguments from other books of Scripture, *e.g.* Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; but the Sadducees had drawn their objection from the Pentateuch, therefore from that section of the Bible he refutes them. To the books of Moses was always made the ultimate appeal in confirmation of doctrine; in the supreme authority of those writings all sects agreed. The utterances of the prophets were explained away as allegorical, poetical, and rhetorical; the plain, historical statements of the Law could not at that time be thus treated. Christ endorses unreservedly the Divine inspiration of the Pentateuch; he intimates that it was the voice of God to all time, and providentially directed to disperse such errors as those now produced.

Ver. 32.—**I am** (ἐγώ εἰμι). The quotation is from Exod. iii. 6, where God gives himself this name, as the Eternal, Self-existent One. **The God of Abraham . . . Jacob.** These patriarchs had long been dead when this revelation was made; had they been annihilated, the Lord could not have called himself still their God. By this utterance he implied that he had still to do with them —had a blessing and a reward which they were to receive, and which they must be alive to enjoy. How can they who are his cease to exist? They who are in personal relation and covenant with God cannot perish. There were personal promises to Abraham, distinguished from those made to his seed (see Gen. xiii. 15; xv. 7; xvii. 8, etc.), which were never fulfilled during his earthly life, and await realization in a future existence. God was the patriarchs' Father, Saviour, Redeemer, Judge, Rewarder; he could not hold these relations to mere dust and ashes, but only to conscious and responsible beings, existing, though in another condition, and in another portion of God's creation. Thus was proved the continued existence and personality of the soul; and the resurrection of the body follows consequentially from this. Man is a complex being; he has body and soul, neither of which is complete without the other. The soul is not perfect man without the body, which is its organ; the body is not perfect man without the soul, which animates it. In giving eternal life to man, God gives it to the creature as originally made, not to one portion only of his nature. **Of the living.** "For," as St. Luke adds, "all live unto him." The so-called dead are alive in God's view; they have an abiding relation to him, live in his world, which comprises the seen and unseen, the present and the future. Thus St. Paul says (Rom. xiv. 8, 9), "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living."

Ver. 33.—**They were astonished at his doctrine.** The multitudes were amazed, not only at an interpretation which was entirely new to them, and which opened to them some of the depths of that Scripture of which they had been taught and knew only the letter; but because Christ showed that he looked into men's hearts, saw what was the motive and cause of their opinions, and, in explaining difficulties, unfolded eternal truths. The Sadducees, thus answered in the presence of the listening crowds, attempted no reply, slunk away confounded, utterly foiled in their hope of casting ridicule on the teaching of Christ. St. Luke notes that some scribes present, doubtless of the Pharisaic faction, were highly delighted with this public defeat of their adversaries, and cried, in enforced admiration, "Master, thou hast well said!"

Vers. 34—40.—*Fourth attack: The Pharisees' question concerning the great commandment.* (Mark xii. 28—34.)

Ver. 34.—**He had put the Sadducees to silence** (ἐφίμωσεν, as ver. 12). The Pharisees were informed of, and some of them had witnessed, the discomfiture of the Sadducees (see Luke xx. 40); hence they deemed it necessary again to attack Jesus by asking a question which specially appertained to their own teaching. They felt that, if they were ever to compass his overthrow, they must first lower his credit with the people, so that these might no longer care to support or defend him. To succeed in entangling Jesus in a difficulty would not only effect this, but would also gain them a triumph over their adversaries, who had been so completely defeated. **Were gathered together;** ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, which may mean, "to the same place," as perhaps Acts ii. 1; or "on the same ground," "for the same purpose." The former is probably correct. The English versions omit the words (see the rendering of ver. 41, where ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ does not occur). They grouped themselves around Christ, or else gathered in a council-

chamber, taking combined action against him.

Ver. 35.—**A lawyer**; *νομικός*, called by St. Mark "a scribe"—a term of wider signification, which would include "lawyers." Vulgate, *legis doctor*, which gives the right sense; for such were teachers and expounders of the Mosaic Law. This man was put forth by the Pharisees as an expert, who would not be so easily discomfited as the Sadducees had been. **Tempting him.** Trying him (comp. 1 Kings x. 1); putting him to the test, not altogether maliciously, but partly from curiosity, and partly from a desire to hear Christ's opinion on a much-disputed point. It is evident, from St. Mark's account, that Christ was pleased with him personally, for he said to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Those who put this lawyer forward had, of course, sinister motives, and hoped to make capital from Christ's answer; but the man himself seems to have been straightforward and honest. We have had the term "tempting" used in a hostile sense (ch. xvi. 1; xix. 3), but there is no necessity for so taking it; and it seems to imply here merely the renewal of the attack on Christ.

Ver. 36.—**Which is the great commandment in the Law?** *Ποία ἐντολὴ μεγάλη ἐν τῷ νόμῳ; What sort of commandment is great in the Law?* According to rabbinical teaching, there were more than six hundred precepts in the Law; of this considerable number all could not be observed. Which were of absolute obligation? which were not? The schools made a distinction between heavy and light commandments, as though some were of less importance than others, and might be neglected with impunity; and some of such exceeding dignity that fulfilment of them would condone imperfect obedience in the case of others. Some taught that if a man rightly selected some great precept to observe, he might safely disregard the rest of the Law (see ch. xix. 16, etc.). This was the kind of doctrine against which St. James (ii. 10) expostulates: "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." The Pharisees may have desired to discover whether Jesus knew and sanctioned these rabbinical distinctions. He had proved himself intimately acquainted with the inner meaning of Scripture, and able to evolve doctrines and to trace analogies which their dull minds had never comprehended; the question now was whether he entered into their subtle divisions and could decide this dispute for them. Such is the view usually taken of the scribe's question; but it may well be doubted, if regard is had to the character of the man, whether he had any intention of entangling Christ in these subtleties, but rather asked for a solution of the general problem—Of what nature was the precept which should be regarded as "first" (Mark) in the Law? We may compare the somewhat similar question and answer in Luke x. 25—28. Lange's idea, that the scribe wished to force Christ to make some answer which, by implying his own claim to be Son of God, would trench upon the doctrine of monotheism, seems wholly unwarranted. This theory is based on the supposition that the Pharisee took it for granted that Jesus would answer, "Thou shalt love God above all," and intended to found upon that reply a condemnation for having made himself equal with God by his assertion of Sonship. But the text gives no countenance to such intention, and it has been suggested chiefly for the purpose of accounting for Christ's subsequent question (vers. 41—45), which, however, needs no such foundation, as we shall see.

Ver. 37.—**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God**; *Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου* (Deut. vi. 5, from the Septuagint, with some slight variation). Christ enunciates the two great moral precepts of God's Law, not, indeed, stated in these words in the Decalogue, but implied throughout, and forming the basis of true religion. **Heart . . . soul . . . mind.** The Septuagint has "mind, soul, strength." The expressions mean generally that God is to be loved with all our powers and faculties, and that nothing is to be preferred to him. It is difficult to define with any precision the signification of each term used, and much unprofitable labour has been expended in the endeavour to limit their exact sense. "Quum," as Grotius says, "vocum multarum cumulatio nihil quam intensius studium designet." It is usual to explain thus: *Heart;* which among the Hebrews was considered to be the seat of the understanding, is here considered as the home of the affections and the seat of the will. *Soul;* the living powers, the animal life. *Mind;* *διανοίᾳ*, intellectual powers. These are to be the seat and abode of the love enjoined.

Ver. 38.—**The first and great commandment**; or better, *the great and first commandment;* Vulgate, *Hoc est maximum et primum mandatum.* Here was a plain answer to the question of the scribe, which no one could gainsay (comp. Luke x. 27). They who repeated daily in their devotions, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (see Mark), could not help acknowledging that love of him whom they thus confessed was the chief duty of man—one which was superior to every other obligation.

Ver. 39.—**The second.** The scribe had not asked any question about a second

commandment: but Christ is not satisfied with propounding an abstract proposition; he shows how this great precept is to be made practical, how one command involves and leads to the other. **Like unto it**; ὁμοία αὐτῇ: in nature and extent, of universal obligation, pure and unselfish. **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** From Lev. xix. 18. The verb, both here and ver. 37, is ἀγαπήσεις, which implies, not mere animal or worldly affection (φιλέω), but love from the highest moral considerations, without self-interest, holy. The Latins indicated this difference by *amo* and *diligo*. Our "neighbour" is every one with whom we are concerned, *i.e.* virtually all men. He is to be loved because he is God's image and likeness, heir of the same hope as we ourselves, and presented to us as the object on and by which we are to show the reality of our love to God. "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John iv. 21). And for the measure of our love to man, we have Christ's word in another place (ch. vii. 12), "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Ver. 40.—**Hang all the Law and the prophets**; *i.e.* all Scripture, which is comprised in these terms (comp. ch. v. 17; vii. 12); in other words, all the revelations which God has made to man in every age. The clause is peculiar to St. Matthew. It signifies that on love of God and love of man depend all the moral and religious, ceremonial and judicial precepts contained in the Law, all the utterances of the prophets, all the voices of history. Scripture enunciates the duty to God and our neighbour, shows the right method of fulfilling it, warns against the breach of it, gives examples of punishment and reward consequent upon the way in which the obligation has been treated. Thus the unity and integrity of revelation is demonstrated. Its Author is one; its design is uniform; it teaches one path, leading to one great end.

Vers. 41—46.—*Christ's question to the Pharisees concerning the Messiah.* (Mark xii. 35—37; Luke xx. 41—44.)

Ver. 41.—**Jesus asked them.** He spake generally to the assembled crowd in the temple (Mark), addressing no one in particular. The questioned becomes the questioner, and this with a great purpose. He had silenced his opponents, and opened profundities in Scripture hitherto unfathomed; he would now raise them to a higher theology; he would place before them a truth concerning the nature of the Messiah, which, if they received it, would lead them to accept him. It was as it were a last hope. He and the Pharisees had some common ground, which was wanting in the case of the Sadducees and Herodians (comp. Acts xxiii. 6); he would use this to support a last appeal. Let us observe the Divine patience and tenderness of Christ. Not to gain a victory over inveterate enemies, not to expose the ignorance of scribe and Pharisee, not to exhibit his own profound knowledge of the inner harmonies of God's Word, does he now put this question. He desires to win acceptance of his claims by the unanswerable argument of the Scripture which they revered; let them consider the exact meaning of a text often quoted, let them weigh each word with reverent care, and they would see that the predicted Messiah was not merely Son of David according to earthly descent, but was Jehovah himself; and that when he claimed to be Son of God, when he asserted, "I and my Father are one," he was vindicating for himself only what the prophet had affirmed of the nature of the Christ. He had, so to speak, hope that some among his hearers would accept this teaching, and save themselves amid that untoward generation. It was when this last hope failed, when he saw nothing but hardened hearts and wilful prejudice, that he uttered the woes and predictions in the following chapter.

Ver. 42.—**What think ye of Christ?** τοῦ Χριστοῦ, *the Christ*, the Messiah. What is your belief? What do you, the teachers of the people and the careful interpreters of Scripture, opine concerning the Messiah? **Whose Son is he?** This was a question the full bearing of which they did not comprehend, thinking that it referred only to his earthly descent. In their partial knowledge, perhaps half contemptuously, as to an inquiry familiar to all, they say unto him, The Son of David. So all prophecy had said, as they very well knew (ch. i. 1).

Ver. 43.—**He saith.** They had answered glibly enough, not knowing what was to come of their natural admission; now Christ puts a difficulty before them which might have led them to pause and reflect upon what that assertion might connote. **How then?** πῶς οὖν; If Christ is David's Son, how is it then, in what sense can it be said, etc.? **Doth David in spirit call him Lord.** "In spirit" means speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—an argument surely for the Divine authority of the Old Testament, when "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). Christ proceeds to quote a passage from Ps. cx., acknowledged by the Jews to be Davidic and Messianic. Both these positions have been called in question in modern days, and sceptical critics have hence presumed to infer

ignorance or deceit on the part of Christ; *i.e.* either that he did not know that the authorship was wrongly attributed to David, and that the psalm really referred to Maccabean times, or that, knowing these facts, he deliberately ignored them and endorsed a popular error in order to give colour to his argument. The statement of such a charge against our Lord is a sufficient refutation. Universal tradition, extending to this very time, which gave to the psalm a Messianic interpretation, is surely more worthy of credit than a theory elaborated in the present century, which in no respect regards the natural signification of the language, and can be made to support the novel idea only by forced and unreal accommodations. By speaking of David as having uttered the quoted words, Christ does not formally state that this king wrote the psalm; he merely gives the accepted view which classed it as Davidic. The authorship did not matter in his application; his argument was equally sound, whoever was the writer.

Ver. 44.—The Lord said unto my Lord (Ps. cx. 1). The quotation is from the Septuagint. But neither this nor our English Version is an adequate rendering of the original, where the word translated "Lord" is not the same in both parts of the clause. More accurately, the solemn beginning of the psalm is thus given: "Utterance [or, 'oracle'] of Jehovah to my Lord (*Adonai*)." The psalmist acknowledges the recipient of the utterance as his sovereign Lord; this could be no earthly potentate, for on earth he had no such superior; Jewish tradition always applied the term unto the Messiah, or the Word. The prediction repeats the promise made by Nathan to David (2 Sam. vii. 12), which had no fulfilment in his natural progeny, and could be regarded as looking forward only to the Messiah. **Sit thou on my right hand.** Thus Messiah is exalted to the highest dignity in heaven. Sitting at God's right hand does not necessarily imply complete Divine majesty (as Hengstenberg remarks), for the sons of Zebedee had asked for such a position in Messiah's earthly kingdom (ch. xx. 21); but it denotes supreme honour, association in government, authority second only to that of Monarch. This is said of Christ in his human nature. He is "equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood." In his Divine nature he could receive nothing; in his human nature all "power was given unto him in heaven and earth" (ch. xxviii. 18). **Till I make** (ἕως ἂν θῶ) **thine enemies thy footstool**; ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου. This is the Septuagint reading. Many manuscripts here give ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν σου, *Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet.* Some few have both ὑποπόδιον and ὑποκάτω. Vulgate, *Donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.* The complete subjection of all adversaries is denoted (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 25—27; Heb. i. 13); and they are subjected not merely for punishment and destruction, but, it may be, for salvation and glory. The relative particle "till" must not be pressed, as if Christ's session was to cease when his victory was completed. We have before had occasion to observe that the phrase, ἕως οὗ, or ἕως ἄν, asserts nothing of the future beyond the event specified. As St. Jerome says of such negative phrases, "Ita negant præteritum ut non ponant futurum" (comp. ch. i. 25; v. 26; xviii. 34). Of Christ's kingdom there is no end.

Ver. 45.—**If David . . . Son?** The argument is this: David speaks with highest reverence of Messiah, calling him his Lord: how is this attitude consistent with the fact that Messiah is David's Son? How can Messiah be both Son and Lord of David? We, who have learned the truth concerning the two natures of Christ, can readily answer the question. He is both "the Root and the Offspring of David" (Rev. xxii. 16). The Athanasian Creed offers the required solution of the seeming paradox: "God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God, and perfect Man . . . who although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ." Here was an explanation (if the Pharisees took his words to heart) of much that had excited their indignation, and caused cavil and carping. He claimed to be the Messiah; and Messiah, as Scripture presented him, had a twofold nature. When, therefore, he asserted equality with the Father when he, "being man, made himself God" (John x. 33), he was vindicating that Divine nature which he as Messiah possessed. Jesus did not further elucidate this mystery. He had given food for reflection; he had unfolded the hidden meaning of Scripture; he had shown the shallowness of the popular exegesis; the knowledge was here; there was wanting only the will to raise the flower of faith in the heart of these obdurate hearers.

Ver. 46.—**No man was able to answer him a word.** They could not confute Christ's arguments; they would not receive and ponder them; so they held their peace. Had they had a real desire to be instructed, they would have profited by the present occasion; coming to the light with honest and good hearts, they would have been enlightened. But this was far from their

wish, so they went away empty. Neither durst any man. They perceived that they could gain no advantage over Christ by such methods of attack. Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, had ignominiously succumbed; to make a fresh assault was to court a fresh defeat. Seeing this, they dared no longer tempt him in this way. Henceforward they would use other tactics. Treachery and violence must now play their part. These weapons would be more successful in compassing the destruction of the innocent Victim.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The parable of the marriage feast.* I. THE FIRST INVITATION. 1. *The King.* This parable resembles the parable of the great supper in Luke xiv.; but it was delivered at a different time, under different circumstances. It differs also in its ending and in many of its details. It cannot possibly be, as some have thought, a mere variation of that parable. The King is God the Father, the Lord God omnipotent. He made a marriage for his Son. The marriage is the union between Christ and his Church—the union described by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians (v. 23—27); the union which is to reach its perfect consummation and bliss in God's eternal and everlasting glory (Rev. xix. 7—9; xxi. 9, 10). The bride is the Church, regarded in its ideal character, as one, holy, catholic, apostolic. The invited guests are those who have been called into the Church, taken individually. So in Rev. xxi., the holy city, regarded as a whole, is the bride, the Lamb's wife; while in ver. 27, individual saints, they which are written in the Lamb's book of life, are described as entering into it. The King made the marriage. The choice of the Church lies in the eternal purpose of God, the election of God the Father. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." He determined, in his gracious love, to sanctify our human nature, by uniting it to the Divine nature in the Person of his only begotten Son. The Son of God loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church. The parable describes the preparations for the marriage; not the glorious marriage supper of the Lamb, when the bride shall have made herself ready, arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. For that marriage supper is the blissful consummation of the mystical union of the bride with the heavenly Bridegroom; all who are admitted there are blessed. The marriage feast of the parable is the kingdom of heaven which the Lord came to establish upon earth; the Church, his bride, is not yet in the full sense ready; she has not yet been transfigured by his grace into the likeness of the heavenly Bridegroom; her robes are not yet whiter than snow, made white in the blood of the Lamb. But she is even now his chosen bride, though she needs purification and sanctification. The great Catholic Church, the whole congregation of Christian people upon earth, is the figure, the beginning, of the congregation of the redeemed in heaven. The privileges offered to the faithful are spiritual communion with Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit, access to our Father in heaven through the atonement once made upon the cross, the blessed sacrament in which all true believers are strengthened and refreshed with heavenly food; all these are a foretaste of that great marriage supper which the Lord is preparing in heaven for those who are being sanctified by his Holy Spirit upon earth. 2. *His servants.* The King sent forth his servants to call them which were bidden (as Esther sent the chamberlain to bring Haman to the banquet to which she had invited him the day before); but they would not come. The servants were John the Baptist, the twelve, the seventy. They called the Jews, God's chosen people, bidden long ago, to receive the salvation, the full gospel privileges of which all the prophets had spoken. The Lord himself called them. "If any man thirst," he said, "let him come unto me, and drink;" "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." But, alas! they would not come. "Ye will not come to me," he said in his Divine sorrow, "that ye might have life." Again the King sent other servants. He did not at once reject his ancient people for their stubbornness and disobedience. He sent again, and now the message was more urgent: "I have prepared my dinner [it was not the supper, δεῖπνον; but the midday meal, ἄριστον, which would mark the beginning of the marriage festivities]: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready." The other servants were the

apostles and evangelists sent forth to preach after the great Day of Pentecost. Now the Sacrifice had been offered, the Victim had been slain. The eternal purpose of God had been fulfilled in that one sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. All things were now ready. These other servants preached first to the Jews; but still, as a people, they would not come. They made light of the gracious invitation; some, heedless and thoughtless, went their ways, caring only for the present life, its business or its pleasures. One went to his field: he was a man of landed property; he had all that he wanted. Another went to his merchandise: he was absorbed in the pursuit of gain; he had no time, no thoughts for other things. Both neglected the King's invitation: they had no desire for the royal banquet. Others, more zealous and more violent, because they were zealous for their own exclusive privileges, not for the honour and glory of God, persecuted and slew the servants of the King—the holy Martyr Stephen, the Apostle St. James, and many other saints of God. 3. *The wrath of the King.* The King marked these wicked deeds. There was no need that others should repeat them to him (the words, "when he heard thereof," seem not to be genuine); he knoweth all things. He was wroth. Those wicked men had despised his grace and bounty; they had slain his messengers. He bore with them in his long-suffering mercy till their iniquity was full. Then he sent forth his armies; he destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. The Lord saw again in prophetic vision that awful visitation over which he had wept when he looked upon Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives: "They shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee." Then he spoke in Divine pity and sorrow, now in the tones of awful justice. It must be so; they are hardened in their wilful unbelief; they will add sin to sin; the dreadful day must come. The wrath of the King is fearful exceedingly; the terror of the Lord is overwhelming. Let us listen to the gentle calling of his grace while there is time.

II. THE SECOND INVITATION. 1. *The message.* Again the King sent forth his servants. The marriage feast was ready; the fountain was opened for sin and for uncleanness; the living Bread which came down from heaven was offered to men; all were invited to take of the water of life freely. They which had been bidden were not worthy. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life (Acts xiii. 46). The King bade his servants go into the highways, and call all, without distinction, as many as they should find: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." 2. *The obedience of the servants.* They did according to the bidding of the King; they went into the highways, and gathered together as many as they found. The apostles and evangelists preached everywhere, whithersoever they could go; they gathered together a great company from all parts of the world. And now the wedding was furnished with guests, the halls of the palace were filled. For the messengers had worked hard, and had brought all who would come, without distinction of race, or social position, or education, or even of moral character; bad and good alike were invited, not only the righteous, but publicans and sinners also. The good (in the human sense of the word) would become better; the bad might, by the gift of grace, be cleansed and converted and saved. All alike were called to the dinner; that is, to the blessings and privileges of the gospel, which are an antepast of the full joy of heaven.

III. THE WEDDING GARMENT. 1. *The King's question.* The King's house was full; the guests were already at the festal board (*τοὺς ἀνακειμένους*). The King came in to see them. His eye ranged through that great assembly. He saw all—every one. There was one who had not on a wedding garment. He had been brought from the highways; he had come just as he was; with clothes, perhaps, worn and ragged, soiled and filthy. How was it? The other guests were all suitably attired. They too had been gathered from the highways; there were high and low, good and bad, among them. But whatever they were when they were bidden, whatever was their condition then, all had wedding garments now. This one alone was "clothed with filthy garments," like Joshua the high priest when he stood before the angel (Zech. iii. 3); but he was not now, like Joshua, clothed with change of raiment. The King's eye found him out. He could not be hid, though, we may well believe, he sought to escape that piercing look. "Friend," the King said (the word does not imply intimacy and affection, but only knowledge and acquaintance; it is used in the rebuke of the

discontented husbandmen, ch. xx. 13, and by our Lord to Judas, ch. xxvi. 50), "how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" The question is gently expressed, but the negative particle used (μὴ ἔχων) seems to appeal to the man's consciousness; it seems to imply that he was aware of his condition, and knew that he was transgressing the rules of decorum. He was speechless; he could find no answer, no excuse. It may be that festal garments for all the guests were provided by the bounty of the King; this unhappy man had contemptuously rejected the offered gift; he had preferred his own mean and sordid raiment; he appeared at the King's board just as he had come from the highway, with no change, no preparation. Certainly, he had taken no pains to provide himself with suitable attire; plainly, he might have done so; all the other guests were clad in wedding robes; why was he in this unseemly garb? He could find no excuse; he could not plead want of time; the rest had found time. He could not plead ignorance; the others knew how the robes were to be procured. He could not plead poverty; the bounty of the King was inexhaustible. His presence in that guise was an insult to the King, a dishonour to the high festival to which he had been invited. He was unworthy of a place among the chosen guests. The wedding garment is the righteousness of saints (Rev. xix. 8); "but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv. 6). Yet, thank God, we may find a place among the guests of the King, for Jesus Christ our Lord "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14). We must appear before the King, "not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The robe of righteousness is ours, and yet not ours. It is the righteousness of saints, because it has been given to them. "To her was *granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen" (Rev. xix. 8). The King giveth the fair garments freely in his large and generous bounty. But that righteousness was not of nature; they were born in sin. It was not gained by any works of theirs; by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God (Rom. iii. 20). It is a gift; it cometh of grace, the grace of God, "who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." We must seek it of him, for without that robe of righteousness we cannot sit among the guests at the marriage feast. 2. *The King's sentence.* The King made no further inquiries; he read the heart of the miserable man; he knew his history. He pronounced at once the awful sentence: "Then said the King to the servants." These servants (διάκονοι) are not the same as the servants (δοῦλοι) who were sent forth to call the guests. They were Christ's apostles and evangelists; these are the angels of judgment, who "shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (ch. xiii. 41). They were bidden to bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness. The time for repentance was past; he might have procured the wedding garment; he had taken no pains to obtain it; he had not even asked for it; nay, we must believe he had rejected it when it was offered him out of the bounty of the King. Now it was too late; he was helpless; bound hand and foot, he could not seek it now. And without that wedding garment there was no place for him in the palace of the King. He must be cast out into the outer darkness; that outer darkness thrice mentioned in this Gospel of St. Matthew (see ch. viii. 12 and xxv. 30), and always with the solemn addition, "There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." Out of the kingdom of light into the kingdom of darkness; away from the joy and gladness, away from the presence of the King, away from the happy guests; into that place of remorse and misery where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth; bitter remorse for the past, and, alas! no hope for the future. Bound hand and foot as he now is, through his own contempt of the great King, he cannot attain unto that holiness without which (let us well ponder the awful words) no man shall see the Lord. 3. *The conclusion of the parable.* "For many are called, but few are chosen." The words have a more awful meaning here than they can have in ch. xx. 16, if, indeed, they are genuine in that place. In ch. xx. all receive the reward; the concluding words seem to point to the few who are chosen for the highest places in the kingdom of God. Here the distinction is plainly between the saved and the lost. Many were called to the marriage; few only came; of those few one was cast out, even as the traitor Judas, though one of the twelve apostles of the Lord, went to his own place. So now

there are many open sinners, many more utterly apathetic and indifferent, and, alas! even among those who outwardly obey the calling, who come to church, and use the appointed means of grace, even among those who come to the holy table of the Lord, there are (we fear, in sadness and perplexity) not a few who have not given their hearts unto the Lord, who have not that white raiment (Rev. iii. 18) which may be bought of him without money and without price. In the parable only one of those who obeyed the calling is cast out. It is a parable of the long-suffering mercy of our God. The King sends again and again. He is not willing that any should perish. But it is a parable also of his all-seeing justice. His eye searches out that one unworthy guest among the crowd. He knows the sins, the negligences, the unbelief of each individual member of his Church. None can stand before his face without that holiness which is so great, so precious, so awful a thing, which so few of us can dare to say or think that we have. He bids us buy the white raiment of him; let us come and buy, counting all things else as dross, that we may "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and be clothed with that humility, that charity, which are woven into the white robe of his righteousness. Few are chosen. They who choose God for their portion on earth are chosen by him to be with him in heaven. Our choice of him proves that his choice has rested upon us. He first called us. Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure.

LESSONS. 1. It is God himself who calls us; to refuse that gracious calling must be fearful guilt. 2. The privileges of the Church will not avail without holiness of heart and life. 3. Think of that weeping and gnashing of teeth; and pray and strive and hunger after righteousness.

VERS. 15—22.—*The question of tribute.* I. THE TEMPTATION. 1. *The coalition.* The Pharisees were greatly offended. They as well as the chief priests (ch. xxi. 45) perceived that these parables were spoken of them. Their conscience smote them; they felt in their hearts the truthfulness of the Saviour's words; they knew that his censure was just. But, instead of acknowledging their guilt, they blazed into wrath; instead of confessing their sin, they sought to destroy the great Teacher who had exposed it. They shrank from nothing; they would make friends even with the Herodians to compass their designs, as they had done once before (Mark iii. 6). The two parties were wholly opposed to one another; the one, fiercely zealous for the Law; the other, merely political, utterly indifferent to religion; now they acted together for a time, united by their common hatred to our Lord. They could sink their differences, fundamental as they were, to bring about his death, to murder him whose teaching, very high and pure and holy as they knew it to be, exposed the hollow formalism of the Pharisees, the time-serving indifference of the Herodians. Surely the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. 2. *The snare.* They determined to lay a trap for him. The Pharisees sent with the Herodians their own disciples, young men whom, it may be, they thought the Lord would not recognize; the elders of the party had often stood opposed to him. They were to submit to the Lord, as if for his decision, a question which might well have arisen in controversy with the Herodians. The approached him with flattery; they called him "Master," "Teacher;" they praised his impartiality, his justice, his truth. Then came the insidious question, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" They thought the dilemma one from which there was no escape. Answer as he might, there lay on either side a terrible danger: he might take his choice of provoking the fanaticism of the Jews or the hostility of the Romans. The only other source, it seemed to them, would be that ignominious confession of ignorance which that same day the Lord had forced from the chief priests and scribes.

II. THE LORD'S VICTORY. 1. *The exposure.* "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" He was high above the reach of flattery; he heeded not the praise of men. He knew their hearts. He called them hypocrites; they were acting a part; smooth words were on their lips; the malice of hell was in their hearts. But they were foiled. "Show me the tribute money," the Lord said. The coin produced bore the image and superscription of Cæsar. 2. *The answer.* It was full of wisdom. The Lord did not evade the question, yet he did not expose himself to their malicious accusations. He laid down a great principle—a principle far-reaching in its applications, and fitted to regu-

late the conduct of men in all ages. "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Cæsar had his rights; the fact that his coin was current in Palestine showed that the Jews were under his government, under the protection of his laws. The Lord does not enter into any political discussions; he simply refers his questioners to the logic of facts. As a fact, Cæsar was paramount; in the providence of God, Palestine had come under his dominion; the Jews used money coined in his mint; that denarius which they had just put into the Lord's hand was stamped with his name and image. Therefore it was lawful, it was more than lawful, it was a duty, to pay tribute unto Cæsar, for that tribute was Cæsar's due. "Render therefore to all their dues," St. Paul wrote afterwards; "tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." Christianity does not interfere with the obedience due to the laws under which we live. But if the denarius was due to Cæsar, the half-shekel was due to God; the Herodians must not forget this. "Render unto God the things that are God's." The principle is of wide application. "Ye are not your own," the apostle tells us. God made man after his own image. He wrote his law in the heart. That image was marred, not wholly lost, by the Fall (see Gen. ix. 6; Jas. iii. 9). It may be recovered; God's chosen must bear the image of the heavenly; they must be conformed to the image of his Son, changed into the same image from glory to glory, renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created them. Then if we render unto God the things that are God's, we shall give him ourselves, our souls and bodies, which are his—his by right of creation, his again by right of redemption, for we are bought with a price. The second clause of our Saviour's rule both qualifies and includes the first. We may not give unto Cæsar the things that are God's; if, unhappily, there should be a collision between our duty to God and our obedience to the civil power, we must obey God rather than man. Under all other circumstances, in rendering unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, we so far render unto God the things which are God's; for "the powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." The great principle of obedience to God covers the whole of the Christian life. Our duty to God contains and implies our duty to our neighbour. The best Christian will be the best subject, the best son, the best servant.

LESSONS. 1. Hate flattery. Do not flatter others; speak the truth. 2. Render unto all their dues. The Christian must be just in his dealings, obedient to the law. 3. Give God his dues—your whole heart.

Vers. 23—33.—*The Sadducees.* I. THEIR CASE OF CASUISTRY. 1. *Their doctrine.* They held that there was no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit (Acts xxiii. 8). Some of them now came to Christ, asserting their unbelief. They had not hitherto, like the Pharisees, taken a decided stand against our Lord. The chief priests, indeed, who were Sadducees, had been provoked into hostility by our Lord's action in the temple; but we do not read of Sadducees, as such, joining in the opposition against the Lord before this time, except in the one case mentioned by St. Matthew (ch. xvi. 1). They were few in number, but rich and powerful through their possession of the chief places in the Church. Their rank, their sceptical tendencies, seem to have led them to regard our Lord up to the present time rather with indifference than with active hostility. They had not hitherto taken much interest in his teaching and miracles. But he had become a power in the land, the most conspicuous Figure in Palestine; they could not go on ignoring him as they had done. Sadduceeism and Pharisaism represent tendencies diametrically opposed to one another, yet sometimes united in opposition to the truth. Philosophic indifference on the one side, superstition and hypocrisy on the other, are the two opposite poles of opinion. Both stand aloof from that simple, loving, earnest faith which marks the real follower of Christ; sometimes they unite against it. 2. *Their question.* They proposed a difficulty, a possible complication arising out of the institution of levirate marriage. A woman, they suppose, had married in succession seven brothers: whose wife should she be in the resurrection? Some of the rabbis had already decided the question—a woman who had been married more than once would, they thought, be the wife of the first husband in the world to come. So said the rabbis; but what was the opinion of the great Teacher from Nazareth?

II. THE LORD'S REPLY. 1. *To their question.* "Ye do err," he said. They were wandering this way and that, far from the truth; and the cause of that error was: (1) Their ignorance of the Scriptures. We observe that the Lord did not attribute the error of the Sadducees to their rejection of an oral Mosaic tradition, which was one of the fundamental differences between them and the Pharisees. They received the Pentateuch as of Divine authority; it seems certain also that they regarded the other Scriptures of the Old Testament as sacred books, though this has been denied by Origen, Epiphanius, Jerome, and others after them. But they held the Pentateuch to be of paramount importance, far more sacred than other books of Holy Scripture; and they could not find there the doctrine of a resurrection. The Lord accuses them of ignorance; they knew the letter of Scripture, though probably not so well as their rivals the Pharisees; but they did not compare Scripture with Scripture; they had no spiritual insight; they did not penetrate into its inner meaning. Ignorance of the Scriptures is a fruitful cause of error. We all need to be diligent students of God's Holy Word; but we need more than study; we need constant earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law." (2) Ignoranee of the power of God. They had not felt the power of God in their own hearts, lifting them up to himself. This absence of spiritual experience had led them to disbelieve that marvellous exercise of Divine power which is involved in the doctrine of the resurrection. The Pharisees accepted the doctrine, but they held it in a gross and carnal form. This the Sadducees rejected; but they would not believe that, though flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet this earthly body, sown a natural body, shall by the power of God be raised a spiritual body, that this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, as the Pharisees taught. The resurrection-life is wholly different from this earthly life of ours. The resurrection-body has not the animal nature of this natural body. Love will continue, purified and deepened; husband and wife, once joined together by God, cannot be put asunder. But the bond of love will be elevated, refined, spiritualized. For they which are accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead can die no more. Marriage, in its earthly aspect, is no longer necessary. The redeemed are as the angels of God in heaven; "equal to the angels" (Luke xx. 36)—equal to them in purity and holiness and love; equal to them in joy and blessedness; equal to them in all spiritual endowments, in beauty and glory and strength; capable of serving God as the blessed angels serve him, of loving God as the blessed angels love him, of contemplating with adoring gaze his infinite perfections, his wisdom, love, power, holiness, as the blessed angels see him now; needing rest no longer, but ever fresh and glad and unwearied in the ineffable fruition of the beatific vision; where "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." 2. *To their doctrine.* The Lord turns to the fundamental error of the Sadducees. These men had come to him (according to the reading of several ancient manuscripts) asserting that error, saying that there is no resurrection. The Lord refers them to the books of Moses. "Have ye not read?" he said, in the form of words which he used so often. We mark how he insists upon the duty of searching the Scriptures, how he urges it again and again. He quotes the Book of Exodus. There are more distinct assertions of the great truth of the resurrection in other books of the Old Testament, but the Sadducees regarded the Pentateuch as of supreme authority, and it seems that their rejection of the doctrine was mainly based on the supposed silence of Moses. Therefore the Lord refers them to the Law, which they set above the other Scriptures. He insists upon the revelation made to Moses when the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The Lord draws out the deep meaning of the sacred words. That relation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob implies their continued existence. For "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." He is the Eternal, the I AM, the Self-existent One, absolute and unconditioned in his everlasting, infinite Being. He is the Life; he giveth life; he breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. That gift of life, the gift which he gave to that man whom he created in his own image, after his own likeness, is not a mere temporary gift, not the gift of a few short years, to be spent, perhaps, in trouble

and sorrow. Such a view of God's great gift of life is disparaging to the Almighty, the all-loving Giver. Surely more than this is contained in the relation in which he stands to his people; more than this is implied in the simple words in which that relation is expressed: "their God." Indeed, he himself tells us so in his Holy Word: "God is not ashamed to be called their God: *for* he hath prepared for them a city." He is the God of Abraham. Then Abraham is not dead. Abraham confessed that he was a pilgrim and stranger upon earth; he desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one; he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. "Abraham is dead, and the prophets," the Jews said to our Lord. But his life is hidden with God; "all live unto him." God knows, sees, comprehends, in his Divine omniscience, the separate life of each individual soul, that from the time of the creation until now has passed into the assemblage of the countless millions in the spirit-world. They do not sleep idly; they live. He knows them every one. The thought is to us overwhelming in its vastness, in the infinite complexity of the problems which it suggests. But with God all things are possible. The Sadducees greatly erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. Let us ask him to teach us by the grace of his Holy Spirit the deep meaning of his Holy Word; and let us believe in his almighty power, and walk before him in reverence and godly fear.

LESSONS. 1. Guard against the cold indifference of the Sadducees; pray for faith and love and zeal. 2. Search the Scriptures; pray for grace to understand them. 3. Think much of the blessed resurrection. Oh that we may attain unto the resurrection of the just!

Vers. 34—46.—*The Pharisees.* I. THE QUESTION OF THE LAWYER. 1. *The gathering of the Pharisees.* The multitude were astonished at the wisdom, the deep and holy teaching, of the blessed Lord. He had answered the pretended difficulties of the Sadducees, and had proved the great doctrine of the resurrection from the very books which they prized most highly. The Pharisees heard that he had put their adversaries to silence. They came together. Their feelings, doubtless, were various: many of them were angry and troubled at the Lord's success and popularity; some were vexed at his superiority in theological argument,—he had done what they could not do; some few had better motives. 2. *The lawyer.* He had heard the Lord reasoning with the Sadducees; like the scribes mentioned by St. Luke (xx. 39), he perceived that he had answered them well, that he knew far better than himself the meaning of that Law of Moses which the scribes and lawyers professed to understand and to teach. He asked him a question, tempting him. We must not take it for granted that the intention was evil. The word may mean no more than "trying" him, as "God did tempt Abraham," trying his faith; as the Queen of Sheba came to "prove Solomon with hard questions." We know from St. Mark's narrative that the lawyer or scribe belonged to the better class of Pharisees. He recognized the wisdom of our Lord, and felt the truth and holiness of his words. "Which is the great commandment in the Law?" he said; or, as the words may perhaps be rendered, "What sort of commandment is great?" He may have been thinking of the Pharisaic distinction of commandments into great and small, heavy and light. 3. *The Lord's answer.* (1) The great commandment. The Lord does not lay down mechanical rules; he does not compare the commandments with one another, and estimate their comparative importance. He states at once a great principle, "Thou shalt love." Selfishness is the bane and curse of our nature. Love is the refining, elevating power. The highest form of love must have the highest object, and that is God himself. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." The Jews owned the importance of this commandment; they wore it in their phylacteries; the Lord bids us carry it in our hearts. Men may say that the affections are not directly under our own control like individual actions; we cannot hope or fear, hate or love, at the bidding of another. Love is essentially spontaneous; it cannot be forced; forced love is no true love; it is not love at all. But God bids us love him; he would not mock us with an impossible commandment. He helps us to obey it by his Word, by his grace. Love produces love. God reveals to us his own great love in the life and death of Jesus Christ our Lord. Love implies personal knowledge. God "shineth into his people's hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The love of God is the first of all the command-

ments. We must not be contented with our spiritual state unless we are sincerely and earnestly striving to obey it. The measure of that love is the measure of the whole heart and soul and mind: the heart, the centre of our being; the soul, the seat of the affections and desires; the mind, the home of thought and reason. The love of God must dwell in all these parts of our complex nature, filling the whole man with its gracious sanctifying influence; we must try to love him with the whole strength of all our highest faculties. Such love, the first duty of the Christian, is also the source of his sweetest, holiest joy. There is no earthly joy like that which flows from the love of those dearest to us; and as the love of God is of all forms of love beyond comparison the highest, so the joy which streams from that love is of all joys unutterably the deepest and the most blessed. It is the foretaste of heaven, for the joy of heaven is to love God perfectly, and to know and feel the great love of God. St. Peter says that those who love him now "rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And if that be true of those who now see him not save by faith, what must be the entrancing gladness of those who see him face to face, as he is, in his kingdom? (2) The second commandment. There is a second, the Lord said, like unto the first: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Like the first, it prescribes a pure and unselfish love. And it issues from the first, for Christian love is not mere human good nature; it is a grace—it is the love of those whom God loves, because he loves them. The two commandments are like one another. Both say, "Thou shalt love;" the word "love" in both is the same; not φιλεῖν, which expresses feeling, affection, passion; but ἀγαπᾶν, which is the love of reverence, respect. We are bidden to honour all men; to respect their rights, their feelings; to reverence in all men, however humble and ignorant, the image of God; to remember that all are precious in the sight of Christ, ransomed with his life, redeemed with his precious blood. And that love, that respect, should be like the feelings with which we regard ourselves—true, real, sincere. As we care for ourselves, for our own comfort and happiness; so, if we are Christ's true disciples, we must care for the comfort and happiness of others. Our love for others must be like the love with which we regard ourselves—like it in reality, in strength. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law;" for the great principle, "Thou shalt love," covers the whole sphere of human action and duties; and, if once accepted and received into the heart, will regulate all the details of life, and guide the Christian aright in all his relations to others, at all times, under all circumstances. The commandments of God, whether expressed in the Law or the prophets, are not so many scattered, unconnected rules; they run up into one great principle; they are all developed from the one law of love.

II. THE COUNTER-QUESTIONS OF THE LORD. 1. *The first question.* The Pharisees were still gathered together; most of them were filled with jealousy and hatred. All so understood the great truth of the unity of the Godhead as to suppose it impossible to regard the expected Messiah as other than merely human. Hence the Saviour's question, "What think ye concerning the Christ [the Messiah]? whose Son is he?" They thought the answer easy. They knew that the Scripture had said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David; they had said so before (John vii. 42), and now they answered at once, "The Son of David." 2. *The second question.* Jesus quoted the hundred and tenth psalm—a psalm regarded by the rabbis as Messianic, "The Lord said unto my Lord [Jehovah said unto Adoni], Sit thou at my right hand." How could David speak of the Christ as his Lord? How could the Son of David be the Lord of David? David spoke in the Spirit, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. How did they, the teachers of Israel, understand those sacred words? They could not answer him. They did not deny the Messianic character of the psalm, as, alas! some do without good reason now. They believed that the psalm was David's, and that he was speaking of the Christ; but they did not know, as we know, that Christ "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;" that he was "God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world." We can answer the Lord's question readily; we know the Christian faith. The Pharisees could not answer him a word; and none from that time durst ask him any more questions.

LESSONS. 1. "The great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Keep that commandment, and you are safe; neglect it, and no exactness of external obedience will atone for that neglect. 2. The second commandment is like it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is the rule which must guide the Christian in his relations to others. 3. "What think ye of Christ?" He is the Son of God; he became for our sake also the Son of man. He is our God, our Saviour, our Example, our Life, our All in all.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The marriage feast.* The opening of this parable reminds us of the feast of wisdom in the Book of Proverbs (ix. 1—5). But there is an advance beyond the Old Testament ideas. Now the interest is no longer centred in the abstraction "wisdom," but the king and his son, representing God and Jesus Christ, make the feast one of supreme importance. So much the greater, then, must be the folly of those who decline to attend.

I. THE ROYAL PREPARATIONS. Much must be done to provide so great and sumptuous a feast as shall be fit for the wedding of a king's son. But all these elaborate preparations have been completed. Much was needed to make ready the gospel and its privileges, the new Christian blessings, the festival of the marriage of the Lamb with his bride the Church. But God has made all ready; he has provided the Bread of life and all the bounties of the gospel. They have been produced at the greatest possible cost, and now they are spread out in readiness for the guests. We have not to manufacture our own highest blessings; God offers them freely to us. We have not to wait for them; they are all ready in this happy Christian era.

II. THE SHAMEFUL REFUSALS. Those first invited refuse to come. Their conduct is scandalous, and that for several reasons. 1. *The feast was important.* It was for the wedding of a king's son. The king was the host, and a king's invitation is a command. Yet the guests made light of it. They who reject the gospel reject the gift of God, and insult him. 2. *The guests had previously consented to come.* This is plainly implied, because the message sent to them is merely a reminder that all is now ready. So was it with the Jews. So is it with those who once showed interest in Christ and have since grown cold. 3. *There was no valid excuse for refusal.* The men went their ways, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. There is no good excuse for the rejection of the gospel of Christ. Too often the most commonplace worldly interests are preferred to it. 4. *The messengers were cruelly maltreated.* A certain irritation arising from a consciousness of being in the wrong makes people angry with those who would lead them into the right way.

III. THE GUESTS FROM THE HIGHWAYS. The king must have his feast stocked with guests, if only with tramps and beggars. This suggests to us a desire on the part of God to find those on whom he can bestow his kindness. It is as though he were possessed with social sympathies and could not endure to be alone in his joy. Thus we see the best of all reasons for accepting his grace. There can be no doubt that he will welcome all who come, because he hungers for souls. Observe further: 1. *The rejection of Christ by the Jews led to the opening of the kingdom to the Gentiles.* This would have happened in any case, but the conduct of the Jews expedited and facilitated the process (*e.g.* see Acts xiii. 46). 2. *It is not man's desert, but God's loving-kindness, that invites to the gospel feast.*

IV. THE WEDDING GARMENT. The dramatic incident with which the parable closes gives us a shock of surprise. Here is an additional, most important lesson. All kinds of people are invited, and some are in a very unfit state to appear at the wedding feast. But the king provides a seemly garment, that the dingy dress of everyday life may not mar the beauty of the festival. God invites all sorts and conditions of men to the feast of the gospel, and even the very lowest may come at once. But God provides them a new character. If a man will not take this, if he seeks the privileges of the gospel, but will not submit to its changing influence on his character, he must be cast forth. He can come just as he is; but he must not remain just as he is, especially as God provides for him a better way of life.—W. F. A.

Vers. 15—22.—*Tribute to Cæsar.* It is easy to see the trap that the Pharisees induced the Herodians to set for our Lord. If he refused to sanction the paying of tribute to Cæsar, he could be accused of sedition against the Roman government; if he consented to sanction it, he could be held up to the Jews as unpatriotic, and therefore not fit to be thought of as the Messiah. His skilful answer set the question in its true light, and also lifted it into a higher region, and added what his tormentors could not refute, although they were far from being prepared to carry out all that the words of Christ involved.

I. THE DUTY TO CÆSAR IS NOT TO BE DENIED. The words and actions of Christ implied an affirmative answer to the question of the Herodians. But they went further, justifying his reply by deducing it from their conduct. The coinage of Cæsar was accepted by the Jews. The image of the gloomy Tiberias was on the *denarii* that circulated in their metropolitan markets. This fact shows that the Jews were submitting to the Roman yoke. Then they must act accordingly. 1. *We owe duties to the civil government.* Religion, which makes us citizens of heaven, does not allow us to renounce our citizenship on earth. It is a duty for Christian men to take part in politics. To refuse to do so is to hand over public affairs to those who are not guided by Christian principles, *i.e.* to degrade the state. Those good people who are too holy to touch politics are not above profiting by the good laws and just government that other men have laboured to bring about. Under a tyranny the authorities claim tribute; in a free country the people claim self-sacrificing service. 2. *Jesus Christ did not come to produce a political revolution.* The fanatics expected this of the Messiah; the zealots tried to effect it; but Jesus always behaved as a law-abiding citizen. We cannot say that he would never sanction revolution, or the attempt of brave people to throw off the yoke of a cruel tyranny. There was no opportunity to do this in the days of Christ. Nor did our Lord come as a political agitator. He came to regenerate the state as well as the individual, but he wrought at this task from within and spiritually, by inspiring the principles on which good government must be carried on.

II. THE DUTY TO GOD IS NOT TO BE NEGLECTED. This was ignored by the Herodians in their "wickedness" (ver. 18). 1. *God has claims upon us.* If Cæsar has his due, so—nay, much more—has God. His claim, like Cæsar's, is one of rule and authority. He expects obedience. While Cæsar also expects tribute, God too claims tribute—tribute he seeks from men; and this is nothing less than their hearts. What is due to God is the surrender of ourselves and all we have. 2. *There is no collision between the secular and the religious.* We can render Cæsar's due while we are also rendering God's, and God's while we are rendering Cæsar's. Politics do not exclude religion, any more than religion can dispense with politics. Each subject has its own function. Yet they are not co-ordinate, and if there were a conflict, the duty to God must prevail, as in the case of the Christian martyrs. But then Cæsar required of the martyrs what was not his due. 3. *Politics must not be substituted for religion.* The best service rendered to Cæsar will not free a man from his duty to serve God. There is a fascination in public life that threatens to absorb a man's total energy. This is a temptation that must be resisted. The great name of Cæsar dominated the old world; other exacting influences go far to rule our own age. We need to be on our guard lest they crowd out the thought of God.—W. F. A.

Ver. 32.—*The God of the living.* According to his wonderful custom, Jesus turns the conversation from a frivolous, unworthy course to a subject of loftiest import. The unseemly Sadducean jest (vers. 23—28) is rebuked, and a great thought is suggested in its stead. Our Lord utterly repudiates the notion that the resurrection will be a return to such a life as we now see on earth. But that there is a future life he distinctly teaches, and here he gives us a reason for expecting it. Let us examine this.

I. THE NAME OF GOD IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PATRIARCHS. Thus we have a familiar Divine title, for God is known by his revelation to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. We worship the same God whom our fathers worshipped. All that they discovered of God remains to us as an inherited possession of knowledge. Thus we have not to feel after an unknown God if haply we may find him. History has revealed God. Not the patriarchs alone, but our own Christian ancestors have handed down to us an experience of God. They knew and loved him, and he is presented to us for

love and faith as the God of our fathers. Still, it may be said, while this helps us in relation to God, it does not reveal anything concerning the present existence of the blessed dead. We think of God as he *was* in relation to those departed men; thus we come to a certain knowledge of God; but this rests entirely in the past. What does it tell us concerning the men whose histories are the mirrors in which it is reflected to us? We must proceed to a further inquiry.

II. GOD IS ESSENTIALLY IMMUTABLE. What he was to the patriarchs that he is to us now. This was partially confirmed—confirmed as far as the time would allow, in the days of the patriarchs. What Abraham learnt of God, Isaac found to be true, and the same was confirmed in the experience of Jacob. The three generations of the patriarchs knew one and the same God, and they all found him to be changeless.

III. THE ETERNITY OF GOD'S LOVE LEADS US TO BELIEVE IN THE CONTINUED LIFE OF HIS CHILDREN. If God is immutable, his love must be eternal. Loving once, he loves for ever. It is not enough for him to transfer his affection to successive generations. It is of the nature of love to dwell without cessation on the objects beloved. But if God loves his children on earth, he will not cease to love them when they die; and if he loves them still, he will desire to see them, and will therefore desire their continued being. Thus the love of God is a great reason for believing that he will not suffer his children to perish.

IV. THE ETERNAL LIFE OF GOD IS AN ASSURANCE OF THE ETERNAL LIFE OF HIS CHILDREN. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is more than a name, and more than a passive Object of worship, for he is the Author and Sustainer of the lives of the patriarchs. He is a living God; his presence brings life; to be in him is to be in the very centre of the best life. Such a God does not content himself with moving among the tombs of the dead past. His own outflowing vitality touches and quickens all with whom he comes into contact. If he in any way associates himself with the men of a far-distant antiquity, he will be their Preserver. Their contact with the ever-living God gives them the life eternal.—W. F. A.

Vers. 34—40.—*The two commandments.* Originality of mind may be as much apparent in a wise selection from what is old as in the creation of what is new. Some of the most striking teaching of our Lord is of this character. Jesus Christ did not repudiate the Old Testament, nor did he despise its truths because his own went further, but he pointed out what was most important in the ancient revelation, and rescued this from the oblivion into which it had fallen with many people in their scrupulous attention to the petty details of external observances. Thus he met the tempting question of the Pharisees by weighty words from their own Law, the very solution of which was a revelation and a rebuke of Pharisaic formalism.

I. CHRIST CALLS US BACK TO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES. The error of the rabbis lay in a tendency to confuse the minds of their scholars and to obscure the essential truths of revelation by directing too much attention to minute questions of casuistry. A similar mistake was made by the Schoolmen in the Middle Ages, although these masters of hair-splitting delighted in the discussion of less practical subjects. We are always in danger of missing the essential truths of our faith in the consideration of distracting details. But Christianity is a religion of principles. This is most characteristic of the New Testament. 1. *These principles are fundamental.* 2. *They admit of wide and varied application.* 3. *They must be obeyed internally*—in thought and heart.

II. THE ROOT-PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IS LOVE. This was found in the old Law; it belonged to Judaism, because it is always the source of the best life. But it is most prominent and powerful in Christianity. The gospel reveals the love of God, and it instils a spirit of love in man. So essential is this that no one can be accounted a Christian who is hard-hearted and utterly selfish, however saintly he may be in other respects. Love is shown in two principal relations. 1. *It seeks the welfare of those who are loved*—the honour of God and the good of fellow-men. 2. *It delights in fellowship with those who are loved.* Christian love draws us nearer to God and nearer to one another.

III. GOD IS THE FIRST OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN LOVE. 1. *He deserves love.* (1) Because he is good and glorious in the beauty of holiness. There is no other object of affection so supremely worthy of our heart's devotion. (2) Because he first loved us. Love is

the child of love. Our love to God is a reflection of God's love to us; it is our response to his goodness and kindness. 2. *He claims love.* God is not indifferent to our attitude towards him. He cannot be if he loves us. In his own wonderful fatherly love he seeks the affection of his children. Therefore a cold morality, or a philanthropy that ignores God, is not sufficient.

IV. MAN IS THE SECOND OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN LOVE. In practice we cannot separate the second commandment from the first. St. John tells us that we cannot love God if we do not love our brother (1 John iv. 20). In loving what is good in man we love God. Therefore neither commandment can be taken without the other. If it were possible to seek God alone, that would not please him. He does not desire us to be so absorbed in heavenly contemplation as to forget earthly duties. The Christian ritual is the ministry of brotherly charity (Jas. i. 27).

To all this it may be objected that we cannot love on command. True. But (1) we can remove the selfish hindrances to the love of God and man. (2) We can direct our thoughts to those considerations out of which love springs. Thus we can cultivate the affections.—W. F. A.

Vers. 41—46.—*The Divine Christ.* The often-quoted question, "What think ye of Christ?" should be, "What think ye of *the* Christ?" Jesus was not asking the Pharisees for an opinion about himself, the speaker addressing them, as he had asked his disciples on a previous occasion (ch. xvi. 13). He was referring to the Jewish expectation of the Messiah, and without now pressing his own claim to be the Messiah, he was asking what idea the Pharisees had as to this great Hope of Israel. They had been questioning him; he now turns upon them with a penetrating inquiry.

I. THERE IS TESTIMONY TO THE CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. Jesus quotes ancient prophecy. It may be said that he would thus find an *argumentum ad hominem* when arguing with a Jew. But it is evident that our Lord appealed to the Old Testament as to an authority which he himself valued. Thus he gives his own authority to support the Divine message of the prophets, and he justifies us in searching these Scriptures for the testimony they bear concerning him (John v. 39). The value of the Old Testament in this respect is not that it shows how certain men were gifted with a miraculous foresight, by means of which they predicted the advent and life of Christ. This would be interesting chiefly as throwing light on the powers of the prophets, but it would not be of much practical use to us. We may see the Old Testament setting forth important truths about Christ. It foreshadows in a way to prepare the reader for understanding Christ. Thus it has its own gospel message.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT TESTIFIES TO THE DIVINE GLORY OF THE CHRIST. Jesus selects one striking instance of this specific testimony. Ps. cx. plainly represents the Messiah as greater than David, for, while written in the name of the king, it yet makes the founder of the Jewish dynasty address his descendant as "my Lord." This argument holds good, whether we believe the psalm to have been composed by the shepherd-king, or follow the recent criticism that rejects its Davidic authorship. For even in the latter case, it is plain that the inspired writer of the psalm taught that the Messiah was to be so much greater than his famous ancestor that it would be seemly for David to address him as "my Lord." This truth, then, was in the Old Testament. Yet those who most honoured their ancient Scriptures did not perceive it. We need the Spirit of Christ to help us to understand the prophecies of Christ.

III. OUR LORD GAVE THE HIGHEST INTERPRETATION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF THE CHRIST. This fact is important in itself, as a light on the prophecies. But it is much more weighty when we consider it in relation to Jesus himself. We know that he claimed to be the Messiah, although he did not make that claim public till the end of his life. Therefore his interpretation of prophecy must be applied to his thought about himself. He was calm, unselfish, unambitious, lowly in heart and life. Yet he argued for the very highest attributes of the Name which he knew to be his own. Was he not speaking out of the depth of his self-consciousness? If he used such words as are here before us, he could not have been satisfied with being regarded as only a man. In veiled language to the Jews, but in language that is open as the day to us, Jesus claims to be Divine, and his character, his life, and his work all agree with his unique claim.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—13.—*Excuses.* I. One of the commonest excuses which men make to themselves for not accepting God's salvation is THE DESIRE TO MAKE SOME KIND OF PREPARATION FOR COMING TO CHRIST. "How can I come, who have no conviction of sin, no deep repentance, no earnestness?" But uniformly in God's Word salvation is offered to men as they are. "*Now*" is God's accepted time. And the reason is obvious. The salvation offered in Christ is the one thing that can make us any better. We have no hope of getting better feelings, more spiritual desires, a deep and genuine repentance, until we accept Christ. He is exalted to give repentance, and you cannot have it without him. This hard impenitent heart, this unconcern about God, is precisely what identifies you as the person for whom salvation is urgently needed and to whom it is offered. "I came not to call the righteous," etc. God's command is on you now, and bids you accept Christ. No preparation is required. Sin is the preparation for salvation. Christ does not say, "Come with sufficient earnestness, and I will save you," but "Come, and I will give you all you need."

II. But possibly you say, "I CAN'T REPENT IN MY OWN STRENGTH; I CAN'T BELIEVE IN MY OWN STRENGTH; I AM WAITING FOR THE SPIRIT, WITHOUT WHOSE AID I CANNOT COME TO CHRIST." Certainly this is true; but are you more ready for good than the Spirit is? Is it not rather true that he has been waiting for you, working in you? He who gives the command to come gives also the strength to obey it. The man with the withered hand might with truth have said, "I cannot," when bidden to stretch out his hand; but he believed and obeyed. "The Father's commandment is life everlasting." The Father is willing you should be saved, the Son is willing, the Spirit is willing. May not Christ be justified in saying to you, as he did to others, "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life"?

III. Another common excuse is that PROFESSING CHRISTIANS ARE NO BETTER THAN MANY WHO MAKE NO PROFESSION. But the presence of what is counterfeit in religion or in anything else should only make us careful that we receive the real thing and not the spurious. No man refuses his week's wage because his fellow-workman has received a bad shilling. It matters not to you what other men have made of religion; each man must give account of *himself* to God. And those persons of whom you speak so bitterly are not more bound to set you an example than you are to set them. The fact that you make no profession saves you indeed from the faults of professing Christians, but condemns you with a special guilt, "He that believeth not is condemned already," etc. The sins of others cannot save you from this great condemnation.

IV. A man sometimes pleads that RELIGION IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER, AND THAT HE HAS NOT TIME TO DETERMINE WHAT ATTITUDE HE SHOULD TAKE UP WITH REGARD TO IT. If this is true, it ought not to be so. Time has no right to cheat a man out of eternity. If there be any truth in what Christ says, you are spending your strength for naught and in vain. Whatever you are giving yourself to, God's judgment about man's work remains, "*This* is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Until this be done, all your activity is like the hard running of a messenger who has left his message behind him; the harder he runs the further back he has to go before he can be of any use. What is the use of all your toil if you are not at one with God, if you are not obeying his commands?

V. There are those who sincerely grieve that THESE DIFFICULTIES STAND IN THEIR WAY, BUT YET THERE THEY ARE, AND WHAT CAN THEY SAY? But he who determines to have all his difficulties solved before he takes the practical step of choosing Christ as *his* Saviour, inverts the right order of procedure, inverts God's order; for his law is, "If any man will *do* the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Do you see your way to attain holiness without the Spirit and the other aids God offers? or, if you do not, how do you propose to justify yourself in living on without asking God for these aids?

It may be that for some such reasons as these you may be declining to make a profession which you ought to make. But is there really any need to bring further light or even persuasion to bear on you? Are you not already convinced that the thing for you now is distinctly to close with Christ as your Lord and Saviour? There is always *danger* in delay; you cannot tell what influences you may shortly come under which will quite turn your mind away from serious and earnest dealing with Christ.

But apart from the danger, your first question ought to be in this as in all other matters, "Is it my *duty* to delay? What ought I now to do?"—D.

Vers. 15—33.—*Question of the Sadducees: "Whose shall she be?"* The attempt of the Pharisees to ensnare our Lord in his talk was the result of a meeting called for the purpose of considering how they might silence a critic who was making himself too formidable. They do not see how he can answer their question without laying himself open to the accusation and hostility of one party or other in the state. But our Lord is neither blinded by their false flattery nor staggered by their ensnaring question. Having no denarius of his own, he asks them to produce one. There in their own hands is the image of Cæsar, testifying that they themselves are Cæsar's subjects. But he is not contented with making them feel that they have answered their own question. He adds a single clause which takes them far out of the region of their own quibbling question, "and unto God the things that are God's." This implies that there is nothing inconsistent in the claims of these two different sovereigns. The Sadducees, if they bore less malice against our Lord, were even more frivolous. The difficulty they raised had no reality in it, because a woman who was merely handed over, under the Levitical law, to her deceased husband's brother was not in the same sense his wife as she had been the wife of her first husband. It is not a bad instance of the way in which men unconsciously become frivolous and ridiculous by harping on one objection, and *that* an objection which by no means penetrates to the heart of the subject. The fact that such a question could be put shows that a belief in the resurrection was so common among the Jews that disbelief in it had become the badge or watchword of a party—a state of matters which implies that in the Old Testament the material for settling the question of a future state was not so copious and so decisive as to make disbelief impossible. And the circumstance that our Lord could find in the whole Bible no text more directly bearing on the subject than the one he cites is proof that the idea of immortality was not a common one in Old Testament times. The unquestioned dimness of Old Testament revelation on this point has been explained in many ways. But the proper explanation is certainly to be found in the peculiar character of the Divine revelation which the Bible records. If the revelation were a series of oracles, of abstract utterances, it would be hard to understand why the plain discovery of a future life should have been withheld; but the entire revelation is personal and historical. The foundation of all religion, the existence of God, *e.g.*, is never given in the Old Testament Scriptures as an abstract proposition. It is taken for granted. It is no otherwise with the light which revelation sheds on man's future life. It has come, not in abstract propositions, not in direct oracular utterances from God, but through the longings of his people for continued life in him, and through the slow-growing conviction that God's love is love for evermore. The commonest and probably the most reliable of all natural arguments for immortality is that which is based on the injustice and suffering of various kinds which men experience in this present world. In view of this, men have been compelled to think of a future state in which things shall be righted and justice done and compensation made. But this is precisely the view of matters which elicited the clearest utterances regarding immortality which are to be found in the Old Testament (see Ps. lxxiii. and Job xix.). But the argument used by our Lord is of a finer and subtler kind. From the fact of God's calling himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he argues that these men still lived. It would seem a dishonour to God to remember that he had connected himself with Abraham, if he could not keep Abraham alive. The argument involves the idea that to be the God of any one implies a living relationship. One's God is he who gives him life and blessing, and to speak of being the God of a mummy or of a handful of dust is out of the question. We know that God is love. He loves very specially those to whom he specially reveals himself—those whom he calls his children; but as these persons are without ceasing passing out of this life, it follows that, if they pass out of existence altogether, God must be subjected to a continual sorrow. Such perishing friendships are unworthy of God's eternal nature. The answer of our Lord has no very positive teaching regarding our relation to one another hereafter. It certainly implies no cessation of love between those who have here found much of their happiness in one another. No rational idea of the future can be constructed as

all without including the satisfaction of our best affections and the exercise of our highest powers. No satisfactory idea of salvation can be cherished which does not include the prospect of a time when we can frame a life for ourselves according to our late acquired wisdom and our fruitless repentance here. But this emphatic assertion of immortality by our Lord is made in connection with the resurrection of the body. We are conscious that our body is one thing and we ourselves another. Still, the soul has received a great part of its character from the body it has worn, so that, even after separation from the body, the soul will retain the character the body has impressed upon it, and this again must determine the character of the new body which the soul is to receive. It is, however, of very little moment to ascertain what kind of life is in reserve beyond the grave, if we are not ourselves sure we shall attain it. Christ puts this in our power. His Spirit, received by us now as a Spirit of holiness, will quicken our mortal bodies, and will raise us to be with him in the life to come.—D.

Vers. 1—14.—*The invitations of the gospel.* The priests and elders having left in a rage (see Mark xii. 12), Jesus continued his discourse, addressing the people. This parable brings before us the invitation of the gospel, first to the Jew, and then also to the Gentile. Consider—

I. THE INVITATION SPECIAL TO THE JEW. 1. *The blessings of the gospel are presented under the similitude of a marriage feast.* (1) Under this similitude also the blessings of the everlasting covenant are presented in the prophets (see Cant. v. 1; Isa. lxii. 5). Marriage is the highest emblem of that union which constitutes heaven. There goodness and truth in perfection are united. Heaven must be in a man before a man can be in heaven. (2) The feast is royal. It is made by the King, viz. of the heavens; for the kingdom of the heavens is the subject of the parable. If a royal banquet in this world is the occasion of a nation's joy, the banquet of the King of heaven is a joy to the great universe. (3) It is the marriage feast for the King's Son. Christ is the Bridegroom. The Church is the bride. The season of the banquet is the gospel day, commencing upon this earth but ending in the heavens (see ch. ix. 15; 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 32; Rev. xix. 7—9). 2. *Prophets and apostles are the King's messengers.* (1) They are called his "bondservants." Bondservice to God is the noblest freedom. The more absolute this service, the more glorious the freedom. (2) They came to those who were bidden. The Jews were the people elected from among the nations to be the people of the covenant, and every way specially the favoured of the Lord. To them also the gospel came in the first instance. (3) The old prophets made the gospel law to emanate from Jerusalem (see Isa. ii. 3; Jer. xxxi. 31—34). The message of John Baptist and of the seventy disciples was to them that "the kingdom of the heavens was at hand." The commission to the apostles after the Day of Pentecost was, "Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and *all things are ready.*" (4) They came to the bidden with entreaty. They urged the will of God, the need of man, the richness of the bounty, the quality of the guests, the blessedness inconceivable to follow. 3. *But the favoured people proved themselves unworthy.* (1) For they "made light" of the invitation. "Considerations which should have the mightiest power upon the spirits of men may still signify less and less, when those to whom they come continue long under the gospel and the gospel is hidden to them. 'If you cannot speak to me of something greater than heaven and hell, eternal blessedness and eternal misery, you move not me; for these things I have heard of and made light of long ago'" (Howe). The soft, idle, voluptuous people, who think only of quietly enjoying life, conveniences, riches, private pleasures, and public diversions, make light of the gospel invitation. (2) "They went their ways, one to his own farm," equivalent to "immovable goods," viz. deluded by a false security; "another to his merchandise," equivalent to "movable goods," viz. lured by desire of gain. "His farm," equivalent to "what he has;" "his merchandise," equivalent to "what he desires to have." How many perish by misusing lawful things! (3) "And the rest laid hold on his servants, and entreated them shamefully, and killed them." These are the openly unjust and violent, the outrageously wicked, sinners by profession. (4) Note: Worthiness consists in accepting the gospel invitation; unworthiness, in refusing it (see Acts xiii. 46). He only is worthy to be a disciple who is willing to lift the cross (see ch. x. 37, 38). 4. *They are*

punished accordingly. (1) The murderers were destroyed. The Romans were God's armies sent in his wrath to destroy them. The Assyrian armies were the rod of his anger against Ephraim (see Isa. x. 5). The Medes and Persians were the armies of God's wrath against Babylon (see Isa. xiii. 4, 5). The angels of famine, pestilence, and war are his armies which he sent against Israel by the Romans (cf. 1 Kings xxii. 19). (2) Their city was burnt. What an anticipation of the destruction of Jerusalem is here (cf. Ezek. xvi. 41; Luke xiii. 33, 34)!

II. THE INVITATION GENERAL TO THE WORLD. 1. *The messengers are the same.* (1) The prophets anticipated the calling of the Gentiles (cf. Deut. xxxii. 21; Rom. x. 19; Isa. lxv. 1; Rom. x. 20; Hos. ii. 23; Rom. ix. 26). (2) The apostles, accordingly, when the Jews refused their invitation, carried the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Rom. xi. 11, 12; Eph. iii. 8). These were the people found by the King's messengers in the "partings of the highways" (ver. 9). (3) Divine benevolence is even enlarged by human perversity. "Where sin abounded grace doth superabound." 2. *But they had better-success.* (1) All sorts, "bad and good," were invited, and all sorts came in. As an invitation to a king's banquet would astonish a wayfarer, so did the invitation of the gospel come as a surprise to the Gentiles (see Acts xvii. 19, 20; Rom. x. 20). (2) The visible Church is a mixture of hypocrites and unbelievers in amongst the genuine saints. It is the *floor* where the bad and good wheats are mingled (ch. iii. 12). It is the *field* where the bastard wheat and true grain grow together (ch. xiii. 26, 27). The *net* which collects bad fish and good (ch. xiii. 48). The *house* in which the wise and foolish are found (ch. xxv. 1). The *fold* in which are the sheep and the goats (ch. xxv. 33). (3) For this imperfect state of things there is no present help. The minister's commission is to call all. The King alone can infallibly distinguish between the bad and the good. 3. *A royal inspection will determine the true.* (1) The King will behold the guests. This survey will take place at the last judgment. God takes particular notice of those who profess his religion (see Cant. vii. 12; Rev. ii. 1, 2). Those who are worthy he will then approve and welcome. (2) He will see who has not on the festal garment. The garment which distinguishes the good is worn upon the heart. It is therefore invisible to the minister, but visible to the King. As the festal robe constituted meetness for the feast, so is the garment here spoken of the complete meetness for heaven. The "fine linen is the righteousness of the saints," so imputed and imparted; for unless imparted as well as imputed the wearers could not be "saints" or holy ones. (3) He will search the reasons: "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" etc. (ver. 12). Why art thou willing to receive the King's bounty, but not to comply with the King's conditions? Garments are provided. Not to wear one is a mark of contempt towards the King. The filthy rags of self-righteousness cannot be tolerated in heaven. (4) The most presumptuous will be speechless in the presence of the King. Into speechlessness must all objections to the gospel be ultimately resolved. 4. *Fearful will be the punishment of the wicked.* (1) "Bind him hand and foot." Restraint will be laid upon the works and ways of sinners in perdition. Satan also will be bound with a great chain in the bottomless pit. It is punishment to the wicked to be restrained from doing mischief. (2) "Cast him out into the outer darkness." From the brilliantly lighted banqueting-hall. What a contrast from the brightness of heaven's glory to the darkness of hell's misery! Joy and pride converted into sorrow and shame. (3) "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Useless regrets; remorse; despair. (4) "Many are called, but few chosen." Many hear; few believe. Many are in the visible Churches, few of them at the same time in the invisible Church. You are among the many called: are you also among the few chosen? Exclusion is for neglect.—J. A. M.

Vers. 15—22.—*The ethics of the tribute.* The Pharisees had hitherto questioned our Lord on points of ecclesiastical ethics, and were invariably worsted. Now they face round and assail him with the weapon of political ethics. "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" Behold in the scene before us—

I. THE WISDOM OF THE SERPENT IN ITS VENOM. 1. *It is seen in the question proposed.* (1) The issue is not whether it was lawful for an individual Jew to pay the Roman tax. That question was already practically settled. It was a maxim common among all people, and acknowledged among the Jews, that the prince who causes his

image and titles to be stamped on the current coin is by those who use it acknowledged as the ruler. (2) The issue was whether by a joint effort of the nation it was not their duty to God to throw off the Roman yoke. It involved many considerations, such as: (*a*) The origin of the Roman power. (*b*) The manner in which that power had been used. (*c*) The degree of injustice which must be sustained before a nation can legally throw off an allegiance to which it has submitted. (*d*) The definition of the theocracy in the modified form in which it then existed. (*e*) Besides these, many minor considerations. (3) In proposing a question so complicated and intricate they hoped to entangle him in his talk. 2. *In the confederation proposing it.* (1) Behold the Pharisees in league with the Herodians. These persons were political enemies. The Pharisees were seditious demagogues. The Herodians, if not Sadducees, as Herod was, were partisans of Herod, who owed his elevation to the Romans. But they find a common cause against Jesus; nor was this the first time (see Mark iii. 6). "Samson's foxes looked several ways, but met in one firebrand" (Henry). (2) See them in consultation. So were the Scriptures verified (cf. Ps. ii. 2; lxxxiii. 3—8; Jer. xviii. 18; xx. 10). Contrivance and deliberation intensify the malignity of sin (see Micah ii. 1). Wicked wit makes wicked will. (3) Observe how the Pharisees put forth "their disciples." Note: The wicked have disciples. Disciples would look more like learners, less like tempters. (4) The masters would be present to watch the issue and to seize the opportunity to enclose the Victim in the serpent's folds. 3. *In the flattery in which it is conveyed.* (1) In the praise they give to Christ they speak the truth. He was indeed a Teacher true, and a true Teacher of the way of God. He was himself the Truth and the Way. He also was above all influence of injustice. He had no improper fear of Herod or of Pilate. He evermore reproved with equity (see Isa. xi. 4). (2) But they use the truth to serve a bloody purpose. The matter may be true and the intention treacherous. They sought to "ensnare him," viz. to his destruction, as a bird in a net (cf. Mark xii. 12, 13; Luke xx. 20). There are those who never do good but with the purpose of promoting evil. (3) Suspect the man that praises you to your face. "He who caresses thee more than he is wont has either deceived thee or is about to deceive thee" (Italian proverb). Praise upon the lip, malice in the heart. Joab kissed when he killed Amasa (2 Sam. xx. 9). Judas betrayed when he kissed Jesus (ch. xxvi. 49). 4. *In the presence in which it is urged.* (1) It had to be answered in presence of the people. They vainly boasted that they were Abraham's seed, and never were in bondage (see John viii. 33). They as vainly professed to have no king but God. If Jesus replied that it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, the people might be easily roused against him. (2) It had to be answered in presence of the Pharisees. They only wanted the pretext to stir up the people against him as the Enemy to the liberties of his country. (3) It had to be answered in presence of the Herodians. If Jesus took the side of the people, and said it was not lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, then the Herodians were ready to inflame Herod against him in the interests of the Romans. This very indictment was, two or three days later, laid against him (see Luke xxiii. 2). Behold—

II. THE WISDOM OF THE SERPENT IN THE DOVE. 1. *It is seen in his exposure of his assailants' hypocrisy.* (1) They could not hide their duplicity from his all-searching vision. By the exposure of their wickedness he proved them right when they called him true. (2) This exposure was as politic as it was severe, for it discredited them before the people. (3) Nothing could have mortified them more; for they sought the praise of men rather than the praise of God. He never gains who contends with Jesus. 2. *It is seen in his avoidance of their trap.* (1) He took the wise in their craftiness (see Luke xx. 23) when he made them recognize the image and superscription on the coin. With what consistency did the chief priests afterwards cry out, "We have no king but Cæsar" (John xix. 15)! (2) "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's." God is the Author of spiritual order, and, through this, of civil order also. Human sagacity sees one side of duty; Divine wisdom sees all sides at once. (3) Here was nothing that the enemy could take hold of. The answer glorified God, and Cæsar could not object to it. The Herodians and Pharisees were rebuked, but so obliquely that neither could take advantage of him. And the people were edified. 3. *It is seen in the assignment to Cæsar of his own.* (1) It is generally that which has upon it Cæsar's image and

superscription. By Christ kings reign. His religion is no enemy to civil government (see Rom. xiii. 1). Cæsar is to claim nothing but what is "Cæsar's." He is neither to claim, nor are we to render to him, what is "God's." (2) Cæsar may claim honour, viz. in return for the government protection afforded to life, property, and liberty. (3) Cæsar may claim obedience, viz. to the laws instituted for the restraint of evil-doers, and the maintenance of order and freedom. (4) Cæsar may also claim tribute, viz. to meet the expenses of the government in the exercise of its proper functions. 4. *It is seen in the assertion of the claims of God.* (1) Generally God also claims whatever has his image and superscription. The image of God stamped on the spirit of man denotes that all his faculties and powers belong to God, and should be used for his glory. (2) Eminently to God belongs our religion—our love, worship, and obedience. Cæsar has no right to meddle with this. Cæsar is only to be resisted when not to do so would be to resist God. (3) If Cæsar intrude into this domain, then the Christian must suffer rather than sin. (4) In questions of conflict between the claims of God and Cæsar, the Christian man has to be guided by a conscience enlightened by great principles. Hence Christ left the question open which was put to him, but enunciated the great principles by which every man may determine for himself.

III. THE VENOM OF THE SERPENT IN HIS FOLLY. 1. *And when they heard it they marvelled.* (1) They marvelled at his knowledge of their hearts. (2) They marvelled at the adroitness with which he avoided their arts. (3) They marvelled at the wisdom of his doctrine. (4) They marvelled at the incisiveness of his rebukes. 2. *But they left him, and went their way.* (1) Their admiration should have drawn them to him with repentance. (2) They showed no signs of repentance. Christ is marvellous to many to whom he is not precious. The lessons of wisdom are lost upon them. (3) "They went *their* way," not his. His way was heavenward. Their way was to perdition.—J. A. M.

Vers. 23—33.—*The resurrection of the dead.* When Jesus had disposed of the Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees approached him. They were the physicists—the materialists—of their time, who did not believe in angels or spirits, and accounted as a thing incredible the resurrection of the dead. They urged a case which they deemed conclusive against the latter, which is recorded here (vers. 23—28). We are chiefly concerned with our Lord's reply (vers. 29—32). Hence we learn—

I. THAT THE HUMAN SPIRIT HAS ITS TRUE LIFE IN UNION WITH GOD. 1. *Covenant relationship is expressed in the term "God of."* (1) Thus when Jehovah proclaims himself to be "the God of Abraham," the meaning is that he stands in covenant relationship to that patriarch (see Gen. xvii. 7, 8). So of Isaac and of Jacob; but he never speaks of himself as the God of Lot, of Ishmael, or of Esau. (2) By the Sinai covenant with the Hebrew nation he became the "God of Israel" (see Deut. xxix. 10—13). (3) Now, in the gospel covenant, he is "the God" of every true believer (cf. Jer. xxxi. 31—34; Heb. viii. 10). 2. *The covenant relationship implies purification from sin.* (1) The Hebrew word for "covenant" expresses the idea of purification. The plan of God's goodness and mercy is sometimes called his purification; the term is also applied to the sacrifices offered to God, and Christ himself is called the Covenant, or Purification Sacrifice, of his people. (2) The phrase, "make a covenant," is literally, "cut off a purifier," or purification sacrifice, in allusion to the death of the sacrifices. So Messiah was to be "cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa. liii. 8) (3) The sacrificial blood sprinkled is called the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant the effect of which was ceremonial purification (see Heb. ix. 19, 20). This of course typified the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ (see Heb. ix. 13—15). (4) The Shechinah passing with Abraham along the avenue between the divided pieces of the sacrifices, when God entered into covenant with that patriarch, set forth the consent of the sinner to be treated as the sacrifices were treated should he violate the Law of God, and the engagement of God to light up with his favour and friendship the way of obedience through the blood of Christ (cf. Gen. xv. 10, 17; Exod. xix. 18; Jer. xxxiv. 18—20). 3. *The life of the covenant is more than existence.* (1) The God of the pure is "the God of the living" (ver. 32). Luke adds, "For all live unto him" (Luke xx. 38), viz. all standing in true covenant relationship to him. The unbelieving Jews existed, but they did not "live" in Christ's sense, when he said, "Ye will not come unto me,

that ye might have life" (see John v. 39, 40). (2) All destitute of this covenant life of purity are dead—"dead in trespasses and sins," obnoxious to be treated as the sacrifices had been (cf. Eph. ii. 12; Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19). Those who despise the everlasting covenant are liable to the "much sorer punishment" of being cut up by the flames of hell.

II. THAT THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT SURVIVES THE DEATH OF THE BODY. 1. *God's covenant remains with his disembodied saints.* (1) Abraham was dead when God said to Isaac, "I *am* the God of Abraham thy father" (see Gen. xxvi. 24). Isaac also was dead when God said to Jacob, "I *am* the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac" (Gen. xxviii. 13). Jacob also was sleeping when God appeared to Moses, and said, "I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. iii. 6). This is the fact recognized in the argument of our Lord. (2) But if God was, hundreds of years after the natural death of the patriarchs, still in covenant relation with them, they must retain a conscious existence in the disembodied state. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him" (see Luke xx. 38). This living unto God is a condition of the happiest consciousness (cf. John iii. 36; vi. 48—53; xi. 26). 2. *The existence of the sinner is an abiding death.* (1) "God is not the God of the dead," viz. "in trespasses and sins," whether in this world or in the disembodied state. The antithesis of a life which is distinct from existence is obviously a death not involving the extinction of existence. If spiritual life survives the dissolution of the body, so may the spiritual death survive the dissolution of the body. (2) "God is not the God of the dead." This gives no more encouragement to the universalist than it does to the annihilationist. God is nowhere in his covenant pledged to the disembodied sinner. What a terrible thing to the spiritually dead is his indestructibility!

III. THAT GOD IS PLEDGED TO RAISE FROM THE DEAD THE BODIES OF HIS SAINTS. 1. *He is pledged to raise the Hebrew patriarchs.* (1) The argument of the text is intended to prove more than the conscious and happy existence of the spirit of the believer after death. This undoubtedly it does conclude, as we have seen; but it means more. (2) It is an argument also to prove the resurrection of the body (see ver. 31). And the reasoning to that conclusion was to the Sadducees unanswerable (see Luke xx. 40). (3) Its force lies in the matter of the covenant. It promised the patriarchs personal inheritance in Canaan (see Gen. xvii. 7, 8), which, in this mortal life, they never enjoyed (see Acts vii. 5). But God still abides by his covenant, as is evident from his words to Moses at the bush. How, then, can the promise be fulfilled, unless they be raised from the dead for the purpose? (4) In this sense the patriarchs themselves interpreted the promise. They knew they should die without inheriting (see Gen. xv. 13—16). How could they understand the land to be personally inherited by them as "an everlasting possession," unless in the great future? That future inheritance their faith firmly seized (see Heb. xi. 9—19). 2. *The promise extends to all believers.* (1) The natural seed of Abraham as such are not the children of the promise. Else it behoved the Arabs, Midianites, and Idumæans to have inherited. Only a portion of the seed of Jacob inherited the land in any sense. No one ever yet inherited the land according to the terms of the promise as "an everlasting possession." (2) The true Seed of Abraham is Christ (see Gal. iii. 16). He is the Depository of the promises. Yet even he never inherited the land of promise in person. But the "Scriptures cannot be broken." The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was a necessity; for he must inherit it for ever. (3) Believers in Christ, whether lineally descended from Abraham or not, are the seed of Abraham, and children of the promise. In a secondary sense the term, "seed of Abraham," is to be taken collectively (cf. Gal. iii. 26—29). Believers therefore must be raised from the dead that they may inherit. (4) Then the expression, "all the land of Canaan," purports the whole earth to its utmost limit (cf. Ps. ii. 8; lxxii. 8; Rom. iv. 13—18; Heb. xi. 13). The covenant also extends into the heavens.—J. A. M.

Vers. 34—40.—*The greater commandments.* The Jews made many distinctions about the commandments of God, calling some "light," others "weighty," others "little," others "great." According to their estimating, therefore, some commandment must be "greatest." Some of them contended that the law of the sabbath was the greater

commandment, some the law of sacrifice, some that of circumcision, and some pleaded for the wearing of phylacteries. They now referred the resolution of this vexed question to Jesus, who astonished them by giving precedence to love. The Talmud reckons the commandments at six hundred and thirteen; of which three hundred and sixty-five are negative, and two hundred and forty-eight affirmative; but our Lord's enumeration is two, for that all the Law is fulfilled in love to God and man. This is so in the nature of the case.

I. LOVE PRESUPPOSES ESTIMATION. 1. *God reveals himself that he may be supremely loved.* (1) Opinion must precede affection. Love resists all attempts at coercion. It cannot be forced. It must be won. God binds us to love him by his supreme and infinite excellence. He is "the Perfection of beauty," of intelligence and truth, of goodness and love. (2) He reveals himself in his manifold and glorious works. (3) He reveals himself in his sacred Word. In the wonders of his Law. In the riches of his Gospel. (4) He reveals himself in his wise and gracious providence. 2. *Man is to be loved as reflecting the image of God.* (1) The God-like win the love of the godly. They are admirable and amiable as they reflect the truth and goodness of their Maker. (2) The devil-like cannot be loved with complacency by the godly. Yet with pity and compassion they may be loved. They are thus loved by God, who still sees his image, though dreadfully defaced; he sees wonderful capabilities, though frightfully demoralized.

II. LOVE IDENTIFIES ITSELF WITH ITS OBJECT. 1. *So in loving God the lover is ennobled.* (1) The intense love of a holy being necessarily implies the intense love of holiness. Love to God is the vital and purifying flame of holiness. So it fulfils the law of God, by a sweet constraint compelling obedience to all his commandments. (2) The freedom of this obedience, being that of entire choice and supreme delight, gives the noblest character to submission. (*a*) As it impels to the most arduous duties for the glory of God. (*b*) As it makes us willing to submit to the severest sufferings for the glory of God. (3) Love to God feeds its own strength and the strength of every virtue by bringing us into communion with God himself. It produces the full and entire satisfaction of the soul. But without it the most punctilious obedience is but a formal idolatry. 2. *The second commandment is "like unto" the first.* (1) It is not *equal* to it; for it is "the *second*." The claims of God are evermore superior to the claims of men. Yet how prone are men to feel indignation at a breach of the Law in its second table rather than in the first! (2) It is, however, "*like* unto it:" (*a*) In having superiority over all except the first. (*b*) As being also a precept of love, an efflux of the same principle, directed to our neighbour. (3) It makes self-love the measure of neighbourly affection. It therefore supposes that we should love ourselves. It is not wrong to pay respect to our interests, temporal as well as spiritual. And in loving our neighbours as ourselves we shall do them no harm, but seek to do them all the good we can.

III. LOVE WOULD HAVE ITS OBJECT WORTHY OF ITSELF. 1. *This it has in God.* (1) We can only bless God by acknowledging him. For he is Love itself, infinitely worthy. (2) We acknowledge him in worship. By praise. By meditation. By prayer. (3) We acknowledge him in service. Obeying his will. Witnessing for his glory. 2. *This it seeks in our neighbour.* (1) Love makes us to rejoice in his happiness. (*a*) If he is virtuous, love will not detract, but emulate. (*b*) If he is honoured, love will not be envious, but pleased. (*c*) If he becomes wealthy, love will not covet, but pray that he may not suffer damage by that which has proved ruin to many. (2) Love makes us to mourn in his adversity. (*a*) If he is sick and suffering, love will not be unconcerned, but will visit and comfort him. (*b*) If he is disappointed, love will not exult, but encourage him. (*c*) If he is disgraced, love will not chuckle and give currency to the scandal, but will help to deliver him from the snare of the devil. (3) It will bless him by prayer to God for him, by holy exhortation, and by kindly Christian influence. 3. *It will make sacrifices in this service.* (1) It will sacrifice ease in the interests of religion and philanthropy. (2) It will sacrifice temporal profit to glorify God and to benefit a fellow-man possessing a nature that is to live for ever. (3) It will sacrifice reputation for God, with whom our reputation is safe, by condescending to the low for his benefit. (4) It will sacrifice life for God as the martyrs did, and in the cause of humanity, which is the cause of God.—J. A. M.

Vers. 41—46.— *Wisdom's question.* In teaching his interrogators to love God, Jesus proceeds to direct them to the God they ought to love. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" was put to a representative assembly—Herodians, Sadducees, scribes or Karaites, and especially Pharisees, beside his disciples and the people. By proposing this one question of moment, Jesus proves the folly of those who by malevolent questions would prove his wisdom. It showed them that ignorance of the prophecies was the source of their captiousness. The question is for us.

I. WHAT THINK YE OF THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST? 1. *He is the "Son of David."* (1) The covenant of God was established with David. This purported that Messiah should appear in his line. The promise of the saving Seed was limited to Seth in the family of Adam; then to Shem in the family of Noah; then to Abraham in the line of Shem. The covenant was carried on from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob, and from Jacob through Judah to David (cf. 2 Sam. vii. 12—17; Ps. lxxxix. 27—37). (2) Thenceforward "the Son of David" became a prophetic title of Messiah (see Isa. ix. 7; xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6; xxxiii. 15, 16). The "Son" of whom David sings in his psalms referred to Solomon only as the type of Messiah (see Ps. lxxii. 1). (3) "Is not this the carpenter's son?" But the "carpenter" was "of the house and lineage of David." So was Mary the poor virgin. What vicissitudes in families! How God makes grandeur to spring out of humiliation! (4) Why are not the Jews convinced that Messiah must have appeared before the destruction of Jerusalem? For the national genealogies then perished, and nobody can now prove himself to be the son of David. But the genealogy of Jesus was proved at the enrolment for the taxation in the days of Cæsar Augustus, when the records were intact, and is recited in the Gospels. 2. *He is the Son of God.* (1) "Jehovah said unto *Adonai*." This term is properly applied to superiors, sometimes it is by courtesy given to equals, but never to inferiors. David, as an independent monarch, acknowledges no superior but God. (2) "David *in the Spirit* called him Lord." Note: Jesus here credits the Old Testament writers with Divine inspiration (cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; Acts i. 16; ii. 30). David in the Holy Spirit of prophecy called him Lord. (3) He was David's Lord before he became his Son. What can more emphatically mark the Divinity of Christ? How else could he be David's Lord, who was not to be born for ages after him, and was certainly to exercise no secular dominion over him? 3. *He is at once the Son of David and the Son of God.* (1) As the Son of David, his humanity was real. As the Lord of David, his Divinity is evident. Acknowledge here the glorious mystery of the Incarnation. (2) This mystery Jesus more fully unfolded after his resurrection (see Rev. xxii. 16). (3) So is he qualified to be the one Mediator between God and man. (4) In his Divine humanity Jesus pledges our regeneration and transfiguration.

II. WHAT THINK YE OF HIS CHRISTSHIP? As the Sonship is a rule of *nature*, the Christship is a title of *office*. 1. *As the Christ he is our Prophet.* (1) Moses calls universal attention to him in this capacity (see Deut. xviii. 15, 19). And in this capacity he is authenticated (see ch. xvii. 5). (2) In his character of Prophet or Teacher he silenced the gainsaying of Herodians, Pharisees, Karaites, and Sadducees. (3) As the great Prophet he gives us his perfect law of liberty with the institution of the ministry to proclaim it. He also gives us with his Word his own Holy Spirit of illumination. "A wonderful fashion of teaching he hath." 2. *As the Christ he is our Priest.* (1) A Priest not after the order of Aaron. For "our Lord sprang out of Judah" (see Heb. vii. 13, 14). Yet Aaron was his type. (2) His priesthood is "after the order of Melchizedek." So we learn from the psalm here quoted (Ps. cx.). His priesthood is royal. It is made with an oath. It is a priesthood in the heavens. The ascension of Christ is referred to in every instance in which the hundred and tenth psalm is quoted in the New Testament. It is an unchangeable and an everlasting priesthood. (3) Our great Priest offers himself in sacrifice for us. When Cyrus took the King of Armenia and his son Tigranes prisoners, with their wives and children, and upon their humble submission gave them their liberties and their lives, Tigranes, as they were returning home, asked his wife, "What thinkest thou of Cyrus? Is he not a comely and a proper man, of a majestic presence?" "Truly," said she, "I know not what manner of man he is; I never looked upon him." "Why," said he, "where were thine eyes all the while?" "I fixed mine eyes all the while," said she, "upon him [meaning her husband] who, in my hearing, offered to Cyrus to lay down his life for my

ransom." 3. *As the Christ he is our King.* (1) He is the King of glory. Sitting on the right hand implies participation in the regal power. But the Lord of David is on the right hand of Jehovah. (2) His rule is spiritual. The dominion to which David himself is subject implies a heavenly King and a heavenly kingdom. (3) Christ subdues his enemies by the power of love. Those who comply with his terms of salvation he makes victorious over sin, death, and hell. (4) Those who refuse the rule of love will be compelled to feel the rod of iron (see Ps. cx. 5, 6).

We may estimate our character by our views of Christ. Some do not think of him at all. Some think too meanly of him, Some think too hardly of him. His true bride will esteem him "the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely."—J. A. M.

Ver. 3.—*Man's ill-grounded wilfulness.* "And they would not come." There is nothing more to be said about it. They had no reasons. They offered no apologies, and no excuses. They were just wilful, stubborn, stupid; they had taken up with some unreasoning and unreasonable prejudice, and they "would not come." Dods points out that the "object of this parable is still the same (as of the previous parables), to set in a vivid light the guilt of the Jewish leaders in rejecting Christ, and the punishment which in consequence was to fall upon them." Our Lord had used a similar figure of a feast before, but then he represented those who declined the invitation as having more or less reasonable excuses. One was engaged over a farm, one over his oxen, and one over his marriage; and they were not disposed to put these aside in order to fulfil their engagements with their host. But here there are no excuses, only sheer wilfulness, which is ready to run even into rebellion and insult (see ver. 6).

I. THE OPPOSITION OF THE MERELY WILFUL. Every parent knows the extreme difficulty of training a stubborn child. You cannot reason with him; you cannot persuade him. It does no good to chastise him. Many a parent is at his wits' end to know what to do with a wilful child. And what could any one hope to do with those stubborn Jerusalem officials, who had made up their minds that Jesus was an impostor, and so would heed no evidences, listen to no arguments, and yield to no persuasions? They too were invited to the gospel feast. They loudly professed their readiness to respond whenever God called. The call came; Christ brought it, and then up went their backs; "they would not come." If you trouble them with any importunity, they will turn dangerous, and insult the messengers; as these officials afterwards did Stephen, Peter, James, and Paul. All Christian workers understand the hopelessness of dealing with the stubborn and wilful. No force seems to reach them. Labour is in vain. Opposition may be overcome. Unintelligent wilfulness is hopeless.

II. THE TREATMENT OF THE MERELY WILFUL. They have to be let alone, and left to suffer, and to learn by suffering. It is a hard school, and it must be a hard school, in which such persons have to learn. Our Lord even intimates that there must be a specially awakening severity of dealing with them, because that stubbornness is not mere natural disposition; it is a product of self-conceit, pride, and prejudice. It is *sin*, and must be punished.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The enticement of material interests.* "One to his farm, another to his merchandise." These men, as we have seen, were discourteous from mere wilfulness, mere bad nature; but they turned away from the king's servants to their own private affairs, in order to make a show of reasonable excuse. So while it is true that men often are absorbed in their material concerns, and these may explain their neglect of religion, it is even more frequently true that men make their material interests excuse their bad-heartedness, and are busy with temporal concerns in the hope of hiding their stubborn self-willedness. A man's material interests never need really stand in the way of his religion; but if he is resolutely set against religion, he can easily make his material interests into a stumbling-block in his way. A great deal of insincere talk is made about the enticement of things seen and temporal; business and pleasure are supposed to carry away men who would be pious. The honest fact is that men usually do not want to be pious, and throw themselves into their worldly concerns as a blind.

I. MATERIAL INTERESTS REGARDED AS GENUINE TEMPTATIONS. There is, for all men, even for good-willed men, a fascination in things seen and temporal The sense-

sphere is attractive. In every man there is the natural ambition to succeed, to rise in the social scale, and to win the comfort and security of wealth. For men with the business faculty, trade and commerce are positively attractive. In these days the range of living is so luxurious, and trade so competitive, that a man is almost compelled to put his whole mind into his business, if he is to succeed. And every man has material claims from those dependent on him. But, held in fair limitations, our material interests are *not* temptations. The soul's life in God finds expression through them.

II. MATERIAL INTERESTS MADE AN EXCUSE FOR BAD-HEARTEDNESS. This may be opened, illustrated, and enforced, so as to be very searching. Men do not *want* to be religious; they are stubbornly resolved *not* to go to the gospel feast. That is the *real reason* for their extreme interest in their farm and their merchandise.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The free invitation of the gospel.* There is an immediate reference to those whom our Lord addressed in this parable. He was speaking to men who prided themselves on being in the special favour of God—God's invited guests. Our Lord was bringing home to their hearts the consequences of the Jewish neglect of God's last invitation. 1. The Jews, as a nation, must be destroyed. 2. The Gentiles, as individuals, must be drawn into the Divine favour. Those Jews had conceived that the Divine favour was held in strict limitations. It belonged exclusively to those who were of Abraham's seed. And this idea had led them to presume; and in their pride they even rejected God's Son. They felt as if they might do as they pleased even with the invitation to the feast. Compare the way in which St. Paul found it necessary to turn away from the Jews, and give free offer of eternal life to the Gentiles.

I. THE GOSPEL IS OFFERED TO THOSE WHO HAVE NO NATURAL CLAIM TO IT. These folk in the highways had no claims of birth, or education, or fitness. They were just men who wanted food; and to them the offer of food was made. The gospel goes beyond all the special claims and rights that men think they have, and just deals with men as men—with men as sinful men; with men as having lost by their sin even their natural rights to the favour of God. It is not until we can give up all confidence in our own merit that we are prepared to hear the gospel message, "Whosoever will, let him come."

II. THE GOSPEL IS OFFERED TO THOSE WHO HAVE NO DISPOSITION TOWARD IT. These folk in the highway, perhaps, had not even heard of the king's marriage feast. If they had, it never entered their heads that they would like to be guests at it. It was no place for such as they were. Some of them were beggars at the wayside. All of them were in their workday clothes. A comfortable meal at home they would enjoy much more than a grand feast at the palace. It was even needful to use forceful persuasions, and compel them to come in. Still, we are confronted by this difficulty—so many have to be *made* to want and welcome the gospel; to be taught their need, and to be persuaded that the fulness of Divine provision is really opened to them. The gospel is offered freely to *whosoever will*, but the work is committed to Christ's servants of making men *will* to receive the gospel. "We persuade men."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*Wilfulness spoiling our blessings.* "Not having a wedding garment." The incident is a distinctly Eastern one. So motley a crowd would be very out of place in a king's palace. It was not only kindly consideration which provided an all-covering, handsome robe for guests whose own clothes were shabby; it was a sense of appropriateness which required all the guests to be suitably arrayed. In treating this parable it should be kept in mind that he who gave the feast was a *king*, and so sent his invitations, and made his arrangements and conditions, with an authority which all were bound to respect. As illustration of this custom, it may be mentioned that, "every guest invited to the wedding at the royal marriage of Sultan Mahmoud, had made expressly for him, at the expense of the sultan, a wedding garment. No one, however dignified his station, was permitted to enter into the presence-chamber of that sovereign without a change of raiment. This was formerly the universal custom in the East."

I. THE REASON FOR BRINGING IN THIS PARTICULAR MAN. It is an unexpected addition to the parable, and at first one does not see how its point of teaching bears on,

or runs in harmony with, the things our Lord is enforcing. It seems as if it suddenly struck our Lord that what he had been saying was open to misconstruction. "The perception of the absolute, unconditioned freedom of entrance, the sense borne in on their mind that they were the objects of God's love and invitation, might possibly lead them to overlook the great moral change requisite in all who enter God's presence and propose to hold intercourse with him." It is true that salvation is freely offered, but a man must be in a certain frame of mind to receive it. One so unresponsive to the kindness and authority of the king as this man, who would not have the wedding garment, was clearly unfitted for and unable to receive the king's grace.

II. THE REASON FOR THE BEHAVIOUR OF THIS PARTICULAR MAN. Nothing explains his act but the uppishness of self-will. He was not going to be ordered about—to be made to do what somebody else wished. If the king wanted him at the feast, he must take him just as he was. See in this no sense of gratitude for the king's kindness; no sense of submissive obedience to the king's will; no lowly estimates of his own unfitness. So the man who was just upon getting a big blessing lost it altogether through his own stubborn wilfulness.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Purposed entanglements.* As foolish a thing as was ever attempted was trying to entangle Jesus in talk. A difficult business enough if Jesus had been only a wise prophet-teacher. A hopeless business, seeing that Jesus was the Son of God, and read thoughts and hearts, and "knew what was in man." We are to understand that different parties agreed to set several traps for Jesus, hoping to catch him in one or other of them. Popular feeling was too strongly in his favour for his enemies to venture upon anything like an open arrest. "All the previous attempts had been to discredit Jesus *as a religious Teacher*; the present is an attempt to expose him to the hostility of the *Roman government*." It would suit the purpose of the Sanhedrin if they could make him say something *disloyal*, so that the Romans would deal with him.

I. ENTANGLEMENTS REVEALING THOSE WHO ATTEMPTED THEM. This opens an interesting character-study. It brings before us the shifts to which men resort who will not yield themselves to arguments and persuasions they are determined not to admit. These men were resolved not to accept Christ as Messiah. They were resolved to discredit his claims somehow, and destroy him, if only they could get a chance. They were untrue to their better selves, and so they had to be ruled by their baser selves; and thus they were put upon all sorts of mean and miserable shifts and schemes. Yet they did not see how they were degrading themselves. Honourable men were self-deluded into acting dishonourably. These men are shown up. They were not really jealous for the honour of God: it was fear for their own place and influence that made them so mean and base. The upright man wants no shifts, and takes no advantage of his brother.

II. ENTANGLEMENTS REVEALING HIM WHO WAS TO BE ENTANGLED. Our Lord felt no sort of alarm when, with imposing authority, the deputation from the Sanhedrin made its demands. Our Lord showed no fear or anxiety when the schemers presented their subtle and malicious question. And he made no mistake; he gave the entanglers no sort of opportunity. He was proof against their wiles. His simplicity tested their guilefulness. His wisdom saw through their schemes.—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*Christ keeping to his province.* The coin produced was probably a silver denarius of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, and it bore on its face the head of the emperor, and had an inscription running round it, containing his name and titles. To understand how this question was intended to entangle Christ, we must remember that the Mosaic injunction, "Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee" (Deut. xvii. 15), was made by the rabbis to mean that they must not pay tribute to any foreign power. The Romans levied a poll-tax on each individual, and this tax was particularly offensive to the patriotic party. If they could make Jesus take part with the zealots, they could accuse him to the Romans as a dangerous person and fomenter of rebellion. The answer of Jesus is very variously explained, and has even been taken as a watchword of particular religious schools. But the answer is really *a refusal to answer*; and in this its skilfulness is seen.

I. CHRIST'S REPROACH. "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" This must have annoyed them, and made them fear that they would do but little with him. This impressed the people, who were listening, and made them feel sure that he was more than a match for the entanglers.

II. CHRIST'S REQUEST. "Show me a penny." As it had to be a coin that tribute to Cæsar could be paid in, and not a shekel with which payments in support of God's temple were made, it had to have the head of the reigning Cæsar on it. Christ evidently examined it in view of the people, who were anxiously watching; and he made his questioners say distinctly whose image was on the coin. It was not God's temple; it was Cæsar.

III. CHRIST'S REPLY. "Cæsar's is it? then it is nothing to me. I am the servant of God. I have nothing to say on such a matter. It is not in my province. If Cæsar's head is on the coin, no doubt it belongs to him; then give it him if it is his." Jesus had no authority to urge the claims of Cæsar; he came to urge the claims of God. And he meant to keep to his province. If they wanted to know anything about the Word and will of God, he was ready to explain and teach. But Cæsar had better mind his own business, and he would mind his. In our time, earnest effort is being made to obliterate the distinction between the "secular" and the "sacred." The distinction is real and abiding. Our Lord set his seal upon it. They may run in harmony, but they run, and they always must run, along distinct lines.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*Denial of resurrection as a sign of mental mood.* "The Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection." It does not appear how their question helped the entanglement scheme. Possibly the design was to secure a statement that could be declared to oppose Moses' Law. This would discredit him with the people; and it might be made the ground of a formal condemnation by the Sanhedrin, which the temple officials would have to execute, and so Christ would be got rid of. The point before us now is, that these Sadducees are described to us in one sentence. One thing suffices to reveal them to us. One opinion told the class of opinions they held. You may know the men by this, "they say that there is no resurrection." And when you know that is their opinion, you see at once the hypocrisy of the question they came asking Christ.

I. THESE SADDUCEES WERE CRITICAL. They wanted a reason for everything. They received nothing they could not understand. They failed in receptivity. About everything they asked questions. Whatever was presented to view, they persisted in getting to look at it on the other side. Explain that the critical temperament and faculty are Divine gifts and endowments, but they are perilous because they so easily become masterful and absorbing, destructive of some of the finer and gentler qualities and faculties. Criticism, like fire, is a good servant, but a bad master.

II. THESE SADDUCEES WERE UNSPIRITUAL. We should call them "materialists." They were not sensitive to anything that did not appeal to the five senses. They were deficient in imagination. They were, in their way, scientific. Angels they could not do with, for they had no substance. Resurrection they could not do with, for it was a dream, and had, and could have, no verification. There have always been such men. We may be sorry for them; for the unseen is the real, the Divine is the abiding, the spiritual is the true; and he only *lives indeed* who can respond to the environment of the spiritual, the Divine, the eternal.

III. THESE SADDUCEES WERE CONCEITED. Not in the common and familiar ways of conceit. They were intellectually conceited, and that is the most hopeless kind of conceit, and, indeed, the most offensive kind. The "superior" man, who is always wiser than everybody, and smiles supercilious smiles, is the most aggravating of mortals.—R. T.

Ver. 30.—*The pure humanness of marital relations.* The Sadducees rested their "denial of the resurrection on the ground that they found no mention of it in the Law, which they recognized as the only rule of faith." The mistake they made, which our Lord at once brought to view, was this—"They could not conceive of any human fellowship in the life of the resurrection, except such as reproduced the relations and conditions of this earthly life." Man's material for thought is mainly provided by the

common, earthly, sensual relations and associations; but man does not become true man save as he rises above these, and, by the help of them, conceives the "unseen." It is the glory of man that he is able to create in imagination what he has never seen realized in fact. He can think of relations between beings in which no sex-elements are introduced. He can imagine a place where they neither "marry nor are given in marriage," and where the "propagation of the species" is not the dominant idea, as it is here. In the conception of such a place and condition, an all-sufficing answer was given to the subtle entanglement of these Sadducees.

I. THE RACE DEPENDS ON MARITAL RELATIONS. The law of sex is the universal earthly law, ruling the creatures as well as man. Seeding is the work of every plant; starting a new generation is the work of every living creature, and of every human being. And God has made this universally to depend on the relations of male and female. The fact that man has made misery and sin out of God's design must not blind us to the wisdom and goodness of that design.

II. CHARACTER DEPENDS ON THE MARITAL RELATIONS. Neither can man be true man, nor woman true woman, apart from marriage. This may be more impressively seen in woman, but it is equally true of man. Woman never reaches her noblest possibility save through motherhood. 1. Show what elements of character are developed, and what are refined, by the associations of marriage. 2. Show what moral good for the race comes through the influence on children exerted by those whose characters are improved through the marital relation.

III. REDEMPTION DEPENDS ON THE MARITAL RELATIONS. Dr. Bushnell, in his very striking way, says the redemption of the world must mainly come about through the "out-populating of the Christian stock." There is a sense in which Christians will come to "possess the earth."

IV. RESURRECTION-LIFE DOES NOT DEPEND ON MARITAL RELATIONS. There is (1) no race to propagate; (2) no character to be gained; (3) no redemption to accomplish. Established righteousness can have friendship without marriage.—R. T.

Ver. 32.—*The so-called dead are alive.* "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Having separated the idea of marriage from the conditions of the after life, our Lord took the opportunity of showing these questioners how *unspiritual* they were, and how unspiritual was their reading and rendering of Holy Scripture. They could see only the surface; they could not discern meanings and suggestions. When God said he was the "God of Abraham," something was involved in the saying. For the spiritually minded man this was involved—Abraham was alive. Abraham was risen and living. God was in actual, present relations with him. And what was true of Abraham is, for the spiritual man, true of all the so-called dead—they are risen, they do live. Our Lord here distinctly affirms the continued existence of the soul, which is the real man, after death. He taught the "immortality of the soul."

I. DEATH IS A PHYSICAL EVENT. The soul is immaterial, but it comes into relation with a material body, and through its senses and faculties it acts in a material sphere. Death is one of the things that bear relation to that body. It is the supreme form of disease. Disease may destroy a limb or an organ, and the soul may keep within the limited body. But when disease affects what we call vital organs, and when death corrupts the body, the soul must go away from it—it is no longer usable. The soul, the man, does not die; it is only liberated from the limitations of a particular environment. We are coming, in these days, more and more clearly to see that death is a physical affair.

II. DEATH IS A NECESSARY EVENT. Because the connection between soul and body is made for a distinct moral purpose. It is therefore made for a limited time; and the connection must cease when the issue is reached. Life in the body and the earth-sphere is the soul's education-time, it is its moral probation; and so it is as necessarily limited as a boy's school-years. Life on earth is not the soul's real life; it is not its manhood, it is its preparation-time.

III. DEATH CANNOT TOUCH THE SOULS THAT MEN ARE. This has always been the Christian belief, though we express it nowadays in somewhat new forms. See how the truth bears on the question of the Sadducees They thought of humanity as

permanently divided into sexes. They had to learn that souls have *no sex*, so their question, so far as it applied to *them*, was absurd.—R. T.

Ver. 42.—*Our thoughts of Christ's Sonship.* "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is he?" This is what may be called a Socratic dialogue. Our Lord asks questions, and leads his hearers on until they find themselves entangled, and discover how little they had thought about the things of which they had talked so glibly. The expression, "What think ye of Christ?" has been made the text of many general sermons on the claims and Person of Christ; and it has been variously urged that our opinions about Christ decide our religious standing. We try to keep strictly to the passage, and find points in following through the precise inquiry of our Lord.

I. WHOSE SON IS MESSIAH? Our Lord uses the term "Christ," or "Messiah," here in its general sense, and from the Pharisees' point of view. He is not directly speaking of himself, or affirming that he is Messiah. He speaks to these Pharisees, and virtually says to them, "You talk about Messiah, you expect the coming Messiah, you are very learned about the Messiah. Say then, 'Whose Son is he?'" Those Pharisees could not read the mind of Jesus as he could read their minds, and they did not suspect how he meant to puzzle them; so at once they answered, "The Son of David." "The Pharisees were ready at once with the traditional answer; but they had never asked themselves whether it conveyed the whole truth, whether it could be reconciled, and, if so, how, with the language of predictions that were confessedly Messianic." Show how fully our Lord met this prophetic necessity. His mother was, and his reputed father was, "of the house and lineage of David."

II. HOW CAN MESSIAH BE DAVID'S SON AND DAVID'S LORD? This was so exceedingly easy a question, that one wonders how anybody could have been baffled by it. But perhaps these Pharisees were *not* baffled. They saw the answer plainly enough, but they saw also what the answer involved. This explained it all—Messiah was to be both "Son of *David*" and "Son of *God*." But Jesus claimed to be Messiah, and these Pharisees dare not let the people hear them admit that the "Son of David" was also "Son of God." Those people had triumphantly brought Jesus into the temple as the "Son of David;" and if the Pharisees had ventured a reply to Jesus, they must have acknowledged his claim to be "Son of God." Our Lord was the Divine-human being—of David according to the flesh; of God according to the Spirit. God was the soul of his humanity.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1—39.—*Denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, and lamentation over Jerusalem which followed their guidance to her own destruction.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.)

Ver. 1.—**Then spake Jesus.** Some small portion of this discourse, the close of our Lord's public teaching, is found in Mark xii. 38—40 and Luke xx. 45—47 (comp. also Luke xi., xiii.). It is here addressed to the multitude, and to his disciples, and seems to have been designed to comfort the former under the difficulty of having accredited teachers who were proved to have misunderstood Scripture, and were incapable of interpreting it aright. He willed to show how far they were to follow these instructors, and where it was necessary to draw a line beyond which they were not to be obeyed. Some modern critics have suggested that this discourse was not spoken at this time, but that St. Matthew has here collected into one body certain sayings of our Lord uttered at different times and places. It is far more natural to suppose that St. Matthew's statement of the occasion of this discourse is historically true, and that Christ here repeated some parts of the censure he had already, in the course of his ministry, found it necessary to pronounce. The unity of this utterance in form and essence, its logical sequence and climactic character, prove that it was delivered at one time, and was intended to form the Lord's farewell address to the wayward people who would not come unto him that they might have life. The discourse may be divided into three parts.

Vers. 2—12.—*The moral character of the scribes and Pharisees, and warning to Christ's disciples.*

Ver. 2.—**The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.** In the seat of the great

judge and lawgiver. This is stated as an undoubted fact (ἐκάθισαν), with no idea of blame attached. Literally, *sat on the seat of Moses* from time immemorial. These (meaning not individuals, but the collective body) are the authorized expounders and teachers of the Law; their position is assured; they are not to be displaced. The scribes were the party chiefly denoted; they were of the Pharisaical sect; hence the addition, "and the Pharisees," by which is intimated, not that these latter, *qua* Pharisees, had any teaching office, but that the former shared their religious opinions. The Sadducees seem to have had no popular influence, and were never recognized as leaders. The Levitical priests never appear in the Gospels as teachers or expositors of the Mosaic system; this function of theirs had devolved upon scribes and lawyers.

Ver. 3.—**All therefore.** It is because of their official authority as appointed teachers and expositors of the Law that Christ gives the following injunction. **That observe and do.** Many manuscripts and versions invert the order of the verbs, reading, *do and observe*. The received text seems most logical. *Observe*; τηρεῖτε, present imperative, continue to observe as a rule of conduct. *Do*; ποιήσατε, aorist, do immediately, whenever the occasion arises. All that they taught or commanded out of the Law, or in due accordance therewith, was to be observed and obeyed. The statement is made in general terms, but was conditional and restricted by other considerations. It was only their official injunctions, derived immediately from Scripture, not their glosses, evasions, and interpretations, that were to be regarded with respect. The Lord had already taken occasion to warn against these errors (see ch. xvi. 6, 11, 12, etc.). As inheritors of the authority of Moses, and speaking *ex cathedrâ*, they were so far worthy of respect. This principle laid down, Christ proceeds to denounce their evil practices. **After their works.** You must distinguish between their preaching and their practice; the latter is to be shunned with all care. The scribes are never accused of corrupting the sacred text, which, indeed, was scrupulously guarded, and kept pure and unaltered. It was their treatment of the doctrines thereof that was censured. Our Lord shows their evil example in two particulars—their principle was "words, not deeds" (ver. 4), and ostentation in religion (vers. 5—7). **They say, and do not.** They enunciated the Law, they enjoined obedience to it in the minutest particulars, and yet they themselves continually, in the most important points (ver. 23), infringed, neglected, evaded it. St. Paul, himself a strict Pharisee, denounces in stern language such inconsistent professors (Rom. ii. 21—23).

Ver. 4.—**Bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne**; δυσβάστακτα: *importabilia* (Vulgate). The last epithet, which is very uncommon (Luke xi. 46), is omitted by some manuscripts and versions, but it is probably genuine here. The burdens are the minute regulations and prescriptions, the vexatious restrictions, the innumerable traditional observances with which these teachers had garbled and defaced the written Law. We have noticed some of these glosses in the matter of the sabbath and ceremonial purification; and these are only specimens of a system which extended to every relation of life, and to all details of religious practice, binding one rule to another, enforcing useless and absurd minutiæ, till the burden became insupportable. Alford considers that not human traditions and observances are signified by the "burdens," but the severity of the Law, the weighty duties inculcated therein, which they enforce on others, but do not observe. It may, however, well be doubted whether Christ would ever have termed the legitimate rites and ceremonies of the Law unbearable burdens, though their rigorous enforcement by men who regarded only the letter, while they had lost the spirit, would naturally deserve censure. (If the epithet is not genuine, of course this remark does not apply.) What Christ denounced was not the Law itself, however severe and grievous to human nature, or even immemorial tradition, but the false inferences and deductions therefrom, leading to injunctions insupportable and impracticable. **Will not move them with one of their fingers**; *with their finger*. This does not imply (and it would not be true) that the rabbis themselves were all hypocrites, and broke or evaded the Law with impunity. We know that they scrupulously attended to all outward observances. What is meant is that they take no trouble to lighten (κινῆσαι, "to move away"), to make these burdens easier by explanation or relaxation, or to proportion them to the strength of the disciple. They impose them with all their crushing weight and severity upon others, and uncompromisingly demand obedience to these unscriptural regulations, putting "a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10; Gal. v. 1). Contrast with this the Christian's service: "My yoke is easy," says Christ, "and my burden is light" (ch. xi. 33).

Ver. 5.—**For to be seen of men.** The second bad principle in their religion was ostentation and vanity. Acts done professedly in the honour of God were animated

by self-seeking and ambition. They never penetrated beyond externalism. See this spirit reproved in the sermon on the mount (ch. vi. 1, 2, etc.). "They loved the glory of men more than the glory of God" (John xii. 43). Christ then gives proofs of this spirit of ostentation in religion and in private life. **Phylacteries**; φυλακτήρια: literally, *preservatives*; equivalent to "amulets;" the translation of the Hebrew word *tephillin*, "prayer-fillets." These were either strips of parchment or small cubes covered with leather, on or in which were written four sections of the Law, viz. Exod. xiii. 1—10; 11—16; Deut. vi. 4—9; xi. 13—21. They were worn fastened either to the forehead, or inside the left arm, so as to be near the heart. Their use arose from a literal and superstitious interpretation of Exod. xiii. 9; Deut. vi. 8; xi. 18. Their dimensions were defined by rabbinical rules, but the extra pious formalists of the day set these at naught, and increased the breadth of the strips or of the bands by which they were fastened, in order to draw attention to their religiousness and their strict attention to the least observances of the Law. These phylacteries are still in use among the Jews. Thus in a 'Class-Book for Jewish Youth' we read, "Every boy, three months before he attains the age of thirteen, commences to make use of the tephillin, which must be worn at least during the time of the morning prayers. The ordinance of the tephillin is one of the signs of the covenant existing between the Almighty and ourselves, that we may continually bear in mind the miracles God wrought for our forefathers." **Enlarge the borders of their garments**; τὰ κράσπεδα τῶν ἱματίων αὐτῶν, *the fringes of their outer garments*. The best manuscripts have merely *their fringes*. So the Vulgate, *magnificant fimbrias*. These fringes or tassels (*zizith*, *zizijoth*) were fastened to the corners of the garments, in accordance with Numb. xv. 38—41, and were composed of white and blue threads. They were intended to remind the wearers of the commandments of the Lord, and were regarded as peculiarly sacred (see ch. ix. 20). Christ condemns the ostentatious enlargement of these fringes as a badge of extraordinary piety and obedience. We quote again from the Jewish 'Class-Book:' "Every male of the Jewish nation must wear a garment [not usually an under-garment] made with four corners, having fringes fixed at each corner. These fringes are called *tsetsis*, or, memorial fringes. In the synagogue, during the morning prayers, a scarf with fringes attached to it is worn, which is called *tollece*, 'scarf or veil.' These memorial fringes typically point out the six hundred and thirteen precepts contained in the volume of the sacred Law. They are also intended to remind us of the goodness of the Almighty in having delivered our forefathers from the slavery in Egypt."

Ver. 6.—**The uppermost rooms**; τὴν πρωτοκλισίαν: *primos recubitus*; *chief place* (Luke xiv. 7). The custom of reclining on cushions set in horseshoe fashion at three sides of the table was now prevalent, the old custom of squatting round a low table, as at present practised in the East, having been long abandoned. The place of honour is said to have been at the upper end of the right side, the president being placed, not in the centre of that end of the table which faced the opening, but at the side. The most honoured guest would be at his right hand (but see on ch. xxvi. 23). There was often much manœuvring to obtain this post, and many petty squabbles about precedence arose on every festal occasion (see Luke xiv. 1, 7, etc.). **The chief seats in the synagogues.** The usual arrangement of the synagogue is given by Dr. Edersheim ('Life and Times of Jesus,' i. pp. 434, etc.). It was built of stone, with an entrance generally on the south, and so arranged that the worshippers might direct their prayers towards Jerusalem. In the centre was placed the lectern of the reader; the women's gallery was at the north end. "The inside plan is generally that of two double colonnades, which seem to have formed the body of the synagogue, the aisles east and west being probably used as passages. At the south end, facing north, is a movable ark, containing the sacred rolls of the Law and the prophets. Right before the ark, and facing the people, are the seats of honour, for the rulers of the synagogue and the honourable." These were the places for which the Pharisees contended, thinking more of gaining these, where they could sit enthroned in the sight of the congregation, than of the Divine worship which nominally they came to offer (comp. Jas. ii. 2, 3).

Ver. 7.—**Greetings in the markets.** They loved to be denoted as superiors by respectful salutations in public places. **To be called Rabbi, Rabbi**; "My Master" (compare the French *Monsieur*, used not only vocatively, but absolutely); the term addressed by scholars to their teacher, and repeated for ostentation's sake, of course implying superiority in those thus called. Christ himself was thus addressed by those who desired to denote his authority and pre-eminence (ch. xxii. 16, 24, 36; comp. John i. 38). These greetings and salutations were enjoined on scholars and inferiors, under pain of ecclesiastical censure and loss of salvation.

Ver. 8.—**Be not ye called Rabbi.** After stating the customs of the Pharisees, Christ proceeds (vers. 8—12) to give his own dis-

ciples a lesson in humility. The pronoun is emphatic, "But ye, be not ye called." They are not to be eager for such distinctions, indicative of spiritual superiority. The prohibition must be understood in the spirit, and not in the letter (comp. 1 Cor. xi. 1; 1 Tim. i. 2). Our Lord does not forbid respect for teachers or different grades in his Church (see 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11—13); that which he censures is the inordinate grasping at such personal distinctions, the greedy ambition which loves the empty title, and takes any means to obtain it. **One is your Master,** even **Christ.** The received text gives *εἷς γάρ ἐστιν ὑμῶν ὁ Καθηγητής, ὁ Χριστός.* Many good manuscripts read *Διδάσκαλος, Teacher* (so Revised Version) instead of *Καθηγητής, Leader,* and omit *ὁ Χριστός.* Both these variations seem reasonable and warranted. "Leader" has probably been introduced from ver. 10, where it occurs naturally; it is out of place here, where, for the sake of concinnity, "Teacher" is required in both parts of the sentence. And it is unlikely that Jesus should here expressly mention himself. He is speaking now of their heavenly Father; to himself he refers in ver. 10. In support of the allusion to the Father, Bengel cites ch. xvi. 17; John vi. 45; Acts x. 28, etc. The Vulgate has, *Unus est enim Magister vester;* and yet Roman Catholic commentators interpret the clause of Christ, in spite of the purposed indefiniteness of the expression. Jesus points to the inspiration of the Father or the Holy Spirit as that which teaches his disciples. They were to follow no earthly rabbi, but the heavenly Teacher. **All ye are brethren.** And therefore, so far, equal. They were disciples of our Lord, and to them appertained equality and fraternity.

Ver. 9.—**Your father.** This was the title given to eminent teachers and founders of schools, to whom the people were taught to look up rather than to God. It was also addressed to prophets (2 Kings ii. 12; vi. 21). In ver. 8 Christ said, "be not called;" here he uses the active, "call not," as if he would intimate that his followers must not give this honoured title to any doctor out of complaisance, or flattery, or affectation. **Upon the earth.** In contradistinction to heaven, where our true Father dwells. They were to follow no earthly school. They had natural fathers and spiritual fathers, but the authority of all comes from God; it is delegated, not essential; and good teachers would make men look to God, and not to themselves, as the source of power and truth.

Ver. 10.—**Neither be ye called masters;** *καθηγηταί: leaders, guides.* This is just what the Pharisees claimed to be (see ver. 16 and Rom. ii. 19, 20). **One is your master** (*Καθηγητής: Leader*), even [*the*] **Christ.** Here Jesus announces himself, not only as their Teacher, but as the Messiah, their Ruler and Guide. He is censuring that sectarian spirit which began in the primitive Church, when one said, "I am of Paul; another, I of Apollos," etc. (1 Cor. i. 12), and has continued to this day in the division of the one body into innumerable sects and parties, ranged under various leaders, and generally bearing their founder's name. "What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him" (1 Cor. iii. 5). How mournful to think that Christ's great prayer for unity (John xvii.) is still unfulfilled, frustrated or delayed by man's self-will!

Ver. 11.—**But he that is greatest . . . your servant;** *διάκονος: minister* (see ch. xx. 26, 27). It was there said to the apostles alone; here it is spoken more publicly to emphasize the contrast between Christian humility and Pharisaical pride and vanity.

Ver. 12.—**Whosever shall exalt himself shall be abased** (*ταπεινωθήσεται, shall be humbled*); **and he that shall humble** (*ταπεινώσει*) **himself shall be exalted.** It is not clear why the rendering of the verb is not uniform in this verse. The antithesis certainly requires it. The gnome, so often repeated (see references), seems to be, as it has been called, "an axiom in the kingdom of God." It is indeed a universal law in God's dealings with men. Olshausen quotes a saying of Hillel to the same purport, "My humility is my exaltation, and my exaltation is my humility." The first clause was prophetic of the speedy overthrow of the haughty Pharisees; the second is grandly illustrated in the example of Christ, who humbled himself to the death of the cross, and is now highly exalted; who "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2). St. Peter draws the lesson, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. v. 5, 6).

Vers. 13—32.—*Eight woes pronounced on the Pharisees for their conduct and teaching.* (Comp. Luke xi. 42—52.)

Ver. 13.—Some authorities transpose vers. 13 and 14—a variation attributable to the circumstance that the commencing clauses are the same. As Christ inaugurated his public teaching by pronouncing eight benedictions in the sermon on the mount, so here he closes his ministry by imprecating or prophesying eight woes on the perverse and unbelieving Pharisees. In Lange's commentary there is proposed a scheme of antithesis between the bene-

dictions and the woes; but it is not very successful, being often forced and unnatural; and it is better to regard the contrast in a general view, and not to attempt to press it in particulars. Jesus here pours forth his righteous anger on those whose obstinate infidelity was about to bring ruin on the Jewish city and nation. **Woe unto you!** (ch. xi. 21). These terrible "woes" are not only evoked by indignation, and pronounced as a solemn judgment, they are also expressive of the profoundest pity, and are prophetic of the future. They have, indeed, a twofold reference—they refer first to temporal judgments and visitations, now ready to fall; and secondly to the retribution in the eternal world. That the meek and lowly Jesus should utter such awful denunciations shows how greatly he was moved, how he left nothing untried to turn these hard hearts to introspection and repentance. **Scribes and Pharisees** (see on ver. 2), **hypocrites** (ch. vi. 2). Christ uses this word seven times in these denunciations. It is applied to the Pharisees as deceiving themselves and others, under the mask of godliness hiding polluted hearts, persuading themselves that formal externalism was real piety and devotion, and practically teaching this fatal delusion. **Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men**; ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων: *before men; ante homines* (Vulgate. This is the *first woe*—against perverse obstructiveness. They prevent men from accepting Christ, and so entering God's kingdom, by their false interpretation of Scripture, by not allowing that it testified of Christ, and by making the path impassable for the poor and ignorant. And this is done "in the face of men," when they are, as it were, thronging round and wishing to enter. "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge," he says, in another place (Luke xi. 52). **Neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.** The kingdom of heaven is here metaphorically regarded as a banqueting-hall, where are celebrated the espousals of Christ and his Church. The Pharisees watched the access thereto. They stood at the door to bar all entrance. If any showed signs of yielding to honest conviction, they sternly forbade them to proceed; they repelled them with violence, as by excommunication (John ix. 22, 34), or by calumniating the Teacher (ch. ix. 34, etc.). There was many a time when the people were ready to acknowledge Christ and to follow him as Messiah. A word from their authorized leaders would have turned the scale in his favour; but that word was never spoken. The weight of authority was always placed on the opposite side, and naught but prejudice, animosity, and slander befell the cause of Jesus.

Ver. 14.—*Second woe*—against rapacity and hypocrisy. There is some doubt about the genuineness of this verse, and our Revisers have expunged it from their text, relegating it to the margin. It is omitted by ℵ, B, D, L, Z, some copies of the Vulgate and some versions; on the other hand, it is found in E, F, G, H, K, M, and other later uncials, and in the received Vulgate and Syriac Versions. Critics reject it as a supposed interpolation from Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47. At any rate, whether spoken now or at another time, it is undoubtedly an utterance of Christ, and to be received with all reverence. **Ye devour widows' houses.** Women who have lost their natural protector become their prey. To these they attach themselves, winning them over by flattery and fraud, and persuading them to assist them with their substance to the ruin of their fortunes. God had always defended the cause of widows, and had urged his people to deal gently and mercifully with them (see Deut. x. 18; xxvii. 19; Ps. lxviii. 5; Isa. i. 17; Luke xviii. 3—7). This woe is followed in St. Luke by the episode of the widow's mite (Luke xx. 47; xxi. 1—4). **And for a pretence make long prayer**; or, *and that, making long prayers for a pretence.* They put on an appearance of extraordinary devotion, that they might more easily secure the favour of the widows; or else they exacted large sums of money, engaging to offer continual prayers for the donors (compare St. Paul's words in 2 Tim. iii. 6). Thus these hypocrites made a gain of godliness at the expense of the most helpless members of the community. Greater (περισσότερον, *more abundant*) damnation. No condemnation in this world or the next can be more justly awarded than to him who adds hypocrisy to covetousness, and makes religion a cloke for cruel rapacity. The comparative may refer to "the lengthened hypocritical prayers which went before" (Lange).

Ver. 15.—*Third woe*—against evil proselytizing. **Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte.** The word προσήλυτος is used in the Septuagint to signify "a stranger" or "sojourner" (Exod. xii. 48, 49, etc.), and at this time was applied to a convert to Judaism (Acts ii. 10; vi. 5), whether circumcised, "a proselyte of righteousness;" or uncircumcised, "a proselyte of the gate." To *compass sea and land* is a proverbial expression, denoting the employment of every means, the exercise of the utmost effort. One might have thought that, in its proud isolation and exclusiveness, Judaism would not have exposed itself to this reproach. But what says Josephus? In more than one passage of his histories he testifies to the zealous propagation of the

Jewish religion, and in some cases the enforcement of circumcision on vanquished enemies (see 'Ant.,' xviii. 3. 5; xx. 2. 4; 'Bell. Jud.,' ii. 17. 10; 'Vita,' § 23). Tacitus ('Hist.,' v. 5) gives a most unfavourable account of the numerous converts which Hebrews made throughout the Roman provinces; and St. Augustine ('De Civit.,' vi. 11) quotes Seneca saying, "Cum interim usque eo sceleratissimæ gentis consuetudo convaluit, ut per omnes jam terras recepta sit, victi victoribus leges dederunt" (Edersheim). For similar testimony, we may refer to Horace, 'Sat.,' i. 4. 142, 143; and Juvenal, 'Sat.,' vi. 541, etc. But it was not proselytizing in itself that the Lord censured. As possessing revelation and the only true religion in the world, the Jews might well have deemed it their business to enlighten the gross darkness of heathenism, and to endeavour to shed abroad the pure light which was confided to their care to tend and cherish. That they were not expressly commanded to do this, and that little blessing attended their efforts in this direction, was dependent upon the transitory and imperfect character of the old covenant, and the many evils which would be consequent upon association with alien peoples. In making converts, the Pharisees sought rather to secure outward conformity than inward piety, change of external religion than change of heart. There was no love of souls, no burning zeal for the honour of God, in their proselytism. They were prompted only by selfish and base motives—vain-glory, party spirit, covetousness; and if they converted men to their own opinions, with their false tenets, gross externalism, and practical immorality, they had far better have left them in their irresponsible ignorance. **When he is made**; *when he is become* a proselyte. **Twofold more the child of hell**; *a son of Gehenna*; i.e. worthy of hell fire. So we have 2 Sam. xii. 5, "a son of death;" John xvii. 12, "the son of perdition" (comp. 2 Thess. ii. 3). The converts became doubly the children of hell because, seeing the iniquities of their teachers, they learned an evil lesson from them, "engrafted the vices of the Jews on the vices of the heathen," distrusted all goodness, discarded their old religion and disbelieved the new, making utter shipwreck of their moral life. "Ita natura comparati sumus," says an old commentator, "ut vitia potius quam virtutes imitemur, et in rebus malis a discipulis magistri facile superentur."

Ver. 16.—*Fourth woe*—against evasive distinctions in oaths. **Ye blind guides.** They were by profession leaders and guides, and yet by their literalism and externalism they lost the true significance of the Scriptures which they taught, and the ritual of which they were the exponents. The Lord repeats the epithet "blind" (vers. 17, 19, 24). **Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing.** Our Lord seems to refer more especially to oaths connected with vows, of which he had already spoken (ch. xv. 5, 6). The arbitrary distinction between oaths was indeed an instance of moral blindness. An oath by the temple was not binding; it might be broken or evaded with impunity. **By the gold of the temple**—*i.e.* by the sacred treasure and ornaments therein—**he is a debtor** (ὀφείλει); he is bound by his oath. The casuistry employed by the Jews in this matter was well known, and had become proverbial among the heathen. F.M. quotes Martial, xi. 94—

"Ecce negas, jurasque mihi per templa Tonantis,
'Non credo: jura, verpe, per Anchialum.'"

"Anchialum" is equivalent to *am chai aloh*, "as God liveth," the Jew (*verpus*, "circumcised") being bound by no oath but one that contained some letters of the Divine name or some attribute of God.

Ver. 17.—**Ye fools.** Jesus adds to "blind" the epithet "fools," which implies not only the irrationality and absurdity of their practice, but also its moral delinquency, the fool in sapiential language being the sinner. **The temple that sanctifieth the gold.** Our Lord shows the absurdity of this sophistical distinction. It was because the temple was the place of God's presence that what was therein was consecrated. The gold was nothing without the temple; the temple, the originally holy, is superior to the gold, the derivatively holy, and an oath that calls the temple to witness is surely obligatory.

Ver. 18.—**By the altar.** The great altar of burnt offerings, according to the Mosaic ritual, was consecrated and dedicated with most remarkable solemnities, as the centre of sacrificial worship (see Exod. xxix. 36, etc.; xxx. 28, 29; Numb. vii. 10, etc.). **The gift that is upon it.** The victim, which, as being offered by themselves, was counted more worthy than the altar of God which sanctified the gift. This is, indeed, an instance of sight blinded by self-righteousness. **He is guilty**; ὀφείλει: *he is a debtor*, as ver. 16. Others see here the principle that the validity of oaths was differentiated by the nearness to the Person of God of the things by which they were taken. This, too, opened up large opportunities of evasion.

Ver. 19.—Our Lord repeats the unanswerable argument of ver. 17. **That sanctifieth the gift.** Exod. xxix. 37. "It shall be an altar most holy; whatsoever toucheth

the altar shall be holy" (comp. Ezek. xli. 22). The offering is one with the altar.

Ver. 20.—**Sweareth by it, etc.** One can see what an inveterate evil our Lord was denouncing, when he takes such pains to point out its absurdities, which seem to us self-evident. The oath by the altar involves the notion of the victim as well as the altar; one cannot be separated from the other; and, of course, implies him to whom the offering is made.

Ver. 21.—**By him that dwelleth therein.** In fact, it comes to this: to swear by temple or altar is to swear by God—an oath most solemn, which may not be evaded. "That dwelleth" *is* in some manuscripts the aorist participle, κατοικήσαντι, implying that God once for all took up his abode in the temple, and filled it with his ineffable presence (see 1 Kings viii. 13; Ps. cxxii. 14). From such passages we learn that God sanctifies things and places to be devoted to his service, and to be accounted by men holy and separated from all common uses. The Authorized Version translates the received text, κατοικοῦντι, which has good authority, the past participle being, perhaps, a correction by some scribe who thought that the day of Judaism was past when Christ spoke.

Ver. 22.—**By heaven.** The Talmudists affirm that an oath "by heaven" or "by earth" was not binding, on the ground, probably, that these were mere creatures. Christ again dissipates such sophistries. To swear by the creature is virtually to swear by the Creator. A brute, inanimate thing cannot be witness to an oath; he alone can be appealed to who owns all. Thus we "kiss the book," calling God to witness our words. Christ had already given a lesson to his followers on this subject in the sermon on the mount (ch. v. 34—37). He inculcates true reverence, that fear and awe of God's dignity and God's presence which constrains a man to avoid all profaneness and carelessness in regard to things that are concerned with God.

Vers. 23, 24.—*Fifth woe*—against scrupulosity in trifles and neglect of weighty duties (Luke xi. 42). **Ye pay tithe of** (ἀποδεκατοῦτε, *ye tithe*) **mint and anise and cummin.** Practically, the law of tithe was enforced only in the case of the produce mentioned in Deut. xiv. 23—corn, wine, and oil—but the Pharisees, in their overstrained scrupulosity, applied the law of Lev. xxvii. 30 ("all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's") to the smallest pot-herbs, even to their leaves and stalks. "Mint" (ἡδύοσμον). Of this well-known plant several species grow in Palestine; it was one of the ingredients of the sauce of bitter herbs eaten at the Paschal feast (Exod. xii. 8), and was hung up in the synagogue for its fragrance. "Anise" (ἄνηθον) is known to us as "dill," and is much used in medicine and for seasoning. "Cummin" (κύμινον) (Isa. xxviii. 25, 27), an umbelliferous plant, with seeds something like caraways, and used, like them, as a condiment and medicine. **Have omitted the weightier matters of the Law.** The Pharisees were very far from treating important duties with the same scrupulosity which they observed in little matters. Christ particularizes these weighty duties: **Judgment, (*and*) mercy, and faith.** Three are named, in contrast to the three petty observances mentioned above. Christ seems to refer to the words of Micah vi. 8, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (see also Hos. xii. 6; Zech. vii. 9, 10). Worthless are all outward observances when the moral precepts are neglected. "Judgment" (τὴν κρίσιν) means acting equitably to one's neighbour, hurting nobody by word or deed; as in Jer. v. 1 a man is sought "that exerciseth justice." Such impartiality is specially enjoined in the Law (Deut. xvi. 19, etc.). "Mercy," loving-kindness in conduct, often taught in the Pentateuch, as in the case of the widow, the stranger, and the debtor, and very different from the feeling of those who "devour widows' houses." "Faith" may mean fidelity to promises: "He that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance" (Ps. xv. 4); but it is more probably taken as that belief in God without which it is not possible to please him, and which should underlie and influence all moral action (Heb. xi. 6). **These** (ταῦτα) . . . **the other** (ἐκεῖνα). "These last" are judgment, mercy, and faith; these it was your duty to have done. "The other" refers to the tithing mentioned above. Christ does not censure this attention to minutiæ. He would teach conformity to regulations made by competent authority, or conscientiously felt to be binding, even though not distinctly enjoined in Scripture (see vers. 2, 3); his blame is reserved for that expenditure of zeal on trifles which stood in the place of, or left no strength for, higher duties. It was a very elastic conscience which tithed a pot-herb and neglected judgment. **Strain at a gnat;** διϋλίζοντες τὸν κώνωπα. "At" is supposed to be a misprint for "out." Thus Revised Version, and early English versions, *which strain out the gnat;* Vulgate, *excolantes culicem.* Alford thinks the present reading was an intentional alteration, meaning "strain (out the wine) at (the occurrence of) a gnat"—which seems more ingenious than probable If "at" be retained, it

must be taken as expressive of the fastidiousness which had to make a strong effort to overcome its distaste at this little insect. The wine, before drinking, was carefully strained through linen (see Amos vi. 6, "strained wine," Septuagint) to avoid the accidental violation of Lev. xi. 20, 23, etc.; xvii. 10—14, by swallowing an unclean insect. The practice, which was in some sense a religious act, is found among the Buddhists in Hindostan and Ceylon, either to avoid pollution or to obviate the danger of taking life, which their code forbids. A (*the*) camel. The gnat and the camel, which were alike unclean, stand at the extremities of the scale of comparative size. Our Lord uses a proverbial expression to denote the inconsistency which would avoid the smallest ceremonial defilement, but would take no account of the gravest moral pollution.

Ver. 25.—The *sixth woe*—against merely external purification (Mark vii. 4; Luke xi. 39). Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter. Thus the Lord typically denotes the Pharisees' external ceremonialism, their legal purity. They looked, so to speak, to the cleanliness of the outside of the cup that contained their drink, and the platter that held their food. Such cleansing would, of course, have no effect on the drink or meat itself. They are full of (*γέμουσιν ἐξ, are full from*) extortion and excess (*ἁρπαγῆς*). For this last word the manuscripts offer many variations, arising, probably, from its uncommoness. It seems, however, to be genuine. But we find it altered into "unrighteousness," "impurity," Vulgate, *immunditia*, "intemperance," "covetousness," "wickedness." The vessels are conceived as filled with contents acquired by violence and used without self-control.

Ver. 26.—Thou blind Pharisee. The address is in the singular number, to give vividness and personal effect, and the epithet accentuates the absurdity censured. Cleanse first that which is within. They must learn to reverse their practice. If you wanted to have your food pure, you would clean the inside of your vessel more carefully than the outside. The external purity should proceed from and be a token of the internal. So in the case of the moral agent, the ceremonial purity is a mockery and hypocrisy unless it be accompanied by holiness of the heart. That the outside of them may be (*γένηται, may become*) clean also. However fair to see, the man is not pure unless his soul is clean; he cannot be called pure while the higher part of his being is soiled and foul with sin. And inward saintliness cannot be hidden; it shines forth in the countenance; it is known by speech and action; it sheds sunshine wherever it goes. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23).

Vers. 27, 28.—*Seventh woe*—against another form of the same hypocrisy (Luke xi. 44). Whited (*κεκονιαμένοις*) sepulchres. Once a year, about the fifteenth of the month Adar, the Jews used to whitewash the tombs and the places where corpses were buried, partly out of respect for the dead, but chiefly in order to make them conspicuous, and thus to obviate the risk of persons incautiously contracting ceremonial defilement by touching or walking over them (Numb. xix. 16). To such sepulchres our Lord compares these Pharisees, because their outwardly fair show concealed rottenness within (comp. Acts xxiii. 3). Indeed, it might be said that their seeming exceptional purity was a warning of internal corruption, a sign-post to point to hidden defilement. Obtrusive religiousness, emphatic scrupulosity, are marks of pride and self-righteousness, utterly alien from real devotion and holiness.

Vers. 29—32.—*Eighth woe*—against hypocritical honour paid to departed worthies (Luke xi. 47).

Ver. 29.—Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous; or, *adorn the monuments of the just*. In the last woe Christ had spoken of sepulchres; he speaks of them here again, giving an unexpected view of the seeming honours paid to departed saints. The sumptuous mausoleums and tombs found *e.g.* round Jerusalem, and bearing the names of celebrated men (such as Zechariah, Absalom, Jehoshaphat), sufficiently attest the practice of the Jews in this matter. But the Pharisees' motives in acting thus were not pure; they were not influenced by respect for the prophets or repentance for national sins, but by pride, hypocrisy, and self-sufficiency. The present was a great age for building; witness Herod's magnificent undertakings; and probably many gorgeous tombs in honour of ancient worthies were now erected or renovated.

Ver. 30.—And say. They boasted that they were better than their fathers; they disavowed their crimes, and endeavoured, by honouring the prophets' graves, to deliver themselves from the guilt of those who persecuted them. Fair show, with no reality! They professed to venerate the dead, but would not receive the living; they reverenced Abraham and Moses, but were about to murder the Christ to whom patriarch and prophet bore witness. Commentators quote the old adage, herein exemplified, "Sit licet divus, dummodo non vivus." The only practical way of deliver-

ing themselves from the guilt of their forefathers was by hearkening to those who now preached the gospel of salvation—the very last thing which they were purposed to do.

Ver. 31.—**Ye be witnesses unto yourselves.** By busying yourselves about adorning the tombs of the prophets slain by your ancestors, you show your descent and the spirit which animates you. **Ye are the children**; *ye are sons.* They were true sons of their fathers, inheriting their murderous instincts, following their steps. Like father, like son. They inherited and put in practice the same false principles which led their ancestors astray.

Ver. 32.—**Fill ye up then**; καὶ ὑμεῖς πληρώσατε: *do ye also* (as well as they) *fill up.* An imperative, expressive of Divine irony, containing virtually a prophecy. Complete your evil work, finish that which your fathers began (comp. John xiii. 27). **The measure.** There is a certain limit to iniquity; when this is reached, punishment falls. The metaphor is derived from a full cup, which a single drop more will make overflow. This added drop would be the death of Christ and the persecution of his followers. Then vengeance must follow (comp. Gen. xv. 16; 1 Thess. ii. 16)

Vers. 33—39.—*Declaration of the sentence on these Pharisees and their generation.*

Ver. 33.—**Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers**; γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν: *offspring of vipers.* Our Lord repeats the Baptist's denunciation (ch. iii. 7). They were of devilish nature, inherited from their very birth the disposition and character of Satan. So Christ said on another occasion, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth" (John viii. 44). **How can ye escape!** Πῶς φύγητε; the deliberative conjunctive, *How shall ye escape? Quo modo fugietis?* (Vulgate). There is no emphasis on "can" in the Authorized Version. What hope is there now of your repentance? Can anything soften the hardness of your hearts? The Baptist had spoken more hopefully, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" But now the day of grace is past; the sin against the Holy Ghost is committed; there remaineth only the fearful looking for of judgment. **The damnation of hell**; literally, *the judgment of Gehenna; judicio Gehennæ* (Vulgate); *i.e.* the sentence that condemns to eternal death (ch. v. 22). The phrase is common in the rabbinical writings (see Lightfoot). "Before sinning, we ought to fear lest it be the *filling up*; after sinning, we should trust in a truly Christian hope that it is not, and repent. This is the only means to escape the *damnation of hell*; but how rare is this grace after a pharisaical life!" (Quesnel). Hypocrisy is a bar to repentance.

Ver. 34.—**Wherefore**; διὰ τοῦτο. **Because** ye are resolved on imitating your forefathers' iniquities, you will also reject the messengers that are sent to you, and shall suffer righteous condemnation. **I send** (ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω) **unto you.** The sending had already begun. In the parallel passage of St. Luke (xi. 49) we read, "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send." Christ is the Wisdom of God, and by his own authority gives mission to his messengers. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21), he says to his apostles; and to such he is referring in the words which follow. **Prophets.** The apostles were of like character, inspiration, and influence as the prophets under the old dispensation, and succeeded in their place as exponents of God's will and heralds of the covenant. **Wise men.** Men full of the Holy Ghost and heavenly wisdom. **Scribes.** Not in the then Jewish sense, but instructors in the new law of life, the law of Christ's religion (ch. xiii. 52). All the means of teaching and edification employed aforetime were abundantly and more effectually supplied under the gospel. St. Luke has, "prophets and apostles." **Kill**; as Stephen (Acts vii. 59), James (Acts xii. 2). **Crucify**; as Peter (John xxi. 18, 19; 2 Pet. i. 14); Simeon (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 32); and probably Andrew. **Scourge** (see Acts v. 40; xxii. 19; xxvi. 11; 2 Cor. xi. 24, 25). **Persecute** (see Acts xiii. 50; xiv. 5, 6, 19, 20; xxvi. 11; and compare Christ's prediction, ch. x. 17, 18). The passage in the Second (Fourth) Book of Esdras i. 32, which is strikingly parallel to our Lord's denunciation, may possibly be a Christian interpolation, "I sent unto you my servants the prophets, whom ye have taken and slain, and torn their bodies in pieces, whose blood I will require of your hands, saith the Lord."

Ver. 35.—**That upon you may come** (ὅπως ἔλθῃ). This phrase does not express a simple consequence, neither can it mean "in such a way that"—explanations which have been given by some commentators to avoid a seeming difficulty in the final sense; but it is to be translated, as usually, *in order that, ut veniat.* God, foreseeing the issues of their evil heart, puts in their way occasions which will aid his vengeance and accelerate the time of their punishment. He lets them work out their own destruction by committing an unpardonable sin. He does not force them into this course of conduct; they can resist the opportunity if they will; but he knows they will not do so, and the visi-

tation becomes judgment. To have a man's blood upon one's head is to be held guilty of the crime of murder, and to be liable to make the required atonement for it. So in their blind fury, taking the punishment on themselves, the Jews a little later cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" (ch. xxvii. 25). **Righteous blood.** So in the Old Testament we often find such expressions as "innocent blood" (2 Kings xxi. 16; xxiv. 4; Jer. xxvi. 15); "blood of the just" (Lam. iv. 13); comp. Rev. vi. 10 and xviii. 24, where it is written that in Babylon "was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all them that were slain upon the earth." **Righteous Abel.** The first of the murdered, the prototype of the death of Christ and of all good men who have died for truth, religion, and justice (Gen. iv. 8; 1 John iii. 12). The catalogue of such is long and terrible. Our Lord assigns a period to its dimensions, commencing with the first death mentioned in the Bible, and ending with the murder of **Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple** (*τοῦ ναοῦ, the sanctuary*) **and the altar.** Our Lord is speaking of a past event well known to his hearers; but who this Zacharias was is much disputed. Origen mentions a tradition, otherwise entirely unsupported, that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was the son of Barachiah, and was murdered in the temple. But the story looks as if it was made to relieve the difficulty of identification; neither, as far as we know, was he a prophet. Zechariah, the minor prophet, was the son of Berechiah; but we read nothing of his being slain in the temple or elsewhere. It is true that Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' iv. 5. 4) tells how a "Zacharias, son of Baruch," an honourable man, was slain by the zealots in the temple. But this murder took place A.D. 68, and our Lord could not number it among past crimes, or speak of it as an event familiar to those who heard him. The only other prophet of this name in the Bible is one mentioned in 2 Chron. xxiv. 20—22, as stoned by the people at the command of Joash, in the court of the house of the Lord. "And when he died," it is added, "he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it." This makes his case correspond to that of Abel, the voice of whose blood cried unto God from the ground. He is also the last prophet whose death is recorded in the Old Testament, and the guilt of whose murder, the Jews say, was not purged till the temple was burned under Nebuchadnezzar. It seems to be a kind of proverbial saying which the Lord here uses, equivalent to "from the first murdered saint to the last," taking the arrangement of the Hebrew canon of Scripture, and regarding the Books of Chronicles as the conclusion of Jewish history. This (though it would exclude the murder of other prophets, *e.g.* Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.) would all be plain enough and quite appropriate to the context were it not that the Zechariah thus referred to was the son of Jehoiada, not of Barachias. But there are two solutions of this difficulty suggested; and, allowing either of these, we may confidently assert that the above-named prophet is the personage intended. (1) The words, "son of Barachias" may be an early interpolation, introduced by a copyist who was thinking of the minor prophet. They are omitted by the first corrector of the Sinaitic Manuscript, are not found in the parallel passage of St. Luke (xi. 51), and Jerome remarks that in the 'Gospel of the Nazarenes' was read "son of Joiada." (2) There may have been family reasons, unknown to us, why Zechariah was thus designated (see the commentators on our Lord's genealogy in St. Luke iii., especially on ver. 23, "son of Heli," ver. 27, "son of Salathiel," and ver. 36, "son of Cainan"). Or Jehoiada may have had two names, as so many Jews had. Indeed, the two appellations are not altogether dissimilar in meaning, *Jehoiada* signifying "Jehovah knoweth," and *Barachiah*, "Jehovah blesseth." Or again, Barachiah may have been the father of Zechariah, and Jehoiada the more famous grandfather. It has been suggested (by Morison, *in loc.*) that one of the monuments recently erected in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem was dedicated to Zacharias. Such a one still bears his name. Hence Christ's allusion is very natural after his statement in ver. 29. The scene of the murder was the open space in the priests' court, between the holy place and the great altar of sacrifice. The sanctity of this spot made the crime abnormally atrocious.

Ver. 36.—**All these things.** All the crimes committed by their forefathers shall be visited upon this generation by the destruction of the Jewish city and polity, which took place within forty years from this time. The blood of the past was required from the Jews of the present time, because they and their evil ancestors were of one family, and were to be dealt with as a whole. In spite of the teaching of history and example, in spite of the warnings of Christ and his apostles, they were bent on repeating the acts of their forefathers, and that in an aggravated form and against increased light and knowledge. The punishment here announced is the temporal reward. Christ here says nothing of the final judgment.

Ver. 37.—**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!** Pathetic iteration! As he approached the

city on another occasion Christ had used the same words (Luke xiii. 34, 35); he repeats them now as he takes his final farewell. He speaks with Divine tenderness, yet with poignant sorrow, knowing that this last appeal will be in vain. It has been remarked that, whereas St. Matthew elsewhere names the capital city, the theocratic centre, Hierosolyma, which is the Greek equivalent, he here calls it Hierousalem, which is Hebrew, as though, while recording the words used by Jesus, he desired to reproduce the actual sound of the Saviour's affecting address. **Killest . . . stonest.** Such is thy wont, thy evil practice. So Christ says elsewhere, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke xiii. 33). "Stonest" was particularly appropriate after the reference to Zechariah (2 Chron. xxiv. 20). **Sent unto thee.** The received Greek is, *sent unto it* or *her* (πρὸς αὐτήν), though some manuscripts and the Vulgate give "thee." But the change of persons is not uncommon. Alford quotes Luke i. 45; xiii. 34; Rev. xviii. 24. **How often!** Some would confine Christ's allusion to his own mission in Judæa, and the efforts made by him to win disciples; but it surely applies to all the doings and visitations of God towards Israel during the whole course of their history, which showed his gracious desire that all should be saved, if they only had willed with him. He hereby asserts himself as one with the God of the Old Testament. Christ's ministry in Jerusalem and Judæa is mentioned by St. John. **Gathered . . . wings.** A tender similitude, which is found in the Old Testament and in classic authors. It implies love, care, and protection. Thus the psalmist prays, "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings;" "In the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (Ps. xvii. 8; lvii. 1); comp. Deut. xxxii. 11; Isa. xxxi. 5, etc. So Euripides, 'Here. Fur.,' 72—

"The children whom I cherish 'neath my wings,
As a bird cowering o'er her youthful brood."

The metaphor is peculiarly appropriate at the time, when, as Lange puts it, the Roman eagles were hovering near, and there was no hope of safety but under the Lord's wings. **And ye would not.** Unmoved by warning and chastisement, impenetrable to long-suffering love, ungrateful for mercies, the Jews repulsed all efforts for their amendment, and blindly pursued the course of ruin. It was always in their power to turn if they willed, but they wilfully resisted grace, and must suffer accordingly (comp. Isa. xxx. 15).

Ver. 38.—**Your house.** The temple or Jerusalem, no longer God's habitation. This betokens not only Christ's solemn departure from the sacred precincts, but the withdrawal of God's Spirit from the Jewish Church and nation. **Unto you.** Henceforward ye shall have it all to yourselves; my Father and I forsake it; we give it up altogether to you. **Desolate.** The word is omitted by some few uncials, but retained by ℵ, C, D, etc., most cursives, the Vulgate, etc. The protecting wing is withdrawn, and the Divine presence removed, and the house is indeed deserted (ἔρημος); (comp. Ps. lix. 25; Jer. xii. 7).

Ver. 39.—**Ye shall not see me henceforth.** Christ explains the denunciation just given. In a few days he will be separated from them by death and burial; and, though he appeared to certain chosen witnesses after his resurrection, he was seen no more by the people (Acts x. 41); their house was deserted. Some take the word "see" in the sense of know, recognize; but it seems rather weak to say, "Ye shall not know me till ye acknowledge me as Messiah," as the knowing and acknowledging are practically identical or simultaneous. **Till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!** The words which had greeted his triumphal entry a few days before (ch. xxi. 9). The clause, "till ye shall say," does not shut the door of hope for ever; it looks forward to a happier prospect. The time intended is that when Israel shall repent of its rejection of the Messiah, and in bitter contrition look on him whom it pierced, owning and receiving Jesus with glad "Hosanna's!" Then shall they behold him coming in power and glory, and shall regain their old position as beloved of God (see Hos. iii. 4, 5; Zech. xii. 10). Then "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26). Thus this terrible chapter, so dark and menacing, closes with a glow of hope and a promise, indefinite but certain, of final restoration.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The scribes and Pharisees.* I. THEIR CHARACTER. 1. *Their position.* "They sit in Moses' seat." The scribes were the recognized teachers of the Law. The Pharisees exercised the greatest influence in the council and among the nation at large. Moses sat to judge the people (Exod. xviii. 13); now the scribes taught and

expounded the Law. Therefore the Lord enjoined obedience to their precepts. But we must mark the word "therefore." They were to be obeyed because they sat in Moses' seat—as the successors, in some sense, to his authority, as the expounders of his Law. So far they were to be obeyed; but not, the Lord himself elsewhere cautions us, in their misinterpretations, in their contrivances for evading the plain meaning of the Law, in their many quibbles and their endless distinctions. We see here that the Lord bids us obey constituted authorities in all things lawful. Those who are set over us may not always be orthodox in their opinions; their characters may not always command our respect; but the very fact that they are set over us makes it our duty to treat them with respect and to obey their directions, whenever such obedience is not inconsistent with our duty to God. Submission to our superiors, even if they are unworthy of their position, is an exercise of humility, and agreeable to the will of God; for "the powers that be are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisted the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." We observe that the Lord does not here condemn the priests. They do not seem, *as a body*, to have taken a prominent place in the opposition to his teaching. The chief priests, who were Sadducees, did so. But we are told, early in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." "The priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his mouth." But in our Lord's time a separation had been made between the duties of the teacher and the priest. The scribes taught the people; the priests ministered in the temple. The scribes, puffed up with their minute knowledge of the letter of the Law, were intensely antagonistic to the holy Teacher who brought out its spiritual meaning. The priests, excepting always their Sadducean leaders, do not seem to have been so hostile. They were occupied with their temple ministrations; they were, as a body, not recognized as public teachers, and were probably not so influential as the scribes, not brought so prominently before the eyes of the people. The Lord came to fulfil the Law. He attended the great festivals; he bade the leper whom he healed to show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded. He did not interfere with the ministrations of the priests, nor does he here censure their life and conduct. The chief priests were hostile to him, probably because he exercised authority in the temple which they regarded as their own domain, and diminished their revenues by expelling the traffickers from the sacred precincts. The scribes opposed the Lord, so did the chief priests; in both cases from selfish motives. Let us beware of selfishness, and fight against it. It poisons the very life of the soul; it sets men against the Lord; it leads them to say in their hearts, "Not thy will, but mine be done." 2. *Their conduct.* (1) "They say, and do not," the Lord said. They made the Law a heavy burden, a yoke which men were not able to bear, by their practice of "making a fence round the Law." Such were their rigid and wearisome regulations about the observance of the sabbath, and the minute rules concerning the washing of vessels mentioned by St. Mark (vii. 4). But they themselves would not help to move that burden with one of their fingers. The teacher who lives a holy, self-denying life helps men by his example to bear the burden which he lays upon them. His conduct proves the reality of his convictions; it shows the strength of the motives which he enforces, the power of that grace which he preaches. Preaching, without practice, as in the case of the scribes, has little sanctifying influence, cannot much help men to deny themselves and lead a godly life. A life of real self-denial is the most convincing sermon. (2) All their works they did "for to be seen of men." They did not care for that inward purity of heart which does not win human praise. They strove to catch the eyes of men by the outward show of devotion. They delighted in phylacteries larger than usual, in borders and fringes more conspicuous than those commonly worn. There was no harm in wearing the phylactery or the fringe; the one was certainly ordered by the Law, probably also the other. The harm lay in the desire to attract attention, in the craving for display, in the tendency to exalt these outward things above inner spiritual religion. (3) They coveted pre-eminence; they eagerly desired the chief places at feast or at synagogue; they liked to hear themselves called "Rabbi, Rabbi." Their religion was outside show; they had no real love for God, no desire for spiritual holiness.

II. THE CONTRAST. 1. *The disciples of Christ must not seek for titles of honour.*

"Be not ye called Rabbi," the Lord said. There is one Teacher, one Father, one Master. The Lord's people must not seek for distinctions, for pre-eminence; they are all brethren. We are not to take the words literally. To do so would be to follow the Pharisees. They were slaves of the letter; the Lord's lessons are spiritual. St. Peter speaks of Mark as his son; so does St. Paul of Timothy and Titus; he describes himself as the spiritual father of his Corinthian converts (1 Cor. iv. 15). St. John addresses some to whom he writes as "fathers" (1 John ii. 13). In the Epistle to the Hebrews (xiii. 7, 17) we are bidden to obey them that have the rule over us, where the Greek verb is that from which the word rendered "master" in ver. 10 is derived. But Christian men are not to seek after these and such-like titles; they are not to set store by them. If they come to us in the course of God's providence, we may accept them. To reject them might be no true humility, but only the affectation of it. The difficult lesson is to be humble in heart, in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves. 2. *They must be truly humble.* The greatest, the most advanced Christians, will readily consent to be last of all and servants of all; for every advance in holiness brings us nearer to him who took upon him the form of a servant, and came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It is a first principle in Christ's religion that "whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." The Lord uses these words again and again (Luke xiv. 11; xviii. 14). His apostles echo them (Jas. iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5). The Lord Jesus had taught the blessedness of humility in the first of the Beatitudes. He illustrated his lesson in his own holy character, in the meekness and lowliness of his life. But the lesson is very high and difficult, hard for human nature to learn. Therefore it is enforced constantly in Holy Scripture, that this frequent repetition may help us to feel its deep importance, and urge us to cultivate that precious grace of lowliness without which we can make no real progress in the narrow way that leadeth unto life. The Pharisees exalted themselves. They loved sounding titles, high place, the praise of men. The Christian must learn of Christ to abase himself. Self-exaltation leads to spiritual ruin; for "God resisteth the proud."

LESSONS. 1. Obey in all things lawful those who are set over you, not only the good and gentle, but also the froward. 2. Better to do and say not, than, like the Pharisees, to say and do not. 3. Flee from the love of display; it poisons the life of the soul. 4. Pray earnestly for constant growth in humility.

VERS. 13—31.—*Condemnation of their hypocrisy.* THE EIGHT WOES. 1. *The first.* The reiterated "Woe unto you!" is an expression of holy indignation. Christ, the righteous Judge, denounces the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He knew the hardness, the impenitence of their hearts, and in his awful justice he pronounces their condemnation. Yet those very woes are also utterances of holy sorrow. The word is thrice rendered "alas!" in Rev. xviii. (see also ch. xxiv. 19). The Lord grieves over the sinners (see ver. 37) while he condemns them. The woe must come upon the impenitent; the Lord knew it in his Divine foreknowledge; he foretells it now. His words are stern, very terrible; but it is the sternness of holy love. He cared for the souls of those scribes and Pharisees; he had wept over them as he drew near to the city two days before; he closes this awful denunciation of the Divine wrath with the most touching outburst of grief. He spoke in tones of warning, if so be that even now these hard-hearted men might learn to know the terrors of the Lord, might repent and be saved. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" The awful words come again and again, like the refrain of a dirge of intense sadness. It was this hypocrisy that was killing their souls. God requireth truth in the inward parts; he searcheth the hearts; he knoweth all things; he is the God of truth; he hateth falsehood. These men were acting a part; their whole life was a lie; they cared only for the appearance of piety; they had no wish to be really holy. They said their prayers; they did not wish to have the things for which they prayed; they did not even try to live as they prayed. They read their Bibles; they pretended to honour them and to believe in them; they had no real faith; they made no attempt at all to regulate their lives according to God's Holy Word. Nothing is more hateful in God's sight than hypocrisy; it is unbelief; the hypocrite does not really believe in God's omniscience, that he readeth the hearts of men. Hypocrisy is an acted lie, and it is the devil who

is the father of lies. God loveth truth. These hypocrites, the Lord said, shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. The kingdom of heaven was the Christian Church which the Lord had come to establish upon earth. There were multitudes willing to listen to the gospel of the kingdom, ready to enter in. But the Pharisees closed the way; they brought all their great influence to bear upon the work of obstruction. They would not enter into the kingdom themselves; they were like the guests first bidden in the parable of the marriage supper. And they hindered them that were entering in, who were on the point of becoming Christ's disciples. When the people were amazed at his mighty works, and said, "Is not this the Son of David?" the Pharisees interfered with their envious and malicious suggestions, and dared to attribute the miracles of the blessed Saviour to the agency of Satan. They agreed that if any man did confess that he was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. So they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. They set themselves in direct opposition to the gracious will of God, to the Saviour's work of love, opposing him now, as afterwards they opposed his apostles—"forbidding us," says St. Paul (1 Thess. ii. 16), "to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." Upon those who fight against God, who hinder the work of his servants, who try to check the progress of the gospel, the woe must come, the heavy wrath of God must surely fall upon them. 2. *The second woe.* Ver. 14 has apparently been inserted here from Mark xii. 40 and Luke xx. 47, where it is certainly genuine. The scribes were like those false teachers described by St. Paul in 2 Tim. iii. 6. They made a profit of their reputation for knowledge and sanctity, imposing upon weak women. They were not what the Lord bade his apostles to be, fishers of men's souls, but they fished for their money. They made long prayers, but their prayers were more acting; they were addressed in reality not to God, but to men, to those widows and others whose favour they sought for filthy lucre's sake. Therefore, the Lord said, they should receive greater condemnation. They were not only hypocrites; they were covetous, dishonest. The condemnation of the hypocrite would fall upon them, and the condemnation of the thief. The affectation of piety for the sake of selfish gain is awful guilt in the sight of the all-holy Lord. We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. That tremendous ransom ought to give depth, reality, zeal, to our religion. It is grievous sin to substitute earthly motives for that one only Christian motive, grateful love for our Redeemer. 3. *The third woe.* The Pharisees were not without zeal; they had zeal enough; they were fanatics; they would compass sea and land to make a single proselyte. But their zeal was party zeal. Party spirit had taken the place of religion in their hearts; they would work hard for their party; they would not deny themselves to please God. Their missionary zeal, such as it was, brought no glory to Almighty God, saved no souls. The proselyte, once made, became twofold more the child of hell than his teachers, more bigoted, more devoted to party, narrower and more exclusive, prouder of the privileges of Judaism than even those who had been born Jews. They should have been children of the kingdom; alas! they were children of hell; for there is no place in the kingdom of heaven for hypocrites, but only for the true worshippers, who worship God in spirit and in truth. The devil is the father of lies; those whose worship is a lie must have their place with him. 4. *The fourth woe.* They were blind guides, fools and blind. They professed to be teachers; they despised the untaught. "This people," they said, "who knoweth not the Law are cursed" (John vii. 49). But they were ignorant themselves; they did not understand the very ritual which they prized so highly. Their teaching was full of puerile and false distinctions. An oath by the temple, they said, was not binding, neither an oath by the altar; but he was a debtor who swore by the gold of the temple or by the gift that lay upon the altar. They who taught such untruth, such folly, were fools and blind indeed. They did not understand the order of consecration; the gold was sacred only because it belonged to the temple, which was the house of God; the gift was sacred only because it was offered upon the altar, which was the table of the Lord. The gold derived its sacredness from the temple, the gift from the altar. The Lord recognizes the reverence which is due to consecrated things and places. We may find God everywhere; we may worship him everywhere, not only at Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim; but in the present limitations and con-

ditions of our human nature it is necessary for us that special places should be dedicated to his service, and associated in our thoughts with his presence and his worship. The sacredness of things or places is derived entirely from that association with God's presence and service. Then to swear by them—by the altar, or by the temple, or by heaven his dwelling-place, is to swear by him whose presence alone giveth consecration even to the heavens. Every oath is in reality an appeal to God; the omission of his name does not avoid the awfulness of reference to him. Then the Lord's disciples may not swear, save under those solemn circumstances when an oath is required by the magistrate and sanctioned by Holy Scripture. No evasions, no pitiful distinctions, like those of the scribes, no substitution of less sacred words, can make the ordinary use of oaths lawful, or even harmless. 5. *The fifth woe.* Their religion consisted in small outward observances; it had no inner truth; they affected a scrupulous conscientiousness in things infinitely little, while they omitted the weightier matters of the Law. Scrupulous exactness in the payment of tithes and in Levitical purifications were the distinguishing characteristics of the Pharisaic fraternity. It was well enough to pay the insignificant tithe on common garden herbs; but ostentatious carefulness about this and such-like trifles, combined with carelessness about the great inner realities of personal religion, showed the hollow hypocrisy of their lives. They would strain out the gnat, the small ritual offence, and swallow the camel, the huge uncleanness of soul-defiling sin. Judgment, mercy, and faith were the weightier matters of the Law, unspeakably more important than the details of outward ordinances. To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, were, the prophets said, better than thousands of burnt offerings. The Lord Jesus Christ enforces the teaching of the Law and of the prophets. Obedience in small things is right; obedience in great things is necessary for salvation. The exactest ritual and the strictest orthodoxy are of no value without justice and mercy and faith. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the precious fruit—the fruit of the Spirit; without this, the husk, the rind, are worthless. 6. *The sixth woe.* The Pharisees were especially scrupulous in avoiding all occasion of Levitical defilement; they heeded not the uncleanness of their hearts. It profits little to cleanse the outside of a cup or platter, if the inside is filthy and pollutes the food. A fair outside may hide the evil heart from the sight of men, but the eye of God sees through; to that all-seeing eye the wicked soul lies open in awful clearness. The Pharisees were blind. Be our prayer, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." We want to see the condition of our souls, to know the whole truth, the whole sad wretched truth. Then we shall begin with that which most needs cleansing—the inside, the inner life of thought and feeling and motive. God desireth truth there. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." If that is clean, made white in the blood of the Lamb, the outward life will be clean also. "Blessed are the pure in heart." But the outward show of purity without the inner truth is vain, worthless, contemptible. 7. *The seventh woe.* They were like the sepulchres around Jerusalem, which, according to Jewish custom, had been whitened a month ago, and still looked bright and clean in the sunlight; within they were full of all uncleanness; their very whiteness was a warning, that men might avoid defilement. So was it with the Pharisees; they made a great show of religion; but that outward show, like the whiteness of the sepulchres, spoke of inward corruption. The true man is humble in heart; he knows his own shortcomings; he makes no display of religion; he walks humbly with his God. Much talk, much show, is an evil sign; it is often an index of an unclean, unconverted heart. 8. *The eighth woe.* They built and garnished the tombs of the prophets and the righteous. The Lord may possibly have pointed to some of the conspicuous sepulchres which lay before him on the Mount of Olives. They condemned their fathers' crimes; but they owned that they were the children of them which killed the prophets. And, the Lord said, they were like their fathers, they had inherited their fathers' spirit. They would have slain the prophets, had they lived in their time, as now they were about to slay the Christ of God. They honoured the prophets in the distance; they would have hated them in the present. Stier quotes a striking passage from the Berlenberger Bibel: "Ask in Moses' times, 'Who are the good people?' They will be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but not Moses,—he should be stoned. Ask in Samuel's times, 'Who

are the good people?' They will be Moses and Joshua, but not Samuel. Ask in the times of Christ, and they will be all the former prophets with Samuel, but not Christ and his apostles." May the Lord save us from this spirit of unworthy jealousy, and teach us to honour goodness, not only in the remote distance, which is easy, but in immediate proximity to us, which is sometimes, alas for our miserable selfishness! very hard indeed. "Charity envieth not:" follow after charity.

LESSONS. 1. Christ is an awful Judge, as well as a most loving Saviour. Take we heed unto ourselves. 2. His wrath must fall on those who oppose his blessed work. Let us help it with all our might. 3. Christ hates hypocrisy. Seek above all things to be real. 4. Party spirit is a poor substitute for true religion. Seek to save souls. 5. Is your outward life blameless? It is well. But it is a small thing in comparison with the infinite preciousness of purity of heart.

Vers. 32—39.—*Prophecy of their future.* I. THEIR CONTINUANCE IN THE SINS OF THEIR FATHERS. 1. *Prediction of their treatment of Christ's disciples.* They would fill up the measure of their fathers; the Lord knew it in his Divine foreknowledge. They were still what John the Baptist had once called them—serpents, "a generation of vipers." How were such as they to escape from the condemnation of Gehenna? For hypocrisy hardens the heart. The state of the hypocrite is hopeless, perhaps, beyond that of most other sinners; self-satisfied as he is, he will not repent and come to Christ. "Wherefore," the Lord said, "I send unto you prophets." Mark the majestic "I send;" it asserts his authority, his equality in the truth of his Divine nature with God the Father. Mark the solemn "wherefore;" it contains a depth of inscrutable meaning—meaning full of mercy on the one side, full of awful mystery on the other. He would send his messengers unto them. Then even now he cared for their souls, even now he sought to save them. But he knew in his Divine omniscience how they would treat his servants; they would persecute them, and scourge them in their synagogues; some they would kill and crucify. The mission of the apostles would increase the guilt of the Jews; the good tidings of salvation would be to them, not life, but death. The Divine foreknowledge is not inconsistent with human free-will. The Pharisees had the power to choose or to reject the Saviour. He would not have mocked them with the offer of an unattainable salvation, an inaccessible heaven. Yet he knew that they would reject him, for he was God, infinite in knowledge as in all other Divine attributes. That knowledge did not destroy their free agency; it did not remove their guilt. Here is one of those deep mysteries which human thought cannot penetrate; hereafter it shall be revealed. 2. *The consequence to themselves.* On them would come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth. It must be so; for they had inherited the guilt of their ancestors, and that accumulated inheritance of evil had hardened their hearts into very stone. It must be so; for it was in the course of God's awful justice. As he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, who first hardened his own heart; so now he sent his messengers to the hardened Pharisees, that upon them might come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth. It is the ordinance of God, the law of that human nature which is his work, that wilful sin wilfully persevered in should lead on to guilt deeper yet. It would be so in the case of these hard-hearted Jews. Their obstinate unbelief would soon lead to a crime greater than any which the world, wicked as it was, had seen from the very beginning. That awful crime would fill up the measure of the long catalogue of deeds of blood. It would all fall upon that generation, from the first murder that ever was to the last recorded in the Hebrew canon; for all the accumulated blood-guiltiness of mankind would be summed up in the tremendous guilt of those who were so soon about to cry, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" "Verily I say unto you, All these things must come upon this generation." We feel it must be so. We hear the dread sentence, and we bow in silent awe before the judgment of God. And yet we know and feel that Christ cared even for those hard-hearted sinners, and would have saved them in his tender pity. But, alas! they would not come to him, that they might have life.

II. THE LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM. 1. *The Lord's love.* The stern language of most awful condemnation changes. We hear the tenderest accents of Divine pity, the sad wailing of disappointed love. The Lord had wept over Jerusalem. Now again his sacred heart yearns with mighty compassion for the city which he loved so well.

He sorrows over the whole city, not only for the scribes and Pharisees whose hypocrisy he had denounced; his glance takes in the whole population, the poor and ignorant as well as the rich and learned; the deceived as well as the deceivers. His glance takes in all times, not only the present rejection of his grace, the awful guilt that was close at hand; but also their past offences, their past refusals of his offered mercies. Again and again he had wished to gather them together into his little flock, into his holy Church; again and again during his ministry upon earth, again and again before his incarnation, when he sent his warnings from heaven, he would have gathered them together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. A most touching simile, expressive of yearning affection, of tender solicitude, expressive too of the Lord's power and knowledge, wide-reaching in its range, all-embracing in its individual tenderness. Jerusalem, with its great population, was as a brood of chickens in his sight; he knew all, he cared for all; he would have sheltered all under his wings. But alas! they would not. He wished to gather them together; they did not wish to be gathered under the shelter of the Saviour's love. The Lord clearly asserts the great mystery of man's free-will. He willeth that all men should be saved; but he doth not force the will of man. He would draw us to himself by the constraining attraction of love. He does not use his almighty power to compel our obedience. Enforced obedience is without value; enforced love is not love; the very phrase is a contradiction in terms, for love is essentially free and spontaneous. He calls us, he invites us; he warns, he threatens, he chastens; he manifests his love, that the sight of that great love may kindle the flame of love in our unloving hearts; he came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation; he, the eternal Son of God, became a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he gave himself to die in the mysterious depth of his exceeding great love; he declares his love by the unanswerable eloquence of the cross. But he leaves us free. Man was made in the image of God. The human will is a sacred thing; it must not be forced, or moral distinctions are lost, and love is annihilated and holiness is impossible. We know it is so, though we cannot solve the perplexing mystery. Let us try to yield up our will to him; to pray the deep holy prayer which he prayed in his agony, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." 2. *The consequence of the rejection of his love.* "Your house is left unto you desolate." The Lord is about to depart from the temple. It is no longer what it had been—the house of God. He calls it "your house." It had been long without the ark, without the Shechinah; now it would be without the presence of Christ, without the favour of God. It was left desolate—left to them; for God was leaving the temple, the city, the nation. Tacitus and Josephus tell us that, before the fall of Jerusalem, the awful voice of departing Deity was heard, "Let us depart hence." Christ was leaving the temple now. "Ye shall not see me henceforth," he said, "till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They would see him, indeed, once again in his sufferings on the cross. They would see, and yet not see, for their eyes were holden. Yet these last words were words of mercy and hope. He looked on through the ages, through the long period of Israel's unbelief and banishment, to the great restoration that is to come, when they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him; "and so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26).

LESSONS. 1. As a man lives, so, as a rule, he will die. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." 2. Sin leads on to sin, guilt to yet deeper guilt. Take heed betimes. 3. The Lord weeps over the hard-hearted. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." May he soften our hearts and give us true repentance!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—*Needless burdens.* The faults of the scribes and Pharisees were not confined to their own private lives. Not only were they formal and unreal themselves, and blameworthy on that account; they were harsh and tyrannical in their treatment of the people. They showed their sanctity in constructing an artificial standard of holiness for other persons to follow. This is a not uncommon fault of professional religionists, and it leads to the imposition of needless burdens of many forms.

I. THE CREATION OF NEEDLESS BURDENS. 1. *Their character.* These burdens are of various kinds. (1) Vexatious observances. Rites of religion have been multiplied and elaborated, until, ceasing to serve their true end as instruments of devotion, they have checked the worship they could not sustain. (2) Difficult doctrines. Notions which were not involved in the scriptural revelation have been added by speculation and handed down by tradition, and belief in them insisted on as essential to salvation. (3) Fancied duties. An unwholesome casuistry, which neglected the weightier matters of the Law, has been busy in multiplying the petty details of correct conduct. 2. *Their origin.* These needless burdens were not imposed by God. He is reasonable and merciful. We must look lower for their origin. (1) From men. Without any Divine authority, though insolently claiming that authority, men have assumed to bind needless burdens on their fellows. (2) In hypocrisy. The authors of the burdens would not so much as move them with their finger. Inwardly lax, they were externally rigorous. Hypocrites lack the grace of Christian charity.

II. THE REMOVAL OF NEEDLESS BURDENS. This is one of Christ's happy works. 1. *The grounds of the removal of them.* (1) Their needlessness. Christ is practical. He is too real to tolerate artificialities in religion. (2) Their oppression. The sympathy of Christ was called forth, and his indignation was roused as he saw simple folks tyrannized over by hypocrites. (3) Their hindrance of necessary duty. Jesus did not desire to see a lax style of living. He himself brought high claims and made great demands—once bidding a rich young man renounce the whole of his wealth (Mark x. 21). Needless burdens would distract the attention and absorb the energy of people to the neglect of important duties. While they are given up to the pursuit of little, insignificant, useless performances, they forget and omit great and weighty obligations. 2. *The method of their removal.* (1) On the authority of Christ. He has a right to direct our conduct. Let us go to him and not to man for our "Christian Directory." (2) By the exposure of the character of the needless burdens. The timid conscience is often scrupulous, just in proportion to the smallness of the fancied duties with which it troubles itself. What it wants is a clear perception of the needlessness of its supposed obligations. Christ was daring in breaking bands which never should have been bound. He who receives the Spirit of Christ receives the Spirit of liberty. (3) With the revelation of true duty. We are called to leave the slavery of law and of casuistry, that we may have power to accept the great obligations of Christian service; and the realization of these obligations is a means of attaining the desired liberty. They who have taken Christ's yoke cannot allow themselves to be encumbered with the Pharisees' burdens.—W. F. A.

Vers. 8—10.—*Christian equality.* Our Lord does not wish to see the distinctions of Judaism, which had become so odious in his day, repeated in Christianity. He does not desire the dogmatism of the rabbis to be copied by the Christian teachers, or the authority of the rulers to be transferred to the Christian pastors. He does not want his people to think that they can best show their humility by losing their self-respect and cringing before ecclesiastical superiors. In opposition to all such tendencies, he enunciates his principles of Christian equality.

I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN EQUALITY. Christianity is essentially democratic. Jesus Christ was a Man of the people, the greatest Tribune of the people the world has ever seen. He took the side of the oppressed against their oppressors, that of the "dim multitude," not that of the privileged few. His aim in this matter was to bring about a condition of brotherhood. There is a measure of inequality which no arrangements of men can set aside. One man is not always as good as another. People differ enormously in character, in ability, in energy. Therefore absolute equality is impossible. It is impossible according to the constitution of nature, and it is doubly impossible in face of the great variation of human conduct. But there is an equality to be striven for. The equality of Christian brotherhood is to be observed among Christians. Christ's words do not directly apply to the larger society of mankind. This equality should involve an equivalent in religious privileges which are meant to be freely offered to all. It should discourage any artificial distinctions.

II. THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN EQUALITY. 1. *The Fatherhood of God.* We have one Father in heaven, and undue deference to men in religion obscures the honour due

to God. 2. *The Lordship of Christ.* This is the specifically Christian principle, while the former one is a general religious principle. The Church is not a republic; it is a kingdom with Christ as its Head. Christians are bound to see that they put no one in the place of Christ. He has direct dealings with each of his people. He wants no grand vizier, no local satrap, no intermediate lord. He is the Master of each individual Christian, and every one can go to him personally for instructions.

III. THE VIOLATION OF CHRISTIAN EQUALITY. The words of Christ are ominous of coming dangers. They have a profound significance in the light of subsequent events. It is wonderful that their plain meaning should have been so egregiously disregarded as to permit of the construction of a monstrous ecclesiastical hierarchy in one direction and the creation of a system of dogmatic orthodoxy in another. Forgetting Christ and the privilege of closest relationship with him, Christian people have bowed their necks to the tyranny of various ecclesiastical masters and theological fathers. Order requires the appointment of officers in the Church, and truth demands respect for knowledge and for the capacity to teach. But it is a mistake, a wrong to God and Christ, to show such deference to human authorities as shall be false to Christian liberty.—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—*The woe of the hypocrites.* A most important part of the work of Christ was to expose the utterly false and worthless character of the venerated religious leaders of his day. It was a thankless task, one that brought odium on the head of its Author. A weaker man would have shrunk from it, and a less sensitive man might have enjoyed the humiliation it inflicted on his enemies. But Jesus was neither cowardly nor censorious. Therefore he rebuked the venerated religionists, and yet we know the necessity of doing so must have been most repulsive to him.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE HYPOCRITES. 1. *Speciously religious.* There was an appearance of sanctity in the Pharisees and a pretence of orthodoxy in the scribes that won for both a reputation of religious superiority. The world has never been without persons of brilliant external appearances in religion, and these persons have always had "their reward" (ch. vi. 2). 2. *Inwardly false.* Our Lord saw that the religion was unreal, that it was only worn as a garment for show. This is the characteristic of the hypocrite. He is more than a pretender; he is consciously false to his pretences; he is a living lie. 3. *Acting a part.* The hypocrite is an actor. He dresses his character and poses so as to win the admiration of other people. His very course in life is planned and carried out with a theatrical intention. This intention is the explanation of the glaring contradiction between the mask and the real countenance.

II. THE WICKEDNESS OF THE HYPOCRITES. This is twofold. 1. *The hindrance of others.* The scribes and Pharisees prevented simpler people from entering the kingdom of heaven. This they did partly by confusing their minds with false notions, and partly by discouraging their efforts in setting before them vexatious precepts and needless, impossible requirements. It is a mark of hypocrisy to represent religion as a very difficult attainment, and to lay claim to superior sanctity by the easy method of setting up a high, or rather a false and unattainable, standard for other people. 2. *Their own failure.* These hypocrites behaved like the dog in the manger. Their harshness to other people did not help their own cause. No one enters the kingdom of heaven by keeping other people out of it. Religious selfishness is doomed to disappointment.

III. THE DOOM OF THE HYPOCRITES. 1. *Its exposure.* For a time these people live in honour, and their skilful arts of deception seem to secure them against any discovery of their hollow and unreal characters. But this calm security cannot last long. Even if it is maintained till the end of the present life, it must vanish like smoke in the great apocalypse of the future judgment. God knows all from the beginning, and if he does not at once reveal the wicked falsehood, it cannot be because this ever imposes upon him. In his own time he will unveil it. 2. *Its punishment.* God hates lies, and he is angry against those who put stumbling-blocks in the way of children and humble persons (ch. xviii. 6, 7). The hypocrites who are guilty of both of these faults are doubly culpable in the sight of Heaven. Their condemnation is just.—W. F. A.

Ver. 24.—*The gnat and the camel.* It was characteristic of the scribes and Pharisees

to strain out the gnat and yet to swallow the camel. They would be very careful in avoiding minute formal improprieties, while they committed great sins without compunction.

I. THE EVIL HABIT. This is seen in many forms to-day. 1. *In moral conduct.* People are found to be very scrupulous about points of politeness, and very negligent of real kindness. They will not offend an acquaintance with a harsh phrase, and yet they will ruin him if they can outwit him in a business transaction. There are persons of strict Puritanism, who forbid even innocent forms of amusement for their children, and yet who are self-indulgent, ill-tempered, uncharitable, and covetous. Such people swallow many a huge camel, while sedulously straining the gnats out of their children's cup of pleasure. 2. *In religious observances.* The greatest care is taken for the correct observance of ritual, while the spirit of devotion is neglected; a rigid standard of orthodoxy is insisted on, but living faith is neglected; a punctual performance of Church ordinances is accompanied by a total disregard for the will of God and the obligations of obedience.

II. THE SOURCE OF THIS HABIT. 1. *Hypocrisy.* This was the source in the case of the scribes and Pharisees, as our Lord himself indicated. It is easier to attend to minutiæ of conduct than to be right in the great fundamental principles; to rectify these a resolution, a regeneration of character, is required; but to set the superficial details in a certain state of decency and order involves no such serious change. Moreover, the little superficial points are obvious to all people, and, like Chinese puzzles, challenge admiration on account of their very minuteness. 2. *Small-mindedness.* In some cases there may be no conscious hypocrisy. But a littleness of thinking and acting has dwarfed the whole area of observation. The small soul is able to see the gnat, but it cannot even perceive the existence of the camel. It is so busy with the fussy trivialities on which it prides itself, that it has no power left to attend to weightier matters.

III. THE CURE OF THE HABIT. 1. *By the revelation of its existence.* When the foolish thing is done in all simplicity and good faith, it only needs to be seen to be rejected. When it is the fruit of sheer hypocrisy, the exposure of it will, of course, make it clear that the performance will no longer win the plaudits of the crowd; and then, as there will be no motive to continue in it, the actor will lay his part aside. But this does not imply a real cure. For that we must go further. 2. *By the gift of a larger life.* We are all of us more or less cramped by our own pettiness, and just in proportion as we are self-centred and self-contained shall we give attention to small things. We want to be lifted out of ourselves, we need the awakening of our higher spiritual powers. It is the object of Christ to effect this grand change. When he takes possession of the soul he sets all things in their true light. Then we can strive for great objects, fight great sins, win great victories, and forget the gnats in the magnitude of the camels.—W. F. A.

Ver. 29.—*Building the tombs of the prophets.* In the rather vulgar architectural restoration which went on during the days of the Herods, it might often be seen that old, venerated, but ruinous tombs were being rebuilt and decorated afresh. The process was significant of behaviour which is often repeated in other places and in other ages.

I. GOOD MEN, ILL TREATED DURING THEIR LIFETIME, ARE HONOURED AFTER THEIR DEATH. The world venerates its own martyrs. In course of time, it comes to lavish extravagant honours on the men whom it treated as the very scum of the earth during their lifetime. Most conspicuous has this been in the case of Jesus Christ himself—despised, rejected, insulted, crucified while on earth, yet now at least respected, even by those who have not learnt to love him. No doubt this admits of explanation. There are characters which men do not quickly understand or appreciate. A life is not complete until it is finished, and the whole meaning of it cannot be read until we can see it as a whole. A great man is in advance of his age, and only the later age, which has been in some measure educated up to him by the very influence of his life and teaching, is in a position to comprehend him. But while all this is natural, it is not the less unfortunate. What is the use of honours heaped on the grave of the silent dead? The laurels we pile on their tombs cannot bring joy to those who are no longer with us. There is a grim irony in the common custom of waiting for their death

before recognizing the merits of the best men. The applause that bursts out so rapturously after they have left the stage is of no comfort to them now. It would have been better to have shown them more kindness during their lifetime. In homelier regions much heartbreaking might be spared, and many bitter regrets avoided, if we would take care to show the affection and forbearance for our dear ones in their lifetime which we shall vainly yearn to render them when it is too late.

II. THEY WHO HONOUR THE DEAD MAY BE UNGENEROUS TO THE LIVING. The Jews venerated their ancient prophets, and yet they persecuted contemporary prophets. The very qualities which made the great dead so glorious in their eyes were seen in John the Baptist and Jesus, only to be treated with contempt or even with anger. In the Christian Church it has been the fashion to look back with semi-adoration on "the Fathers;" but possibly men as good and great have been living in our own day. Descendants of the Puritans, who were the champions of freedom a century or two ago, have been most repressive towards those who have inherited the liberty-loving spirit of the Puritans. But in commemorating the deeds of Christian heroism of the past, we condemn ourselves if we will not give every encouragement to the true heroes of the present. Now it must never be forgotten that the prophets were unpopular in their day; that they protested against prevalent beliefs and fashionable practices; that they denounced the sins of social and religious leaders. The disposition to honour such men should justify itself by allowing a larger liberty to the advanced thinkers and the earnest reformers of our own times.—W. F. A.

Ver. 37.—*The lament over Jerusalem.* These are among the most touching words ever uttered by our Lord. They reveal his strong patriotism, his deep human affection, the greatness of the salvation he brought, and at the same time the frustration of the hopes which these things naturally raise, owing to the stubborn self-will of the Jews. Here is a lesson for all time.

I. THE GUILTY CITY. 1. *No city was more privileged.* Jerusalem was the favoured city of a favoured land. David, the great singer, celebrated her praises; David, the great king, raised her fortunes. But better than royal fame was her religious glory. Great prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, taught in her streets. More than once signal Divine providences helped her in direst necessity. Here was the temple of the Divine Presence. Finally the city was honoured by the coming of Christ. 2. *No city was more sinful.* When account is taken of her privileges, Jerusalem excels in guilt as she excels in favour. The most favoured people prove to be the most ungrateful and rebellious. She murders her best friends. She crowns her guilt by delivering her Christ up to death.

II. THE PITYING SAVIOUR. Jesus is grieved and loth to think of the doom of the wicked city. 1. *It was his own city.* Not his native city, but the capital of his land, and the royal city, to which he came as King (ch. xxi. 4, 5). Jesus was a patriot. 2. *It was the city of God.* Its ruin was like the ruin of God's own daughter. They who have once known God touch the heart of Christ with peculiar compassion when they lose their happy privilege. 3. *It was a doomed city.* Already with prophetic eye Jesus saw the Roman legions compassing it about. It lay as the prey ready for the eagle. The heart of Jesus grieves over the sinner's doom.

III. THE WONDERFUL SALVATION. By a homely and yet most touching illustration Jesus tells what he has longed to do for the city in its peril. 1. *He comes to save.* This is his great mission, and his salvation begins with "the house of Israel" (ch. xv. 24). 2. *He is able to save.* Jesus speaks with the utmost confidence. He can save a whole city; nay, we know he can save a whole world. No doubt, if Jerusalem had accepted Christ and his teaching, the mad revolt which called down the vengeance of Rome would have been prevented. But in his deeper work, as our Lord has redeemed many of the worst profligates, he has shown himself able to save all men. 3. *He offers to save.* The pathos of this wonderful utterance of Jesus lies in his own heartfelt desire and its disappointment. With long-suffering patience he repeats his often-rejected offer. He stands at the door, and knocks.

IV. THE FINAL DOOM. The house is to be left desolate at last. 1. *There is an end to the opportunity for escape.* This has lasted long. Many were the occasions when Jesus would have welcomed the people of Jerusalem, and have extended to them

his saving grace. But at last the end has come. The day of grace must be followed by the day of judgment. 2. *Even Christ's desire to save may be frustrated.* It is not enough to know that he yearns to save. Men may be lost now, as Jerusalem was lost. 3. *Obstinate rejection of Christ will lead to ruin.* Man's will may thus frustrate Christ's desire. Note: It was not for stoning the prophets, but for rejecting Christ's salvation, that Jerusalem was ultimately doomed. Christ can save from the worst sin; but none can be saved who wilfully reject him.—W. F. A.

Vers. 2—33.—*Pharisees and Sadducees.* The Pharisees first appear under this name in Jewish history about the year B.C. 160. There had been Separatists, or Puritans, as far back as the Captivity, but it was after the return to Palestine that events gave an impulse to the Separatist idea so strong as to consolidate what might otherwise have remained a tendency. The Jews had learned the value of commerce, and it was found impossible, in dealing with foreign merchants, to observe the minute regulations prescribed by the more zealous. The minority, who even pretended to this, were obliged to become Separatists, not only from the Gentiles, but from their own less scrupulous coreligionists. Hence their frequent connection with the scribes. There had always been scribes in Israel, men who could draw state or legal documents. But after the influence of Ezra had stimulated, if it had not created, a desire to know the Law, synagogues were to be found in every town. And a synagogue implied a copy of the Law and a person who could read it. The scribes therefore necessarily became a profession, with just such a curriculum for pupils and candidates as distinguish professions among ourselves. It was inevitable that they should acquire great influence among the people. For in their best days they were the guardians of the Law, and strove unceasingly to make it supreme over every act of every person. Not only did the scribe discharge all the functions of a modern lawyer, but he was appealed to in all circumstances where the application of the law might seem obscure. They were both the makers of the law and its administrators, and they did not scruple, sitting apart from active life, to enforce on men engaged in it all the wire-drawn and fantastic distinctions which their minds, imbecile with attention to the letter of the Law and with unpractical pedantry, could contrive. It was this inconsiderate exercise of their authority which provoked our Lord's rebuke. But burdensome as was the teaching of the scribes, two causes operated to make them the most popular members of the community. 1. To them was committed the key of the kingdom of heaven; they had power to bind and loose—they alone could give a man assurance that he had actually attained to the righteousness required by the Law. 2. The people were at one with them in their grand aim to give the Law absolute sway over the life of every Jew. The Pharisees who did live as the scribes enjoined, were in the eyes of the people the true Israel, the pattern Jews. The scribes and Pharisees, then, though not identical, were closely related, so closely that our Lord subjects them to one common rebuke. The Zealots, who repudiated any king but Jehovah, and refused to pay tribute to Cæsar, were the natural result of Pharisaic teaching. And indeed the Pharisees did themselves refuse to swear allegiance to Herod. They may be looked on, therefore, as the national party. Their influence was not solely and throughout evil, for to them and to the scribes was due the knowledge of the Law to which our Lord so often appealed. But the grave defects of their teaching, and its ruinous influences on the religious character, are so distinctly enounced in the Gospels that they need not be dwelt on. The origin of the Sadducees explains their position in the state. It is generally agreed that they take their name from Zadok, who was elevated to the high priesthood by Solomon. It was the same line which inherited the office after the Exile, and through all the changes in the Hebrew state the high priests maintained great influence, and in our Lord's time we find them still sitting as presidents in the highest court, the Sanhedrin. Still, also, there were grouped round them the Sadducees! It was to this party that men of wealth, men in office, and men of pure priestly descent, attached themselves, although many of the priests leant more to the Pharisees. They lived in luxury, and their morality was not high. At the same time, whether from envy of the popularity of the Pharisees, or from common sense, they resisted the Pharisaic additions to the Law. Thus they refused to accept the doctrine of the resurrection, not being able to find it in the Books of Moses. They are rarely mentioned in the

Gospels, because they were mostly in Jerusalem, and their ideas had found no acceptance with the people. From the *leaven* of *Pharisaism*, or *ultra-legalism*, three mischievous results follow. 1. The minute regulations which are extended to the whole of life leave no room for conscience to exercise itself, and accordingly it pines and dies. 2. Minute observances obtain a magnified importance. 3. The bare performance of the duty enjoined is reckoned everything, while the state of heart is overlooked. We shall escape the leaven of the Pharisee if we learn to pay more attention to the heart than to the conduct; if we have so true a delight in pleasing the Lord that we do not consider what men think of us. The *leaven of the Sadducees* is perhaps even more certainly fatal to true religion. The Pharisee has sincerity, though it is quite superficial; he has zeal, though misdirected; but the Sadducee has neither. He is all for this world, and, save to forward him in it, religion is an encumbrance. His heart is not gladdened with any loving thoughts of God, nor his spirit refreshed by fellowship with the unseen world. If we escape these influences we shall do what few have done. For all men are under the temptation either to make too much of the observances of religion or to make them a mere form. Worldliness deadens a man's spirit to spiritual impressions, and gradually saps his faith till he ceases to believe in anything but the palpable world with which he has now to do. On the other hand, if the leaven of the Pharisee prevails to the extent of making us fear God more than we love him, and do by constraint what we ought to do because we delight in it, we are in as unwholesome a state as the Sadducee we reprobate.—D.

Vers. 1—12.—*Ethics of authority.* After Jesus had put the Jewish sectaries to silence, he addressed his disciples and the people, who had witnessed his encounters, as to how they should deport themselves in respect to the scribes and Pharisees.

I. SECULAR AUTHORITY SHOULD BE RESPECTED. 1. *Jewish magistrates were to be obeyed.* (1) "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." Moses is figuratively represented as then still sitting to deliver his oracles (cf. Acts xv. 21). Note here the lessons of posthumous influence. (2) The Law of Moses was the municipal law of the state. The scribes and Pharisees, being members of the Sanhedrin and inferior councils, "sat in Moses' seat," viz. as magistrates. As expounders of the municipal law, they did not travel out of their depth, and were therein sufficiently learned to give them weight and reputation. (3) Evil men occupy good places. The seat of Moses must not be overturned because its occupants dishonour it. It must rather be upheld to make them ashamed. 2. *Pagan rulers are to be obeyed.* (1) Any regular government is better than none. The tyranny of a monarch is more tolerable than the anarchy of a mob. (2) Christ submitted to the rule of Cæsar, and to that of the inferior Roman magistrates. This he did purely for our example. (3) His inspired apostles encouraged obedience to existing authorities as being "ordained of God." They were therefore to be held in reverence. They were to be supported. Taxes were to be paid to them. Prayer was to be made for them.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF EVIL RULERS MUST BE AVOIDED. 1. *As inconsistent teachers.* (1) The scribes and Pharisees did not fill the chair of Moses as theologians with the sanction of Christ. On the contrary, he showed that they made void the Law by their traditions. He warned his followers to beware of their doctrine (see ch. xvi. 6). (2) They might be obeyed in what they read from the Law and the prophets. The "therefore" limits the application of the "all things whatsoever" to precepts of inspiration as distinct from the traditions of the elders. We may not reject sound teaching because of the unworthiness of the teacher. (3) Yet must we be suspicious of the teaching of the wicked. People must be warned of wolves and dogs and deceitful workers (cf. Acts xx. 29, 30; Phil. iii. 2; 2 Cor. xi. 13). 2. *As inconsistent workers.* (1) "They say, and do not." The study of the hypocrite is to seem religious in the sight of men, rather than to be religious in the sight of God. (2) They would aggravate the burden of the Law, which was sufficient in itself (see Acts xv. 10), by the addition of traditional imposts. (3) The burden they imposed upon the people they would not touch with a finger themselves. They were the priests who fasted upon wine and sweetmeats, while they forced the people to fast upon bread and water! (4) How different the example of Christ, who took upon himself our heaviest burden, to make all easy for his people! 3. *As examples of pride and ostentation.* (1) The scribes and Pharisees

literally interpreted Exod. xiii. 16 and Deut. vi. 8, and wore scrolls of paper or parchment with texts of Scripture written on them, bound round their wrists and foreheads. The fringes on their garments, which God enjoined upon the Israelites to remind them of doing all the commandments (see Numb. xv. 38), they wore broader and longer than other men. They paraded their piety "at feasts," and "in synagogues" and "in markets," where they might be seen. (2) In all this ostentation there was superstition. They looked upon their phylacteries as preservatives in the sense of amulets. (3) Such aspirants must be jealousy watched. "Mark and Luke have selected from our Lord's discourses, handed down in full in Matthew, the sins of pride, avarice, and hypocrisy, as those most suited to show why they should 'beware of the scribes'" (Harmer).

III. CHRIST MUST BE EXALTED EVERMORE. 1. *By refusing the arrogance of his enemies.* (1) The scribes and Pharisees would set aside the claims of Christ. They affected to be called "Rabbi," "Father," "Master," in an unwarrantable sense. The Talmud pretends that "King Jehoshaphat used to salute the wise men with the titles, Father, Father; Rabbi, Rabbi; Master, Master!" This claim purported that, as the "wise men," they should be implicitly believed in what they affirmed, without asking any further question. It purported, moreover, that they should be implicitly obeyed in what they enjoined without seeking further authority. (2) But here they must be resisted. The Christian has but one infallible Teacher. So has he but one absolute Father—the heavenly. So has he but one supreme Master—Christ. None but Christ has ever fully illustrated his doctrine in his life. 2. *By cultivating true humility.* (1) In this is Christian greatness. Love is greatness. The heart is at once the most important and most laborious organ; the servant, yet the ruler of all. Self-love is purified and dignified by being subordinated to the love of God and our neighbour. (2) The Christian will not exalt himself. He must not covet the titles affected by the scribes, nor must he assume the authority and dominion implied in these names. When self-love is exalted, self itself becomes abased. (3) The Christian will not unduly exalt his fellow. "All ye are brethren." Ministers are to each other brethren. They are brethren to the people. Christ himself is the "Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). What an example to his disciples! (4) The Christian loses himself in exalting Christ. "Call no man," etc., *i.e.* ascribe infallibility to none (see 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6). The whole passage (vers. 3—7), like ch. xx. 25, may justly be regarded as a prophecy and warning to the Christian Church. "Among Christians there is none to sit in Christ's seat" (Alford). It was George Herbert's habit, when he mentioned the name of Christ, to add, "my Master." 3. *Christ will abase the proud, and exalt the humble.* (1) "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled." "All the world cannot exalt a proud man, because God will pull him down" (Anon.). (2) "Whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted." No sentence of our Lord's is so often repeated. It occurs in the evangelists, with little variation, at least ten times. Pride is as natural to man as it is hateful to God. (3) "Honour is like the shadow, that flees from those who pursue it, but follows those who flee from it" (Henry).—J. A. M.

Vers. 13—15.—*The credit of the Church.* The Church of God is a unity throughout the ages. It is more proper to speak of the Christian dispensation of the Church than of the Christian Church as opposed to the Jewish. This unity exists, not only through the ages, but also throughout the universe. While its head-quarters are in heaven, there has ever been a visible representation upon the earth. This is sometimes called "the Church;" in the Gospels it is distinguished as "the kingdom of heaven." In this sense we now speak of it. Note, then—

I. THAT THE CHURCH IS TROUBLED BY THE INTRUSION OF HYPOCRITES. 1. *They enter it for selfish ends.* (1) What care the hypocrites for God's glory? They are simply stage-players in religion. (2) They affect the glory of human applause. They transfer to themselves what should be given to God. (3) By pretending to extraordinary piety, they insinuate themselves into the confidence of unprotected and unsuspecting persons, to rob them of their property (cf. 2 Tim. iii. 6; Titus i. 11). The extreme of avarice is to devour the house of the widow, who should be specially spared (cf. Exod. xxii. 22, 23; Prov. xv. 25; Isa. x. 1, 2). "While they seemed to soar heavenward upon the wings of prayer, their eye, like the kite's, was all the while upon

their prey on the earth, some widow's house" (Henry). (4) Some think it probable that the scribes and Pharisees sold their "long prayers," as the Romish priests sell their Masses. Through sympathy for their deceased husbands, widows might fall easy victims to the avarice of those who "make merchandise of souls." 2. *In it they are obstructive to good.* (1) The scribes and Pharisees would not enter the kingdom themselves. They did not use "the key of knowledge" to see what Scripture said about Messiah. (*a*) In Jacob's departing sceptre of Judah. (*b*) In Moses' Prophet. (*c*) In Daniel's weeks. They shut their eyes. (2) They hindered those who were entering. The people were on the point of entering into the privileges of the new dispensation preached by John Baptist and Jesus, but were hindered by the scribes and Pharisees. (*a*) They were hindered by their example (see John vii. 48). (*b*) By their doctrine, in cavilling against Christ (see ch. xii. 24; John ix. 16). (*c*) By their authority, in the threat of excommunication (see John ix. 22). (*d*) Therefore only the violent could force an entrance into the kingdom (see ch. xi. 12; Luke xvi. 16). 3. *They promoted evil.* (1) They were infernally zealous. They spared no pains to make proselytes, not, however, with a view to benefit them, but for sectarian ostentation. For the scribes and Pharisees made proselytes to the schools of particular rabbins. (2) Their victims they made even more the sons of hell than themselves. Note: (*a*) Hypocrisy is itself the offspring of hell, for it originates with the "father of lies." (*b*) "Twofold more." The Hellenist Jews, who were mostly proselytes, were the bitterest enemies of the apostles (see Acts xiii. 45; xiv. 2, 19; xvii. 5; xviii. 6). Truth falsified is worse than simple falsity. Half-truths are the most vicious lies. (*c*) The proselytes were trained by the Pharisees in wicked sophistry, which palliated vice and substituted ceremony for piety. They were also taught to practise evil with less remorse and greater subtlety than they had been accustomed to in their former condition.

II. THAT IT IS UNFAIRLY CHARGED WITH THEIR VICES. 1. *Unbelief seeks to fasten their scandal upon it.* (1) Sons of Belial are never weary of denouncing the hypocrisy of the Church. If they can find any rascality in a professor of religion, they cry exultingly, "There's your Christianity!" (2) They delight in favourably contrasting themselves with the hypocrites of the Church. What is more common than for sons of Belial to say, "I don't profess to be religious, but I am better than many of your Christians"? 2. *But this is manifestly unfair.* (1) Christ does not recognize hypocrites as Christians. On the contrary, he repudiates them with the strongest abhorrence. (2) They are only tolerated in the Church because of the difficulty of finding them out. For want of infallible judgment, the tares have to grow with the wheat until the harvest. (3) Hypocrites are not Christians. The "hypocrisy of the Church" is a misnomer. There is a clear distinction between the true members of the Church and those hypocrites who intrude into its visible corporation. In all fairness this should be recognized. (4) Instead of contrasting themselves with hypocrites, let them compare themselves with Christ, and see then where they stand in the judgment. (5) Let them compare themselves with the Christ-like. These are the only true Christians, the only true Church-members—members approved by its laws, and permanently belonging to its corporation. Hypocrites are neither.

III. GOD WILL VINDICATE THE CREDIT OF HIS CHURCH. 1. *By separating the hypocrites from it.* (1) They fairly belong to the world. Their spirit is of the world. (2) Their connection with the Church is unnatural. It is like themselves, a deception. (3) Their connection with the Church is transient. Like the tares among the wheat, the bad fish among the good in the net, the goats among the sheep, in the final judgment. 2. *By dooming them to perdition.* (1) Hypocrites will be found with worldlings in the damnation of hell. Let the sons of Belial, then, contrast themselves with their own if they will. They will scarcely call the hypocrites Christians in damnation. (2) The greater damnation. Note: (*a*) There are degrees of damnation. (*b*) Pretences of religion will aggravate the torments of the lost. (*c*) The gospel curses are the sorer (cf. Heb. x. 29). Who can entreat for him against whom the great Intercessor pleads? A "woe" from Christ has no remedy. No such wrath as that of the Lamb! "*Three* woes are made to look very dreadful (Rev. viii. 13—ix. 12); but here are *eight* woes, in opposition to the *eight* Beatitudes (Matt. v. 4)" (Henry). 3. *By rebuking their accomplices.* The open sinner is an accomplice with the very

hypocrite he affects to scorn, in rejecting and crucifying the Just One. All sinners will have "their portion with the hypocrites" (see ch. xxiv. 51).—J. A. M.

Vers. 16—22.—*Swearing.* From the *doings* of the scribes and Pharisees the Lord passes to their *teaching;* and he commences with their refinement in respect to oaths. There is no reference here to *judicial* swearing, or deposing upon oath before a magistrate in the interests of public justice. The whole argument goes to show that the swearing here referred to is the voluntary and gratuitous.

I. SWEARING ORIGINATES IN FALSEHOOD. 1. *Simple assertion is the sufficient bond of a true man.* (1) By volunteering more, a man reflects upon his own honour. He that will not trifle with his word has no need to swear. (2) By requiring more, he reflects upon the character of his neighbour. (3) An oath is no increased guarantee for truth. He that can trifle with his word will trifle with an oath. 2. *More than affirmation is from an evil source.* (1) It comes from the spirit of falsehood. This is the spirit of the devil. He is the father of lies. (2) The spirit of falsehood will make lies as black as possible by calling in sacred things to witness them.

II. IT TENDS TO EQUIVOCATION. 1. *The Pharisees invented evasive distinctions.* (1) "An oath for confirmation is the end of all strife," because it is an appeal to God as witness to the truth. (2) But the Pharisees made it "nothing," *i.e.* the oath has no force, or may be violated with impunity, to swear by the temple, provided the gold of the temple was left out of the question. So they made it "nothing" to swear by the altar, provided the gift upon the altar was excepted. Thus their swearing tended to lying. 2. *These distinctions were false in fact.* (1) They inverted the order of importance. They preferred the gifts to the altar, and the gold to the temple. They preferred their own righteousness to the righteousness of God, in holding their gifts to be of greater consequence than God's appointment. (2) The altar which sanctifies the gift is greater than the gift; so for the same reason is the temple greater than the gold. Note: Gold that touches the altar is more than gold, for it is consecrated to the Divine service. Things are great in proportion to their sacredness. Therefore seek *first* the kingdom of God. (3) The value of material things is determined by their uses. A fortune coming to a sot is but a death-warrant to him. 3. *They are demoralizing.* (1) The object of attaching superior sanctity to the gifts of the altar and gold of the temple treasury was to heighten the idea of meritoriousness in presenting them. (2) The scribes and Pharisees also probably derived pecuniary advantage from those gifts.

III. IT INJURES REVERENCE. 1. *It is a breach of the commandments.* (1) It offends against the first and second. An oath is an appeal to God; to make this appeal to a creature is to put that creature in his place (see Deut. vi. 13). To swear by anything lower than God is to set aside the Author of truth and faith in favour of a creature. (2) It offends against the third. It vulgarizes the most sacred things. Too much familiarity with them brings them into contempt. This is an offence which God will not lightly pass over (see Exod. xx. 7). 2. *It is a violation of the gospel law.* (1) Our Lord is most emphatic in his inhibition of swearing (see ch. v. 33—37). (2) Swearing is now, therefore, no longer a thing sacred, but, on the contrary, most profane.

IV. IT DECEIVES AND ENSNARES. 1. *The guides are blind.* (1) It is bad when the leaders of the people cause them to err (see Isa. ix. 16; lvi. 10). It is bad for the people. When the conscience, by casuistry, is made the ally of vice, the condition of the dupe is hopeless. (2) If it is bad for the people, it is worse for the guides. Their blindness is worse than ignorance. It is the blindness of a wilful, perverting casuistry. (3) However keen-sighted a man may be about his temporal interests, he is blind indeed if he be unable to discern what concerns his eternal welfare. 2. *But God is not deceived.* (1) He will be no party to the fictitious distinctions of men by which they would fain release themselves from the obligation of their oaths. He holds the swearer by the temple to swear by the God of the temple. (2) "By him that dwelleth," perhaps *dwelt,* in allusion to the *Shechinah,* which was the chief glory of the temple once, but was then wanting in the second temple. Taken in the *present,* the temple with the Shechinah was the body of Christ (see John ii. 21). This is the greatest and most durable of temples—the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Note: Every Christian is a living temple; so common things are sanctified

to him (cf. 1 Cor. vii. 14; Titus i. 15). (3) "By all things thereon." The substitution of this phrase here for the gold suggests a reference to the sacred fire, and to the ministration of the priests. Appurtenances pass with the principal (cf. Ps. xxvi. 6; xliii. 4). (4) All forms of oaths are by God reduced to the true intent of an oath. A man should never take advantage of his own fault. God will be his own witness, and will make the swearer answerable for his oaths.—J. A. M.

Vers. 23, 24.—*Monstrous trifling.* Our Lord proceeds to pronounce upon the hypocrite the woe of his other evils. Note—

I. THE LAW HAS ITS "WEIGHTIER MATTERS." 1. *These are its moral precepts.* (1) "Judgment." This implies: (*a*) Justice in principle. (*b*) Justice in practice. (2) "Mercy." This must harmonize with justice. The gospel gloriously brings out this harmony. (3) "Faith." This implies: (*a*) Faith in the sense of creed, or truth in belief. A true creed is of great importance. (*b*) Faith in the sense of sincerity, in opposition to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Those called hypocrites are otherwise described as unbelievers (cf. ch. xxiv. 51; Luke xii. 46; 1 Tim. iv. 2, 3). (*c*) Faith in the sense of fidelity or faithfulness, viz. to God first, then also to man (cf. Micah vi. 8; Luke xi. 42). (4) There must be the judgment of intelligence in the understanding; the mercy of love in the heart; the works of faith or truth in the life. 2. *Its ceremonies are for the sake of its morals.* (1) Distinction in animals, clean and unclean, was to show the differences between good and bad men. (2) Distinction in meats was to teach discrimination in fellowships. (3) Laws respecting the treatment of creatures was to show how men should be treated. "Doth God take care for oxen?" (cf. Deut. xxv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18). They that are taught in the Word, and do not communicate to them that teach them—loving a cheap gospel—come short of the Pharisee, who tithed pot herbs. (4) Purifications which terminated in the flesh taught the need of the "answer of a good conscience toward God."

II. THE HYPOCRITE INVERTS GOD'S ORDER. 1. *He is punctilious to trifles.* (1) He is scrupulous to the tithing of mint, dill, rue, cummin (see Lev. xxvii. 30). The Talmud says, "The tithing of corn is from the Law; the tithing of herbs is from the rabbins." He will "strain out the gnat." The stricter Jews were extremely particular in straining their liquors before drinking, lest they should inadvertently swallow some unclean insect, and so be defiled. The wine-gnat is easily caught in a strainer. (2) Scrupulousness in the abstract is not blameworthy. "These things ought ye to have done." Eminent virtue may display itself in the smallest matters (see Mark xii. 42). The morality is imperfect that neglects detail. 2. *He misses important things.* (1) The scrupulous Pharisee, in his minute attention to the letter, missed the spirit of the Law, which was of far greater importance. The gnat and the camel are both unclean, though of very different magnitude. The Pharisee was scrupulous over the ceremonial, unscrupulous as to the moral—the greater. He unblushingly practised the greatest iniquities. The Law is fulfilled more in the spirit than in the letter. The gospel is the spirit of the Law. (2) We strain out the gnat and swallow the camel when we are scrupulous about trifling errors and unscrupulous about great evils. The Pharisee is like the customer that is punctual in paying small debts that he may get deeper into the tradesman's books and defraud him of a greater sum. They swallowed the camel when they gave Judas the price of innocent blood; they strained out the gnat when they scrupled to put the money in the treasury (ch. xxvi. 6). (3) Things should be taken in God's order, which is the order of their importance. The things of God come before those of men (see ch. xvi. 23). Those only who attend to the "weightier matters" are qualified to judge as to the *lighter* ones. The formal may exclude the essential, but the essential does not exclude the formal. There may be piety without religion; there cannot be religion without piety.—J. A. M.

Vers. 25—28.—*Fatal blindness.* Our Lord continues to denounce woes against hypocrites, both for what they *do* and for what they *are*. The relation between doing and being is constant. These things are written for our learning.

I. THE HYPOCRITE IS WOEFULLY GUILTY. 1. *He is guilty of heart-wickedness.* (1) Under the utmost ceremonial strictness, like the garnished tomb enclosing "dead men's bones and all uncleanness," is concealed the greatest moral laxity. Thus—

"Nature, like a beauteous wall,
Doth oft close in pollution."
(Shakespeare.)

(2) As an adorned tomb is but the garniture of death and corruption, so is the external sanctity of the Pharisee in disgusting *contrast* to his inward turpitude. (3) The meat and drink in the platter and cup, externally so scrupulously cleansed, are the nourishment and refreshment of the hypocrite. His luxuries are procured by means nefarious and corrupt (see ver. 14). The hypocrite is selfish to cruelty. (4) The nourishment and refreshment of the Pharisee is, in the estimation of Christ, filth and poison. Luxury punishes fraud, feeding disease with fruits of injustice. The disease and death thus nourished are moral more than physical. 2. *He is guilty of deceiving others.* (1) The cleansed outside of the cup and platter, and the whiting on the sepulchre, are *intended* to be seen; and so is the piety of the hypocrite. The purpose is to divert attention from the filth and rottenness within. (2) The success is often too well assured. Man surveys surfaces. His vision does not search substances. To do this requires experiment which he is too lazy to institute. (3) Hence the professed belief in human nature. (*a*) Unconverted men must be hypocrites to be endured. Society would be intolerable but for its veneer. (*b*) The children of nature are readily deceived in a world of hypocrites. Their pride and self-conceit leads them to credit themselves with virtues; and the Pharisee deceives them. (*c*) But that religious persons should "believe in human nature" only shows how successfully the hypocrite may even "deceive the very elect." (*d*) The believers in human nature are liable to trust in it instead of Christ for their salvation, and perish in their delusion. 3. *He is guilty of insulting God.* (1) He ignores God. While he strives after the praise of men, he leaves God out of the account. Is God to be treated as nobody with impunity! (2) He degrades God. Affecting the praise of men rather than the praise of God, he treats the Creator as inferior to his creatures. Will this insolence be endured for ever? (3) As the whitening of the sepulchre was intended to warn passengers to avoid its defiling contact, so should the sham piety of the Pharisee warn honest men away from the sphere of his moral infection (see Luke xi. 44). (4) Let the sinner be alarmed at the formidableness of the impending woe. Let him repent, amend, and sue for mercy.

II. THE HYPOCRITE IS CRIMINALLY BLIND. 1. *God requires truth in the heart.* (1) He is himself essentially holy. This means that his nature must repel from him everything that is unholy. God must needs wage eternal war against sin. (2) But his grace has made possible his reconciliation to the sinner. (*a*) In the provision of the atonement. (*b*) In the gift of the Holy Spirit. (*c*) Through faith the righteousness of the Law may not only become "imputed *to* us," but also "fulfilled *in* us." (3) The life will be holy when the heart is clean. "The heart may be a temple of God or a grave; a heaven or a hell" (Stier). The cleansing of the inside affects the outside, but not contrariwise. "Cleanse *first* the inside of the cup and of the platter, *that* the outside thereof may become clean also." (4) There is a cleansing that is external even after the heart is clean. This our Lord evinced when he washed the feet of his disciples. 2. *The hypocrite imposes upon himself.* (1) He is criminally blind to the folly that avoids those scandalous sins which would spoil his reputation with men, while he allows the heart-wickedness which renders him odious to God (see Ps. v. 9). Jesus saw the filth within the cup and platter, and the rottenness within the sepulchre. (2) He is criminally blind to the fact that in imposing upon his fellows he does not impose upon his Maker. The same Jesus who showed the Pharisee the extortion and excesses of the heart will show these things to him again in the day of woe. (3) The hypocrite is criminally blind to the fact that the life is cleansed in the heart. Those only are externally clean who are inwardly pure. Christ views the profession in relation to the state of the heart. In this light he will judge the works of men at the last great day.—J. A. M.

Vers. 29—39.—*Judgment and mercy.* We come now to the eighth and last of this series of woes denounced by Christ against the wicked, which stands in striking contrast to the eighth and last of the Beatitudes (cf. ch. v. 10—12). Note—

I. THAT INSTEAD OF THE FATHERS COME UP THE CHILDREN OF THE WICKED. 1. *The*

fathers of the wicked were the persecutors of the good. (1) The older Pharisees were guilty of the blood of the more ancient prophets. Rulers, civil and ecclesiastical alike, were persecutors. Note: (*a*) Rulers are generally what the people will have them. "Like people, like priest" (cf. Isa. xxiv. 2; Jer. v. 30, 31; Hos. iv. 9). (*b*) So contrariwise, people are demoralized by their rulers. (2) They slew the righteous because of their righteousness. So it was in the case of Abel (cf. 1 John iii. 12). And for having reproved the iniquity of the people, Zechariah was slain by order of King Joash (see 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21). 2. *The children of wickedness confess while they denounce their fathers.* (1) By building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, the Pharisees disavowed the deeds of their fathers who had persecuted them. But this was precisely what their fathers did with the tombs of the prophets whom the grandfathers had slain. Note: It is a sign of a hypocrite to profess veneration for all good men excepting those among whom he lives. (2) The cases of Abel and Zechariah are cited as belonging to a series destined to be continued. By sending his prophets and scribes, apostles and evangelists (cf. ch. xiii. 52; Luke xi. 49), Jesus gave these hypocrites the opportunity to prove themselves by the very deeds they professed to abhor, the children of their wicked fathers. Accordingly, as he predicted, they "killed" the two Jameses; "crucified" Andrew and Peter; "stoned" Stephen and Paul; "scourged" Peter, John, and Paul; and others they "persecuted from city to city" (see Acts viii. 1; ix. 2). Being the "offspring of vipers," they were "serpents," and, together with their fathers, the brood of the original serpent (cf. ch. iii. 7; xii. 34; John viii. 44). Note: The same providence of God is an opportunity for a man to prove himself a hero or a rascal. (3) "Ye build," etc. Note: Hypocrites incur guilt in matters not wrong in themselves. Building the sepulchres of the righteous is a cheap affectation of righteousness. The dead Pharisee was burying his dead when he honoured the dead messenger and dishonoured the living message.

II. THAT THE SINS OF AGES MAY BE VISITED UPON A SINGLE GENERATION. 1. *Judgment is provoked by persistent impenitence.* (1) There is a measure of iniquity which provokes judgment. As when the "fourth" transgression is added to the third (see Amos i. 3, etc.). (2) Wickedness may be so encouraged as to render repentance and reformation utterly hopeless (see Jer. xiii. 23). (3) Judgment is deferred until the measure of iniquity which provokes it is full (see Gen. xv. 16). (4) The measure is full when that point is reached beyond which it is inconsistent with the character of a wise and righteous government, though founded in mercy, to extend impunity. (5) He who commits any sin is partaker with all who have committed the same. So the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon their children. 2. *Its severity follows in the wake of mercy.* (1) The hen clucking her chickens under her wing when the hawk is overhead is a fine figure to set forth the merciful protection which Jesus would extend to Jerusalem against the Roman eagle, did her children but know the day of their visitation (cf. Ps. xci. 4; Mal. iv. 2). (2) That sinners are not gathered to Christ is owing wholly to their wickedness (cf. Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12). "Fill ye up," etc., is a word of permission, not a command; as if he had said, "I contend with you no longer: I leave you to yourselves." (3) "The tears of Jesus are the last issues of defeated love, and tell sinners, 'Thou hast despised my blood that would have saved thee; thou shalt yet have my tears that do only lament thee lost'" (Howe). (4) Punishment equal to the accumulated woes brought upon men for resisting the truth and persecuting its preachers in all past ages, came upon this generation for putting to death One infinitely greater than all the prophets.

III. THAT A CHRISTLESS HOUSE IS A WOEFUL DESOLATION. 1. *So it proved in the days of the fathers.* (1) The blood of Zechariah, like that of Abel, cried for vengeance. The last words of Zechariah were, "The Lord see, and require it" (cf. Gen. iv. 10; 2 Chron. xxiv. 22). (2) Vengeance came when "the host of Syria came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people." A people deprived of princely rulers—princely in the moral sense—is in a sorry case. (3) But the temple was not desolated by the Babylonians until after the sins of the people had provoked God to take away the glory of his own blessed presence. 2. *So it proved in the days of their children.* (1) As the blood of Jehoiada returned upon the head of his murderers in the Babylonian invasion, so did that of Jesus return upon their

children in the Roman invasion. (2) As the Babylonians did not demolish the first temple until after the Shechinah had abandoned it, so neither did the Romans destroy the second temple until after Jesus had left it. (3) It is remarkable that, in leaving the temple, he followed the course indicated by the Shechinah (Ezek. x.). It stood first upon the threshold. So did Jesus when he uttered his pathetic lamentation. Then it removed to the east of the city to the Mount of Olives. So did Jesus. From the Mount of Olives it ascended into heaven. After the ascension of Jesus came the abomination of desolation spoken of by the Prophet Daniel. (4) "Your house." So the temple is now termed—not "God's house" any longer (cf. Exod. xxxii. 7, where God says to Moses, "Thy people"). "Is left unto you"—to the Jews especially—"desolate," since they can no longer seek salvation there. (5) The Jews still carry the curse of Cain the murderer of Abel—the "mark" of the "fugitive and vagabond." 3. *The children of wickedness are not exclusively Jewish.* (1) For the blood of the martyrs of Jesus shed by the pagan Romans desolation was poured upon Daniel's "desolator" (see Dan. ix. 27). The barbarians were the instruments of retribution. (2) The mystical Babylon revived in the papacy is reserved for retribution for the blood of the martyrs which is found in her (see Rev. vi. 11; xvii. 6; xviii. 24; xix. 20). (3) Individual offenders are reserved to the judgment of the last day. "So terrible is God's judgment that when he punishes a sinner he seems to punish *all sin* in him" (Quesnel).

IV. THAT THE LONG-SUFFERING OF CHRIST IS SALVATION. 1. *The Jews will yet see Christ in his glory.* (1) This they have clamoured for. (2) The contrast to his first coming in humiliation will be great. 2. *They will all acknowledge him then.* (1) Formerly the babes perfected praise when the rulers refused it (see ch. xxi. 9). (2) The rulers then will cry, "Hosanna!" The words, "Blessed is he!" are a confession of the Messiahship of Jesus (see Rom. xi. 26, 27). (3) If they do not say, "Blessed is he!" in penitence then, they will say it by constraint in perdition.—J. A. M.

Ver. 3.—*The sin of inconsistency.* "For they say, and do not." To our Lord the supreme offence was contradiction between saying and doing, appearance and fact, outside and inside, show and reality. A man who is himself consciously sincere is always keen to detect, quick to revolt against, insincerity in others. But if inconsistency is mischievous in any man, it is doubly mischievous in religious teachers, and in persons occupying prominent positions of influence. Probably the reference of our Lord to "scribes and Pharisees" is intended to limit his denunciation to particular classes of Pharisees—those who were learned in the Law, and professed to teach the Law. 'It really means "those Pharisees who were also scribes." And when Jesus adds the word "hypocrites," he really limits his denunciation to such as were hypocrites.

I. INCONSISTENCY IS THE PERIL OF OFFICIALS. Whatever is done regularly as a duty is in danger of being done perfunctorily. The heart may go with the act at first, but the constancy and the outwardness soon involve the failing of heart-interest, and presently the heart is occupied with one thing and the hands with another; and even the desire for harmony between the interests of heart and hand can easily be lost. This is the common peril of all officials—priests, clergy, statesmen, teachers, secretaries; and the peril is never so great as in cases of religion. Cases of open inconsistency may happily be infrequent in the Christian ministry, but the fear of inconsistency should always be present to the mind of those who hold office, and make them watchful and zealous concerning their own integrity. A teacher never has his true power unless heart and hand go well together.

II. INCONSISTENCY IS THE PERIL OF DISCIPLES. Our Lord was anxious concerning the influence of the model teachers of his day on the men who were to teach his truth after he ascended. So his words are intended to be a solemn warning to them. What scribes *said* was more worthy and more important than what they *did*. What our Lord's disciples *were* and *did* was always much more important than what they *said*. To do Christ's work in the world, our words must always precisely utter our hearts. But show the danger of *over-stating* religious feeling and experience, and so weakening our force by the suggestion of inconsistency.

III. INCONSISTENCY IS THE PERIL OF THE PEOPLE. For if they see it in their teachers,

they readily take up the idea that it is permissible in themselves, and so Christ's truth is dishonoured and his service misconceived.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The fascination of human praise.* "All their works they do for to be seen of men." It is right for us to desire acceptance and favour with our fellow-men. The desire for human praise is a proper incentive and inspiration, which no moralist can afford to under-estimate. But in relation to it, we must apply the ever-working law of Christian moderation. The love of praise very readily becomes an absorbing mania, and, like all manias, it implies mental and moral deterioration. A man may come to live for praise, and make a life-aim of getting his fellows' admiration. If he does, he will drift ever downward, until he even tries to get praise for the cut of his garments, the grace of his bow, and the politeness of his speech. He will even be pleased when ignorant street people gape at his phylacteries and the wide borders of his garments; and everywhere he will be asserting himself, and pushing into the chief places; making himself disagreeable by trying to make himself admirable.

I. HUMAN PRAISE AS AN INSPIRATION. It is not the highest and best inspiration. It is only *an* inspiration. The loyal-hearted and high-toned man seeks Divine acceptance. "Study to show thyself approved unto *God*." But men can help others by kindly approvals. And the hope of gaining approval does worthily influence grown men as well as young children. Show (1) that the praise of men may translate God's approval to us; (2) that we need never be puffed up, if we take men's praise to God, and thank him for letting us have the cheer of it; (3) that we need not make the desire for men's praise shape our conduct and relations. We can do right because it is right, and accept men's praise if it comes. It is always well to remember that God approves the *quality* of a thing, but men are usually caught by the *appearance* of things. There is never any reason why a good thing should not also be a good-looking thing.

II. HUMAN PRAISE AS A SNARE. In the case of these scribes we see that it made them untrue to themselves. They soon found out what men stared at and admired, and then set themselves to provide it, heedless as to whether it expressed their real selves or not. Human praise cultivates *vanity*, a meaner vice than pride. Vanity differs from pride partly in this—the proud man generally has something to be proud about; the vain man is vain concerning just himself, and wants *flattery*, yearns for it, lives on it, will demean himself if only he can get it, feeds his vanity on praise, and never minds though the praise is worthless in its insincerity.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The equality of believers.* "And all ye are brethren." The kindliness and mutual helpfulness of brotherhood are not prominent in our Lord's mind at this time. He was rather thinking of the equality of the brothers in one family. All are sons. No one of them is any more than a son. No one of them has any rights over his brother. The variety of gifts, talents, and dispositions in no way affects the equal rights of the brotherhood. All who push themselves into chief places, bid for special greetings, or claim to be masters—if they presume to call themselves Christ's disciples—sin against the equality of the Christian brotherhood.

I. THE EQUALITY OF THE BROTHERHOOD IS BASED ON THE COMMON SONSHIP. If our standing in Christ depended on the Divine recognition of peculiarities in us; or if we gained it upon superior merit or upon special endeavour, there might be orders and gradations in the Christian discipleship. But brothers are just born into families; they are brothers because they are sons, and for no other reason; the bond uniting them is the common family life. So we are born of God; made sons apart from all effort of our own; quickened with a Divine life whose operations we cannot control. And we are all quickened and saved and made sons in just the same way. Rich or poor, there is for all the one "laver of regeneration." We are brothers because we are sons; and as we are nothing but sons, so we are nothing but brothers.

II. THE EQUALITY OF THE BROTHERHOOD ADMITS OF VARIETIES IN ABILITY. The diversity of character and of gifts in a family is the subject of constant remark. It is a commonplace. But noble natures never make such diversity a reason for claiming superiority. The most talented members are often the most brotherly. The family bond is not affected by personal peculiarities. There are diversities of gifts in God's

redeemed family. We always go wrong when, on account of some gift, we assert ourselves and break the brotherhood.

III. THE EQUALITY OF THE BROTHERHOOD IS SEEN IN MUTUAL SERVICE. It is not that some one member is served by the rest, but that each is ready to serve the other. Each holds his gift at the command of the other. True, a brother's gift may put him in some office; but he is there to serve, not to rule. This idea is preserved, in idea at least, in every section of Christ's Church. The highest offices are never other than brotherly places of service. Our ministers are our brethren.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Greatness finding expression in service.* This setting of truth was repeated by our Lord again and again, and variously illustrated by parable and by example (as in our Lord's washing the disciples' feet). He must have been much impressed by the unreadiness to serve which distinguished the prominent religionists of his days. The Pharisee class was always scheming to *get*—to get wealth, to get praise, to get credit. He never saw them *giving*, or trying to do anything for anybody. They were always standing on their dignity. They loved "salutations in the market-places," everybody paying special deference to these learned and holy men. Even the little boys pulling off their turbans, and bowing low as the great man passed. It was in the mind of Christ to set a complete contrast to all this before the people; and he would have his disciples continue his example. But it should be clearly shown that our Lord's example was in no sense put on; it was the natural and proper expression of his principles and spirit.

I. A MAN IS IN NO SENSE GREAT WHO THINKS CHIEFLY ABOUT HIMSELF. This is what Christ teaches. This is not what the world teaches. If a man is to "get on," the world says he must take care of "number one." Christ says he may get *on* that way, but he will never get *up*. The inspiration is low which a man gives himself. The old-world idea of greatness was summed up in the ideas of position and achievement. In connection with our text, set out before you a self-centred Pharisee, and say whether that man is, in any sense at all, *great*. What can you admire in him? No doubt he thinks himself great; but is he? Evidently Christ has raised our standard of judgment, and we find we only despise the man whose life circles round himself.

II. A MAN IS GREAT WHO THINKS CHIEFLY ABOUT WHAT HE CAN DO FOR OTHERS. Christ has recovered "ministry," and ennobled it for ever. Recovered it, because: 1. It was God's primal idea for the human race. When he made man male and female, he established the law of mutual service. When he made parents and children, he glorified the law of mutual service, and lifted motherhood into the first human place. When he permitted sickness, trouble, and poverty in his world, he called for a brotherhood of sympathizing service. 2. It was man's mischief-making to interfere with God's dignity of service. This man did when, in his wilfulness, he organized society, built cities, made offices, and set one man above another. Then everybody soon began to think what advantage he could get over his brother, instead of what he could do to serve him.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The woe of the hypocrite.* The word "woe" is repeated again and again in this chapter, and yet the reader of it fails to realize what the woe denounced precisely was. The suggestive word is left by Christ. It is enough to tell these men that they are surely heaping up woe for themselves in the latter day. Some hint of the coming woe may be given in the closing verses of the chapter, which indicate a time of sorest humiliation, of hopeless ruin. Jewish literature gives quite as bad a picture of them as Jesus did. "Fear not *true* Pharisees, but greatly fear *painted* Pharisees," said a Jewish ruler to his wife, when he was dying. "The supreme tribunal," said another, "will duly punish hypocrites who wrap their talliths around them to appear—what they are not!—true Pharisees."

I. WHAT THINGS WERE HEAPING UP WOE FOR THESE HYPOCRITES. Our Lord marks several things in which their hypocrisy was especially manifest. 1. Their professing to be spiritual teachers, yet keeping the people from receiving spiritual truth (ver. 13). 2. They joined devout prayers for desolate widows with a grasping covetousness that seized the widows' property and ruined them. 3. They made proselytes, so to say, to righteousness, but compelled them to be as bitter, base, and uncharitable as them-

selves. 4. They made foolish distinctions, which they took care did not hinder themselves. 5. They appeared to be most delicately scrupulous, but in their conduct they allowed the grossest and most abominable licence. 6. They were supremely anxious about the *look* of things; they were wickedly indifferent about the *real condition* of things. 7. They wanted *men* to admire them in public, but they dare not let any one see their private lives. It is easy enough to see that, for such men, a revealing day must come, and, when it came, it would prove humiliation and woe indeed. It is woe for such men to be found out. It was a beginning of woe for Jesus thus to show them up before the people, and make them objects of scorn and detestation.

II. WHAT PERSONS SUFFERED WOE BECAUSE OF THE HYPOCRITE. For the religious hypocrite is a *woe-maker*. And this point may be opened out with some freshness. Every religiously insincere man: 1. Makes woe for himself. He has no enemy like himself. 2. He makes woe for the religious community to which he belongs. He prays against their prayers; he brings disgrace on them when he is found out. 3. He makes woe for society, which learns, by his failure, the misery of mutual mistrust. 4. He even brings dishonour on the name and cause of God.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The peril of making proselytes.* The term "proselytes" is used, and not "converts" or "disciples." It is employed when the idea to be conveyed is "persuasion" to accept some particular opinion or hobby, or to join some particular system or party. "Conversion" suggests an inward change and renewal; "proselyting" suggests outward association with a party. "Conversion" is full of hope; "proselyting" is full of peril. The word was used by the Jews for persons who had been heathen, but had accepted Judaism, and they distinguished between (1) proselytes of the gate, who received the teachings of the Old Testament, but not the ceremonial Law; and (2) proselytes of righteousness, who conformed to the whole Law. Our modern term "pervert" conveys something of the idea our Lord attached to "proselyte." Dean Plumptre gives an historical reference, which skilfully brings out the point of our Lord's reproof. "The zeal of the earlier Pharisees had shown itself in a propagandism which reminds us rather of the spread of the religion of Mahomet than of that of Christ. John Hyrcanus, the last of the Maccabean priest-rulers, had offered the Idumæans the alternative of death, exile, or circumcision. When the government of Rome rendered such measures impossible, they resorted to all the arts of persuasion, and exulted when they succeeded in enrolling a heathen convert as a member of their party. But the proselytes thus made were too often a scandal and proverb of reproach. There was no real conversion, and those who were most active in the work of proselytizing were for the most part blind leaders of the blind. The vices of the Jew were engrafted on the vices of the heathen. The ties of duty and natural affection were ruthlessly snapped asunder. The popular Jewish feeling about them was like that of the popular Christian feeling about a converted Jew."

I. THE PERIL OF MAKING PROSELYTES FOR THOSE WHO MAKE THEM. Open such points as these: 1. A man must exaggerate sectarian differences before he can try to win proselytes to an opinion. 2. A man must make more of the outward form than the inward spirit. 3. A man is only too likely to use bad means in gaining such an end. 4. A man who makes proselytes honours himself rather than God. 5. And such a man is only too likely to be deceived in the result he attains.

II. THE PERIL OF MAKING PROSELYTES FOR THOSE WHO ARE MADE. Open these points: 1. Men may be overpressed to accept opinions on which they have really formed no judgment. 2. Perverts notoriously exaggerate the *formalities* of the new creed they adopt, and become bitterest partisans.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*The scruples of the formalist.* "Strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." The proverbial character of this sentence is manifest, but the precise form is disputed. Trench thinks "straining *out* a gnat" is better; and he suggests reference to the scrupulous anxiety shown in drinking water. A traveller in North Africa reports that a Moorish soldier who accompanied him, when he drank, always unfolded the end of his turban, and placed it over the mouth of his *bota*, drinking through the muslin, to *strain out* the gnats, whose larvæ swarm in the water of that country. The "camel" is only used in the proverb as the representative of something big. The

Hindoo proverbial saying is, "Swallowing an elephant, and being choked with a flea." Reference must be kept to the class of persons that may be regarded as represented by hypocritical Pharisees.

I. HE WHO PRESERVES THE SPIRIT CAN ADAPT THE FORMS. No man may say that the forms of religion are unimportant. They have their place, and only need to be kept in their right place. But life comes before expression of life; and spirit comes before form. Being "born from above" is more important than any religious rite, even the most sacred. Only the man who has the *spirit* can bear right relations to the forms. He will use them. He will not be mastered by them. He understands that forms were made for him, and he was not made for the forms. They must, therefore, be adjusted to him and to his needs. To him all forms are servants. Authority in the forms of religion may be voluntarily recognized; but a man's own quickened life is the supreme authority to him.

II. HE WHO UNDULY ESTIMATES THE FORM WILL SOON BE ENSLAVED BY THE FORM. The student of human nature, who considers the sense-conditions under which we are set, will argue that it must always be so. He who observes Christian life, or skilfully reads personal experience, will declare that it *is so*. Once let religious forms and ceremonies control conduct, break bounds of the restraint of soul-life, and they will run as does loosened fire; they will overlay the spiritual feeling; they will absorb all the powers; and become supreme interests; and when the spirit is thus overlaid, the result too often follows which we see in these Pharisees—exaggerated scruples about exact and minute forms going along with a demoralizing indifference to moral purity.—R. T.

Ver. 28.—*Appearance and reality.* "Ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." This is the revelation, not of a mere observer of men, but of a Divine Heart-searcher, a Divine Thought-reader.

I. MAN JUDGES BY THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, AND MAKES MISTAKES. When Samuel saw the handsome eldest son of Jesse, he said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." But he was reproved. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). 1. Man can only judge by the help of appearances, because he cannot read the heart. 2. Man is disposed to judge of religion by appearances, because he is daily judging everything in this way. 3. Man is always liable to make mistakes, because appearances often accidentally, and more often intentionally, fail to present realities. The peril of trusting to appearances may be illustrated by the way in which goods are dressed up to attract sale. The same thing is found in religious spheres. Credit is gained by the show of piety; and the hypocrite is ever over-anxious about his external observances. Our Lord's figure of the cup is common to every age; his figure of the "whited sepulchres" belongs to the East. Sepulchres were whited so that Jews might not unconsciously walk over them, seeing that this involved ceremonial defilement. The outsides of burial-places were whitewashed once a year. It is not enough to see a man's devoutness at church. See him at home. See him in business. See him in private prayer. See him as God sees him.

II. GOD JUDGES BY THE INWARD REALITY, AND MAKES NO MISTAKE. He looks inside the cup. He knows what is inside the sepulchre. He reads the secret life of the fastidiously devout Pharisees. He finds David right-hearted, and chooses him rather than his handsome brother. St. Paul intimates that the Christian man should be so absolutely sincere and true, that he could readily stand out in the sunshine, and let it look him through and through, and round and round. See how the good man comes altogether to prefer the Divine appraisement, and to say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Impress that when the man is heart-right with God, he is properly anxious about his appearance before men. He wants that to tell, as fully as possible, the truth of his inner life.—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*Holy denunciations.* Revised Version, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" margin, "Gehenna." It is neither right nor wise to attempt any mitigations or modifications of this intensely severe sentence. Let the words stand precisely as we find them; and let the sentence be

the sternest, severest, intensest sentence that ever passed the Divine lips of our blessed Lord. Capable of being misunderstood and misrepresented, they are capable also of most rational and most reasonable explanation. All we have to do is to inquire whether the persons referred to, and the circumstances under which the words were uttered, would justify a noble-minded man in speaking so intensely. If they would then Jesus is justified.

I. THESE DENUNCIATIONS, READ IN THE LIGHT OF THE PERSONS DENOUNCED. Explain that they would have been unsuitable for the Pharisees as a class. They would have been over-intense if applied to the formalist and hypocritical sections of the Pharisee class. But they are strictly appropriate to those few men who, for months past, had been resisting every witness that favoured Christ's claim; had been plotting, dodging, scheming, to destroy Christ; had come fawning upon him, with malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness in their hearts. Defeated in argument, they would not admit defeat. Humiliated by our Lord's answers, they were still bent on effecting their shameless purpose. What did such men deserve? What was left to be done with them? They had to be shown up, as men are shown up when withering denunciations are heaped upon them, under which they cower, conscience-smitten. Jesus was doing the best thing possible for those wretched men, by these holy denunciations, the mere form of which must be judged by Eastern, not Western, models.

II. THESE DENUNCIATIONS, READ IN THE LIGHT OF THE PERSON DENOUNCING. Those who so readily accuse Christ of over-severity would be the very first and loudest in accusing him of moral weakness, inability to recognize or respond to sin, if such instances of severity had not been recorded. The true man, the Divine man, feels *adequately* in response to every situation; and we may unhesitatingly affirm that this was a time to be sublimely indignant, and that burning words of wrath—terrible as these—were the fitting thing for the occasion.—R. T.

Ver. 37.—*Lost opportunities become judgments.* One writer observes that converts to Judaism were said to come "under the wings of the Shechinah." This familiar metaphor may have suggested to our Lord's mind the figure of the hen and her brood. "Many times by his prophets Christ called the children of Jerusalem to himself—the true Shechinah—through whom the glory of the latter house was greater than that of the former." Whedon well says, "The beautiful tenderness of this verse shows that the warnings of the previous verses are the language, not of human anger, but of terrible Divine justice." It is quite probable that our Lord's visits to Jerusalem, and his prolonged labours in that city, are not fully detailed in the Gospels. He may refer to his own efforts to win the people to full allegiance to Jehovah, as represented in his own mission. Jerusalem had its opportunities. They were multiplied until it seemed almost overweighted with privilege. Those opportunities had been neglected and despised again and again, and now they were growing into heavy, overwhelming judgments.

I. OUR OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVISIONS OF THE DIVINE MERCY. We say of those who try us beyond endurance, "Well, we will give him one more chance." And we think this a great sign of our pitifulness and mercy. Then what was God's mercy in patiently bearing with his wayward people, and renewing their chance, their opportunity, age after age? Trace the opportunities by following the line of prophets, special Divine messengers, up to the mission of John, and then of the Lord Jesus. The figure of the text is a specially tender one, viewed in the light of Eastern associations. Birds of prey abound, and chickens are in momentary danger, and hens have to be keenly watchful. But what can a hen do, if her chickens are wilful, and will not respond to her call?

II. OUR OPPORTUNITIES DESPISED MUST TURN INTO DIVINE JUDGMENTS. God's dealings with us must have issues. We cannot play with them as we like. If God acts in *mercy*, he does not forego his *claim*. But it may be also shown that the treatment of our opportunities becomes a revelation of our character; and it reveals bad things. God's judgments really come on character, and on acts only because they reveal character. Jerusalem sinners thoroughly needed and deserved their judgment.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Vers. 1—51.—PROPHECY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, AND OF THE TIMES OF THE END. (Mark xiii. 1—37; Luke xxi. 5—36.)

There is no reason to think, with Olshausen, that St. Matthew or his editor has considerably amplified the original discourse of our Lord by introducing details and expressions from other quarters. The discourse, as we now have it (ch. xxiv. and xxv.), forms a distinct whole, divided into certain portions closely related to each other, and it would have been unnatural in St. Matthew, and opposed to his simple and veracious style, to have put words into our Lord's mouth at this moment, which were not actually uttered by him on this solemn occasion.

Vers. 1—3.—*Occasion of the discourse.* (Mark xiii. 1—4; Luke xxi. 5—7.)

Ver. 1.—**From the temple**; Revised Version, *went out from the temple, and was going on his way* (ἐπορεύετο). So the best manuscripts and versions. It was while he was proceeding on the route to Bethany that the disciples interrupted him with their remarks about the temple. He had now taken his final leave of the hallowed courts; the prophecy of the desolation of the house was beginning to be fulfilled (see on ch. xxiii. 38). **His disciples came to him.** They were disquieted by Christ's words recorded at the end of the last chapter, which spoke of a terrible retribution about to fall, of the desolation of the temple, of Christ's own departure for a time. St. Mark (xiii. 3) tells us that Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately when these things should be, and what signs should forewarn of their approach, as in ver. 3. St. Matthew records here that his disciples came to him for to show (ἐπιδεῖξαι, *to display*) him the buildings of the temple (ἱεροῦ, the whole sacred enclosure). They had gathered from his words that destruction awaited this edifice, but as they gazed upon it they could scarcely bring themselves to believe in its coming overthrow. So as they gained some commanding point of view, they drew Christ's attention to its beauty, magnificence, and unequalled solidity, desiring him to explain further the mode and time of the catastrophe. It was popularly said, "He who never saw the temple of Herod has never seen a fine building."

Ver. 2.—**And Jesus said.** The best manuscripts and the Revised Version give, *But he answered and said.* **See ye not all these things?** Vulgate, *Videtis hæc omnia?* Our Lord, in turn, calls attention to the glorious structure in order to give added emphasis to his weighty denunciation. **Not be left here one stone upon another.** This prophecy was most literally fulfilled. Recent explorations have shown that not a stone of Herod's temple remains *in situ*. The orders of Titus, given with regret, for the total demolition of the walls of temple and city, were carried out with cruel exactness, so that, as Josephus testifies ('Bell. Jud.,' vii. 1. 1), passers-by would not have supposed that the place had ever been inhabited. When the apostate Julian, in the fourth Christian century, endeavoured to cast a slur upon prophecy by rebuilding the city and temple, his design proved to be an ignominious failure, and the sacred shrine has continued to this day a monument of Divine vengeance.

Ver. 3.—**As he sat upon the Mount of Olives.** On his way to Bethany towards the close of this day, he rested for a while and communed with the disciples, uttering the wonderful eschatological discourse which follows in this and the next chapter. It is noted that the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans began on the very spot where this prophecy of its destruction was delivered, strategical reasons compelling them to make their attack from this quarter. "A sudden turn in the road," writes Dr. Edersheim (ii. 431), "and the sacred building was once more in full view. Just then the western sun was pouring his golden beams on tops of marble cloisters and on the terraced courts, and glittering on the golden spikes on the roof of the holy place. In the setting, even more than in the rising sun, must the vast proportions, the symmetry, and the sparkling sheen of this mass of snowy marble and gold have stood out gloriously. And across the black valley, and up the slopes of Olivet, lay the dark shadows of those gigantic walls built of massive stones, some of them nearly twenty-four feet long. Even the rabbis, despite their hatred of Herod, grew enthusiastic, and dream that the very temple walls would have been covered with gold had not the variegated marble, resembling the waves of the sea, seemed more beauteous. It was probably, as they [the disciples] now gazed on all this grandeur and strength, that they broke the silence imposed on them by gloomy thoughts of the near desolateness of that house which the Lord predicted." **Privately.**

Such questions were not to be asked openly in the hearing of any who might have followed him from the city. There was nothing more resented by the average Jew than any intimation of the destruction of the temple. It was one of the charges against Stephen that he had said that Jesus would destroy the temple (Acts vi. 14). When, therefore, some of the apostles wished for more definite information on this subject, they took care to make their inquiry in private. Their questions were twofold—they desired to know the time of the events, and the signs which should precede Christ's coming and the end of the world. **When shall these things be?** "These things" refer to the destruction of the temple, and the course of events which, as they conceive, are dependent thereupon (comp. ch. xxiii. 36). To their minds, this catastrophe could only occur contemporaneously with the coming of Christ in glory and the end of the world. They saw in it a great revolution which should usher in the final consummation. But *when* should this come to pass?—in their own day, or after many ages? in the lifetime of this generation, or at some far-distant period? It was not mere wanton curiosity to know the future which prompted the question, but rather a reverent desire to prepare for these great events, of the certainty of which they were now fully assured. So the next question shows no doubt concerning the facts, and asks, not the mode of the accomplishment, but only what anticipatory warning and indication were to be given. **Sign of thy coming** (*τῆς σῆς παρουσίας*), **and of the end of the world** (*συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος*). They look upon these two events as synchronous, or very closely connected. The word *parousia*, which in classical Greek means "presence," or "arrival," is used in the New Testament specially for the second advent of Christ to set up his eternal kingdom in full power and glory (see in this chapter vers. 27, 37, 39; and comp. 1 Cor. xv. 23; 1 Thess. ii. 19; iii. 13, etc.). Referring to the same event, we find in some places the term "epiphany" used (see 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 1), and in others "revelation" (*ἀποκάλυψις*, 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7); but the three expressions denote simply the open establishment of Messiah's kingdom, indefinitely as to time and manner. The phrase translated "the end of the world" means literally *the consummation of the age* (cf. ch. xiii. 39; Heb. ix. 26); *consummationis sæculi* (Vulgate); *i.e.* the close of this present æon, in contradistinction from the future æon, or the world to come. This is "the last time," "the last days," spoken of elsewhere (see 1 Pet. i. 5; 1 John ii. 18; and comp. Isa ii. 2; Micah iv. 1).

Vers. 4—41.—*The first portion of the great prophecy.*

Ver. 4.—**Jesus answered and said.** The succeeding prophecy has much exercised the minds of commentators from the earliest times unto the present. It is, indeed, full of mysteries, dark sayings, profundities, which our minds cannot fathom. Many of these are and must be inherent in the subject; but some difficulties have been created by the imperfect views taken by those who have applied themselves to explain the Lord's utterances. It is seen by all that we have here predictions concerning the fate of Jerusalem, concerning the parousia of Christ, and concerning the last times; it is the attempt to assign to these events separately certain definite portions of the address that has led to confusion and perplexity. Over-refinement and over-wisdom have marred the exposition of many critics. They have limited to one event that which was spoken of more than that one; confining their view to one point, they have excluded other points which were equally in the mind of the Revealer. It has been usual to divide the prophecy in this chapter into two sections, of which the first, extending to the twenty-ninth verse, is supposed to relate to the fate of Jerusalem itself; the second, comprising the rest of the chapter, to the parousia and the coming to judgment. But such definite partition will not stand investigation, and can be maintained only by doing violence to language or ignoring more natural explanations. The prophecy announces analogous events, the description of which has more than one application, and often passes from one to another with nothing to closely mark the transition. The combination of facts thus woven together cannot be coarsely unravelled. The same words, the same expressions, are used to denote the arrival or fulfilment of distinct occurrences. To limit these to one event only is to set bounds to the Omniscient. So it seems to be not only most expedient, but most reverent, to look on our Lord's eschatological address as one whole, of which the several parts are in full harmony and sequence (if we were only able to understand them), and to acknowledge that insuperable difficulties in the interpretation do exist and are meant to exist. The Lord had to prepare his followers for the overthrow of their city, and the dangers to life and faith which would accompany that judgment. He desired also to raise in them a constant expectation of his advent, so that Christians then and thenceforward might ever live in hope and watch for a great future. Herein will be found the key to the perplexities of the address; not that even this

unlooks all the mysteries, but it opens the drift of these wonderful utterances, and enables us to see light amid the gloom. This will appear more fully as we examine the details. **Take heed that no man deceive you**; πλανήσῃ: *lead you astray* (so ver. 5). Jesus does not answer the disciples' question as to the time when "these things" shall occur; that is purposely left uncertain. He proceeds to warn them against the dangers which would beset them in the coming crisis. He withdraws them from the speculative to the practical (see vers. 23—25).

Ver. 5.—Here begins what has been called the first strophe of the oracle (vers. 5—14), which indicates certain prognostics common to the close of the Jewish theocracy and to the end of the world. **Many shall come in my Name** (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου), resting on my Name, grounding their pretensions thereon. **Saying, I am Christ** (*the Christ*). They who really desired to follow Christ should be tried by the temptation to see in other persons the Messiah. The warning could scarcely have been needed by the apostles themselves; it must have been meant primarily for their converts and the early Christians. And though we have no account in apostolic Church history of any such pretenders, yet in the age succeeding our Lord's death we read of many impostors who asserted themselves to be inspired prophets, if not the Messiah, and led astray many credulous persons (see Josephus, 'Ant.,' xx. 5. 1; 8. 6, etc.). There were doubtless many false Messiahs whose names are little known, and critics have enumerated twenty-nine such. The pretensions of these persons were not generally admitted, and their adherents were commonly few and uninfluential. Our Lord probably did not allude to these in his monition. But we may observe that the warning may include such deceivers as Simon Magus and those many false teachers who vexed the early Church, and, without assuming the name of Christ, did Satan's work by undermining the faith. St. John speaks of there being "many antichrists" in his day (1 John ii. 18), and St. Paul had occasion to warn his converts against "heretical seducers" (see 2 Cor. xi. 13; 2 Thess. ii.; 1 Tim. vi. 3, etc.). Since then the prophecy has been fulfilled in the heretics who, professing to come in the Name of Christ and to enunciate his doctrine, or, like Mohammed, to assume his place, have taught lies. These shall abound in the latter days, and shall be a sign of the approaching end.

Ver. 6.—**Ye shall hear** (μελλήσετε ἀκούειν). Ye are about, ye are destined, to hear. "Futurum complicatum, *audituri eritis*" (Bengel). He addresses the apostles as representatives of the whole body of believers. **Wars and rumours of wars**; *i.e.* wars near at hand, and distant wars of which the rumour only reaches you, but which threaten to approach and menace your peace (cf. Jer. iv. 19). The peace which reigned at Christ's birth was rudely shattered after his death, though the wars before the destruction of Jerusalem were of no great importance. We hear of an intended expedition against Aretas (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 5. 3), of one of Caligula against the Jews (ibid., xviii. 8. 2), both of which, however, came to nothing. Then there were certain insurrections in the reigns of Claudius (ibid., xx. 5. 3) and Nero (ibid., xx. 8. 6—10). The Roman empire was disturbed; four emperors—Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius—died by violence within a short space of time; the restless Parthians were a continual source of trouble. But these and such-like occurrences do little to exhaust the meaning of Christ's prediction. He is looking forward to a distant future, and sees with prophetic eye the state of warfare which has prevailed from the disruption of the Roman empire, and which shall continue unto the end. **See that ye be not troubled**; rather, *see, be ye not troubled.* Look on it all, and yet be not affrighted. **All these things** (πάντα) **must come to pass.** All that I announce is sure to occur, not from any absolute necessity, but because of men's passions and perverseness, which will bring it to pass (see on ch. xviii. 7; and Jas. iv. 1). **The end is not yet.** These signs might lead men to think that the final consummation was close at hand. Our Lord warns against such a conclusion. St. Paul speaks of "the end" as occurring in Christ's second advent (1 Cor. xv. 24).

Ver. 7.—**Nation shall rise against nation**, etc. This part of the prediction is inapplicable to the era preceding the ruin of Jerusalem, the disturbances that occurred then (*e.g.* at Alexandria, Seleucia, Jamnia, and other localities mentioned by Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 9. 8, 9; 'Bell. Jud.,' ii. 17. 10; 18. 1—8; iv. 3. 2; and by Philo, 'Legat. ad Caium,' § 30) could hardly have been indicated in such grand terms. More to the purpose is the sketch of the period given by Tacitus, at the opening of his history, though it embraces also details belonging to a somewhat later age: "I enter upon a work fertile in vicissitudes, stained with the blood of battles, embroiled with dissensions, horrible even in the intervals of peace. Four princes slain by the sword; three civil wars, more with foreign enemies, and sometimes both at once; prosperity in the East, disasters in the West; Illyricum disturbed; the Gauls

ready to revolt; Britain conquered, and again lost; Sarmatians and Suevians conspiring against us; the Dacians renowned for defeats given and sustained; the Parthians almost aroused to arms by a counterfeit Nero. Italy afflicted with calamities unheard of, or recurring only after a long interval; cities overwhelmed or swallowed up in the fertile region of Campania; Rome itself laid waste by fire, the most ancient temples destroyed, the very capitol burned by its own citizens," etc. ('Hist.,' l. 2). But the Lord's words seem to refer to times when Rome's dominion had ceased, and nation warred against nation, as in later and modern days in Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa. So again the prediction must be extended far beyond events in the Jewish cycle. **Famines.** Besides the famine mentioned in Acts xi. 28, there were others in Jerusalem and Judæa (Josephus, 'Ant.,' iii. 15. 3; xx. 2. 6; 4. 2; 'Bell. Jud.,' vi. 3. 3). Suetonius ('Claud.,' 18) speaks of "assiduas sterilitates;" and Tacitus ('Ann.,' xii. 43) records as happening at the same period, "frugum egestas, et orta ex eo fames." **And pestilences;** as consequent on famine. Hence the Greek paronomasia, λιμοὶ καὶ λαμοί, in our text. But many editors expunge λιμοί, considering it, with some reason, to have been introduced from the parallel passage in St. Luke, where it is certainly genuine. Of pestilences we have notice in Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' iv. 6. 1), in Tacitus ('Ann.,' xiv. 16), and Suetonius ('Nero,' 39), where we read that at Rome in a single autumn thirty thousand persons perished. Wordsworth refers to Tertullian ('Apol.,' xx.), who sees in these predictions infallible proof of the inspiration of Scripture. "Hence it is that we come to be so certain of many things not yet come to pass, from the experience we have of those that are; because those were presignified by the same Spirit with these which we see fulfilling every day" (Reeve). **Earthquakes.** Commentators relate the occurrence of such commotions at Rome, in Crete, Laodicea, Campania, etc., and at Jerusalem (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' iv. 4. 5; Tacitus, 'Ann.,' xii. 43, 58; xiv. 27; xv. 22; Seneca, 'Ep.,' 91. 9; Philostratus, 'Vit. Apollon.,' iv. 34; Zonaras, 'Ann.,' xi. 10). Nösgen takes the term "earthquakes" in a metaphorical sense as equivalent to ταραχαί, and implying mental perturbations; but it seems incongruous to admit a metaphysical prognostication in the midst of a notice of a series of material phenomena. **In divers places;** κατὰ τόπους: *per loca* (Vulgate). Some render the words, "in all places," *ubivis locorum*, as in Luke ii. 41, κατ' ἔτος, "every year." But it is better to take the preposition distributively, "place by place," like κατ' ἄνδρα: so equivalent to "here and there."

Ver. 8.—**Beginning of sorrows;** ὠδίνων: *labour-pangs, travailings.* The metaphor often occurs (see Isa. xxvi. 17; Jer. xiii. 21; Hos. xiii. 13, etc.). These great events are called "labour-pangs" because they usher in the new creation, "the regeneration" spoken of in ch. xix. 28 (see note there). St. Paul writes (Rom. viii. 22), "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The tribulations and calamities which preceded and accompanied the overthrow of the Jewish polity are a sign and warning of the great and universal woes which shall herald the day of judgment. Jewish writings speak of "the sorrows of Messiah," distresses, wars, famine, dissension, etc., which should herald his advent, and Christ may have used the popular opinion, true as far as it went, as a vehicle for conveying the further truth, that the coming age would be produced amid terrible agonies of men, peoples, and nature.

Ver. 9.—The Lord passes to the fate of his followers, or the corporate Church. **Then.** St. Mark does not note the time; St. Luke writes, "before all these things." Hence we gather that the calamities now announced will precede, accompany, and follow those before mentioned. That which befell the apostles and early believers is an emblem of what Christianity will undergo at the hands of an antagonistic world. St. John, in the Revelation, has shadowed forth these things as doomed to fall upon the Church in the latter days. **Shall they deliver you up to be afflicted** (comp. ch. x. 17, 18). Christ is speaking, not only of the apostles, but of disciples generally. They shall deliver you over to the authorities, civil and religious, to be punished. The Book of the Acts contains numerous examples of such afflictions (see Acts iv. 3; viii. 1; xii. 4; xiii. 50; xiv. 19, etc.). **Kill.** As Stephen (Acts vii. 59), James the brother of John (Acts xii. 2), Peter and Paul (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' ii. 25), and many others. **Hated of all [*the*] nations** (Acts xxviii. 22, "As concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against"). Tacitus speaks of those "quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat" ('Ann.,' xv. 44). The Romans seem to have placed Jews and Christians in the same category, and to have bestowed on the latter the hatred felt for the former. But the Lord's words point to some feeling more universal and permanent than this temporary animosity, even to the hatred which occasioned the death of martyrs in all ages, the warfare between

good and evil, faith and unbelief, which shall continue and increase in virulence unto the end (John xv. 20; xvi. 2).

Ver. 10.—**Shall many be offended.** The persecutions directed against the disciples in general shall in many cases result in overcoming their steadfastness and sapping their faith. **Shall betray one another.** To curry favour with enemies and to secure their own safety in troublous times, Christians were found to inform against friends, and to deliver them up to the civil authorities. Tacitus notes instances of this degrading cowardice. "First those were seized who confessed that they were Christians; and then on their information a vast multitude was convicted" ('Ann.,' xv. 44). **Shall hate one another.** Dissensions in religion cause the most bitter hatred, the very opposite of that love which is the essence of Christianity (John xv. 17). Where one of a pagan family embraced Christianity, the convert was regarded as an outcast, and cut adrift from the nearest domestic ties. The same treatment obtains even now in India. The reference in the text chiefly concerns contentions among professing Christians; we see such effects every day; they appear in every page of ecclesiastical history; they have stained the annals of our own and every nation.

Ver. 11.—**False prophets** (ver. 24). These were not necessarily predictors or soothsayers, but teachers having, as they said, a message from God. Such pretenders have arisen in every great crisis; but the Jews a few years later were deceived continually by fanatics or impostors, who professed to be inspired, and promised the infatuated people deliverance, urging them to resist the Romans, in expectation of the coming of Messiah to lead them to immediate victory (comp. Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' vi. 5. 2). The designation "false prophets" applies also to those heretical teachers who vexed the peace of the early Church, and of whom St. John expressly speaks, "Many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John iv. 1). These were Judaizing and Gnostic teachers, who tried to mar the good work of the apostles (see Acts xx. 30; Rom. xvi. 17, 18; 2 Cor. xi. 13; Gal. i. 7—9; Col. ii. 18—23, etc.). Throughout the Christian ages heresiarchs have always raised their evil voices, and the history of the Church is very much composed of accounts of such teachers, and of the efforts made to suppress them and to correct their pernicious doctrines.

Ver. 12.—**Because iniquity shall abound** (πληθυνθῆναι, *is multiplied*). The word rendered "iniquity" is ἀνομία, "lawlessness," general immorality and licence. Impatience of rule and discipline, connivance at and imitation of heathen practices, reacted upon the faith of believers, undermined steadfast adherence to principle. Then was the power of "that wicked one" (ὁ ἄνομος, 2 Thess. ii. 8) exercised and seen in the lapse of the unstable. **The love of many** (τῶν πολλῶν, *the many*, the majority) **shall wax cold.** "Love" (ἀγάπη) here is used in its general and comprehensive sense, as having God as its chief object and man in subordination thereto. The troubles and persecutions that shall beset believers, the spirit of worldliness and self-seeking that a timid faith encourages, will issue in loosening dependence upon God and trust in his providential care; and internal dissensions will destroy that brotherly love which ought to be characteristic of Christians. Of this lack of energetic love the Lord speaks in his warnings to the Church of Laodicea (Rev. iii. 16), "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Ver. 13.—**He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved** (ch. x. 22). Here is a note of consolation amid the refrain of woe. Patience and perseverance shall be crowned at the last. "The end" means primarily the destruction of Jerusalem, and the salvation promised is safety in that day of peril. It is believed that no Christians perished in the siege or after it (see ver. 16). But τέλος, being here used without the article (differently from vers. 6 and 14), must not be restricted to one allusion, but must be taken more generally, as indeed a universal axiom, equivalent to "finally," as long as endurance is needed. And the salvation must refer to the soul's sentence at the last day, not to any mere safety of body and life. What the maxim says is this: patient continuance in well-doing, resignation under persecutions and afflictions, holding fast the one faith even though it lead to the martyr's death,—this shall win the crown of eternal blessedness. The Christian must not be led astray by false teachers, nor offended by the prevalence of scandals, nor let his love be chilled, if he would gain the reward, share in Messiah's glory, and save his soul.

Ver. 14.—**This gospel of the kingdom.** The good news of the coming of Messiah's kingdom—what we call in short, "the gospel"—"that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. v 19). He calls it "this" (ch. xxvi. 13), because it is that which he preached, which it was the object of his incarnation to set forth. **In all the world** (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ, *in all the inhabited earth*). Before the taking of Jerusalem, the gospel had been carried into all parts of the then known world. We have very uncertain information about

the labours of most of the apostles, but if we may judge of their extent from what we know of St. Paul's, we should say that very few quarters of the Roman world were left unvisited. "Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the inhabited world" (Rom. x. 18). St. Paul testifies that the gospel was preached to every kingdom under heaven (Col. i. 6, 23). He himself carried it to Arabia, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Illyricum, Rome, Spain (see Rom. xv. 19, 24, 28; Gal. i. 17; Phil. i. 13, etc.). **A witness unto all** [*the*] **nations.** That both Jews and Gentiles might have the opportunity of receiving or rejecting Christ. The witness should be for or against them according to the use made of this opportunity. If the gospel thus delivered contained this utterance of our Lord's, the fulfilment of the predictions would lead to belief in him, and could fail to win acceptance only by reason of invincible prejudice or wilful perversity. Shortly, the truth is that the gospel will be everywhere offered, but not everywhere received. **And then,** when all these signs, especially the one last named, shall have appeared, **shall the end come,** primarily of Jerusalem, secondarily of this world or this age. Nothing is said of the effect of missionary efforts in early days or in time to come. We know that there was no national conversion in the primitive era, however common individual conversion may have been. So in the present age we are not to expect more than that Christian missions shall reach the uttermost parts of the earth, and that all nations shall have the offer of salvation, before the final appearance of Christ. The success of these efforts at universal evangelization is a mournful problem. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith upon the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8).

Ver. 15.—In this second strain of the prophecy contained in vers. 15—22, our Lord confines himself almost entirely to the fate of Jerusalem. **Therefore.** The illative particle carries us back to the signs given in the previous section (vers. 5—14). By saying **when ye shall see,** he implies that some of his hearers shall behold this mysterious sign, and have the opportunity of profiting by the knowledge thereof. **The abomination of desolation** (*τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως*). The term is from the Septuagint Version (with which Theodotion's agrees) of Dan. xii. 11; in Dan. ix. 27 we find *βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων*, where the Hebrew gives, "Upon the wing [or, 'pinnacle'] of abominations shall come the desolater." Also in Dan. xi. 31 we have the simple *βδέλυγμα*. What is meant by the term in our text is a matter of unsettled dispute. The prophecy in Dan. xi. 31 has been generally referred to the doings of Antiochus Epiphanes (see 1 Macc. i. 54), and the present is considered to relate to something analogous. "Abomination" in the Old Testament is generally connected with idolatry or sacrilege; "of desolation" is equivalent to "that causes desolation." Among the many explanations of this passage which have been offered, two only seem worthy of consideration. (1) The desolating abomination is referred to the Roman armies encamped around Jerusalem (Luke xxi. 20), of which the symbol was the legionaries' eagles, regarded with reverence by the soldiers. But in opposition to this view it may be said, if the holy place, without the article, signifies the Holy Land, then the presence of the Latin forces would be no new sign to the Jewish people, as they had been familiar with such a sight for many years. If the temple itself is meant, it is plain that it would be too late to fly from that doomed city when the Roman eagles were already in the hallowed courts. (2) The alternative interpretation, which has seemed to many more probable, explains it of the sanguinary deeds of the Zealots, who, after the war had been carried on for some years, seized the temple, put a stop to the daily sacrifice, deluged the sacred courts with blood, and were guilty of most hideous crimes and excesses, which, as Josephus testifies, were the immediate cause of the city's ruin (see Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' iv. 3. 7, etc.; 5. 1, 2; 6. 3; v. 9. 4; vi. 2; and Wordsworth's note on this ver. 15). The presence and acts of these ruffians were to be the signal for the escape of the Christians. I must confess that neither of these explanations satisfies me. The primal fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy is found in the erection of the statue of Jupiter in the temple by the order of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the pollution of the altar by the sacrifice of swine thereon. Our Lord would seem to refer to something analogous which should give the Christians a signal for escape before the complete investiture of the city. The deeds of Zealots and assassins, however atrocious, could not with any propriety be described as "abomination that maketh desolate standing in the holy place." The term, according to scriptural analogy, must refer to some sacrilege and pollution connected with idolatry, of which certainly the Zealots were not guilty. The Fathers, recognizing this, have seen the fulfilment in the erection of images of the Roman emperors in the temple or its precincts. But we have no account of any such act preceding the final siege. Pilate's attempted introduction of the Roman ensigns was defeated by the threatening attitude of

the people (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 3. 1), and the actual setting up of these ensigns in the sanctuary, and the erection of the statue of Titus, were subsequent to the capture of the city and temple ('Bell. Jud.,' vi. 6. 1). Our Lord is plainly referring to something that transpired before the conclusion of the siege, otherwise we might recognize an allusion to the insurrection of Bar-cochebas, which ended in the destruction of the partially rebuilt city, the abolition of its old name, the erection of a temple to Jupiter on the site of the holy place, and the placing of a statue of the emperor upon the altar, A.D. 135. What the "abomination" was cannot now be accurately determined, though its character may be divined from what has been said, and it was probably some anticipation of the antichrist who is to appear before the final consummation, who "exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. ii. 4, 8). Spoken of by Daniel the prophet, in three passages (ix. 27; xi. 31; xii. 11), all obscure and difficult, and not necessarily referring to the same events. Christ takes it for granted that his auditors understand the allusion. Stand [*standing*] in the holy place. Those who take "the abomination" to be the Roman army, explain this clause to mean "posted on the holy soil." But τόπος ἅγιος, with or without the article, is never used but in reference to the temple and its adjuncts (comp. Acts vi. 13; xxi. 28; and in the Septuagint, Lev. x. 13; Isa. lx. 13; 2 Macc. viii. 17, etc.). Whatever the sign may be, it is to be seen within the temple. (Whoso readeth, let him understand.) There are three ways of regarding this parenthetical clause. (1) Alford takes it as "an ecclesiastical note, which, like the doxology in ch. vi. 13, has found its way into the text." This is a mere conjecture which has nothing to support it. (2) Others consider it to be a remark of St. Matthew, intended to call special attention to the warning; but such an observation is entirely without precedent in the synoptic Gospels, and it is found also in the parallel passage of St. Mark. It is scarcely probable that both these evangelists would have given the identical caution, if it arose from their own motion in respect of those who should read their words before the siege. (3) It seems more natural to take the clause as uttered by Christ himself with a silent reference to the words of the angel to Daniel, "Know therefore and understand" (Dan. ix. 25; comp. xii. 10). The Lord would point emphatically to the prophecy of Daniel, and his own interpretation thereof (2 Tim. ii. 7). He seems also to imply that the application is not at once obvious, and needs spiritual insight to discern it. (How, in the face of this declaration of the Son of God, any believer can deny Daniel's claim to be a prophet and the utterer of authentic predictions, is a curious case of mental obfuscation or invincible prejudice.)

Ver. 16.—Then; *i.e.* when they shall see "the abomination of desolation," etc. Them which be in Judæa. Not only in Jerusalem, but in its vicinity, as most exposed to danger from the invading army. Flee into (ἐπί, *over*) the mountains. The Christians seem to have taken this advice when the city was attacked by Cestius Gallus, about A.D. 66, some three or more years before the siege under Vespasian. Gallus had appeared before the walls, and apparently had every hope of taking the city, when, for some reason not certainly known (either owing to a supposed defeat, or ignorance of his own success, or the advice of his generals), he suddenly withdrew his forces (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' ii. 19. 6, 7). The Christians, bearing Christ's warning in mind, and having, as we may conjecture, seen the predicted sign, took the opportunity of flight from the doomed city, and made their escape to Pella, a town of Decapolis, south-east of Bethshean, and the ruins of which are known now by the name of *Fahil*. Eusebius probably refers to this migration ('Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 5), narrating that, owing to a certain revelation given to holy men among them, the whole body of the Church, before the war, removed across the Jordan to Pella, and dwelt there in safety during those troublous times. We probably, however, do not know the exact time of the flight, as we are ignorant of what was the warning of imminent danger which rendered this hurried proceeding necessary.

Ver. 17.—Housetop. This was flat, and used as a place of rest, meditation, and familiar concourse (ch. x. 27). Come down . . . house. The roof was accessible by two staircases, one external leading from the street or the country, the other mounting from the apartments. The householder was not to descend by this latter to carry off anything from his chambers within, but to escape at once by the outer staircase (comp. Luke v. 19). The flight was to be precipitate, like that of Lot from Sodom (cf. Luke xvii. 32). The warning was necessary, as, when the Zealots and assassins had the upper hand, they allowed no one to leave the city. The warning, however, applied to dwellers in any part of Judæa.

Ver. 18.—In the field. People in the open country would be in as great danger as those in the city, the hostile troops

doubtless being dispersed on all sides, plundering, burning, and slaying. **Return back.** He who was working in the fields only partially clad was not to go to his house to fetch the rest of his garments, but to make good his flight just as he was. He would naturally lay aside his heavy burnous while engaged in work, but all considerations of propriety and comfort were to be put aside at the present emergency. The warning was to be regarded equally by those in doors or out of doors, at home or abroad.

Ver. 19.—**Woe unto them that are with child!** The Lord, while he counsels flight, has a word of compassion for those poor mothers who are forced to have recourse thereto. The circumstances mentioned would impede flight and greatly increase danger and distress. The sufferings of mothers and children in the siege are narrated by the historian, and even such horrors as are indicated in Deut. xxviii. 53—56 were not unknown (see Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' v. 10. 3; vi. 3. 4; Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 6, 7).

Ver. 20.—**Pray ye that,** etc. (προσεύχεσθε ἵνα). He bids them pray to and worship God, in order that he may give them a favourable time for flight. The clause introduced with the final particle does not directly denote the subject of the petition, as our version gives the impression, but rather the aim of the petitioners (Morison). **Not in the winter.** He spake of personal hindrances in the last verse; here he speaks of external circumstances over which man has no control, except by prayer. The weather in winter, which means the rainy season, might render the roads impassable, and would, of course, prevent any hope of obtaining food by the wayside from cornfield or fruit tree. **The sabbath day,** which precluded any work or the use of beast of burden, and restricted a journey to something less than a mile. We must remember that until the final catastrophe the Christians observed such Mosaic restrictions (see Exod. xvi. 29; Acts i. 12). A flight for such a short distance would have been of no avail under the imperious circumstances which rendered escape advisable.

Ver. 21.—**For then.** Jesus gives the reason why this precipitate flight (vers. 16—20) was rendered necessary at the moment spoken of in ver. 15. **Great tribulation.** The miseries suffered in the siege of Jerusalem were stupendous. To the skilful and fierce attacks of the Romans from without were added from within dire famine and pestilence, dissensions, violence, and continual bloodshed and murder. Josephus estimates the number of those who fell in the siege and capture of Jerusalem at 1,000,000, the usual population being largely increased by the influx of pilgrims attending the Feast of the Passover, and by thousands of fugitives who had flocked in from the country (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' vi. 9. 3). He adds that 97,000 were carried away captive during and after the war. **Such as was not . . . nor ever shall be** (Dan. xii. 1). This is not mere hyperbole, but sober fact. Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' Procem. 4) himself bears similar testimony: "Of all the cities under the dominion of Rome, ours was once the most happy, and afterwards the most utterly miserable. For the misfortunes of all the nations upon earth that have ever happened, if they are compared with the calamities to which the Jews were exposed, will, in my opinion, fall far short." Chrysostom sums up the matter thus: "Whence came there thus upon them wrath from God intolerable, and more sore than all that had befallen aforetime, not in Judæa only, but in any part of the world? Is it not quite clear that it was for the deed of the cross and for this rejection? Mark, I pray thee, the exceeding greatness of the ills, when not only compared with the time before, they appear more grievous, but also with all the time to come. For not in all the world, neither in all time that is past, and that is to come, shall any one be able to say such ills have been. And very naturally; for neither had any man perpetrated, not of these that ever have been, nor those to come hereafter, a deed so wicked and horrible" ('Hom.,' *in loc.*). The "affliction" spoken of refers not only to bodily sufferings, but to that anguish of mind occasioned by acute apprehension and expectation of danger, such as was felt in the days before the Flood, and at the time of the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Ver. 22.—**Except those days should be shortened** (ἐκολοβώθησαν, *had been shortened*). In the midst of wrath God thinks on mercy. He providentially ordained that the days of vengeance should not be indefinitely prolonged; the siege was practically of short duration, the country was not wholly overrun and desolated (comp. 2 Kings xiii. 23). The natural causes that combined to produce this shortening of the siege have been recounted by commentators. These were—the divided counsels of the Jews themselves, the voluntary surrender of parts of the fortifications, the fierce factions in the city, the destruction of magazines of provisions by calamitous fire, the suddenness of the arrival of Titus, and the fact that the walls had never been strengthened as Herod Agrippa had intended. **There should no flesh be saved;** *i.e.* the whole Jewish nation would have been annihilated. **For the elect's sake.** At the intercession of the

escaped Christians, who offered up unceasing prayer for their brethren and countrymen, God lessened the duration of the calamities. "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (Jas. v. 16). Ten righteous would have saved Sodom; Lot's intercession did preserve Zoar (comp. Isa. vi. 13; Jer. v. 1; Acts xxvii. 24). Some, not so suitably, explain "the elect" to be those Jews who should hereafter turn to the Lord; or the elect seed, "beloved for the fathers' sake" (Rom. xi. 28). We may well believe that the local tribulations, such as are intimated by Daniel and Christ, and their limitation in time, are a picture of what shall happen in the last days, the intermediate fulfilment being the prelude of the final accomplishment.

Ver. 23.—**And then.** The third section of the prophecy, contained in vers. 23—35, passes from the fortunes of Jerusalem to the end of the world. To the Lord's hearers was conveyed the truth that the signs and events now indicated were to be subsequent to the destruction of the city. No further note of chronology was given. The uncertainty of the future caused a state of constant expectation and hope. And this is the feeling which we Christians are intended to embrace and cultivate. "The word 'then' relates not to the connection in the order of time with the things just mentioned, . . . not meaning what should follow straightway after these things, but what should be in the time when these things were to be done of which he was about to speak" (St. Chrysostom, 'Hom.,' *in loc.*). **Lo, here is Christ!** This refers to something different from the announcement in ver. 5. Some analogous deceptions doubtless occurred at the siege of Jerusalem, but the Lord is predicting the remote events of the latter days, of which previous occurrences were types and anticipations. **Believe it not.** When Christ does come the second time, there shall be no doubt or ignorance of his appearance (see ver. 27, and compare the warning in Deut. xiii. 1—3).

Ver. 24.—**False Christs.** He shows the nature of the dangers to which believers will be subject. He does not confine his view to Jewish history; he foretells the appearance of pretenders who shall assume the part of Christ, and blasphemously assert that they are Messiah. **False prophets.** Without assuming the name of Christ, many impostors shall be found who, professing to be inspired or lawful teachers, shall lead hearers into false doctrine, or claim to possess a new revelation, or something additional and supplemental to the eternal gospel. Such was Mohammed; such were the founders of Buddhism, Mormonism, and other so-called religions, who based their views on special revelation given from heaven for the purpose of improving the existing faith or introducing a new one. **Shall show** (δώσουσι, *shall give*, as Acts ii. 19) **great signs and wonders.** Two usual terms for miracles, the former regarding rather the evidence afforded by them, the latter the element of the marvellous inherent in them (comp. John iv. 48; Acts ii. 22; vii. 36, etc.). That such men did work actual miracles, or what were regarded as such, cannot be reasonably doubted. Satan was on their side, and, as far as he was permitted, confirmed their teaching by supernatural assistance. St. Paul testifies that such should be the action of the antichrist, "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. ii. 9; comp. Rev. xiii. 13, 14). Many of these wonders may have been effectuated by natural forces unknown to the majority of men, and therefore considered as superhuman; others may have been derived from the spiritual world, but necessarily from that realm thereof which is under the control of evil demons. Whatever may have been their source, they were displayed in support of lies and errors, and had a certain success. **Insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive** (ὥστε πλανῆσαι, εἰ δυνατὸν) **the very** (καὶ, *even*) **elect.** The Authorized Version seems to make our Lord imply that such seduction was absolutely impossible. The translation ought to run, as in the Revised Version, *so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect*, signifying the difficulty, not the impossibility, of drawing them away from the truth. "The elect" are Christians, true followers of Jesus, and members of his Church. These may fall from the faith, for they are not yet finally safe, and on that chance Satan builds; but as long as they rest on Christ, looking to him for guidance and protection, trying the spirits by the Word of God and by the truths which they have learned in creed and worship, they stand firm against the strongest temptations.

Ver. 25.—**I have told you before** (see John xvi. 1—4). The warning was needed in the first age; it will be needed in the last. The prediction was known before the ruin of Jerusalem, and doubtless preserved many from falling victims to the seducers at that period; it must be used *now* and till the end to preserve Christians from the errors of infidelity, false philosophy, agnosticism. That such attacks on their faith shall be made is a proof of Christ's omniscience; that he gives here and in the next verses premonitions of danger, with counsel how to avoid it, is evidence of his love and care for his elect.

Ver. 26.—**Wherefore if** (ἐὰν οὖν, *if therefore*). The Lord proceeds to make the matter more plain by entering into details which

the "here" and "there" of ver. 23 had not sufficiently denoted. **He** (Christ) **is in the desert.** If there was a partial fulfilment of this warning at the siege of Jerusalem, when some impostors tried to persuade the people that Messiah was in the wilderness, preparing to march to their relief, it is to have its chief accomplishment just before the final consummation. **Go not forth.** Be not deluded into following any local deceiver. The definite place of appearance proves its falsity (see ver. 27). **The secret chambers;** *in penetralibus* (Vulgate). When Christ comes the second time, he will not come as at Bethlehem, in secret, in a corner. If any pretender should be announced under such conditions, they were to put no belief in him. These were simple tests which all could apply. To limit the Lord's appearance to particular persons or to a particular place, was to incur fatal error.

Ver. 27.—**As the lightning . . . east . . . west.** That is, shines from one end of heaven to the other. St. Chrysostom's comment explains the similitude: "How, then, shineth the lightning? It needs not one to talk of it, it needs not a herald, but even to them in chambers it shows itself in an instant of time throughout the whole world. So shall that coming be, showing itself at once everywhere by reason of the shining forth of his glory." We are told, "every eye shall see him." His advent shall be sudden, universal, unmistakable; in a moment he shall be present, visible in all his power and glory. From the language of this verse probably has been derived the orientation of churches, and the mode adopted of depositing the bodies of deceased Christians, so that they may at the resurrection face the Lord when he comes from the east.

Ver. 28.—**For.** The particle seems to be spurious, and is omitted by late editors. Christ applies a proverbial saying in confirmation of the certainty and universality of his appearance. He had used the same under other circumstances (Luke xvii. 37): and analogous expressions are found in Job xxxix. 30; Hos. viii. 1; Hab. i. 8, etc. **Wheresoever the carcase** (πτῶμα) **is, there will the eagles be gathered together.** Eagles (ἀετοί) do not live on carrion, so that here probably vultures are meant. The Hebrew word *nesher*, translated "eagle" in our version, often signifies "the vulture," as in Micah i. 16. This bird's keenness of sight is almost incredible; it will discern a prey at an enormous distance, and its movements being watched by others, all eager to secure food, a carcase is very quickly surrounded by a multitude of these rapacious birds, flocking from all quarters. What our Lord meant by this proverb has occasioned great disputation. If Christ were referring primarily and chiefly to Jerusalem, it would be easy to explain "the carcase" to be the corrupt city, "the eagles" the ministers of God's vengeance, especially the Roman armies, whose standards bore the image of this bird of prey. Or if it were a mere general truth, and to be taken entirely in a spiritual sense, the gnome would imply that moral corruption calls for heavenly chastisement. But neither of these interpretations would satisfy the context, which speaks of Christ's second advent. Hence many regard the sentence as altogether parallel to the preceding verse, expressing in metaphor that which was there set forth in more direct terms, viz. that all men shall assemble to the place where Christ shall summon them to be judged, as vultures congregate round a carcase. In this case the carcase is Christ, the eagles or vultures are the men to be judged. This exposition has satisfied commentators of reputation, but it has its weak points. One fails to see the propriety of describing men coming to the great assize as vultures gathering to devour a dead body, or how in this case the body can be Christ or the place of his appearance. More probable is the interpretation which regards the carcase as antichrist or the world-power, and the eagles as the saints and angels who shall attend Christ when he comes in judgment (Rev. xix. 17, 18). Others expound the clause entirely in a mystical sense. The carcase is Christ, or the body of Christ; the eagles are the saints, or true Christians; these, whatever happens, will, with keen spiritual sight, always be able to discern Christ and his body, and to flock thereto. He calls himself πτῶμα, because he saves us by his death, and feeds us by his body, in his Church, Word, and sacraments (see Wordsworth, *in loc.*). Such is the interpretation of many of the Fathers, and it has many analogies in other places of Scripture. Far be it from us to restrict the sphere of Divine prediction, or to assert that any legitimate reference which we may discover was not in the Lord's mind when he spake the words. But it is more simple to regard the proverbial saying in itself, without looking for abstruse or mystical meanings. As a carcase, fall where it may, is immediately observed by the vultures and attracts them, so Christ's coming shall at once be discerned by all men and draw them into it.

Ver. 29.—**Immediately** (εὐθέως δὲ, *but immediately*) **after the tribulation of those days.** The particle must not be disregarded, as it implies a caution with respect to the parousia. The Lord proceeds to announce some details of the final advent. Taking the tribulation to be the single fact of the

ruin of Jerusalem, with its accompanying horrors, some have explained the Lord's word "immediately after" by the foreshortening process of prophecy, which makes the distant future seem close to the obtruding present, or by the consideration that in God's view time does not exist: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. iii. 8). But the truth is, the tribulation (ver. 21) only began with the fall of Jerusalem; that was its first and partial fulfilment; and, as St. Luke implies (xxi. 23, 24), it has been going on ever since, and is not yet finished. The punishment of the Jews is still proceeding, Jerusalem is still trodden down by the Gentiles, wrath still lies upon the people, they are still dispersed over the world, and have been and are more or less persecuted in many countries. This state of things is to continue "till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" it is, then, "immediately after" this that the signs announced by the Lord shall be seen. He is, as we said above (see on ver. 4), purposely indefinite, that the Church may learn to wait and watch for the return of the Saviour and Judge. This state of expectation is to be its normal condition. It had its effect on the primitive Church before the Jewish catastrophe. St. Peter (Acts iii. 19—21) tells of the times of refreshing, when Jesus shall come, as possibly close at hand; St. Paul more than once speaks in the same strain (1 Cor. i. 7; Phil. i. 6, etc.), though he warns his converts not to omit ordinary duties in immediate expectation of the end (2 Thess. ii. 2); St. James (v. 9) tells of the Judge standing before the door. And since then often has this belief cropped up at various stages of the world's history, showing that Christ's warning has sunk deep into Christian hearts, and produced the temper of mind which he purposed to raise. **Shall the sun be darkened**, etc. There is no valid reason why the physical phenomena mentioned in this verse are not to be taken literally, even if we see also in them a spiritual significance. It is only reasonable to expect that the end of this world should be accompanied by stupendous changes in the realm of nature. The sun was miraculously darkened when Jesus hung on the cross. What wonder if similar catastrophes signal his coming to judgment? The apostle's words point to a literal fulfilment (2 Pet. iii. 10, 12). Our Lord's prediction echoes announcements often found in the Old Testament, which are not always to be considered metaphorical (see Isa. xiii. 10; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Joel ii. 30, 31; iii. 15, 16; Amos viii. 9). Anticipations of some of these terrible latter-day signs occurred at Jerusalem, according to Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' vi. 5. 3, 4). **Darkened . . . not give light.** This is in accordance with Hebrew parallelism. The next clause is constructed in the same way. **Fall from heaven.** The Lord may be speaking of the apparent effect of these convulsions of nature, in accordance with popular ideas, as we talk of the sun rising and setting; or he may thus term the obscuration or extinction of the light of the stars. **The powers of the heavens** mean probably the heavenly bodies independent of the solar system, called elsewhere "the host of heaven" (Deut. iv. 19, etc.); or the phrase may signify (though the parallelism would not be so perfect) the forces and laws which control these bodies. An interruption in the action of these powers would occasion the most awful catastrophes (see Hag. ii. 6, which makes a similar announcement). We must notice the spiritual application of this prediction, as it has obtained a wide acceptance. The words are sometimes taken in a bad sense. The sun is Satan, or Lucifer, who fell as lightning from heaven (Luke x. 18); "the powers of the heavens" are the hosts of the prince of the power of the air, "the spiritual wickednesses in high places;" the stars are all that exalt themselves, who shall be consumed and vanish at the brightness of the cross. But more generally the luminaries are explained in a good sense. The sun is Christ or his truth, which shall be obscured in the last days; the moon is the Church, darkened by heresy and unbelief, and borrowing no light from its sun; the stars are they who once were foremost in the faith, but now shall fall from their steadfastness, or be unable to diffuse light, owing to the gross darkness and mistiness of those evil days.

Ver. 30.—**And then**; *i.e.* after the great physical changes mentioned in the last verse. **The sign of the Son of man.** This has been differently interpreted (1) as the appearance of Christ himself in the clouds of heaven (ch. xxvi. 64; Dan. vii. 13, 14), when the glory and majesty of his advent will prove that he is Saviour and Judge. But this explanation seems to confuse the sign and that which it represents, the token of Messiah and Messiah himself who cometh afterward. And the definite article, "*the* sign," seems to imply something already well known to denote him, whereas his appearance could not be known beforehand. (2) A star, which shall herald his second coming, as a star announced his birth. This, which is Olshausen's suggestion, is entirely arbitrary, and has nothing to support it, especially as the meaning of the star would not be directly intelligible to all men. (3) Meyer and De Wette suppose a bright light, or a kind of Shechinah. This, which doubtless will be manifested, was indeed a token

of the presence of God, but could not be recognized at once as the sign of the Son of man. (4) We come to what has been the almost universal interpretation of the Fathers and early commentators, who saw in the sign the cross of Christ, which is indeed the ensign and standard of the gospel. Nothing, equally with this, can characterize the Son of man, the emblem of his humiliation and his triumph. **Then.** When they behold this sign in the sky, and know unmistakably that Christ in person is about to appear. **Shall all the tribes of the earth mourn** (*κόψονται, shall beat the breast*). Not alone the Jews, looking on him whom they pierced, shall bewail their blindness and impenitence (Zech. xii. 10—14; Isa. liii.), but all the nations, the races and peoples who have rejected him whom they ought to have received. The cross shows that he died for them, though they profited not by his sacrifice (comp. Rev. i. 7; vi. 15—17). **They shall see** (*ὄψονται*, an echo of the preceding *κόψονται*). The sign is followed by the advent of Christ in person. **Coming in the clouds of heaven.** Some have taken "clouds" to mean angels, comparing ch. xvi. 27; but there is no need for considering the term here to be metaphorical. The accompaniments of the theophanies are always thus announced (see Ps. xviii. 10—12; Isa. xix. 1; Dan. vii. 13, etc.; ch. xxvi. 64). He thus claims to be the God of whom these words are continually used, and he leaves his hearers to gather that he will come visibly, not spiritually to individual souls or Churches, but manifestly to the whole of mankind, whether quick or risen. **With power.** In his full omnipotence. *Cum virtute multa* (Vulgate). The expression must not be taken as denoting the attendant angels; they are named in the next verse. It denotes that he who on earth met with naught but pain and humiliation should be displayed to the same earth with that splendour and majesty which essentially belonged to him.

Ver. 31.—**His angels.** As the executors of his will, to bring before his throne all who have to be judged. They have the same office in the parable of the tares and the wheat (ch. xiii. 41). **With a great sound of a trumpet** (*μετὰ σάλπιγγος φωνῆς μεγάλης*, which may also mean, *with a trumpet of great sound*). Some manuscripts, with the Vulgate, read, "with a trumpet and a great voice;" others, "with a great trumpet," omitting "voice." All, however, agree in asserting the employment of the trumpet on this momentous occasion (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16). The term may be metaphorical for a voice exceeding loud (comp. Rev. i. 10; iv. 1); but it is more probably to be taken in the obvious sense, with a reference to its use among the Jews in calling the assembly and giving the alarm. Of course, the occurrence is supernatural. It is, indeed, as great a miracle for a sound to be heard simultaneously in both hemispheres as it is for Christ to be seen at the same moment by all dwellers on the globe. This is a matter to be believed, not explained. **Shall gather together his elect.** The angels will infallibly select these from the mass of men, either by spiritual insight or Divine direction. The elect are not Israelites alone, but true believers of all nations (see ver. 14 and John xvii. 20, 21). These are first collected, and then the reprobate are summoned, according to ch. xxv. 41. **From the four winds.** The four cardinal points, *i.e.* from every quarter of the earth. Four is the number of the world or the universe. **From one end . . . the other;** literally, *from the ends of the heavens unto their ends*, as Deut. iv. 32—a parallel to the preceding clause. From horizon to horizon, though this expression, taken literally, is not extensive enough.

Ver. 32.—**Learn a parable** (*τὴν παραβολὴν*) **of** (*ἀπὸ*) **the fig tree;** better, *from the fig tree learn its parable.* Learn ye the lesson which this tree can teach you; though, indeed, it might teach other lessons than the one which Christ would enforce. **When his** (*its*) **branch is yet tender** (*ἤδη . . . γένηται ἁπαλός, is now become tender*). This refers to the new shoots of unripened wood. **Putteth forth leaves** (*τὰ φύλλα, its leaves*). Copyists and editors vary between *ἐκφυῇ*, subj. aor. passive, and *ἐκφύῃ*, active. The Vulgate has the passive, *et folia nata.* **Summer is nigh.** The fruit of the fig tree appears before the leaves, as we learned in the story of the withered fig tree (ch. xxi. 19), which the Lord may have had in mind when he gave this illustration. Did he intend to symbolize the revival of the life of the withered Jewish race in the time of the end?

Ver. 33.—**So likewise ye** (*οὕτω καὶ ὑμεῖς, so also ye*, emphatic). As surely as buds and leaves prove the coming of summer, so ye, who have been taught, may gather from the fulfilment of the signs mentioned (vers. 15—22, etc.) the approach of the end. **Know that it is near** (*ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν*). The subject is not expressed, but it must be the Son of man (ver. 30), so that the rendering ought to be, *he is near.* Many, however, take the understood nominative to be the judgment, or the kingdom of God, or the occurrences last spoken of. **At the doors;** as Jas. v. 9, on the very threshold, and therefore about to enter.

Ver. 34.—**This generation.** Our Lord's assertion has given rise to sceptical observations, as if his prophecy had failed

Alford has endeavoured to remove objections by taking γενεὰ as equivalent to γένος, a race or family of people, and referring it to the continued existence of the Jews. He cites Jer. viii. 3 (Septuagint); ch. xii. 45; xvii. 17; xxiii. 36, etc., in confirmation of this signification. His examples, however, are not unassailable, though such use is certainly classical; but at the same time, it is unlikely that Christ should thus indefinitely postpone a period of infinite importance to his hearers. But there is no necessity for assuming any unusual meaning in the term "this generation." Its plain and obvious reference is to the contemporaries of the speaker, or those who shall live some thirty or forty years longer; this period would bring them to the siege of Jerusalem. And remembering that Christ has drawn no definite line between this crisis and the final consummation, we are justified in regarding all these things as meaning, primarily, the signs preceding or accompanying the downfall of the city. In a secondary sense, "this generation" may mean the spiritual Israel, the generation of them that seek the Lord (Ps. xxiv. 6). "All these things shall surely come to pass," says Chrysostom, "and the generation of the faithful shall remain, cut off by none of the things that have been mentioned. For both Jerusalem shall perish, and the more part of the Jews shall be destroyed, but over this generation shall nothing prevail—not famine, not pestilence, not earthquake, not the tumults of wars, not false Christs, not false prophets, not deceivers, not traitors, not those that cause to offend, nor the false brethren, nor any other such-like temptations whatever." Some critics have combined the three meanings of "generation" given above, and have seen in Christ's words a threefold reference, first, to the contemporary people; secondly, to the Jewish nation; thirdly, to the Christian believers or dispensation. According to Lange, "this generation" means the generation of those who know and discern these signs.

Ver. 35.—Christ adds a solemn assurance that his words have in them a vitality and endurance which the mightiest works of nature do not possess. The facts and truths embodied in his words are sure and steadfast, and what he has promised or predicted shall inevitably be fulfilled. This verse is omitted by ℵ, but it is most probably genuine, as it undoubtedly has its place in the other two synoptists (comp. 1 Pet. i. 24, 25).

Ver. 36.—The apostles had asked (ver. 3), "When shall these things be?" Christ does not now expressly answer this question; he puts forth strongly the uncertainty in the knowledge of these great events, and how this ignorance is disciplinary. **Of that day** (*de die illa*, Vulgate) **and hour**, viz. when Christ shall appear in judgment. The expression plainly implies that a definite day and moment are fixed for this great appearing, but known only to God. **Knoweth no man, no, not** (οὐδὲ, *not even*) **the angels of heaven.** A kind of climax. Man is naturally excluded from the knowledge; but even to the angels it has not been revealed. A further climax is added in St. Mark, and from that Gospel has been introduced by some very good manuscripts into this place, *neither the Son* (the Revised Version admits the clause). The words have given occasion to some erroneous statements. It is said by Arians and semi-Arians, and modern disputants who have followed in their steps, that the Son cannot be equal to the Father, if he knows not what the Father knows. Alford says boldly, "This matter was hidden from him." But when we consider such passages as "I and my Father are one;" "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John x. 30; xiv. 11, etc.), we cannot believe that the time of the great consummation was unknown to him. What is meant, then, by this assertion? How is it true? Doubtless it is to be explained (if capable of explanation) by the hypostatic union of two natures in the Person of Christ, whereby the properties of the two natures are interchangeably predicated. From danger of error on this mysterious subject we are preserved by the precise terms of the Athanasian Creed, according to which we affirm that Christ is "equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood... one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person," etc. If, then, Christ asserts that he is ignorant of anything, it must be that in his human nature he hath willed not to know that which in his Divine nature he was cognizant of. This is a part of that voluntary self-surrender and self-limitation of which the apostle speaks when he says that Christ "emptied himself" (Phil. ii. 7). He condescended to assume all the conditions of humanity, even willing to share the imperfection of our knowledge in some particulars. How the two natures thus interworked we know not, and need not conjecture; nor can we always divine why prominence at one time is given to the Divine, at another to the human. It is enough for us to know that, for reasons which seemed good unto him, he imposed restriction on his omniscience in this matter, and, to enhance the mysteriousness and awfulness of the great day, announced to his disciples his ignorance of the precise moment of its occurrence. This is a safer exposition than to say, with some, that Christ knew not the

day so as to reveal it to us, that it was no part of his mission from the Father to divulge it to men, and therefore that he could truly say he knew it not. This seems rather an evasion than an explanation of the difficulty. **But my Father only.** The best manuscripts have "the Father." "But" is εἰ μή, *except*. So Christ said to his inquiring apostles, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts i. 7). These words do not exclude the Son's participation in the knowledge, though he willed that it should not extend to his human nature. With this and such-like texts in view, how futile, presumptuous, and indeed profane, it is to attempt to settle the exact date and hour when the present age shall end!

Ver. 37.—**As the days of Noe were.** In citing this example, the Lord has special reference to the fact that the warning then given was not heeded (Gen. vi. 3). If, as seems probable, the antediluvians had more than a century's warning of the coming flood, it can hardly be only the suddenness of the calamity to which Christ would point (1 Pet. iii. 20). He has used the illustration elsewhere (Luke xvii. 26, 27), where also the destruction of Sodom is adduced as a type of the last day. **So shall also.** The parousia of Christ shall fall on a world incredulous and heedless.

Ver. 38.—**They were eating,** etc. The Lord describes the reckless way in which men went on their usual course, pursued their pleasures and avocations, with the doom hanging over them, in spite of the warning given. The word for "eating" (τρώγοντες) implies the idea of gnawing food greedily like an animal, hence eating gluttonously. They had learned to drink to excess long before Lot's time (Gen. ix. 20, 21). The periphrastic form of expression, ἦσαν τρώγοντες . . . πίνοντες, denotes not a single act, but habitude. **Until the day.** Though they had watched Noah building the ark, and heard him preach righteousness for many a year, they took no heed. It must be observed that Christ here confirms the historical accuracy of this episode in Genesis.

Ver. 39.—**Knew not.** They would not comprehend the signs of the coming judgment, or, at any rate, refused to profit by them, preferring their own carnal pleasures to the care of their souls and the amendment of their lives. The Lord assures us that similar recklessness and unbelief will be found at his coming. Doubtless anguish and fear will fill many hearts, but the general feeling will be incredulity, and a false security which refuses to take warning. Sadler compares it to Belshazzar's feast at the very moment of danger, and the Athenians' insensibility at the time of the great plague, when the people seemed to be exemplifying the maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" (Isa. xxii. 13). "For like as when the ark was making, they believed not; but while it was set in the midst of them, proclaiming beforehand the evils that are to come, they, when they saw it, lived in pleasure . . . so also now, antichrist, indeed, shall appear, after whom is the end, and the punishments at the end, and vengeance intolerable; but they that are held by the intoxication of wickedness [comp. Wisd. iv. 12] shall not so much as perceive the dreadful nature of the things that are on the point of being done. Wherefore also Paul saith, 'as travail upon a woman with child' [1 Thess. v. 3], even so shall those fearful and incurable evils come upon them" (Chrysostom, 'Hom.,' *in loc.*). Morison considers that Christ is not blaming the antediluvians, but simply referring to the fact that up to the last moment they were ignorant of the impending catastrophe. But this seems inadequate.

Ver. 40.—The Lord gives two examples of the suddenness of his advent, and its effect in private life. **Shall two be in the field.** They shall be working together at their ordinary agricultural occupations, with nothing outwardly to distinguish one from the other, good and bad being mingled together. **The one shall be taken** (παραλαμβάνεται, *is taken*, the present implying certainty), **and the other left** (ἀφίεται, *is left*). Christ speaks as though he saw the scene before him. The "taking" implies separation from companions, as ch. xvii. 1; xviii. 16, etc. This is the work of the angels (ver. 31). There is some doubt as to the destiny of the two classes named. Are the good "taken" and the evil "left"? or are the evil "taken" and the good "left"? Some suppose that the terms allude to the sudden approach of a hostile army by which some are taken prisoners and others allowed to escape; or, since in the parable the tares are first gathered for the burning, those taken must be the wicked, those left are for storing in the everlasting garner. On the other hand, many commentators understand the verbs in a sense opposite to that mentioned above. As (ver. 31) the angels are sent forth to gather the elect, the "taken" are of this class, who are caught away to meet the Lord and his saints (1 Thess. iv. 17; John xiv. 3), while the others are left for judgment and reprobation (2 Thess. i. 7—9). Bengel, continuing the reference to the Flood, writes, "*Assumitur* in tutelam (ver. 31), ut Noachus cum domo sua; *sinitur* in periculis, quicquid obveniat, ut homines in diluvio." The latter interpretation of the two seems to be the correct one. At any rate,

it is plain that the nicest discrimination is exercised, and that among men and women, in all conditions of life, a final severance shall then be made, which shall apportion their lot in the other world.

Ver. 41.—**Two women shall be grinding at (ἐν) the mill.** In the absence of mills turned by wind or water, which were of much later invention, every household had its own little handmill, worked by women of the family or by slaves (Exod. xi. 5; Judg. xvi. 21; Isa. xlvii. 2). "Two stones, about eighteen inches or two feet across, rest one on the other, the under one slightly higher towards the centre, and the upper one hollowed out to fit this convexity; a hole through it, in the middle, receiving the grain. Sometimes the under stone is bedded in cement, raised into a border round it, to catch and retain the flour, or meal, as it falls. A stick fastened into the upper one served as a handle. Occasionally two women sit at the same pair of stones, to lighten the task, one hand only being needed where two work together, whereas a single person has to use both hands" (Geikie, 'Holy Land and Bible,' p. 155). "Two women were busy in a cottage at the household mill, which attracted me by its sound. . . . To grind is very exhausting work, so that, where possible, one woman sits opposite the other, to divide the strain, though in a poor man's house the wife has to do this drudgery unaided" (ibid., p. 661). St. Luke (xvii. 34) adds a third situation to the cases mentioned by our Lord, viz. "two men in one bed," or on one dining-couch.

Vers. 42—51.—*Practical exhortation drawn from the uncertainty of the last day: Watch.*

Ver. 42.—**Watch therefore.** The end will be sudden, the final separation will be then completed; be ye therefore always prepared. Few exhortations are more frequently and impressively given than this of the duty and necessity of watchfulness. Of course, the Christian has to watch against many things—his own evil heart, temptation, the world, but most of all he must watch and be always looking for the coming of his Lord; for whether he be regarded as Redeemer, Deliverer, or Judge, he will come as a thief in the night. **What hour.** Very many good manuscripts and some late editors read "on what day." This is probably the genuine reading, "hour" being an alteration derived from ver. 44. **What** (*ποίᾳ*) means of what kind or quality—whether sudden, immediate, or remote.

Ver. 43.—**But know this;** *ἐκεῖνο δὲ γινώσκετε*: *illud autem scitote* (Vulgate); or, *this ye know.* The Lord draws particular attention to what he is going to say, which is a strange and startling truth in a parabolic form (see Luke xii. 39, etc.). **The good man of the house;** *οἰκοδεσπότης*: *the master of the house; paterfamilias* (Vulgate). **If . . . had known . . . he would have watched.** The form of the sentence (*εἰ* with indicative in the protasis, and *ἄν* with indicative aorist in the apodosis) implies that the result did not happen. The master may have made all secure as far as bolts and bars were concerned, but he did not keep awake, though he had reason to know that a thief was in the neighbourhood, and so was not ready to frustrate any attack made in an unsuspected manner. **To be broken up;** *διορυγῆναι*: *to be digged through; perfodi* (Vulgate). Houses constructed of sun-dried bricks, mud, or loose stones, could be easily pierced and entered without forcing shuttered window or barred door (comp. Job xxiv. 16). The significance of the parable is easy to see. The householder is the disciple of Christ, the thief is Christ himself, who comes on the unwatchful when and where they expect him not. It is, indeed, a strange comparison, but one calculated to alarm the unwary, and to show the necessity of the caution enjoined. Similar warnings are found elsewhere; *e.g.* 1 Thess. v. 2, 4; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3; xvi. 15. The exposition which regards the thief as the devil is not so suitable to the context.

Ver. 44.—**Therefore.** Regarding the solemn example just given, taking it as applicable to spiritual things. The warning is of general obligation, and may be used by each individual Christian for his own benefit; for there is a sense in which the day of death is the coming of Christ, and as death leaves us so, as far as we know, judgment will find us.

Ver. 45.—**Who then** (*τίς ἄρα*;)? In Luke xii. 41, etc., Christ utters this parabolic discourse in reply to Peter's question, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" He now turns his exhortation to those in authority over the house, specially to the ministers and stewards of his mysteries, proposing it in an interrogative form, not only because the man he wants is difficult to find, but in order that each may put the question to himself, and see if he reaches the high standard suggested. **Is a** (*ὁ, the*) **faithful and wise** (*φρόνιμος, prudens, practically wise*) **servant.** The idea is that some good and true slave is raised to the stewardship of his master's household, like Eliezer whom Abram advanced to this position (Gen. xv. 2). **Hath made ruler** (*κατέστησεν, hath set*) **over his household** (*ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπείας αὐτοῦ*, see on ver. 47). The word *θεραπεία* is used classically for a body of attendants), the servants that form the family, the *ménage*. Christ asks—Where is one to be found fit for this position in his Church? It is the Lord who selects and appoints the

steward; he is neither self-constituted nor appointed by those over whom he rules. **To give them meat** (*τὴν τροφήν, their food*) **in due season.** It was the duty of such an officer to dispense the regular allowance of daily food to the members of the household. So the stewards of the mysteries of Christ have to feed his flock with spiritual food, with the Word and sacraments, and to do this wisely and discreetly, according to the capacity, advancement, and circumstances of each recipient. The exhortation holds good for others as well as the clergy, civil rulers, the rich, all men. All our endowments, mental, spiritual, physical, material, are the gift of God, and are to be used in his service and to the good of others.

Ver. 46.—**Blessed is that servant.** The Lord had asked—Who is the faithful and wise servant? he virtually answers—It is the one whom his lord when he cometh shall find duly performing the duties of his office. Such a one he pronounces "blessed;" and what happier lot can befall a man in a responsible position, than to be taken while diligently and rightly performing his appointed work (see ch. xxv. 21)?

Ver. 47.—**He shall make him ruler over** (*καταστήσει ἐπί*, with dative, denoting permanency of occupation; in ver. 45 it is with genitive, as of temporary superintendence) **all his goods**; *all that he hath.* This is the reward. He who before was set over only a small part of his lord's possessions is now made superintendent of all his property; for "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke xvi. 10). How we are to take this promise as applied to the rewards of the kingdom of heaven, we know not yet. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). There are similar mysterious statements elsewhere; *e.g.* ch. xix. 28; Rom. viii. 32; Rev. ii. 26; iii. 21. This may be one of those passages in which we are not meant to press or understand all the details of the parable.

Ver. 48.—**But and if** (*ἐὰν δὲ*). "And" is a remnant of an old use of the word, meaning "if," so that it is here redundant, and the translation should be simply, *but if*; *si autem.* **That evil servant** (*ὁ κακὸς δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος*) is in a sense the same as he who, in ver. 45, was regarded as faithful and prudent. The opposite case is here put; he is supposed to be wicked and untrustworthy; he no longer is always watching for his lord's coming and endeavouring to be always ready, because he knows that he may at any moment be called to account. **My lord delayeth [his coming].** B, ℵ, and other good manuscripts omit *ἐλθεῖν* as unnecessary. Revised Version, *my lord tarrieth.* He brings himself to believe that the day of reckoning is still distant, and that he will have plenty of time to prepare his accounts before the settlement is called for. So men put off the day of repentance, saying, "To-morrow, to-morrow," when they ought to feel that the present alone is theirs in which to prepare for judgment.

Ver. 49.—**Shall begin.** As soon as he conceives the idea of the delay in his lord's arrival, he changes his conduct, plays the master, and uses his power for oppression and injustice. But he has only time to commence these unrighteous acts, when he is arrested by the very occurrence which he had wilfully ignored. **To smite his fellow-servants**; *i.e.* those who are faithful to their master. Applied to Christian ministers, such conduct would appertain to those who use their authority for oppression or self-aggrandizement, "lording it over the charge allotted to them" (1 Pet. v. 3). **And to eat** (*ἐσθίῃ δέ, and shall eat*) **and drink with the drunken.** He indulges in luxury and intemperance, choosing as his companions men of dissolute habits. A self-indulgent minister, or one who is not discreet in choosing his friends and acquaintance, has little influence in checking the excesses of his flock, and is far from being, as he ought to be, "a pattern of good works" (Titus ii. 7).

Ver. 50.—**Shall come,** either actually by his appearance, or virtually by calling the guilty soul to judgment. **When he looketh not for him** (*οὐ προσδοκᾷ, expecteth not*). He has put away all thought of the sudden advent of the Lord. **That he is not aware of** (*οὐ γινώσκει, he knoweth not*). The awful hour was utterly unknown; but this has not made him watchful; hence he becomes unfaithful.

Ver. 51.—**Shall cut him asunder** (*διχοτομήσει*). This mode of death was inflicted in some cases (see 1 Sam. xv. 33; 2 Sam. xii. 31; Dan. iii. 29; Heb. xi. 37; compare also the account of the execution of Mettius in Livy, i. 28; and Horace, 'Sat.,' I. i. 99). Thus in our own country "quartering," after hanging at least, was once a usual penalty for some offences, such as high treason. The term has been here interpreted to refer to the operation of the cruel scourge, which without metaphor might be said to cut a man to pieces; or "to dismiss from his employment," which seems to be hardly an adequate punishment. The difficulty is that the utter destruction of the malefactor implied in his literal cutting asunder is not consistent with his subsequent consignment to the lot of the hypocrites. Hence the Fathers have variously explained the term to signify sepa-

ration from the company of saints, or from spiritual grace, or from all the blessings promised to the righteous. But we may take the Lord's words as applying first to temporal punishment—the unrighteous steward shall suffer death as horrible as dichotomy, a severance of body and soul, accompanied with unspeakable tortures; as in the History of Susanna, ver. 55, "The angel of God hath received the sentence of God to cut thee in two." Appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. The Lord drops the parable, and speaks of the terrible reality. The hypocrites are the faithless and deceitful, who, while pretending to do their lord's work, are mere eye-servants, and really neglect and injure it. The remissful steward shares their punishment in the other world. There (ἐκεῖ) shall be, etc.; *i.e.* in the place where the hypocrites receive their punishment (ch. viii. 12; xxii. 13; xxv. 30). The expression signifies measureless grief and despair.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The great prophecy: General predictions of coming sorrows.* I. THE TEMPLE. 1. *The Lord's departure.* Jesus went out. He had taught in the temple for the last time. He had greatly loved that holy house of God. He had shown a burning zeal for its honour. Twice he had expelled the crowd of traffickers who made it a house of merchandise, a den of thieves. He "would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple." He so strongly insisted upon the duty of regarding the house of prayer with solemn reverence. When but a child, he had spent in the temple the hours during which Mary and Joseph were seeking him. There was no need, he told them, for anxiety; they might have known where he was to be found. He was constantly in the temple during his visits to Jerusalem. At this last visit he had "looked round about upon all things," showing his deep interest in all that pertained to the worship of God. He had watched the people casting money into the treasury for the temple service. Now he went out. The rulers of the temple had rejected him. Chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, all who had authority in the temple, or were held in reverence as teachers and expounders of the Law, were ranged against him. He had uttered his last awful warnings, his last sorrowful lament for the hardness of their impenitent hearts. He "went out." Simple words, but very awful in the depth of their meaning; they are echoed in the Μεταβαίνωμεν ἐντεῦθεν of Josephus, in the "Excedere deos" of Tacitus. "Behold," he said, "your house is left unto you desolate." The temple is desolate when the Lord of the temple hath departed. The humblest church is glorious exceedingly when the Lord is present. The costliest and most gorgeous building is desolate in the sight of God when the Lord Jesus is not there. He is found of them that seek him; he is present when two or three are gathered together in his Name. Let us seek him in the Church, and we shall find him there. Let us take heed, whatever we do, never to lose sight of him whose presence gives the truest consecration. 2. *Conversation with the apostles.* They came to show him the buildings of the temple. They were proud, like all other Jews, of that magnificent structure, those enormous blocks of marble, those costly decorations. They called the Lord's attention to those goodly stones, those precious gifts. He could not share in the enthusiasm of his disciples. Costly offerings are precious in the sight of the Lord, only as the expression of faith and love. Outward magnificence was nothing to him when the beauty of holiness was gone. The very splendour of the temple saddened the Saviour's soul. It was like the religion of the Pharisees, fair outwardly; but the services there performed were formal and heartless. And the Lord saw, in the clear vision of his Divine foreknowledge, what in less than forty years was coming. "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." That magnificence was soon to pass away. The holy city would sink in blood and fire, and that while some to whom the Lord was speaking were yet living on the earth. The temple buildings would be levelled with the ground; nothing would remain save those solid substructions, which even now excite the wonder of the pilgrim. The Lord knew all this; he could not take delight, like the apostles, in that short-lived splendour.

II. THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. 1. *The question of the disciples.* The Lord sat on the Mount of Olives, in full view of the holy city with its glorious temple. He sat there in sorrowful silence; his holy soul was filled with sadness as he thought upon his

people's sin, and the coming judgments. The crowd had dispersed. Four of the apostles, Peter and James, John and Andrew, came privately to him. They had listened in awe and wonder to his stern condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees. They had heard him say that they themselves, the Lord's messengers, would suffer many things, that the accumulated guilt of Jewish history would fall upon the present generation. He had told the Jews that their house was left unto them desolate; that they should see him no more till they, too, like the multitude whom they had blamed on Palm Sunday, should cry, "Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!" Now he had prophesied in plainer terms the coming destruction of the temple. They were perplexed. "When shall these things be?" they asked; what sign would there be of that Parousia, that presence of which the Lord had spoken, and of the consummation of the age? The Prophet Daniel (ix. 25—27) had taught the Jews to associate the times of the Messiah with the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. He had spoken of a consummation, of a desolation: when should these things be? It is a question which has been often asked, which we often ask ourselves in shuddering awe, in trembling expectation. 2. *The Lord's answer.* He does not answer the question directly; it was not his wont to satisfy speculative curiosity. When he was asked, "Are there few that shall be saved?" he said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." So now his first words are words of warning, "Take heed that no man deceive you." His answer is intended rather to guide the life of Christians than to disclose the awful secrets of the future. The date of the day of judgment is an unsolved and insoluble problem. It is known only to the Father. It is not his will that this mystery should be revealed; it is better for us to be ignorant. Knowledge of the time, if far hence in the remote future, might lull us into security; if near at hand, might fill us with intense excitement, and unfit us for our ordinary duties, as was the case with the Thessalonians when they thought that the day of the Lord was immediate. The Lord gives us no data for discovering when the end shall be. The bearing of his answer is practical; he shows us what ought to be the attitude of the Christian soul toward the solemn future; it should be that of calm and trustful expectation. The Christian should keep in view not only his own death, but the coming of the Lord. He should keep in his thoughts not only the possibility that to-day, any day, he may die, as he has seen others die; but also the possibility that to-day, any day, the Lord may come; and with the coming of the Lord may come the end of the world, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment. This is the purpose of the Lord's words, not to give us that knowledge which (ver. 36) we cannot have, which, if we could have it, would not be for our good. The Lord speaks throughout this chapter in the mysterious tones of prophecy. He speaks of a nearer coming, and of one comparatively distant; of the end of the Jewish dispensation, and of the end of the world. The two comings, the two consummations, are blended together in the prophecy. It is not easy everywhere to disentangle them. In those passages which appear to relate to one only of the two tremendous catastrophes, we find features which seem to belong to the other. From the prophetical point of view, the two seemed nearer together than they now appear to us; the intervening distance was lost sight of. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was the end of the Jewish dispensation. It might well seem to the Jews like the end of the world. It was so crushing, so tremendous, attended with sufferings so frightful, bloodshed so terrible. To us Christians it is a meet figure of the greater catastrophe which is to come. We are bidden to look forward. It is not simply our own death which we are told to expect. We may die before the coming of the day of the Lord; we may be soon called out of the world; and the world may go on its way for ages. But he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. This is the prospect which the Lord sets before us in this solemn discourse. We *may* be among the living when he shall come; we may hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; we may see the dead rising at the call of Christ; we may, yet alive, "be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Then "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." St. Peter's memory, as he wrote these solemn warnings, seems to

reproduce the words which he heard from Christ, when, along with James and John and Andrew, he came unto him privately on the Mount of Olives. The same apostle sums up the practical teaching of this great eschatological discourse in a few striking words. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace,"—"looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God." 3. *Warnings in detail.* (1) False Messiahs. Many shall come saying, "I am the Christ, the Messiah." Many such there were in New Testament times—Theudas, the Egyptian (Acts xxi. 38), Simon Magus. Many such arose afterwards, Barcochba, Manes, Mohammed, claiming the place and office, if not the name, of Christ. There have been many deceivers; some there are still. God's people must take heed; they must not believe every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; for many false prophets, St. John tells us, are gone out into the world. (2) Wars, famines, earthquakes. These things there must be. There have been again and again in the progress of history times marked with a special intensity of troubles and horrors, when men's hearts have failed them, and the end of all things seemed close at hand. But the Lord says, "Be not troubled, be not scared, excited; the end is not yet. Be prepared for it, but be calm, collected." Alas! the curse of war is not yet removed. Still the earth which God created is reddened with the blood of men made in the image of God, shed by their brethren's hand. Yet the end cometh not. These things are the beginning of travail; they are dreadful, and yet they offer hope, for they are birth-pangs. The end of the Jewish dispensation is the birth of the Christian Church; the yet more awful signs which are to attend the end of the world are the birth-throes of the great regeneration (the παλιγγενεσία, ch. xix. 28), the birth of the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (3) Persecutions. Besides the troubles destined to come upon all the world, the Church of Christ was to have its own special trials; his followers were to be afflicted and slain and hated of all nations for his Name's sake. And these persecutions would lead to worse things yet—to apostasies; and apostasies would produce mutual hatred and the betrayal of Christians by Christians; there would be false prophets, heretical teachers in the Church itself. Iniquity, lawlessness, would abound, as it did when St. Peter and St. Jude wrote their Epistles; and, in sad declension from the truth, the love of the many would wax cold. Christians would leave their first love, like the Church of Ephesus; they would sink into a routine of formal service without heart and without love. But some would remain steadfast even in that evil time; some would endure all these temptations, whether of persecution from without the Church or of evil example from within; their patience would have its perfect work; their endurance would, by God's grace, be complete, their perseverance final; and such should be saved. "The same shall be saved," the Lord says emphatically; not, alas! all professing Christians, but "he that endureth unto the end." How earnestly, then, should we pray and strive after perseverance! It is not a passing wish of "God forgive me!" that ensures our soul's salvation, it is not a rush of excited feeling, but the patient continuance in well-doing. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (4) The gospel must be preached in all the world. This gospel of the kingdom is the good news concerning the kingdom of heaven which Christ established upon earth, the good news of salvation through Christ promised to those who endure unto the end. That gospel was to be preached in all the world before the end should come. The world here, as in other places (*e.g.* Luke ii. 1), may mean no more than the Roman empire. St. Paul seems to have regarded this prophecy as fulfilled even in his time. He says (Col. i. 6, 23) that the gospel was present in all the world, that it had been preached to every creature which is under heaven. In a true sense it was fulfilled when the distinction between Jew and Gentile was abolished, when the apostles were commanded to make disciples of all nations, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Thus the end of which the Lord speaks here might mean the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the Jewish dispensation. But as knowledge extends itself, as the known world becomes wider till it is coextensive with the surface of the earth, so the area of missionary operations is enlarged. And thus the prophecy acquires another and a wider meaning. "The gospel shall be preached in all the world, for a testimony to all the nations of the earth." Then the end in its most awful meaning, the end of the world, shall come.

LESSONS. 1. The temple without Christ is desolate. Magnificent buildings have no

beauty in God's sight if Christ is not found there. 2. We must, like the apostles, watch for the signs of Christ's coming. 3. But the truest wisdom is to live in constant expectation of it.

Vers. 15—28.—*Predictions of the nearer end: The destruction of Jerusalem.* I. THE WARNINGS OF THE COMING END. 1. *The sign.* The Lord returns to the first question of the disciples, "When shall these things be?" His eye had been looking forward in prophetic vision through the process of the ages; now he returns to the nearer end, to that awful catastrophe which, to the Jews, seemed like the very end of the world—the destruction of the holy city and of the temple, the dwelling-place of God, the centre of their whole religious system. He warns his followers of the horrors of that awful time. The guilty city must perish; the Lord's people must come out of her, that they be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues. The end of Judaism was to be to the Christian Church the beginning of a more vigorous and independent life. The Jewish Christians must separate themselves from their unbelieving brethren; they must escape for their life, as Lot fled out of Sodom. They would know the time; for they would see the abomination of desolation, spoken of through Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place: this was to be the signal for their flight. The Lord emphatically asserts the authority of Daniel's prophecy. He bids us read it with care and thoughtfulness. He says that this prediction, difficult and perplexing as it may seem, was given by the Spirit of God, spoken *through* Daniel. We cannot now with absolute certainty say what "the abomination of desolation" was —whether some profanation of the temple by the Romans, or some awful deed of the Jews themselves, such as those horrors and blasphemies related by Josephus. Plainly it was some definite event understood by contemporary Christians, recognized as the fulfilment of the Lord's words and as the signal for departure. 2. *Flight must be immediate.* Christians were to flee at once to the mountains before the investment of the city, as we are told they did flee over the mountains of Gilead to Pella, in the north of Peræa. Not a moment was to be lost when once the abomination of desolation was seen in the holy place. All Christians, whether then in the city or in the surrounding country, were to flee at once for their lives; they were not to linger for any purpose, to remove their property or to fetch their clothes. The body is more than raiment. It was a warning to Jewish Christians then; it is a warning to all Christians still. No earthly considerations must keep the awakened soul from fleeing at once to Christ. We hear his warning words; they reach our hearts as perhaps they have never reached them heretofore. We see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. This world of ours was once holy; God pronounced it "very good." But the abomination of desolation is in it—sin in all its forms; uncleanness and dishonesty and cruelty, unbelief and selfishness. The converted Christian must arise at once; he must flee into the mountains, to the clear and lofty height of communion with God, into fellowship with Christ above the dull and heavy atmosphere of this wicked world. We must flee thither, and that at once. If we delay through lingering desires of earthly things, it may be too late. 3. *Difficulties and horrors of the time.* The flight would be sudden and without time for preparation; hindrances of whatever kind would be full of danger. The Lord expresses his compassion for the afflicted, "Woe unto them that are with child!" The "woe" here, as in some other places, is an utterance of sympathy. We may cast our care upon him in our troubles; he careth for us. And we may pray for the alleviation of those troubles; he allows it. Only before the prayer for present relief, for daily bread, let us pray, "Thy will be done;" then we may safely ask for such things as are needful for the body. The Jewish Christians in those times of distress might pray that their flight should not be in the winter nor on the sabbath day. The Lord, indeed, had not encouraged the superstitious observance of the sabbath; Christians afterwards were to keep the first day of the week in place of the seventh. But the early Jewish Christians were "all zealous of the Law" (Acts xxi. 20), and the scrupulousness of those among whom they lived would cause many hindrances and difficulties. It was in the highest degree desirable that their flight should be unimpeded, for the misery of those days would be awful. Such tribulation never was, nor would be ever again. The Lord's words are strong, but not stronger than those in which Josephus describes the actual horrors of the siege and fall of Jerusalem. Never,

he says, did any other city suffer such miseries, nor did any age breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was from the beginning of the world. The destruction of life was enormous. It seemed as if the whole Jewish race would be swept away. But the days of tribulation were shortened for the elect's sake—for the sake of those among the Jews who believed or would hereafter believe (comp. Rom. xi. 5, 7). "The Lord shortened those days," we read in St. Mark. God's providence so ordered circumstances that the siege was ended sooner than might have been expected (in five months), and thus the loss of life, though tremendous, was not so overwhelming as otherwise it might have been. "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" he careth for them. The great events of history, the convulsions which shake society, are ordered by him for the good, for the salvation, of his elect. Monarchs and statesmen and warriors act from various motives, often from wicked and selfish ambition. But the Lord reigneth. He overruleth all things for the elect's sake. Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure, and then trust ourselves in entire resignation to his blessed will.

II. WARNINGS CONTINUED. 1. *Deceivers.* *Then*, the Lord says. He looks onward again, beyond the destruction of the holy city. Jerusalem had fallen, but the Lord had not yet come. In a real sense, indeed, the fall of Jerusalem was a coming of the Lord (comp. ch. x. 23 and xvi. 28). He came in that awful event to execute judgment upon the guilty, to bring the old dispensation to an end. But he had not come revealed in his majesty. He bids his people beware of false prophets, false Messiahs. Many such there have been, many such there will be down to the times of the antichrist described by St. Paul (2 Thess. ii. 3—10). Like that antichrist, these false Christs will show signs and lying wonders, so as to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. But that, thank God, is not possible, for we have Christ's word, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." He warns us now —"I have told you before"—that we may be prepared in the day of temptation. There will be false Christs, the Lord says, repeating his warning; each will have his followers, who will try to draw people after him. "Behold, he is in the desert!" some will say. Christ's people must not listen. The true Messiah has come; we bear his name; we know him if we are his indeed; and that knowledge is life eternal. We need no other prophet; there can be no other Christ. When he cometh again men will not say, "Lo, here;" or "Lo, there." "Every eye shall see him." When he first came in great humility, men said to one another, "We have found the Messias." But he cometh not thus again. In power and awful glory he shall come, a dreadful Judge. Then Christians must not allow themselves to be misled by false Messiahs. They must not believe the stories of ignorance or fanaticism. Some may say, "Behold, he is in the desert!" others, "Behold, he is in the secret chambers!" Some may tell us that we shall find Christ in the free air of the desert, away from creeds, and forms, and systems of doctrine, and antiquated Churches. Others may think to find him in the narrow, confined limits of this or that sect. Believe them not. "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." But seek not after the Christ here nor there, in the desert nor in the secret chambers; for the true Christ is found everywhere by those who seek him in simplicity and in truth, not only at Jerusalem or "in this mountain." 2. *What Christ's coming will be.* It will overspread the world at once. "Every eye shall see him." The sense of his presence will fill the whole universe, as the lightning fills the whole expanse of the sky. It cometh from the east, and is seen even to the west. So shall the coming of the Son of man be; in flaming fire, visible throughout the universe, startling quick and dead alike with its omnipresent energy. "*Wheresoever* the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." The carcase is the festering corruption of sin. There are high authorities for a very different interpretation; but both the fitness of words and the context, which speaks of God's awful judgment rather than of the means of grace and the Bread of life, seem to necessitate the explanation which is perhaps generally adopted. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." That revelation will burst at once upon the whole universe. Those mighty angels are the eagles. They shall gather the wicked from among the just. Wherever the carcase is, wherever there are impenitent sinners, dead unto God and holiness,

corrupted with the pollutions of sin, there shall the messengers of judgment be gathered together; as the Roman eagles were once gathered round Jerusalem, to fulfil the awful behests of God. Wherever the carcase is, here, there, far and near, throughout the vast universe of the quick and dead, the angels of judgment will surely find the guilty and the reprobate. There will be no escape. The area of judgment will be coextensive with that of the vast multitude of souls. Then Christians should live in the expectation of that awful day, not eager for novelties, not listening to those who say, "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" but living soberly, righteously, and godly, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LESSONS. 1. Jerusalem must perish. The Church may not dare to trust in external privileges. It must abide in the love of Christ, in the life of Christ, or the candlestick will be removed. 2. Christians must flee from the world which passeth away to the city of God which abideth for ever. 3. Live always in the thought of the judgment.

Vers. 29—51.—*The end of the world.* I. ITS CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. *The heavens.* The Lord had been glancing onwards into the future. There would be wrath upon the chosen people; it would last long; they would be led away captive into all nations. Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles; it would lie desolate long—even "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke xxi. 23, 24). The tribulation of those days is not yet ended; still Jerusalem is lying waste; still her children are scattered. Again and again the tribulation has seemed to come to its climax, and men have looked for the coming of the Lord. Christ would have his Church ever live in the attitude of expectation, as men that wait for their lord. But the end is not yet—it cometh immediately after that long tribulation. Then "shall the sun be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven." Words like these were used by the Hebrew prophets as symbolical of the fall of earthly empires—of Babylon, of Edom, of Egypt (Isa. xiii. 10; xxxiv. 4; Ezek. xxxii. 7). The Prophet Joel (ii. 30, 31), in a passage quoted by St. Peter (Acts ii. 19, 20), describes the like portents as ushering in "the great and terrible day of the Lord." St. John saw similar wonders, in vision, at the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. vi. 12, 13), when "the great day of his wrath was come." We must receive the Lord's words with reverent awe, as foretelling the terrors of that tremendous day, when "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." It is the grand, lofty language of prophecy; we need not attempt to bring the details down to the lower plane of science. Our part is rather to listen to the warning of St. Peter, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 2. *The sign.* The Jews had more than once asked for a sign from heaven; the Lord would not give it. Now his apostles had inquired, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" He does not define it. But such a sign, he tells us, there will be: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." What that sign will be we know not certainly. It will be visible to all the world: "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." It will be a sight awful exceedingly to the wicked; welcome, above all other visions, to the eye of faith. "Then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." It may well be, as very many have thought, a cross of dazzling splendour—the cross that is life to the believer, death to the sinner; the cross in which alone the followers of the Lord may glory. That cross, it may be, glittering high above, will be the token of his coming; then all kindreds of the earth shall wail, some, perhaps, even then with the godly sorrow of repentance (Zech. xii. 10—12), some with the wailing of despair and terror; for "they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." Every eye shall see him then—they that love him as the very life of their souls, and they that have pierced him with their sins, and crucified the Lord afresh. What strange, wonderful words for him to utter, who then sat upon the Mount of Olives, rejected and despised by the leading men of his nation, with suffering and ignominious death in immediate prospect! 3. *The angels.* "He shall send forth his angels." They are his, for the Father had said, "Let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. i. 6); they are his, for he himself is God. He shall send them with a great sound of a trumpet—the trump of God. The voice of the trumpet at Mount Sinai was exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. How

much louder and more awful shall be that trumpet-call which shall wake the dead, and summon quick and dead alike before the throne! The angels, the messengers of the Son of man, shall gather together his elect. The angels are his; the elect are his; they are Christ's, bought with his precious blood; his, for the Father who chose them and by his choice made them "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," hath given them to the only begotten Son; they are his; none can pluck them out of his hand. His angels shall gather them together from the four winds—from one end of heaven to the other. Not one of them shall be lost—wherever they may be, in the remotest corners of the earth, or lying in long-forgotten graves—the angels shall gather them together, from the cottage and from the palace, from the crowded city and the desolate wilderness, from below the green sods of the churchyard and from the fathomless depths of the sea; the angels shall bring every one of God's elect safe to the Lord who loved them and died for them, whom they believed in, and loved and trusted even unto death.

II. THE TIME. 1. *The parable of the fig tree.* The disciples had asked, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" The Lord had spoken of the fall of Jerusalem and of the great day; he had told them of the abomination of desolation which should be the warning of the one, and of the sign of the Son of man which should announce the other. He now proceeds to the question of time; again he speaks first of the nearer end, the end of the temple and the holy city; then of the end of all things. He sat on the Mount of Olives; he pointed, it may be, to a fig tree then putting forth its leaves; those buds, those tender leaflets, were the earnest of approaching summer. So, the Lord said, "when ye shall see all these things [the signs which he had mentioned], know that it is near, even at the doors." They would see it, some of them; for that generation would not pass till all these things were fulfilled—all these things, that is, of which the Lord had spoken but just before in the temple: "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation" (ch. xxiii. 36); all those things of which the disciples had asked him, "Tell us, when shall these things be?"—the destruction of the temple, the ruin of Jerusalem, the scattering of the people of Israel. It was hard for Jews to realize; Jerusalem was all the world to them; their attachment to Jerusalem was more than patriotism—it was a religion to them. Jerusalem was the centre of their worship; the temple was the centre of Jerusalem, the house of God, the dwelling-place, in ancient times, of his manifested glory. They regarded that glorious building with a national pride, with a deep religious interest, with a passionate love, which, perhaps, has had no parallel in the history of the world. They had watched the progress of Herod's restoration (or rather rebuilding), not without some feelings of suspicion, but yet with intense delight and enthusiasm. And now they heard that those goodly stones which they so much admired were all to be thrown down; there would not be left one stone upon another. It was like a death-blow to them—like the very end of the world—strange and almost incredible in its terrible awfulness. But it was true; it was surely coming; "Heaven and earth shall pass away," said the Lord, "but my words shall not pass away." Mark the calm confidence of the assertion. Only a Divine Person could so speak; such words in the mouth of any human teacher would be presumptuous and intolerable; but Christ was meek and lowly in heart, for he is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." 2. *The last day.* The end of Jerusalem was soon to come, in the lifetime of some who then stood around the Lord; the end of the world was not yet. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." It is not for us to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. That knowledge is hidden in the counsels of God; we may not presume to search into it. It is not given to the blessed angels, not even to the Son in his human nature, as he himself tells us (Mark xiii. 32). The finite and the infinite met in the one Person of Christ—human limitations on the one side; on the other the power, knowledge, and wisdom of God. The relations between those two natures are wholly beyond our comprehension; we cannot by any intellectual effort picture to ourselves the manner of their union—how the one affected the other. It is enough to know that the Lord, in his great love for us, condescended to submit to the conditions of our humanity; and one of those conditions was this, that on the human side of his Person he knew not, as

we know not, the day, the hour, of his own second advent. Strange that men should have ever ventured to think that knowledge within their reach. It is hidden from us, for our good. It is God's will that we should live looking always for the judgment. What he wills is best for us. He willeth that all men should be saved; it is not his will that we should know the hour of the Lord's coming, or the hour of our own death; his will is best. 3. *The hour will be unknown to the end.* Noah was in the world a preacher of righteousness; God had warned him of the coming judgment. Then the long-suffering of God waited while the ark was a-preparing. All through that time Noah, we must suppose, was preaching, reproving, bearing witness of the wrath to come; but men heeded him not. For many years the huge structure of the ark was a standing warning to those who lived around. But they were immersed in the ordinary pursuits of life—in its business, pleasures, sins. They found no time to listen to the preacher's voice; it may be they mocked him, as the men of Sodom afterwards mocked the one righteous man who dwelt among them. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. They saw him enter with his family and the great host of living creatures; they must have known something of the meaning of his conduct. But still they heeded not; they acted as though they knew nothing; they did not repent, they did not flee for their lives. And after seven days the Flood came and swept them all away. So shall it be at the time of the end: God's servants will preach, as Noah preached then; they will prepare to meet their God, as Noah then prepared. The world will be heedless still, absorbed in earthly things, unchanged, unthinking. Upon such idle thoughtless lives the coming of the Lord shall flash in awful suddenness. 4. *It will cause strange separations.* Two men shall be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left. They are engaged in the like occupation, alike ignorant of the nearness of the judgment. Suddenly he cometh; one is taken and one is left. One is taken to be with Christ in the eternal blessedness; one is left to the awful judgment. They had seemed alike to the eyes of men; but God knoweth the secrets of the hearts. One had served him in the inner worship of the spirit, in sincerity, and faith, and holy love, and deep humility; the other had been worldly and selfish, his prayers had been but lip-service, his worship but hypocrisy. That day will make strange revelations; it will tear away the mask of the hypocrites, it will show the holiness and the true nobility of the humble self-denying Christian, it will make an eternal separation between the godly and the ungodly, the saved and the lost.

III. THE SAVIOUR'S WARNINGS. 1. *The need of watchfulness.* The Lord urges this upon us strongly. He repeats it again and again. The warning is for all people and for all times: "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." His apostles re-echo the Saviour's words, "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." The name Gregory, borne by so many holy men, witnesses to the deep impression which this solemn warning made on the minds of early Christians. The duty is one of paramount obligation; for the night is far spent, the day is at hand. This present life is night compared with the full burst of the resurrection-day. The Christian must not slumber, pleasing himself with the shadowy dreams of earthly glories; he must keep vigil, watching always; for the day is at hand, the effulgent sunshine of the true life. "Therefore watch," saith the Lord: "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." 2. *The thief in the night.* The thief comes stealthily in the dead of the night, when men are least expecting danger. Had they known the hour, they would have watched. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night;" "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." The Lord's words sank very deeply into the minds of the apostles: witness the frequent repetition of the illustration (1 Thess. v. 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3 and xvi. 15). "Therefore be ye also ready." The Lord's earnest admonitions should bring home to our hearts the momentous importance, momentous above the power of language to express, of watching for his coming. Very blessed are those who know him now as a most loving Friend, a most gracious Saviour; and, alas! very intense must be the misery of those who neglect his solemn warnings, living without watchfulness, without prayer; who must, unless they repent, know him for the first time as an awful Judge, when he cometh suddenly upon the careless slumberers, as the thief cometh in the dead of night.

IV. THE PARABLE OF THE SERVANTS. 1. *The faithful and wise servant.* According to St. Luke (xii. 42), where the parable occurs in another connection, it was a question of St. Peter's which gave occasion to it, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" It is plainly addressed in the first instance to the apostles, and to those who, in the providence of God, have been called to the like office and ministry. But it embraces in the range of its application all Christian men who have been placed in any position of trust, and have the power of influencing others for good. The Lord asks, "Who is the faithful and wise servant?" He answers his own question. It is he who feels and recognizes the duties rather than the advantages of his position. He has been set over a portion of the Lord's household. He knows the reason. It is not for his own enjoyment or profit, but that he should give them meat in due season. He must be a faithful dispenser of the Word of God and of his holy sacraments; and that in all humility and self-distrust, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He must take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made him overseer, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. And this he must do in constant watchfulness, looking always unto Jesus, waiting for the appearing of the Lord. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing"—blessed exceedingly above all that heart can conceive of rapture and of gladness; for thus saith the Lord, "He shall make him ruler over all his goods." He shall exalt him to the highest place in his kingdom. The highest places in heaven are not like those of earth; one man's exaltation does not exclude others. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me in my throne." That highest promise is for all who overcome; there is room for all faithful Christians in the throne of Christ. "Wherefore we labour [φιλοτιμούμεθα, 'we are ambitious'] that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." This is the high ambition of the faithful Christian. 2. *The evil servant.* Alas! not all are watchful. Some who have been left in charge of the Lord's household think only of themselves. They say in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth his coming." They care nothing for their Lord's household, nothing for their fellow-servants. They think only of their present ease and comfort, nothing of the awful future. They are hard, proud, tyrannical; they carry themselves as "lords over God's heritage." They are selfish, sensual, self-indulgent, absorbed in their own pleasures, their own emoluments. The doom of such, unless by God's mercy they repent, is dreadful exceedingly. "The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him." Then shall come the tremendous sentence shadowed forth in a most frightful form of punishment; but more fearful even than that frightful punishment, for it points to an eternal doom: "He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

LESSONS. 1. Let us mourn in true repentance now, that we mourn not in that day when the sign of the Son of man shall appear in heaven. 2. One is taken, one is left. Most awful words! "Watch ye therefore." 3. He cometh suddenly. None can know the hour of his coming; therefore watch always. 4. Blessed are the watchful; miserable exceedingly must the careless be. Therefore let us watch.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 5.—*False Christs.* It is a fact of history that pretenders appeared who claimed to be sent by God for the deliverance of the Jews, and practically usurped to themselves the position of the Christ. But all this belongs to far-distant ages. In a larger application of our Lord's idea, the world has seen many other false Christs down even to our own time, for whoever or whatever assumes to do the work of Christ or claims his honours is a false Christ. Let us look at some of these usurpers.

I. THE PRIEST. Men who come between us and God, so that we are shut off from the privileges of religion, excepting as we submit to their authority, are false Christs. Priests who offer to intercede with peculiar efficacy, claim to sacrifice on the behalf of others, and assert that they are the channels of sacramental grace, take on themselves functions which rightly belong to Christ. At the head of this great assumption is the pope; but the humblest minister who would have us look for salvation through his

mystic grace shares in the same offence. In fairness it should be seen that Romanist priests and their imitators do not claim to set aside the work and honour of Jesus Christ, but merely to administer his grace. Yet practically their functions are substituted for Christ's, and the people are induced to look to them instead of going to Christ, the one High Priest, and to God, as themselves kings and priests.

II. THE CREED. Theologians only profess to interpret the mind and will of Christ. Nevertheless, the scholasticism of the Church has led to the exaltation of doctrinal statements into the place which of right belongs to Christ himself. Thus it was once a popular presentation of the gospel to describe it as a group of saving truths which a person was to believe. The great thing was for him to see the way of salvation clearly. The whole idea of salvation by orthodoxy was the substitution of dogma for Christ. It taught that men are saved by believing a Creed; but the New Testament teaches that salvation is dependent on faith in Christ alone.

III. THE CHURCH. This is an institution founded by Christ himself. It is his own body, the body of which he is the Head. But there is a great perversion when the body is put in the place of the Head, and is thought to perform its functions. The Churchly notion of religion is that men are saved through their connection with the Church. It is true that all Christians maintain that salvation is in and through Christ alone. There is no formal and confessed substitution of the Church for Christ. But the perversion is not the less real in practice. As a fact, multitudes of people are led to think much more of their inclusion in the Church than of their being in Christ. The assertion that there is no salvation outside the Church is soon twisted into the idea that there is salvation for all in the Church, and that membership therein is the primary condition of salvation. Against these and all other substitutes for Christ we have to be on our guard, that we may look alone to the living personal Saviour for grace and life.—W. F. A.

Ver. 13.—*Final perseverance.* It is evident that our Lord was speaking with especial reference to the series of calamities that was to accompany the death-throes of the Jewish state. In them are typified and illustrated the trials which test the fidelity of the Christian in many walks of life.

I. WE ARE WARNED TO EXPECT HEAVY TRIALS. No woes can have been greater than the troubles of that tragedy of history, the fall of Jerusalem. But Job justly tells us that "man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job v. 7). It is foolish to anticipate calamity, for "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" but it is equally foolish to deny its possibility, or to be astounded and amazed when we have our share of what, after all, is just the common lot of mankind. Most assuredly the feeble faith that will be swamped in the first gale of adversity is not fit to be launched on the uncertain seas of life.

II. THESE TRIALS WILL REQUIRE THE GRACE OF CONTINUOUS ENDURANCE. It might be possible to muster courage for the encounter with one huge calamity in a rare crisis of life. The exceptional necessity would call out exceptional energy, and the very excitement of the novel situation would help to brace the spirit of heroism. But in many lives the trial of faith is long and tedious. There is not one brief and brilliant hour of martyrdom, but there are years of repeated difficulties and renewed troubles. To face such experiences a gift of patience and stubborn endurance is requisite. For most of us this is needed, because in some form the whole of life is a course of discipline, although it is not the purgatory pessimists paint it.

III. THE ENDURANCE OF ADVERSITY AND TEMPTATION IS NOT INDEPENDENT OF OUR OWN EFFORTS. It is not solely dependent on those efforts. Nobody can stand firm in his own strength alone. If we are enabled to be faithful, this is because God is with us, our Strength and our Stay. There is no possibility of continuous endurance excepting through his presence and help. The trials are certainly too severe for unaided human strength. But this is not all. It is but one side of the situation. The Divine grace is given to those who seek it; it is given according to the measure of faith; and it is given to inspire and energize our efforts, not to supersede them. We must strive, or we shall fail.

IV. A GREAT DELIVERANCE WILL CROWN THE ENDURANCE THAT IS PERSEVERED IN TO THE END. 1. *There will be an end.*

"Now we fight the battle."

But the battle will not last for ever. Patience and courage! The affliction is but brief. It is foolish to risk all rather than stand out its short time. 2. *It is necessary to endure to the end.* The ship that has weathered many a storm on her long voyage must be prepared to face the last tempest, or she will perish in sight of her haven. It is not enough that we were victorious in bygone days. The fidelity of youth will not excuse the failure of later years. The battle is not over till it is won, and the battle of life is not won till life is finished. 3. *Then will be the final victory.* Faithful, persistent endurance will issue in the end of the trial and in the salvation of the sufferers. Salvation is perfect and secure for those who are "faithful unto death."—W. F. A.

Ver. 27.—*Lightning.* Our Lord compares his coming to a great flash of lightning which blazes out in the east and illumines earth and sky as far as the west. This is in contrast to the notion of an obscure and doubtful appearance, or one that is local and limited, or one the coming of which is so gradual that it can scarcely be discerned. In opposition to these erroneous conceptions, the advent of Christ is to be lightning-like. Let us consider its characteristics as they are suggested to us by this startling image.

I. VISIBILITY. Bursting out of the darkness of the storm, the lightning blinds us with the brilliancy of its illumination. There is no mistaking the fact that it has come. We may not observe the glow-worm; we cannot ignore the lightning. The awful "day of God" at the destruction of Jerusalem has made its impress on all history. Other advents of Christ in judgment, as in the sack of Rome by the Goths, the wreck of the Spanish Armada, etc., have startled the world with their terror. The present more peaceful coming of Christ to heathen nations in the spread of his gospel produces most visible effects in the transformation of degraded fetich-worshipping cannibals into civilized, humane Christians. Our Lord's words lead us to anticipate that there will be no obscurity about his great final advent. Then every eye shall behold him.

II. BREADTH. The lightning flashes from east to west; or its flash is so splendid, that while for a moment it plays in the east, the far-off west is illumined by the radiance it spreads in all directions. There is a greatness in the appearance of Christ. Even when he came in humiliation, he was "a Light to lighten the Gentiles." Perhaps he had some thought of his first appearance in the East, and of the spread of his light to Europe, when he spoke of the lightning shining in this direction. But if it is a strain of fancy to assert that any such idea is to be found in this image, the notion of breadth is certainly there. Christ's life was lived in the open. As St. Paul boldly said, "This thing was not done in a corner" (Acts xxvi. 26). Christ is the Light of the world, and his radiance is spreading over the earth. The last advent will be for all the world to see, and it will concern all mankind.

III. SUDDENNESS. Nothing is so sudden or so startling as the lightning. In its very silence it gives us a greater shock than the roaring thunder. There is something peculiarly awful in its momentary blaze of splendour, especially as we know that there is death and destruction in its shaft. In a moment the steeple is shattered, the stout oak is blasted and riven to its core, the strong man is scathed and flung down dead. It is not clear that our Lord meant us to attach any idea of destruction to his image of the lightning. We know that there is a terror in the wrath of the Son (Ps. ii. 12). In his advent to judgment Christ must smite down his foes. He is not the incarnation of unruffled amiability which modern hymns represent, although he is not the stern Judge of Byzantine art. Part of the terror of his judgment is its suddenness. We know not when he will come. Yet if we are his true people we need not fear. His sudden advent will be our sudden joy.—W. F. A.

Ver. 36 (as in Revised Version).—*The unknown day and hour.* This is one of the most striking words of our Lord. The record of it shows the veracity of the Gospel writers. No early Christian would have invented such a sentence as this. The words themselves testify to the truthfulness and to the humility of Christ. They are significant also in the light they throw on the limitations of knowledge.

I. THE FACT. No one but our Father in heaven knows the whole future. Some

parts of it are revealed to all of us, some are within the perception of prophets, more may be specially known to angels, very much must have lain open before the eye of Christ. But God only knows the whole. The final judgment is known only to him. Why is this? 1. *Perhaps the date is not fixed.* To God, who is independent of time, all our uncertainties and contingencies must be visible and sure. But it is impossible for us to imagine the form of thought that comprehends such things. To us many things are uncertain, in part because they are dependent on changing conditions. Will a particular man be saved or lost? No one can say, because no fixed destiny determines his future. It will be conditioned by his conduct, by the action of his free-will. It is open for him to repent at any time. So it may be that the date of the final judgment will be determined according to the conduct of men, according to the course of history. It may be hastened or it may be postponed, as the behaviour of the world changes. 2. *Certainly full knowledge would be injurious.* It is one of the greatest mercies of life that God hides the future. If any sorcery could reveal it, the depth of folly would belong to those people who resorted to that sorcery. The knowledge of future evil would crush us; the knowledge of future good would take the zest out of our joys and make the blessings of life stale and uninteresting. Moreover, God disciplines us by ignorances. This should not make us indifferent to truth; it must be our duty to learn what God teaches. But it cannot be healthy to attempt to pry into secrets which God means to keep to himself. Calculations of modern prophets about unfulfilled prophecy are here rebuked beforehand by our Lord.

II. INFERENCES IN REGARD TO JESUS CHRIST. 1. *The distinction between Christ and his Father.* Clearly they are here seen as two Persons. Yet it is the fashion of popular theology to "confound the Persons," and to speak of Jesus as if he were just the same as the Father. 2. *The comparative subordination of Christ.* We dare not say, with Cyril, that the ignorance of Christ was only apparent. That must be to represent him as an unreal Actor. He meant what he said in all honesty. It may be that Athanasius was right in applying all such passages as that before us to the earthly humiliation of our Lord. Still, the statements of Scripture as to the Son being sent by the Father (*e.g.* John xx. 21), applying as they do to the first advent and the very origin of the Incarnation, suggest something like a secondary position even prior to the earthly life, as we shall see if we reverse the phrases, and think of the Son sending the Father—a most improper notion. The Sender must be in some way superior to the Sent. 3. *The Divinity of Christ.* This is apparent even in this passage, where the secondary position is stated: (1) Because Christ separates himself from all other men, and even places the angels between himself and them. (2) Because Christ shows Divine knowledge of the fact of the ignorance of angels as well as men, and of the fact of his Father's unique consciousness.—W. F. A.

Vers. 40, 41.—*One taken, and another left.* What our Lord here somewhat obscurely applies to the time of the coming judgment is clearly seen in all ages and in every family where death is plying his erratic craft.

I. THE DISTINCTION. There are the greatest possible variations in providence. God does not follow any regimental orders. The ages do not march with the measured tramp of drilled battalions. Families are broken up. Aged men are left, while young men are snatched away. Bad people flourish to a green old age, and some "whom the gods love die early." The useless remain to cumber the ground, and the useful are cut down in the midst of their work. 1. *Similarity of external conditions is no guarantee of similarity of fate.* The two men are at the same field-work, the two women are both alike grinding corn. Yet how different are their fates! We cannot judge of a man's future by his worldly position. 2. *Association in life does not secure association in death.* The family is grievously broken; old friends are parted; life-partnerships come to an end. Two friends may be very near in life, yet death may make an awful separation, if one is called to the world of light and the other banished to the realm of darkness.

II. THE TWOFOLD FATE. 1. *The one taken.* Whither? There is an eerie vagueness in our Lord's language. The summons comes, and the most reluctant must obey without a shadow of resistance. But whither does it call? We vainly strive to follow the flight of the passing soul, and the utmost effort of imagination cannot trace it one

step beyond the old familiar earthly scenes. A cloud receives the traveller out of sight the moment he takes his departure. Yet we know that there are tremendous possibilities in the unseen, and we know that the blessedness or woe of the future life depends on the conduct of this life. He who is taken has gone "to his own place." 2. *The one left.* (1) To what is he left? To grief, desolation, and loneliness—but also to God who never leaves, to Christ who is never taken from us. (2) Why is he left? Perhaps for further work, perhaps for finer chastening, perhaps to give one more opportunity for repentance. But let him consider that his time also must come. Before long all are taken. The distinction is temporal, not final; it is a matter of the postponement of the dreaded end, not of its avoidance.

III. THE UNCERTAINTY. Our Lord evidently desires to lay stress on this. We do not know when the final judgment will be. We do not even know when our own last day will come. This, too, may be swift and sudden as the lightning-flash, unexpected as the thief in the night. We never know which will be taken and which left. How often the feeble invalid outlives the strong man who is smitten down by some accident or fatal disease in the midst of his busy life! Such thoughts should not induce a morbid melancholy, or a listless indifference to life. They warn us to be always ready for the summons that shall call us hence. But then he is fit to die who is most truly equipped for the duties of life, and to him the sudden message will be no awful terror, but the trumpet of victory, or, better than that, the Father's voice calling his child home to himself.—W. F. A.

Vers. 45—51.—*The two servants.* Our Lord here applies his teaching about the suddenness of the advent of the unforeseen judgment to the conduct of his servants. In view of the possibility of being called to account at any moment, what manner of men should we be? Jesus gives us contrasted pictures of two very different servants as they are found at his coming, and of their consequent fate.

I. THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT. 1. *His character.* No doubt his known fidelity and wisdom furnish the reasons for his appointment to an important office. (1) The first requisite is fidelity. Our business is not to please ourselves, but to serve our Master. (2) The second requisite is wisdom. This is more than acuteness of intellect. It is a moral faculty, the right use of the intellect. 2. *His trust.* (1) A post of responsibility. God is the supreme Lord, yet he grants to the several provinces of his kingdom a considerable measure of "home-rule." He does not humiliate by driving us like cattle; he gives us scope for the exercise of our powers and the proof of our fidelity. (2) A post of useful service. The servant is to provide food for the household. He is a steward of the provisions of the family. God trusts his servants to feed his family. If they are unfaithful, the children will starve. 3. *His conduct.* He simply does what is required of him. His Master finds him "so doing." He is not expected to devise novelties of self-willed service. He cannot exceed his duty. But it is enough if he does it. Christ looks for simple obedience—service according to his will. 4. *His reward.* This is in the form of promotion. The faithful servant is to serve still, but in a higher position. God does not reward service by granting idleness or selfish indulgence in luxury, which would mean no reward to the true servant. As it is a great honour to be permitted to serve, it cannot be a reward to be set aside from further service; the great reward is just the privilege of larger service.

II. THE EVIL SERVANT. 1. *His excuse.* "My lord tarrieth." This is but a thought of his heart, yet it bears fatal fruit in his life. Evidently the miserable man is an "eye-servant." He has no sense of duty, no interest in his work. A lazy, dishonourable slave, he will not work if he can escape. The very delay of his master, which is meant to enlarge his honourable trust, he seems to regard as a mark of indifference, as though he would blame his lord for apparently neglecting the household. Here we see the hypocrisy of which the man is accused later. 2. *His vile conduct.* (1) Cruelty. He beats his fellow-servants. He abuses his position of trust. Instead of feeding the household, he flogs it. The very power that was given to him for good uses he turns to evil. The shepherd has become a wolf. So has it been in the Church of Christ with men in high office. (2) Intemperance. The man is tyrannical and ill-tempered, because he is weak and self-indulgent. No men are at heart so cold and cruel as those who live for their own pleasures. Selfishness and sensuality lead

directly to hardness and harshness in dealing with other people. All this is essentially degrading. The honoured steward becomes the boon companion of low drunkards. 3. *His shock of surprise.* Because his lord tarried, he began to think he should never be called to account. He was the more amazed and confounded with the sudden advent of his master. Christ will come in judgment to men who never expect him. 4. *His awful doom.* To such a man, and not to the abandoned outcast, Christ threatens the most fearful punishment. The professed servant of God, the man in trust and honour who abuses his privileges, will be the victim of the direst wrath of Heaven. —W. F. A.

Vers. 1—3.—*The coming of Christ.* After dooming the temple to desolation, "Jesus went out." The action was significant (see Luke xix. 44). In every case the departure of the Saviour is a solemn event. "His disciples," viz. Peter, James, John, and Andrew (see Mark xiii. 3), called his attention to the magnificence of the structure. Men are naturally influenced by material glories. They had especially noticed the greatness of the stones (see Mark xiii. 1), and were astonished when Jesus declared that these should become disjointed and overthrown. How "slow of heart" are even good men "to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken" (see Micah iii. 12; Jer. xxvi. 18)! What havoc in the material world is wrought through moral obliquity! "And as they sat" in full view of the temple and city (ver. 3), where the Shechinah had rested after leaving the temple and the city, and whence it ascended into the heavens—awful presage of the desolation of the temple and city by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of the people by the Babylonians (Ezek. xi. 23):—the action of Jesus here therefore was not only the expression of a tender, sorrowful, patriotic, human sympathy, but moreover a parable and a prophecy of momentous import.

I. CHRIST WAS COMING IN HIS KINGDOM. 1. The advent of the King Messiah was the constant subject of ancient promise. 2. It was accordingly the chief expectation of the Jews. 3. But so dazzled were they with the splendour of the imagery, in which the coming of Messiah in his glory is set forth in prophecy, that they overlooked the predictions setting forth an earlier advent of Messiah in humiliation. 4. Hence, when Jesus came in that earlier advent his people were offended in him.

II. HE COMES IN SPIRIT AND POWER. 1. So he came upon the memorable Day of Pentecost. Jesus had been corporeally transiently present with his disciples as their Comforter, and he promised, after his removal from them in that capacity, to come again as their permanent or abiding Comforter in his Divine Spirit (see John xiv. 15—21). 2. That advent was quickly followed by the "end of the world," or, more properly, the "consummation of the age." The Levitical dispensation ended with the destruction of the temple. For the temple was the very centre of that system. "The temple was destroyed: (1) *Justly;* because of the sins of the Jews. (2) *Mercifully;* to take away from them the occasion of continuing in Judaism. (3) *Mysteriously;* to show that the ancient sacrifices were abolished, and that the whole Jewish economy was brought to an end, and the Christian dispensation introduced" (Clarke). 3. The judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem was a figure of the judgment of the great day. The scattered Jew-Christians found relief in the judgment which brought desolation to their persecutors (cf. Mark xiii. 13; Jas. v. 7—9).

III. HE WILL YET COME VISIBLY, IN POWER AND GLORY. 1. He will then come "in the clouds." (1) He will come upon a glorious throne. (2) He will come with a myriad retinue. Clouds of angels. Clouds of spirits of just men made perfect (see Heb. xii. 1). 2. He will come to introduce the millennium. (1) He will begin that reign with judgments upon the obstinately wicked. The antichristian nations will be overthrown. (2) He will end that age with the final judgment upon the dead, small and great.

IV. HE COMES IN THE ARTICLE OF DEATH. 1. This is the "end of the age" to us as the term of our probation. 2. It is to us virtually the day of judgment. 3. Christ comes in person to receive to himself his own (see John xiv. 3). 4. Let us be admonished and prepare.—J. A. M.

Vers. 4—14.—*Signs of the advent.* The coming of Christ in his kingdom being the great event of prophecy to be fulfilled, the time and signs of that coming became ques-

tions of intense interest to the disciples. The time is generally indicated by the signs. These are—

I. APOSTASY THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF FALSE CHRISTS. 1. *Many antichrists appeared before the destruction of Jerusalem.* (1) Even in apostolic days the mystery of iniquity was already working (see 2 Thess. ii. 7; 1 John ii. 18). Note: Antiquity is no certain evidence of truth. Error is very nearly as ancient. The spirit of falsehood invaded the garden of Eden. (2) Many came professing to be the Christ. "Theophylact has recorded that one Dosatheus, a Samaritan, put himself forth as the prophet foretold by Moses; that Simon of Samaria also declared himself to be the *great power*, that is, the 'great power of God,' mentioned in the Acts. This prophecy also seems to contemplate Theudas, and 'that Egyptian' (see Acts xxi. 38), and another impostor mentioned, but not named, by Josephus, all of whom styled themselves prophets, though only rebels and deceivers. Manes, in later times, presumed to call himself the Christ, and to choose twelve apostles, in imitation of our Lord" (Joachim Camerarius). Since Christ in Christianity is all that is Divine and saving, so all false systems of Christianity are false Christs. 2. *Many have since been deceived by the popes.* (1) The popes affect to be vicars of Christ, and usurp his prerogatives. They claim infallibility. They assert dominion over the faith of Christians. They undertake to forgive sins committed against God. (2) Multitudes have apostatized through their deceptions. The state of Christendom was deplorable before the Reformation. The mischief is still extensive (see Rev. xiii. 3). (3) This seems to be the apostasy indicated by Paul as that destined to be developed when the restraining power of the Roman emperors should be taken out of the way (see 2 Thess. ii. 7, 8). 3. *Many have been deceived in the Mohammedan delusion.* (1) Mohammed was an antichrist, as he set himself above the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) He made converts by hundreds of thousands by the eloquence of his sword. How extensive were the conquests of the Saracens! What an empire was once that of the Turks! (3) Mohammedan Mahdis are ever arising. We are warned to take heed against deceivers. "The colour of the greatest good is often the cover of the greatest evil" (Henry). Seducers are enemies more dangerous to the Church than persecutors.

II. EXCITEMENTS OF MILITARY COMMOTION. 1. *These existed before the destruction of Jerusalem.* (1) When Jesus was born there was peace. The temple of Janus was shut. (2) But think not that he came to continue such a peace (see Luke xiii. 49—53). War comes of refusing the gospel. (3) "Rumours of wars." When Caius [Caligula] resolved to erect his statue in the temple at Jerusalem, the consternation was so great that the people omitted to till the land. (4) Christians were to "*hear* of wars." They are more apt to "hear" of them than to engage in them. Many of them submitted to die rather than serve in the armies. (5) "Nation rising against nation." In Palestine, before the time of Joshua, there were "many nations and great." At this time there were many divisions in the land—Judæa with Samaria, Galilee, Ituræa, Abilene. These were in conflict and commotion (see Bishop Newton's 'Diss. on Prophecy'). 2. *They are to precede the millennial reign.* (1) The war-spirit, born in depraved human nature, has become organized in these last times, viz. since the great prophetical era marked by the first French Revolution. (2) Standing armies have now swollen to enormous proportions; and science has been taxed to render weapons of war terribly destructive. (3) To support this system industry is oppressed. Ploughshares are beaten into swords—a process which was destined to precede the reverse operation of beating swords into ploughshares (cf. Isa. ii. 4; Joel iii. 9, 10; Micah iv. 3).

III. FEARFUL PUBLIC CALAMITIES. 1. *Famines.* (1) Such there were before the destruction of Jerusalem. One of these was foretold by Agabus (see Acts xi. 28). Josephus and Eusebius mention two famines which took place in the days of Claudius; and Josephus expressly says, "There was a great famine throughout Judæa" ('Ant.,' xx. 2). (2) Such have occurred in modern times, and are likely to become increasingly destructive as the population of the world increases, and the war-spirit increases with it. 2. *Pestilences.* These are the usual attendants of famines. (1) Epidemic disorders are generally produced from the scarcity or badness of provisions. (2) The carnage of the battle-field is also a source of epidemic disease. 3. *Earthquakes.* (1) Such there were before the destruction of Jerusalem. The first of the series was that in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus. The histories of Claudius and of the

following emperors notice many in Asia and the islands of the Ægean. They took place in Crete, in Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos; in Laodicæa in the consulship of Nero; at Hierapolis and Colosse. In all these places the Jews resided. Add to these that dreadful one in Judæa mentioned by Josephus ('Wars,' iv. 4), accompanied by a furious tempest, with continual lightnings, thunders, and rain. (2) The thoughtful observer of the signs of these times cannot overlook the earthquakes by which they are ever increasingly distinguished (see Mallett's tables).

IV. THE WIDE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL. 1. *The publication was at first limited to the Jews.* (1) Our Lord in Person came to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." (2) Occasionally, however, he presaged the publication of his gospel to the Gentiles. (3) Though he commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature, he instructed them to begin at Jerusalem. 2. *When the Jews rejected it, then the apostles turned to the Gentiles.* (1) It soon was carried throughout the Roman empire, then styled the world (see Rom. i. 8; x. 18; Col. i. 6, 23). Then followed "the end" in the judgment upon Jerusalem. (2) Now, through the great evangelistic societies—Bible societies and missionary societies—the testimony of the gospel is carried into "all the world" in the wider sense. May we not therefore look for the day of judgment upon the antichristian nations? Of all these things Christians are to take heed. For the confirming of their faith. For the inspiration of their hope. For their personal safety.—J. A. M.

Vers. 15—28.—*Salutary warnings.* Having announced the signs of his advent, first for the destruction of the Jewish antichrist, and secondly for that of its Gentile counterpart, Christ gives to his disciples salutary warnings suited to the crises.

I. IN RESPECT TO SECULAR EVILS. 1. *We do well to take heed to the sure Word of prophecy.* (1) "The abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," equivalent to the Roman army with its ensigns. The כנף in Dan. ix. 27 may denote the Roman *wing* or army (cf. Isa. viii. 8). Josephus shows that the ancient Jews understood this prophecy of Daniel to relate to the Romans. The ensign was an eagle, an unclean or abominable creature, and especially abominable as it was an idol. (cf. 1 Kings xi. 5, 7). Images of the Cæsars were inscribed in the shields on the ensigns. Our Lord fixes the interpretation in this sense (cf. Luke xxi. 20). (2) "Standing in the holy place." This cannot be the temple, for the Romans did not stand there until after the opportunity for the flight had passed. The circuit of the holy city was in the holy place (cf. Acts vii. 7). Before this time the Roman soldiers stationed in Jerusalem, in deference to the scruples of the Jews, had ensigns without the effigies of Cæsar. Pilate attempted to introduce the images, but yielded to the remonstrances of the Jews, and commanded them to be carried back to Cæsarea. (3) "Whoso readeth let him understand." Those who read the Scriptures should endeavour to understand them. We should have understanding of the times (cf. 1 Chron. xii. 32; ch. xvi. 3). "The wise shall understand." Daniel is intelligible in the interpretations of Christ. When untoward things occur, the people of God should confer with the prophets. 2. *Christ is a mountain of safety to those who fly to him for refuge.* (1) "Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains." Cestius Gallus, Prefect of Syria, besieged Jerusalem for some years, and then raised the siege. This was the sign to the Christians to flee. They accordingly removed to Pella and other towns in the mountainous region of Gilead, east of the Jordan. In the territories of Agrippa, who remained faithful to the Romans, they were safe. When Titus came some months later, there was not one Christian remaining in the city. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly." (2) "Let him which is on the house-top not," etc. In the promptitude of obedience there is safety. Had the Christians delayed their flight when Cestius Gallus raised the siege, they must have suffered for their unbelief with the unbelieving Jews. Josephus relates that Titus completed his lines of circumvallation with incredible celerity. "None of the wicked shall understand." The Jews perished because they would not understand the salutary warning of Jesus. (3) Life is more than property. If we sacrifice property to secure the life of the body, much more should we sacrifice it to secure the more precious life of the spirit. Flight must not be hindered by burdens. The Christian carries all his property in Christ. It is not to trust, but to tempt God, when we refuse to pass through the door which

he opens for our escape. 3. *Calamities are mitigated for the sake of the elect.* (1) "Woe unto them!" etc. (ver. 19). Frightful accounts are found in Josephus of the sufferings of helpless women and children in those "days of vengeance." (2) "But pray ye," etc. (vers. 20—22). We must labour to make the best of the inevitable. The followers of Christ in times of calamity should be much in prayer. The prayer that anticipates may mitigate evil. "That your flight be not in the winter," when the ways would be scarcely passable. "Neither on the sabbath day," lest they should be exposed to the indignation of the Jews, or hindered by their own superstitions. (3) "But for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." The prayers of the good are effective, and the wicked profit by their successes. As there is a community of suffering between the wicked and the good, so is there a community of mitigations between the good and the bad. God rules in human affairs.

II. IN RESPECT TO SPIRITUAL DECEPTIONS. 1. *He warns them against false Christs.* (1) There were many such about the time of the siege. Some before it (see Acts v. 36, 37). Others soon after, as Jonathas, who formed an army in Cyrene; and Barchochebas, in the reign of Adrian. (2) Those who observe the signs of our times cannot fail to see false Christs. Not only is there the Roman impostor (see 2 Thess. ii. 3—10) and his Eastern rivals, but many minor deceivers are springing up. (3) As the counterfeit presupposes the genuine coin, so do false Christs indicate the true. As the appearance of false Christs nearly two thousand years ago showed that the true Christ had then come (cf. Dan. ix. 25), so do the appearance of false Christs now presage the approaching second advent of the true. 2. *He warns them against false prophets.* (1) False Christs have also their false prophets. Every Mahomet has his Abubeker. (2) Our Lord not only foretold the appearance of these deceivers, but the manner of their proceeding (cf. Acts xxi. 38; Josephus, 'Ant.,' xx. 7; 'Wars,' vi. 5; vii. 11). (3) "If it be possible," etc., imports simply that it is difficult to deceive the elect of God (cf. Acts xx. 16; Rom. xii. 18). "To fear the worst oft cures the worst" (Shakespeare). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil" (see Prov. xxii. 3; Heb. xi. 7). (4) Times of great trouble are times of great temptation. 3. *He warns them against their deceptions.* (1) "Great signs and wonders." The Jews had magical arts, interpreted dreams, and pretended to work miracles and predict the future. (2) The Roman antichrist comes "with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness" (see 2 Thess. ii. 9—11; Rev. xiii. 13, 14). If not the elect, the infidels are deceived. They fly from the extreme of superstition into the opposite extreme of scepticism, and so miss the truth. (3) The coming of the true Christ is a grand thing, like the sheet lightning. So the Roman armies came in public, as the executioners of the Judge, in contradistinction to the stealthy manner in which the false Christs came. They came suddenly, without any premonitory whispering as to the "secret chamber." They came universally, for they filled the land. Like the lightning shining from the east, they entered Judæa from that quarter, and carried their conquests westward. (4) The coming of Christ here also refers to his second personal advent (cf. Luke xvii. 22—37). When a people do by their sins make themselves carcases, God will send his vultures among them (cf. Deut. xxviii. 49; Heb. viii. 1).—J. A. M.

Vers. 29—31.—*The signs of the heavens.* The earlier verses of this chapter set forth principally the signs from the earth. The "tribulation" referred to here is that consequent upon the siege of Jerusalem in the first place, and in an extended sense may be viewed as continued through the whole period of the dispersion of the Jews.

I. THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IS PRECEDED BY REVOLUTIONS. 1. *These are described under the figure of the shaking of the powers of the heavens.* (1) The mechanical heavens bear rule over the physical earth. They are therefore made emblems of government, whether political or religious or both. The shaking of the heavens imports the removal of such governments (see Isa. xiii. 10; xxiv. 23; xxxiv. 4; Jer. iv. 23; Ezek. xxxii. 7, 8; Dan. viii. 10; Joel ii. 10, 30, 31; iii. 15; Amos viii. 9, 10). (2) The sun is the symbol of the supreme power in the state, and of monarchy in particular. The darkening of the sun imports the humiliation, if not extinction, of the supreme civil rulers. (3) The moon is the emblem of the ecclesiastical system. Anciently, the times and ceremonies of the Church were measured and ordered by the

revolutions and changes of the moon. As the true Church, like the moon, borrows its light from the Sun, viz. "of righteousness," so have spurious religious systems borrowed theirs from civil rulers. The moon eclipsed represents a dispensational change in the true Church, and confusion to the false Churches. (4) Stars represent particular rulers, as princes and leaders in the state; and "angels" or ministers in the Church. The stars leaving their orbits and falling obviously imports the effects of revolution upon the leaders of religious corporations. 2. *Trace now the fulfilment of the prophecy.* (1) The Jewish system literally collapsed "immediately after the tribulation" of the days of the destruction of Jerusalem. The Romans took away their "nation." They also took away their "place," or temple. And the destruction of the temple involved the abolition of the Levitical system, of which the temple was the very centre. Thus the sun, moon, and stars of that people came to grief together. (2) The prophecy had a further fulfilment in the calamities, revolutions, and ultimate overthrow of the Roman empire. We find the same figures applied in the Apocalypse, first to the overthrow of the pagan powers of the empire by Constantine; and next, to the subversion of the empire itself by the northern invaders (see Rev. vi. 12; viii. 12). The application of the word "immediately" in reference to these events will not surprise when we take into account the character of prophetic language, and the vast range of time to which it is applied. (3) The final instalments of fulfilment will take place when the antichristian powers, civil and ecclesiastical, shall come into judgment. This event will come "immediately after the tribulation" upon the Jews comes to its end in their restoration to their land and covenants. (4) Who can say whether this prophecy may not also have a literal accomplishment in the mechanical heavens themselves? There is a remarkable relation between astronomical and political changes. 3. *In all commotions Christ will be merciful to his people.* "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet," etc. (ver. 31). (1) These words may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles. They are said to come from the "four winds" or "corners of the earth" (cf. ch. viii. 11, 12; Luke xiii. 28, 29). God's message comes as the sound of a trumpet (cf. Numb. x.; Isa. lviii. 1; Jer. vi. 17; Ezek. xxxiii. 3, 6; Rom. x. 18). (2) They may be applied to the gathering of the Jews. They are still in a sense God's "elect." They are destined to be gathered out of all the nations into which God has driven them in his anger. The angels with the trumpet will be God's messengers in gathering them (cf. Dan. viii. 10; Esth. viii. 16; Jer. xv. 9; Amos viii. 9). (3) They may be applied to the gathering together of the elect of God, who shall be called forth from their graves "by the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God" (cf. Exod. xix. 13, 16; Lev. xxv. 9; 1 Thess. iv. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 52).

II. THE "SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN," AND THE "COMING OF THE SON OF MAN IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN," ARE THE SAME. 1. *This was the sign for which the sceptics clamoured.* (1) The Jewish rulers were offended at the mean appearance of Jesus. "The carpenter's Son!" "Of Nazareth!" "Have any of the rulers believed?" Pride has a natural antipathy to humility. But the pride of all false glorying must be stained. (2) They overlooked, or refused to see, that Messiah was to come in this very quality of humiliation. The "Root out of a dry ground!" (see Isa. lii. 14; liii. 2, 3; Ps. xxii. 6; Mark ix. 2). The antitype of "David in all his afflictions." So of the "prophets and righteous men" who suffered for righteousness' sake. (3) The rulers had refused the "signs which Jesus did," most unreasonably accounting them insufficient. Men are not now sceptics for lack of cogent evidence. Unbelief is of the "evil heart" (cf. Ps. xiv. 1; Heb. iii. 12). (4) The sign from heaven, for which they clamoured, was that of the Prophet Daniel (cf. Dan. vii. 13; ch. xvi. 1). That sign was not intended for this generation. The sign from the earth—that of the Prophet Jonah, was to be given to them (see ch. xii. 38—40). 2. *They will receive it to their confusion.* (1) Confounded by their pride, they missed the *event* of the first advent of Messiah. Yet by that very pride which blinded them they were urged to fulfil the prophecies which they failed to see. So God makes the perversity of scepticism to praise him. (2) They confounded the *time* of the second advent. They looked for Messiah as a King when they should have looked for him as a Priest. Here also their pride confused them. (3) How will that pride be confounded when they shall see the very blessed Person whom they had rejected and crucified, "coming in the clouds, of heaven, with power and great glory"! As the "sign of the

Prophet Jonah" was Jonah, so the "sign of the Son of man" is the Son of man. In the cloud, viz. of the Shechinah, Jesus went into heaven, and in the same cloud will he return (see Acts i. 9—11). (4) Sooner or later, all sinners will "mourn." Those who have not mourned in contrition will "wail" in despair (cf. ver. 30; Rev. i. 7). The cloud of the Presence was a pillar—support, viz. in union, of vapour and fire. As judgment came from that Presence in the water which destroyed the old world, so from the fire of the cloud will come forth those flames which will consume in the judgment to come.—J. A. M.

Vers. 32—42.—*The event and the time.* Having unfolded to the disciples the manner and circumstances of the two great events respecting which they had inquired, our Lord now proceeds to speak more particularly of their certainty and of the time of their occurrence.

I. THE EVENT OF THE JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN. 1. *This is asserted under a simile.* (Vers. 32—35.) (1) The fig tree was a symbol of the Jewish nation (cf. Joel i. 7; ch. xxii. 19). To the literal Israel these things were primarily spoken. They have relevance also to the spiritual Israel, viz. in a future fulfilment. The outside world give no heed to sacred signs. "None of the wicked shall understand" (see Dan. xii. 10). (2) The teaching is that as the budding of the fig tree, then probably visible before them (cf. ch. xxi. 19; Luke xxi. 29), was a sure presage of summer, so must the signs indicated in the preceding discourse be taken to pledge the near approach of the sequel, glorious to the righteous, disastrous to the wicked (cf. ch. xvi. 3; Luke xxi. 31; Rev. i. 1). (3) "The summer is nigh." When the trees of righteousness put forth the leaf of faithful promise, it is a happy presage of good times. But that which to the good is an enlivening light is to the wicked a scorching and consuming fire. 2. *The assertion is repeated in the comment.* (1) The generation that witnesses the signs will also witness the sequel. This was literally so in regard to the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. ch. xvi. 28; xxiii. 36). There is a distinction between "these things," which refer to the events of the destruction of Jerusalem, and "that day" (ver. 36), which indicates the season of the final judgment. Yet was the judgment upon Jerusalem a type of the judgment of the last day. (2) The "generation" destined to see the end of "all things" in the wider sense, is the Jewish race (see A. Clarke, Steir, and Alford). Therefore the preservation of that race amidst untoward circumstances pledges the certainty of the sequel. (3) It is easier for the heavens and the earth to pass away than for the word of Christ to fail (see Luke xvi. 17). The creation had a beginning, so may have an end; but Christ's truth is from eternity, and cannot but abide. The failure of the truth of God would be, in other words, the failure of his existence, which is a supposition superlatively absurd.

II. THE TIME OF THAT EVENT IS NOT WHOLLY UNCERTAIN. 1. *It is particularly known to God alone.* (1) To him it *is* known. It is therefore distinguished as "the day of the Lord." Christ, as God, therefore, knew it. "It is necessary to distinguish between the knowledge of Christ as a Divine Person and that which he possesses as the Prophet of his Church. As Divine he knows all things; but as a Prophet he receives his messages from the Father, and makes them known to us. In this sense he knew not the day of judgment; that is, it was no part of the revelation which God gave to him to make known to men" (A. Fuller). "To know" has the idiomatic sense of "make known" (cf. 1 Cor. ii. 2; Acts i. 6, 7; 1 Tim. vi. 15). (2) As it was not given to the Son to make it known, so neither was it given to the angels. They have great capacities for knowledge, and, dwelling at the fountain of light, have also great opportunities; but their prescience is limited, or at least it is not given to them to make it known. (3) The *day* on which Titus was to invest Jerusalem was not known to the disciples when our Lord advised them to pray that their flight might not be on the *sabbath*. The *hour* or *season* was not known to them when he advised them to pray that it might not be in *winter* (ver. 20). So are we without knowledge of the day and season of the great event of which the judgment upon the Jews was but a figure. Wisdom withholds particular revelations of the future to encourage prayer. 2. *Yet is it generally made known to the wise.* (1) Many ancient prophecies contain approximate anticipations of the time. Light upon this subject was progressively increasing. Daniel gave intimation of the destruction of Jerusalem to the year in his period of four

hundred and ninety years, though not the day or season. (2) Our Lord himself speaks of great political revolutions that should happen before his return; and his language plainly implies that the event was then remote (see ver. 48; ch. xxv. 5, 19). (3) Paul declares that before that great event there should occur a gradual development and subsequent gradual wasting of a great apostasy, the germs of which were already working in his day (see 2 Thess. ii.). (4) Proceeding further, we find Peter using language evidently designed to prepare the Church for a long delay (see 2 Pet. iii.). (5) The series of intervening events is wonderfully disclosed in the course of the revelations given to John. The wise who study this series cannot be ignorant as to the approaching time. 3. *But to the wicked it will come as a surprise.* (1) So the Flood came upon the men of that generation. "They knew not." They were warned, but did not heed. "Death never comes without a *warrant*, but often without a *warning*" (Anon.). Not knowing, *i.e.* acknowledging, is joined with eating and drinking and marrying. They were sensual because secure; but the ignorance of wickedness is an imaginary security. "The flood came." Those who will not know by *faith* shall be made to know by *feeling*. The evil day is never further off for men's putting it off. Judgments are most terrible to those who make a jest of them. (2) "As in the days of Noah." The design here is to show that the desolation will be as general as it will be unexpected. The miserable Jews neglected the advice of Jesus to watch, and were destroyed. It is for us to learn wisdom by the things which they have suffered. The general neglect of religion is a more dangerous symptom to a people than particular instances of irreligion. (3) The siege of Jerusalem surprised the Jews in the midst of their festivity at the Passover (cf. Judg. xviii. 7, 27; 1 Thess. v. 3). Man's unbelief shall not make the truth of God's threatenings of none effect (cf. Isa. xlvii. 7—9; Rev. xviii. 7). "The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming is to those who are watchful a savour of life unto life, and makes them more watchful; but to those who are careless it is a savour of death unto death, and makes them more careless" (Henry). 4. *It will be a time of separation.* (1) "Then shall two men be in the field," etc. (ver. 40). Many who have been united in the closest earthly relations will then be found separated in their spiritual condition and eternal allotment. (2) Those "taken" correspond to Noah and his family, who were taken into the ark, and to the disciples of Jesus, who removed to Pella. Those "left" correspond to the people shut out of the ark, and those shut into Jerusalem when it was devoted to destruction. In the last day the elect will be gathered out of the devoted world into the cloud of Christ's protecting presence. (3) Here our Lord enjoins upon his disciples to watch, and that too in reference to his coming—an event so far remote that when it occurs they will be found among the dead. In like manner, we find the apostles exhorting their brethren to watchfulness, and urging the same reason, while they certainly knew that event to be remote. The lesson, then, is that it is manifestly the Divine purpose that the thoughts of the people of God should be carried forward to and fixed upon that momentous time when Christ shall come to judge the world.

Observe, then: 1. That to live in a state of preparation for this event is also to live prepared for death. 2. That every exhortation of Scripture to watch for the former is alike applicable to the latter. 3. That in a most important respect the hour of death is to every man the hour of judgment.—J. A. M.

Vers. 43—51.—*The two servants.* The "household" of God is his Church (see Eph. iii. 15). In the professing Church there are two classes of persons, viz. the "wise" and the "evil." In minor particulars there may be an infinite diversity, but ultimately all will be visibly separated into these great classes. This will hold in respect to both ministers and people.

I. "WHO, THEN, IS THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT?" 1. *He that watches for the return of his Lord.* (1) "Wisdom" is a synonym for "religion." In this sense the term is commonly used in the Proverbs of Solomon. The "wise" servant, therefore, is he that has repented of his sin and has accepted his Saviour. (2) True Christians are "of the day," and are instinctively watching for "that day" in which the Lord Jesus will appear in his glory (see 1 Thess. v. 4—6; 2 Pet. iii. 10—12). (3) To such the advent of the Master can be no surprise. If Jesus threatens the angel of the Church at Sardis to come on him as a thief, it is because he was neither penitent nor

watchful (see Rev. iii. 3). (4) "If the master of the house had known in what watch," etc. (ver. 43). Life, like the night, is distributed into *watches*. A watch in Old Testament times was four hours; at this time it was three. The Christian's vigilance should be unslumbering. 2. *He that is "ready" to welcome that return.* (1) "Therefore be ye also *ready*" (ver. 44). Readiness is now substituted for watchfulness. To be ready we must not only look for the coming of Christ, but so to look as to be prepared for it (see 2 Pet. iii. 11—14). (2) To be ready is to have such an assured faith in Christ as a present Saviour that whensoever he may come in his Lordship he will be welcomed. (3) But the service of God is not limited to trust and worship; obedience is the complement of these. When the Master comes the servant must be found "doing." Doing the will of Christ is watching for him in readiness. (4) He must be found "*so* doing." Note: There are activities in the Church which are mischievous. Ministers are in the Church *rulers* in the sense of being *bishops* or *overseers* to direct the work of Christ (see Heb. xiii. 17). They have also to "give" or dispense the bread of life (see Ezek. xxxiv. 8; Acts xx. 35). For this they must not substitute the "stone" of profitless doctrine or the "serpent" of poisonous error. The "bread" must be sound and wholesome. It must also be given in fitting "portion" and in "due season." Note: There are certain portions of the bread of life which lose their effect by being administered to improper persons and out of proper season. (5) He must be "*found* so doing," viz. when the Master comes. This implies constancy and perseverance. "It is expected of the steward that he be *found* faithful," so faithful that he cannot be surprised (see 1 Cor. iv. 2; 1 Tim. i. 12; iv. 16; vi. 14; Heb. iii. 2; Rev. ii. 25).

II. WHO, THEN, IS THE EVIL SERVANT? 1. *He that has little faith in the speedy coming of Christ.* (1) (Ver. 48.) This is one who is nominally a Christian, but really a hypocrite. The first manifestation of the hypocrite is the heart-reflection, "My Lord tarrieth." The thought is in the heart; it is the offspring of desire. As when Jesus said to John, "Behold, I come *quickly*," meaning *certainly*, so the hypocrite saying, "My Lord tarrieth," expresses secret disbelief that his Lord would come at all. (2) Christ knows what men say in their hearts. (3) The evil servant through his unbelief neglects to get ready. Note: Faith influences practice. (4) "But know this," etc. (ver. 43). This is a description of what a man would do rather than of what he should do. He would indeed watch at the hour if he knew it, but not till then. The teaching here is a discouragement of death-bed repentances. It is against all procrastination. Religion is not to be separated from the duties and enjoyments of common life. He leads a heavenly life who sanctifies his earthly deeds to heavenly ends. 2. *He that governs with oppression.* (1) "And shall begin to beat his fellow-servants." Here is the Ishmael in the family of Abraham. (2) Evil ministers strike their fellow-servants with the fist of office. They lord it over God's heritage. Fellow-service is forgotten. (3) Rich men tyrannize over their poorer brethren sometimes by shaking in their faces the golden fist. "Do not rich men oppress you?" Here also fellow-service is too often forgotten. (4) Could such things happen but for a disbelief in the speedy coming of the Lord? The dignity of the kingdom of Christ is service. Christ was among his disciples as one that served. 3. *He that leads an irregular life.* (1) He does not love the company of the children of God. Their spiritual fellowship is distasteful to him. (2) But he "eats and drinks with the drunken." Feasting together is the sign of fellowship. (3) The fellowship of wickedness tends to wickedness. He becomes "drunken." Perhaps not with wine. All wickedness is intoxication. (4) The evil minister "feeds himself without fear." So does his evil lay fellow-servant. (5) Could these things take place but for a disbelief in the speedy coming of the Lord? When the Israelites concluded that Moses, through his long absence in the mount, might never return, they set about making to themselves gods. (6) The coming of the Lord in his mercy is indeed delayed by the wickedness of his professed servants, but his coming to them in judgment is thereby hastened.

III. HOW WILL THE LORD DEAL WITH THESE SERVANTS? 1. *The faithful he will promote to honour.* (1) "Blessed is that servant." He is happy in the approbation of his Lord. The question, "Who is that wise and faithful servant?" may, perhaps, be taken as though Jesus had said, "I should very much like to know him, so rare, so valued, are such in my sight." (2) Not only is he blessed in his present sense of the

approval of Christ, but the happiness is reserved for him of a public approbation before an assembled universe: "Well done." (3) He is blessed in the promotion which depends upon that public approbation. Having been faithful in his earlier opportunities, he is further trusted. "Verily I say unto you, He will set him over all that he hath." The bliss of heaven is not the fancied bliss of inactivity. The bliss of heaven is still the bliss of service. 2. *The evil will be relegated to punishment.* (1) His death will be a degradation. It is separation from the communion of saints, and from all the gifts he had abused. (2) "I will cut him asunder." Some take this in the sense of severe scourging (see margin, Revised Version). It may be taken in the sense of discerning and exposing the thoughts of his heart. So the Word of God is compared to a sharp sword, which "pierces to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). Such exposure to a hypocrite is a terrible mortification. Note: Death literally cuts asunder the animal soul and the rational spirit. (3) "And appoint him his portion with the hypocrites." The hypocrite will be punished with his kind. The associations of perdition are monotonous. "If the devil ever laughs, it must be at hypocrites. They are the greatest dupes he has. They serve him better than others, and receive no wages; nay, what is still more extraordinary, they submit to greater mortifications to go to hell, than the sincerest Christian to go to heaven" (Colton). (4) "There shall be weeping." Not, however, the weeping of contrition. It is the weeping that is associated with "gnashing of teeth." It is the weeping of helpless rage and of hopeless despair.—J. A. M.

Ver. 3.—"*The end of the world.*" This term is a figure of speech. It represents something. It does not describe something. The actual ending of the world is an almost impossible conception. So far as we are able to trace Divine dealings, there are no "endings;" there are stages. But what we call an "ending" from one point of view is a "beginning" when seen from another point of view. What we ought to inquire is—Was this a familiar figure of speech in the time of our Lord? and if it was, what ideas were attached to it as familiarly used? The patriarchal age came to an end, but there was no abrupt scene which can be called an ending. The same remark may be made concerning the closing of the Mosaic age. And we need imagine no catastrophe as the close of the Christian age. The coming of Messiah was, in Jewish thought, connected with the "end of the world," and vague, wild, and extraordinary were the things associated with that "coming" (see Stapfer's 'Palestine in the Time of Christ,' ch. v.).

I. THE END OF THE WORLD IS THE END OF THE AGE. Distinctly present the truth that God ever works in stages, making each stage prepare the way for another and a higher. This may be shown by the revelations of the primeval ages made by geological researches; or by the history of separate nations; dynasties and royal houses represent distinct ages or dispensations. So we find stages within the history of Mosaism, the Jewish Church passing through several dispensations. Those who can read the philosophy of the Christian centuries can trace stages in them. One such stage was nearing completion in the time of Christ; and, with a very human tendency to exaggeration, men were imagining that an end of a particular polity for a small nation was to be the "end of the world."

II. THE END OF THE AGE IS ALWAYS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW AGE. If we did but fully grasp this idea, we should be delivered from many hindering mistakes. 1. Endings are always *local*. There never has been any ending that concerned the whole world. 2. Endings insensibly glide into the new scenes. Abrupt endings may belong to man's spheres, his dynasties, and his systems; but abruptness seldom, if ever, characterizes God's ending. His spring has an ending, but it is a gliding into summer. If we can think of an actual "end of the world," we must think of a gliding into the new and eternal age.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The Christian attitude in times of civil commotion.* There is always a tendency to exaggerate their importance. It is strange to find Christian people able to find some high prophetic allusion for every little war or social disturbance within the sphere of their knowledge. Every national trouble is manufactured into a sign of the "coming end." Precisely of this strange tendency our Lord so anxiously warned

his disciples in this discourse. "Do not run away into extravagant imaginations under the impulse of every bit of local civil commotion. There will be a good deal of that sort of thing, but the 'end is not yet.' The world is not going to fall to ruin, even if Jerusalem should become a desolation." Our Lord bade the disciples take warning from passing events, so that they might secure their personal safety; but he intimated that they would be wise to leave the world's future altogether in God's hands, and not attempt to be wise above what was written.

I. CHRISTIANS SHOULD LET PASSING EVENTS HELP TO GUIDE THEIR CONDUCT. Our Lord commended observing the "signs of the times." Illustrate by reference to the anticipated siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Our Lord pointed out certain events which the disciples should take as distinct warnings. They should respond to them by instant flight; and, as a matter of fact, the Christians of Jerusalem did note those signs, and did effect their escape to Pella. For Christians civil commotion is warning and education. It decides conduct, and it develops and tests character. Through the Christian ages this has been fully illustrated. There have been times of faction fight, of civil war, of invasion and national ruin. Christ prepares his disciples for such times, which give them the chance of showing noble examples and exerting holy influences.

II. CHRISTIANS SHOULD AVOID TRYING TO FIT PASSING EVENTS INTO GOD'S SECRET PLANS. 1. Because Christians never can know God's secret plans. 2. Because Christians could never fit their little pieces into the plan, even if they knew it. It is extraordinary that there has always been a strong disposition to expect a speedy termination of the whole system under which we live. It may be one of the forms of human conceit. We cannot imagine that things can last much longer *after we are gone*. J. A. Alexander works out these two points. 1. So far as we have any means of judging, the "end is not yet." 2. So far as it remains a matter of doubt, it is better to assume that "the end is not yet," than to assume the contrary.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The mission of religious persecution.* Religious persecution is an evil, and a serious evil, but it cannot be called an unmitigated evil. Persecutors come under Divine judgments; but persecutors, in the Divine overruling, are made to do the Lord's work. The Lord Jesus was persecuted, and we fully sympathize with him in those persecutions. And yet we only know him through them. His perfect obedience as a Son only comes to view on the background of the sufferings he endured. What is true of the Master is true of his Church. It has ever been sanctified through the persecutions it has been called to endure.

I. ITS MISSION IN RELATION TO THE TRUTH OF THE CHURCH. Illustrate two points. 1. The conflicts of the Church have helped to formulate the doctrine of the Church. Persecutions have dealt with opinion, and have helped to make right opinion. It may even be shown that the influence on truth has not been altogether good, because the strain of persecution has tended to exaggerate particular opinions, and put them out of the Christian harmony. 2. The martyrdoms of persecuting times have vivified the leading truths of the Church. The things men have died for are all-important. They must be worth dying for; they are primary truths of the "faith."

II. ITS MISSION IN RELATION TO THE SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH. 1. The ages of persecution have been *spiritual* ages. Then the critical spirit is wanting. Men easily believe. The underlying meaning of God's Word is more important than its literary form. Men find they need "the sincere milk of the Word." 2. The ages of persecution have been ages of *brotherhood*. The common peril ensures common service. There is mutual shielding, mutual sympathy, and the records tell of heroic acts of self-sacrifice done at such times. The story of such ages acts upon us to-day as an inspiration to brotherhood.

III. ITS MISSION IN RELATION TO THE SPREAD OF THE CHURCH. It has been, over and over again, as it was in the first Christian age. The disciples were "scattered abroad" in consequence of the persecution that arose over the preaching of Stephen, and they "went everywhere, preaching the Word." 1. At such times there is a secret spreading of the Church. Hidden, it works like leaven. Illustrate by history of the Church in Madagascar and Uganda. 2. At such times there is the entering of new spheres, and possession of new lands in the name of Christ (see story of the Pilgrim Fathers).—R. T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The difficulty of keeping on.* "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." These verses are connected with Christ's prophecy of the history of his Church. There may be difficulty in fixing the precise references of his language, but he describes general features which are seen in every passing age. There is always a disposition to exaggerate or over-estimate the evils of the age in which *we* happen to live, because they are specially prominent to us. But we may certainly say this much—we live in an age when outside wickedness and semi-wickedness are telling very directly and very injuriously on the Christian spirit. It cannot be said that there is general failing from the Christian profession; but there is a strange, sad "chilling of the Christian love," a "leaving of the first love." In some ages the separation of the Church from the world is more marked, and so the influence of the world on the Church is less felt. Illustrate by Slapton Sands in Devonshire. A fresh-water lake well stocked with fish is divided from the sea only by a road and a narrow belt of sand. Usually the two are well kept apart. But when wind and tide unite, the sea rises, floods the sand and the road, and pours the defiling and destructive salt waters into the sweet lake.

I. EFFECT OF GROWING INIQUITY ON THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT. "Love waxes cold." The true idea of Christian life is the sanctifying and ennobling power of a personal love to Christ. Iniquity, self-willedness, and self-willed ways chill this love (1) by presenting to us other and rival claims to our love (preacher must be left to select illustrations of such claims); (2) by undervaluing and putting slights on Christ. Show how human friendships are spoiled when our friends are satirized and scorned. Show how jealously, in these criticizing days, we need to watch over our high, adoring, admiring thoughts of Christ.

II. THE MASTERY OF SURROUNDING INIQUITY IS THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS. "He that shall endure to the end." It will cost persistent and persevering effort if we are to keep loving Christ supremely. True endurance is not possible unless we have a strong grip of Christ. We must have and cherish warm feeling toward Christ. We must keep on (1) trusting, (2) obeying, (3) following, (4) honouring, (5) working for Christ. And if ever faint, it must be "faint, yet pursuing." —R. T.

Ver. 14.—*The gospel-witness.* The expression, "in all the world," can only mean the "world" as men then thought of it. Our Lord's statement is verified in the fact that there was "hardly a province of the vast Roman empire in which the gospel had not been preached before the destruction of Jerusalem." The "world" is an altogether larger idea to us; but the gospel has to be preached to "all the world" as we apprehend it. The Apostle Paul uses very broad terms. He speaks of the gospel as having gone out into all the earth (Rom. x. 18); as being present in all the world; and as having been preached in the hearing of every creature which is under heaven (Col. i. 6, 23). A difficulty is suggested. These representations do not seem to match the facts in the apostolic age or in any other age. The gospel has not actually reached every part of the earth yet; and it has been effective unto the salvation of but a minority of the human race. Some have thought they could find explanation in the limitation "for a witness;" as if the conversion of "all nations" were not the design of the gospel-preaching. This idea may, however, be presented in an exaggerated form. We may see the reasonable senses in which the gospel is a witness to all nations.

I. THE GOSPEL-WITNESS IS A WITNESS FOR GOD. The right knowledge of God comes, always has come, always must come, by revelation. A creature, limited by the senses and sense-relations, cannot reach the apprehension of unseen things without help. Such a creature, having the help of revelation, is yet constantly disposed to materialize its apprehension: this is seen in the disposition to make visible symbols of the unseen God. This tendency takes the coarser forms of idolatry, and the more refined forms of philosophy. The gospel, then, is a witness, because it is a fresh and corrective declaration of what God is, what God thinks, and what God requires.

II. THE GOSPEL-WITNESS IS A WITNESS AGAINST IDOLATRY. This may be illustrated by St. Paul's work at Lystra and at Athens. Take such points as these. 1. Preach the gospel, and men see that the true God asks for *love*. So it witnesses against all religions of *fear*. 2. Preach the gospel, and men see that the true God

can only be served by *righteousness*. So it witnesses against all immoralities of rites and ceremonies.

III. THE GOSPEL-WITNESS IS A WITNESS CONCERNING MEN. Preach it, and the "thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." It will prove everywhere a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." What is strange is that, wherever the gospel is preached, men are discovered to themselves, and know that they are *sinners*. That is the beginning of the gospel-mission.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*The mischiefs wrought by antichrists.* "For there shall arise false Christs," *i.e.* false Messiahs. In the period between our Lord's ascension and the destruction of Jerusalem many so-called prophets arose who claimed Divine authority. It is not clear that they claimed to be the Messiah; but after the fall of Jerusalem one appeared who called himself Barchochebas, the "Son of a star," and claimed to be Messiah, and deceived many. If we can get a proper meaning to the term "antichrist," we shall see that such have appeared in every age, and repeated in every age the same mischief-making. An "antichrist" is any man or any woman who, in any sphere, undoes or resists the work of Christ, or compels men to think unworthy thoughts of Christ. Fitting introductory matter would be an account of the social and religious mischiefs wrought by the antichrists of the first century, especially of Barchochebas.

I. THE ANTICHRIST OPPOSES THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST. That authority is not only absolute and supreme in Christ's Church, it is also in constant, immediate, and direct administration; to it the Church can always appeal. Antichrist (1) withdraws us from the Divine authority; (2) criticizes the Divine authority; (3) substitutes something for the Divine authority. Antichrist comes between the soul and Christ.

II. THE ANTICHRIST OPPOSES THE PURITY OF CHRIST. The sinless Christ has it as his supreme aim to make sinless disciples, and present his Church perfect even as he is perfect. Purity, therefore, is the great aim of Christ's Church; and to it purity is a high ideal. Any one whose influence tends to sully the Church's purity, or to lower the Church's standard, is an antichrist. There are those who teach a liberty which is licentiousness, and a self-indulgence which is disloyalty. "Ye are called unto holiness:" this will test all antichrists.

III. THE ANTICHRIST OPPOSES THE UNITY OF CHRIST. Sectarianism is the exaltation of *opinion* over *truth*. The Church could be one if it were only based on loyalty, love, and obedience to the Lord Jesus. The Church is broken up into sections, ever-multiplying sections, by the particular opinions of men, who presume to declare Divine authority for their opinions. Christ is one with the Father by his loyalty to him; and that is the way in which we must be one in Christ.

IV. THE ANTICHRIST OPPOSES THE CHARITY OF CHRIST. This may be opened in two ways. 1. There is the selfishness which shuts men up to what is called the "enjoyment" of religion, heedless of the ministry the world needs. 2. There is the bitterness of the heresy-cry against those who do not happen to think exactly as we do.—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*Sky-signs.* The figurative character of this verse is apparent. It does not describe actual events. It belongs to astrological rather than to astronomical associations. There is no literal interpretation of these words possible. Isaiah uses similar symbols in prophesying the Divine judgments on Babylon (Isa. xiii. 10), and we may reasonably think that such a scriptural passage suggested our Lord's statement. "Even the common speech of men describes a time of tribulation as one in which 'the skies are dark,' and the 'sun of a nation's glory sets in gloom.'" The verse is plainly poetical and pictorial, but what it pictures is the series of terrible civil calamities and commotions and distresses which attended the Roman siege of Jerusalem. It is not necessary to suppose any allusion to a future breaking-up of the framework of the earth in the last times. Of *that* no man really knows; and no precise description has been or could be given.

I. SKY-SIGNS THAT TEACH GOD'S WORKING IN THE WORLD. Men might be disposed, even those disciples might be disposed, to look upon the events of the siege of Jerusalem as just ordinary national incidents. Jesus therefore used figures in relation to them which lifted them to a higher plane, and made the disciples think about them,

discern their relation to the whole course of God's dealing with his ancient people, and trace his direct working in them. All the events connected with the history of the Jewish nation are designedly revelational; and it is their revelational value which disciples must be helped to discern. But when once we see that this is true for the Jewish nation, we begin to see that it is true for all nations. Men make much now of the "philosophy of history." They never can read history aright until they begin to study the "religion of history." Wars, migrations, changing dynasties, are not understood till they are seen to be "sky-signs."

II. SKY-SIGNS THAT TEACH GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE FOR THE WORLD. Christ's way of referring to the overthrow of organized Judaism by the destruction of the sacred city fitted that historical fact into the Divine redemptive plan. It was the removing of the scaffolding, that the complete building might come into view. It was the withdrawal of dependence on material forms, in order that the spiritual reality might fully occupy men's minds and hearts.—R. T.

Ver. 34.—*A key to our Lord's meaning.* "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." The position in which these words stand is significant. Many writers see references to the commonly called "end of the world" in vers. 29—31 because the imagery is so large as to seem unsuitable for a mere national desolation. Our Lord meets that difficulty, and distinctly declares that the figures picture events which belong to *that generation.* What needs to be clearly seen is, that this discourse of our Lord's is not a general discourse on the "last things," but a precise anticipation of the experiences through which his disciples were about to pass, and a gracious preparation for them. He was leaving those disciples to themselves. He had indications to the very last of their unfitness to be left. They were still so hampered by their notions of a material kingdom. They were Jews, full of Jewish ideas. It would be a distress to them that the Jewish system was to be put away, as having fulfilled its mission. It might even be overwhelming to them that the very city and temple were destroyed. Our Lord would forewarn them. Their knowledge of the fact would help them to think aright, and to act aright, when the time came. This is the key to our Lord's meaning.

I. THE DISCIPLES HELPED TO THINK ARIGHT. We know how great a strain on them was the opening of the gospel to the Gentiles. St. Peter had to explain his conduct in baptizing Cornelius. St. Paul had to give account of his teachings of the Gentiles. And we can understand how much greater must have been the strain, when not only were Gentile Churches formed, but the Jewish Church was broken up. Suppose that our Lord had never spoken of this removing of organized Judaism. We can quite see that the Jewish Christians would have been altogether alarmed and overwhelmed. They could think aright, and realize the permanency of the Church as a spiritual institution, independent of, if related to, any material forms.

II. THE DISCIPLES HELPED TO ACT ARIGHT. Explain that, from a Jewish point of view, the centre for the new Christian mission must be Jerusalem. Those disciples would be likely to cling to Jerusalem in a way that would involve their personal safety. Our Lord therefore forewarned them. When certain events happened, they must finally and quickly forsake the sacred city. That there might be no self-delusions, no procrastinations, he made his meaning plain by the words of the text.—R. T.

Ver. 40.—*The taken and the left.* This suggests suitable instruction for a time when sudden death visits a family or a Church. At such times there is gracious work to be done, in sympathizing with the smitten and bereaved, and in teaching solemn lessons.

I. Illustrate the text in cases of PRESERVATION FROM DANGER. Help toward the nourishing of devout gratitude. Take cases of the few spared from a shipwreck, or recovered from a mine accident. Or case of Luther's friend Alexis, who was smitten by lightning at his side. All of us can think of friends of our school-time or our youth who have been called away. Wherefore are we spared? What is it that God has for us to do? Are we doing it?

II. Illustrate the text in cases of RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE Help toward nourishing religious anxiety. Take times of mission and revival; the saved and unsaved work together, sit together.

III. Illustrate the text in cases of FAMILY BEREAVEMENTS; so bring to view and impress spiritual consolations. Family separations always causing grief and distress. Different scenes at grave-sides beheld by ministers. Extreme distress may be shown only in noble self-restraints; see Abraham's sorrow over Sarah. What must it be to sever two souls that have grown together in loving, mutual dependence and service through long, long years? It is like tearing the climbing plant from the stem round which it has clung so hard that the two seemed to share a common life. There are three great sources of consolation that may be urged. 1. The "taken" are taken from toil and suffering to rest and peace. All life must be suffering toil; all heaven must be restful toil. Illustrate by the friendship of Christian and Faithful in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Faithful was taken away to rest by the fire-chariot at Vanity Fair. 2. Those "left" are left with abundant provisions of Divine grace. The Hebrew youths in the blazing furnace were not left alone. There are (1) promises to cheer the sadness of the way; (2) there is a lamp to lighten the darkness of the way; and (3) there is a Friend to guide amid the dangers of the way. 3. The "taken" and the "left" will soon be reunited where there is no separation. "A little while;" "We shall know even as we are known;" "They go no more out for ever."—R. T.

Ver. 44.—*Abiding readiness.* "Therefore be ye also ready." The one point which our Lord seeks to impress on his disciples is the uncertainty of the time of the great testing-day, and of all testing-days. The fact that a reckoning-day for the Lord's servants must come has to be fully accepted. If there is any sense in which we are now in trust during our Lord's absence, it is certain that his absence can only be temporary. We can never cease to be servants in charge. We can never get a personal right in the things of which we are set in charge. Purposely our Lord withholds from his disciples of every age the date of his return. It is truest kindness to do so. It is moral training to do so. His disciples always go wrong when they try to fix dates. Christ distinctly refuses to allow any data on which such fixtures can be made. Prophets of the "second coming," and of the "end of the world," are wise above what is written, and let their imaginations run riot over Bible figures of speech.

I. THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF FEELING THAT THE MASTER MAY COME AT ANY TIME. 1. It keeps the thought of the Master close, near to us at all times. So it takes us out of ourselves. 2. It keeps us thinking what the Master would like to see when he comes. So it makes us ever busy about our work. 3. It sets us upon thinking what pleasant surprises we can give our Master when he comes. So it lifts our work high above the drudgery of service. 4. It keeps in our hearts the ever-cheering confidence of the Master's smile, if he sees all has been right and is right in his home. Add that all this filling of our souls with the thought of our Master provides the healthiest deliverance from all self-centred sentimentalism. Illustrate from our Lord's picture of the good servant, who was found "watching," in the sense of being busy about his work.

II. THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF FEELING THAT THE MASTER IS DELAYING HIS COMING. This represents the most striking contrast. The thought of the Master is lifted away, and self rises to fill the vacant space. No need to hurry preparations; it will be soon enough when he sends notice. Meanwhile there can be self-enjoyment. There is no fear of being taken at unawares. See the picture of the unworthy servant. Whether men think they can, or think they cannot, fix the time of Christ's coming, the *fact* for them all will be that he will come to them at unawares, and find them out. —R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

Vers. 1—13.—*Parable of the ten virgins.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.) This parable, as a continuation of the teaching of the last chapter, sets forth the necessity of having and retaining grace unto the end, in order to be able to welcome the advent of Christ. The duty of watchfulness and preparation for the great day is, of course, implied and set forth (ver. 13); but the point is that the oil of God's grace alone

enables the soul to meet the bridegroom joyfully, without dismay. The usual marriage customs of the Jews are well known. On the appointed day, the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, proceeded to the bride's house, and thence escorted her, with her attendant maidens and friends, to his own or his parents' home. In the parable, however, the proceedings are somewhat different. Here the bridegroom is not in the town, but somewhere at a distance, so that, though the day is settled, the exact hour of his arrival is uncertain. He will come in the course of the night, and the virgins who are to meet him have assembled in the house where the wedding is to take place. They wait for the summons to go forth and meet the bridegroom and conduct him to the bridal-place; and when the signal is given that he is approaching, they set forth on the road, each bearing her lamp (Edersheim).

Ver. 1.—**Then.** The time refers to the hour of the Lord's advent (ch. xxiv. 50, 51), and the parousia of the Son of man (ch. xxiv. 36, etc.). **Shall the kingdom of heaven be likened.** At the time named something analogous to the coming story shall happen in the Church, in the gospel dispensation. **Ten virgins.** Ten is the number of perfection; such a number of persons was required to form a synagogue, and to be present at any office, ceremony, or formal benediction. Talmudic authorities affirm that the lamps used in bridal processions were usually ten. The "virgins" here are the friends of the bride, who are arranged to sally forth to meet the bridegroom as soon as his approach is signalled. "The Church, in her aggregate and ideal unity, is the bride; the members of the Church, as individually called, are guests; in their separation from the world, and expectation of the Lord's coming, they are his virgins" (Lange). The bride herself is not named in the parable, as she is not needed for illustration, and the virgins occupy her place. These virgins represent believers divided into two sections; evidently they are all supposed to hold the true faith, and to be pure and undefiled followers of the Lord (2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xiv. 4), to be waiting for his coming, and to love his appearing; but some fail for lack of grace or of perseverance, as is shown further on. **Their lamps** (*τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν*, better *ἑαυτῶν*, *their own lamps*). They all made separate and personal, independent preparation for the meeting. These lamps (for they were not torches) were, as Dr. Edersheim notes, hollow cups or saucers, with a round receptacle for the wick, which was fed with pitch or oil. They were on these occasions fastened to a long wooden pole, and borne aloft in the procession. **Went forth.** This does not refer to the final going forth to meet the bridegroom on the road (ver. 6), as it is absurd to suppose that they all fell asleep by the wayside, with their lamps in their hands (ver. 5), and, as a fact, only five went out at last; but it doubtless intimates that they left their own homes to unite in duly celebrating the wedding. **To meet the bridegroom.** An evident interpolation adds, "and the bride," which the authorized Vulgate unhappily confirms, reading, *exierunt obviam sponso et sponsæ*. In this case the scene refers to the bridegroom's return in company with his bride. But this is a misconception, as no mention is made of the bride anywhere in the genuine text. The bridegroom comes to fetch home the bride; and these maidens, her friends, assembled in her house to be ready to escort him thither (cf. 1 Macc. ix. 37). The wedding seems to take place at the bride's house, as Judg. xiv. 10.

Ver. 2.—**Five of them were wise** (*φρόνιμοι*, ch. xxiv. 45), **and five were foolish.** The best uncials (ℵ, B, C, D, L) invert the clauses, in agreement with the order in vers. 3, 4. So the Vulgate. In this case the idea would be that the foolish were a more prominent and noticeable class than the others. All the virgins were outwardly the same, were provided with the same lamps, prepared to perform the same office; the difference in their characters is proved by the result. Their folly is seen in the fact that at the time of action they were unable to do the part which a little care and forethought would have enabled them to perform successfully.

Ver. 3.—**They that were foolish** (*αἵτινες μωραί*) . . . **took no oil with them.** It has been doubted whether they brought no oil of their own at all, trusting to get their lamps filled by others, or whether they neglected to bring an additional supply to replenish them when exhausted. The latter seems most likely to be the sense intended; as the spiritual aspect of the parable places both classes in exactly the same position at starting, and we know from other sources that, the oil-reservoirs being very small, it was the custom to carry another vessel from which to refill them. Some good manuscripts commence the verse with "for," thus making the verse justify the epithets applied to the virgins.

Ver. 4.—**In their vessels.** These were the flasks or vases carried by the maidens to replenish the oil in the lamps as occasion

demanded. The contrast between the two classes seems to lie in the foresight of the one and the negligent carelessness of the other. It has been common from early times to find in the lamps the symbol of faith, in the oil the good works that proceed therefrom. The wise virgins exercise their faith in charity and good works; the foolish profess, indeed, the faith of Christ, but carry it not out to the production of the good works in which God ordained that they should walk (Eph. ii. 10). But this exposition, time-honoured though it is, surely does not meet the requirements of the parable. What one wants is an interpretation which shall show how it is that the want of oil and its sudden failure debar one from meeting the bridegroom. If the oil be good works, and the believer has gone on doing these until the Lord's advent is signalled, why should he fail at the last? How comes it that in a moment he leaves off doing his duty, and making his calling and election sure? These are questions which the patristic and mediæval explanation leaves unsolved. I doubt not that the right solution is to be found in regarding the oil as symbolical of the Holy Spirit, or the graces of God. This is a truly scriptural notion, as declared by the use of this substance in holy rites. Accepting this view, we should say that the ten virgins had so far alike taken and used the grace of God, but that they differed in this—that, while the wise maintained the supply of grace by constant recourse to the means thereof, the foolish were satisfied with their spiritual state once for all, and took no pains to keep their spiritual life healthful and active by the renewal of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. They retained the outward show and form of faith, but neglected the true inward life of faith; they had the appearance without the reality.

Ver. 5.—**While the bridegroom tarried** (ch. xxiv. 48). We may suppose that all had lighted their lamps at first, in expectation of being immediately called to meet the bridegroom. But he came not. The advent of Christ was not to be as speedy as the disciples imagined. No one could divine when it would take place. As St. Augustine says, "Latet ultimus dies, ut observetur omnis dies." See here a figure of each Christian's probation. **They all slumbered** (*ἐνύσταξαν*) **and slept** (*ἐκάθευδον*). The first verb implies the nodding and napping of persons sitting up at night; the second means "they began to sleep," actually. All, wise and foolish, did this; so in itself it was not sinful, it was only natural. To such drowsiness the best of Christians are liable. The bow cannot be kept always strung; "Neque semper arcum tendit Apollo." Having made all preparations, the virgins ceased for a while to think of the bridegroom's coming. The Fathers take this sleep to be an image of death, the awaking to be the resurrection, when the difference between the two classes is known and displayed. But this would imply that all the faithful will be dead when the Lord comes, which is contrary to 1 Thess. iv. 17. Nor, on the other hand, is it conceivable that they whose lamps are kept burning till the day of death will be unprovided when the Lord comes.

Ver. 6.—**At midnight.** When sleep is deepest and awaking most unwelcome. The Lord will come "as a thief in the night" (ch. xxiv. 42—44; 1 Thess. v. 2). **There was a cry made** (*γέγονεν, hath been made*). The cry comes either from the watchers or from the advancing company. We are told by the apostle (1 Thess. iv. 16) that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." The suddenness of the event is indicated by the tense of the verb—"there hath been," "there is," a cry. **The bridegroom cometh!** The best manuscripts omit the verb, which omission makes the expression more graphic. The bridegroom is Christ; he comes now to judge, to punish and reward; and Christians have to meet him, and show how their duties have been performed, and how their personal preparation has been made.

Ver. 7.—**Trimmed their lamps.** The trimming consisted in removing the charred portion of the wick, and raising the wick itself by means of a pointed wire which was fastened by a chain to each lamp. These operations would be followed by the replenishment of the vase with oil from the vessel carried for that purpose. In a spiritual sense the dormant grace has to be revived at the awful summons. It had, indeed, come upon all unexpectedly at the moment; but while one party was ready to meet the emergency, the other was wholly unprepared. The foolish, indeed, got their wicks ready to light, when they suddenly discovered that they had no oil in their lamps, and remembered that they had brought no further supply with them.

Ver. 8.—**The foolish said unto the wise.** They apply to their prudent companions for aid at this crisis. They recognize now the superior wisdom of the others, and would fain have their assistance to hide their own deficiencies. **Are gone out** (*σβέννυνται, are going out*). The lamps, fresh trimmed, had burned for a few moments, and then, having no oil, soon waned and died out. Spiritually speaking, the idea of these people seems to have been that the merits of others could supply their lack, or that there was a general

store of grace to which they could have recourse, and which would serve instead of individual personal preparation. See here a terrible warning against delay in the matter of the soul, or against trusting to a death-bed repentance.

Ver. 9.—Not so; **lest there be not enough** (*μήποτε οὐ μὴ ἀρκέσῃ, haply it will not suffice*). Edersheim renders, "Not at all—it will never suffice for us and you," in order to give the force of the double negation. In Aristotle, *μήποτε* is often equivalent to "perhaps," *e.g.* 'Eth. Nic.,' x. 1. 3. "Even so they failed," says St. Chrysostom, "and neither the humanity of those of whom they begged, nor the easiness of their request, nor their necessity and want, made them obtain their petition. And what do we learn from hence? That no man can protect us there if we are betrayed by our works; not because he will not, but because he cannot. For these, too, take refuge in the impossibility. This the blessed Abraham also indicated, saying, 'Between us and you there is a great gulf,' so that not even when willing is it permitted them to pass it." **But** (probably spurious) **go ye rather to them that sell.** The answer is not harsh, and the advice is not ironical or unkind. The wise cannot of themselves supply the lack. They have no superabundant store of grace to communicate to others; at best even they are unprofitable servants; the righteous shall scarcely be saved; so they direct their companions to the only source where effectual grace may be obtained. They that sell are the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries, who dispense the means of grace. These are said to be bought, as the treasure hid in the field or the pearl of great price is bought (ch. xiii. 44—46). Divine grace can always be procured by those who will pay the price thereof; and the price is faith and prayer and earnestness,—nothing more, nothing less (Isa. lv. 1; Rev. iii. 18). But the time is short; delay is fatal; hence the counsel so urgently given, "Go ye," etc. **Buy for yourselves.** This is important. Every one must bear his own burden. The grace must be their own; what is required of those who would meet the Bridegroom without shame and fear is personal preparation, personal faith and holiness. We shall be judged individually; our Christian virtues must be entirely our own, wrought in us by the grace of God, with which we have humbly and thankfully co-operated. It is curious that some ancient and modern commentators see in this part of the parable only an ornamental detail without special signification.

Ver. 10.—**While they went to buy.** They followed the advice given them. Whether they were successful or not is left untold; the issue would have been the same in either case; their return would have been too late. The opportunity they had had was not properly used; when preparation was comparatively easy they had neglected to make it; they had been once converted, so to speak, and rested in that fact, and thought it sufficient for all time, omitting to seek for daily supplies of grace, and now they find themselves miserably deceived. There is a certain wilful forgetfulness and negligence which can never be remedied on this side the grave. **They that were ready.** The five wise virgins who had made provision for the meeting, had renewed the grace of God in their hearts, and kept it alive by diligence and perseverance, according to the apostle's counsel (2 Pet. i. 4—8). **Went in with him to the marriage** (*τοὺς γάμους, the marriage feast*). They not only duly met the bridegroom on his way, but accompanied him into the joyful scene, the bridal feast, the type of all spiritual happiness (Rev. xix. 9). "This world," says 'Pirke Aboth,' "is like the vestibule, the world to come is like the dining-chamber: prepare thyself in the vestibule, that thou mayest be able to enter into the dining-chamber." Well says the Son of Sirach, "Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vow in due time, and defer not until death to be justified" (Ecclus. xviii. 22). **The door was shut** (Luke xiii. 25). It is customary in the East, at great entertainments, to close the doors when all the guests are assembled. So at our universities, during the dinner hour, the gates of the colleges are always shut. Scott, in 'Old Mortality' (ch. viii. note), remarks that this custom was rigorously observed in Scotland. When the door is shut in the parable, there is no more entrance for any one. Trench quotes St. Augustine's saying, "Non inimicus intrat, nec amicus exit." Christ is the door by which our prayers reach God; through him alone they prevail; when this is closed the access to the heavenly throne is barred.

Ver. 11.—**Lord, Lord, open to us.** They apply to the bridegroom himself as now taking the direction of affairs. So when Christ the spiritual Bridegroom comes, he rules over all. Here, as elsewhere in the parable, the great spiritual reality shines through the earthly delineation. Whether the five foolish ones obtained oil or not at this late hour matters nothing; they were too late to do that which they had to do, too late to join in the bridal procession, and thus procure admission to the festival. Their piteous cry is not answered as they hoped. It is too late to ask for mercy when it is the time of vengeance. In this present state of grace we have the comforting injunction, "Knock, and it shall be opened

unto you;" in the day of retribution the door is shut, and no knocking will unclose its barred portal. True it is that "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father."

Ver. 12.—**I know you not.** They had not been in the bridal company, nor joined in the festive procession, so the bridegroom could only answer from within that he had no knowledge of them. What is meant spiritually by this rejection is doubtful. This is not a solitary instance of the use of the expression. In the sermon on the mount Christ declared that his sentence on those that professed, but practised not, would be, "I never knew you: depart from me!" (ch. vii. 23). He is said to know those whom he approves and acknowledges to be his (see John x. 14). God says of Abraham, "I know him" (Gen. xviii. 19) and of Moses, "I know thee by name" (Exod. xxxiii. 12). To be known of God is a higher blessing than to know God (Gal. iv. 9). Many think that the words of our text imply utter reprobation. So Nösgen; and Chrysostom writes, "When he hath said this, nothing else but hell is left, and that intolerable punishment; or rather, this word is more grievous even than hell. This word he speaks also to them that work iniquity." But we must observe that in the present case we have not the terrible addition, "Depart from me!" The sentence of exclusion from Christ's presence is not equivalent to that in ver. 41, which dooms souls to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. These five virgins had received the grace of God, and used it well for a time, and only failed at the last for lack of care and watchfulness. They had still some love for the Lord, still desired to serve him; it is not conceivable that they should suffer the same punishment as the utterly godless and profane, whose wickedness was perfect and Satanic. Doubtless they were punished; but as there are degrees of happiness in heaven, so there may be gradation of pains and penalties for those debarred from its blessings (see 1 Cor. iii. 15). But it is not improbable that the exclusion in the first place refers to the deprivation of participation in Messiah's future kingdom, whatever that may be, according to the vision in Rev. xx., and that the proceedings at the final judgment are not here intended.

Ver. 13.—**Watch therefore.** This is the lesson which the Lord draws from the parable, as elsewhere he gives the same warning, *e.g.* Luke xii. 35, repeated by the apostle (1 Thess. v. 2, 6). **Ye know neither the day nor the hour [wherein the Son of man cometh].** The words in brackets are omitted by the earlier uncials, the Vulgate, Syriac, etc., and are to be regarded as an exegetical interpolation (comp. ch. xxiv. 42). Tertullian well says, "Ut pendula expectatione solicitudo fidei probetur, semper diem observans, dum semper ignorat, quotidie timens quod quotidie sperat" ('De Anima,' 33). It remains to observe that, mystically, Christ is the Bridegroom, who celebrates his nuptials with his bride the Church, and comes to conduct her to heaven; those who are ready will accompany him and enter into the joy of their Lord; those who have not made their calling sure will be shut out.

Vers. 14—30.—*Parable of the talents.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.) Following on the lesson of watchfulness and inward personal preparation just given, this parable enforces the necessity of external work and man's accountability to God for the due use of the special endowments which he has received. The former was concerned chiefly with the contemplative life, the waiting virgins; this chiefly with the active, the working servant; though, in fact, both states combine more or less in the good Christian, and the perfect disciple will unite in himself the characteristics of John and Peter, Mary and Martha. St. Luke (xix. 11—27) has recorded a somewhat analogous parable spoken by Christ on leaving the house of Zacchæus, known as the parable of the pounds; and some critics have deemed that the two accounts relate to the same saying altered in some details, which are to be accounted for on the hypothesis that St. Luke has combined with our parable another on the rebellious citizens. That there are great resemblances between the two cannot be disputed, but the discrepancies are too marked to allow us to assume the unity of the two utterances. Christ often repeats himself, using the same figure, or illustration, or expression to enforce different truths or different phases of the same truth, as here he may have desired more emphatically to impress on the disciples their special responsibilities. The variations in the two parables are briefly these: The scene and occasion are different; this was spoken to the disciples, that to the multitude; in one the lord is a noble who was to receive a kingdom, in the other he is simply a landowner; here his absence is a matter of local space, there it is a matter of time; the servants are

ten in the one case, and three in the other; in one we have pounds spoken of, in the other talents; in St. Luke each servant has the same sum delivered to him, in St. Matthew the amount is divided into talents, five, two, and one; in the "pounds" the servants show differing faithfulness with the same gifts, in the "talents" two of them display the same faithfulness with differing gifts; here the idle servant hides his money in a napkin, there he buries it in the earth; the conclusions also of the parables vary. Their object is not identical: the parable in our text illustrates the truth that we shall be judged according to that which we have received; the parable in St. Luke shows, to use Trench's words, that "as men differ in fidelity, in zeal, in labour, so will they differ in the amount of their spiritual gain." The latter treats of the use of gifts common to all, whether bodily, mental, or spiritual, such as one faith, one baptism, reason, conscience, sacraments, the Word of God; the former is concerned with the exercise of endowments which have been bestowed according to the recipient's capacity and his ability to make use of them,—the question being, how he has employed his powers, opportunities, and circumstances, the particular advantages, examples, and means of grace given to him.

Ver. 14.—**For** the kingdom of heaven **is as a man.** The opening sentence in the original is anacoluthic, and our translators have supplied what they supposed to be wanting. The Greek has only, *For just as a man*, etc.; Vulgate, *sicut enim homo.* The other member of the comparison is not expressed. The Revised Version gives, "It is as when a man." They who receive the possible interpolation at the end of ver. 13 would simply render, "For he (the Son of man) is as a man." The Authorized Version plainly affords the intended meaning in the words of the usual preface to such parables (ver. 1; ch. xiii. 24, 31, etc.). The conjunction "for" carries us back to the Lord's solemn injunction, introducing a new illustration of the necessity of watchfulness. **Travelling into a far country** (*ἀποδημῶν, leaving home*). Here our Lord, being about to withdraw his bodily presence from the earth and to ascend into heaven, represents himself as a man going into another country, and first putting his affairs in order and issuing instructions to his servants (comp. ch. xxi. 33). **Who called his own** (*τοὺς ἰδίους*) **servants.** The sentence literally is, *As a man . . . called his own bond-servants.* Those who specially belonged to him—a figure of all Christians, members of Christ, doing him service as their Master. **Delivered unto them his goods** (*τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ, his possessions*). This was not an absolute gift, as we see from subsequent proceedings, and from the well-known relation of master and slave. The latter, generally speaking, could possess no property, but he was often employed to administer his master's property for his lord's advantage, or was set up in business on capital advanced by his owner, paying him all or a certain share of the profits. The money still was not the slave's, and legally all that a slave acquired by whatsoever means belonged to his master, though custom had sanctioned a more equitable distribution. The "goods" delivered unto the lord's servants represent the special privileges accorded to them—differences of character, opportunities, education, etc., which they do not share in common with all men. This is one point, as above remarked, in which this parable varies from that of the "pounds." In both cases the gifts are figured by money—a medium current and intelligible everywhere on earth.

Ver. 15.—**Unto one he gave five talents.** The talent of silver (taking silver as worth a little over 5*s.* an ounce) was nearly equivalent to £400 of our money. It is from the use of the word "talents" in this parable that we moderns have derived its common meaning of natural gifts and endowments. The three principal slaves receive a certain amount of property to use for their master's profit. **To every man.** To all is given some grace or faculty which they have to employ to the glory of God. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. iv. 7). No one can justly say he is neglected in this distribution. Whatever natural powers, etc., we possess, and the opportunities of exercising and improving them, are the gift of God, and are delivered to us to be put out to interest. **According to his several ability** (*κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν*). The master apportioned his gifts in accordance with his knowledge of the slaves' capacity for business, and the probability of their rightly employing much or little capital. So God distributes his endowments, not to all alike, but in such proportions as men are able to bear and to profit by. The infinite variety in men's dispositions, intellects, will, opportunities, position, and so on, are all taken into account, and modify and condition their responsibility. **Straightway took his journey** (*ἀπεδήμησεν εὐθέως*). Immediately after the distribution he departed, leaving each slave, uncontrolled and undirected, to use the property assigned

to him. So God gives us free-will at the same time that he sets before us opportunities of showing our faithfulness. The Lord may be referring primarily to the apostles whom he left immediately after he had bestowed upon them authority and commission. The Revised Version, Westcott and Hort, Nösgen, and others transfer the adverb "straightway" to the beginning of the next verse (omitting δὲ in that verse). It is supposed to be superfluous here. The Vulgate accords with the Received Text; and there seems to be no sufficient reason for accentuating the first slave's activity above that of the second, who was equally faithful.

Ver. 16.—**Went.** The one who had received the five talents, the mark of the greatest trust, lost no time, but betook himself to business with zeal and energy. **Traded with the same** (*εἰργάσατο ἐν αὐτοῖς, made gain with them*). The verb is applied to husbandry or any work by which profit is obtained. A special method of increasing the allotted sum is mentioned in ver. 27; but here the term is general, and implies only that the slave used the money in some business which would prove to his master's advantage. In other words, he exercised his faculties and powers in his master's service and with a view to his master's interests. **Made** [them] other five talents. The addition "them" is unnecessary. He doubled his principal—"made" being equivalent to "gained." In the parable of the "pounds" we find the same sum increased in different proportions; here we have different sums multiplied in the same proportion.

Ver. 17.—**Likewise, etc.** The second servant made an equally good use of his smaller capital. It matters not whether our endowments are largo or little, we have to use them all in the Lord's service. "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke xii. 48); and *vice versâ*, to whomsoever less is committed, of him less shall be required. The burden is proportioned to the shoulder. We continually observe what to us seem anomalies in the distribution of gifts, but faith sees the hand of God dividing to each severally as he will, and we are confident that God will take account at last not only of the man's ability, but also of his opportunities of exercising the same. "He also" is omitted by Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and others.

Ver. 18.—**He that had received one** (*τὸ ἕν, the one* talent). Limited opportunities do not condone neglect. This third servant was as much bound to put out to interest his little capital as the first was his larger means. **Went**; *went away*. He too was not altogether idle; he in some sort exerted himself, not indeed actually in evil (as the servant in ch. xxiv. 48, 49), but yet not practically in his lord's service. **Hid his lord's money.** He thought the amount so small, or his master so rich, that it was of no consequence what was done with it; it was not worth the trouble of traffic. So, like all Easterns, he buried the little treasure in the ground, to keep it safe till his lord should ask for it, recognizing that it was not his own to treat as he liked, but that it still belonged to him who had entrusted it to his care. The man had some special grace, but he never exercised it, never let it shine before men, or bring forth the fruit of good works.

Ver. 19.—**After a long time.** The interval between Christ's ascension and his second advent (ver. 5) is long in men's view, though Christ can say, "Lo, I come quickly" (Rev. iii. 11, etc.). **And reckoneth with them** (ch. xviii. 23). The opportunity of labouring for Christ in the earthly life is ended at death; but the reckoning is reserved for the parousia—the coming of the Lord. The matter in the parable is concerned with the past actions of the servants of Christ (ver. 14); about the final judgment of the rest of the world nothing is here expressly said, though certain inferences must be drawn from analogous proceedings.

Ver. 20.—**He that had received** [*the*] **five talents.** The slaves appear in the same order as they had come to receive the deposits. The first comes joyfully, showing boldness in his day of judgment (1 John iv. 17), because he has dealt faithfully and diligently, and prospered in his labours. **Thou deliveredst unto me.** He rightly acknowledges that all he had came from his lord, and that it was his duty and his pleasure to increase the deposit for his master's benefit. The long delay had not made him careless and negligent; rather, he had used the time profitably, and thereby added greatly to his gains. **I have gained beside them** (*ἐπ' αὐτοῖς*). The two last words are omitted by Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf, and the Revised Version. If they are not genuine, they are, at any rate, implied in the account of the transaction. The Vulgate has, *Alia quinque superlucratus sum.* The good servant says, Behold, as if he pointed with joy to the augmented wealth of his master. He does not speak boastfully; he does not praise himself for his success; he had simply done his best with the means entrusted to him, and he can speak of the result with real pleasure (comp. 2 Cor. i. 14; Phil. iv. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 19). So in a religious sense the obligation to improve talents is even more imperative. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one to profit withal" (1 Cor. xii. 7). The grace which he receives he must employ for his own sanctification, as a member of Christ,

for the edification of others, for the interests of God's Church; such work will show that he is worthy of his Lord's trust and faithful in his stewardship.

Ver. 21.—**Well done** (εὖ), **thou good and faithful servant.** He is praised, not for success, but for being "good," *i.e.* kind and merciful and honest in exercising the trust for others' benefit; and "faithful," true to his master's interests, not idle or inactive, but keeping one object always before him, steadily aiming at fidelity. Some regard the words as a commendation of the servant's works and faith, but this is not the primary meaning according to the context. **Over a few things.** The sum entrusted to him was considerable in itself, but little compared with the riches of his lord, and little in comparison of the reward bestowed upon him. The Greek here is ἐπὶ ὀλίγα, the accusative case denoting "extending over," or "as regards." **I will make thee ruler** (σε καταστήσω, *I will set thee*, ch. xxiv. 45) **over many things**; ἐπὶ πολλῶν, the genitive implying fixed authority over. From being a slave he is raised to the position of master. He is treated according to the principle in Luke xvi. 10, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." The spiritual import of this reward is hard to understand, if it is wished to assign to it a definite meaning. It seems to intimate that in the other world Christ's most honoured and faithful followers will have some special work to do for him in guiding and ruling the Church (see on ch. xix. 28; and comp. Luke xix. 17, etc.). **Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.** Here is seen a marked contrast between the hard life of the slave and the happiness of the master. Literalists find here only a suggestion that the lord invites the servant to attend the feast by which his return home was celebrated. Certainly, the word translated "joy" (χαρά) may possibly be rendered "feast," as the LXX. translate *mishteh* in Esth. ix. 17, and a slave's elevation to his master's table would imply or involve his manumission. On the earthly side of the transaction, this and his extended and more dignified office would be sufficient reward for his fidelity. The spiritual signification of the sentence has been variously interpreted. Some find in it only an explanation of the former part of the award, "I will make thee ruler over many things," conveying no further accession of beatitude. But surely this is an inadequate conception of the guerdon. There are plainly two parts to this. One is advancement to more important position; the second is participation in the fulness of joy which the Lord's presence ensures (Ps. xvi. 11; xxi. 6), which, possessed entirely by himself, he communicates to his faithful. This comprises all blessedness. And it is noted that the joy is not said to enter into us. That indeed, though a blessing unspeakable, would be an inferior boon, as Augustine says; but we enter into the joy, when it is not measured by our capacity for receiving it, but absorbs us, envelops us, becomes our atmosphere, our life. Commentators quote Leighton's beautiful remark, "It is but little that we can receive here, some drops of joy that enter into us; but there we shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness."

Ver. 22.—**That had received** [*the*] **two talents.** This man, who had received a less sum, had been as faithful as the first, and comes with equal confidence and joyfulness to render his account, because he had been true and diligent in furthering his lord's interests to the best of his means and faculties. He had, it seems, less capacity, but had used it to the full.

Ver. 23.—**Enter thou,** etc. Both these servants had doubled their capital, and the lord commends and rewards them both in the same terms. The point is that each had done his best according to his ability. Their different talents, greater or less, had been profitably employed, and so far the two were equal. Fidelity in a smaller sphere of labour may be of greater importance than in a larger area; and seemingly insignificant duties well performed may be of incalculable spiritual advantage to one's self and to others. Differences in talents make no distinctions in rewards, if the utmost is made of them. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12).

Ver. 24.—**He which had received the one talent.** The rest of the parable is concerned with the case of this unprofitable servant. Usually, those who have most privileges neglect or misuse them or some of them; here the man apparently least favoured is taken as the type of the useless and wicked disciple, because his task was easiest, his responsibility less, his neglect most inexcusable. He has heard the words of his two fellow-servants, and the great reward which their faithful service has received; he comes with no joy and confidence to render his account; he feels fully how unsatisfactory it is, and begins at once to defend his conduct by proclaiming his view of his lord's character. **I knew thee that thou art an hard** (σκληρὸς) **man.** He chooses to conceive of his lord as harsh, stern, churlish in nature, one without love, who taxes men above their powers, and makes no allowance for imperfect service, however honest. He dares to call this impudent fiction knowledge. Thus men regard God, not as he is, but according to their own perverted

views; they read their own character into their conception of him; as the Lord says, in Ps. l. 21, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." **Reaping where thou hast not sown** (*thou sowedst not*), **and gathering where thou hast not strawed** (*ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισας, whence thou scatteredst not*). This is a proverbial saying, implying a desire of obtaining results without sufficient means. The last verb is interpreted either of sowing or winnowing; the latter seems to be correct here, thus avoiding tautology. It is used by the Septuagint in this sense in Ezek. v. 2, as the rendering of the Hebrew verb *zarah* (Edersheim). So the phrase here signifies gathering corn from a floor where thou didst not winnow. The slave virtually brings a twofold charge against his master, viz. that he enriched himself by others' toil; and that he expected gain from quarters where he had bestowed no labour.

Ver. 25.—**I was afraid.** He took as certain the conception which he had formed of his master's character, as harsh, exacting, and unsympathizing, and therefore feared to speculate with his money, or to put it to any use whereby it might be lost or diminished. This is his excuse for negligence. He endeavours to cast the fault from his own shoulders to those of his superior. So evil men persuade themselves that God asks from them more than they can perform, and content themselves by doing nothing; or they consider that their powers and means are their own, to use or not as they like, and that no one can call them to account for the way in which they treat them. **Hid thy talent in the earth** (see on ver. 18). Put it away for safety, that it might come to no harm, and not be employed for evil purposes. He recognizes not any duty owed to the giver in the possession of the money, nor the responsibility for work which it imposed. **Lo, there thou hast that is thine**; *lo! thou hast thy own.* This is sheer insolence; as if he had said, "You cannot complain; I have not stolen or lost your precious money; here it is intact, just as I received it." What a perverse mistaken view of his own position and of God's nature! The talent was given to him, not to bury, but to use and improve for his lord's profit. Hidden away, it was wasted. The time, too, during which he had the talent in his possession was wasted; he had not honestly used it in his master's service, or laboured, as he was bound to do. He ought to have had much more to show than the original endowment. To vaunt that, if he had done no good, at least he had done no harm, is condemnation. He might not thus shirk his responsibility. His answer only aggravated his fault.

Ver. 26.—**Thou wicked and slothful servant.** In marked contrast with the commendation, "good and faithful," in vers. 21, 23. He was "wicked," in that he calumniated his master, who really seems to have been ready to acknowledge the least service done to him, and never looked for results beyond a man's ability and opportunities; and he was "slothful," in that he made no effort to improve the one talent entrusted to him. **Thou knewest** (*ἤδεις*), etc. Out of his own mouth he judges him (Luke xix. 22). He repeats the slave's words, in which he expressed his notion of his lord's character and practice, and deduces therefrom the inconsistency of his action, without deigning to defend himself from the calumny, except, perhaps, by the use of *ἤδεις*, which gives a hypothetical notion to the assumed knowledge. "You knew, you say." Some editors place a mark of interrogation at the end of the clause, which seems unnecessary.

Ver. 27.—**Thou oughtest therefore,** etc. Your conception of my character ought to have made you more diligent and scrupulous; and if you were really afraid to run any risks with my money or invest it in any hazardous speculation, there were many ordinary and safe methods of employing it which would have yielded some profit, and some of these you would have adopted had you been faithful and earnest. The return might have been trifling in amount, but the lord shows that he is not grasping and harsh by being willing to accept even this in token of the servant's labour. **To have put** (*βαλεῖν*). The term means to have thrown the money, as it were, on the banker's table. This would have been less trouble than digging a hole to bury it. **Exchangers**; *τραπεζίταις: numulariis; bankers.* In St. Luke (xix. 23) we find *ἐπὶ τράπεζαν*, with the same meaning. These money-changers or bankers (for the business seems always to have combined the two branches) were a numerous class in Palestine, and wherever the Jewish community was established. They received deposits at interest, and engaged in transactions such as are usual in modern times. **With usury** (*σὺν τόκῳ, with interest*). At one time, law had forbidden usurious transactions between Israelites, though the Gentile was left to the mercy of his creditor (Deut. xxiii. 19, 20); but later such limitations were not observed. The rate of interest varied from four to forty per cent. The spiritual interpretation of this feature of the parable has most unnecessarily exercised the ingenuity of commentators. Some see in the bankers an adumbration of the religious societies and charitable institutions, by means of which persons can indirectly do some work for Christ, though unable personally to

undertake such enterprises. Olshausen and Trench regard them as the stronger characters who, by example and guidance, lead the timid and hesitating to employ their gifts aright. But it is more reasonable to consider this detail of the parable as supplementary to its chief purpose, and not to be pressed in the interpretation. The Lord is simply concerned to show that all talents, great or small, must be used in his service according to opportunities; and that, whether the return be large or little, it is equally acceptable, if it show a willing mind and real fidelity in the agent. In illustration he uses two cases which yield most profit, and one which produces the least. Nothing can be inferred hence concerning the morality of usury. Christ draws his picture from the world as he finds it, pronouncing no opinion on its ethical bearing.

Ver. 28.—The sentence on the unprofitable servant follows. It is to be observed that he is punished, not for fraud, theft, malversation, but for omission. He had left undone that which he ought to have done. **Take therefore the talent from him.** The forfeiture of the talent was just and natural. It was given to him for a special purpose; he had not carried this out; therefore it could be his no longer. A limb unused loses its powers; grace unemployed is withdrawn. God's Spirit will not always strive with man. There comes a time when, if wilfully resisted and not exercised, it ceases to inspire and to influence. Well may we pray, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from us!" Give it, etc. This is done on the principle stated in the next verse and ch. xiii. 12. God's work must be done; his gifts are not lost; they are transferred to another who has proved himself worthy of such a charge. As the servant who had the ten talents had already brought in his account and had received his reward, it seems, at first, difficult to understand how additional work and responsibility should be given to him. But it is the blessedness of Christ's servants that they rejoice in a new trust received, in added opportunities of serving him, whether in this life or in the life to come, and all the increase which they make is their own eternally and augments their joy.

Ver. 29.—**Unto every one that hath . . . abundance** (ch. xiii. 12). So we have seen in the first part of the parable. The proverb says, "Money makes money;" a man who has capital finds various means of increasing it; it grows as it is judiciously employed. Thus the grace of God, duly stirred up and exercised, receives continual accession, "grace for grace" (John i. 16). The Christian's spiritual forces are developed by being properly directed; Providence puts in his way added opportunities, and as he uses these he is more and more strengthened and replenished. **From him that hath not** (ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος). So the Received Text, probably from Luke xix. 26; the best manuscripts and editions read, τοῦ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντος, *but as to him that hath not*; this, followed by ἀπ' αὐτοῦ at the end of the verse, is less tautological than the other reading. To "have not," in accordance with the context, signifies to possess nothing of any consequence, to be comparatively destitute, in the world's estimate of riches. **Shall be taken away even that which he hath;** *even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.* The Vulgate, following some few manuscripts, has, *Et quod videtur habere auferetur ab eo*, from Luke viii. 18. The poor unpractical man shall lose even the little which he possessed. So the spiritually unprofitable shall be punished by utter deprivation of the grace which was given for his advancement in holiness. If applied to the special circumstances of the time and of the persons to whom it was addressed, the parable would teach that the disciples who recognized and duly employed the riches of the doctrine and powers delivered unto them would receive further revelations; but that the people who spurned the offered salvation and neglected the gracious opportunity would forfeit the blessing, and be condemned.

Ver. 30.—**Cast ye the unprofitable servant into** [*the*] **outer darkness** (ch. viii. 12). The parable merges into the real. The matter represented bursts through the veil under which it was delivered, and stands forth plainly and awfully. The command is issued to the ministers of the Lord's vengeance, whether earthly or angelic. The slave was truly unprofitable, as he advanced neither his master's interests nor his own, which were bound up with the other. While the faithful servants enter into the joy of the Lord, he is rejected from his presence, expelled from the kingdom of heaven, banished we know not whither. And why? Not for great ill doing, sacrilege, crime, offence against the common laws of God and man; but for neglect, idleness, omission of duty. This is a very fearful thought. Men endeavour to screen themselves from blame by minimizing their talents, ability, opportunities; this parable unveils the flimsiness of this pretence, shows that all have responsibilities, and are answerable for the use they make of the graces and faculties, be they never so small, which they possess. Spiritual indolence is as serious a sin as active wickedness, and meets with similar punishment. Our Lord's account of the last judgment terribly confirms this truth (vers. 42—45). **There shall**

be [*the*] weeping and [*the*] gnashing of teeth (ch. xxiv. 51). "There," viz. in the outer darkness. The remembrance of lost opportunities, wasted graces, bartered privileges, will fill the mind of the banished with terrible remorse, and make existence a very hell; and what more shall be added? Some of the Fathers have recorded a gnomic saying derived from this parable, if not an utterance of our Lord himself, "Be ye approved bankers."

Vers. 31—46.—*The final judgment on all the nations.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.) Before entering upon the exposition of this majestic section, which is a prophecy, not a parable, we have to settle the preliminary question as to who are the subjects of the judgment here so graphically and fearfully delineated. Are they only the heathen, or Christians, or all mankind without exception? The Lord's present utterance is plainly the development of the account of the parousia in ch. xxiv. 30, 31. There those that are gathered are "the elect," nothing being said concerning the rest of mankind; here we have the forecast completed, both righteous and unrighteous receiving their sentence. "All the nations" usually represent all Gentiles distinguished from the Jews. But there is nothing to indicate separate judgment for the Jew and Gentile. Equally unlikely is the notion that the transaction is confined to the heathen, whether the opinion is grounded on a supposed extension of the mercies of Christ to those ignorant of him, but having lived according to the laws of natural religion; or whether it assumes as certain that believers will not be judged at all (an erroneous deduction from John v. 24). It seems, on the one hand, incongruous that persons who have never heard of Christ should be addressed as "blessed of my Father," etc., ver. 34; and it seems, on the other hand, monstrous that such, having failed through ignorance and lack of teaching, should be condemned to awful punishment. That Christians alone are the persons who are thus assembled for judgment is not likely. Is there, then, to be no inquisition held on the life and character of non-Christians? Are they wholly to escape the great assize? If not, where else does Christ refer to their case? What reason can be given for the exclusion of this great majority from the account of the proceedings at the last day? It appears, on the whole, to be safest to consider "all the nations" as meaning the whole race of men, who, dead and living, small and great, Jew and Gentile, shall stand before God to be judged according to their works (Rev. xx. 11—13). This is not a parable, but a statement of future proceedings by him who himself shall conduct them. It is not a full account of details, but an indication of the kind of criteria which shall govern the verdicts given.

Ver. 31.—**When** (ὅταν δὲ, *but when*). The particle, unnoticed in the Authorized Version, indicates the distinction between this section and the preceding parables, the latter exemplifying the judgment specially on Christians, this setting forth the judgment on the whole world. **Son of man.** With his glorified body, such as he was seen at his Transfiguration (Acts i. 11). **In his glory.** The term occurs twice in this verse, as elsewhere (ch. xvi. 27; xix. 28; xxiv. 30, where see notes) denoting that then his humiliation will have passed away, and he will appear as he is. **All the holy angels with him.** "Holy" is probably a transcriber's addition, which has crept into the later text. The Vulgate omits it. At this time all the family of heaven and earth shall be assembled (ch. xvi. 27; Deut. xxxiii. 2). Of angels and men none shall be wanting. "Omnes angeli, omnes nationes. Quanta celebritas!" (Bengel). **Then shall he sit, etc.** He shall take his seat as Judge on his glorious throne (Rev. xx. 11), surrounded by the angels and the saints (Jude 14; Rev. xix. 14). Observe, this was spoken three days before his death (comp. ch. xxvi. 53, 64).

Ver. 32.—**Shall be gathered** (ch. xxiv. 31). The angels shall gather them, the dead being first raised to life. **All** (τὰ, *the*) **nations.** Not the heathen only, but all mankind (see preliminary note). The criteria upon which the judgment proceeds, in the following verses, seem to imply that all men have the opportunity of receiving or rejecting the gospel (ch. xxiv. 14; Mark xiii. 10; Rom. xi. 32). How this can apply to those who died before the incarnation of Christ and the consequent evangelization of the world, we know not, though we may believe that, ere the end comes, Christ will have been preached in every quarter of the globe. That some process of enlightenment goes on in the unseen world we learn from the mysterious passage, 1 Pet. iii. 18—20; but we have no reason to suppose that probation is extended to the

other life, or that souls will there have the offer of accepting or repelling the claims of Jesus (but see Phil. ii. 10; 1 Pet. iv. 6). By describing mankind as "all the nations," Christ shows the minute particularity of the judgment, which will enter into distinctions of country, race, etc., and while it is universal will be strictly impartial. He is the Shepherd of all mankind, whether considered as sheep or goats, and can therefore distinguish and class them perfectly. Those who have never heard of Christ (if such there shall be) can be tried only by the standard of natural religion (Rom. i. 20). **Shall separate them** (*αὐτοὺς*). Individuals of all the nations. Hitherto good and bad had been mingled together, often indistinguishable by man's eye or judgment; now an eternal distinction is made by an unerring hand (ch. xiii. 49). The idea is already found in Ezek. xxxiv. 17, "Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats." **As a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.** The flocks of sheep and goats generally keep together during the day (Gen. xxx. 33), but are separated at night or when being driven. The Syrian goat is usually black. The Lord delights in employing simple pastoral illustrations in his teaching.

Ver. 33.—**The sheep on his right hand.** The sheep are the type of the docile, the profitable, the innocent, the good (see Rom. ii. 7, 10). The right hand is the place of favour and honour (Gen. xlviii. 17; Luke i. 11; Mark xvi. 5). **The goats** (*ἐρίφια, kids*) **on the left.** The diminutive is here used for the goats, to convey an impression of their worthlessness. Compare *κυνάρια*, "whelps," in the conversation of our Lord with the Syro-Phœnician woman (ch. xv. 26, 27). They are the type of the unruly, the proud (Isa. xiv. 9, Hebrew), the unprofitable, the evil (see Rom. ii. 8, 9). This judicial distinction between the right and left hands is found in classical writers. Thus Plato, 'De Republica,' x. 13, tells of what a certain man, who revived after a cataleptic attack, saw when his soul left his body. He came to a mysterious place, where were two chasms in the earth, and two openings in the heavens opposite to them, and the judges of the dead sat between these. And when they gave judgment, they commanded the just to go on the right hand, and upwards through the heavens; but the unjust they sent to the left, and downwards; and both the just and unjust had upon them the marks of what they had done in the body. So Virgil makes the Elysian Fields to lie on the right of the palace of Dis, and the penal Tartarus on the left ('Æn.,' vi. 540, etc.).

Ver. 34.—**Then.** When the division is made, the sentences are pronounced. At death a separation between good and evil is in some sort made, as we learn by the parable of Dives and Lazarus; but the final award is not given till the great day. **The King.** He who had called himself the Son of man, here for the first and only time in Scripture names himself the King (comp. ch. xxvii. 11). He, the Messiah, takes his throne and reigns, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. xix. 16), Lord of both the dead and the living (Rom. xiv. 9). **Unto them on his right hand.** He speaks first to them, as more worthy than the others, and as he loves to reward better than to punish. How the sight and hearing of this first sentence must awake the remorse of the reprobate! **Come.** He calls them to be by his side, to share his kingdom and glory (John xii. 26). Ancient commentators have tenderly expanded this invitation, conceiving it addressed individually to patriarch, prophet, apostle, martyr, saint; others have paraphrased it in affecting terms: "Come from darkness to light, from bondage to the liberty of God's children, from labour to perpetual rest, from war to peace, from death to life, from the company of the evil to the fellowship of angels, from conflict to triumph, from daily temptation and trial to stable and eternal felicity." **Ye blessed of** (equivalent to *by*) **my Father.** So *διδακτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, "taught of [*i.e.* by] God" (John vi. 45). They were beloved by God, and were to be rewarded by the gift of eternal life. This was their blessing (Eph. i. 3). Nothing is said about election or predestination, as if they were saved because they were blessed by the Father. There is a sense in which this is true; but they were rewarded, not because of their election, but because they used the grace given to them, and co-operated with the Holy Spirit which they received. **Inherit** (*κληρονομήσατε, receive as your lot*). "Of what honour, of what blessedness, are these words! He said not—Take, but *Inherit*, as one's own, as your Father's, as yours, as due to you from the first. 'For, before you were,' saith he, 'these things had been prepared, and made ready for you, forasmuch as I knew you would be such as you are'" (St. Chrysostom, *in loc.*). Christians are by baptism made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, gifted with heavenly citizenship, which, duly used, leads to eternal glory. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17). **From the foundation of the world** (*ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, a constitutione mundi*). In other passages we have, "before (*πρό*) the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24; Eph. i. 4). The two expressions virtually correspond, implying God's eternal purpose, "who willeth that

all men should be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4).

Ver. 35.—**For.** Jesus here gives the reason which influences him in conferring this great boon on "the sheep" of his flock. He instances certain works of mercy which they performed during their earthly pilgrimage, as examples of the kind of acts which he deems worthy of eternal reward. It is not that he regards no other with favour, but these six works, as they show the temper and virtue of the doer, are taken as the type of those which are approved. They are proofs of self-denial, pity, sympathy, charity; they demonstrate that the doer has something of God in him, that according to his lights he possesses and has exercised the supreme grace of love. The Lord confines himself to one detail; he does not disparage other requirements necessary for salvation, as faith, prayer, sacraments, chastity, truth, honesty; but he looks on one particular class of works as the great result of all the aids and provocatives offered by his Spirit, and herein sets forth the principle by which judgment is guided, and which can be applied universally. The Judge asks not what we have felt or thought, but what we have done or left undone in our dealings with others. "It is plain," says Bishop Bull ('Harm. Ap.,' diss. i. 5. 4), "that our works are considered as the very things on account of which (by the merciful covenant of God through Christ) eternal life is given us." He quotes Vossius ('De Bon. Op.,' 10): "It is asked whether a reward is promised to works as signs of faith? Now, we conceive they say too much who suppose it promised to works as deserving it, and that they say too little who think it promised to them only as signs of faith. For there are many passages of Scripture where it is shown that our works, in the business of salvation, are regarded as indispensably requisite, or as a primary condition, to which the reward of eternal life is inseparably connected." **I was an hungred,** equivalent to "very hungry" (ch. xii. 1). Christ enumerates the chief of what are called the corporal works of mercy, omitting burial of the dead (see on ver. 36). We may note here an argument *a fortiori*: if such simple acts (comp. ch. x. 42) meet with so great a reward, what shall be the portion of those who are enabled to rise to more perfect obedience and higher degrees of devotion and self-sacrifice? **Ye took me in** (*συνηγάγετέ με*); *i.e.* into your houses, received me with hospitality, or as one of your own family. We have instances of such hospitality in Gen. xviii. 3; Judg. xix. 20, 21; and of this use of the verb *συνάγειν* in 2 Sam. xi. 27, Septuagint. Why Christ speaks of himself as receiving these ministrations is explained in ver. 40.

Ver. 36.—**Ye visited me.** The visitation of the sick has become a common term among us. It implies properly going to see, though other ideas are connoted. **Ye came unto me.** It was easier in those days to visit friends in prison than it is at the present time. Good men, if they could not obtain release of prisoners, might comfort and sympathize with them. The seven corporal works of mercy which antiquity has endorsed have been preserved in the mnemonic line, "Visito, poto, cibo, redimo, tego, colligo, condo." All these might be performed by non-Christians who professed the fear of God and followed the guidance of conscience. God never leaves himself without witness; his Spirit strives with man, and in the absence of higher and completer revelation, to be wholly guided by these inner motions is to work out salvation, as far as circumstances allow, and in a certain restricted sense. In a universal judgment regard is had to this consideration. "In return for what do they receive such things? For the covering of a roof, for a garment, for bread, for cold water, for visiting, for going into the prison. For indeed in every case it is for what is needed; and sometimes not even for that. For surely the sick and he that is in bonds seek not for this only, but the one to be loosed, the other to be delivered from his infirmity. But he, being gracious, requires only what is within our power, or rather even less than what is within our power, leaving to us to exert our generosity in doing more" (St. Chrysostom, *in loc.*).

Vers. 37—39.—**Shall the righteous answer him.** The righteous are those on the right hand, those who have passed through earthly probation, and have come forth holy and pure. Their reply (which is given before the Lord's explanation) is contained in three verses, which recapitulate the deeds specified by the Lord, with some slight variation in the wording. **When saw we thee,** etc.? If this reply is conceived as spoken by the followers of Christ, who must be supposed to know what he had said (ch. x. 40—42, "He that receiveth you receiveth me," etc.), it must be considered as expressive, not so much of surprise, as profound humility, which had never hitherto realized the grand idea. They had done so little, they had rendered him no service personally, they were unworthy so to do—how could they merit such a reward? If the answer is taken as given by non-Christians, it shows ignorance of the high value of their service, and astonishment that, in following the dictates of conscience and charity, they had unwittingly had the supreme honour of serving Christ. Mediæval legends have exemplified the identity of Christ and his suffering members by telling how saints

have seen him in those whom they relieved. Such stories are told of Saints Augustine, Christopher, Martin, and others. **And fed thee** (ἐθρέψαμεν). Instead of "gave me to eat" (ver. 35). **Sick or in prison, and came unto thee.** Instead of "sick, and ye visited me; in prison," etc. The Lord could not more emphatically have recommended works of mercy as having the highest value in his estimation. "There is a mystery in many of the actions of men, which needs the interpretation of the Master" (Morison).

Ver. 40.—**The King shall answer.** The royal Judge condescends to explain the meaning of the seeming paradox. **Inasmuch as**; ἐφ' ὅσον, rendered in the Vulgate *quamdiu*, rather, *quatenus*, in which sense the phrase is found also in Rom. xi. 13. **Unto one of the least of these my brethren.** That is, not the apostles, nor specially Christians, but all the afflicted who have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings and sorrows. Any such he is not ashamed to call his brethren. **Ye have done** (*ye did*) **it unto me.** The Lord so perfectly identifies himself with the human family, whose nature he assumed, that he made their sorrows and sufferings his own (Isa. liii. 4; lxiii. 9; ch. viii. 17), he suffered with the sufferers; his perfect sympathy placed him in their position; in all their affliction he was afflicted. From this identification it follows that he regards that which is done to others as done to himself. Thus he could expostulate with the persecutor, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" And we have the amazing revelation that he receives with the same graciousness the pious workings of natural religion in the case of those who know no better.

Ver. 41.—**Unto them on the left hand.** The sentence on these is comprised in vers. 41—45. It is conveyed in terms parallel to that on the righteous; but how infinite the difference! **Depart from me!** Not "Come!" (ver. 34). What a world of misery is contained in this word, "Depart"! As the light of God's countenance is happiness, so banishment from his presence is utter woe. What it implies we know not; we will not attempt to imagine. God preserve us from ever knowing! **Ye cursed.** He had called the righteous, "blessed of my Father;" he does not term these, "cursed of my Father," because God willeth not the death of a sinner. "**Not he laid the curse upon them, but their own works**" (St. Chrysostom, *in loc.*). It was no part of God's design that any of his creatures should suffer this misery. "God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living. For he created all things, that they might have their being . . . but ungodly men with their words and works called death unto them" (Wisd. i. 13, etc.). **Into everlasting fire** (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον, *the fire which is everlasting*). To the poignant regret for the loss of happiness and of the presence of God there is added physical anguish, expressed metaphorically by the term "fire." This is called everlasting, and however in these days of compromise we may seek to minimize or modify the attribute, it was so understood by our Lord's hearers (see below on ver. 46). **Prepared for the devil and his angels.** This region or sphere of torment was not, as the kingdom of the righteous, prepared for man originally; it was particularly designed (τὸ ἡτοιμασμένον) for Satan and his myrmidons (see 2 Pet. ii. 4, 9), and will not be perfected till the last judgment (Rev. xx. 10). There is no hint of its being remedial or corrective; and what it is to the devil it must be to those who share it with him. It is man's own doing that he is unfit for the company of saints and angels, and, having made himself like unto the evil spirits by rebellion and hatred of good, he must consort with them and share their doom. It seems as though there were no proper place for man's punishment; there is no book of death corresponding to the book of life (Rev. xx. 12, etc.); the wicked are in an anomalous state, and, shut out by their own action from their proper inheritance, fall into the society of demons. How to reconcile this destiny, which seems inconceivably terrible, with God's mercy, love, and justice, has always proved a stumbling-block to free-thinkers. It is, indeed, a mystery which we cannot understand, and which Christ has purposely left unexplained. We can only bow the head and say, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25).

Vers. 42, 43.—The Lord gives the ground of the sentence, which proceeds on the same terms as the former one. The crimes for which these souls are punished are those of omission and negligence; they failed to perform the most elementary duties of charity and brotherly love which conscience and natural religion enjoin; they had lived utterly selfish and unprofitable lives. If sins of omission are thus punished, we may infer that positive transgressions shall meet with still heavier retribution.

Ver. 44.—**Then shall they also answer [him].** Not in words, for at that time objection and expostulation would not be allowed, but in thought, "standing at the judgment-seat, yet ceasing not to sin." There is a certain self-confidence in their reply, very different from the humility and misgiving of the righteous. **When saw we thee, etc.?** They put all these neglected duties in a careless summary. They had never thought of Christ in the matter: were they to be

condemned for this? Some had never even heard of Christ, never been taught faith in him: was this their fault? This is the line which their self-justification took; there was nothing of love, nothing of humility.

Ver. 45.—**Inasmuch as, etc.** The Judge at once disallows all such pleas. He exacts nothing which any good man, Christian or not, might not have done. As before, identifying himself with the human race, he shows that, in neglecting to perform acts of mercifulness and charity to the afflicted, they disregarded him, despised him, dishonoured him. **One of the least of these.** He adds not "brethren," as above (ver. 40), because the evil acknowledge no such brotherhood; they live for self alone, they own not their real relation to the whole family of man.

Ver. 46.—**Shall go away.** Bengel notes that the King will first address the righteous in the audience of the unrighteous, but these last will be dismissed to their place of punishment before the others actually receive their reward. Thus the evil will see nothing of the life eternal, while the good will behold the vengeance inflicted on the others (ch. xiii. 49). **Into everlasting punishment** (*εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον*) . . . **life eternal** (*everlasting*, *ζωὴν αἰώνιον*). The same term is used in both places, and ought to have been so translated. The word *κόλασις* in strict classical usage denotes punishment inflicted for the correction and improvement of the offender, *τιμωρία* being employed to signify punishment in satisfaction of outraged justice, or to revenge an injury. But it is open to doubt whether the former term is to be taken in its strictest sense in the New Testament. A ceaseless controversy rests on the meaning of *αἰώνιος*, some contending that it signifies "everlasting," and nothing else; others that its sense is modified by the idea to which it is attached; and others again that it ought to be rendered by "æonian," to which is given an indeterminate signification governed by our conception of the duration expressed by æon. This is not the place to discuss this perplexing question, nor shall I attempt to dogmatize upon the problem. Suffice it to make these few observations. On the one hand, taking the literal sense of our Lord's words, and the meaning which his hearers would attach to them, we must believe that the risen life and the second death are equally everlasting (see Judith xvi. 17; Ecclus. vii. 17; 4 Macc. xii. 12). And if it is thought that eternity of punishment is incompatible with love and benevolence, and inequitable as the penalty of offences committed in time, it must be remembered that eternity of reward is infinitely beyond all human claims, and bears no proportion to the merits of the recipient. Nor may we reason from our conception of the nature and attributes of God; how these attributes work harmoniously together, though seemingly opposed, we cannot presume to determine. The consequences of sin even in this world are often irretrievable, as are some human punishments. We have no reason to suppose that punishment is inflicted only for the correction of the criminal (see on ver. 41), nor is it possible to conceive how this result could be effected by condemning him to the society of devils. Further, we have to regard the heinousness of sin in God's sight, remembering the infinite price paid for its expiation. And lastly, the doctrine does not depend upon this passage only, but is supported by many other statements in both the Old and New Testaments; *e.g.* Isa. lxvi. 24; Dan. xii. 2; Mark ix. 44, 46, 48; Rev. xxi. 8. Such are some of the chief arguments in favour of the everlasting nature of future punishment. On the other hand, we have to remark that our Lord is here not concerned with teaching this doctrine of eternity; he assumes the authorized view of the matter, and draws his awful lesson from that view. It is certainly true that the meaning of *αἰώνιος* is not fixed and uniform; it is conditioned by the term to which it appertains. No one would say that "everlasting" was applied to God and to a mountain in the same sense; and though it seems incongruous to find a difference of meaning in the same sentence, yet there may be reasons for distinguishing the signification of the qualifying adjective in the terms "eternal life" and "eternal punishment." God, indeed, cannot draw back from his promise, but he may be more merciful than the tenor of his threats seems to imply. It is possible that "æonian" may denote merely indefinite duration without the connotation of never-ending. Such like are the pleas brought forward to lessen the plain enunciation of the awful truth. For myself I do not see any escape from the import of the statement, nor any hope of amelioration in the case of the lost, when relegated to the scene of their penal existence (see on ch. xviii. 8, 9). But I set no bounds to the Divine mercy and wisdom; and God may see a mode of reconciling his strict justice with his desire of man's salvation, which our finite understanding cannot grasp. All we can say here is that infinite misery and infinite happiness are set before us, and that God has thus shown the two ends without reserve or possible modification, in order that we may be aroused to shun the one and to win the other. "From thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation, good Lord, deliver us."

HOMILETICS.

VERS. 1—13.—*The parable of the ten virgins.* I. THEY GO FORTH. 1. *The kingdom of heaven.* Here, as elsewhere, that kingdom is the visible Church. But the present parable seems to relate to a part only of the kingdom, a portion of the Church. There may possibly be no spiritual significance in the word "virgins." Like the number ten, perhaps a common number at such times, it may belong merely to the structure, the imagery of the parable; young unmarried women were and are usually attendants of the bride (comp. Ps. xlv. 14). But these virgins all alike took their lamps; all alike went forth to meet the Bridegroom; all too had oil in their lamps, though not all had a store of oil in their vessels also. Then all were something more than nominal Christians; all had, in some sense, come out of the world, and had gone to meet the Bridegroom. There are no hypocrites in the parable, no openly wicked and disobedient men. This consideration gives it a very awful meaning; it is not enough to have been once awakened, there is need of constant persevering watchfulness. The parable embodies and enforces the lesson of the last chapter, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." The virgins all had lamps; the lamp seems to represent the outward Christian life of worship and obedience which is seen by the eye of men. They all had oil in their lamps; the oil is the Holy Spirit of God. They all went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom, of course, is Christ; he had come from heaven to fetch home his bride the Church. Lange well remarks, in his commentary, "As it respects the relations of the virgins to the bride, we must bear in mind the analogy of the marriage supper of the king's son and his guests. The Church, in her aggregate and ideal unity, is the bride; the members of the Church, as individually called, are guests; in their separation from the world, and expectation of Christ's coming, they are his virgins." The bride is not mentioned in this parable. It describes not the Church as a whole, but its individual members; not all its members, but those only who have been once awakened, who have at least begun to come after Christ, and have made some progress, more or less, in the way of godliness. In the visible Church the evil are ever mingled with the good, and among those who seem to be good there are always some whose "goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." So among these virgins who all went forth to meet the Bridegroom, there were five wise, but the remaining five were foolish. 2. *The differences which exist among its citizens.* All the virgins took their lamps; all the lamps were burning as they went forth. Outwardly there was no observable difference among them; but the foolish took no oil with them; the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. It is not enough to have been "once enlightened;" we may not dare put our trust in the grace once given in holy baptism, or in what may seem to have been the change of repentance and conversion. The foolish virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom. They had their lamps; and the lamps were not empty or dark, they were burning, they had oil in them. Then even the foolish were using the means of grace, they had been made "partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Heb. vi. 4), they seemed to be living Christian lives, they had made some real progress. But they took no oil with them; they acted as if the lamps, once lighted, would burn on for ever; they had no store of oil for future use. They had "the washing of regeneration;" they delighted in their past experience, and trusted in it as if they had all that was needed for their spiritual life. They had not "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Their lamps burned brightly for a time; all seemed well, but they had not brought their vessels, flasks of oil, to supply their lamps. Perhaps the vessels were cumbrous, heavy to carry; plain, too, not striking in appearance; they made no show like the burning lamp. These virgins were like the seed that was sown upon the rock. They heard the Word, and at once received it with joy, but they had no root. They were wanting in perseverance, in watchfulness. They did not keep in their minds the thought that, though the Bridegroom might come at any moment, yet he might long delay; that there was need of daily preparation, of constant watchfulness, for his coming. The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. They knew that it was not safe to trust to the grace of their baptism, to a flush of excitement, to past experience, however precious; they counted not themselves to have apprehended; they forgot what was behind, and ever reached forth unto those things which were before; they sought in persevering prayer and daily

self-denials, and the constant faithful use of the appointed means of grace for "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The Spirit is the holy oil, the oil with which the Lord himself was anointed ("God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost," Acts x. 38), the "unction from the Holy One," which is given to all his faithful servants; that anointing abideth in them, and teacheth them (1 John ii. 27) because they "stir up the Gift of God that is in them," not quenching the Spirit, as careless slothful Christians do, but treasuring in their hearts that sacred Gift, striving always to grow in grace, to walk in the Spirit, to mind the things of the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit, to increase in the Holy Spirit more and more. We must treasure the sacred oil, the Divine anointing; we must seek for its daily renewing. We shall not seek in vain if we seek in persevering prayer. "My Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." 3. *The protracted absence of the King.* The Bridegroom tarried. The end was not yet; the second advent was not so near at hand as was almost universally expected in the early Church. The Bridegroom tarried; the time of waiting was long—longer much than men had thought. The first excitement passed away, some had left their first love, the love of most was growing cold. Drowsiness seized the virgins in their watch; first they bowed their heads in slumber, then they were all sleeping. So it is now. Many true Christian souls have been gathered to their fathers, to the countless multitude of the departed, since this parable was spoken; through the grace of the Lord Jesus they have been laid to sleep in the quiet rest of Paradise. In another sense those who are now living upon the earth slumber and sleep in the eye of God; the vigilance of the most earnest is but as sleep compared with that constant and intent watchfulness which is the ideal of the Christian life. We ought to live as men waiting for their Lord, our loins ever girded, our lamps ever burning, in daily expectation of his coming, in constant readiness to meet him. Alas! we slumber and sleep; we forget the first fervour of our conversion; our religious exercises are performed as a matter of routine, sometimes almost unconsciously, without energy, without that deep and awful sense of their immense importance which ought to fill the heart of every Christian. The shades of difference among Christians are innumerable: some are utterly careless; some rouse themselves from time to time to thought and real effort; some try by the power of faith and prayer to keep themselves in the love of God, and to love the appearing of the Saviour. But none realize to the full the tremendous necessity of watchfulness; none live in that fixed attention, in that constant looking unto Jesus, in that full preparedness, in that daily and hourly anticipation of the Saviour's coming, which we should regard as the true Christian frame of mind, to which we should strive to approximate nearer and nearer, in all humility and self-distrust, not counting ourselves to have attained, but ever pressing forward. Alas! as the Lord looks upon the Churches, they all in various degrees are seen to slumber and sleep.

II. THE KING IS AT HAND. 1. *The midnight cry.* It came suddenly, in the dead of night. The long-expected Bridegroom was coming now, coming in his glory, coming with all his angel-train to take unto himself his chosen bride. So one day the Lord will come with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; so now the hour of death cometh upon us one by one, when we are not looking for it, when we are sleeping, engaged in this world's business or amusement, thinking nothing of the awful change which is at hand. Suddenly we seem to hear a cry—a cry that thrills through our hearts, "Prepare to meet thy God!" 2. *The awakening.* Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. All heard the midnight cry; all prepared to meet the Bridegroom. When death is at hand, when the thought of the Lord's speedy coming is borne with power into the soul, a man looks into his own heart. We must remember that this parable relates only to Christians who have led in various degrees a religious life. Men who have never felt religious impressions, who are without any spiritual experience, are often so hardened by the deceitfulness of sin that they slumber on, dying as they lived, without the sense of sin, without the fear of God, and never waking till they pass out of this world into his most awful presence. But those who have been believers in any real sense must hear that solemn cry. They ask themselves, they are forced to ask whether they will or no—What is their religion? Is it true? is it real? is it deep? They all want their repentance deepened, their faith confirmed, their love to God increased, kindled to a holier affection, to a more trustful confidence. All

the virgins trimmed their lamps, they all sought to prepare themselves to meet the Bridegroom. But there was a difference. The foolish virgins felt now the want of those vessels which they had heedlessly left—the want of that oil which they had neglected to provide. When they awoke to a sense of the Bridegroom's near approach, they found, alas! that their lamps were going out; there was still a faint, flickering flame; but it was dying, almost gone, and, alas! they had no oil to replenish the empty lamp. So dying men feel when they are not ready; they feel that their religion has not been deep and real; it has been too much a thing of words and outward forms, with some excitement of the feelings now and then; but it has taken no deep hold upon the character, it has not sunk into the heart. They felt some interest in religion once; they made a little progress; it was enough to give them some comfort under ordinary circumstances; but ah! not enough to support them now in the presence of the king of terrors; it is weak, it fails them at the last; their lamp is being quenched, they have almost quenched the Spirit by their spiritual indolence. (The Greek word here rendered "going out" and that translated "quench" in 1 Thess. v. 19 are the same.) In their distress they send for the clergyman, for some Christian friend; but ah! it is little that they can do. "There is not enough," the wise virgins answered, "for us and for you." Each man must have that sacred oil in his own vessel, in his own heart and character. He must have bought it too; it must be bought of him who sells without money and without price. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, . . . and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed; . . . and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." The precious oil must be bought with prayer, with strong, persevering, faithful prayer; it must be treasured in the heart; it must so fill the character that by the grace of God it becomes our own, our very own, and cannot be taken from us. One man cannot give that holy oil to another—only God can give it; one man cannot save another's soul—only God can save us. The wise virgins did all that they could for their companions—they bade them go to them that sell. All that we can do is to point the sinner to Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Sinners must come to him in their need; they must buy of him as he counsels them, and that for themselves. Others cannot buy the precious oil for them; it must be bought with their own prayers, their own crying and tears. 3. *The coming of the Bridegroom.* The warning was short; there was little time to prepare; very soon the Bridegroom came. Then they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. The wise virgins were ready; they had been slumbering, but they had oil in their vessels. Christian men may be taken unawares; death may come suddenly upon them; the Lord may come suddenly; but, if they have been living in faith and prayer, they will be able, so to speak, to put themselves at once into an attitude of devotion. Such men are filled with the Spirit; the Spirit is there, ready to make intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. They can rouse themselves at once into preparedness; they are ready to say their "Nunc dimittis," for they have been waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and their eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord. The wise virgins were ready; they went in with the Bridegroom to the marriage. 4. *The door was shut.* It is open now; penitent sinners may enter; penitent sinners have entered in multitudes—David and Peter, and she who had sinned much, to whom much was forgiven. It is open to all who are ready, who are cleansed by the purifying influences of the blessed Spirit, by the pervading virtue of the sacred oil, from the defilement of sin. But the time will come when it must be shut; it was shut to those foolish virgins when they returned. They had not found the oil, we may be sure; but they cried in their despair, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" Alas! it was too late. He answered, "I know you not." The Lord knoweth those that are his; he knows them every one. "I know mine own, as the Father knoweth me." He knows them with the knowledge of Divine love, of intimate affectionate communion. He knoweth not thus those who have lived without persevering prayer, who have left their first love, who have not kept themselves in the love of God, building themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. "I know you not," he said. The words are not so dreadful as the awful condemnation of the slothful servant in the next parable, or of those that were set on the left hand in the prophecy of the judgment; it may be, we cannot tell, that they denote a milder doom. But this is a subject involved in the very deepest mystery.

It is enough for us if we feel the exceeding awfulness of those words, "The door was shut," and take into our hearts the solemn warning of the Lord, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." It must be very dreadful to be found unprepared, even if the lamp is not quite gone out, even if it had been burning brightly once. Very dreadful it must be to pray, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" and to obtain no answer save those awful words, "I know you not;" dreadful exceedingly, even if those words do not imply the extremest condemnation; still more dreadful—dreadful beyond the reach of thought, if they do mean perpetual exclusion from the presence of God in the great outer darkness. Therefore watch—watch and pray always.

LESSONS. 1. It is not enough to belong to the visible Church. We must grow in grace. 2. We must pray daily for the renewing of the Holy Ghost. 3. We must examine ourselves daily, not leave self-examination to the hour of sickness and approaching death. 4. The Lord cometh suddenly; therefore watch.

Vers. 14—30.—*The parable of the talents.* I. THE MASTER AND HIS SERVANTS. 1. *The Master's departure.* This parable is the complement of the last. The two together cover both sides of the Christian life—the contemplative and the active. The burning lamp represents the life of faith and worship kindled by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The trading represents the outward life of active work for Christ. Under all ordinary circumstances the two must be combined. A living faith cannot exist in the heart without manifesting itself in outward work; while active work for Christ's sake springs from that living faith, and loses all its worth and beauty if it becomes dissociated from faith and love. The two elements must coexist in all Christians; but they may be combined in different proportions, so that some are mainly men of action, others mainly men of contemplation. In large measure we must be both. We must keep the lamp of zeal and faith ever burning, and we must work for Christ. Christ himself was the man travelling into a far country. He was about to depart out of this world unto the Father. The parable relates primarily to the apostles, to whom it was spoken; then to the ministers of God's Holy Word and sacraments, who are his servants, who must work for him in his Church; then to all Christians, for all belong to Christ, being bought with his blood, and all have work to do for him. The Master was about to depart. He called his own servants. We must remember that those servants were not like servants now, as free as their masters. They were slaves, bought with their master's money; they belonged to him; their time, strength, ability, all were his. 2. *The Master's goods.* He delivered his goods to his servants; they were to trade with them. Slaves often earned money for their masters in various trades or professions. He entrusted large sums to them—five talents to one, three to another, one to a third. Here we notice one of the leading distinctions between this and the cognate parable in Luke xix. 12—27. There each of the ten servants received the same sum, a pound, a mina; here the sums entrusted to the servants differ greatly. The two parables supplement one another. That in St. Luke teaches that the necessary means of grace are given in like measure to all the servants of the King. They show various degrees of zeal and diligence in the use of them. The rewards of the great day will vary according to those varying degrees of faithfulness. The parable of the talents teaches a somewhat different lesson. "There are diversities of gifts" (1 Cor. xii. 4); "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers;" "But all these worketh one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The talents must represent first and chiefly spiritual gifts, such as those first granted on the great Day of Pentecost, the gifts necessary for the apostles of Christ, and in various degrees for those who have been called to continue the apostles' work. Those gifts are not given to all God's servants alike. The gifts of the Spirit differ; there are great differences in energy, zeal, strength of character, spiritual eloquence. "The Spirit divideth to every man severally as he will," according to the needs of the Church, according to the capacity of the individual servant. But, secondarily, the talents must also signify all the good gifts of God—health, time, intellectual powers, earthly riches, station, influence; these and such-like are his gifts, entrusted to us for a while, to be used, not for our own enjoyment, but for his service. They are bestowed in widely different measure. Each man's responsibility varies according to the greatness of the

gifts entrusted to him. 3. *The use made of them.* Straightway (according to what seems to be the best arrangement of the text) he who had received five talents went and traded with them. He lost no time; he felt the greatness of his trust, and set to work at once to do his best for his lord. He was successful; he made other five talents. The second servant was equally industrious, and in proportion equally successful; each gained cent. per cent.; each did his master's work faithfully. The third digged in the earth and hid his lord's money. He knew that the profit of his trading would not be his own; he did not care to labour for his lord. He represents those who neglect spiritual gifts, who do not stir up the gift of God that is in them, who quench the Spirit; and secondarily, those who use the good things of this world simply for themselves, not for the glory of God and the good of their fellow-men. The talent was hidden in the earth; buried amid worldly cares and worldly amusements. The unhappy man had received the grace of God in vain; he had wasted his earthly means upon his own selfish pleasures.

II. THE RECKONING. 1. *The first servant.* The lord cometh after a long time (another hint that the second advent was not to be expected immediately), and reckoneth with his servants. The first, to whom five talents had been entrusted, had gained other five talents. He brings them; he attributes his gains entirely to his lord's original gifts; "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents." He had worked; but it was the lord who had enabled him to work, who had given him the means. He represents the few highly gifted and eminently faithful Christians, such as St. Paul, who could say, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." The Lord recognized his diligence: "Well done," he said, in those precious words which thrill through the Christian's heart, filling him with high and blessed hope, "Well done, good and faithful servant." It is that highest praise, the praise of God, which the Christian should desire with all his heart and soul, heeding not the praise of men. He shall have that crowning praise who hath been faithful here, who ever regards himself as the Lord's servant, set here to work for God; who regards his powers, his means, whatever they may be, as his Lord's money, to be used in his Lord's service. Those gifts are "few things." Even the five talents, the great personal gifts, the vast means of doing good, which have been bestowed on some of the Lord's servants, are "few things," very small indeed compared with the glory and the blessedness reserved for the faithful. For those faithful ones shall be admitted into "the joy of their Lord," the Lord's own joy, the joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame. They shall sit with him in his throne; for he hath given them the glory which was given him of the Father. Heart of man cannot tell the entrancing rapture of that holiest joy. 2. *The second servant.* He too had done his best. His gains were less than those of the first servant, but he was not so richly endowed. He had been equally faithful; he had made the best use of his humbler gifts; he was as good and holy and noble-hearted a man as his more highly gifted brother. He is welcomed with the same high praise; he receives the like reward. It is faithfulness, not gifts, which will be considered in the great day. Many men of mean capacities and poor endowments will be among the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." 3. *The third servant.* He lingered to the last; his conscience was uneasy. But he could not escape his master's eye; he must render his account. He comes at length, but not in humility and self-abasement, confessing his sinful negligence; he comes with false excuses, trying to shift the blame from himself upon his lord. He knew, he said, that his master was a hard man, harsh and exacting; he required from his servants more than they could render, more than he had enabled them to render. He feared him; he would not trade with his talent, lest in the risks and uncertainties of business he should lose some portion of it; but he had kept it safe: there it was. His master, he implied, had no right to ask for more. So men argue, or pretend to argue, now. They will not work for the glory of God or for the good of souls. The real reason is sloth, selfish sloth; they will work only for themselves. But, like the slothful servant, they have their excuses; they are unequal, they say, to the work to which God's providence seems to call them; God's demands are so large, so deep-reaching; he requires more than weak human nature can give,

more than ought to be expected of them. They shrink from undertaking religious work, lest by failure in that work they incur the wrath of God and bring themselves into danger. So they do nothing for God. They own that they had hidden the talent, the grace once given to them, but at any rate they had not wasted it in riotous living or lost it by misfortunes in trade. They were free from gross offences. Their lives had been at least decent and respectable. Neither are they unbelievers; they own that the talent belonged to their Lord; he had given it them, and they would restore it. "There thou hast that is thine." They are no worse than others, they say, no worse than they have always been. They will not see that this excuse is false, that negative obedience is not sufficient. They are God's servants; they belong to him; their time, health, strength, money, intellect, are not their own; all these things are God's gifts, lent to them for a while; they must give an account of their use of them at the great day of reckoning. 4. *The judgment.* "Thou wicked and slothful servant." Those most awful words put into the clearest light the solemn truth that more than freedom from gross offences is needful for salvation. The slothful servant was wicked, for he had defrauded his lord; he had not given him that service which was his bounden duty; he had lived as if he were his own master, and had only himself to please. He was wicked, too, because he made these miserable excuses; because, instead of confessing his sin, he slandered his lord. The lord repeats the servant's words in righteous indignation; he judges him out of his own mouth. If he had been such as the servant falsely said, fear, if not love, should have urged the man to do his duty. If he had feared the risks of trading, at least he should have put his lord's money to the exchangers. The returns would have been small compared with the gains of the faithful servants; but even those small returns would have shown that the servant had taken some care of his lord's interests. The Lord seems to imply that those small returns would have been accepted. Any real work for Christ is better than spiritual sloth. Some Christians are abundant in their labours; all must work if they would be saved; if they have not the energy of a St. Paul, they must help those who are foremost in Christian work with their alms and with their prayers. They must at the least show their interest in their Master's cause in this way, if they are incapable of more active exertion. And work they must, every one, in accordance with their powers. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required;" but he also to whom little is given must use that little in his Master's service. The smallness of our gifts is no excuse for sloth. The most ignorant, the very poorest, can do something for their Lord. They may do much, for the value of the work is measured by its proportion to the worker's powers. The second servant received the same reward as the first, though his earnings were in themselves far less. The poor widow's two mites were more precious in the sight of God than the costly offerings of the rich. He that doth not use his talent must lose it. God's gifts cannot be neglected with impunity. The Gift of God, if not stirred up by constant use, will be taken away. It will be given to those who have worked faithfully. Others will step into the places of the unfaithful, will do the work which they have neglected, and obtain the reward which might have been theirs if they had done their duty. For it is a law of God's kingdom that "unto every one that hath shall be given." He giveth more grace—grace for grace. Grace is ours when it is used; then it is wrought into the character; then we have it. "And to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." He hath, and yet he hath not. God had given him that grace without which we can do nothing, but he hath not made it his own by diligent use. It must be taken from him in the righteous judgment of God. The grace of God cannot lie dormant in the heart. If it is not valued, if it is not used, it must be taken away. But the loss of the talent was not the only punishment. We hear again those dreadful words which the Lord had uttered twice already (ch. viii. 12; xxiv. 51), which he repeated, we may be sure, in mercy, to warn us of the sinner's doom, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

LESSONS. 1. We are all God's servants; all alike have a work to do for him; all must do it. 2. All that we have is his, whether external gifts, or personal endowments, or gifts of the Spirit; all must be used in his service. 3. The joy of our Lord is blessed beyond the power of thought. Then work for Christ; it is faithful work,

not apparent success, which determines the reward. 4. The condemnation of the slothful servant is awful exceedingly. Then work while there is time.

Vers. 31—46.—*The last judgment.* I. THE JUDGE. 1. *His glory.* The Lord was sitting on the Mount of Olives, looking sadly back upon the holy city and the temple which he had finally left. He had been rejected by the hierarchy of the chosen nation; the shadow of the cross was falling on him; in three days would come the awful agony and the tremendous sacrifice. He knew all this with the clear calm knowledge of Divine omniscience; but his thoughts dwelt, that Tuesday afternoon, not on his own sufferings now so near, but on the great results of his incarnation and atonement which were to be manifested in the far-distant future, the salvation of his chosen, and, alas! the condemnation of the impenitent. With the cross in near prospect, he speaks of himself as the King—the king of all nations; the Son of man indeed, still in our human nature, for the two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and the manhood, once joined together in the one Person of Christ, were never thenceforth to be divided; but coming in his glory, himself in that body of glory of which a passing glimpse had been vouchsafed to the three most favoured apostles on the Mount of the Transfiguration, surrounded by the holy angels, his attendants and ministers. Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, that great white throne which St. John saw in that awful vision of the great day which was revealed to him for our instruction and warning. No human words could describe the glory of the Judge. St. John could only say that from his face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 2. *The gathering of all nations before him.* The parables of the virgins and the talents are parables of judgment; but they deal with a portion only of the tremendous subject. Judgment, St. Peter says, "must begin at the house of God." These two parables embrace in their range only Christian people, those who have gone forth to meet the heavenly Bridegroom, and the immediate servants of the Lord. The first parable represents the judgment of the inner life of the soul; the second, the judgment of the outward life of obedience or idleness. Each parable reveals to us one of the many aspects of that tremendous assize. Now parable passes into prophecy. A wider scene is opened out—the judgment of the whole world. Our thoughts are no longer to be concentrated on a portion only of the vast multitude. All nations are gathered together before the Son of man; quick and dead alike; all the countless millions that have been born unto the world from the Creation to the great day; every one from Adam the first man to the new-born babe; all, summoned by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, gathered together by the attendant angels, all shall stand before the Judge. His eye will range over those countless hosts. He knows the whole history of each individual. The books of which we read in the Revelation represent the infinite knowledge of God. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." The Judge will divide the thronging crowds with unerring accuracy, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. The division will be as easy to the Almighty Judge; the differences, often almost invisible to us, as clearly marked in his sight. "He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

II. THE BLESSED. 1. *The welcome.* The Lord describes himself as the heavenly King. He knew that in three days the mocking title, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," would be set above his head as he hung dying on the cross. But he knew also, in his inmost consciousness, that he was indeed King of kings and Lord of lords. The kingdom of heaven was his by right. It was he who should hereafter open that kingdom to the blessed: "Come, ye blessed of my Father," he will say. Come; for it is his will that his chosen should be with him to behold his glory, and to share his glory. Come; for their salvation is his joy, the joy for which he endured the cross. He bringeth home rejoicing the sheep that once was lost. He saith unto his friends, "Rejoice with me." Come; for he loveth them with an everlasting love, a love stronger than death. He calls them blessed, "Ye blessed of my Father;" for the Father had pronounced them blessed. He had chosen them by his electing grace; he had given them to the only begotten Son; they were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." He bids them take possession of the kingdom

—the kingdom of glory, that glory which passeth all that eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or that hath entered into the heart of man. That kingdom had been prepared for them from the foundation of the world; even before the world was (Eph. i. 4), God knew, in the fulness of his Divine omniscience, each elected spirit, and predestinated each to be conformed to the image of his Son. The kingdom had long been theirs in the purpose of God; now it was to be theirs in possession. 2. *The ground of the welcome.* They had loved the Lord; they had tended him (he said) in distress and sorrow; they had laid him, the Lord God Almighty, under obligations by their love and tenderness. He would reward them now. The righteous are bewildered with that wondrous welcome. It is a joy almost too great for them to bear—a sweetness so penetrating that the heart well-nigh faints in the intensity of its rapture. They knew that nothing they had done could deserve that unutterable blessedness now opened to their view. They can see, as they look back on their past lives, no deeds so good and holy as the Lord had said. They had learned of him the grace of humility, those of them who were Christians; those who had not heard the gospel (for surely many heathen men will be among the number of the blessed) had shown the law of love written in their hearts, and were a law unto themselves, doing by nature things contained in the Law (Rom. ii. 14, 15). None of them fully understood the preciousness of acts of unselfish love. They felt their own shortcomings; in their self-abasement they had ever thought themselves the chief of sinners. But the King now shows to them the meaning of their deeds of love. Charity, that chiefest of graces, springs out of faith. It looks to Christ, and rests in Christ as its ultimate centre. It is so, in some sense, even with the good deeds of heathen men; for Christ is the Saviour of all men. Christ died for all men; and all who in truth and earnestness seek after God, consciously or unconsciously, follow Christ. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body." The judgment will be, as Holy Scripture says in many places, according unto works; but those works spring out of faith, and derive their whole spiritual value from the faith and love which prompted them. The Lord, in this place, speaks of one class only of holy deeds. He does not exclude other Christian graces, other forms of obedience. All will, we may be sure, be taken into account in the judgment. But in this prophecy, as in many of his parables, the Lord takes one aspect of God's dealings with mankind. He insists on that one aspect, and impresses it forcibly upon his hearers. One important truth is best driven home by being presented alone; other balancing truths can be taught on other occasions. We must study the Scriptures as a whole. One part explains another; one part suggests the necessary qualifications for the interpretation of another.

III. THE LOST. 1. *The condemnation.* "Depart from me, ye cursed." Very awful and tremendous words. All the more so as coming from his mouth who bade all men, "Come unto me;" who came not into the world "to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." He had loved those lost souls; he had called them again and again; he had wept over their hardness and unbelief. But they would not come unto him that they might have life. They resisted the Holy Ghost; they closed their eyes in wilful blindness; they persevered in disobedience till their heart was hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and there was no more hope of amendment. Now they must depart from him whom in life they would not hear; they must depart, and that into the eternal fire prepared (not for them; it was not the will of God that any should perish; he willeth that all men should be saved) "for the devil and his angels." They had loved darkness rather than light; they must dwell in the great outer darkness away from the light of God's presence. They had listened to the tempting voice of Satan; they must share his doom. 2. *The ground of condemnation.* They had done no good; they had lived only for themselves. They had seen sorrow and distress and poverty all around them; they had shown no love, no pity, no sympathy. And in neglecting the poor, the afflicted, they had neglected Christ the Lord. For the poor are his representatives. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord;" and he that careth not for the poor careth not for Christ, who is present in his poor, who bids us love one another as he hath loved us. They who have no pity on the poor would not have ministered to the Lord if they had lived when he had not where to lay his head, when holy women ministered to him of their substance. And

these shall go away into eternal punishment. They are not accused of any crime—of theft, or murder, or impurity; but they were without love, and he that loveth not knoweth not God who is love, and cannot enter into heaven which is the home of love. It is a most solemn thought that this tremendous condemnation was incurred, not by crime, not by actual sin, but by neglect of duty, by selfishness and want of love. Let us rouse ourselves to a sense of the danger of selfishness; let us covet earnestly the best gifts, especially that highest gift of love. "The righteous shall go into life eternal." It is love, the Lord saith, which is the mark of the blessed; "charity never faileth."

LESSONS. 1. The Lord is at hand. He shall sit on the throne of his glory. On which side shall we be set—on the right hand or on the left? 2. "Come, ye blessed." There is no joy so intense, so rapturous; may it be ours! 3. Then follow after charity. 4. "Depart from me, ye cursed." There is no misery so awful; God in his mercy save us from it! 5. Then follow Christ the Lord; love the brethren; imitate the example of the King.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

VERS. 1—13.—*The ten virgins.* I. CHRIST INVITES HIS CHURCH TO SHARE HIS JOY. Here is a festal occasion, and the joy and splendour of it will not be complete unless the virgin-friends of the bride go forth to meet the bridegroom with their lamps illuminating the gay scene. More than once is the gospel gladness compared to that of a wedding. Under such an image the service and the warfare of life are for the moment forgotten, and its bright, glad side is brought to light. This too is to be seen in the kingdom of heaven, and its happiness is to be shared by Christ's people.

II. WE NEED PREPARATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JOY OF OUR LORD. The virgins must not only be in wedding array, they must have their lamps trimmed and fed for the illuminated procession. The wise virgins were thoughtful enough to take oil for the further supply of their lamps. The preparation of these lamps was a preliminary work. The soul must be prepared to enter into Christ's joy by kindling the flame of devotion, and by providing the oil of grace to feed this flame. If there is no grace on earth there can be no glory in heaven.

III. IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE INADEQUATE PREPARATION. The foolish virgins had their lamps and lit them. There must have been some oil in them. But there was no further supply. If the bridegroom had not tarried, all would have been well. It was his delay that was so fatal. The foolish virgins are like the rocky ground on which the seed sprang up quickly, but on which the green plant only endured for a short time. They represent persons of brief, temporary religious experience. These people have no stores of grace to fall back on. Time reveals their shallowness. We may have grace to live passably for a short time, but the requisite is to endure to the end; to be shining in the light of God whenever Christ shall come.

IV. DILIGENCE IN THE FUTURE CANNOT ATONE FOR NEGLIGENCE IN THE PAST. Seeing that their lamps are going out, the foolish virgins apply for help from their wise sisters. But these virgins are too prudent to part with any of their precious oil. Their conduct strikes us as selfish. But it is human, and as such it is a warning against neglecting God's grace and trusting to the tender mercies of our fellow-creatures. Moreover, in the spiritual region we cannot transfer grace. The wise virgins recommend an impossible course, in ignorance, or as a rebuke, or to relieve themselves of the unpleasant importunity of the other five. The course is impossible. The shops are shut at night. Lost opportunities never return.

V. CHRIST MUST DISOWN THOSE WHO WERE ONCE HIS PEOPLE IF THEY HAVE CEASED TO POSSESS HIS GRACE. In their dismay and bewilderment, the foolish virgins clamour for admission to the wedding feast, even though they have not their lamps, for "the bridegroom is so sweet." But they are refused. Does the conduct of the bridegroom seem harsh, the punishment too severe? Let us observe that all things are in proportion. If the offence is slight—only forgetting to fill vessels with oil, so also is the penalty—only to miss a family festival. Translate this into the spiritual realm, and both sides become proportionately aggravated. The offence is negligence as to the

exhaustion of grace; the penalty, exclusion from the joy of Christ. Each is negative; each is serious.

VI. CHRISTIANS NEED TO CULTIVATE A WATCHFUL SPIRIT. The ten virgins must be all Christians, for they all belong to the intimate circle of friends, and they all have lamps alight at first. The fault of the foolish ones is negligence, carelessness, caused, one would say, by comparative indifference. It is well to be always watchful; but if, like all the ten, we sometimes sleep, at least let us see that we have provided for coming need.—W. F. A.

Vers. 14—30.—*The parable of the talents.* This parable is naturally associated with that of the ten virgins. In both we have the time for preparation, the crisis of judgment, the differences of conduct, and subsequent results. But this second parable treats of higher responsibilities and graver issues. Here we have a specific trust; the duty is more than watching, it is diligent working; and the rewards and punishments are proportionately greater. We pass from the joys of the kingdom and the possibility of missing them, to the serious duties of the kingdom and the great honours and heavy penalties that follow obedience and negligence.

I. THE TALENTS ENTRUSTED. 1. *The significance of the talents.* This parable has given a secondary meaning to the very word "talent" in the literature of Christendom—a meaning which has come to supersede its original application, so that a talent with us is not a sum of money, but a power or faculty, and a talented person is a person highly endowed with natural gifts. In the large use of the word by our Lord the talent is anything that gives scope and facility for service—intellect, wealth, position, etc. 2. *The variety of the talent.* Some are more richly endowed than others. Nothing is more false to nature than the doctrinaire theory of equality. There is the greatest possible inequality, not only in the distribution of property—which is often owing to man's injustice, but in the providential bestowal of personal gifts. 3. *The trust of the talents.* The owner takes a journey into another country, and leaves his property with his servants. God is not really absent, but his presence is not apparent, and he leaves scope and freedom for the right use of what he has entrusted to men.

II. THE SERVANTS' CONDUCT. 1. *The diligent servants.* Two do their best with what is committed to their charge, and work equally well, each just doubling his capital. (1) God expects active service, and not merely negative innocence. (2) Our powers and faculties are not our own; they are to be used for God. (3) These gifts grow with use, and to ourselves the natural and the chief result of diligent service is the enlargement of our own powers. (4) The best service must be proportionate to our natural gifts. The man with two talents can only make two more, not five; yet he works as well as his more gifted companion. 2. *The slothful servant.* This man had but one talent. If he had possessed more he might have been inspired to some enthusiasm. (1) There is a temptation to neglect small gifts. (2) It is wicked to be slothful. (3) Inability is no excuse for indolence, because all have some powers for service.

III. THE FINAL ACCOUNT. This must be rendered. The owner will return to his estate, though he may be long absent. God will call all his servants to account for the use they make of their powers and opportunities. 1. *The reward of fidelity.* (1) This is for faithfulness in service, not merely in keeping what is committed to us. (2) It takes the form of a larger trust. 2. *The punishment of indolence.* The idle man has his excuse, but it is a false one. The Master does not reap where he has not sown; for he gave the talents which were to be the seed of more wealth. (1) Neglected gifts are withdrawn. If we will not use our faculties, we shall lose them. (2) The indolent servant is cast into darkness and despair. He might have done well. Not positive sin alone, but neglect to do our duty in God's service, will be heavily punished.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Good and faithful servants.* We cannot but be struck with the cheerful tone of these generous words. They encourage us to look to the brighter side of Christian life and work. This is not all failure. It is largely fruitful and acceptable to God.

I. THERE ARE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS OF GOD. No age in the history of the Church has been without such people. Even when the five-talented men are scarce,

men of two talents have abounded, and have proved their fidelity by their fruitful industry. It is well for us to be on the look out for these worthy servants of God, that we may recognize and honour them. They are the salt of the earth; they show us that God has not left himself without witness. It is especially pleasing to see men of the greatest endowments laying all their gifts out in the service of God. A truly Christian statesman or a poet of leading rank presents to us an inspiring sight of faithful service in high places. But the service may be equally true in the humblest walks of life. There is no reason why the man of one talent should not be as faithful as the man of five talents.

II. GOD GENEROUSLY RECOGNIZES THE MERITS OF HIS TRUE SERVANTS. Here we read of unstinted praise lavished upon them. It is true that no men have absolute merit with God, that all of us are sinful, and that all our good work is marred with evil. Any good in the work we have done is only accomplished by means of the grace of God, and therefore we must say, "Not unto us, but unto thy Name be the glory." Yes; the glory is all God's. Still there is room for effort and fidelity. God acknowledges these qualities, and when he sees them he rejoices over them. In his great judgment he will generously acknowledge them.

III. THE GROUNDS OF DIVINE REWARDS ARE IN THE CHARACTER OF THE SERVICE RENDERED. These are not found in the amount of work considered by itself. God does not give men wages. Nor does the system of payment by "piece-work" obtain in the kingdom of heaven. God's method is to take account of character, of motive, of the way in which a person makes use of what is entrusted to him. Thus they who produce most results will not be honoured more than those people whose efforts result in less visible effects, but who are equally faithful with their smaller gifts. Still there is a sort of "payment by results." God looks for fruit. Fidelity cannot be sterile. The faithful servant will certainly have something to show for his efforts, though it may not be all he hoped for, or anything like what men demanded of him.

IV. GOD REWARDS HIS GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS BY COMMITTING A LARGE MINISTRY TO THEIR CHARGE. Instead of talents, these servants are to have cities. Fidelity in small things proves the character and trains the powers, and so prepares for service in large things. Now, this enlarged service is the best reward that can be offered to the diligent servant. Such a man does not desire to be released from responsibility. The paradise of idleness would be no heaven to him. He has a reward which would be a purgatory to the indolent man. Here lies the way to the joy of the Lord. They share God's joy who serve in God's kingdom, and the joy is greatest when the service is most full.—W. F. A.

Ver. 29.—*The Divine law of increase.* Jesus Christ here enunciates a deep and far-reaching principle. It is one which at first sight may strike us as harsh and even as unjust; yet a little consideration should reveal its absolute equity. So great and important a law cannot be without its serious lessons of warning and encouragement.

I. THE SCOPE OF THE LAW. 1. *In external nature.* We not only see the survival of the fittest, but its propagation and extension. Those plants and animals which are most suited to their circumstances not only flourish best; they multiply greatly. Moreover, it is just in them that we are to look for the appearance of new and more advantageous modifications of structure. 2. *In our bodily life.* The athlete strengthens his muscles with exercise. The musical ear becomes more musical by listening to music. On the other hand, the muscle of the feeble invalid who is not strong enough to take exercise dwindles away, and the senses that are not used become dull and blind. 3. *In our mental faculties.* The powerful intellect of the thinker grows stronger by his thinking, while the feeble intellect of the dullard becomes weaker by neglect. 4. *In spiritual experience.* The life of communion with God grows deeper and larger the more truly it is lived. 5. *In Christian work.* This is what our Lord had especially in mind when he proclaimed his great law. It is by working for God that we grow strong in God. Thus if there is a rivalry between the contemplative and the active life in religion, our Lord would seem to favour the latter as the more fruitful in good to the Christian himself.

II. THE JUSTICE OF THE LAW. A similar principle seems to be at work among human affairs where it issues in most hard and cruel results, and where it certainly

appears to be unjust. Thus the capitalist is enabled to enlarge his business, while the poor tradesman who needs an increase much more is not able to go forward at all. Great houses tend to monopolize commerce which once divided itself among many shops, and the larger the business is the more people flock to it and add still more to its gigantic proportions. Thus the successful man wins favour, while the failing man who wants it much more fails to get it. All this looks unfair. We must recognize, however, that it only deals with the external life. That earthly means should lead to earthly results is natural. But there are higher regions where the injustice is counteracted. The successful man of the world may be a dismal failure in his higher life. Here the law works justly. It is right that a man's future should grow out of his present conduct. In the parable of the talents it is not the mere possession of the talents, but the use of them, that determines the retributive treatment. The man of five talents is not rewarded because he holds the five, but because he multiplies them. It is the second five acquired by his own industry, not the first five received as a gift, that occasions his further honour and enrichment. God will give more according to what we have attained in our own spiritual life. In this there is no injustice, but much more than justice, for we could not claim the increase. It is added by God's great bounty in graciously rewarding faithful service.—W. F. A.

Vers. 31—46.—*The judgment of the nations.* The two earlier parables of judgment refer to those who are in confessed relationship with God. The parable of the ten virgins represents the relationship of friendship,—that of people who would share in the joys of God's home, as friends at a wedding feast; the parable of the talents represents a less intimate relationship,—that of service; the talents are committed to their proprietor's "own servants." Now the scene changes, and we are brought out to the larger world of the nations; the judgment of those who do not know Christ as their Friend or consciously serve him as their Master is here typified. To Jews this would mean the judgment of the Gentiles; to Christians it represents the judgment of the heathen, with those, also, who live in Christendom, but who do not give their adherence to any of the Churches.

I. CHRIST WILL JUDGE THE WORLD. 1. *There will be a judgment of the world.* This is not to be confined to the Church; it will not be only for those who acknowledge Christ. We cannot escape from it by ignoring the rule of Christ. The most heedless and careless, the most worldly and unspiritual, the most sceptical and materialistic, will be brought before the bar of the universal judgment. 2. *This judgment will be in the hands of Christ.* It will be conducted by the "Son of man," who, even when acting as a Judge, is to be regarded as a Shepherd dividing his flocks. Therefore the judgment will be conducted with humanity and with sympathy, with the discrimination of knowledge gained in experience.

II. THE JUDGMENT OF CHRIST WILL RESULT IN A TWOFOLD DIVISION. 1. *There will be two classes.* All are not condemned; but all are not approved. Even Jesus with all his graciousness must reprobate what is wrong. His gospel is not a security of salvation for the sinful impenitent. 2. *There will be but two.* These are the main divisions. All characters tend either downward or upward. We are all either in the narrow way or in the broad way—either sheep or goats. 3. *These classes will be separated.* At present they are united. There will be a revelation and a division, and each man will then go to his own place.

III. THE GROUND OF JUDGMENT WILL BE MEN'S CONDUCT TOWARDS OTHER PEOPLE. It will not be a profession of religion, nor a creed, nor a performance of acts of worship. Christ looks chiefly to conduct in the world. He takes what is done to one of his brethren as the test. This is just the same as if it were done to him, because he is so perfectly sympathetic, that he feels what is done to his brother exactly as though it were done to himself. The rule is for the judgment of the heathen and those outside the Church of Christ. More is expected of Christ's own confessed followers—lamps well supplied with oil of grace, and faithful use of entrusted talents. But such people cannot be excused from what is expected even of the heathen. We can all best serve Christ by ministering to his brethren. This is what he most cares for.

IV. THE JUDGMENT WILL RESULT IN BLESSEDNESS AND PUNISHMENT. 1. *There is the joy of the kingdom for the sheep on the right hand.* It is remarkable to see that the

kingdom was prepared for such from the foundation of the world. From the first its blessings were for many who are not in any visible Church, for many who do not know themselves to be Christians. 2. *There is punishment for the goats on the left hand.* The hard and selfish are those who receive this punishment. They will not escape it because of their ignorance or their refusal to recognize Christ. It will be unbearably awful.—W. F. A.

Ver. 46.—*The eternal future.* This is a fearful subject, and one from which we naturally shrink. Yet if Christ spoke of it he must desire us to study his words; if what he said was true, we can only neglect it at our peril. The difficulty is to take his words just for what he meant them to teach us, without over-weighting them with the fantastic horrors of the mediæval imagination, and also without diminishing their force when we have set them free from those monkish accretions.

I. THE DREADFUL DOOM. 1. *This is called punishment.* The word in the Greek is not the strongest term that could have been employed, viz. one that stands for vengeance. It is a word that generally signifies chastisement, *i.e.* remedial punishment. But whether such an idea was in the mind of our Lord it is impossible for us to say, especially as he did not speak in Greek, but used the less definite Aramaic language. It is sufficient to know that his language plainly teaches (1) that there will be suffering in the future for those who are hard and selfish in this life; and (2) that this suffering will be justly apportioned according to character. Of its nature Jesus says little, but his dreadful words about "wailing and gnashing of teeth" show that it must be very severe—a suffering to be avoided by all means as a fearful evil. 2. *This is to be eternal.* The adjective is indefinite; though it is frequently used for what is everlasting, it is not always so employed, and a stronger term, which plainly means "endless," is not applied to future punishment. We can infer nothing positively from the usage of the word in regard to the question of the possible termination of future punishment. On the one hand, it cannot be said that it forbids all hope; on the other, it must be affirmed that it offers no hope. It presents a dark prospect stretching out into the ages of the future, and it shows no gleam of light beyond it. It is not wise for us to dogmatize on what God has left thus veiled.

II. THE GLORIOUS REWARD. 1. It is *personal.* Life is not a possession like money or lands, which can be detached and valued separately. It is in ourselves. God's best gift is within the soul. 2. It is *positive.* Here is more than rest after toil and peace after storm. A gift of actual energy is suggested to us. Life has its powers and faculties. This life of God is more than existence in the future, for St. John tells us that some men on earth have it, and that others have it not (1 John v. 12). While its full development is for the future, it begins here and now. It is the life of God in the soul, the powers and energies of the spiritual nature. The prospect of such a life teaches us that we do not yet know what it is to live; the future will unfold possibilities not yet even dreamed of. 3. *This too is to be eternal.* Its endurance rests on a better foundation than the endurance of the punishment, though the same adjective is used for both states, for it rests on the everlasting love of God. Still the word "eternal" in its vast vagueness points to the life growing and expanding in the future ages, so far on that we cannot trace its remotest future. That is the glorious future of "the righteous;" and "the righteous" are just those who minister to their needy fellow-men.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—13.—*Parable of the ten virgins.* This parable illustrates chiefly these three things: the meaning of our Lord's command to watch; its reason; and the means of fulfilling it.

I. IT SHOWS US THAT IT DOES NOT MEAN, BE ALWAYS ON THE WATCH, BUT, BE ALWAYS PREPARED. The fisherman's wife who spends her time on the pier-head watching for the boats cannot be so well prepared to give her husband a comfortable reception as the woman who is busy about her household work, and only now and again turns a longing look seaward. Our life is to bear evidence that one of the things we take into account is the approach of our Lord.

II. IT ILLUSTRATES ALSO THE REASON OF THE COMMAND. No one can tell when the second great interruption of the world's even course is to take place. It may be

nearer than some expect; or it may be more distant. The virgins who neglected to carry oil were those who expected the bridegroom would soon appear. It is your baseless supposition that the Lord will not come quickly that betrays *you* into carelessness. If any one feels that this comes to no more than an appeal to fear, it can only be said in reply that the expectation of Christ's coming does not give rise only to fear, but also to hope; that it braces the Christian energies, and, in accordance with human nature, quickens the spiritual life. The expectation of Christ's coming becomes merged in the sense of his presence.

III. IT SHOWS US HOW WE ARE TO PREPARE FOR MEETING THE LORD. The lamps of the virgins were meant to add brilliancy to the scene. They were in keeping with it. Everything in us that heartily welcomes Christ's presence, and heartily rises to do him honour, everything that will seem a suitable accompaniment in the triumph of a holy Redeemer, is a preparation for Christ's coming.

Passing, however, to some detail brought before us in the parable, we are at once brought face to face with the warning that all who may at one time show preparedness for Christ's presence do not in the end show the same. The folly of the foolish virgins consisted in this—that they lit their lamps, but made no provision for feeding them: the flame was to all appearance satisfactory, but the source of it was defective. They are a warning to all who are tempted to make conversion everything, edification nothing; who can remember the time when they had very serious thoughts and very solemn resolutions, but have made no earnest effort, and are making none, to maintain within themselves the life they once began. The wise are those who recognize that they must have within them that which shall enable them to endure to the end; not only impressions, right impulses, tender feelings, but ineradicable beliefs and principles which will at all times produce all right impulse and feeling, and bring us into contact with Christ and with things unseen. Another hint may be accepted from this part of the parable—that there must be regard paid both to the outward and inward life. On the one hand, if you do not renew your supply of grace, if you do not carefully see to the condition of your own spirit, your good works will soon become less frequent, less sincere, and less lovely, your flame will burn low. But on the other hand, if you tend only the life of your own soul, if you are not letting your light shine before and *upon* men, then you will soon find it impossible to receive oil, your internal life, the graces of your own spirit, will languish and stagnate. If you are to be prepared to meet your Lord, the vessel of oil is not enough without the burning lamp, nor the lamp merely lighted and with no supply of oil. This being the distinction between the wise and foolish virgins, that which brings it to light is that the bridegroom did not come while all the lamps were burning, and that during his delay they all slumbered and slept. This seems to mean no more than that all having made such preparation as they judged sufficient, calmly and securely waited the approach of the bridegroom. But the security which is excusable and the repose which is necessary in one condition is in another utter madness. It is one thing to turn away your attention from the Person and coming of Christ when you have made sure you are prepared to meet him, and altogether another thing to turn your attention to other things in mere thoughtless security. But we may learn from the slumber of the wise as well as from the rash sleep of the foolish. There is a kind of sleep in which the sense of hearing at least is on the alert, and takes note of the one sound it waits for. Whatever necessary occupation turns our direct attention from the approach of our Lord, there should still be an openness of sense in his direction, an inwrought though latent expectation of his coming, a consciousness which but a whisper will arouse. "At midnight the cry is heard, Behold the bridegroom cometh!" And now the difference between the really and apparently prepared is manifested. This sudden and appalling reversal of their hopes, this mingling at a marriage feast of exultant joy and the most melancholy and calamitous ruin, seems intended to fix in our minds an idea opposite to, and that should extirpate, the idle fancy that things somehow will come all right, that there is no real need of all this urgent warning and watching. Men cannot believe that out of a life that may be jested or trifled away consequences so lasting and so awful can possibly flow. You may defer all seriousness, all thought of God, all trying of your hope and security till the coming of your Lord, but further you cannot defer it, then it will be made manifest that this life *has* momentous issues.

Then it is not an easy, lazy turning to one's neighbour for help that will do any good. Those who are *ready* pass in to the marriage, and "the door is shut." A new thing it is for that door to be shut. So long has it stood open, thrown wide back, that we forget there is a door that can shut that entrance. But the time comes when whosoever will shall not be saved, when it will be vain pointing men to the door, when whosoever is outside there remains. The great lesson our Lord himself draws from the parable is that since we know not the day nor the hour of his coming, our only safety is to watch through them all. And for those who have found in Christ salvation and life, the expectation of his speedy coming can only be grateful and stimulating. It is this which *occupies* the future; whenever you look in that direction it is the Person of Christ that meets the eye. He teaches us to look forward from the sorest day of our lives to that certain day when we shall meet and enjoy himself, and enter into that joy that is satisfying his ample nature. From the saddest, darkest night he bids us watch for that morning that shall more surely rise upon us than to-morrow's sun.—D.

Vers. 14—30.—*The parable of the talents.* There are three parables which illustrate the relation of work and wages in the kingdom of heaven—the labourers in the vineyard, the pounds, and the talents. What this parable chiefly illustrates is that men are rewarded, not solely in proportion to the quantity of work produced, but that their ability and the means at their disposal are taken into account. And in order that this life be a fair field for the test of fidelity, two or three things are requisite, and these are noted in the parable.

I. What is committed to our trust is no trifle, but the *goods* of our Lord—all he has on earth—whatever can produce on earth the fruit he himself wrought for and died for. There is no interest of his carried forward without the labour of men; if his servants cease to work, his cause on earth is at an end.

II. The Master distributes his goods "according to the several ability" of his servants. Each gets what each can conveniently and effectively handle, and no one is expected to produce results out of proportion to his ability and his means.

III. It is only "after a long time that the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." They are not summoned to a reckoning while yet embarrassed by the novelty of their position; they have time to consider, to wait opportunities, to try experiments. The wise have time to lay up great gains, and even the foolish to have learnt wisdom.

It is not without significance that the servant who did nothing at all for his master was he who had received but one talent. This is the peculiar temptation of the man who has little ability. By showing no interest in that situation in life that God has seen fit he should fill, he would have us believe he is qualified for a higher. You are in the same condemnation when you refuse to do anything because you cannot do a great deal; when you refuse to help where you cannot lead; when you hesitate about aiding in some work because those with whom you would be associated in it do it better and show better in the doing of it than yourself. This miserable fear of being mediocre, how many a good work has it prevented or crippled! The insolence of this man's words is not intentional. He reads off correctly his own state of mind, and fancies that his conduct is appropriate and innocent. *All* wrongness of conduct *is* at bottom based on a wrong view of God. Nothing so conduces to right action as right thoughts about God. If we think, with this servant, that God is hard, grudging to give, never really delighting in our efforts after good, and that whatever we attempt in our life he will coldly weigh and scorn, then manifestly we have no heart to labour for him. But this view of God is unpardonably wrong, for the very heartiness with which the other servants were greeted refutes it. Moreover, the action flowing from it is inconsistent. If the Master is so slow to recognize sincere effort, so oppressive in his exactions, why did you not at least put your money into the hands of men who would have found a use for it and paid you a good interest? There are numberless ways in which the most slenderly equipped among us can fulfil the suggestion here given. There is no lack of great works going on for our Lord to which we may safely attach ourselves, and in which our talent is rather invested for us than left to our own discretion. The parable does not acknowledge any servants who have absolutely nothing. There is something to be done which precisely you can do, something by

doing which you will please him whose pleasure in you will fill your nature with gladness; it *is* given to you to increase your Lord's goods. See, then, that you be not burying your talent. Money is made for circulation; so is grace. Yet some men might as well have no grace for all the good it does; it is carefully wrapped up, as if encounter with the world would fret its edges and lower its value. What, then, is the result of this? The great law is enforced, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." And in the kingdom of Christ this law is self-acting, as it is also in our own bodies and in all matters physical. The muscle that is unused dwindles and disappears; no one needs to come and remove it; want of use removes it. So it is with every faculty—bodily, mental, or spiritual. Yet how many think they can retain just so much godliness and no more! How many think they are hitting the right mean between over-righteousness and worldliness! This is proof that there is something radically wrong in their notion of the kingdom and work of Christ. You cannot possibly have just so much grace and no more; it must grow, or it will die. The reward is as certain, and provided for by the same great law, as the punishment. Beginning with such grace as you have, there lies before you the possibility of indefinite increase, if you do what you have power to do—resolutely crush out what you know to be your weaknesses and faults, and seek to have your whole life gathered up into some ascertained and intelligible connection with Christ. This increase of grace is itself the reward, or at any rate the essential part of it. The talents gained are left in the hands that gained them, and wider opportunities for their use afforded. The faithful servant of Christ is always entering upon his reward, and entrance into heaven only marks the point at which his Lord expresses his approval, and raises him to a position of acknowledged trustworthiness, the position of one who has acquired an interest in the work, whose joy is his Lord's joy—joy in advancing man's best interests, joy in the sight of others made righteously happy. There can be no reward more certain, for it begins here. No one need tell *you* there is no heaven; the kingdom of heaven *is* within you. It is also the best you could picture to yourself. The reward a person in sickness receives for careful attention to every prescription of his physician is that he becomes healthy. If you ask—What is it that makes life worth living, which we can set before us as our sufficient reward and aim? the answer can only be that we have the hope of becoming satisfactory persons, of becoming perfect as our Father is perfect, who needs no reward, but delights in being and doing good, who loves, and is therefore blessed.—D

Vers. 31—46.—*The judgment.* No human imagination avails to grasp the conception of the judgment of a world—the great white throne, the voice of the archangel, the generations of all time gathering from all quarters. There is one feature of the judgment which is here and elsewhere made prominent—that Christ himself is to be Judge. The Father hath given him authority to *execute judgment* also, "*because* he is the Son of man." Jesus Christ is that Person through whom God has seen fit to transact with men from the first, and it will be so to the end. It is in the Person of Christ that God has been accepted or rejected of men; and it is fit that in this Person also men be accepted or rejected of God. We shall be judged by One who can read our soul with his own human knowledge of men and their ways. There are only two points in this great subject which will now be taken up: (1) the duration of the doom pronounced; (2) the grounds on which it proceeds.

I. Round these words of our Lord a sea of controversy has continually raged. In every generation there are numbers who explicitly declare that they cannot believe in the everlasting punishment of any of their fellow-creatures. And although many do so from mere thoughtlessness, in others it arises from the feeling that it would be inconsistent with their own expectation of happiness, and with their best ideas of God. Men of feeble imagination, to whom the doctrine is little more than a form of words, have little temptation to rebel against it. But there are others to whom it makes life an intolerable misery; and rather than resign all mental comfort and happiness, they resign their belief in eternal punishment. But belief is not to be determined by our wish, but by Scripture and reason. If we turn to our Lord's teaching, and try to make out whether he taught universal restoration, the distinct conclusion seems to be that he did not. His words here are a fair sample of his teaching on this point, and

apparently he meant by them to convey the impression which every simple-minded, unbiassed reader receives from them, that the duration of the punishment of the lost equalled the duration of the blessedness of the saved. The word translated "everlasting" in the one clause and "eternal" in the other is the same in both clauses. And though this is scarcely the place to discuss the meaning of a Greek word, so much has been said of the proper translation of the word being "age-long," that it is necessary to guard against the accepting of such an account as sufficient. Even in its first original sense there is prominent the idea of enduring to the end, of permanence. So that in the course of time it became the commonest term to express that which lasts, in opposition to that which passes away. It occurs everywhere in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the purpose of which Epistle is to bring out the enduring, permanent, absolute, final, eternal nature of the Christian religion in opposition to the temporary, transient nature of the Old Testament dispensation. Plato falls into almost the very language of Paul, and says of the heavens and the earth that these visible things are temporal, but the unseen is eternal, abides; and in saying this he uses the word used here. But no doubt besides its application to what is absolutely eternal, as to God himself, the word may legitimately be applied to epochs long but not eternal. But unquestionably it conveys the idea that what is spoken of will last so long as its subject lasts unless something is said to the contrary. The bliss promised and the punishment threatened would be understood to last so long as the subject of them lasts unless an *explicit* intimation were given that it would not be so. But so far from this, the New Testament everywhere implies that the state of things introduced by Christ and his work is a final and permanent state, suitably described by the word that is applied to God himself when he is called Eternal. It is to be noted also that the Jews of our Lord's time certainly believed in a final judgment and irreversible doom; and it is not to be believed that our Lord should have used the very figures and language used by them if he had had any new doctrine to publish regarding the future.

II. The grounds on which the final separation proceeds must commend themselves to the most blunted conscience. The friends of mankind are to share the destiny of the great Friend of our race, the haters of mankind are to partake with the great enemy. At first sight the duties taken account of seem the easiest. But the spirit of Christ is that which induced him to pity us and come down for our help, and it is this spirit of love which is fundamental. The man who is like him in this will one day be like him in all else. "Love is of God," and will still be recognized by God as belonging to him. It is worthy of observation that those who were rewarded for these deeds of charity were not aware that in doing them they had been serving Christ. His explanation of this to them reminds us of the device of Eastern princes of wandering through their dominions in disguise, that they may learn the feeling of their subjects. So does Christ even now dwell *incognito* among his own, in the habit of the poor and sick and oppressed; and, asking help from one and another, he finds who they are who have listened to his commandment that we should love one another, and who they are who are fulfilling his work of mercy upon earth. And this identification of himself with all that is base and wretched has its basis in the substantial facts of his earthly life. His life was spent for the relief of men, but it was merely part of the fulfilment of an eternal purpose. He is no less desirous of relieving the miseries of this present age than he was of relieving those who were around him upon earth. And as we would think gratefully and lovingly of one who in our absence cared for some brother or parent, wife or child, who stood in need of help, so does Christ think highly of him who considers and cares for any weak brother of his for whom he died, and whom when he comes he will claim for his own. Are you prepared for this judgment? We are not asked what we have felt, or thought, or believed, but what we have *done*. It is conduct which shows if you are of the spirit of Christ, capable of enjoying what he counts a blessed life. His aim was the only right aim, the only aim which in the judgment will be taken account of. Every one who tries this finds it is radical, that it involves regeneration, that he cannot adopt it as his real aim in life without giving himself up to God.—D.

Vers. 1—13.—*The virgins.* Amongst the great truths taught in this parable we notice these.

I. THAT RELIGION ADMITS OF NO NEUTRALITY. 1. *In other things men may be indifferent.* (1) Thus in questions of science: one dogmatist may assert that gravitation is the effect of attraction as a property in matter. Another may hold attraction in matter to be a mechanical absurdity. It is of little consequence should a third person suspend his judgment. The cosmos will not go to pieces because he cannot determine how its elements are kept together. (2) So in questions of politics: some may stoutly contend that a liberal policy is the least revolutionary and safest for the commonwealth. Others may as stoutly oppose this view. A third party may see difficulties on either hand, and be unable to come to any conclusion. The world will not wait for him to make up his mind. 2. *But the relations of existence forbid neutrality in religion.* (1) Here the Divine claims upon the individual are urgent. To neglect these is to treat the Almighty with contempt. Such an offence is the reverse of trifling. Negligence here is damnable. (2) Here also are urgent human claims. Every man is his brother's keeper, responsible to God for his influence upon his brother. (3) We are responsible also to ourselves. Every man has to live with his own conscience. His eternal happiness or misery depends upon the opinion his companion has of him. He is made respectable and happy, or otherwise, according to the nature of his relation to the question of religion. (4) If God forsake the sinner, Satan will compel him. Neutrality, therefore, is out of the question. We can only vanquish Satan by the help of God. Our possibilities are infinitely grand or mean. To be a son of God, what more glorious! To be a serf of Satan, what more despicable!

II. THAT UNBELIEF IS THE PARALYZER OF RELIGIOUS ENERGY. 1. *The world appeals vividly to sense.* (1) Hence in the Bridegroom's absence there is a disposition to slumber. The glitter and whirl of the world's excitement drowns and stupefies the spiritual sense. (2) Faith is the counteractant. It acts by what Dr. Chalmers calls "the expulsive power of a new affection." Realizing vividly the superior glories of the spiritual world, we gain the victory over the world of sense. 2. *The foolish sleep without oil in their vessels.* (1) Some foolish ones have no lamps, no profession of religion. These are the people outside the Churches. They are the people of the world. Many of these go to sleep pluming themselves upon being "better than many of those who do profess." (2) Others go to sleep because they have lamps—because they are professors, though they have no oil in their vessels, no grace of God in their hearts. How many trust for salvation to their Church-membership rather than to Christ! Useless is the oil-less lamp. 3. *Even the wise are found sleeping.* (1) Some think "sleep" here means death. This, however, scarcely comports with the grand inference and application of the argument, "Watch." The exhortation surely comes too late to the dead. (2) Is there not a sense in which the Churches generally are asleep—the wise as well as the foolish? Are not Christians, taken generally, far too worldly? How little of holy scorn do we feel for the pleasures of the vain and frivolous! Is there not also a culpable supineness in relation to the condition of the world perishing around us? What excitement would there be in a ship's crew while a man overboard remained unrescued! What excitement in a crowd while an inmate of a house on fire remained unsaved! Where is our faith in the perishing condition of the world of sinners, and in the saving efficacy of the Redeemer's blood? Are we not paralyzed by our unbelief?

III. THAT RELIGIOUS EXCITEMENT KINDLES AS THE WORLD FADES. 1. *All examine themselves at the judgment.* (1) That will be the "midnight," viz. of the world. The sun shall be darkened. (2) Then shall the midnight "cry" be raised. It will be discerned in the crash of the thunders; in the growling of the earthquakes; in the roar of the fire of the great conflagration; in the ever-aggravating vibrations of the trump of God. (3) All will then be raised from their graves. "Then all those virgins arose." The unjust as well as the just will respond to that voice, and come forth from their graves. 2. *All examine themselves in dying.* (1) The hour of dying is the midnight of life. The world then recedes from the senses, or, which is the same, the senses are closing upon the world. (2) The midnight cry is then heard in the thunderings of the Law and in the terrors of the Lord. The echoes are awakened in the conscience. The death-rattle in the throat is a solemn alarm. (3) In such a crisis all the virgins are astir. The wise are excited to look to their lamps and their oil. Happy are they when they find the grace that can sustain and nourish the

light of a good profession. The foolish look with consternation upon their oil-less vessels.

IV. THAT ETERNITY EXPOSES THE REFUGES OF FOLLY. 1. *Trusting to works of supererogation.* (1) These were invented about the end of the twelfth century. It is founded upon what the papists call "counsels of perfection," or rules which do not bind under the penalty of sin, but are only useful in carrying men to a greater degree of perfection than is necessary to salvation. This dogma is repugnant to Holy Scripture (cf. ch. v. 48; Phil. ii. 12). In due time the popes, to give colour to their doctrine of indulgences, claimed to have the custody of the fund of the superabundant merits of Christ and of his saints, and enriched their coffers by the sale of these. (2) Could there be a prophetic irony in the advice of the wise virgins to the foolish, "Go ye to them that sell"? The irony is terrible when taken in connection with the sequel, that when they returned with the oil so procured it availed them nothing. 2. *Trusting to the infallible final perseverance of the saints.* (1) The lamps of the foolish virgins once had light, else they could not have "gone out." (2) Their lamps went out while they slept. Imperceptibly the oil of grace was consumed, while no effort was made to replenish the store. (3) The sequel is that they find themselves shut out. 3. *Trusting to the opportunities of the future.* (1) While the Bridegroom tarried, the foolish virgins slept without making any provision of oil for their lamps. Lo here the very spirit of procrastination. (2) When the alarm of the presence of the Bridegroom rouses them, they make a desperate rush to prepare for him; but all now is unavailing. The procession is formed without them, and they are shut out in the darkness. (3) Importunity now comes too late. It was all over with the antediluvian procrastinators when the door of the ark was shut. (4) The moral, then, is—Watch. Watch, because the time is uncertain. Watch, because the event is sure.—J. A. M.

Vers. 14—30.—*The talents.* This, like the preceding parable, refers immediately to the professed followers of Christ. It probably has a special, though certainly not exclusive, application to ministers and those distinguished by office in the Churches. We have to consider—

I. THE TALENTS. 1. *These are not the natural faculties.* (1) In the possession of these there is no difference of "one," "two," and "five." The Caucasian has no attribute that is not also possessed by the Hottentot. The premier enjoys no attribute that is not also enjoyed by the peasant. (2) Were the talents our natural faculties, then would the privation of them amount to the extinction of our being. But the unprofitable servant survives his privation of his talent, to be punished for his slothfulness. (3) The talents must not be confounded with the agents to whom they are entrusted for use. But the natural faculties go to constitute the agents. 2. *They are the gifts of grace and providence.* (1) Foremost amongst these is the royal gift of the Holy Spirit. The lord travelling into the far country is Christ after his Passion ascending into the heavens. Thence he sent the baptism of his Spirit (see Eph. iv. 8). This great Gift is distributed into (*a*) the ordinary; (*b*) the extraordinary. There is a manifestation of the Spirit given to every man to profit withal. (2) Whatever in the order of Providence may increase our influence. (*a*) Property. (*b*) Social status. (*c*) Education. (*d*) Patronage. (*e*) Experience. (3) Opportunities. (*a*) Ordinances of the gospel—Bibles, sabbaths, ministers. (*b*) Circumstances of Providence, or occurrences called accidents. (*c*) Relationships. (*d*) Time. Every moment has its grace; every grace has its employment; every employment is for eternity. Note: A talent of silver is worth £350. All Christ's gifts are rich and valuable. They are the purchase of his precious blood.

II. THEIR CUSTODY. 1. *God gives them diversely.* (1) To one he gives "five," to another "two," to another "one." This is arbitrary, of his own spontaneity, without consulting with the recipient. This he has an absolute right to do. (2) Yet is his arbitrariness guided by wisdom. He gives "to each according to his several ability." He trusts us up to the limit of our own ability. Five talents would be too much for this man; one would be too little for this. God, who distributes, knows. (3) Justice also is conspicuous in the distribution. No one is pressed beyond his powers. Who can say that the difference between the greatest and the least in the matter of opportunity is more than five to one? Plato, in his laws, allowed no man to possess

an income of more than five times that of the poorest. This might be feasible with an adequate levelling up. (4) No man has any right to complain that he has more or less than another. He that has much should not despise him that has little. He that has little should not envy him that has more. The man who improves his gifts, however small, will surely obtain the kingdom. 2. *He gives them to be improved.* (1) Every gift and grace of God is capable of improvement. (*a*) To the comfort and salvation of the recipient. (*b*) For the benefit of his race. (*c*) For the glory of his Maker. (2) No talent must be buried. "Money is like manure, good for nothing in the heap; but it must be spread" (Bacon; see also Eccles. vi. 1, 2; Jas. v. 3). That many Christians are too slothful to be useful is a melancholy fact. So perseveringly should we serve as not to outlive our character and our usefulness. (3) Much more must no talent be abused. Yet to bury is to abuse. He who digs to hide his talent puts himself to more trouble to abuse God's mercy than it would cost him to improve that mercy unto his salvation.

III. THE RECKONING. 1. *The diligent are rewarded.* (1) They can render their account with joy. For with the talents they had received "they went and traded." Note: A true Christian is a spiritual tradesman (see Prov. iii. 15; ch. iii. 45). Those who diligently improve their talents will have boldness in the day of judgment (see 1 John ii. 28; iv. 17). (2) They receive commendation. They are praised for their goodness and faithfulness. If there be no merit, there is yet a rewardableness in our good deeds. They are promised a promotion. "I will set thee over many things." If the few things be "five talents," what must be the "many things," equivalent to "five cities," equivalent to "an hundredfold"! The *servant* over the few things is to be made ruler over many things. Note: Heaven is a place of order and government. (3) They receive glory. "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." Christ, for the joy that was before him, endured the cross. That joy was the glorification of his humanity, both body and soul. It is also the glorification of the members of his Church, which is his mystical body and soul. This joy will fill the capacity of every member, whether he be a man of five talents or of two. Heightened capacity will still have perfect enjoyment. Christ's servants are all princes. The crown (2 Tim. iv. 8), the throne (Rev. iii. 21), the kingdom (ch. xxv. 34). 2. *The indolent are punished.* (1) They are reproached. "Wicked and slothful" is opposed to "good and faithful." Faithfulness rather than success is approved, and so is faithlessness rather than failure reproved. Note: The servant who had least entrusted to him is here represented as the unfaithful one, perhaps to impress upon us that we must not make the smallness of our gifts a pretext for indolence. (2) The slothful servant, justifying himself on the ground of his master's severity, expresses the views of the Author of all good that are taken by carnal minds. How awfully depraved is he that can charge his crimes upon his Maker! Note: The parable puts a weak excuse into the mouth of the slothful servant, to show that for neglect there is no apology. (3) Hard thoughts of God beget fear (vers. 24, 25). Note the spirit of the slave. By refraining from expressing displeasure at the injustice of the slothful servant, our Lord teaches that the duty of serving him is incumbent even on the natural man. (4) The indolent are deprived of their gifts and graces. "Take the talent from him." From the faithless minister, from the faithless Church-member. "For from him that hath not even that which he hath shall be taken away." "He who hath this or that, and makes no use of it, may not improperly be said both to have it and not to have it" (Aristotle). Only what we use well becomes crystallized into a good character. (5) The unprofitable are relegated to wrath (ver. 30). "Unprofitableness and omission of duty is damnable; unfaithfulness in us, who are but stewards and servants. To do no harm is praise fit for a stone, not for a man" (Baxter). "Cast ye out the unprofitable servant." (*a*) "Into outer darkness." All outside heaven is darkness in eternity. (*b*) "There shall be weeping," etc.; misery.—J. A. M.

Vers. 31—46.—*The great assize.* It has been well observed by Dr. Doddridge that our Lord here proceeds to speak of the great day of retribution, in a description which is one of the noblest instances of the true sublime anywhere to be found. Portions of the description are undoubtedly parabolic, the intention evidently being to give prominence to certain important principles; but otherwise it is a solemn anticipation of what will one day become history. We may consider—

I. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE COURT. And conspicuous here is: 1. *The appearance of the Judge.* (1) "The Son of man." Under this title the Lord comes to us as the Divine Word or Truth made flesh, and so accommodated to our apprehension. In this quality God reveals himself as our Redeemer and Saviour; and in this quality he will appear as our Judge. Accordingly, we learn, "Neither hath the Father"—the Godhead as distinct from the manhood—"judged any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son." Again, "And because he is the Son of man" (cf. John v. 22, 27; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. ii. 16). (2) But it is the "Son of man *in his glory.*" He came to redeem us in his humiliation. In his second advent his humanity will be beatified. This was anticipated in the vision of the Transfiguration (see John i. 14). The Deity of the Son of man will then be more gloriously visible. (3) "And all his angels with him." Angels rather shade than enhance the glory of the Lord. They are the "clouds" in which elsewhere the Son of man is described as coming (see Dan. vii. 13; ch. xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64; Rev. i. 7). They come to moderate the effect of that face, the fire of which will kindle the final conflagration (cf. 2 Pet. iii. 7; Rev. xx. 11). (4) "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory," or "glorious throne." Agreeably to this he speaks as "the King" (ver. 34). Surely it is impossible, in the light of this Scripture, were there no other, to doubt the proper Deity of our blessed Lord. 2. *The vast assembly.* (1) "And before him were gathered all the nations." Though the particular illustration which follows has reference to those only from among them who had heard the gospel, yet these words imply that the whole human race will congregate there (see Acts xvii. 31). Witness, then, all the men from every clime, and all the generations of the ages. (2) Such a congregation presupposes a general resurrection. Elsewhere we are taught that this will take place (cf. Dan. xii. 2; John v. 28, 29). So the dead, small and great, stand before the throne (Rev. xx. 12). (3) Added to the vast aggregate of humanity, "all the angels" are present. This doubtless brings prominently before us the holy angels; but their presence suggests also that of the fallen. And we read further on of the "everlasting fire *prepared for the devil and his angels*" (ver. 34). They were probably the first judged. They were the first in transgression, the first cursed, and so likewise the first doomed (see Rev. xx. 1—3). 3. *The solemn discrimination.* (1) All nations are assembled before the King for his inspection. The *process* of the inspection is not here described; but elsewhere we are assured that "every one of us shall give account of himself unto God" (Rom. xiv. 12). Neither is *time* here specified which the inspection may occupy. It will probably extend throughout the great period of a thousand years described by John (see Rev. xx.). (2) The discrimination eventuates in separation (ver. 32). The sheep is the symbol of peaceableness and innocency. The goat, on the contrary, a quarrelsome, lascivious, and ill-scented creature, describes the impure. The sheep pass to the "right hand," a position which, according to the rabbins, expresses approbation and eminence. The goats pass to the "left," which, they say, expresses disapprobation and rejection. The Romans recognized a similar distinction (see 'Æn.,' vi. 540). (3) The angels will be employed as instruments in this great service (see ch. xiii. 30, 39—43). Note: Men who can agree in matters of worldly business, and even in matters of morals, will yet separate when they come to the higher plane of religion. The spirituality of the future state is the touchstone.

II. THE AWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. *They are commended.* (1) Because they showed kindness to the disciples of Christ. They gave meat to the hungry; drink to the thirsty; clothing to the naked; hospitality to the stranger; attention to the sick; encouragement to the prisoner. (2) Because they did all this from the pure motive of love to Jesus. So he takes it home. "*I* was hungry," etc.; "ye did it unto *me*." What dignity does this stamp upon the lowliest offices and acts (see Eph. vi. 5—7; Col. iii. 17; Heb. vi. 10)! (3) Therefore are they greeted as "blessed of the Father." Such acts of kindness evince them to be the children of that blessed Father who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (see ch. v. 43—48). "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is more God-like. 2. *They are promoted.* (1) "Come, ye blessed [children] of my Father;" come nearer to me, the "Son of man," the "King" of glory. "My brethren" (ver. 40). Jesus never directly calls his disciples his brethren until after his resurrection. Jesus glorified is more nearly related to the men regenerated than Jesus unglorified to men

unregenerated. It is when the Lord is glorified in us that we become truly those whom he acknowledges as his brethren (cf. ch. xxviii. 10; John xiii. 1, margin Revised Version; xx. 17). Yet is there a becoming reverence which prevents the disciple from speaking thus familiarly of the Lord. Even James does not presume to call himself "the Lord's brother," neither does Jude, who distinguishes himself rather as "the brother of James" (cf. Jas. i. 1; Jude 1). (2) "Inherit the kingdom." This implies the crown (2 Tim. iv. 8); the throne (Rev. iii. 21); the sceptre (Rev. ii. 26, 27). (3) "Prepared for you from the foundation of the world," viz. in the terms of the everlasting covenant which promises rewards to the obedience of faith. "For you," viz. who have done the works which prove the genuineness of faith. Note: The disavowal by the righteous of the virtue ascribed to them is designed to show the absence of all idea of merit from true righteousness. The good do good for its own sake—for the Lord's sake who is goodness itself. (4) All this is summed up as "eternal life." This is union with Christ, who is that Life (see 1 John v. 12, 20).

III. THE DOOM OF THE WICKED. 1. *They are convicted.* (1) They are impeached with want of sympathy with Christ. "Ye gave me no meat," etc. They would not consider Christ in his disciples. (2) Special pleading will be of no avail before the judgment-seat of Christ. "When saw we thee," etc.? Sinners are more ready to lay claim to virtues to which they have no right, than to confess the evils of which they are guilty. But they will get their answer. "Forasmuch," etc. Note: Virtue cannot receive the slightest wound of which Jesus does not instantly feel the smart (see Acts ix. 4, 5). (3) The offences here alleged are negative. This does not say that positive wickedness shall escape. The murderer, the adulterer, the thief, the liar, the blasphemer,—every sinner will have his sinfulness brought home to him. 2. *They are degraded.* (1) "Depart from me"—from your last hope of mercy and salvation. "Ye cursed." In departing from me whom you refused to accept as your Curse-bearer (אָרוּר), bear now your own deserved execration. (2) Depart "into eternal fire." This is afterwards described as "eternal punishment." Hell is that horrid centre in which all the lines of sin and misery meet. The Greek word construed "eternal" is to be understood in the New Testament, not so much in the light of its etymology as in that of its usage. When applied to the world, it has no limit except the duration of the world (see Rom. xvi. 25, Revised Version; Jude 7). When applied to the world to come, it has no limit (see Mark ix. 43; see also Isa. xxxiii. 14; Dan. xii. 2; 2 Thess. i. 9; Rev. xiv. 11; xx. 10). (3) "Prepared for the devil and his angels." Note: There is a ringleader among devils. "What must be the nature and misery of a confinement with those powerful, active, sagacious beings, whose minds are all malice, fraud, and cruelty, and whose endless being is a succession of rage, revenge, and despair?" (Dwight). (4) "And these shall go away," etc. Those who refused to accept the invitation to "come," will have to obey the order to "go." "Every word has a terror in it, like that of the trumpet of Mount Sinai, waxing louder and louder" (Henry).—J. A. M.

Ver. 2.—*Signs of wisdom and of folly in the Christian life.* "And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." We should not confuse the word "foolish" with the word "wicked." Some were thoughtless, heedless of possibilities; they lived in the present, and could not anticipate. Life is full of emergencies, and he is wise who prepares for all that he can imagine may come. Our Lord frequently impressed the importance of forethought in the Christian life. He had immediately before been counselling his disciples to be "always ready." It is that point he now further illustrates in these three parables of the chapter, showing that the true readiness includes (1) maintenance of the personal religious life; (2) full response to all Christian obligations; and (3) kindly relations with all around us. In the parable of the "virgins," we are taught that the wise Christian provides for the maintenance of the soul's life, but the foolish Christian is content to live on the experiences of to-day.

I. WISE CHRISTIAN LIVING. Strain of some kind is sure to come in every Christian life. It may take forms of affliction, persecution, temptation; but our Lord intimates that nothing will ever really test and try us so much as "mere continuance." This is his point in the teachings of the last time. Everybody was anticipating speedy consummations. He says, "the end is not yet." The bridegroom is certainly coming, but there may be long waiting-times before he comes. Wise disciples provide for the

strain of "patient continuing in well-doing." And the provision they make is soul-nourishment. They keep the oil-stores replenished; they keep the soul's light brightly shining, and then they are ready for all circumstances, prepared for all delay and for all strain. That is the secret of Christian wisdom, "Keep thy soul with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." What are the soul-stores from which the soul's light may be kept replenished, should be fully illustrated.

II. FOOLISH CHRISTIAN LIVING. There is both a wrong and a right concern for the "morrow." It is wrong to *worry* over it; it is right to anticipate and prepare for it. It is foolish merely to enjoy the present. Dods says, "The foolish virgins are a warning to all who are tempted to make conversion everything, edification nothing; who cultivate religion for a season, and then think they have done enough; who were religious once, can remember the time when they had very serious thoughts and very solemn resolutions, but who have made no earnest effort, and are making none, to maintain within themselves the life they once began." Christian folly is neglecting personal soul-culture.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*The provision for Christian emergencies.* "The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Some think that torches of tow, steeped in oil, and fastened to the end of sticks, may be meant. Wetstein quotes the following from Rabbi Solomo: "It was the custom in the land of Ishmael to bring the bride from the house of her father to that of her husband in the night-time; and there were about ten staffs; upon the top of each was a brazen dish, containing rags, oil, and pitch, and this being kindled formed blazing torches, which were carried before the bride." The lights were intended to make brightness and joyousness for the marriage procession, and the possession of a lighted lamp was a sort of guarantee, a sort of ticket of admission to the feast. Oil from the store-vessel poured into the dish would revive the flame when the cry of the "bridegroom coming" was heard. "Oil in the vessel" was the virgins' provision against all contingency. Whatever happened, with oil in the vessel with the lamp they could keep the light alive. The foolish virgins went carelessly on their journey, satisfied with this—their lamps were burning, and not troubling themselves to think how long they would burn, and what they would do when the flame began to flicker. It is not enough to have oil in the lamp.

I. THE "OIL OF DIVINE GRACE" IS THE PROVISION WE NEED. That figure of speech gathers up several things. 1. A personal experience of dealing with God. 2. Cultivated habits of communion with God. 3. A cherished sense of dependence on God. 4. Well-established views of Divine truth. 5. Gathered stores of Divine promises and comfortings. All such things as belong to the personal and private life of godliness. But this is only the one side. There is another and even more important side. The "oil of grace" really represents the indwelling Spirit, who is ready to inspire us to every good word and work. That Spirit is with all who are in earnest and dependent. When his grace seems exhausted, he "giveth more grace," and so our lamp is ever supplied, and the light ever kept brightly burning.

II. THE "OIL OF GRACE" CAN BE OBTAINED. In times of emergency we can use means—attend services, etc., and in a way, buy and obtain. The difficulty is that we cannot often get the grace in time for the emergency.

III. THE "OIL OF GRACE" SHOULD BE A CONSTANT POSSESSION; a store ever being replenished. See Zechariah's figure of the living olive branches ever dropping fresh oil into the bowl.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The warning of the shut door.* We need not push the meaning of our Lord's figure to extremes. The shut door properly belongs to the picture he is painting. It is just what actually did happen in such cases. Those not actually in the procession were excluded when the house was reached. "Those virgins had failed in that which could alone give them a claim to admission. Professing to be bridesmaids, they had not been in the bridal procession, and so, in truth and righteousness, he could only answer from within, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." This, not only in punishment, but in the right order of things. We have a way of shifting everything away to the mysterious "day of judgment." But our Lord is not thinking of that; he was thinking of the opportunities that come to men in the course of Christian

living. The warning is a general one. All things are in limitation. Nothing but comes to an ending. That ending is always uncertain. So we must be ready for everything, and take full advantage of it while we have it. Van Lennep explains the shutting of the door in a way that suggests our present point: "While they went to purchase oil, the procession moved to the house of the bridegroom. The door was then shut, in order to avoid the danger arising from violent men, who might make an irruption, rob, and carry off costly garments, jewellery, and even the bride herself!"

I. THERE IS THE "SHUT DOOR" OF RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGE. Illustrate by special times of "mission" or "revival." If we do not respond while the mission is in progress, presently the door is shut, the mission is closed, and we are left out in the cold. Or take a valued and honoured ministry. If we fail to yield to gracious persuasions, presently the lips are sealed in death—the "door is shut."

II. THERE IS THE "SHUT DOOR" OF RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE. This sets the truth in relation to Christian professors. Dispensations of providence bring Divine correctings and chastisings. If we do not respond, the affliction passes, the door of disciplinary opportunity is shut; and we are left outside, unsanctified.

III. THERE IS THE "SHUT DOOR" OF RELIGIOUS DUTIES. Christ carries on his work of grace in us, partly, by the duties he calls us to perform. They are duties belonging to his service, but they are also agencies used in carrying on his work. If we shrink from doing them, our opportunity is taken away, given to others, and, for us, the "door is shut."—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Christ's relation to our talent-trusts.* Eastern workpeople were mostly what we should call slaves. They were provided for by their masters, and their profit belonged to their master.

I. CHRIST'S TALENT-TRUSTS. This parable is true of ordinary endowments; the common gifts and abilities of men. We are to see it in the Christian light. All our gifts, powers, and possessions are trusts, not ours to hold, only ours to use; and concerning the use of them all God will surely inquire one day. Fix thought on the special gift to us. Our talent is the one thing we can do better than others. It is the precise thing that we are sent into the world to do. No servant of Christ is without his talent. What may it be? Teach, give, sing, pray, write, visit, preach, sympathize. It is the one thing in relation to which we have the "consciousness of power." How can we know what our talent-trust is? Let us put ourselves simply into God's hands, cherishing a loving readiness to do his will; then let us take and do the duty that lies before us, and our gift and power will surely be revealed to us.

II. CHRIST'S APPORTIONMENT OF HIS TALENT-TRUSTS. Masters know their servants, and give trusts accordingly. What a good thing for us it is that we have not to choose what our talent-trusts shall be! There are two things for him who apportions our trusts to decide. 1. He must make the trust match the capacity. He must not give ten where there is only capacity for dealing with five; or five where there is capacity for dealing with ten. If he has given you ten, he knows you can put the ten to good use, and you must try. 2. The various trusts must cover all the work that he wants done. So we cannot wonder if some forms of service are lowly forms—in business, home, society, or Church. Lowly gifts are needful. Lowly offices are important. The use of Christ-entrusted gifts, anywhere, or in anything, makes the sphere and the work beautiful. "One talent" represents the lowly gifts. Just the very power *you* have Christ wants for his kingdom. Men may call your gift nothing, and so may you in dreary times. But the Lord Jesus never undervalues any of the trusts he commits to his people. And you should never undervalue your trust until your Master does.

III. CHRIST'S EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING HIS TALENT-TRUSTS. He looks for two things, as gain by trading. 1. Service by the use of them. We are to benefit others by the use of our gifts, and this will be accounted service rendered to our Lord. 2. Culture by the use of them. We are to get personal benefit, as putting the talents to use develops our powers. The finest and best moral qualities, the most sturdy and most sensitive spiritual graces, are won by indirect culture, through the expenditure and use of our faculties and gifts. Work, spend, give, thereby you shall gain power for higher service; thereby you shall "meeten for the inheritance."

IV. CHRIST'S JUDGMENT OF THOSE WHO RECEIVE HIS TALENT-TRUSTS. 1. The

judgment is the same for all trusts. There is not one principle of judgment for the ten-talent man, and another principle for the one-talent man. 2. The judgment is based on the quality of the work, not on mere results. He who makes his one talent into two may really be more faithful than he who makes his five talents into ten. 3. The judgment is severe on those who never tried to do anything with their talent. Those who have small powers are tempted to despise and neglect them.

V. THE REWARDS CHRIST GIVES ARE SIMPLY OTHER AND LARGER TRUSTS. Illustrate by the successful general, who would think it no reward to be pensioned off. The only honour he cares for is some higher and nobler trust. We should cultivate the thought of heaven as the "higher service." Doing well what we do, we shall have more to do for Christ; and that will be our best possible reward. Appeal: Are you Christ's servant? Then you have your talent-trust. What are you doing with it? What will you say to him when he comes again? And what will he say to you?—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The moral value of our responsibilities.* Several distinct lines of thought open out from this parable. 1. The diversity of the talents with which men are entrusted. 2. The common responsibility of all before God, be their talents few or many. 3. The certainty found in the very nature of a trust, that a reckoning-day must come. 4. The true apprehension of life is gained by treating it as a stewardship. 5. The apparent insignificance of a man's talent can never excuse its neglect. The point to which attention is now more especially directed is, that God works out a gracious purpose in moral character by putting men under responsibilities. In the case our Lord brings before us, no doubt the lord wanted his property cared for during his absence; but, beyond and above that, he wanted his servants tested and cultured, by meeting responsibilities, into a faithfulness which he could recognize and reward when he returned.

I. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES. Life is full of such from its beginning to its end. See the Divine idea in the two heads of the human race. The first Adam trusted with the garden, and trusted to leave alone the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The second Adam trusted with the work of redemption. Show (1) that we train our children by giving them responsibilities, expecting them to do things. (2) Youth begins to feel the gravity of life, and, laying hold of life-responsibilities, cultures manhood. (3) The progress of life is ever developing new trusts, through business, family, social, and religious relations. Illustrate by a few special cases, such as: (1) A man waking suddenly to the consciousness of some particular gift. (2) A girl changed into a thoughtful, self-controlled woman by becoming a wife and a mother. (3) A man fully accepting the religious life. He is no true man—he is but a child still—who has not discovered and felt his life-burden.

II. OUR RESPONSE TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES. This our Lord so skilfully illustrates in three specimen instances. We can properly respond, because they are only given up to the measure of our ability. We should be crushed if they were too much for our strength. We can respond by opening our whole natures to accept them, as the flowers open to the sunshine. It is a beginning of good thus to lift ourselves up to meet responsibilities. We begin to feel what possibilities are in us. The true conception of the angel is not with folded wings standing, but with poised wing ready to fly. Waiting to meet his trust. From some points of view all human trusts seem little. Estimate their moral influence, and no one of them can be thought little. —R. T.

Ver. 24.—*Complaining of others when we ourselves are in the wrong.* This is familiar enough to all who have the management of families. The child in a temper is always ready to complain of his mother's temper. The child who has done wrong is quick to make out that somebody else was in fault. The same thing is found in business and social relations. Servants complain of masters. One class of society complains of another class. More than half the sorrows of humanity would be removed if men would only look at home, and set themselves upon the correction of their own faults, the remedying of their own failings. In this parable nothing can be plainer than the fact that this man with one talent had been wilfully neglecting what he knew to be

his duty. It was duty he could do; duty he ought to do. But when the day of reckoning came, he tried to hide his shame by complaining of his master, and calling him hard names. How that excused *him* nobody can see.

I. IN MAN IS AN INVETERATE DISPOSITION TO RESIST THE CONVICTION OF SIN. It is the hardest thing we ever try to do, to say, "I am wrong." It is the hardest thing we ever undertake, to persuade another to say he was wrong. A man will set himself upon all sorts of guileful schemes, and readily yield to all kinds of self-delusions, rather than admit himself to be in the wrong. The man who has the quickest and keenest sense of sin in others is often utterly dull to any sense of his own sin. 1. It is this which partly explains the general conception of the devil. He is a convenient "other one" outside ourselves, on whom we can shift all responsibility for the sins which we ourselves plan and commit. 2. It is this that accounts for the gracious promise of the Holy Ghost as the "Convincer of *sin*, of righteousness, and of judgment." 3. This disposition is strengthened by every successful act of stifling conviction. 4. The disposition is even to be found in Christian people, and may be illustrated in relation to specific *Christian* sins. The one-talent man represents a disciple.

II. THE COMMONEST SIGN OF RESISTANCE IS COMPLAINING OF OTHERS. 1. This turns our thoughts away from ourselves. It is not safe for a wilful man to have his eye turned inward. He shrinks from reading over his own story. He likes to hear about other people's faults; and will dwell with much satisfaction upon his disabilities and lack of opportunities. Men are so hard, and men deal so hardly by him. If a man speaks harshly of others, it is well to suspect him of being guilty of the fault he condemns. 2. This turns other people's thoughts away from us. See in the parable. The master is searching out the wilfulness of the one-talent man. But he seems to say, "Think about yourself, and then you will leave me alone."—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*The law of rewards.* Trust comes to the trustworthy. Opportunities are taken away from those who fail to use them. "Men, here on earth, give to him that hath, and faithful work is rewarded by openings of a higher kind." "Non-user tends to invalidate legal right. A muscle that is not exercised tends to degenerate and lose its power." Dods calls this verse, "the law of spiritual capital." "However little grace we seem to have to begin with, it is this we must invest, and so nurse it into size and strength. Each time we use the grace we have, by responding to the demands made upon it, it returns to us increased. Our capital grows by an inevitable law." "The unused talent passes from the servant who would not use it to the man who will. A landlord has two farms lying together: the one is admirably managed, the other is left almost to itself, with the least possible management, and becomes the talk of the whole country for poor crops and untidiness. No one asks what the landlord will do when the leases are out. It is a matter of course that he dismisses the careless tenant, and puts his farm into the hands of the skilful and diligent farmer." "Give it unto him that hath ten talents."

I. THE REWARD OF FAITHFULNESS IS INCREASED TRUST. We need to correct our common idea that reward is something to *possess;* the truest and best reward is something to *use.* He who is faithful in least things does not want a present; his reward is the trust of higher things. Life is full of this idea. The faithful are always in selection for the higher service, and are finding in that higher service their satisfying reward. But there is something deeper than that. He who is faithful gets his real reward in that *development of power* which fits him for higher trusts. A man's reward is what he *becomes,* not merely what he *gets.* What, then, is our final reward in heaven? Not possessions, but higher service. Think deeper, and we see that it is not even higher service, it is the cultured condition which fits us for undertaking the higher service. Heaven is our ennobled selves, and the work God finds for the ennobled to do.

II. THE REWARD OF FAITHLESSNESS IS REMOVED TRUST. And that this is distinctly Divine judgment will be felt by all who estimate the honour of being trusted and used. God's severest judgment on the unfaithful is his taking their trusts away. He will not honour them by permitting them to bear responsibilities. There can be no heaven for such as fail to put their earth-pounds to noble uses. For God to say to a man,

"I will not trust you," is far worse woe than to apportion him the "outer darkness, the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth."—R. T.

Ver. 31.—*The Son of man exercising judgment.* The advent of Messiah was, in the Jewish mind, associated with general judgment. The people looked forward with dread to the Messianic era. There are some who can regard the passage commencing with this verse as descriptive. Others regard it as parabolic, with the scenery taken from men's ideas of the after-life. It is difficult to follow the passage as descriptive, because human thought and human language are incapable of dealing with actual events beyond the earthly sphere. What we may find in it is an indication of what Christ makes the basis of his judgment of men. There are two things which may reasonably surprise us.

I. OUR JUDGE IS THE "SON OF MAN." It may be said that God is our Judge. But that brings in the element of fear. It seems to us that he must have an absolute and awful standard, and tested by it there will be no chance at all for any of us. "If thou wert strict to mark iniquity, who should stand?" But the God who judges us is revealed to us as the "Son of man," and then confidence takes the place of fear. The Son of man is one of us; he has passed through our experience. He knows us. And what we feel is that, if abstract justice needs to be qualified by a consideration of circumstances, he can safely so qualify it. This point may be illustrated by our familiar distinction between "justice" and "equity." "Justice" is precisely and exactly what the law lays down; and that is what we, rightly or wrongly, expect from God. "Equity" is that law applied with due consideration of relations between man and man, or of special human infirmity. And that is what we expect from the "Son of man"—from One "in all points tempted like as we are." Christ in no sense relieves the august solemnity of judgment, but he makes us fully, freely, lovingly, willing to accept his appraisement.

II. OUR JUDGE USES AN UNEXPECTED BASIS OF JUDGMENT. We should be puzzled with it if the parable dealt with the *world* and *sinners*. It pictures the judgment of Christ's disciples. Eastern flocks are made up of sheep and goats, but all are the shepherd's property and care. Christ seems to propose judging on a basis of mere humanity or charitableness. But he goes deeper than that. The charity of which he speaks is the most satisfactory revelation of *character*, and it is character, not action, that is the basis of his judgment.—R. T.

Ver. 40.—*Christ's acceptance of vicarious service.* What is striking and suggestive is, that our Lord should make no reference to the cultured and sanctified personal life of his disciples, but fix attention on their service to others, their sympathies, generosities, and charities. At first it may seem as if his praise rested on their good works; but soon we come to see that what our Lord accepts is the best indication of character, and precisely of *Christly* character. There is a sort of goodness which is only sentimental. That goodness is always self-centred and self-sphered. That goodness Christ neither approves nor accepts. That goodness is essentially un-Christly. There is a goodness which finds expression in serving others for Christ's sake; serving others because we have not Christ to serve. That goodness is principle. That goodness is Christ-likeness. "Even Christ pleased not himself;" "I am among you as he that serveth."

I. VICARIOUS SERVICE IS SERVING OTHERS. To mutual service humanity is called. To the special service of all distressed, disabled, and suffering ones, the Christian humanity is called. This "serving others" becomes an absolutely efficient and sufficient test of the Christ-spirit in us. Christ *was* good; but we know it because he "went about doing good." Over his whole life shines the glory of something *done* to relieve, and comfort, and raise, and save his fellow-men.

II. VICARIOUS SERVICE IS SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS. It is not mere neighbourliness, sympathy, or charity, that is here commended. These, standing alone, are not the conditions of acceptance with Christ. He was speaking to his own disciples. The basis of acceptance for them was their love to him and trust in him. But they could not show such love directly to Jesus. Perhaps it would have been easier for them if they could. We are all put under this strain. We cannot minister

to Jesus himself; will we minister to him vicariously, through his suffering brethren? When he comes for his reckoning, it is of this our Lord will take account; and if he finds we have been, consciously, vicarious ministrants, he will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, *ye did it unto me.*" Charity, *for Christ's sake*, is acceptable.

III. VICARIOUS SERVICE OF CHRIST, THROUGH THE SERVICE OF OTHERS, PROVES IN THE END TO BE THE BEST SERVICE OF OURSELVES. For we "enter the joy of our Lord." But this point needs to be presented with great care, lest self-seeking considerations, entering in, should spoil the Christly service.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ch. xxvi.—xxviii. 20.—THUS JESUS ENTERS UPON HIS KINGDOM.

Before attempting to expound this most momentous section of the gospel history, we must make up our minds concerning the solution of the difficulties which are involved in some details in the account of the last Supper. The supposed discrepancy between the narrative of the synoptists and that of St. John has exercised the minds of commentators from the earliest times unto the present, and enormous ingenuity has been expended in endeavouring to harmonize what are regarded as conflicting statements.

The two chief difficulties are these: According to the synoptists, as generally understood, our Lord and his apostles ate the Passover, *i.e.* the Paschal lamb, when he instituted the Holy Communion; according to St. John, the death of Christ took place before the Passover was celebrated. Hence arise the questions—Was the last Supper the regular Paschal meal? Was Christ crucified on the 14th of Nisan or on the 15th? In the time of our Lord, the festival commenced on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, originally the day of preparation, but now considered part of the feast. "Between the evenings" of this day—*i.e.* from the time of the sun's decline to its setting—the lambs were killed in the temple courts. The 15th, commencing on the evening of the 14th, and lasting till the evening of the 15th, was the great day of the feast. All the accounts agree in stating that our Lord was crucified on Friday, the day before the sabbath, but the day of the month is not so clearly defined. The year seems to be settled as A.U.C. 783, A.D. 30, the sixteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius. In this year, astronomers tell us, the 14th of Nisan (equivalent to April 7) fell on a Friday; and as for typical reasons at least we should expect that Christ would die at the hour when the Paschal lamb was slain, we at once see the fitness of this date and day, if they can be safely maintained. It is incredible that the events immediately preceding and accompanying the execution of Christ should have occurred on the actual feast-day; it is also incredible that, as some critics suppose, the Pharisees altered the legal day in order that they might be free to accomplish their wicked design. These considerations lead us unhesitatingly to adopt the account given by St. John (himself an eye-witness, and certain to have noted and remembered the exact date of this stupendous event), and to assume that Christ was crucified on the 14th of Nisan, dying at the hour when the lambs were legally slain. The notes of time afforded by St. John are found in John xiii. 1, 29; xviii. 28; xix. 14, 31. Attention to these passages will show that, according to the Fourth Gospel, the Passover had not been eaten when our Lord was crucified, and that in that year the Passover coincided with the sabbath. To meet the difficulty of the synoptists' assertion, that Jesus ate the Passover at the last Supper, two suggestions are put forth. It is said that he anticipated the legal time by some few hours, being greater than the Law, as he had often shown himself greater than the sabbath. If this were so, how was the lamb procured? The Paschal victims were not legally slain till the afternoon of the next day, the 14th; how could the twelve have obtained one of these on the 13th? This question is met by the assertion that the lambs (estimated

at some 200,000) could not have been sacrificed in the time appointed, and that a large proportion of the animals were killed and eaten both before and after the strictly legal time. There is no evidence whatever to support this notion, nor can we imagine that Christ, who came to fulfil the Law, would have connived at such a manifest infringement of its provisions. Another solution is that the meal of which he partook with his disciples was a solemn supper in anticipation of the Feast of the Passover, but without the lamb. He himself was the true Passover, the Lamb of God, and in instituting at that time the Holy Eucharist, he gave himself as the spiritual food of his followers. This new festival superseded the Jewish solemnity, and it is possible that, in oral tradition, the two were confused and were counted as occurring together. This solution seems more probable than the former, and would doubtless be confirmed if we were better acquainted with many details well known in the apostolic ages, now unhappily obscured. Some of the difficulties will, we hope, be seen to be reconcilable, as we proceed in our Exposition. How the perplexity concerning the enormous number of lambs required for the teeming population gathered together was met, we know not. Doubtless time and circumstances had modified the rigorous adherence to the prescribed ritual, and possibly many householders (all being in this matter priests unto God, Exod. xix. 6 and Rev. i. 6) slew and prepared their Passover at their own houses or outside the sacred precincts on the legal day and hour. But there is no tradition of any unauthorized alteration of these points in the ordained ceremonial, and we cannot doubt that the Lord would not by his own practice endorse such laxity.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Final announcement of the approaching Passion.* (Mark xiv. 1; Luke xxii. 1.)

Ver. 1.—**When Jesus had finished all these sayings**; *i.e.* those comprised in chs. xxii.—xxv. This was the close of his public teaching. The other discourses which are preserved by St. John (xiii. 31—xvii. 26) were addressed to the chosen apostles Henceforward the narrative sets him forth as Priest, Victim, Redeemer; and Christ himself now distinctly states the day of his death and the person who was to betray him.

Ver. 2.—**Ye know.** He speaks of a fact well known to his hearers—the day of the Passover Feast. And they had been forewarned of his death (see ch. xx. 17—19). **After two days**; μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας: *post biduum.* These words are ambiguous, as it is not certain how the time is reckoned—whether the current day is included or not. If, as is most probable, they were spoken on Wednesday, the phrase means the next day but one, which commenced on the afternoon of Friday. Jesus appears to have passed this day in peaceful seclusion, either in Bethany or its neighbourhood. **Is the Feast of the Passover**; τὸ Πάσχα γίνεται: *the Passover cometh; Pascha fiet.* The lambs were slain during the first evening of the 14th of Nisan, and were eaten within twelve hours. The word *Pascha* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Pasach*, denoting "the passing over" of the destroying angel, when he destroyed the Egyptians, but left untouched the houses of the Israelites, on whose door-posts was sprinkled the blood of the lamb (Exod. xii.). Etymologically, it has nothing to do with πάσχω, and the Latin *patior, passio*, etc., though pious writers have seen a providential arrangement in the apparent similarity of the words (see the possible paronomasia in Luke xxii. 15). *Pascha* (*Pasach*) is used in three senses: (1) the transit of the angel; (2) the Paschal lamb; (3) the Feast of the Passover. It is in this last signification that it is here employed. **And** (equivalent to *when*) **the Son of man is betrayed** (*delivered up*, Revised Version) **to be crucified.** Christ connects his own death with the Passover, not only as indicating the day and hour, but to mark the typical meaning and importance of this solemnity, when he, our Passover, should be sacrificed for us. The present tense, "is betrayed," denotes the imminence and certainty of the event. He sees the event as actually present.

Vers. 3—5.—*Conspiracy of the Jewish rulers.* (Mark xiv. 1; Luke xxii. 2.)

Ver. 3.—**Then.** While Christ was announcing his approaching death, the rulers were plotting its accomplishment. He was certain; they were in doubt and perplexity about it. **The chief priests** (see on ch. xvi. 21). The office of high priest had originally been held for life; but of late the civil power had often deposed one and appointed another, so that there were at times many who had held the post, and who, as well as their deputies, and the heads of the courses, claimed the title of chief priest. These were all members of the Sanhedrin.

And the scribes. These words are omitted on very good authority by many modern editors. They are not found in the Vulgate, though they occur in the parallel passages in the other synoptists. If genuine, they, in connection with "elders" and "priests," would signify that all the elements of the Sanhedrin were present at this council. **The palace** (*αὐλὴν*) **of the high priest.** This, then, was not a formal meeting, or it would have been held in the hall Gazith, "the hall of hewn stones," on the south side of the court of the priests. It was assembled in the court of the high priest's house, because it comprised persons who were not Sanhedrists, such as temple officials, and connections of the high priest, forming what was known as the priestly council, which was the official medium between the Roman authorities and the people. **Who was called Caiaphas.** Josephus ('Ant.,' xviii. 2. 2) speaks of him as "Joseph, who is also Caiaphas;" hence the way in which he is introduced in the present passage. He had been elevated to his high post by the Romans, who found in him a submissive tool. His father-in-law Annas had been appointed by Quirinius, but after nine years had been deposed; he was succeeded in turn by Ismael, Eleazar son of Annas, Simon, and fourthly by Caiaphas, who superseded his immediate predecessor by the favour of the procurator Valerius Gratus, the tenant of the office before Pontius Pilate. The ex-high priest, Annas, was counted still by some rigorists as holding the office, and he appears to have possessed high authority (see John xviii. 13; Acts iv. 6).

Ver. 4.—**By subtilty.** They had decided to put Jesus to death; the question was how to get possession of his Person when there would be no attempt at a rescue, nor any tumult in his favour. The original is literally, *They took counsel in order that they might take*, etc. They seem scarcely to have reckoned on any legal trial; once they had him quietly in their hands, they would find means to dispose of him.

Ver. 5.—**Not on the feast day;** *ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ*: *during the feast;* i.e. during the eight days of the Passover celebration. The assembled multitudes did not leave the city until the close of the octave, so the danger of a rising was not removed till then. The rulers well knew the stern temper of Pilate the procurator, who was prepared to crush any popular movement with the strong hand, and at festival-times had always his soldiers ready to hurl upon the mob at the slightest provocation, and to deal indiscriminate slaughter. Hence arose the plan of a clandestine apprehension. It was, indeed, the custom to execute great criminals at the time of the chief festivals, in order to impress the spectacle of retribution upon the greatest number; but in the case of Jesus, after what had occurred during the last few days, and when Jerusalem was filled with Galilæans, who might naturally favour their countryman's pretensions, it was deemed dangerous to make any open attack. Their fears were relieved in the most unexpected manner by the appearance of Judas among them (ver. 14).

Vers. 6—13.—*The anointing at Bethany.* (Mark xiv. 3—9; John xii. 1—8.) This parenthetical episode is introduced by the two synoptists out of its chronological order, with the view of indicating the immediate cause of Judas's resolution to betray his Master, the issue of which they proceed to narrate (see on ver. 14). This anointing must not be confounded with that related by St. Luke (vii. 37, etc.), where the scene, the time, and the actor were different, and the significance was of a very inferior nature.

Ver. 6.—**When Jesus was in Bethany.** St. John tells us that the incident took place six days before the Passover, *i.e.* on the Saturday preceding Palm Sunday. It is St. Matthew's custom to describe events not always in their historical sequence, but according to some logical or spiritual connection which in his mind overrides considerations of time or place. (For Bethany, see on ch. xxi. 1.) **Simon the leper.** Not that he was a leper now, but either the appellation was hereditary, in reference to some such malady inflicted on his family, or he himself, having been cured by Christ, retained the name in memory of his cleansing. So St. Matthew is called "the publican" after he had relinquished his obnoxious business (ch. x. 3), and the revived man is termed "the dead" (Luke vii. 15). The frequency of the name Simon among the Jews rendered the addition of a surname expedient; thus we have Simon the Cananite, Simon the tanner, Simon Bar-jona, etc. Nothing certain is known about this person. Tradition makes him father of Lazarus or husband of Martha. That he was connected with the holy family of Bethany, either by relationship or close friendship, seems to be well established.

Ver. 7.—**A woman.** St. John identifies her as Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha. Why the synoptists omit her name is not known; it is equally uncertain why St. John makes no mention of Simon. None of the synoptists notice Lazarus, though St. Luke names Martha and Mary (x. 38, 39). It may have been at the

time a matter of prudence or delicacy not to draw attention to them by name. But there is no discrepancy. One narrative supplements the other, and it is best to be thankful for what we have, and not to be over-curious concerning points not explained. **An alabaster box** (ἀλάβαστρον). A cruse or flask made of alabaster, which is a white calcareous spar resembling marble, but softer and more easily worked. These cruses were generally round-shaped, with a long narrow neck, the orifice of which was sealed. It may be the breaking of this seal to which St. Mark refers in his account (xiv. 3), when he says that "she brake the box." **Very precious ointment** (μύρον). St. Mark calls it "pistic nard," rendered in our version "spikenard." The word in our text seems to be used for any salve or ointment which contained myrrh as one of its ingredients. Nard is found in Syria, the Himalayas, and other parts of India. From its root a strong-scented unguent was made, which, being imported from a long distance, was very costly. **Poured it on his head.** It is to be noted that in the original there is no "it" after "poured;" so there is nothing to imply that the whole was poured upon his head. This helps to reconcile this account with that of the fourth evangelist (Morison). St. John tells that she anointed his feet, which was unusual; she first anointed his head, and then his feet, wiping the latter with her long flowing hair. Anointing the head was not an uncommon way of honouring distinguished guests; but Mary had another thought in her mind which the Lord discerned (ver. 12). **As he sat at meat;** *as he reclined at table.* The Jews had adopted the Roman mode of eating (comp. ch. xxii. 10, where the word rendered "guests" is "the recumbent"). St. Matthew does not mention that a special supper was arranged for him (John xii. 1), as if to do him honour.

Ver. 8.—**When his disciples saw it.** St. John states that the objection came originally from Judas. Doubtless, when it was once made, many concurred in it, not, indeed, from Judas's selfish motive (John xii. 6), but because they did not clearly apprehend the Divinity of Christ, nor the unspeakable sacredness of that body which was about to be the instrument of man's redemption. **To what purpose is this waste** (ἀπώλεια)? Wordsworth notes that Judas is called υἱὸς ἀπωλείας (John xvii. 12). A fitting question truly for him to ask! The objectors saw no practical usefulness in the expenditure of this costly substance. If it was thought proper to show respect to their Master, a much inferior oil would have equally effected this purpose, or a few drops of the more precious unguent would have sufficed. So nowadays one hears complaints of money being expended in the rich decoration of churches, etc., when there are starving multitudes whom it would have relieved. But God himself has sanctioned the use of precious materials and of exquisite workmanship in temples built in his honour, and in the accessories of his public worship; the interests of the poor are not overlooked in such expenditure; they who give of their substance for such purposes are just those who feel all their responsibilities, and know that they serve Christ in ministering to his needy members.

Ver. 9.—**Might have been sold for much.** According to St. John, Judas had accurately estimated the value of the ointment at 300 denarii, equal to about £9 of our money. When we remember that one denarius represented the daily wages of a labouring man (ch. xx. 2), we see that the cost was very large. **Given to the poor.** And this "much" given to the poor. But piety is not shown only in giving alms; the honour of God has a superior claim. And Mary was rich, and quite able to afford this offering without neglecting her almsgiving. "How often does charity serve as a cloak for covetousness! We must not neglect what we owe to Jesus Christ under pretence of what we owe his members. Men count as wasted what is expended in the outer worship of God, when they love neither God nor his worship. Jesus Christ authorizes it by accepting it at the very instant in which he was establishing religion by a worship the most spiritual and inward" (Quesnel).

Ver. 10.—**Understood it.** Either their murmurs reached Christ's ears, or he divined their thoughts, and proceeded to defend Mary's action and to give a new lesson. **Why trouble ye the woman?** The disciples, observed Bengel, were really acting offensively to Jesus in thus censuring Mary; but he passes over this, and blames them only in respect of their conduct towards her. Doubtless, their remarks had reached Mary's ears, and annoyed and embarrassed her. **For she hath wrought a good work upon** (εἰς) **me.** A work that proved her zeal, reverence, and faith. Mary had always been devout, contemplative, loving. She had learned much at the grave of Lazarus; she was full of gratitude at the wonderful restoration of her brother's life; she had often heard Christ speak of his decease, and knew that it was close at hand, realizing that which the chosen apostles were still slow to believe; so she was minded to make this costly offering. And Christ saw her motive, and graciously accepted it.

Ver. 11.—**Ye have the poor always with you.** St. Mark adds, "and whensoever ye will ye may do them good." This was in

strict accordance with the old Law: "The poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land" (Deut. xv. 11). The existence of poor gives scope for the exercise of the graces of charity, benevolence, and self-denial; and such opportunities will never be wanting while the world lasts. **Me ye have not always**; *i.e.* in bodily presence. When he speaks of being with his Church always to the end, he is speaking of his Divine presence. His human body, his body of humiliation, was removed from the sight and touch of men, and he could no longer be received and welcomed and succoured as heretofore. In a different and far more effectual mode he would visit his faithful servants by a spiritual presence which should never fail or be withdrawn. To the objectors he would say, "You will no longer have opportunity of honouring me in my human form; why, then, do you grudge the homage now paid me for the last time?"

Ver. 12.—**On my body, she did it for my burial** (*πρὸς τὸ ἐνταφιάσαι με, to prepare me for burial*). This doubtless was in some sort her intention (see on ver. 10). She desired to offer what she could (Mark xiv. 8) of the offices and attentions due to the corpse of a beloved and revered Friend. Christ interpreted her act, and gave it a solemn significance. By this effusion of the precious unguent she anticipated the embalming of the Lord's body; she showed her reverence for that body which was to be given for the life of the world not many days hence. The full meaning of the mystery of which she was the instrument Mary did not comprehend, but what she had consciously done received a wonderful commendation from the Lord, which has no parallel in the Gospel history.

Ver. 13.—**Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached.** This weighty promise and prediction is introduced by the emphasizing formula, **Verily I say unto you.** The gospel is the story of the incarnation of Jesus—his life, teaching, death, resurrection, which implies written documents as well as oral exposition. Our Lord had already (ch. xxiv. 14) intimated that the gospel of the kingdom should be published throughout the world; he here affirms that Mary's deed shall be enshrined therein for all time. **There shall also this, that this woman hath done** (*λαληθήσεται καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη, that also which this woman did*) **be told for a memorial of her.** The history which records the grudging remonstrance of the disciples contains this remarkable approval of Mary's act, associating her for ever with the Passion of the Lord. We may here quote the eloquent comment of Chrysostom, who, however, unreasonably identifies Mary with the sinner who previously anointed Jesus. "Who then proclaimed it, and caused it to be spread abroad? It was the power of him who is speaking these words. And while of countless kings and generals the noble exploits, even of those whose memorials remain, have sunk into silence; and having overthrown cities, and encompassed them with walls, and set up trophies, and enslaved many nations, they are not known so much as by hearsay, nor by name, though they have both set up statues, and established laws; yet that a woman who was a harlot poured out oil in the house of some leper, in the presence of ten men,—this all men celebrate throughout the world; and so great a time has passed, and yet the memory of that which was done hath not faded away, but alike Persians and Indians, Scythians and Thracians, and Sarmatians, and the race of the Moors, and they that inhabit the British Islands, spread abroad that which was done secretly in a house by a woman" ('Hom. lxxx. in Matt.').

Vers. 14—16.—*Compact of Judas with the Jewish authorities to betray Jesus.* (Mark xiv. 10, 11; Luke xxii. 3—6.)

Ver. 14.—**Then.** The time referred to is the close of Christ's addresses, and the assembling of the Jewish authorities mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, vers. 6—13 being parenthetical. It is reasonable to suppose that the loss of the three hundred denarii, of which he would have had the handling, and the reproof then administered, gave the final impulse to the treachery of Judas. This seems to be signified by the synoptists' introduction of the transaction at Bethany immediately before the account of Judas's infamous bargain (see preliminary note on vers. 6—13). **One of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot.** That he was one of the twelve, the chosen companions of Christ, emphasizes his crime, makes it more amazing and more heinous. To witness the daily life of Christ, to behold his miracles of mercy, to listen to his heavenly teaching, to hear his stern denunciations of such sins as covetousness and hypocrisy, and in spite of all to bargain with his bitterest enemies for his betrayal, reveals a depth of perverse wickedness which is simply appalling. Well may the evangelist say that Satan entered into Judas (Luke xxii. 3); it was the devil's work he was doing; he followed this evil inspiration, and thought not whither it would lead him. **Went unto the chief priests.** Their hostility was no secret. Judas and everybody knew of their hatred of Jesus, and of their attempts to get him into their power; he saw his way to carry-

ing out his purpose, and making of it some pecuniary gain. We are not to suppose that this miserable man sank all at once to this depth of iniquity. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus.* Though the descent to Avernus be easy, it is gradual; it has its steps and pauses, its allurements and checks. Modern criticism has endeavoured to minimize the crime of Judas, or even to regard him as a hero misunderstood; but the facts are entirely in favour of the traditional view. We can trace the path by which the apostle developed into the traitor, by studying the hints which the Gospels afford. He was probably at first fairly sincere in attaching himself to Christ's company. Being a man of business capacity and skill in the management of money matters, he was appointed treasurer of the little funds at the disposal of Christ and his followers. Half-hearted and self-seeking, his undertaking this office was a snare to which he easily fell a victim. He began by petty peculations, which were not discovered by his comrades (John xii. 6), though he must often have felt an uneasy apprehension that his Master saw through him, and that many of his warnings were directed at him (see John vi. 64, 70, 71). This feeling lessened the love for Jesus, though it did not drive him to open apostasy. He had admitted the demon of covetousness to his breast, and he now adhered to Christ for the hope of satisfying greed and worldly ambition. The teaching and miracles of Christ had no marked influence on such a disposition, softened not his hard heart, effected no change in his evil and selfish desires. And when he saw his hopes disappointed, when he heard Christ's announcement of his speedy death, which his knowledge of the rulers' animosity rendered only too certain, his only feeling was hatred and disgust. The transient expectations raised by the triumphal entry were not fulfilled; there was no assumption of the earthly conqueror's part, there were no rewards for Christ's followers, nothing but enmity and threatening danger on every side. Judas, seeing all this, perceiving that no worldly advantage would be gained by fidelity to the losing side, determined to make what profit he could under present circumstances. Not with the mistaken idea of forcing Christ to declare himself, and to put himself at the head of a popular movement, nor with any notion of Christ miraculously saving himself from his enemies' hands, but simply from sordid love of gain, he made his infamous offer to the chief priests. It was just when they were in perplexity, and had determined on nothing except that the arrest and the condemnation were not to take place during the feast, that Judas was introduced into the assembly. No wonder "they were glad" (Mark xiv. 11); here was a solution of the contemplated difficulty; they need have no fear of a rising in favour of Christ; if among his chosen followers some were disaffected, and one was ready to betray him, they might work their will, when he was once quietly apprehended, without any danger of rescue and disturbance (see on ch. xxvii. 3).

Ver. 15.—**What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?** There is no disguise in this vile question. Judas unblushingly reveals his base motive in offering such a bargain; and to enhance its value he, as it were, forces his personality into prominence; as if he had said, "I who am his trusted adherent, I who know all his haunts and habits, will do this thing." **They covenanted with him**; ἔστησαν αὐτῷ: *they weighed unto him.* The verb might mean "appointed;" *constituerunt ei* (Vulgate); and St. Mark has "promised," St. Luke "covenanted;" but there is no doubt that some money was at once paid to Judas, as he seems to have returned it (ch. xxvii. 3) without any further interview with the Sanhedrin, though they may have given him a portion at once, and sent him the balance on the success of his attempt. **Thirty pieces of silver**; τριάκοντα ἀργύρια. Thirty shekels of the sanctuary, equivalent to £3 15*s.* of our money. This was the legal price of a slave gored by an ox (Exod. xxi. 32), and must have been considered by the traitor but a poor reward for his crime. He found the rulers as covetous as himself, and disposed to treat both him and his Master with the utmost contempt. Christ had taken upon him the form of a bond-servant, and was here reckoned as such. The transaction had been typically shadowed forth when another Judas sold his brother Joseph for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. xxxvii. 27, 28); when Ahithophel gave counsel against David, his familiar friend (2 Sam. xvi.); and when Zechariah wrote, "I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed [ἔστησαν, Septuagint] for my price thirty pieces of silver" (Zech. xi. 12). St. Matthew alone of the evangelists mentions the exact price agreed upon. It may have come naturally to the "publican" to observe the pecuniary aspect of the transaction.

Ver. 16.—**From that time.** As soon as he had made his bargain. **Opportunity.** "In the absence of the multitude," St. Luke adds. The Sanhedrin no longer thought it necessary to wait for the termination of the festival (ver. 5). **Judas would enable them to seize Christ in his most secret retirement, and at the most opportune** moment.

Vers. 17—19.—*Preparation for the Paschal Supper.* (Mark xiv. 12—16; Luke xxii. 7—13.)

Ver. 17.—**The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread**; literally, *on the first day of Unleavened Bread.* We have arrived at the Thursday in the Holy Week, Nisan 13. Wednesday had been spent in retirement at Bethany, and no acts or sayings of Christ on that day are recorded. The festival actually began at sunset of the 14th, which was called the day of preparation, because the lambs for the feast were slain in the afternoon of that day, preparatory to their being eaten before the morning of the 15th. Domestic preparation, involving the removal of all leaven from houses and the use of unleavened bread, began on the 13th; hence this was considered at this era "the first day of the Unleavened." **Came to Jesus.** As the Master of the family, who had the ordering of all the details of the Paschal celebration. They did not know the mind of Jesus on the subject, and desired his directions as in former years. Bethany was considered as Jerusalem for the purposes of the solemn meal, and the apostles thought that preparation was to be made at some house in that village. **Prepare for thee to eat the Passover.** The preparations were numerous: a proper room had to be found and swept and carefully cleansed from every particle of leaven; tables and couches had to be arranged, lights to be supplied, the lamb and all other necessaries (*e.g.* bread, wine, bitter herbs) provided. All these preparations took much time, so it was doubtless in the early morning that the disciples applied to our Lord. When they spoke of eating the Passover, they doubtless supposed that Christ meant in due course to celebrate the regular Paschal supper on the appointed day, *i.e.* on the evening of Friday. But his intentions were different from what they expected.

Ver. 18.—**The city.** Jerusalem. Jesus was at Bethany. St. Luke says that he sent Peter and John, now first joined together without James. **To such a man** (*πρὸς τὸν δεῖνα*). The other synoptists mention certain signs by which they were to recognize the man. At the entrance of the city they would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water; they were to follow him to the house whither he went, and then give their message to the master of the house. There is a great similarity between this mission and that concerning the ass before the triumphal entry. The foreknowledge and the precision in directions are quite analogous. The "good man" was doubtless a disciple, though at this festival all strangers were freely received by any householder who had accommodation. Dr. Edersheim supposes that he was father of Mark, who was the "young man" arrested by the company that took Jesus (Mark xiv. 51). The secrecy observed in the above-mentioned arrangement was intended to keep the knowledge from Judas, and thus to secure immunity from interruption at the solemn meal. The traitor seems to have sneaked out from the last Supper, and disclosed Christ's retreat to the Jewish authorities, and conducted them to the house; but, finding that Jesus had left the room, he led them to Gethsemane, whither he knew that Jesus often resorted (John xviii. 1, 2). **The Master.** A disciple would know who was meant by this title (comp. ch. xxiii. 8, 10; John xi. 28). Whether any previous arrangement had been made with him, we cannot tell; most probably Christ speaks from prevision and his providential ordering of events. **My time is at hand.** The time of my suffering and death. This fact would make the request more imperative. But the expression was mysterious and indefinite. **I will keep** (*ποιῶ, I keep*) **the Passover at thy house.** The Passover which the Lord was to keep was not the usual Paschal meal, as the lamb could not be legally killed till the 14th, but a commemorative anticipatory feast in which he himself was the Lamb—"the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Of that Lamb the apostles did mystically eat when Christ gave them the bread and wine with the words, "This is my body;" "This is my blood." This Supper, which was virtually the new Passover, seems traditionally to have become confounded with the usual Paschal solemnity; hence the language of the synoptists assumes a form which is applicable to the regular Jewish feast. This explanation, if it seems to derogate somewhat from the precise verbal accuracy of the evangelists, would probably be confirmed if we were better acquainted with the customs then prevalent, and with the current meaning of the language employed. The ambiguity in the accounts may be divinely intended to call attention to the fact that the last Supper was not the Jewish Passover, but the Christian Passover—not the sacrifice on the cross, but an anticipation thereof. We may observe in passing that there is no mention of the lamb in the celebration; Peter and John were not enjoined to provide one, nor are they said to have visited the temple—which, indeed, on the 13th would have been useless: and yet to obtain the lamb in any other way would have been a breach of the Law, which we cannot suppose Christ would sanction. We may also notice that the word "feast" (*ἑορτή*) is nowhere applied to the last Supper, though

it is always employed in reference to the Jewish solemnity. St. Paul, in his account of the institution of the Holy Communion (1 Cor. xi.) makes no mention of any Paschal solemnities or associations, but merely states that it was appointed on the night in which Jesus was betrayed. **With my disciples**; *i.e.* the twelve apostles; none but these, not even the master of the house, were present at this solemn scene.

Ver. 19.—**Made ready the Passover** (see on ver. 17). They got the room ready, provided unfermented bread, wine, bitter herbs, sauce, and some dishes necessary for the feast. They would not eat the Paschal lamb at the legal time to-morrow, so the Lord ordained a commemorative and anticipatory solemnity, in which he appointed a rite which should take the place of the Jewish ceremony. We learn from the other synoptists that the householder was not satisfied with offering Christ and his friends the use of the common hall, which they would have had to share probably with other guests; but he assigned to them his best and most honourable chamber, "a large upper room," already properly arranged and furnished for the feast. Tradition has maintained that this apartment was that afterwards used by the apostles as a place of assembling, and where they received the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost.

Vers. 20—25. — *The last Supper. Jesus announces his betrayer.* (Mark xiv. 17—21; Luke xxii. 14, 21—23; John xiii. 21—30.)

Ver. 20.—**When the even was come**; *i.e.* according to Jewish reckoning, the beginning of the 14th of Nisan; with us, the Thursday evening—the eve of Good Friday. **He sat down**; *he was reclining at table.* Originally, the Passover was ordered to be eaten standing, in reference to the circumstances of its first institution (Exod. xii. 11); but after the settlement in Canaan the posture had been changed to that of reclining in token of rest after a weary pilgrimage. The rule that obtained concerning the number in one company of partakers of the Paschal feast was that it never should be less than ten, nor more than the lamb would suffice to feed, though a morsel of the flesh was considered to satisfy all requirements.

Ver. 21.—**As they did eat.** The details of the Paschal feast are expounded by rabbinical authors, though there is little in St. Matthew's account to lead us to conclude that our Lord observed them on this occasion. The ceremonial usually practised was as follows: The head of the family, sitting in the place of honour, took a cup of wine and water mixed ("the first cup"), pronounced a thanksgiving over it, and, having tasted it, passed it round to the guests; the master washed his hands, the others performing their ablutions at a later part of the service; the dishes were placed on the table; after a special benediction had been spoken over the bitter herbs, the master and the rest of the company took a bunch of these, dipped it in the appointed sauce, and ate it; an unleavened cake was broken and elevated with a prescribed formula; the second cup was filled, the history of the festival was proclaimed, Ps. cxiii.—cxviii. were recited, and the cup was drunk. Now began the proper Paschal meal with a general washing of hands; the lamb was cut into pieces, and a portion given to each, with a bit of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs dipped in the sauce, called by St. John (xiii. 26) "the sop." At the end of the meal, which was supplemented by other viands (which, however, were probably eaten before the lamb), the third cup, named by St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 16) "the cup of blessing," was drunk, and the solemn grace after meat was uttered. It would be necessary to examine St. John's Gospel to see how the ritual fitted into the actual details of the last Supper; we have to deal with St. Matthew's account. **Verily I say unto you.** Christ thus prepares the apostles for the incredible statement which he is about to make. **One of you**; *εἷς ἐξ ὑμῶν.* One out of your number, my chosen companions. He had before spoken vaguely of his betrayal (see ch. xvii. 22; xx. 18; xxvi. 2). By thus showing his knowledge of the coming treachery, and yet declining to denounce the traitor by name, he may have given Judas a last chance of repentance before the final act. St. Matthew omits the washing of the disciples' feet, and the strife about pre-eminence.

Ver. 22.—**Exceeding sorrowful.** Such an announcement filled them with amazement and grief; they scarcely dared suspect one another, but began to doubt their own constancy, though at the time conscious of their integrity. **Is it I?** *Μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι; Numquid ego sum? It is not I, is it?* where the negative answer is expected. It is remarkable that the real character of Judas had never been discovered by the fellow-disciples who for three years had mixed with him in closest companionship. Either he was a consummate hypocrite, or the other apostles were too simple-minded, good, and charitable to think evil of any one. Thus his peculations passed unnoticed, and the greed and avarice which wrecked his spiritual life were entirely unsuspected.

Ver. 23.—**He that dippeth (*dipped*) his hand with me in the dish.** Even now Jesus does not identify the traitor. Many had put their hands into the dish along with

Christ. Judas was one of those who had done so. The fact of eating together made, in the Easterns' view, the treachery more monstrous. "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. xli. 9). The dish was one of large dimensions, from which each guest took his portion with his fingers. It was truly a common meal in which all shared. Our Lord's words were spoken in answer to John's question, "Lord, who is it?" (John xiii. 25). The beloved apostle's position at table, "lying on Jesus' breast," enabled him to ask this without being overheard. There is a mistake commonly made concerning the shape of the table used on such occasions. It was not of a horseshoe form, but oblong. The couches were arranged round three of its sides, and it extended a little way beyond the divans. The Master's seat was not at the top or middle couch, but at the side; and from what occurred we should infer that John sat on the right of Jesus at the end of the couch, and Judas on the left of Jesus, the strife about precedency having been thus settled. (The correct shape of the table, and the places of Jesus, John, Judas, and Peter, are delineated in Edersheim's work, vol. ii. p. 494.)

Ver. 24.—**The Son of man goeth** (*ὑπάγει, departeth*). It is thus that Christ alludes to his approaching death (John vii. 33; viii. 21, 22; xiii. 3, etc.), declaring thus the voluntary nature of his sufferings. **As it is written of him.** Every minute detail of Christ's Passion enunciated by the prophets was fulfilled. "The prescience of God," says Chrysostom, "is not the cause of men's wickedness, nor does it involve any necessity of it; Judas was not a traitor because God foresaw it, but he foresaw it because Judas would be so." **Woe unto that man by** (*through*) **whom the Son of man is betrayed!** *παραδίδοται, is being betrayed.* Judas could hear this and the following sentence, and yet retain his iniquitous purpose! **It had been good for that man if he had not been born**; literally, *it were good for him if that man had not been born.* Jesus says this, knowing what the fate of Judas would be in the other world. There is no hope here held out of alleviation or end of suffering, or of ultimate restoration. It is a rayless darkness of despair. Had there been any expectation of relief or of recovery of God's favour, existence would be a blessing even to the worst of sinners; for they would have eternity still before them in which to enjoy their pardon and purification; and in such case it could not be said of them that it were better for them never to have been born. On one side of the mysterious problem connected with Judas and such-like sinners we may again quote St. Chrysostom ('Hom. lxxxi. in Matt.'), "'What, then,' one may say, 'though Judas had not betrayed him, would not another have betrayed him? . . . Because if Christ must needs be crucified, it must be by the means of some one, and if by some one, surely by such a person as this. But if all had been good, the dispensation in our behalf had been impeded.' Not so. For the Allwise knows how he shall bring about our benefits, even had this happened. For his wisdom is rich in contrivance, and incomprehensible. So for this reason, that no one might suppose that Judas had become a minister of the dispensation, he declares the wretchedness of that man. But some one will say again, 'And if it had been good if he had never been born, wherefore did he suffer both this man and all the wicked to come into the world?' When thou oughtest to blame the wicked, for that, having the power not to become such as they are, they have become wicked, thou leavest this, and busiest thyself and art curious about the things of God, although knowing that it is not by necessity that any one is wicked."

Ver. 25.—**Answered and said, Master,** is it I? *Μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι; It is not I, is it?* as ver. 22. Judas probably had not been one of those who put this question before, and now, availing himself of his proximity to Jesus (see on ver. 23), he has the inconceivable effrontery to make this inquiry privately, as if to assure himself whether Christ was conscious of his treachery or not. It is remarked that he does not call Jesus "Lord," as the other apostles, but "Rabbi," a coldly ceremonious title (so in the garden, ver. 49). The gentle Jesus reproaches him not, but answers him in low tones unheard by the rest (John xiii. 28, 29). **Thou hast said.** A common formula, equivalent to "yes." So ver. 64.

Vers. 26—29.—*The institution of the Lord's Supper.* (Mark xiv. 22—25; Luke xxii. 15—20; 1 Cor. xi. 23—25.) The endless controversies which have gathered round the Holy Eucharist, for opposite views of the meaning and purpose of which men have fearlessly met death, render it a difficult matter to expound the text succinctly and yet with due regard to clearness and precision. If I do not expatiate upon the diverse opinions which have been held on this momentous subject, it is not because I have neglected to weigh and examine them, but because it is more conducive to edification to have a plain statement of what appears to the writer to be the truth, than to

confuse a reader with a multitude of interpretations which in the end have virtually to be surrendered. The points to be specially remembered before trying to expound the section are these: 1. He who institutes the ordinance is Almighty God made man, who is able to set aside one observance and to substitute another in its place. 2. The new ordinance had an analogy with that which it superseded. 3. It was intended to be the one great service and means of grace for all Christians. 4. The interpretation is to be connected with the great discourse of Jesus in the sixth chapter of St. John, where Christ speaks of himself as the Bread of life that came down from heaven, and his flesh and blood as the nourishment of his people.

Ver. 26.—**As they were eating.** Before the supper was quite ended, and before the third cup of wine (see on ver. 21) was drunk. **Jesus took bread** (*τὸν ἄρτον, the bread*, according to the Received Text). The special unleavened cake prepared for the Paschal meal. The four accounts agree in this detail, and seem to indicate a formal action or elevation, like the wave offering in the old Law. We see here the "High Priest after the order of Melchizedek" bringing forth bread and wine like his great prototype (Ps. cx. 4), and by anticipation offering himself as victim. **And blessed it.** The Received Text here and in St. Mark has *εὐλογήσας*, which in some manuscripts has been altered to *εὐχαριστήσας*, in conformity with the wording in St. Luke's and St. Paul's accounts. We find a similar interchange of the words in the miracles of the loaves (see ch. xiv. 19; xv. 36; Mark viii. 6, etc.). Virtually, the two expressions are identical; the thanksgiving is a blessing, the blessing is a thanksgiving. The usual blessing uttered by the master over the unleavened cake is said to have been, "Blessed be he who giveth the bread of earth." From this benediction on the elements, and the thankful remembrance of Christ's death and the benefits thereof herein connoted, the Holy Communion has from the earliest times been called the Holy Eucharist. **And brake it.** The fraction of the bread was so important and essential a part of the institution, that it gave its name to the whole rite, and "breaking of bread" represented the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving (see Acts ii. 42, 46; 1 Cor. x. 16, etc.). Under the old Law the fraction represented the sufferings endured by the chosen people; in Christ's new institution it symbolized his death, when his feet and hands were pierced with the nails and his side with the spear. **Gave it** (*ἔδιδου, was giving*) **to the disciples.** He gave to each of them a portion of the cake in their hand. If they had risen from their couches at the solemn benediction, as we may well suppose they did, they were still standing when the Lord distributed the consecrated bread. That they received it reclining in an easy posture seems unlikely. **Take (*γε*), eat (*γε*).** The two words are given only in our Gospel; St. Mark has "take ye" (*φάγετε* being there an interpolation). St. Luke and St. Paul omit them altogether. We should infer that Christ did not himself partake of the bread or wine (which would have confused the deep significance of the ordinance), but gave it to his apostles, that by such participation they might be identified with the sacrifice represented by the broken bread, thus transforming the Levitical rite into a new sacrament which did not merely commemorate his death, but conveyed its benefits to faithful receivers. **This is my body.** "This" in the Greek is neuter (*τοῦτο*), and therefore is not in agreement with "bread" (*ἄρτος*), which is masculine. It is to be explained as "This which I give you, this which ye receive." The copula "is" would not be expressed in the Aramaic, which Christ spoke; and yet what a world of controversy has hung on this *ἐστι*! Some take it as absolutely identifying subject and predicate; others regard it as equivalent to "represents;" others, again, would modify it in some manner, so that it should not logically express the agreement of the two terms of the proposition. It was doubtless a startling statement to those who then heard it for the first time, but it came upon them not wholly unprepared. In his momentous discourse on the Bread of life, after the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus had spoken of himself as the Food of his people, and then proceeded to make the amazing assertion, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53). The meaning of this mysterious warning was not further explained. Now as the Lord distributed to the apostles the blessed morsels with those solemn words, they learned what he meant by eating his flesh and drinking his blood, how he put it in his servants' power to fulfil the injunction. In what sense could "this" be his body? He was there before their eyes in human form, perfect Man; and yet he gives something else, not that which was standing before them, as his body. Stupendous mystery, past finding out! There is no room here for metaphor or figure. He is not figuratively describing himself or his office or his work, as when he calls himself the good Shepherd, the Door, the Vine, the

Way: he directs attention to one part of his nature, his body, and that as food to be eaten. He shows the mode by which we may be participators of this his lower nature, that as, joined to Adam, we die, so thus united to Christ, we live. We must, as before observed, remember that he who said these words was God incarnate, and that he designed to give his Church a means of realizing and receiving those stupendous blessings set forth in his Eucharistic discourse as depending upon due reception of his body and blood. It is obvious that the apostles could not understand the terms literally, but, believing in his Godhead, believing that he could bring to pass that which he said, they apprehended them in a supernatural, mystical sense; they had faith to know that in these holy elements, blessed by their Lord, they received him, ate his flesh and blood, to their soul's health. This was no mere commemorative rite, not simply a way of remembering Christ's death and Passion, but it was a sacrament, an outward sign of an inward reality, something from without entering the recipients and imparting to them that which before they had not. How the outward and inward are joined together we cannot tell. It is, and will always remain, an unfathomable mystery. The presence of Christ's humanity in the Holy Communion is beyond, above, the ordinary conditions of man's nature; it is supernatural, miraculous, even as was his incarnation, which joined manhood and Deity. The substance, indeed, of the elements remains as before, their nature is not changed, but they have a new relation and use and office; they serve as a means of communicating Christ's body and blood, and they are so called before reception, so that the receiver's faith does not make them to be such, but Christ's own word with power. Attempts to explain this Divine matter hopelessly fail. Hence the Romanist with his transubstantiation, or change of substance; the Lutheran with his consubstantiation, or confusion of substance; the Zuinglian with his irreverent virtualism, alike fall into error and depart from pure doctrine. The only right attitude is to leave all such efforts alone, to believe Christ's word simply but wholly, and to use the sacrament in full faith, that by and through it to the faithful recipient are imparted incalculable benefits. To the words, "This is my body," St. Luke adds, "which is being given (*διδόμενον*) for you;" and St. Paul, "which is [broken; ? genuine] for you." Thus the Lord, before he actually suffered, offered himself as a Victim voluntarily undergoing death, and showed it forth by the broken bread and the poured wine. We are told that the master of the household, when he distributed the pieces of the lamb, said solemnly, "This is the body of the Paschal lamb." Christ transformed this formula to a new use, but in neither case did it introduce a mere symbol of something absent.

Ver. 27.—**He took the cup.** Many good manuscripts have "a cup," and some modern editors omit the article; but this cup was the only one on the table at the time; so the reading matters not. This was probably the third cup at the close of the Paschal meal (see on ver. 21). The wine of the country is what we call a red wine (compare "the blood of grapes," Gen. xlix. 11); it was mixed with a little water when used at the table. This third cup was termed "the cup of blessing" (cf. 1 Cor. x. 16), because over it was spoken a special benediction, and it was regarded as the principal cup, following, as it did, the eating of the lamb. **Gave thanks** (*εὐχαριστήσας*). The thanksgiving was a blessing (see on ver. 26). The celebration of Christ's death and the remembrance of the incalculable blessings obtained thereby may well be termed the Holy Eucharist, the great sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. **Gave** (*ἔδωκεν*) **it to them.** The aorist here used would imply strictly that he gave the cup once for all, herein differentiating the action from that employed in distributing the bread. St. Luke's expression, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves," refers to an earlier stage of the supper. In the present connection he nearly agrees with the other synoptists. It is possible that the cup was passed from hand to hand after it had been blessed by Christ. **Drink ye all of it.** St. Mark adds, "And they all drank of it." Strange it is that, with these words written in the Scripture, any Church should have the hardihood to deny the cup to any qualified Christian. The Romanist's assertion that the cup is for priests alone, as it was given to the apostles only, and was destined for them and their sacerdotal successors, would apply equally to the consecrated bread, and then what becomes of the *general* use of the ordinance? If we would have life in us, we must not only eat Christ's flesh, but drink his blood. We need to be refreshed as well as strengthened in the battle of life, and it may well be that the mutilation of the sacrament carries with it spiritual effects that impede the soul's health.

Ver. 28.—**For.** Yes, drink ye all hereof, for it is unspeakably precious. **This** (*τοῦτο*, as before, ver. 26) **is my blood.** This which I here give you. The blood separated from the body represents Christ's death by violence; it was also the sign of the ratification of a covenant. **Of the new testament;** *διαθήκης: covenant.* The adjective "new" is omitted by some good manuscripts and modern editors, but it gives the sense so-

tended. The Vulgate has, *novi testamenti*. The old covenant between God and his people had been ratified at Sinai by the blood of many victims (Exod. xxiv. 5—8; Heb. viii. 8—13; ix. 15, etc.); the blood of Christ shed upon the cross ratifies "the new or Christian covenant to the world and the Church, and the same blood sacramentally applied ratifies the covenant individually to each Christian" (Sadler). The evangelical covenant supersedes the Judaic, even as the sacrifice of Christ fulfils and supersedes the Levitical sacrifices. **Which is shed** (*is being shed*) **for many**. The Vulgate has *effundetur*, in reference to the crucifixion of the morrow; but this is tampering with the text. Rather, by using the present tense, the Lord signifies that his death is certain—that the sacrifice has already begun, that the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8) was now offering the eternal sacrifice. The whole ordinance is significant of the completion of the atonement. "Many" here is equivalent to "all." Redemption is universal, though all men do not accept the offer (see on ch. xx. 28). Even Calvin says, "Non partem mundi tantum designat, sed totum humanum genus." **For the remission of sins.** "For without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22); "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). The sacrifices of the Law, the blood of bulls and goats, could not take away sin; at most they gave a ritual and ceremonial purification. But what the Mosaic Law could not effect was accomplished by the precious blood of Christ, who offered himself a spotless and perfect Victim unto God. This is our Lord's most complete announcement of the propitiatory nature of his sacrifice, which is appropriated by faith in the reception of his precious blood. St. Paul adds, "This do ye (*τοῦτο ποιεῖτε*), as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me [*εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν*, 'for my commemoration']." These were, of course, Christ's words spoken at the time, and are of most important bearing on what is called the sacrificial aspect of the Holy Eucharist.

Ver. 29.—**I will not drink henceforth** (*ἀπ' ἄρτι*) **of this fruit** (*γενήματος*) **of the vine.** He is about to die. From this moment forward he tastes not the cup. It does not follow that he had partaken of the consecrated wine which he gave his apostles. Probability is against his having done so (see on ver. 26). He used the same words with the first cup at the commencement of the supper (Luke xxii. 18). Of this he probably partook, but not of the latter. The offspring of the vine is a poetical way of describing wine (cf. Deut. xxii. 9; Isa. xxxii. 12, etc.). It is absurd to find in this term an argument for unalcoholic grape-juice. Wine, to be wine, must undergo fermentation, and if it is not to putrefy or to become vinegar, it must develop alcohol. **When I drink it new** (*καινόν*) **with you in my Father's kingdom.** This mysterious announcement has been variously interpreted, and its meaning must remain uncertain. Some refer it to Christ's intercourse with his disciples after he rose from the dead, when *e.g.* he partook of food with them (Luke xxiv. 30, 42, 43; John xxi. 12; Acts i. 4; x. 41). But this seems hardly to meet the requirements of the text, though it has the support of Chrysostom, who writes, "Because he had discoursed with them concerning Passion and cross, he again introduces what he has to say of his resurrection, having made mention of a kingdom before them, and by this term calling his own resurrection. And wherefore did he drink after he was risen again? Lest the grosser sort might suppose that the resurrection was a phantasy. . . . To show, therefore, that they should see him manifestly risen again, and that he should be with them once more, and that they themselves shall be witness to the things that are done, both by sight and by act, he saith, 'until I drink it new with you,' you bearing witness. But what is 'new'? In a new, that is, in a strange manner, not having a passible body, but now immortal and incorruptible, and not needing food." Some explain it of the Passover, of which he then partook for the last time, the type being fulfilled in him. The solution does not explain the new participation in the kingdom of God. It seems, on the whole, best to understand it as a prophecy of the great marriage supper of the Lamb, and the joys that await the faithful in the new heavens and the new earth. The wine is the token of the felicities of this dispensation, and it is called "new" in contrast with the obsolete character of that which it superseded. "Novitatem dicit plane singularem" (Bengel).

Vers. 30—35.—*Jesus announces the desertion of the apostles, and the denial of Peter.* (Mark xiv. 26—31; Luke xxii. 34; John xiii. 36—38.)

Ver. 30.—**When they had sung an hymn.** This was probably the second portion of the Hallel (Pss. cxv.—cxviii., or, if the then ritual was the same as the later, Ps. cxxxvi.). Before this, however, the Lord spake the discourses and the prayer recorded so lovingly and carefully by St. John (John xiv.—xvii.). **They went out.** Which they could not lawfully have done had they been celebrating the usual Jewish Passover (see Exod. xii. 22). Though it is possible that many modifications of the original ritual

had been gradually introduced, yet Christ so strictly observed the Law that he would doubtless have obeyed its injunction in this particular if he had been keeping the legal solemnity. **The Mount of Olives.** Hither he had resorted every night during the week (Luke xxi. 37; xxii. 39).

Ver. 31.—**Then saith Jesus.** The warning, according to the other evangelists, was given in the upper chamber, unless, as is very unlikely, it was twice repeated (see Luke xxii. 31—34; John xiii. 36—38). The "then" of St. Matthew must not be taken strictly as denoting exact chronological sequence, but as marking a change of scene or a new incident. **All ye shall be offended because of me** (*ἐν ἐμοί, in me*). There is an emphasis on "all ye;" even ye eleven, who have been steadfast hitherto. One, Judas, had already departed; but Christ warns the eleven that they too shall for a time lose their faith in him, and sin by forsaking their Lord. His apprehension and trial would prove a rock of offence to them. **It is written.** In Zech. xiii. 7, where the prophet's words are, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." It is here shown that all that happened took place according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." That Christ may be the Saviour he must be a sacrifice. In Zechariah the Lord gives the command to the sword; hence Christ can say, **I will smite.** The Shepherd is Christ, the sheep are the disciples, who, at the sight of the officers coming to seize him, "all forsook him, and fled" (ver. 56). The prophecy in Zechariah is remarkably full of references to Christ, his nature and his position.

Ver. 32.—**After I am risen again.** He comforts his followers now, as always, with the announcement that after his Passion and death he would rise again and meet them. So in the prophet's words succeeding the quotation there is a similar encouragement, "I will turn mine hand upon the little ones;" *i.e.* I will cover and protect the humble and meek, even after they fled and were scattered. **I will go before you** (*προάξω ὑμᾶς*) **into Galilee** (ch. xxviii. 7). The verb is of pastoral signification, as in the East the shepherd does not drive his sheep, but leads them (John x. 4). The apostles, or many of them, after the Resurrection, returned to their old homes in Galilee, but Christ preceded them, and they found him there before them (Mark xvi. 7; John xxi.; Acts i. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 6). He again gathered around him his little flock lately scattered. True, he had then already appeared to them at Jerusalem more than once; but this was, as it were, fortuitously and unexpectedly. The meeting in Galilee was by appointment, and of most solemn import, Christ then reuniting the apostolic body, and renewing the apostolic commission (ch. xxviii. 18—20).

Ver. 33.—**Peter answered and said unto him.** This self-confident answer seems to have been made after he had received the warning recorded by St. Luke (xxii. 31), "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not." He cannot believe that he, the rock-man, can be guilty of such defection. **Though all [men] shall be offended because of** (*ἐν*, ver. 31) **thee.** The addition of "men" in the Authorized Version alters the intended meaning. Peter contrasts himself with his fellow-disciples. Though they all should fall away, he, at any rate, would remain steadfast. He could not endure to be included in the "all ye" of Jesus' warning (ver. 31); and as for failing "this night," he will never at any time (*οὐδέποτε*) be offended in Christ. Commenting on his offence, St. Chrysostom says, "The matters of blame were two: both that he gainsaid Christ, and that he set himself before others; or, rather, a third, too, namely, that he attributed all to himself."

Ver. 34.—Peter's boast elicits a crushing reply from his Lord, foretelling the special sin of which he would be guilty, and the very time of the night when it should be committed. **This night, before the cock crow.** The word "cock" is without the article, so the meaning may be "before a cock crow;" *i.e.* probably before midnight. Cocks were unclean birds, and not kept by strict Jews, and their voice was not much heard in Jerusalem; though it is quite different now, where barn-door fowls swarm round every house. One of the night watches, that about 3 a.m., was known as "cock-crow" (see Mark xiii. 35). Some think this is what is meant here. **Thou shalt deny me thrice.** What Peter denied was that he knew anything of Christ, or had ever been his follower (see vers. 69—75; Luke xxii. 34).

Ver. 35.—**Though I should die with thee** (*κἂν δέῃ με σὺν σοὶ ἀποθανεῖν, even if I must die with thee*). Christ's explanation of his meaning only drew from Peter a more energetic asseveration of his constancy even unto death. "He thought he was able," says St. Augustine, "because he felt that he wished." The other apostles made a similar assertion, and Jesus said no more, leaving time to prove the truth of his sad foreboding.

Vers. 36—46.—*The agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.* (Mark xiv. 32—42; Luke xxii. 39—46; John xviii. 1.)

Ver. 36.—Gethsemane (equivalent to "oil-

press"). Jesus retired thither for privacy and for prayer in anticipation of what was coming. St. John explains, "Where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples." This so-called garden was situated a short distance from the bridge over the Kedron, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. It was a plantation of olives; and there are many of these trees, some of great age, still growing in the neighbourhood. The fanciful idea that some of these witnessed the agony of our Lord has no support whatever. In the first place, olive trees do not live two thousand years; and, secondly, it is certain that in the sieges of Jerusalem all surrounding trees were ruthlessly destroyed; and lastly, the exact site of this terrible scene is unknown, though tradition has fixed upon a certain spot now enclosed with walls, and containing a building known by the name of "The Chapel of the Sweat." **The disciples.** Eight of them—Judas having long ago departed—and three Jesus took with him deeper into the dim recesses of the wood. **Sit ye here.** Remain here, at the entrance to the olive-yard. These might not behold even the beginning of his desolation. Their present faith and love were not equal to the strain. **Go and pray yonder.** One is reminded of Abraham at Mount Moriah, when he says to the attendants, "Abide ye here, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen. xxii. 5). When the Lord says "here" and "yonder," he points to the spots indicated. He always retired to pray, even as he tells his followers to enter into their closets when they put up their supplications to their Father in heaven.

Ver. 37.—**Peter and the two sons of Zebedee.** These three had been privileged to behold his transfiguration, and that glimpse of his glory strengthened them to bear the partial sight of their dear Lord's sufferings. Did his human heart crave for sympathy, and did he desire not to be utterly alone at this awful crisis? We may well suppose so, as he was true Man, with all man's feelings and sensibilities. **Began to be sorrowful and very heavy** (*ἀδημονεῖν, to be sore dismayed*). This word seems to be used of the dismay that comes with an unexpected calamity. St. Mark tells us that Christ was "sore amazed" (*ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι*). It is as though the prospect of what was coming suddenly opened to his vision and overwhelmed him. He now set before himself, *i.e.* his human consciousness, the sufferings which he had to undergo, with all that led to them, and all that would follow, and the burden was crushing.

Ver. 38.—**My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death** (Jonah iv. 9). Christ speaks here of the mental agony which he is enduring; he hides not from the faithful three that which weighs upon his heart, so excessive a strain that human nature must fail to endure it. We cannot gauge the anguish; we may suggest some of the causes of this sorrow. It was not merely the thought of bodily pain, though that would be long and excessive; there were other elements which made his sorrow like to no other sorrow. He thought of all the circumstances that led to his Passion; all that would accompany it; all that would succeed it—the malice and perversity of the Jews, the grievous wickedness that brought about his death, the treachery of Judas, the desertion of his friends, the denial of Peter, his unjust condemnation at the hands of the rulers of the chosen nation, the pusillanimity of Pilate, the guilt of the actors in the tragedy, the wilful iniquity of those whom he came to redeem, the ruin which they brought on themselves, their city and nation—such considerations formed one ingredient in the bitter cup which he had to drain. And then the thought of death was unspeakably terrible to the all-holy Son of God. We men become accustomed to the thought of death. It accompanies us through all our life; it looms before us always. But man was created immortal (Wisd. ii. 23), his nature shrinks from the dissolution of soul and body; and to the sinless, unfallen Man this experience was wholly unknown and awful. Here was the incarnate God, the God-Man, submitting himself to the punishment of sin, tasting death for every man, bearing in his own Person the inexpressible bitterness of this penal humiliation. Added to all this was the incalculable fact that "the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all." The burden of the sins of all mankind he bore on his sacred shoulders. "Him who knew no sin God made to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. v. 21). What this mysterious imputation, so to speak, involved, we cannot tell; but to a being perfectly pure and holy it must have been anguish unspeakable. **Tarry ye here.** As ver. 36, "Sit ye here." **And watch with me.** In his dark hour his human soul yearned for the comfort of a friendly presence; even though these chosen three might not witness the extremity of his agony, their proximity and sympathy and prayers were a support. But he bade them watch for their own sake also. Their great trial was close at hand; they were about to be tempted to deny and forsake him; they could resist only by prayer and watchfulness (ver. 41).

Ver. 39.—**He went a little further.** Deeper into the wood, beneath the gloomy shadow of the olive trees, yet so as not to feel abso-

lately alone. St. Luke names the distance, "He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast." By some clerical error the genuine reading, προελθών, "having gone forward," has been altered in most of the best manuscripts into προσελθών, "having approached." There can be no doubt that this latter reading is erroneous; and it is well, as occasion bids, to call attention to possible mistakes in the most important uncials. **Fell on his face, and prayed.** He prostrated himself on the ground in utter abasement and desolation, yet in submission withal. In this terrible crisis there is no resource but prayer. The shadow of death enveloped him, wave and storm rolled over his soul; yet out of the deep he called unto the Lord. In the Epistle to the Hebrews (v. 7, 8) some affecting details are added, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered." **O my Father** (Πάτερ μου). The personal pronoun is omitted in some manuscripts, but it has high authority. Only on this occasion and in his great prayer (John xvii.) does Christ so address the Father, his human nature in the depth of suffering retaining still the sense of this paternity. St. Mark has, "Abba, Father," as if he spake for the Hebrew race and the Gentile world. **If it be possible**; *i.e.* if there is any other way in which man may be saved and thou be glorified; if there is any other mode of redemption. It is the cry of humanity, yet conditioned by perfect submission. **Let this cup pass from me.** The "cup" is the bitter agony of his Passion and death, with all their grievous accompaniments (see ch. xx. 22, and note there). All heroism and manly endurance in the face of pain and death Christ exhibited to the full; but the elements of suffering in his case were different, and fraught with exquisite torture (see above, on ver. 28). Such was the anguish that it would have then separated soul and body—of such rigour that "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground"—had not an angel appeared from heaven to strengthen and support the fainting human life (Luke xxii. 43, 44). **Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.** In this prayer are shown the two wills of Christ, the human and Divine. The natural shrinking of the human soul from ignominy and torture is overborne by entire submission to and compliance with the Divine purpose. So it is said that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings, learned obedience by the things which he suffered (Heb. ii. 10; v. 8). By this passage the Monophysite and Monothelite heresies are clearly refuted, the two natures and two wills of Christ being plainly displayed. The three apostles saw only some part of their Master's intense agony, and heard only some broken utterances of his supplication; hence there are some slight variations in the synoptical accounts. St. Mark doubtless derived his account immediately from St Peter; the other synoptists from some other source.

Ver. 40.—**He cometh unto the disciples.** He rose from prayer and returned to his three apostles, seeking their sympathy and the comfort of their presence in his lonely desolation. **Findeth them asleep**; *sleeping.* The comfort which his man's nature craved was denied him. St. Luke, the physician, says that the disciples were "sleeping for sorrow." Some great mental shock, some poignant distress, often produces a bodily stupor and sleep; but this is scarcely a valid excuse for such insensibility at this terrible crisis, especially as the Lord had urged them to watch (ver. 38). They had had a very trying day; Peter and John had undergone much bodily fatigue in preparing the last Supper; they were all weary, full of grief, and weighed down by foreboding; it was no wonder that they succumbed to these influences, though we might have expected that such as they would have risen superior to them. "The simple law, that extraordinary tension raises the highly developed spiritual life, while it stupefies the less developed, finds here its strongest illustration in the almost absolute contrast of spiritual watchfulness and sleep" (Lange). **Saith unto Peter.** Peter had been most forward in profession (vers. 33, 35); so Christ addresses him first. The other two, James and John, had boldly asserted that they were able to drink of Christ's cup of suffering (ch. xx. 22); so they are included in the tender reproach. **What** (οὕτως), **could ye not watch with me?** *So, could ye not*, etc.? Is it so that? Are ye unable to do even this little thing for me? Truly a pathetic reproof! **One hour.** It may be that this first stage of the agony had lasted for an hour, but the term is more probably indefinite; or it may refer to the whole time of trial.

Ver. 41.—**Watch** (*ye*) **and pray.** A summary of Christian duty. Watchfulness sees temptation coming; prayer gives strength to withstand it. The apostles needed the injunction at this moment; for their great trial was close at hand. **That ye enter not** (*in order that ye may not enter*) into temptation. The phrase is usually interpreted to mean either to fall into temptation, to be tempted, or to run wilfully into temptation; but it seems to be better, with Grotius, to

take it in the sense of succumbing to, falling under, being vanquished by temptation, like ἐμπίπτειν in 1 Tim. vi. 9, "immergi et succumbere." That Peter and the rest were now to be tempted was certain (Luke xxii. 31, 32), and it was too late to deprecate the trial; but it was right and expedient to ask of God grace to withstand in the evil hour. **The spirit** (πνεῦμα) indeed **is willing, but the flesh is weak.** This was an added motive for vigilance and prayer. The apostles had shown a certain readiness of spirit when they offered to die with Christ (ver. 35); but the flesh, the material and lower nature, represses the higher impulse, checks the will, and prevents it from carrying out that which it is prompted to perform (see the action of these contrariant forces noticed by St. Paul, Rom. vii.). "For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthy tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things" (Wisd. ix. 15). Our Lord at this very time was experiencing and exemplifying the truth of his saying, though in his case the weakness of the flesh was entirely overmastered by the willing spirit. It is noted that Polycarp quotes this maxim of Christ in his 'Epistle to the Philippians,' ch. 7.

Ver. 42.—**Again the second time.** A pleonastic expression, as in John iv. 54; xxi. 16, etc., calling especial attention to "the numerical re-repetition of the Saviour's prayer" (Morison). St. Matthew alone gives the words of this second prayer, which differs in some respects from the first. The possibility of the cup passing away was considered no longer; the continuance of the trial showed that it was not to be. **If this cup may** (*can*) **not pass away from me . . . thy will be done.** He accepts the cup; his human will coincides with the Divine will; he acquiesces with perfect self-resignation. The cup, relatively to the circumstances, could not pass away from the Saviour.

Ver. 43.—**He came and found them asleep** (*sleeping*) **again.** In the best manuscripts "again" is connected with the verb "came." This was his second visit; he was still craving for their sympathy, still desirous of their safety under temptation. **Heavy** (βεβαρημένοι). Weighed down with drowsiness; St. Mark adds, "Neither wist they what to answer him." He partially aroused them, but they were too overcome with sleep to enter fully into the situation or to attend to the obvious duty before them.

Ver. 44.—**Saying the same words** (λόγον, *word*, i.e. prayer). Three times he prayed, and his prayer was always of the same import—teaching us by example to be urgent, instant, in supplication, and, though the special request be denied, to be sure that we are heard and that an answer will be given; even as Christ obtained not the withdrawal of the cup, but strength to submit, endure, and conquer. We must compare this threefold prayer and contest with the threefold temptation at the beginning of our Lord's ministry.

Ver. 45.—**Cometh he.** St. Hilary comments on these three visits: "On his first return he reproves, on the second he holds his peace, on the third he bids to rest." The contest was over; the human will was now entirely one with the Divine will. **Sleep on now** (τὸ λοιπόν, *henceforward*), **and take your rest.** This is probably to be understood literally. There was a short interval still before the apprehension and the subsequent events; as they could not watch, they might use this in finishing their sleep, and recruiting their wearied bodies in preparation for the coming trial. Many expositors find an irony in Christ's words, taken in connection with those that follow, as if he meant, "In a few minutes I shall be seized; sleep on if you can; you will soon be miserably awakened, make the most of the present." But at this moment the tender Jesus would surely never have condescended to address his friends in such a style. All his words and actions were animated with the deepest love for them and anxiety on their account. A change to irony is really inconceivable under the circumstances. Nor is there any reason to take the sentence interrogatively, "Sleep ye at such a moment?" It is more simple to regard the words as said *bonâ fide*, with no mental reservation and no implied censure. We may suppose that a pause ensued before the utterance of the next clause, and that the Lord allowed his fatigued followers to sleep on till the last moment. **Behold, the hour is at hand, and** (καί, equivalent to *when*) **the Son of man is betrayed** (παραδίδοται, *is being betrayed*) **into the hands of sinners.** He calls all sinners who take part in his apprehension, trial, and death—not the Romans only (as Acts ii. 23), but priests, elders, multitude, who joined in the crowd and incurred the guilt. There is now no sign of wavering; he is ready, yea, eager to meet the sufferings which he foresees.

Ver. 46.—**Rise, let us be going.** He will meet, and he wishes his disciples to meet, the coming attack with alacrity and readiness. So with them he goes towards the entrance of the garden where he had left the eight. **Behold.** Judas and his companions come in sight.

Vers. 47—56.—*Betrayal and apprehension of Jesus* (Mark xiv. 43—52; Luke xxii. 47—53; John xviii. 2—11.)

Ver. 47.—**Judas, one of the twelve.** So called by all the synoptists, as if to enhance his guilt—one of Christ's own familiar friends, who had eaten bread with him. **Came.** St. Luke tells us that he led the way to Gethsemane. He well knew the place as a favourite resort of Christ (John xviii. 2); he knew, too, that Jesus was alone there with his apostles, and he had gone with confidence to inform the authorities where they could find him, and to demand a force sufficient to make the arrest. **A great multitude.** Consisting of some of the Levitical guard, Roman soldiers, Sanhedrists, and elders. The soldiers carried swords, the fanatical herd bore staves, to overcome any opposition which, after the demonstration at the triumphal entry, might be naturally expected. St. John adds that they brought with them lanterns and torches in order to search the recesses of the grove, should Christ have hidden himself there.

Ver. 48.—**A sign.** As they approached, Judas gave them a sign which would point out the person whom they were to seize. Probably these did not know Jesus by sight; at any rate, amid the crowd he might easily escape detection; it was also night, and even the Paschal moon might not enable the guards to distinguish faces under the shade of the dark olive grove. **Whomsoever I shall kiss.** In the East such salutation was common among friends, masters, and pupils; and it would awaken no surprise to see Judas thus salute his Teacher. Perhaps he desired to save appearances in the eyes of his fellow-disciples. We marvel at the audacity and obduracy of one who could employ this mark of affection and respect to signal an act of the blackest treachery. **That same is he** whom you have to arrest. **Hold him fast.** As if he feared an attempt at rescue, or that Jesus might, as before (Luke iv. 30; John viii. 59), use his miraculous power to effect his escape.

Ver. 49.—**Forthwith.** The blood-money was to become due on the accomplishment of the betrayal; so Judas, now that the opportunity had arrived, lost no time in completing his part of the bargain. **Kissed him** (*κατεφίλησεν*, a strong word, *kissed him eagerly*, or, kissed him much). Judas was more than usually demonstrative in his salutation. "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Ps. lv. 21). So Joab treated Amasa before he murdered him (2 Sam. xx. 9, 10). What infinite patience for the Lord to submit to this hypocritical caress! It is a type of the wonderful goodness and long-suffering of God towards sinners, how he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

Ver. 50.—**Friend;** *ἑταῖρε: companion* (see ch. xx. 13; xxii. 12). The word seems, in the New Testament, to be always addressed to the evil, though in itself an expression of affection. Here Christ uses no reproach; to the last he endeavours by kindness and love to win the traitor to a better mind. St. Luke narrates that Jesus called him by name, saying, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" **Wherefore art thou come?** *Ἐφ' ὃ πάρει.* The Received Text gives *ἐφ' ᾧ*, which has very inferior authority. There is great difficulty in giving an exact interpretation of this clause. The Authorized Version, as the Vulgate (*Ad quid venisti?*), takes it interrogatively; but such a use of the relative *ὅς* is unknown. If it is interrogative, we must understand, "Is it this for which thou art come?" But Christ knew too well the purport of Judas's arrival to put such an unnecessary question. Others explain, "Do that, or, I know that for which thou art come." Alford, Farrar, and others consider the sentence as unfinished, the concluding member being suppressed by an aposiopesis consequent on the agitation of the Speaker, "That errand on which thou hast come—*complete.*" More probably the clause is an exclamation, *ὃ* being equivalent to *οἷον*, as in later Greek, "For what a purpose art thou here!" It is, indeed, a last remonstrance and appeal to the conscience of the traitor. **Took him.** They seized him with their hands, but did not bind him till afterwards (John xviii. 2). Whether Judas had any latent hope or expectation that Jesus at this supreme moment would assert and justify his Messiahship, we know not. The histories give no hint of any such idea, and it is most improbable that the apostate was thus influenced (see on ver. 14). We must here introduce the incident recorded by St. John (xviii. 4—9).

Ver. 51.—**One of them which were with Jesus.** St. John names Peter as the agent in the attack on the high priest's servant; he also alone gives the name of the servant, Malchus. Of the circumstances which led to the subsequent miracle all the evangelists give an account; the miracle itself is related only by St. Luke. Conjecture has attempted to give reasons for these deficiencies in some of the narratives, and the complementary details in others; but it is wisest to say that thus it has seemed good to the Holy Ghost who guided the writers, and there to leave the subject. **Drew his sword.** The apostles had evidently misunderstood the Lord's words uttered a little while before (Luke xxii. 36—38), "He that hath no sword, let him sell his cloke, and

buy one." Two of them had then exhibited the weapons with which they had armed themselves, as if ready to repel violence. And now one of these, thinking that the hour was arrived for striking a blow in his Master's defence, resorted to violence. Physical courage, indeed, Peter possessed, as was proved by his attitude in the face of fearful odds, but of moral courage he and his comrades exhibited little evidence, when, as soon as their Master was apprehended and led away, they "all forsook him, and fled" (ver. 56). **Struck a (*the*) servant of the high priest's.** The man was the high priest's servant in a special way—what we should call his body-servant; he had evidently made himself conspicuous in the arrest, and Peter struck fiercely at his head as the foremost of the aggressors. St. John, who was acquainted with the high priest and his household, gives his name as Malchus, a Syriac word, meaning "Counsellor." **Smote off his ear.** The blow fell short, but inflicted a serious wound. How the mischief was repaired by the healing touch of Christ is mentioned alone by Luke the physician, for whom the incident would have special interest. We may note, in passing, that this miracle (the last which Christ worked before his death) was wholly unsolicited and unexpected on the part of the recipient, and was performed upon an enemy actually engaged in hostility. What more striking proof of the Lord's mercy and forgiveness could have been given? What better way could there be of demonstrating the nature of the kingdom which he came to establish? Thus he displayed his superhuman power even while surrendering himself to captivity and death. By this immediate action too he secured his followers from reprisal, so that they were allowed to retire unmolested, and Peter, though recognized to have been one of those in the garden (John xviii. 26), was not punished for his part in the transaction.

Ver. 52.—**Put up again thy sword into his (*its*) place.** Christ orders Peter to sheathe his sword; but the wording is peculiar, *Turn away* (*ἀπόστρεψον*) *thy sword;* as if Christ would say, "The sword is none of mine; the arm of flesh and the carnal weapon are thine; turn off thy sword from the use which thou art making of it to its proper destination, to be wielded only at God's command." Then he gives a motive for this injunction. **For all they that take** (*οἱ λαβόντες*) **the sword shall perish with the sword.** There is a stress on the word "take," and there is an imperative force in the future, "shall perish." The Lord is speaking of those who arbitrarily and presumptuously resort to violence; and he says, "Let them feel the sword." The word was of wide application, and contained a universal truth; it was, in fact, a re-enactment of the primæval law touching the sacredness of human life, and the penalty that ensues on its infringement (Gen. ix. 5, 6). It enforced also the general lesson that violence and revenge effect no good end, and bring their own punishment. There is no prophecy here (as some suppose) of the destruction of the Jews at the hands of the Romans; nor is Christ intent on soothing Peter by the thought of the future retribution which awaited the enemies whom he was so eager to chastise. Such suggestions are arbitrary and unwarranted by the context.

Ver. 53.—**Thinkest thou that I cannot now** (*ἄρτι*) **pray to** (*παρακαλέσαι, beseech*) **my Father?** Jesus proceeds to show that he needs not Peter's puny assistance. *Ἢ δοκεῖς; An putas? Or thinkest thou?* The particle, neglected by the Authorized Version, marks the transition to a new motive. The verb *παρακαλεῖν* has the special meaning of "to summon with authority," "to call upon as an ally." Peter needed still to learn the lesson of Christ's Divinity, his oneness with the Father; and this is furnished by the right interpretation of this word, which was not, as our version seems to make it, the cry of an inferior to one mightier than himself, but the summons of an equal to his great Ally in heaven. So Jesus virtually says, "Have I not power through my own Godhead to summon my Father to support me?" (Sewell, 'Microscope of the New Testament'). **Shall presently give me** (*παραστήσει μοι ἄρτι*). The Authorized Version seems to have read *ἄρτι* twice, "now . . . presently." The manuscripts show it only once, but vary its position. It most probably belongs to the first clause. The verb rendered "give" has a more pregnant meaning. It is a military term meaning "to place by the side," "to post on one's flank." Hence the Lord implies that at a word the serried ranks of angels would range themselves at his side, true flank-comrades, to defend and support him **Twelve legions of angels.** Not a dozen weak men. He employs the Roman term "legion" with intention. He had been arrested by a cohort (John xviii. 3, 12, *σπεῖρα*), the tenth part of the legion, which numbered six thousand men; he could, if he chose, call to his aid twelve times six thousand angels, who would deliver their Lord from his enemies. If there was to be an appeal to force, which Peter's rash assault suggested, what could withstand his angelic allies, the heavenly hosts, infinitely more numerous, better disciplined, more effectively officered, prompt and happy to do the will of the great Commander?

Ver. 54.—**But how then** (*οὖν, i.e.* if I now resist) **shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?** There is no "but" in the original. In what way, Christ asks, shall God's determined counsel be accomplished, if you turn to the arm of the flesh, or if I use my Divine power to save myself? The will of God, as declared in Scripture, was that Jesus should be betrayed, seized, should suffer and die. Christ's will was one with the Father's and one with the Spirit's who inspired the Scripture, and therefore he must pass through each stage, undergo each detail, which the sacred volume specified. It was not merely that events were so arranged that they thus befell; nor merely that prophets of old foretold them; but there was some special moral duty and obligation in fulfilling them, which Christ, as one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, was minded to carry out in all perfection. Here was a ray of comfort for Peter and the other apostles. All was foreordained; its announcement in God's book proved it came from God, was under his control and ordering. Patience, therefore, and silent acquiescence were the duties now incumbent. "Be still, then, and know that I am God."

Ver. 55.—**The multitudes.** St. Luke says that Christ addressed "the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and elders, which were come against him." He submitted to indignities, but he felt them deeply; he allowed himself to be treated as a malefactor, but was not insensible to the shame of being supposed to have been capable of acting as such. **A thief**; *a robber*. One at the head of a band of lawless ruffians, who would resist you with arms in their hands—a *sicarius*, a cut-throat, who lurked in secret places to murder the innocent. **I sat daily with you** (*πρὸς ὑμᾶς*, probably an interpolation from Mark). All the past week, at any rate, Christ had taught quietly and openly in the temple. He had none of the habits of the robber; he had not courted secrecy; he had no company of armed men to defend him; why did they not arrest him then? According to St. Luke, Christ adds, "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

Ver. 56.—**All this was done** (*hath come to pass*), etc. This is most probably part of Christ's speech, not a remark of the evangelist. He repeats to the multitude what he had said to Peter (ver. 54, where see note), and what he had already intimated at the last Supper (vers. 24, 31). To quote the words of Stier, "Again and again he declares that one thing which, nevertheless, Christian theology perpetually refuses to learn from the supreme Teacher and Doctor. He holds firmly to the Scripture, whether speaking to the exasperated Jews or the docile disciples; he puts those to shame in their folly by proofs from Scripture, and strengthens these in their despondency by its consolatory promises. He appeals to Scripture in his vehement disputation with men, as he does in his solemn way of suffering to die for them; he confronts Satan with 'It is written,' and prays to the Father—that the Scripture may be fulfilled." If Christ had been taken prematurely in the temple, and put to death by a tumultuary stoning, prophecy would not have been fulfilled, and his death would not have been the appointed sacrifice of the Lamb of God. **Forsook him, and fled.** As he had foretold (ver. 31). They saw their Master bound and helpless; they recognized that he would not deliver himself by heavenly aid, and, fearing to share his fate, they looked to their own safety and basely abandoned him in his hour of danger. Now occurred the incident mentioned only by St. Mark (xiv. 51), which is explained rightly by Edersheim (ii. 485, 544). Only Peter and John followed the officers to the high priest's palace.

Vers. 57—68.—*Jesus before Caiaphas, informally condemned to death.* (Mark xiv. 53—65; Luke xxii. 54, 63—65; John xviii. 24.)

Ver. 57.—**Led him away to Caiaphas.** The synoptists omit all mention of the preliminary inquiry before Annas (John xviii. 13, 19—24). His palace was nearest to the place of capture, and the soldiers appear to have received orders to conduct the Prisoner thither, Annas having vast influence with the Romans, and being the principal mover in the matter. What passed before him is not recorded, none of the disciples being present at the examination. The synoptists take up the account when Jesus was sent bound to Caiaphas, who St. John (xviii. 14) notes was the one who for political reasons had urged the judicial murder of Jesus. **Where** (*i.e.* in whose house) **the scribes and the elders were assembled.** This seems to have been an informal meeting of the leading Sanhedrists, hastily convened, not in their usual place of meeting, but in a chamber of Caiaphas's palace. Some years before this time the right of pronouncing capital sentences had been removed from the council; and hence the necessity of assembling in the hall Gazith (where only such sentences could be delivered) existed no longer.

Ver. 58.—**Afar off.** Peter had fled at first with the others; but his affection drew him back to see what befell his beloved Master. He followed the crowd at a safe distance, and, joined afterwards by John, reached the palace of Caiaphas. **Went in.** St. John

appears to have entered the court with the guard that held the Prisoner; but Peter remained without till introduced by his fellow-apostle, who was known to the servant who kept the door (John xviii. 16). **With the servants.** These were the officers of the Sanhedrin, and the high priest's servants. They retired from the presence-chamber to the open court, and sat round a charcoal fire which they made there. Peter at one time sat with them, at another moved restlessly about, endeavouring to show indifference, but really betraying himself. **The end.** The result of the examination. This verse is parenthetical, interrupting the course of the narrative in order to prepare the way for the account of Peter's denial (vers. 69—75).

Ver. 59.—**The chief priests, [and elders,] and all the council.** The words in brackets are probably spurious; they are omitted by the best uncials and the Vulgate. The words cannot imply strictly that the whole Sanhedrin was present and consenting to the present proceedings; for we know that such members as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa did not consent to the infamous deeds of the rest (Luke xxiii. 51; John xix. 39). **Sought** (ἐζήτουν, *were seeking*) **false witness.** The Sanhedrists had decided on Christ's death; it only remained to find such a charge against him as would compel the Roman authorities to deal summarily with him. For their purpose the truth of the accusation was immaterial, so long as it was established, according to Law (Deut. xvii. 6; **xix.** 15), by two or three witnesses examined apart. They knew well that Christ could be condemned on no true testimony, hence they scrupled not to seek false. If they had meant to deal fairly, they would have allowed some who knew him to speak in his favour; but this was the very last thing which they desired or would have sanctioned.

Ver. 60.—**Found none.** Repeated twice (according to the Received Text), showing the earnestness of the pursuit and the absolute failure of the attempt. What was offered was insufficient for the purpose, or inconsistent (Mark xiv. 56). The second "found none" is thought by many modern editors to be not genuine, and is accordingly expunged. It does not occur in the Vulgate. **At the last came two false witnesses.** When the case seemed hopeless and on the point of breaking down, some of the Sanhedrists' own creatures came forward with a distorted account of Christ's words spoken long before. They brought no accusation founded on any of his late utterances in the temple, or when he was charged with blasphemy and threatened with stoning (John x. 33); they remembered keenly how he had discomfited them on such occasions, and they feared to elicit one of his crushing replies or unanswerable questions. They were glad to fall back upon something else, which especially concerned Annas and Caiaphas, and their gainful trading in the sacred courts (see the next note).

Ver. 61.—**This fellow** (οὗτος). Contemptuously, displaying their animosity by the disrespectful use of the pronoun. **I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.** This is a distorted account of what our Lord said at his first purgation of the temple, when asked to give a sign in proof of his authority. Speaking metaphorically of his body, he had made this announcement, "Destroy ye this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19). At the time the Jews had not understood the words, and they now pervert them into a criminal accusation, which might take the form of charging him with being either an impious fomenter of disturbance, or a pretender to superhuman powers, Divine or Satanic. In either case, the charge would bring him into collision with the Roman authorities, which was the real object of this preliminary inquiry. We must not forget that Christ had twice interfered with the traffic in the temple, which was carried on to the great profit of the avaricious family of Annas, and that the malice of the high priests was on this account greatly embittered.

Ver. 62.—**The high priest [Caiaphas] arose.** As if in indignation at the outrage offered by this vaunt to Jehovah and the sanctuary. But the indignation was assumed and theatrical; for even this charge had broken down, owing to the disagreement of the two witnesses (Mark xiv. 59). Something more definite must be secured before any formal appeal could be made to the Sanhedrin or the procurator. **Answerest thou nothing?** The angry president endeavours to browbeat the Prisoner, and to make him criminate himself by intemperate language or indiscreet admission. **What is it which these witness against thee?** The Received Text (followed here by Westcott and Hort) divides the high priest's words into two questions, as in the Authorized Version. The Vulgate unites the two into one, *Nihil respondes ad ea quæ isti adversum te testificantur?* Alford, Tischendorf, etc., print, Οὐδὲν ἀποκρίνῃ τί οὗτοί σου καταμαρτυροῦσιν; "Answerest thou not what it is which these witness against thee?" Caiaphas professes a desire to hear Christ's explanation of the words just alleged against him.

Ver. 63.—**Jesus held his peace;** ἐσιώπα: *continued silent* (cf. ch. xxvii. 12—14). "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth," etc. (Isa. liii.

7; cf. Ps. xxxviii. 13, 14). He knew it was of no use, and was not the moment, to explain the mystery of the words which he had used. Indeed, it was unfair to ask him to explain the discrepancies in the alleged testimony. "Attempts at defence were unprofitable, no man hearing. For this was a show only of a court of justice, but in truth an onset of robbers, assailing him without cause, as in a cave or on the road" (St. Chrysostom, *in loc.*). The case was best met by a majestic silence. **Answered.** Puzzled and embarrassed by Christ's persistent silence, Caiaphas at last proceeds to put to him a question which he must answer, and which must lead to some definite result. **I adjure thee by the living God.** The high priest now addresses Jesus officially as the minister of Jehovah, and puts him under an oath to make an answer. To such an adjuration a reply was absolutely necessary, and the Law held a man guilty who kept silence under such circumstances (Lev. v. 1). **The Christ, the Son of God.** It is not to be supposed that Caiaphas by these words intended to imply that Messiah was one with God, of one nature, power, and eternity. It is not likely that he had risen above the popular Jewish conception of Messiah, which was of one inferior to God, though invested with certain Divine attributes. But he had heard that Jesus had more than once claimed God as his Father, so he now, as he hopes, will force a confession from the Prisoner's lips, which will set the question at rest one way or the other, and give him ground for decisive action, and enable him to denounce Christ either as an acknowledged impostor or a blasphemer. His language is, perhaps, based on the second psalm, vers. 2, 6, etc.

Ver. 64.—**Thou hast said**; *σὺ εἶπας* (ver. 25); in St. Mark, *ἐγώ εἰμι*. This is a strong affirmative asseveration, and on Christ's lips carries with it the full meaning of the words used by Caiaphas, "I am the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One, God of God, of one substance with the Father." **Nevertheless** (*πλήν*); *i.e.* in spite of your incredulity. But there is no direct opposition intended between the previous and the following statements; so *πλήν* would be better translated, *but moreover*, or *what is more*. **Hereafter**; *ἀπαρτι*. From this moment, beginning from now, from my Passion, my triumph and my reign are inaugurated. **Shall ye see.** Ye, the representatives of Israel, shall see the events about to be consummated, the preludes of the great assize, and the coming of Messiah's kingdom. **The Son of man.** God and yet man; man now in weakness and humility, about to display and give incontestable proofs of his Godhead. **Right hand of power.** Of Omnipotence, of Almighty God. **Coming in the clouds of heaven** (ch. xxiv. 30). Christ thus distinctly asserts his Divinity, and claims to apply to himself the utterance in Ps. cx. 1, and the great prophecy of Daniel (vii. 13, 14). This was the plainest and most specific declaration of his real nature, power, and attributes, made with calm majesty, though he knew it was to seal his condemnation, and open the immediate way to his death.

Ver. 65.—**The high priest rent his clothes** (*τὰ ἱμάτια*). His outer garments, not his pontifical vestment, which he would not wear on this occasion. St. Mark notes that he rent his under clothes, his tunic; so probably he tore both outer and inner garments. This was done in assumed horror at Christ's blasphemy (cf. 2 Kings xviii. 37; xix. 1), rabbinical injunctions requiring such an action, and prescribing the nature, extent, and direction of the scissure. "This he did," says Chrysostom, "to add force to the accusation, and to increase the weight of his words by the act." **His assessors**, though fully agreeing with him, appear not to have followed his example in this particular, taking the high priest's action as typical and sufficiently expressive of the general sentiment. The Fathers see in it a symbol of the rending and destruction of the Jewish priesthood (cf. 1 Sam. xv. 27, 28; 1 Kings xi. 30, 31). **He hath spoken blasphemy.** In claiming to be the Son of God, not in a theocratic sense, but by nature, making himself one with Jehovah. This was what Caiaphas had been desiring. No more discussion was needed; Christ was self-convicted. **What further need have we of witnesses?** He was doubtless relieved to find that the Prisoner had saved him from the trouble of seeking, suborning, and examining any more witnesses. **Ye have heard**; *ye heard* just now. All the assembly could now testify to the truth of the allegation.

Ver. 66.—**What think ye?** He wishes to get a vote by acclamation, not in a formal way, as to the guilt of Christ and the punishment which he deserved. **He is guilty of** (*ἔνοχος, worthy of, liable to*) **death.** This was the punishment pronounced by the Law on blasphemy (Lev. xxiv. 16); the death was, however, to be by stoning (Acts vii. 58). This detail, as they considered it, was now exclusively in the hands of the Romans. We see that this meeting, which virtually doomed Christ to death, was not a regular council of the Sanhedrin; for it was not held in the appointed chamber, and was conducted at night, when criminal processes were forbidden. The meeting next morning (ch. xxvii. 1) was convened for the purpose of considering how this informal sentence should be executed.

Ver. 67.—The scene that ensued upon the verdict being pronounced is beyond measure hideous and unexampled. When the meeting broke up, Jesus was for a time left to the brutal cruelty and the unbridled insolence of the guards and servants. Involuntarily, by their profanity and coarseness, they fulfilled the words of the prophet, speaking in the Person of Messiah, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa. l. 6). **Did they spit in his face.** A monstrous indignity, so regarded by all people at all times (Numb. xii. 14; Deut. xxv. 9; Job xxx. 10). **Buffeted him** (*ἐκολάφισαν αὐτὸν*); *struck him with fists.* **Smote him with the palms of their hands** (*ἐῤῥάπισαν*). There is some doubt whether the verb here means "to smite with a rod" or "to slap in the face with the open hand;" but as we have already had mention of striking with the hands, it is probable that beating with a stick is here intended.

Ver. 68.—**Prophesy**; *divine, guess.* They had previously blindfolded him (Mark xiv. 65; Luke xxii. 64), and now in derision of his supernatural powers they mockingly bid him to name the person who struck him. **Thou Christ.** They use the term sarcastically. "You call yourself Christ, the Prophet of God; well, then, divine miraculously, without seeing, who is he that smote thee."

Vers. 69—75.—*The three denials of St. Peter.* (Mark xiv. 66—72; Luke xxii. 55—62; John xviii. 17, 18, 25—27.)

Ver. 69.—There is much apparent discrepancy in the four accounts of Peter's denials, both as regards the scene, the persons, and the words used. St. Matthew groups them all together in one view without special regard to time and place. The fact doubtless is this—that Peter did not distinctly three times, in three separate utterances, deny Christ, but that on three occasions, and under different circumstances, and in many different words, he committed this sin. There are, as it were, three groups of questions and replies, and the evangelists have recorded such portions of these details as seemed good to them, or such as they were best acquainted with. **Peter sat** (*was sitting*) **without in the palace** (*τῇ αὐλῇ*). We have seen (ver. 48) that Peter was introduced by John into the open court round which the palace was built, and on one side of which was the chamber in which the examination of Jesus was going on. He was within the palace enclosure, but outside the principal apartment; hence he is said in the text to have been **without.** Admission to the courtyard was gained by a passage through the side of a house, which formed the vestibule or porch; this was closed towards the street by a heavy gate, having in it a small wicket for the use of visitors, kept by a porter or other servant. **A damsel.** This was the female porteress who kept the wicket by which Peter was admitted. She appears to have had some suspicion of him from the first, and to have followed him with her remarks from the gate, and to have continued them when he sat down with the servants at the fire kindled in the open court. **Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.** She says, "Thou also" in reference to John, whom she had first admitted, and who seems to have been in no danger, though Peter had great fears for his own safety. Though the porteress probably had no personal knowledge of the apostle, yet scanning his features by the light of the fire, noting his perturbed aspect and his restless actions, and reflecting on his companionship with John, she conjectured that he was a disciple of Christ, and more than once hazarded the assertion with the view of eliciting a definite answer.

Ver. 70.—**He denied before them all.** This was the first batch of accusations and denials. The equivocal denial was made vehemently and openly, so that all around heard it. It does not seem that he would have incurred any danger if he had boldly confessed his discipleship, so that this renunciation was gratuitous and unnecessary. **I know not what thou sayest.** This is virtually a denial of the allegation made, though in an indirect and evasive form, implying, "I do not know what you are alluding to."

Ver. 71.—**The porch**; *τὸν πυλῶνα.* The passage between the street and the court. Peter had walked towards the gate, either in unmeaning restlessness, or with some notion of escaping further questioning. **Another maid saw him.** We gather from the other accounts that both the porteress and some other domestics assailed him at this time. **Jesus of Nazareth.** Christ was popularly so known (see ch. xxi. 11).

Ver. 72.—**With an oath.** Assailed on all sides, and fearing that his simple word would not be taken, Peter now to one and all makes a curt denial, accompanying it with an oath. He was thoroughly determined not to compromise himself, and to silence all suspicion. This was the second stage of his fall. **I do not know the man.** I have no knowledge of this Jesus of whom you are speaking. He calls his beloved Master "the man"!

Ver. 73.—**After a while**; *μετὰ μικρὸν*: *after a little interval.* About an hour, according to St. Luke. Meantime had occurred the examination and informal condemnation of Christ, followed by the brutalities of the attendants, and the Lord's temporary con-

signment to some chamber or gallery that overlooked the courtyard. The excitement of the trial and its accompaniments having somewhat subsided, attention was again turned upon Peter, who, in his nervous trepidation, could not remain quiet and silent, but aroused observation by his indiscreet movements and garrulity. **They that stood by.** Among whom, as St. John notes, was a kinsman of Malchus, who indistinctly remembered having seen Peter at Gethsemane. Probably by this time some rumour of the presence of a disciple of Jesus had spread among the crowd, and there arose an eager desire to discover him. If Peter had not talked, he might have escaped further notice. **Thy speech bewrayeth thee;** *makes thee known.* His dialect (for doubtless he spoke Aramaic) showed that he was a Galilæan, and as most of Christ's adherents came from that region, they inferred that he was one of Christ's disciples. The language and pronunciation of the northern district differed materially from the polished dialect of Judæa and Jerusalem, and its provincialisms were readily detected. The Galilæans, we are told, could not properly pronounce the guttural letters, *aleph*, *kheth*, and *ayin*, and used *tau* for *shin*, *pe* for *beth*, etc.; they also often omitted syllables in words, occasioning equivocal mistakes, which afforded much amusement to the better instructed.

Ver. 74.—**To curse and to swear.** Peter fortifies this, his third denial, by imprecating curses on himself (καταθεματίζειν) if he spake not the truth, and again (ver. 72) confirming his assertion by a solemn oath. There is a certain gradation in his denials: he first simply asserts; he then asserts with an oath; lastly, he adds curses to his oath. "One temptation unresisted seldom fails to be followed by another; a second and greater infidelity is the punishment of the first, and often the cause of a third. Peter joins perjury to infidelity. Deplorable progress of infidelity and blindness in an apostle in so short a time, only out of fear of some underservants, and in respect of a Master whom he had acknowledged very God. He might possibly have proceeded even as far as Judas, had God left him any longer to himself" (Quesnel). **Immediately the cock crew.** This was the second crowing (Mark xiv. 72); the first had been heard at the first denial (Mark xiv. 68).

Ver. 75.—**Peter remembered the word of Jesus.** Simultaneously with the crowing of the cock, the Lord turned round, and from the chamber facing the court looked upon Peter (Luke xxii. 61), singled him out from all the crowd, showed that amid all his own sufferings and sorrows he had not forgotten his weak apostle. What that look did for Peter we learn by succeeding events; it is for the homilist to expatiate thereon. Christ had prayed for him, and the effect of that prayer was now felt. **He went out.** From the portico where the denial had taken place; he rushed from that evil company into the night, a broken-hearted man, that no human eye might witness his anguish, that alone with his conscience and God he might wrestle out repentance. **Wept bitterly.** Tradition asserts that all his life long Peter hereafter never could hear a cock crow without falling on his knees and weeping.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The shadow of the cross.* I. THE PROPHECY. 1. *The end of the Lord's public teaching.* "Jesus had finished all these sayings." There was precious teaching yet to come; but that would be private, in the upper room, addressed to the little circle of the twelve. This Tuesday was the last day of the Lord's public teaching. Now he had finished all these sayings—the controversies with scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees, the great discourse delivered on the Mount of Olives, the parables of judgment, the awful prophecy in which he describes himself as the great King, who shall sit on the throne of glory, who shall judge all the nations of the world. Now he passes from the prophetic to the priestly office. The work of public teaching is ended; the work of atonement is beginning. We are approaching that tremendous sacrifice, the one most awful scene in the whole history of the world, when the high Son of God, who for our salvation's sake became the Son of man, offered up himself the one sufficient Propitiation for the sins of the whole world. It becomes us to draw near with reverence and godly fear, with deep self-abasement and adoring love. 2. *The near approach of his death.* "After two days," he said, "is the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." It was his second clear announcement of the form of death which he was to suffer. It was to be the death of the cross, of all deaths the most horrible. He would indeed sit on the throne of glory with all the holy angels round him; but the cross must come first. He knew it; he knew the day and the

hour; he looks forward with sweet, holy calmness to that cruel death. "The Son of man is delivered up," he said—is being delivered; even while he was speaking the treason was being planned; it would soon be consummated. The greatest festival of the Jewish year would be desecrated by the foulest crime which the world has ever seen; but that crime would, by God's overruling providence, bring about the great sacrifice of which the Passover was the type. "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us." Mark the quiet composure with which the Lord spoke of his coming Passion, and learn of him to contemplate the approach of death with calmness and tranquillity.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE FULFILMENT. 1. *The assembly in the house of Caiaphas.* Caiaphas was, by the appointment of the Roman governor, high priest that year. He had already (John xi. 50) urged the Sanhedrin to seek the death of Christ, prophesying unconsciously "that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Now the chief priests and elders assembled in the court of his house to take counsel as to the best means for carrying out their wicked purpose. 2. *Their fears.* The Lord's words and actions had made a great impression upon the people; they had observed his victories over the Pharisees and Sadducees; they had listened to his preaching with interest, and were very attentive to hear him. Many of them had taken part in the triumphal procession which had escorted him into Jerusalem, and had recognized him with "Hosannas!" as the King Messiah. The leading Jews dared not attempt to take him openly by force; they feared lest the people should rise in his favour, especially as large numbers of Galilæans always came to the Passover. They consulted, therefore, that they might take him by subtilty; but they determined to defer the execution of their design till after the feast-day. It was not from reverence for the sanctity of the Passover season; they did not shrink from desecrating it, when the treachery of Judas enabled them to do so without danger. They feared the multitude. There was an immense concourse in the city. The people, always inflammable, were more so than ever at the Passover, partly through the excitement of numbers, partly through the national spirit aroused by the festival. They might, the chief priests thought, side with Jesus; they might support his claims to the Messianic dignity. The attempt to seize him might evoke a burst of popular sympathy, and lead him to put himself at the head of the multitude. So they determined to defer their guilty design.

LESSONS. 1. The Lord had finished his public teaching; the Pharisees and chief priests had heard it; it had increased their condemnation. Take heed how ye hear. 2. The Lord was about to die. We must die soon. Let us learn to think and speak of our death calmly as he did. 3. The chief priests feared danger; they did not fear the wrath of God. Let us learn of Christ to fear not death, but him who is able to cast both soul and body into hell.

VERS. 6—16.—*The supper at Bethany.* I. THE ANOINTING. 1. *The house of Simon the leper.* The Lord was always welcome there. It may be that he had healed Simon of his leprosy. He had raised Lazarus from the dead; he was regarded with the utmost reverence and affection by Martha and Mary. St. John tells us that Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany. "There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." St. Matthew is evidently relating the same events, but, like St. Mark, he gives no note of time, and apparently neglects the chronological order. Very possibly the two evangelists may have had some reason for omitting the names of Lazarus and his sisters which did not exist when St. John wrote. It was a memorable supper. One sat there who had been dead, who had known those awful secrets which we shall one day know—those secrets so full of deep mysterious interest, so attractive, but so inscrutable. And One was there who is the very Life, without whom there is no life, who had again and again given life to the dead, who one day will call all the dead from their graves as he had a short time before called Lazarus from his; who, though he is the Life and hath life in himself, was yet about to die, to lay down his life of himself, that the dead in sin might live through him who by death abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. He sat there at supper in his infinite condescension, as now he deigns to sup with those whom he hath raised from the death of sin unto the

life of righteousness (Rev. iii. 20). 2. *Mary.* The two sisters were at the supper. Martha served, as she had done before; Mary could think only of the Lord, and of his late wondrous mercy vouchsafed unto the family.

"Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there."

She showed her thankful devotion. She brought an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it first (it seems) on his head, afterwards on his feet, as he sat at meat. It was a very costly gift, but it was not waste, for it was an act of worship. It signified the exceeding sacredness of the holy body of the Lord Jesus Christ. That body was, in the truest sense, the temple of the most high God; it was the tabernacle wherein abode the Word of God, God the Son, One greater than the temple at Jerusalem, the most Holy One for whose worship that temple was built. That temple was rightly held in reverence; the Lord Jesus himself was zealous for its honour. How much greater reverence was due to that holy body in which he had manifested himself! That anointing was a solemn act of worship, a pure unbidden rite of adoration.

II. THE MURMURINGS OF THE DISCIPLES. 1. *Their complaint.* It was a waste, they said; "the ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." St. John gives us to understand that it was Judas who had excited this dissatisfaction. Not that he cared for the poor; his talk about the poor was mere pretence to hide his dishonest avarice. So people often talk now when they blame acts of generous liberality which seem to condemn their own selfishness and want of charity. In their narrow avaricious temper they cannot understand the free generous love which prompts faithful men to give largely for the glory of God, and they impute unworthy motives. The murmurings of Judas seem to have led astray, for a time, several of the other disciples. Men are too ready to listen to disparaging criticisms, too ready to form unfavourable views of their neighbours. Let us judge carefully our own motives, and learn to believe the best of others. 2. *The Lord's reproof.* "Why trouble ye the woman?" Judas was rude, unmannerly; he and the other disciples had vexed the gentle, shrinking Mary by their criticisms of her conduct. But, indeed, her act was not a waste; it was a beautiful deed of unselfish generosity. It is good to help the poor; those who blamed Mary would always have opportunities of doing that, if they were so minded. But there are other ways in which Christian love will show itself. It was good to honour the sacred Person of the Lord Jesus; it is good to give freely, largely, to church-building and other such objects, if the end in view is the true Christian motive—the glory of God. Such was Mary's motive, and it was an especially fitting time to show her love to Christ, for he was about to depart. His death was very near at hand. He had told the disciples; they knew it; probably Mary knew it; she had loved to sit at his feet and hear his word. The gifts which the Wise Men from the East offered at the Saviour's cradle are thought to have a mystic meaning; the myrrh had a reference to his death. Mary's gift of the precious ointment, offered just before that death, spoke yet more distinctly of death and burial. She may have been unconscious, or only dimly conscious, of the meaning of her act. But certainly it was an act of loving adoring worship, and it should have its reward; it should be told throughout the world as a memorial of her. Christ knew that "this gospel," the good tidings of his death and resurrection, would be preached in all the whole world. He who was despised and rejected of Pharisees and Sadducees looked forward to a world-wide empire over the hearts of men. Wide as the gospel would spread, so widely should this good work of Mary be made known. There is no fame like that which the gospel gives; the fame of monarch, warrior, statesman, poet, is not to be compared with the honour granted to the lowly Mary. She sought only the praise which cometh from God. She hath also the praise of all faithful Christians. Her conduct is an example to us; it teaches us that acts of generous, self-forgetting love are beautiful and noble, precious in the sight of God. The odour of the ointment which filled the house at Bethany (John xii. 3) has spread through the great Christian

Church, keeping alive the sweet memory of Mary, urging countless Christian men and women to follow her example.

III. THE BETRAYAL. 1. *Judas.* There was one to whom the fragrance of that perfume was a savour of death unto death. He bore an honoured name, a name of religious significance. "Now will I praise the Lord," said Leah, when she gave that name to her fourth son. And he was one of the twelve, as all the evangelists tell us, to mark the strangeness, the exceeding guilt, of his sin. Yet we suppose he must have been like the others when the Lord first chose him to be near unto himself. He must have been, we think, full of bright promise. Certainly he, like the rest of the apostles, forsook all and followed Christ (ch. xix. 27). The good seed had been sown in his heart, and it soon sprang up; but there were thorn-roots there too; and they, alas! shot up into evil luxuriance, and choked the good seed, and dominated the whole life. Probably he had been fascinated by those dreams of earthly splendour and an earthly kingdom which the apostles entertained so long. He had hoped, like James and John, for some high place near the King; but his ambition was more selfish than theirs. And when the Lord would not claim the throne of David, when he would not allow the enthusiastic multitudes to make him a King, when he spoke of seeming failure, of impending death, and that the death of the cross, Judas was hurt, offended, disgusted with the service which he had chosen. And, St. John tells us, there was one ruling sin in his heart—the degrading vice of avarice. Judas had shown, perhaps, an aptitude for business; he had been entrusted with the bag which contained the alms of those who ministered to the Lord of their substance. Perhaps he had sought the office of purse-bearer; and, alas! it was a snare to him, for he was a thief. Probably he had been long brooding over disappointments, fancied vexations, covetous hopes; for no one becomes utterly base in a moment. A year ago the Lord had spoken of him in words of awful warning (John vi. 70). He did not heed the Master's voice; probably he went on in his evil ways, feeding his secret vice by acts of petty dishonesty, till it became a tyrant passion ruling the whole man, debasing the whole character. He had yielded himself little by little to the power of Satan; at last he had become his captive; now any little temptation would be sufficient to lure him to his doom. The offering of Mary proved to be that last temptation. Satan, in his malice, brings evil out of good. Judas blamed her generosity. It was wasteful profusion, he said; that large sum ought to have been better spent. He wanted it, not really for the poor, but for the bag which he carried; he would have appropriated it, in part at least, to his own use. The Lord's reproof chafed him still more. His mention of his approaching burial crushed the last hopes, if any hopes remained, of an earthly kingdom. Judas determined to forsake his Master. Nothing, he thought, could be gained by faithfulness; something might be gained by treachery. What an awful picture of the deceitfulness of sin, especially of that soul-destroying sin of avarice! 2. *His agreement with the chief priests.* He went to them as soon as he could, perhaps four days after the supper at Bethany; his disappointment had been rankling in his mind ever since. He was ready now to deliver his Master to death, and that for money. "What will ye give me?" he said, openly manifesting that miserable vice which he had hidden under the cloke of care for the poor. Alas! that one of the chosen twelve could say such words, could think such thoughts! He had heard the Lord's solemn question, "What 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?" And now he was going to sell his soul for a paltry bribe. They weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver; the price which God, speaking by the Prophet Zechariah (xi. 13), denounces as "a goodly price that I was prised at of them." Probably they did not think of the prophet's words, or they would not have become the instruments of fulfilling them. It was the price of a slave (see Exod. xxi. 32), far less than the value of the offering of Mary, which had been the occasion, not the cause, of this awful treachery. For this poor bribe he sold his Master, "and from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."

LESSONS. 1. No offering is too costly for the Lord's service. Let us imitate Mary in her loving gifts. 2. Men will scoff at Christian generosity. Let us seek only the praise which cometh from God. 3. One of the twelve fell into deadly sin. Let none presume upon their spiritual privileges. 4. "The love of money is the root of all evil." Let us learn to love it not.

Vers. 17—30.—*The last Supper.* I. THE PREPARATION. 1. *The question of the disciples.* It was now the first day of Unleavened Bread, "when the Passover must be killed" (Luke xxii. 7; Mark xii. 12); apparently, therefore, the fourteenth of Nisan, which seems to have been sometimes regarded as the beginning of the feast (see Josephus, 'Wars of the Jews,' v. 3. 1), though the fifteenth was legally the first day. It is possible, therefore, that the disciples may have come to our Lord at the beginning of the fourteenth, according to the Jewish reckoning, that is, after sunset on the evening of the thirteenth; and thus the last Supper may have taken place a day before the legal time for the Passover. This is, perhaps, the most probable explanation of the apparent differences between St. John and the first three evangelists. The disciples asked the Lord where he would have the Passover prepared; they may have thought that he would keep it at Bethany, which was reckoned within the limits of Jerusalem for the purposes of the feast. 2. *The Lord's directions.* He sent Peter and John to Jerusalem, giving them a sign whereby to find the house which he had chosen. They were to say to the good man of the house, "The Master saith, My time is at hand; I keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples." There was a mysterious power in the Lord's message; the house was freely lent now, as the ass had been lent on the previous Sunday. There was a mysterious meaning in the words, "The Master saith, My time is at hand"—a meaning into which neither the disciples nor the householder could enter. Possibly, also, those words may imply that the Lord would keep the Passover before the appointed day, for his time was at hand—the time when he must depart unto the Father.

II. THE CONVERSATION AT THE SUPPER. 1. *The Lord's prophecy of the betrayal.* "When the even was come, he sat down with the twelve." The Lord showed his holy lowliness; the twelve showed the workings of human pride even at that solemn hour. He washed the disciples' feet; but among them there was a strife, which of them should be accounted the greatest. Strange that these petty jealousies could have found room in apostles' hearts at such a time, in such a presence, after such warnings of the coming cross. Pride is one of our deadliest spiritual enemies; it has wrought sad evil in the Christian Church. We feel its power in our own hearts; we must crush it down if we would follow Christ. He taught them the blessedness of humility by word and by example; and then, as if to humble them still further, he told them the sad truth, "One of you shall betray me." It may be that the words were spoken, not only in sorrow, but also in love; it may be that even now the Lord would have called Judas to repentance, as he would have gathered the hard-hearted Jews unto himself, but they would not; and now Judas would not. He had yielded himself to the tempter; Satan had entered into him (Luke xxii. 3), and there was hope no longer. The Lord's holy soul was filled with the deepest sorrow; this awful treachery wounded his holy human heart with the acutest pangs; in the mysterious union of the human and Divine he knew its dreadful issues. 2. *The questions of the disciples.* The Lord's sorrow communicated itself to the disciples; they were exceeding sorry. Sorrow has a humbling effect. The disciples felt now the influence of the Lord's holy sorrow. They did not answer, like St. Peter afterwards, with passionate assertions of their faithfulness; but they whispered each one, even Peter, it seems, with trembling anxiety and self-distrust, "Lord, is it I?" Not, let us observe, "Is it this man or that man?" but, "Is it I?" The Lord did not answer at first with that distinct intimation which he gave shortly afterwards to St. John (John xiii. 26). He said in general terms that the traitor was one of those nearest to him—one who sat at the same meal, was using the same dish. Perhaps it was said in tenderness; he would even now, if it were possible, win that guilty soul to a sense of sin, to sorrow and repentance. Therefore he continued, in tones of deeper awfulness, to speak of the impending treachery. "The Son of man goeth;" so it was written in the Scriptures; so it was determined in the eternal purpose of God. But God's foreknowledge is not inconsistent with the free-will of man. The man does what must be, for it was foreordained; yet his will is not forced. The will of man is sacred, it is free; we feel the truth of this in our hearts, though we cannot see through the veil of awful mystery which hangs around. "Woe unto that man!" It is an utterance of sorrow, as in ch. xxiv. 19, not an imprecation. "Woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed!" It was *through* Judas; he had sold himself to Satan. Christ saw that evil figure

behind him, prompting him to his hellish crime. He would have warned him even now; he tells him of the dreadful consequences of the sin which was in his thoughts. "Good were it for that man if he had not been born!" How it must have rent the loving heart of the most merciful Saviour to say those awful words! But the sternness was the sternness of love; he gave the traitor a glimpse of the tremendous future, to save him, if it were possible, in spite of himself; to save others from the like fearful doom. But Judas would not heed; he had not yet joined in the questions of the disciples. But now he too said, "Master, is it I?" Perhaps he felt forced to do so; to say nothing, while all the rest were asking the question, seemed to separate him from the others; it might look like an acknowledgment of guilt. Perhaps it was said in wantonness, or bitter scorn, or in that desperation which is the last stage in atrocious guilt. The Lord answered simply, "Thou hast said." It was an ordinary form of affirmation, yet it seems to refer the traitor to his own evil heart—he would find the answer to his question there.

III. THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION. 1. *The bread.* The Lord passes from the old covenant to the new, from the Passover to the Holy Communion. He did so "as they were eating," during the protracted ceremonies of the Paschal supper, while they were thinking of God's great deliverance vouchsafed to their forefathers. He announced himself as the true Lamb of God, the one Sacrifice of which all the sacrifices of the Law were but figures. He took bread, and blessed. He gave thanks for the fruits of the earth, as was customary at the Passover. He blessed God the Father who giveth our daily bread, who giveth the Bread of life; he blessed bread and wine, consecrating them by his words for this new sacred use (comp. 1 Cor. x. 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless"). He gave thanks (St. Luke and St. Paul), and by that thanksgiving made the Holy Communion to be a Eucharist—a service of thanksgiving. He brake the bread, and himself "gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." He had prepared them to receive these wonderful words. A year ago in the synagogue at Capernaum he had announced the great truth that the food of the Christian soul is the flesh and blood of Christ. Then he had promised that spiritual food ("The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"); now he gives it. "This," he said—"this which I give you, is my body." He stood before them, his natural body yet unbroken, his flesh and blood not yet separated, as he gave them the holy food. He had taught them in that great sermon which had offended so many of his disciples, that "it is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." He had told them, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." They would understand that "the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith." They would understand as much as is given to us men to understand of that which must ever remain a sacred mystery. It was God incarnate who spake those holy words. His words, his actions, must have a deep, wide-reaching, mysterious meaning, passing our poor intellect. It is enough for us to know and believe that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. 2. *The cup.* Afterwards the Lord took the cup, the third probably of the four cups which, at that time, were drunk at the Paschal supper; that third cup was called "the cup of blessing" (comp. 1 Cor. x. 16). Again he gave thanks, making it a Eucharist, and bade them all drink of it: "For this," he said, "is my blood of the new covenant." "The cup of blessing which we bless," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" "To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ." The old covenant made between God and his chosen people was ratified and inaugurated by the blood of sacrifices. "Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you" (Exod. xxiv. 8). It was necessary that the new covenant which the Lord had promised by his prophet (Jer. xxxi. 31) should be inaugurated with blood, for "without shedding of blood is no remission." The Lord Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant, being both Priest and Victim; his blood is the blood of sprinkling, which can purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It is the blood of

the new covenant—the blood with which the covenant of grace was inaugurated. The partaking of that cup in repentance, faith, and love brings home the blessings of the new covenant to each believing soul. That blood was now being shed, the Lord said; the hour of his death was so near at hand that he regarded it as already present. He gave himself now in solemn purpose, in voluntary self-sacrifice, to die for men, as he gave his body and blood to be for ever the spiritual food of the Christian soul. It is shed "*for* many," *about* them, *with reference* to their needs; for all in a true sense, for "he died for all," he is the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world; for many, in a deeper, holier sense—many, not all, alas! wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. And it is shed for the remission of sins; for that blood purgeth the conscience, that blood cleanseth from all sin, that blood is accepted as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Then with what grateful love, with what fervent hope, ought all Christian people to come to the Holy Eucharist! for the bread and wine which the Lord hath commanded to be received become by his ordinance the means whereby the body and blood of Christ are received after a heavenly and spiritual manner by the faithful. And that body is the bread of life, and that blood is the blood of the new covenant, sealing the blessings of the covenant of grace to those who in faith partake of that holy food. Thus coming, may we experience in our inmost souls the truth of the well-known words, "O my God, thou art true; O my soul, thou art happy" (see Hooker, 'Eccl. Pol.,' ch. lxvii. sec. 12). 3. *The new wine of the kingdom.* The Holy Eucharist looks not only backward, to the death of Christ, but forward also, to the marriage supper of the Lamb. For the Lord said that he would drink no more of that fruit of the vine, till that day when he shall drink it new with his chosen in the kingdom of his Father. Then the wine shall be new, not the new wine of this world, but a fountain of gladness and rapture such as hath never entered into human heart. The Lord shall share that gladness with his redeemed. He rejoiceth in their salvation; they rejoice in his most precious love. "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." 4. *The departure.* The last Supper was over. They sang a hymn, the conclusion, probably, of the Hallel. The Lord and his disciples chanted the praise of God in those precious psalms, which, from the time of David onward, have ever been the Church's treasury of devotion. They sang of that cup of salvation which, in a Christian sense, they had just received. They sang (and surely they must have felt that those sacred words had now a deeper meaning than ever) how "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." They sang of the Stone which the builders refused, soon to become the Head-stone of the corner. They repeated the "Hosanna!" of Palm Sunday, and ended their high chant of praise with the solemn refrain, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." As the Lord was with his disciples then, singing with them, so may he be with us, in our hearts, singing with us, when we chant the praises of God in the sanctuary. His presence, his inspiration, make praise and prayer acceptable. And now the last psalm was sung, and they went forth into the night. So should the Christian soul, strengthened and refreshed by the holy sacrament, go forth to meet the Lord.

LESSONS. 1. Hate pride; remember your sins; earnestly seek the grace of lowliness. 2. Say, "Lord, is it I?" Do not think of your neighbours' sins, but of your own. 3. Come often to the Holy Communion. Come; for it is the Lord's commandment. Come; for it is the food of the soul. 4. Seek to realize the presence of the Lord in prayer and praise.

Vers. 31—46.—*The Mount of Olives.* I. THE CONVERSATION BY THE WAY. 1. *The Lord's prediction that all should forsake him.* Partly in the upper room, partly on the way, the Lord had uttered those most sacred and precious words which St. John was led by the Holy Spirit to preserve in those chapters which have well been called the holiest of the holy. St. Matthew relates only one thing which passed as they went in the late evening, in the solemn light of the Paschal moon, their hearts, we may be sure, filled with awful forebodings and strange mysterious anticipations, to the well-known spot. The Lord had said long ago, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." The people of Nazareth had been so offended (ch. xiii. 57); now, he

said, his chosen disciples would be offended, and on that very night. He who should become the Head-stone of the corner would be for a time even to them a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. It must be so, the Lord said, for so it had been written, applying to himself that prophecy of Zechariah which has so many mysterious allusions to the Passion, "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." The disciples would remember afterwards that that Shepherd in the prophecy is called by the Lord of hosts "the Man that is my fellow;" and they would feel that those words could be true only of One who, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." That very night the sheep would be scattered, but only for a short time; for it is written in the same place, "I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." The Lord would rise again. He would gather together his little flock; he would go before them, as a shepherd goeth before his sheep. They should see him again in Galilee. 2. *Peter's assertion of his fidelity.* Peter, self-confident as ever, asserted his unshaken loyalty; he, at least, would never be offended. And when the Lord repeated his warning, showing his knowledge of the future even in its minute details, he became more earnest and excited, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." "Likewise also said all the disciples." Let us learn to distrust ourselves. When we are weak, then we are strong.

II. GETHSEMANE. 1. *The agony.* The Lord, in the full knowledge of his coming Passion, sought a place for solitary prayer. He came to the well-known garden whither he "ofttimes resorted." He took with him the three best beloved of the apostles, bidding the others rest. Then came that awful and mysterious agony: "He began to be sorrowful and sore troubled." He bade the disciples remain at a distance; even the three chosen ones, whose companionship and sympathy he desired, might not draw too near to the Lord in his anguish. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." Where apostles might not walk, we may not presume to intrude. We cannot comprehend the full meaning of that most awful agony. We are sure that it was not the mere fear of death which so crushed the holy Saviour's soul. He shared, doubtless, perfect Man as he was, our human horror of death; and in him, we must remember, that horror would be increased by his complete foreknowledge of all the circumstances of that bitter Passion which was now so close at hand. Again, the shrinking from death seems to stand in some relation to the sense of life; the feebler that sense of life, the less men fear to die. But the Lord was not only in the full strength of early manhood, with a bodily frame which had never been weakened by sickness; but he was the Life, the essential, self-existent Life; he had life in himself, therefore it seems the conflict with death must have been in him far more terrible than in ordinary men. Moreover, death must have had an awful aspect in the sight of Christ, because it is the wages, the consequence of sin; and this close connection with sin must have invested death with a horrible character to the All-holy One. But it was not the fear of death which caused that bloody sweat, that utter anguish. Saints and martyrs, and even ungodly men, have met death without flinching; and we know with what calm majestic fortitude the Lord endured the cross. On Palm Sunday the impenitence of Jerusalem had wrung from him a burst of holy tears; and now, when the intense wickedness of men, the wickedness of his own apostles, of the leaders of his own chosen people, was gathering round him, he may well have recoiled in horror from that dark and wretched prospect. He had loved those unhappy men, even Judas, even Caiaphas. He had come down from heaven to save them, and they were rushing into deadly sin, into utter ruin. They had rejected his love and mercy. Alas! thousands more would do the like, would crucify the Lord afresh, would sin wilfully against knowledge and against light, and would die in their sins. He knew it would be so, and he was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And he saw, behind Judas and Caiaphas and the rest, the awful form of the evil one. Satan had entered into them. "The prince of this world cometh," he had said. Satan had nothing in Christ, no hold upon that pure and spotless innocence; but all around he exercised his terrible power with fiendish malignity, by the agency of those wicked men whom he had ensnared to their ruin. It may well be that the nearness and activity of the evil spirit helped to bring that shuddering horror over the Saviour's soul. But, once more, "He was made sin for us, though he was without sin." We cannot penetrate into the awful mysteries which those words seem to imply. We

know that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." We know that he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and we believe that it was that terrible burden of sin—the sin of the whole world—that crushed him to the earth. Sin was to his pure soul most utterly loathsome, most horrible; and, in some mysterious way, it now came close around him, enveloping him with its hateful nearness: all the sins of the whole world, from the first sin of Adam to the last sin with which the last of living men will pollute the creation of God, all came in one burden of accumulated horror upon "the Lamb of God, which taketh away [beareth] the sins of the world." It was a burden which only he could bear. Only the Sinless One, only he who, though he became perfect Man, was in the truth of his being, perfect God, could put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Only he could bear that crushing burden; but it caused him the most intense suffering, unutterable anguish. It was not good for most of the apostles to witness that agony; they could not bear it. He left them at the entrance of the garden. He took the three with him. They had seen the glory of the Transfiguration; the recollections of that effulgent brightness, of those glimpses of the Godhead, might strengthen them in the presence of this more than human sorrow. It seems that the sympathy of these loved and trusted friends, even their very nearness, was some relief to the suffering Lord, as it is with us in our own hour of deep distress. Dying men love to have their dearest friends present with them, watching with them, though they can give no help beyond that sympathizing presence. So it was with Christ the Lord, so true was his humanity. But the extremest anguish he must bear alone; the prayer of completest self-sacrifice he must pray alone. Only the Father and the blessed angels might behold that bloody sweat and hear that most earnest prayer. Not even the three might follow him now. He would have them near; he came to them again and again, as if for sympathy; but the most dread struggle he must face alone. He went a little further into the garden. "He was withdrawn from them," St. Luke says, "about a stone's cast." The evangelist uses a strong word—he tore himself from them. It seems as if the dear Lord could scarcely endure that awful loneliness, and yet he must be alone. That bitter anguish reveals to us the greatness of his blessed love. 2. *The threefold prayer.* (1) The first prayer. The Lord kneeled down upon the ground; then he fell upon his face in the intensity of his supplication. "O my Father," he said, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." The Lord is an example to us in all things. In this overpowering agony he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. Pain and trouble bring the Christian to his God. The greater the pain, the more heartrending the trouble, the more earnestly he will pray. The Lord prayed that the cup of anguish might pass from him, if it were possible. The other evangelists give a slightly different report of his words: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me" (St. Luke); "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me" (St. Mark). With God all things are possible. But it was not possible to take away that cup of woe if men were to be saved, as God willed them to be saved, through the cross and Passion of the Lord. It was not possible, for the cup passed not away. There were, it seems, inscrutable reasons which made that tremendous sacrifice necessary for the salvation of man and the glory of God. God will not always take the cup of suffering from us. It may be necessary that we should suffer, for our own good or for the good of others; our sufferings may be contained in God's eternal purpose. Yet we may pray for their removal; we may ask God to spare us this or that trial, which seems too great for us to bear. Only we must pray all the Lord's prayer, not part only. His perfect human nature involved a human will. That will was distinct from the Divine will; it was a pure, holy, human will; but, like our will, it shrank from pain and death. The Lord yielded it up in entire submission to his Father's will: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." He who is learning to pray that prayer from the bottom of his heart is very near to Christ. (2) The return to the three apostles. There is a restlessness in intense grief which, like other sinless human weaknesses, was experienced by our Lord. He came to the disciples as if seeking for their sympathy, their affection, in his loneliness and exceeding sorrow. But they were asleep. The same three had slept upon the Mount of the Transfiguration. It seems very strange. But we must remember that it was now very late at night, and the spiritual strain upon the apostles during that Thursday evening had been immense.

They had heard the Lord speak again and again, clearly and certainly, of his own approaching death; they had heard of the treachery of one of their own number. They had listened, it must have been in rapt awe-stricken attention, to those wondrous utterances of exhortation, comfort, instruction, recorded in St. John's Gospel. Now the three were left alone, in the silence of the night; they were worn out with excitement, sorrow, watching; and they slept. It must have been a perturbed sleep, like the deep sleep of Abram, when the horror of great darkness fell upon him. The Lord came to them; he found them sleeping, just when his holy human nature, sorely tried, needed the affectionate sympathy of human friends. He addressed the one who a short time before had expressed his love so strongly. "What!" he said to Peter, "could you not watch with me one hour?" The words imply a lengthened prayer. The evangelist has recorded only the essence, the central petition, of that long prayer of agony. The Lord had prayed already for a full hour. They imply too that the Lord, in his perfect humanity, felt some comfort, some stay, in the thought that those earthly friends who were dearest to him were not only near at hand, but awake, watching; as men in extreme sickness, in great suffering, like to feel that those who watch in the sick-chamber are awake, conscious of their state, even though unable to help them. But the good Lord thought not only of himself, as we too often do in sickness; he thought of his disciples. Temptation was close at hand. They needed watchfulness; they needed prayer. They must keep all their faculties awake; they must be thoughtful, vigilant, prepared for the hour of danger. And they must pray. True prayer implies the vigorous exercise of all the highest faculties. It is not easy, but often very difficult; it requires effort, thought, sustained attention. It needs the constant aid of God the Holy Spirit, the great Teacher of prayer. The apostles needed now all the help of prayer and watchfulness, lest they should enter into temptation. The temptation must come; nay, it was already at hand. But they must pray not to enter into it, not to yield themselves to it, not to enter with their own will and consent into the snare which Satan was laying for them. The mere fact of temptation does not imply sin. The Lord himself was tempted. The sin lies in entering into it with our eyes open, with the consent of our will. And the remedy is watchfulness and prayer; a man cannot enter into temptation in this sense while he prays, if only his prayer is the waking, thoughtful, earnest prayer of faith. "At once to pray and to sin," says Stier, "is impossible. Who could with a wakeful and recollected spirit say unto God, '*Not* as thou wilt'? Who, when the word of Jesus bids us watch, and the Spirit of Jesus teaches us to pray, may answer him and say, 'Lord, but I cannot, I am too weak'?" The Lord adds the reason which makes watchfulness and prayer so necessary—the weakness of the flesh. It was weak even in himself, though in him that flesh which he had graciously assumed that he might save us, was without sin; he had come "in the *likeness* of sinful flesh;" but in him the flesh was only weak, it was not sinful. It was weak; it shrank from pain and death. Even he, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. How much more necessary are prayer and watchfulness for us, whose flesh is not only weak, but also sinful, defiled by many sins? The spirit is willing. In him it was more than willing; it was ready, zealous. It will be so with his saints in proportion as the spirit, the highest part of our composite human nature, which was breathed into man by God himself, realizes its powers and its privileges, offering up itself to be dwelt in and purified by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit of God, and, by means of that gracious indwelling, living in that fellowship which is with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. But with us the spirit is not always willing. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and, alas! we are not always led by the spirit, but often by that sinful flesh of ours. And even when in some sense the spirit is willing, when "to will is present with me," how often do we find in our hearts that conflict so wonderfully described in Rom. vii., "how to perform that which is good I find not;" "for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I"! Then what need have we, whose flesh is not only weak, but exceeding sinful, to obey Christ's commandment, to follow Christ's example: "Watch and pray"! (3) The second prayer. The Lord found no help in human sympathy; again he sought it in communion with his Father. His second prayer was calmer. The angel, of whom St. Luke tells us, appeared, perhaps, after the first prayer, strengthening him. "He

was heard in that he feared" (Heb. v. 7). As the angels ministered to him, the Almighty Son of God, after his temptation, so now in his agony one angel comforted him, the Comforter of all. He submitted to receive strength and comfort from his angels. They will calm our spirits in our death-agony if we are truly his. The Lord offered up the prayer of holy resignation, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Perfect peace can be found only in perfect resignation to the blessed will of God. Again he came to the three disciples, seeking their sympathy, and doubtless seeking to prepare them against the coming temptation. But again they were asleep, for their eyes were heavy. God can comfort; his angels can by his appointment succour and defend us; man can do little for us in the hour of death. (4) The third prayer. "He went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." His people often follow his example. They are conscious of great poverty of thought; they find it hard to express the yearnings of their souls in words, especially in times of deep affliction. Often they can only repeat again and again the same simple ejaculation. It is enough. God regards not the form of words, but the earnestness of the supplication. Again, for the last time, the Lord returned to the three apostles. "Sleep on now," he said, "and take your rest." He needed their sympathy no longer; the time for watching with him was past. His hour was come, and he was ready. He had schooled his human will by a mighty effort into complete resignation, into absolute harmony with the Father's will. The struggle was over; he had "trodden the winepress alone;" he was calm in perfect self-mastery. The disciples could help him no more, even by sympathy; they might take their rest while they could. The Lord, in his tenderness, had compassion on their weakness. Possibly there may have been a certain interval of time between those words and the appearance of the traitor. The Lord, perhaps, stood or sat watching his sleeping apostles, and awaiting the approaching band. When he saw them near he roused the sleepers: "Rise," he said, "let us be going;" and he went forward in majestic calmness to meet the danger.

LESSONS. 1. The Lord's dread agony calls upon us for deep and reverent sympathy. 2. It calls upon us for confession and hatred of those sins which added to his burden of woe. 3. It calls upon us for resignation and submission of our earthly will to the holy will of God. 4. It teaches us in our extremest sufferings always to pray—to pray more earnestly.

Vers. 47—56.—*The apprehension of our Lord.* I. THE BETRAYAL. 1. *The approach of Judas.* The three evangelists describe him as "one of the twelve." They add this description, not for the sake of accurate identification, for his treachery had been already mentioned, but to set forth the blackness of his guilt. Holy Scripture commonly uses a certain stern simplicity in speaking of great offences. There is a depth of meaning in those few simple words, "one of the twelve." He was the most conspicuous person among the advancing group; his sin was the deadliest. He knew the perfect holiness of the blessed Master; he had been admitted into his friendship; he had listened to his words of heavenly wisdom, and seen his works of almighty power and love; he had lived for two years and more in the immediate presence of that life of wondrous purity and beauty. And now he is to teach us the solemn lesson that the heart of man is indeed deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that it can continue hard and selfish and impenitent in spite of the greatest possible religious privileges. He came, and with him a great multitude—Roman soldiers, officers of the temple, servants of the chief priests. It may be they feared resistance from the Galilæans or other adherents of the Lord; it may be they feared him. Many of them had heard of his miracles; Judas knew that he had stilled the tempest, that he had raised the dead. He trusted, it seems, to numbers, to earthly weapons. Strange folly, almost incredible in one who had known so much of Christ; but he was blinded by Satan, to whom he had sold himself. 2. *The traitor's kiss.* He gave them a sign. The Roman soldiers, perhaps others also, did not know the Person of the Lord. The sign was to be a kiss. The traitor had known the Lord intimately; he had been, it seems, on the same footing of affectionate friendship with him as the rest of the twelve. He would kiss him now for the last time; but that last kiss would be, not the kiss of peace, but the deadly breath of hellish treachery, the cold, wicked kiss of hypocrisy—the kiss of death. He

came; he said, "Hail, Master!" and he dared to pollute the face of the Lord with his unholy kiss. He kissed him. The Greek word seems to imply that he did it with an affectation of earnestness, with much warmth of manner, perhaps out of excitement, perhaps in fear; perhaps he thought, in his madness and folly, that he might be able to conceal his sin. Christ and the apostles might think that he was coming simply to join them, and might not discover his connection with the band that followed. But the Lord went forth, "knowing all things that should come upon him." He knew the evil heart of Judas. "Companion," he said—he could not call him "friend;" and the Greek word has something of sternness in it, as in ch. xx. 13 and xxii. 12—"is it this for which thou art come?" "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" He showed his Divine knowledge; he showed his almighty power. At the words, "I am he," "they went backward, and fell to the ground." But then he meekly yielded himself to suffer and to die. One word of wrath would have swept his assailants into utter death. He would not speak it; for he came to lay down his life for his sheep. "Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him."

II. THE SWORD OF PETER. 1. *The blow.* Two of the disciples were armed with swords (Luke xxii. 38). They thought for a moment of resistance; "Lord," they said, "shall we smite with the sword?" Peter, always impetuous, did not wait for an answer, but at once struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. 2. *The Lord's reproof.* Mark his majestic collectedness, his thoughtfulness for others; in the immediate presence of danger and death he cared for the wounded man, he cared for the erring apostle. "Put up thy sword into his place," he said, as Peter stood with his drawn weapon, ready to repeat the blow; "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." The kiss of Judas and the sword-stroke of Peter stand in diametrical opposition; the one was the act of cold, selfish, hateful treachery; the other, of bold, ardent, self-forgetting zeal. Both were wrong, though in widely different degrees. The one was the act of a devil (John vi. 70); the other, the act of a saint, though not a saint-like act. Christians may not use the sword for the defence or for the propagation of the gospel. Sometimes mistaken zeal, sometimes more unholy motives, have led to persecutions and to so-called religious wars. The Lord distinctly condemns the use of force; he himself refrained from the exercise of his power. He was King of kings and Lord of lords; he could have subjugated all the kingdoms of the world at once, by one act of omnipotence; he might have had around him now, not eleven disciples, but more than twelve legions of angels. But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled? The salvation of man was to be brought about, not by force, not by a display of power, but by holy teaching, by holy example, by suffering, by self-sacrifice, by the cross. The forces to be employed were not physical, but moral and spiritual. Christ would not terrify men into obedience. What he seeks is not the forced service of slaves, but the willing obedience of love. And love cannot be forced; it can be gained only by love. It is the love of Christ manifested in his incarnation, in his holy life, in his precious death, which constrains his faithful followers to live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. The Lord asked not for the twelve legions of angels; his followers must not use the sword to propagate the gospel.

III. THE LORD'S ADDRESS TO THE MULTITUDE. 1. *The needless display of force.* There was much hesitation in the action of the soldiers. They had felt the Lord's power (John xviii. 6); evidently they regarded him with some awe, with some indefinite terror. Hence he had time to heal the wound of Malchus, to speak to Judas, to Peter, to the multitude. He asked them now why they had come out as against a robber? He had long sat quietly teaching in the temple; he had not sought to escape. But they did not seize him then; they did not interfere with his teaching. Why did they now seem to regard him as a dangerous robber? Why these swords and staves? The good Lord felt the cruelty of their conduct, the indignity with which they were treating him. 2. *The real cause of the Lord's sufferings.* The Lord knew, they did not know, the deep necessities which lay under all this show of human violence. The Scriptures of the prophets must be fulfilled. Those wicked men were ignorantly working out the eternal purpose of God. They were guilty, all of them, more or less; their will was free. But yet, in the mystery of the Divine foreknowledge and the overruling providence of God, which is so infinitely above our reach,

they were bringing to pass the utterances of God through the prophets. The Scriptures must be fulfilled. St. Matthew dwells reverently upon that great truth. He recurs to it again and again. Let us remember it, and treasure it in our hearts for warning and for encouragement. 3. *The flight of the disciples.* They had looked, perhaps, for some exertion of power. But the Lord did not resist; he meekly yielded himself to die. And their heart sank within them. Fear became stronger than love. "They all forsook him, and fled." Even Peter, who had just drawn the sword in his defence; even John and James, the sons of thunder—all fled. Alas! for human nature; how much weakness and cowardice and selfishness there is even in the best of us! Let us learn to distrust ourselves, to recognize our own weakness, to trust in him whose strength is made perfect in weakness.

LESSONS. 1. Many knew Christ after the flesh; and yet they were not saved. Let us pray to know him by faith through the presence of his Spirit. 2. The kiss of Judas could not hide his treason. Outward reverence will not conceal a selfish, wicked heart. 3. We must use gentle means to win hearts to God. 4. Apostles fled. Let us beware of self-confidence; let us watch and pray.

Vers. 57—75.—*The palace of Caiaphas.* I. THE PRELIMINARY TRIAL. 1. *The meeting of the Sanhedrin.* St. John tells us that our Lord was led first before Annas, for a hasty informal examination. Perhaps it was thought that the astute Annas, with that snakelike cunning which was attributed to him, might elicit something which might tell against the Prisoner. But the craft of the old high priest and the brutality of his officers were alike unavailing; and the Lord was sent to Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin had assembled at his house. In their haste and malice they violated the rules of their court. They met in the night; they assigned no counsel to the Prisoner; they called no witnesses in his favour; they passed judgment of death at once. 2. *The witnesses.* In their intense wickedness they deliberately sought false witness to destroy the Innocent; they could not find it. Even the perversion of the Lord's words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," could not be sustained. "Neither so," says St. Mark, "did their witness agree together." The Lord preserved a calm and holy silence amid this falsehood and calumny. We flash into indignation when we are unjustly accused. Let us learn meekness of our Lord.

II. THE INTERVENTION OF CAIAPHAS. 1. *His questions.* He started up in fierce excitement. He urged the Lord to speak. And when Christ still answered nothing, he put him upon his oath, and addressed to him directly the awful question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" It was a flagrant violation of all the rules of judicial procedure. The judge constitutes himself the accuser; he tries to force the Accused to acknowledge the charge. He had, at a previous meeting of the Sanhedrin (John xi. 49—52), maintained the necessity of putting Jesus to death. Did he think that Jesus was indeed the Christ; and, thinking this, did he seek to slay him? Was his guilt like the guilt of Herod, who sought to destroy the young Child that was born King of the Jews? Certainly Caiaphas had "prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation." But probably that prophecy was unconscious; probably he did not understand the full meaning of his words. If he understood it, his guilt would be too awful to contemplate; it would be beyond the limits of human guilt; it would be hellish, Satanic. 2. *The Lord's answer.* When he was adjured by the living God, put upon his oath solemnly by the high priest, the Lord kept silence no longer. "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said;" or, in the equivalent words of St. Mark, "Jesus said, I am." Standing bound before his judge, knowing that he was pronouncing his own death-warrant, he asserted in simple majesty the tremendous truth. He was the Son of God. Caiaphas should one day know it—in that day when "he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." Caiaphas should see him then, the Son of God, but manifested as the Son of man (for it is as the Son of man that he shall execute judgment, ch. xxv. 31; John v. 27; Dan. vii. 13), "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." 3. *The condemnation.* Caiaphas had gained his point now. He rent his clothes (an action forbidden to the high priest, Lev. xxi. 10) in affectation of horror. There was no further need of witnesses, he said; for the Sanhedrin had heard the awful words—awful words, which he called blasphemy; which we know were the truth of God. Caiaphas at once put

the question to the council; and at once, without hesitation, and, it appears from St. Mark, unanimously, they condemned him to be guilty of death. He was condemned to death who is the Lord of life—the Life of the world. He was condemned who is the All-holy One, who knew no sin. He was judged who is the Judge of all; before whose judgment-seat quick and dead must one day stand; who shall say to some, "Come, ye blessed;" and, alas! to others, "Depart from me." 4. *The mocking.* They spat on his face; they buffeted him; they derided his sacred office; they bade him prophesy; they called him "Christ" in bitter mockery. Fearful guilt, horrible brutality, Satanic cruelty. We shudder as we read the words; we feel shame for our fellow-creatures, for our common human nature. They covered that face which is the light of the world; they spat upon him whom all the angels of God worship; they buffeted him who had gone about doing good; they scoffed at him whose holy soul was filled with sacred love, who had come down from heaven for them, who was ready to die for them that they might live. What a contrast!—their rough, savage brutality, and his sweet, heavenly dignity; their violence, and his meekness; their noisy clamour, and his calm holy silence. May we learn of him the lesson which he taught, "Blessed are the meek"!

III. THE DENIALS OF ST. PETER. 1. *The first denial.* He had followed afar off when the disciples fled. He had been vehement, as usual, in his protestations of fidelity and steadfastness. For a time he had stood true to his words; he only had attempted resistance; he only had drawn the sword, and struck a bold blow in defence of his Lord. It was a daring action. Resistance was evidently useless. The Lord interfered; he saved his apostle from the consequences of his rashness. But he yielded himself to his enemies. And then at once St. Peter's courage failed him. He shared the panic fear of the disciples; he fled like the rest. But he soon turned from his flight. He deeply loved the Lord, and he was full of anxiety for him; he followed afar off. St. John, it seems, was able to procure his admission into the hall of the high priest's palace. He sat there with the servants, warming himself at the fire (small details like this give a human interest to the narrative, and evince its simple truthfulness), anxious to see the end. He had thrown himself into danger, as he had done once before on the Sea of Galilee; and again the event proved that he had miscalculated his courage, his endurance. A damsel came to him, saying, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." It was not a soldier, only a damsel; and she seems to have addressed him out of curiosity. He was in no more danger than St. John, whom, it seems, the damsel knew as a disciple of Jesus. But at once he lost courage. He denied before them all, saying, "I know not what thou sayest." His first words, as reported by St. Matthew and St. Mark, are not a direct falsehood. He begins by equivocating, shuffling, pretending not to understand words which were plain to any one. His fall shows us how dangerous it is to tamper with the truth; an evasion soon leads to falsehood, to a wicked oath; it shows us the need of watchfulness and prayer, the danger of self-confidence. It is a sad picture of vacillation, cowardice, falsehood. Very strange too it would be, were it not that we find the like instability in our own weak, wavering, sinful hearts. It was sad for Peter that he over-estimated his firmness, and went into the high priest's palace; but his weakness has turned to the good of the Church. This precious episode is full of sacred lessons. It tells us of our utter weakness, of the need of constant watchfulness and constant prayer. And it tells of the blessed love of Christ, of the constraining power of his loving, mournful look fixed upon the faithless disciple. 2. *The second denial.* Peter went into the porch; he feared to linger among the crowd of servants round the fire; he was anxious to escape from those inquiring eyes, from those busy tongues. But he had thrust himself into temptation, and the temptation thickened around him. He was not left alone in the porch. Another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." And now he sinned more deeply than before. He denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man." And this was Peter, the rock-like apostle, to whom the Lord had entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven; Peter, who a few hours before had said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" Peter, who had drawn the sword in his Lord's defence! The trembling self-distrustful question, "Lord, is it I?" is more becoming in a Christian than that proud self-confidence which so often goes before a fall. 3. *The third denial.* Satan had

desired to have him, and Satan would not easily let him go. He still lingered about the door. He had sinned exceedingly, but his sin had not wholly driven his love for his Master out of his heart. He trembled for his life; and yet a strange fascination kept him in that dangerous place. An hour longer, St. Luke tells us, he remained there—a most miserable hour it must have been. But he was to fall more deeply yet. He talked, it seems, to hide his terror. His provincial accent showed the Galilæan. "Surely thou also art one of them," they said again; "for thy speech bewrayeth thee." Then, alas! for our poor human nature, Peter "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man." This was the climax of his guilt—first the evasion, then the false oath, then this awful result of the first equivocation, cursing and swearing. 4. *His repentance.* Peter swore, "I know not the Man." But the Lord knoweth them that are his; he knew his sinful follower still. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." We may well be thankful to the Evangelist St. Luke for having recorded, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that touching fact. The Lord was in the hands of his enemies, condemned to death, mocked, buffeted; but he thought of his apostle. He had saved him from the swords of the soldiers; now he saved him from Satan. That holy, loving, mournful look went straight to Peter's heart. The crowing of the cock, heard at the same time, brought to his remembrance the warning words of Christ; "and he went out, and wept bitterly." Oh that we might have faith to know and feel that that loving, mournful look is now fixed upon us! Still the Lord looks round about upon all things. He reads the hearts. How often does he even now see sins like St. Peter's—cowardice, falsehood, blasphemy—and that among men who are called by his Name, who have been baptized into his Church! How often do men even now deny the Lord that bought them, sometimes in words, still more commonly by their life and conduct! He sees us out of heaven. Oh that we could realize that look of mournful tenderness, of yearning, compassionate love! The consciousness that that look is seeking us out, that it has found us, that it is fixed upon us in longing affection, must surely bring us to our knees, to true repentance, to those blessed tears which are precious in the sight of the angels of God; for they tell of a sinner that repenteth. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." Look on us, O Lord; and by the power of that holy look win our souls from sin unto God, from selfishness to thine own most blessed love.

LESSONS. 1. "Rend your heart, and not your garments." Caiaphas rent his clothes; it was mere affectation. Let us come to God with a penitent heart, confessing our sin. 2. The Lord was cruelly mocked and derided. Let us learn of him the blessedness of Christian meekness. 3. Peter denied the Lord, and that thrice. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 7–13.—"*Ointment poured forth.*" This incident has a unique honour set upon it by our Lord, who promises it worldwide and lasting fame. Thus accentuated, it claims our closest attention. Why does Christ desire honour to be given to the memory of so simple a deed as is here recorded?

I. ONE WHO TRULY LOVES CHRIST WILL RECKON NO GIFT TOO COSTLY TO BE OFFERED TO HIM. Mary's adoration was prompted by adequate motives. She had often sat at the feet of Jesus, and she had learned to appreciate his goodness as far as any human being could do so. Her brother had just been restored to her from the grave by this wonderful Friend. Jesus had dropped dark hints of his approaching departure. Then all her love and adoration were gathered up in an enthusiasm of devotion for this last typical act. The reason why the incident is so exceptional is that the Marys of Bethany are rare. The real wonder is that the Church of Christ should be so slow to pour out her treasures at his feet, that calculating economy and grudging meanness should cripple the efforts of any Christian people in sacrificing themselves and giving their offerings for the glory of their Lord.

II. JESUS CHRIST ACCEPTS COSTLY OFFERINGS GIVEN TO HIMSELF. The hypocritical objection of Judas was cleverly invented. The traitor knew the simplicity and unselfishness of his Master, and he knew that the heart of Jesus was always with the

needy. Why, then, did not our Lord take the same view of his enthusiastic disciple's action? Because he would not hurt the feelings of Mary, would not grieve her love. Still, even that painful course must have been taken if her conduct had been unacceptable to Christ on account of any blameworthy extravagance. It is plain that he did accept adoration. This was seen on Palm Sunday, when he received the "Hosannas!" of the multitude, and defended the children from the rebukes of the interfering Jews. It is right to give honour to Christ, for he is good and great; but above his human excellence his Divine glory makes this homage supremely fitting.

III. WE SHALL BEST SERVE OUR FELLOW-MEN WHEN WE ARE MOST DEVOTED TO CHRIST. He was not robbing the poor in order to accept a luxury for himself, as Judas rudely insinuated. We must set this incident over against our Lord's recently spoken words about the kindness shown to others being really given to himself (ch. xxv. 40). There is no rivalry between the two kinds of gifts. Mary would not be the less charitable to her neighbours because of her expenditure on her Master. It is more likely that her heart would flow out in richer kindness towards them. Devotion to Christ is the greatest inspiration for sympathy with suffering fellow-men. What is spent on the cause of religion does not detract from the help of the poor. The reason is that the fund of possible generosity is never exhausted. We have not such a limited amount to give away. Few contribute a tithe of what they ought to give. But when the heart is moved to offer directly to Christ, its new warmth of love will prompt it to be more liberal in giving to all other good objects. It is not a fact that, for the most part, those people who refuse to help religious objects are the most generous in charity to their neighbours. The poor would not be grateful to be handed over to the tender mercies of the Judases. On the other hand, we find that those men who are foremost in supporting the cause of Christ are most earnest in human charity. The very people who maintain foreign missions do most for the suffering poor at home.—W. F. A.

Ver. 22.—*The betrayal of Christ.* This is one of the saddest scenes in the life of the Man of sorrows. Leonardo di Vinci has commemorated it pictorially, although his famous fresco is fast fading from the walls of the refectory of the monastery at Milan. Familiar copies of this wonderful picture must have impressed the scene upon all our memories. It is alive with heart-searching lessons for all time.

I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST TO BETRAY HIS MASTER. We might have thought that the spell of Christ's presence would have effectually prevented such a fall. That there should be a Judas in the college of the apostles is a startling fact. 1. *Jesus does not hold any by force.* This is not a case for considering the scope of omnipotence. Here we trench on the awful region of the human will. God does not override that mysterious power. If he did, he would destroy the man himself; he would crush the personality in which alone true service can be rendered to God. 2. *It is possible to know much of Christ, and yet to escape from his influence.* Judas appears to have been a man of great intelligence. He had heard the wonderful teachings of One who "spake as never man spake," yet they had made no final impression on his character. We are not saved by our knowledge of Christ. We may be disciples without being Christians; scholars in the school of Jesus, and yet not saints in his household.

II. NO CHRISTIAN CAN BE SURE THAT HE WILL NEVER BETRAY HIS MASTER. It is pathetic to see these humble men each putting the anxious question, "Is it I, Lord?" But the very utterance of the question suggests the wisdom of those who breathed it. We do not know ourselves. There are volcanic depths which may reveal themselves in sudden explosions, fires that slumber far beneath the green fields and the flowery gardens. The rose and the lily bloom on the surface; but who shall say what will happen when the eruption takes place? No one has fathomed the depth of the hidden possibilities of evil in his own heart; and no one can tell what force of temptations he will be called upon to face. For aught we know, any one of us might become a Judas.

III. THE ONLY SECURITY AGAINST BETRAYING CHRIST IS TO BE FOUND IN A HUMBLE TRUST IN HIS GRACE. The disciples acted wisely in uttering their anxious question This was the best way to get a negative answer. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall." The very fear of falling will be a help against falling, by

inducing a spirit of watchfulness. 1. *We need to be on our guard against unfaithfulness* The danger comes when it is least expected. He who is anxious lest he shall betray his Master will be the first to detect the temptation that points the way of treason. 2. *Christ can keep his people faithful.* We are not left to be the victims of chance, nor are we entirely committed to the charge of our own wayward wills. Christ will not keep any from falling by force, apart from the concurrence of their own will. But he can and he does preserve those who seek his grace and trust his aid. He is able to keep such from falling (Jude 24).—W. F. A.

Vers. 26—29.—*The Lord's Supper.* We must never forget that this central ordinance of our Christian worship was instituted by our Lord himself. It is an indication of his foresight and forbearance; for it shows first that he saw we should need to be repeatedly reminded of what he is to us, and then that he condescended to help the infirmity of our wandering natures by providing the most impressive means for continually presenting the great central facts of his work before our minds and hearts. He enlists the services of the three senses of sight, taste, and touch, to aid the sense of hearing in bringing before us the vital truths of his gospel.

I. THE CHRISTIAN FEEDS UPON CHRIST. 1. *Christ himself.* These elements do not represent abstract doctrines or moral precepts; the theory of redemption or the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount. They represent Jesus. He is our Life. 2. *Christ received as food.* We eat the bread and drink the wine. Christ is the Bread of life. We must personally participate in Christ, and receive him into our lives, in order to profit by his grace. 3. *Christ as every-day food.* Jesus chose the common bread and wine of the country, such as were always at hand. He does not wish to be a rare luxury for wedding feasts and kings' banquets. He will be the poor man's bread, and his daily bread. Yet this is what is most essential. Some people look for rare delicacies in Christ, but they will not make him their daily Bread. Then they will starve. We must live upon Christ.

II. CHRIST BECOMES AS FOOD TO OUR SOULS IN HIS INCARNATION. These elements do not represent the soul of Jesus. They stand for his body and his blood. Strange speculations have risen around this fact, and some have imagined that the properties of the spiritual, of the Divine nature itself, were transferred to the body of our Lord. It is straining the words of Jesus, and putting an unnatural meaning on his language, to suppose any such miraculous transformation of his body to have taken place. In a simpler way we may understand that it is through his incarnation that he becomes our food. Food must be in some way like what feeds on it in order that it may be fully assimilated and absorbed. Christ becomes one with us in his incarnation. We can come near to him in his earthly life. We can touch him, and sympathize with him, and understand him in some degree. Thus we feed on his body and blood, and so receive him.

III. CHRIST GIVES HIMSELF TO US IN HIS DEATH. The bread is broken; the wine is poured out; and these two elements are taken separately. Thus our Lord sets before us the thought of his death. He could not be our Life if he had not given up his own life. It is not the body of Christ in his earthly ministry, it is the body on the cross, that feeds us. It is not the blood in the veins, it is the blood shed, that saves us. The Lord's Supper was instituted on the night before Jesus was betrayed. It pointed on to the cross. It is now the great memorial of Christ in his sacrifice for us.

In conclusion, let us consider how we may approach this sacred feast. We cannot eat and drink "worthily" if we are to be worthy of Christ or free from all sin before we come. This is impossible, and it is not required of us; for Christ is himself the Saviour from sin. What we want is to recognize him as our Life, to trust in him as our Saviour, to surrender to him as our Lord. Then we can come to his table at his own invitation, and refresh our souls with his grace.—W. F. A.

Ver. 28.—"*The blood of the new covenant.*" This verse is intensely interesting, because it contains one of our Lord's rare sayings about the purpose of his death. For the most part the New Testament teachings on that great theme come from the apostles, who reflected on the event after it had passed into history, and with the light of the Resurrection upon it. Still, it is not just to say that the apostles originated the doctrine of the

atonement. Not only is that doctrine foreshadowed in Isa. liii.; in the institution of his Supper our Lord distinctly sets it forth. Before this he spoke of his life being given as a ransom for many (ch. xx. 28), and he called himself the good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John x. 15).

I. JESUS SPEAKS WITH STRANGE EMPHASIS OF HIS BLOOD. In the present day some people shrink from all reference to the blood of Christ. They are disgusted with the coarse and unmeaning language of a certain class of preachers to whom the mere physical image seems to be more than the truth typified. But our Lord himself directs us to the subject in the wine of the Communion. We must interpret his meaning in the light of Jewish ideas. The Jew taught that the blood was the life (Lev. xvii. 11). Then Christ gives us his essential life. The blood was shed in the sacrifice of the victim at the altar. Christ is the great Sacrifice for our sins, and as such he sheds his blood; *i.e.* the blood signifies Christ dying for us; and then, beyond the mere act of dying, it signifies the preciousness of his life given to us.

II. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST SEALS HIS NEW COVENANT. He was instituting a new order, a fresh relationship between man and God. The old covenant of the Jewish Law was obsolete. Men had outgrown it, and were ready to receive something larger and more spiritual. Jesus himself teaches that he institutes the fresh relation. As a covenant signifies certain terms and arrangements, this new covenant of Christ's has its new conditions. His whole teaching about the kingdom of heaven is expository of his covenant. Preparations in prophecy (*e.g.* Jer. xxxi. 31) and explanations in apostolic writings help us further to understand it. 1. *It is for all nations, not only for Jews.* 2. *It is of grace, not of law.* 3. *It is spiritual, not of "carnal ordinances."*

III. THIS NEW COVENANT BRINGS REMISSION OF SINS. 1. *Christ forgives sins.* By exercising his right to do so our Lord roused early antagonism among the defenders of the old religion. But the world has since seen that here lay the very root and core of his work. Here is the essence of the gospel for us to-day—it promises forgiveness of sins. 2. *This forgiveness springs from the death of Christ.* We may find it difficult to trace the connection; but it is not an invention of human speculation, for we find our Lord himself speaking of it. It is Christ's own teaching that our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood.

IV. THE REMISSION OF SINS IS OF WIDE APPLICATION. Jesus says it is "for many." He did not die merely to save an elect few. He had large aims, and he will not "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" until he has brought many souls out of darkness into light. Therefore the very institution of the Lord's Supper is an encouragement for the penitent to seek the pardon which Christ is so bountiful in bestowing. —W. F. A.

Ver. 38.—*The Man of sorrows.* Although this name is found in Messianic prophecy (Isa. liii. 3), it would be wrong to suppose that there was no gladness in the life of Christ. He spoke of his joy (John xv. 11), and he delighted to do the will of God (Ps. xl. 8). So pure a life spent in doing good to men must have had a gladness which no earthly pleasure could bestow. Yet Jesus had sorrows which no man can measure. It is easier to understand the glory of the Transfiguration than the agony of the garden.

I. THE GREATNESS OF THE SORROWS. Many bitter ingredients entered into the cup of anguish which it was the Father's will that Jesus should drink. 1. *The horror of death.* Jesus was young and in health; it was natural for him to shrink from a premature and violent death. 2. *The dread of shame.* Jesus was of the most refined and sensitive nature; in his Passion he was to face insult and ignominy. 3. *Apparent failure.* He came to set up his kingdom, to redeem Israel, to save the world; and his mission was rejected. Instead of the throne, he was to have the cross. All his efforts seemed to be ending in darkness. This was the earthly aspect of them. During his humiliation he must have felt it. 4. *The faithlessness of friends.* One had betrayed him; another was about to deny him; nearly all would flee in selfish cowardice. 5. *Spiritual depression.* At last Jesus seemed to be deserted by God.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE SORROWS. We must look deeper than these immediate occasions of the grief of Christ. The fundamental source is beneath and behind all of them. 1. *The world's sin.* They all result from sin. The world's sin rose up

against God's Holy One, and smote him with all its fury. It was the dark cloud of this mass of sin that hid from him the vision of God. Jesus was bearing the load of sin, and it was breaking his heart. 2. *The goodness of Christ.* Bad men do not feel the world's sin very acutely. (1) The holiness of Jesus was horrified at its black and hideous enormity. (2) The love of Christ was grieved at its shocking cruelty towards himself, and at its own fatal and suicidal influence in the world. He saw it as the cause of misery and ruin and death.

III. THE ENDURANCE OF THE SORROWS. How did Jesus meet them? 1. *With natural shrinking.* He was no fanatical lover of martyrdom. He proved his humanity by feeling acutely and desiring to escape. Therefore he can sympathize with sufferers. 2. *With prayer.* The Gethsemane of agony is Christ's most sacred oratory. He teaches us to bring our griefs to God. His example shows that prayer is the soul's consolation in trouble. 3. *With trustful submission.* He desired God's will to be done, whatever that might be. He prayed for deliverance, but he never complained, much less did he rebel. Here he is the example for us whose greatest sorrows never approach the tragic terror of his.

IV. THE FRUIT OF THE SORROWS. 1. *Christ's victory.* He triumphed by submission. In obedience to God, he attained to the desire of his heart. Through his Passion and crucifixion he won the "Name which is above every name." His sorrows led to his glory. By the *viâ dolorosa* he reached his throne. 2. *The world's salvation.* No selfish motive of personal gain inspired our Lord's endurance. His very reward was to see the world saved. His suffering was all for others; if the world may rejoice in hope, this is owing to the fact that Jesus suffered in the darkness of a dreadful death.—W. F. A.

Ver. 52.—*The curse of the sword.* It was natural that the impetuous disciple should try to defend his beloved Master. But his action was a piece of madness, and, if persisted in, it must have led to a needless slaughter of the followers of Christ. It was not on this account only, however, that our Lord promptly checked it, although doubtless his keen perception and wise judgment detected the strategic weakness of the situation. A much deeper thought flashes out from his words, and sheds a light on the character of his kingdom and the method of his work.

I. THE CAUSE OF CHRIST CANNOT BE ADVANCED BY THE SWORD. Mohammedanism is its very opposite in this respect. Charles the Great made a fatal blunder when he drove the Saxons into the water of baptism by a charge of his fierce warriors. 1. *Christ aims at inward conviction.* A religion of external observances may be imposed by force; but you cannot compel a man to believe as you wish. The persuasion of force may induce a particular course of action to be followed; it will never spread the idea it champions. 2. *Christ desires to win love.* He has not conquered a soul if he has only brought it to silent submission. He seeks much more. He would have the hearts of his people. But the use of force is directly opposed to any such results. You cannot make a man love you by half killing him with sword-thrusts. This method might advance a superstition of fear; it could never aid a gospel of love.

II. THE RIGHTS OF CHRIST CANNOT BE DEFENDED BY THE SWORD. At first sight it might seem to be reasonable to defend Christian truths and institutions by force, even although they could not be planted in this way. Constantine thought so, when he brought the whole machinery of the state to support the Nicene party in its opposition to the Arians. But the subsequent change of his own policy, and the long triumph and tyranny of Arianism, proved that he was mistaken. Here is the fatal error of the persecutor in all ages. Nothing is so injurious to a religious cause as the forcible suppression of its enemies. The religion that persecutes exchanges the love and devotion with which it may once have been regarded for horror and aversion. The dreadful Marian persecutions did more to destroy the power of the pope in England than all the assaults of the Protestants. The same fate would follow the same policy if it were pursued in defence of the purest form of the gospel of Christ.

III. THE WORLD AT LARGE SUFFERS IMMENSELY FROM THE SWORD. Occasionally there is a righteous war, as that which resulted in the suppression of slavery in America. But in the vast majority of cases, a war is an almost unmitigated evil to all who are engaged in it. It causes immeasurable sufferings, and it encourages the worst passions

The words of Christ are true in a deeper sense than superficial readers discover. Not only is the fighting man liable to be killed in battle. His behaviour endangers his better nature. The spirit of hate and revenge is fatal to all that is good in him. Thus he perishes by the sword—not alone by the sword of his antagonist, which he provokes, but by the sword which he wields in his own hand. He is a suicide. In defending his body, too often he kills his own soul.—W. F. A.

Vers. 63—65.—*Christ and Caiaphas.* Jesus now stands face to face with the head of the old Jewish religion. The official leader of the nation is for the first time confronted by the Man who claims to be its true King. Caiaphas could not but look upon Christ with the jealousy a selfish man in power feels for his rival. But Jesus was more than a rival of the high priest. He laid claim to a rank which Caiaphas never dreamed of assuming. We do not wonder that the ecclesiastical judge examined his Prisoner with bitter prejudice.

I. THE ADJURATION. Caiaphas charged Jesus, on oath, to declare whether he was the Christ, the Son of God. 1. *It is most important to know what Jesus Christ claims to be.* We have an interest in the high priest's question quite apart from the judicial process. Our religion is centred in Christ. It is more than an outgrowth of his life and teaching. It rests upon his Person; it lives in him; it is what he is. We cannot wholly disregard him without abandoning Christianity itself. An imperfect knowledge of Christ may be found with a true and saving faith in him. Still, the faith must be in him, and therefore we must know enough of him to trust him. 2. *The greatest question about Christ is as to his Divinity and Messiahship.* (1) Is he the Christ? If he is, he is able to save; if he is, he has a right to claim a loyal following. (2) Is he the Son of God? If he is, he comes to us clad with Divine power. Then we may trust that he cannot fail, and we have the best of all reasons for submitting to his kingly rule. Such questions as these about his nature and authority cannot be set aside as of merely speculative interest.

II. THE REPLY. Jesus did not usually assert his Messiahship; much less did he directly confess his Divine nature, except on certain rare occasions. But he was now at the end of his life, and therefore his revelation of his nature and office could not hinder his work. Moreover, the high priest had a legal right to test his claims, and Jesus never opposed the execution of the law. 1. *Jesus accepted the highest names ascribed to him.* Could he do this if he did not know they were his by right? He was calm and reasonable, simple and humble, generous and unselfish. Yet he consented to be called "the Christ, the Son of God." 2. *Jesus foresaw and predicted his own second advent.* It is wonderful that a peasant from Galilee should speak thus before the greatest dignitary of his nation, amid all the pomp and splendour of the high priest's palace, and in view of his own rejection and death.

III. THE RESULT. Caiaphas took the words of Christ as if they were blasphemy and on this account pronounced him to be worthy of death. 1. *His conduct was determined by an unjust prejudice.* He assumed that the claims of Christ could not be true, and therefore he judged them to be blasphemous. Thus he approached Christ with a closed mind. If we have already made up our minds adversely to the claims of Christ, it is useless for us to examine them. But the only fair method is to approach him with an open mind, ready to weigh all he teaches, ready to accept all that he may give us good warrant for believing. 2. *On his own assumption he was right.* If the high claims of Christ were false, he was guilty of blasphemy. Caiaphas was more consistent than those people are who reject the Divine claims of Christ, and yet honour him as the best of men.—W. F. A.

Vers. 69—75.—*St. Peter denying his Lord.* It says much for the veracity of the Gospel narratives that the evangelists have not shrunk from recording an incident which is to the shame of the chief of the apostles. And yet we may be sure that the charity which covers a multitude of sins would have buried this sad story in eternal oblivion if it had not been full of important lessons for all ages. These things are not written for Peter's shame, but for our instruction. No doubt the first record of the story was derived from the confession of the penitent apostle's own lips.

I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR ONE WHO LOVES CHRIST TO DENY HIM. In the case of Judas

we have seen that knowledge does not prevent treason; here we see that love does not secure one against the weakness of denial. The disciple betrayed his great Teacher, the friend denied his beloved Saviour. The offences were utterly different. Yet St. Peter's is distressing because it overcame the loyalty of love. The emotional and impetuous are in an especial danger of falling before sudden temptations.

II. SELF-CONFIDENCE INVITES TEMPTATION. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Yet St. Peter boldly walked into it. His love for his Master kept him near to Jesus. While almost all the rest of the disciples—all but St. John—had fled, Peter hung on to the outskirts of the procession as Jesus was carried off under arrest to Jerusalem. For this we admire him. He was braver than the apostles who had not a chance of denying their Lord, because they had escaped from the dangerous scenes. It is not just, therefore, to say that he wilfully put himself in the way of danger. But if his heart drew him near to Christ, his humility and self-distrust should have warned him to be on his guard. Our loyalty to Christ may call us into difficult places; but then we should recognize that they are difficult, and pray for grace that we may walk circumspectly in them.

III. COURAGE IN EXCITING DANGERS IS OFTEN FOLLOWED BY COWARDICE UNDER QUIETER CIRCUMSTANCES. In the garden St. Peter was brave as a lion, slashing at the high priest's servant with his sword. In the palace court-yard he cowers before a waiting-maid's joke. It is a great man's house, and St. Peter is an uncouth fisherman; Christ has been seized, and his cause is apparently lost; the watch is long, the night chill, the disciple weary. All these things tend to undermine courage. But it is among such circumstances that we most need to be on our guard. Then there is no excitement of the battle to sustain us. In the hour of depression our danger is great.

IV. ONE FALL LEADS TO ANOTHER. If St. Peter can deny his Master once, it is not at all wonderful that he should deny him thrice. The descent to evil is an inclined plane, which grows steeper as we proceed along it. Therefore it is most needful to resist the tempter at his first onslaught. Like St. Peter, Christ was thrice attacked by the tempter. But unlike his servant, he worsted the foe at the first attack, and met him with the added strength of victory at the subsequent assaults.

V. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN WILL REPENT OF HIS UNFAITHFULNESS. The crowing cock reminds St. Peter of his Master's warning. Then his repentance is sudden and bitter. Christ's servant cannot sin without suffering. But his tears are healing. Though he fall, he shall rise again.—W. F. A.

Vers. 14—25, 47—50.—*Judas.* By piecing together what the various Gospels tell us about Judas, we can see the process by which our Lord separated him from the rest. 1. Our Lord indicated that among the disciples there was a traitor. Unable to detect the conscious look of guilt in the face of any of his companions, each, conscious of the deep, unfathomed capacity for evil in his own heart, can but frankly ask the Master, "Lord, is it I?" But there was one of them who did not join in the question. 2. Jesus answered, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." The circle of suspicion is thus narrowed. 3. Almost simultaneously with this Peter beckons to John, who puts at last, in a whisper, the definite question, "Who is it?" and Jesus, in the ear of the beloved disciple, whispers the reply, 'He it is," etc. (John xiii. 26). The look that accompanies the giving of the sop, as well as the act itself, shows Judas that his treachery is discovered. He therefore mechanically takes up, in a somewhat colder form, the question of the rest and says "Master, is it I?" His fear subdues his voice to a whisper, heard only by John and the Lord, and the answer, "Thou hast said. That thou doest do quickly," is equally unobserved by the rest. The sin of Judas presents us with one of the most perplexed problems of life and character. Let us, first of all, look at the connection of this betrayal with the life of Christ. Why might Jesus not have been taken without the help of a traitor? Possibly the reason was that it was needful that Jesus should be made perfect through suffering, that so he might be a merciful High Priest. He had already suffered in a variety of ways in body and mind; but till he was brought into close contact with a man who could accept his love, eat his bread, press his hand with assurance of fidelity, and then sell him, he did not know the misery that one human being can inflict on another. In conjecturing the character of Judas, we must start

from the idea that with extraordinary capacity for wickedness he had also more than ordinary leanings to what was good. He was an apostle, and had been called to that office by Christ. He was himself so impressed with Christ as to follow him. It is possible he may have hoped to receive wealth and honour in the new kingdom, but this motive mingled with the attachment to Christ's Person which all the apostles had. That Judas was trusted by the other apostles is manifest. Even to the end he is unsuspected by them, and to the end he has an active conscience. He is overwhelmed with remorse and shame; his sense of guilt is stronger even than the love of money that had hitherto been his strongest passion: he judges himself fairly, sees what he has become, and goes to "his own place." If we ask what precisely it was in the crime of Judas that makes us so abhor it, manifestly its most hateful ingredient was its treachery. It is also invested with a horror altogether its own by the fact that this Person whom he betrayed was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world—the best beloved of God and every man's Friend. After three years' acquaintanceship and observation of the various ways in which Christ could bless people, this was all he could get from him. And there are still such men—men who can find nothing in Christ that they sincerely care for, though calling themselves his followers.

I. The sin of Judas teaches us the great power and danger of the love of money. It infallibly eats out of the soul every generous emotion and high aim. It can be so easily and continuously gratified, and it is notoriously difficult to extirpate. Covetousness is more a sin of the *will* than sins of the flesh or of a passionate nature. There is more choice in it, and therefore it above all others is called idolatry, because it above all others proves that the man is in his heart choosing the world and not God.

II. Disappointment in Christ is not an unknown thing among ourselves. Men attach themselves to Christ in a loose, conventional way. They are not wholly and heartily his, but merely seek to derive some influences from him. The result is that they one day find that through all their religious profession and apparently Christian life their characteristic sin has actually been gaining strength. And finding this, they become aware that they have lost both this world and the next. They find that the reward of double-mindedness is the most absolute perdition.

III. The most comprehensive lesson is the rapidity of sin's growth, and the enormous proportions it attains when the sinner is sinning against light. The position Judas enjoyed and by which he might have been for ever enrolled among the foremost of mankind, one of the twelve foundations of the eternal city, he so skilfully misused that the greatest sinner feels glad that he has yet not been left to commit the sin of Judas.

We may, then, walk with Christ, and yet be no Christians after all. Frequently we think and act as if the knowledge of our duty and the occasional good feelings and impulses that we enjoy were themselves saving, whereas it is this that makes our sin and our danger so much the greater. It is possible that the only result of our knowing Christ may be that we betray him.—D.

Vers. 14—25.—*The crime of Judas.* I. CHARACTER OF JUDAS. Though Judas had extraordinary capacity for crime, he must also have had more than ordinary leanings to what was good. He was an apostle. This implies on Christ's part discernment of some qualities in Judas likely to make him useful to the Church. It implies on Judas's part a willingness at least to put himself in the way of what was good. It is true he might follow Jesus as a speculation, expecting advancement and wealth as the result. But this motive mingled to some extent in the discipleship of all the apostles. And probably along with this unworthy motive there was in him, as in them, some mixture of higher purpose. He may have felt the elevating influence of Christ's fellowship, and may have wished to feel it more. And it is something in his favour that he remained so long in Christ's company. Yet this man, with his intelligence, his occasional good impulses, his feeling of affection for Christ, his favouring circumstances, committed the greatest crime it has been possible for any to commit.

II. HEINOUSNESS OF HIS CRIME. The most hateful element in the crime is its treachery. Cæsar defended himself till struck by the dagger of a friend; then he covered his face, and accepted his fate. One can forgive the open blow of a declared enemy, but the man who lives with you on terms of intimacy, and thus learns your past history, your ways and habits, and the state of your affairs, the man you so con-

fide in that you communicate to him what you keep hidden from others, and who, while you still think well of him, uses his knowledge of you to blacken your character, damage your prospects, and ruin your family,—this man is a criminal of a different dye. So Judas used his knowledge of Christ's habits—his hour and place of prayer, etc. The circumstance, too, that he made money by his treachery is an aggravation. The best use he could think of to put Jesus to was to sell him for five pounds. After all he had seen and known of Jesus, this was all the benefit he thought he could derive from him.

III. ATTEMPTED PALLIATIONS OF HIS CRIME. So diabolical does the crime seem, so difficult is it to believe that any one who had known and lived with Jesus could find it in his heart to give him up to his enemies, that attempts have been made to account for the act on less damning motives. Especially it has been urged that it was the purpose of Judas merely to force the hand of Jesus—to compel him to resort to force in self-defence, and erect the standard of the new kingdom. He was weary of the inactivity of Jesus, and sought to bring matters to a crisis. Some plausibility is given to this view by the subsequent remorse and suicide of Judas. This, it is said, proves that he did not intend the death of his Master. But to argue thus is to forget that in all cases sin committed looks very different from sin in prospect. Doubtless Judas did not clearly foresee the terrible guilt of giving up his Master to death; but this does not imply that he did not intend to give him up to death. Before we sin, it is the gain we see; after we sin, the guilt.

IV. SOURCES OF THE CRIME. His discipleship had put him in the way of temptation. He had carried the bag of the small community. His covetousness had increased upon him. And now he saw clearly that no great scope for money-making was to be found in the company of Jesus. He was a disappointed, embittered man. He felt he must break with Christ, but in doing so would win what he could, and would revenge himself on those who had kept him poor, and at the same time, by exploding the society and annihilating it, would justify his own conduct in deserting the cause.

Infer: 1. The power and danger of the love of money. All that we do in the world day by day has a more or less direct reference to money. This passion of covetousness is therefore *always* appealed to. Other evil propensities allow intervals of freedom, periods of repentance and amendment; but this is constant. Judas's fingers were always in the bag; it jingled as he walked; it lay under his pillow as he slept. 2. The enormous growth a sin makes when committed against light. Everything in Judas's position to win him from worldliness. But the unworldliness of his company only led him to take greater advantage, and did not infect him with generosity. Had he passed his days as a small trader in Kerioth, he could only have reached the minor guilt of adulterating his goods and giving them out in false measures; but in Christ's company his sin acquired abnormal proportions. Inducements to righteousness and opportunities of good provoke in the sinner a strong and determined bent to sin.—D.

Vers. 46—56.—*The arrest.* The words, "Rise, let us be going," are not inconsistent with those just uttered, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." These latter words had rather a moral significance than a physical. They meant, "I have no longer any need of your watching." But just as he utters them, he catches the gleam of arms through the trees, and exclaims, "Rise." Describe the scene—the measured tread of the Roman cohort; the glare of torches and lanterns, and the swarming rabble come out to see an arrest and take part in a riot; the traitor in front, guiding the party to the well-known retirement of Jesus; the kiss indicating the Person of the Lord, lest he should escape or lest some of the disciples should give themselves up in his stead; the reply of the Lord, the emphasis being on the words, "Betrayest *thou*?" the sudden panic among the captors; and the violence of Peter.

I. This arrest is THE RESULT OF CHRIST'S EFFORTS TO DO GOOD. His conduct had been conciliatory to the point of meekness. He had been wise, gentle, patient, and persistently beneficent. And this is the result. And every one who has new truth to declare, new methods to employ, reforms to introduce, should recognize that he will be opposed by the combined forces of ignorance, pride, self-interest, and sloth. It is the consolation and encouragement of those who endeavour to improve matters around them, and meet with contempt and ill-treatment for doing so, that they share the lot

of him whose reward for seeking to bless mankind was that he was arrested as a common felon.

II. THE MAGNANIMITY OF CHRIST UNDER ARREST, as shown by his healing Malchus and shielding his disciples. When efforts to help other men have only brought calamity on one's self, there is strong provocation to resentment and bitterness. It is only the few who, when misinterpreted and ill used by ignorance and malignity, can retain any loving care for others.

III. Observe how the various elements of THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT find an actual place in the life of Christ. 1. His *substitution* is pictured in his now giving himself up and shielding his disciples. The Jews clearly understood that he was the head of the movement. Peter's obtrusive violence did not divert their attention for a moment. He was not the kind of man to lead a great movement. Jesus was the dangerous Person. And on his side Jesus acknowledged they were right. It was he who had gathered these men together. But for him, they would have been dreaming at their nets on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus therefore steps to the front, and takes upon himself all the responsibility. And in this the disciples see a picture of his whole work of substitution. This night in the garden represents to them the hour of darkness; and always in every hour of darkness they see Jesus stepping to the front, and saying, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." 2. The *voluntariness* of his sacrifice is also brought out. It was at this point it was especially brought out whether or not he was willing to die, whether he would flee, hide, fight, or surrender himself. Everything is proof of his willingness—his going that night as usual to the garden, his definite resignation to God's will, his meeting his captors, his avowal that he was the Person they sought, his refusal to allow Peter to defend him. Voluntariness was an essential element in his work of atonement. In order to atone for our sin, he had to submit himself to the penalty of sin, to accept as righteously inflicted what was due to sin. Obviously it was needful that he should be a perfectly free agent in doing so. Had his death been compulsory, we could not know whether he was accepting it as righteously inflicted or not.—D.

Vers. 57—68.—*Christ before Caiaphas.* The key to the examination of our Lord by Caiaphas is found in the fact that Caiaphas was the person who had declared it to be expedient that one man should die for the people. This, reduced from the high-sounding phraseology of an abstract maxim to its practical significance as a policy, meant that justice to individuals must not be too scrupulously cared for if the good of the state seems to require injustice; that at any cost of injustice to an individual the Jewish people must ingratiate themselves with Rome. If any bewildered counsellors disliked the idea of putting an innocent man to death, Caiaphas had his answer ready, "Ye know not anything; could we have a better opportunity of showing our zeal for Rome than by sacrificing a Person who claims to be King of the Jews? What though he be innocent? He is a poor Galilæan, whose death is of no consequence. He is connected with no good family which can expose us. By his execution we shall merit the confidence of Rome." Thus Jesus was made a scape-goat, on whom might be laid much treachery and infidelity of which the Romans justly suspected the Jews. An examination begun from this point of view was of no significance as a means of evincing truth. Jesus was prejudged. His death was a much-desired boon to the community. But some show of legal form must be gone through. Cite the legal process in capital cases, and show how it was transgressed, and in what points adhered to. Significance of the silence of Jesus. It is beneath him to reply to questions put under pretext of examining, but really for the purpose of betraying the accused into some expression which might condemn him. The false man is best replied to by silence. His conscience is more likely to be stirred. Such seems to have been the result in Caiaphas's case. At least there is an appearance of sincerity in the words, "I adjure thee," etc. (ver. 63). He seems to have been impressed by the manner of Christ. He had probably never before had an opportunity of studying him, and he has discernment enough to see that this is no ordinary fanatic nor demagogue. To this appeal Jesus at once replies. And on this reply, on his own confession, and not on anything witnessed against him, he is condemned. Jesus' confession, that he is the Christ, the Son of God. Nothing could exceed the solemnity of the circumstances in which the confession was

made. There is no doubt that Jesus laid claim to superhuman dignity; to a dignity which it was blasphemy for any mere man to claim. It was for this he was condemned (see Liddon's 'Bampton Lectures,' 288). Comparing the conduct of the high priest with that of the servants who mocked and abused Christ, we gather two suggestions for practical teaching. 1. How much wrong we may inflict upon Christ by resisting conviction. 2. How much wrong we may do him in ignorance—by adopting the judgments passed upon him by others, and declining the duty of considering his claims ourselves.—D.

Vers. 69—75.—*Peter's denial of Jesus.* Describe the scene—the arrangement of the palace, which admitted of Jesus in the judgment-hall seeing what was passing in the court, the rooms being built round a court open to the sky. Describe also the three denials.

I. SINS ARISE FROM UNSUSPECTED QUALITIES IN US. Peter, the bold, venturesome, straightforward disciple, fell by cowardice and lying; as Moses the meek by anger, and Solomon the wise by folly. Often our most flagrant transgressions arise from parts of our character we have not suspected. We have thought ourselves truthful and honest, and we are betrayed into prevarication and double-dealing. We thought ourselves staunch friends, and have fallen into selfish and inconsiderate actions. We considered ourselves cool, almost phlegmatic, but some mastering combination of circumstances arrived, and we spoke the word or wrote the letter which has broken our life past mending.

II. SIN MUST EXPRESS ITSELF IN ORDER TO ITS ERADICATION. These sins that so distress and perplex us disclose unthought-of evils, and put us on our guard. Peter was to become a leader in the Church, but he would have misled the Church had he not had this self-confidence rooted out. His self-confidence is here allowed to betray him, to bring him to what is most fitted to destroy it, to shame and a sense of weakness.

III. CRITICAL CONDITION OF THE SINNER THUS BETRAYED. All depends on the course we adopt when we are thus betrayed into unexpected sin. All men are so betrayed at one time or other; the difference arises in the manner in which we deal with ourselves after such sin. As John Morley has said, with characteristic wisdom, "The deepest part of us shows in the manner of accepting consequences." Can we accept the situation; can we humbly own that since evil has appeared in our life it must first have been in ourselves? "I did not think I was capable of such wickedness; but now I see what I am." Can we thus go out with Peter and weep bitterly? Thus to face the truth is the beginning of all good. Without this we can come to no good. We must start here, with a clear acknowledgment of our actual character. To blind ourselves to our true character is not to alter it.

IV. DIFFICULTY OF THUS HUMBLING OURSELVES. We say to ourselves, "We have been deceived by circumstances"—"betrayed into sin." Peter would say, "Why did not Jesus look at me before I sinned, and so prevent it? Why had I no inkling of the enormity of the sin till it was committed? My reputation is now gone. May I not as well go back to my fishing and renounce all these perplexing spiritualities?" But Peter was man enough to reject these fancies. He saw that he was a sinner, and that he must not run away from his sin, but face it and defeat it.

V. PETER'S SPECIAL SIN WAS MORAL COWARDICE. A weakness rather than a sin, and yet it is probably as prolific of great crime as any of the more vigorous passions of our nature. The natures it is found in are often in other respects admirable—sensitive, sympathetic, intelligent, inoffensive, kindly. The circumstances it is displayed in: man in business finds his expenditure exceeding his income, but is unable to bear the shame of frankly knowing his position and curtailing his expenses, and so, to keep up appearances, is led into dishonest practices; or a minister, finding his faith diverging from the Creed he has subscribed, is yet unable to proclaim this change of opinion, because he cannot face the public astonishment, the severe denunciation of one party, and the equally distasteful because ignorant and canting sympathy of the other; or a parent cannot bear to lose the good will of his child, and refrains from punishing him as he ought; or the schoolboy, afraid to be thought soft and unmanly, stands by and sees cruelty, or lying, or wickedness perpetrated without a word of manly rebuke.—D.

Vers. 1—5.—*God's plans and man's plots.* The "sayings," "words," or discourses of Jesus here "finished," were begun on the Mount of Olives (see ch. xxiv. 1), and continued till he came to Bethany (see ver. 6). They were spoken, it would seem, publicly, while the sentence following was privately spoken "unto his disciples" (ver. 2). The matter of this sentence is intrinsically intensely interesting, and it is interesting also from its relation to the consultation of the Sanhedrin next mentioned (vers. 3—5). The subject remarkably illustrates two things, viz.—

I. THAT GOD'S PLANS ARE WISE AND BENEFICENT. 1. *Here note the prescience of Jesus.* (1) He clearly and circumstantially foretells his death. Mark the contrast in his revelations: "The Son of man shall come in his glory" (ch. xxv. 31); "The Son of man is delivered up to be crucified." The literal fulfilment of the latter pledges the certainty of the former. (2) He had already very particularly foretold his death (see ch. xvi. 21; xx. 17; Mark x. 32—34). Now he precisely indicates the *time:* "After two days," *i.e.* on the third day, or with one full day intervening (cf. Hos. vi. 2). This was Wednesday; on Thursday night he was betrayed by Judas; Friday morning he was condemned by the Sanhedrin, and two hours later crucified by Pilate. (3) The calmness with which Jesus anticipated the horrors so soon to be experienced is truly admirable. It is explained by the prescience which carried him further (cf. ch. xxv. 31; Heb. xii. 2). 2. *This prescience is clearly Divine.* (1) The chief priests and rulers had for some time meditated his death, and it was within the range of probability that they might accomplish their purpose. But what human forecast could have seen the circumstances and the time of the event? (2) These particulars, as he anticipated them, were against human probability. The plot was to destroy Jesus secretly, and therefore the execution of the purpose was to be deferred until after the feast (ver. 5). Then the multitude would have dispersed, and the Galilæans in particular would have returned to their homes. (3) It was not until Judas made his overture that the plotters altered their plans, and resolved to risk the "tumult among the people." But the treachery of Iscariot was fully within the prescience of Jesus (see vers. 21—25). 3. *It is the prescience of wisdom and beneficence.* (1) Jesus was sacrificed at the Feast of the Passover as the antitype of the Paschal lamb. (*a*) This God distinguishes as especially his: "My sacrifice" (see Exod. xxiii. 18), viz. because it was instituted by him to be a special type of "the LAMB OF GOD that beareth away the sin of the world" (see 1 Cor. v. 7). (*b*) The Paschal lamb was "a male of the first year," the symbol of excellence in its prime. So was Jesus, in the prime of his peerless manhood, when offered up. (*c*) It was "without blemish." He was immaculate in his birth, and in his life and death he fulfilled all righteousness. (2) Wisdom is also seen in the time. (*a*) The word here construed "betrayed" is in the New Version rendered "delivered up," the reference being to the setting apart of the lamb rather than to the treachery of Judas. It refers to something accomplished. The lamb was taken on the tenth day of the first month (see Exod. xii. 1—3); and on this day Jesus entered Jerusalem (see John xii. 1, 12, 13). (*b*) The lamb was then to be kept "until the fourteenth day of the same month" (see Exod. xii. 6). On this day the true Paschal Lamb was sacrificed. There is reason to believe that in this case, two days were kept, and the right day was that upon which Jesus was offered up. (*c*) The time of the day also was exact, viz. "between the two evenings" (see Exod. xii. 6, margin), *i.e.* between the sun's declining west, at noon, and his setting, at about six in the afternoon. Jesus was crucified at noon, and expired three hours later, exactly between the evenings (see ch. xxvii. 46—50). (3) The beneficence of this wisdom is seen in the purposes. As the blood of the Paschal lamb redeemed Israel from Egypt, and redeemed his firstborn from the sword of the destroyer, so are we redeemed from sin and death by the sacrificial blood of Christ.

II. THAT HE MAKES MAN'S PLOTS SUBSERVIENT TO THEM. 1. *We see God's purposes in the assembly.* (1) Who are they? "The chief priests . . . and the elders of the people." Little did they think that they were giving effect to the truth of prophecy; for it is written that "the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Christ" (see Ps. ii. 2; xli. 7). It is also specified that the Paschal lamb should be offered by the whole congregation: "The whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it" (Exod. xii. 6). Here was the very Sanhedrin. (2) What a lesson of human depravity is here! "The chief priests," and probably Caiaphas the high priest at the head of

them. Sacredness of office is no security against rascality. "The rulers," who were members of the great Sanhedrin because of their influence, whether of wealth, or birth, or abilities. Men the most reputable as seen by their fellows, may be the most odious as seen by God. 2. *We see God's purposes in their measures.* (1) Their policy is to have Jesus secretly killed. This was manifestly from the devil, who would give sceptics the pretext to say, "This thing *was* done in a corner." The Sanhedrin feared the uproar of the people. (2) But the devil outwits himself. Iscariot appears upon the scene, and his proposals induce them to hazard the bolder policy. It was customary at festivals to execute malefactors publicly, "that all Israel might see and fear" (see Deut. xvii. 13; Acts xii. 4). (3) Thus, then, the Passion of Christ became a matter of the utmost celebrity. He suffers openly amidst thousands of witnesses. His death was notorious, which gave emphasis to the notoriety of the subsequent event of the glorious resurrection from the dead. (4) Thoughts of the suffering Christ sustain the suffering Christian, suffering for him and with him. And "if we suffer with him, we shall be also glorified together."—J. A. M.

Vers. 6—16.—*Troublers of the good.* Jesus and his apostles were entertained at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper. Simon probably had once been a leper, and was miraculously healed by Jesus (see ch. xi. 5), and became a disciple of the great Physician. Bishop Newcome has admirably harmonized the accounts of the anointing at Bethany given by the evangelists Matthew, Mark, and John. This Simon prepared a supper, to which he invited Lazarus, his neighbour if not also his relative, who by the same glorious Worker had been raised from the dead. The sisters of Lazarus also were present (John xii. 2, 3).

I. MARY FIGURES IN THIS HISTORY AS A BEAUTIFUL TYPE OF GOODNESS. 1. *In her love to Christ.* (1) It was love to him as a personal Friend. He had been intimate in the house of her brother (see John xi. 1—44). Blessed is that family in whose home Jesus is a familiar, welcome, and beloved Guest? Love to a Person. Let us beware of sinking the personal Jesus in abstractions, however admirable. His Personality is not the less real because he is invisible to us and in the heavens (see John xx. 29; 1 Pet. i. 8). (2) It was love overflowing with gratitude. Her heart was especially bound to him by that miracle of grace in which he restored to her family circle her estimable brother alive from the tomb (see John xi. 2—5). Pure and beautiful is the love of a grateful heart. (3) It was love exalted by reverence. She had precious opportunities of estimating his wonderful character, every human attribute of which was radiated by the splendours, and exalted and intensified by the tenderness, of the Divine. We also have our precious opportunities. He is with us in his Word and in his Spirit. Mary, in her improvement of her opportunities, is an example to us. 2. *In the expression of that love.* (1) She had a pound of ointment of spikenard, very precious, contained in an alabaster cruse or flask. This vessel she brake or opened, and poured the contents upon her gracious Lord, first anointing his head and then his feet, wiping them with her hair, the odour of the ointment filling the house. (2) Note here the unselfish profuseness of heart-love to Christ. Nothing is too precious to be expended upon the Blessed One who has shed his most precious blood for us. In Mary's just appreciation of his infinite worthiness, there was no place for the cold and nice calculations as to what good might otherwise be done with this costly nard.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all."

(3) Note also the indefinable spiritual insight and foresight or presentiment which works in an exalted love to Christ. Jesus himself brings this out, as his own Holy Spirit works it in: "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this" (John xii. 7); "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying" (Mark xiv. 8); "In that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial;" "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan. xii. 10). 3. *In the influence of that love.* (1) The fragrance of Mary's love filled more than the house of Simon. Deeds of love to Christ come into every godly family as a delightful

odour. So likewise do they come into the Churches, or brotherhoods of the saints. "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there this that this woman hath done shall be told." So far-reaching is the perfect love. (2) "Shall be told for a memorial of her." The loving are immortalized by their intimate association with the immortal Christ of God. (3) Note here a manifestation of the Divinity of our Lord. We see it: (*a*) In his prescience of the wide notoriety of this action of Mary. (*b*) In the providence which ensured it. (*c*) In the inspiration which moved the evangelists to record it.

II. YET SHE ENCOUNTERED TROUBLERS EVEN IN THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH. 1. *Foremost amongst these was Judas Iscariot.* (1) To him the fragrance of Mary's spikenard was nauseous. All the virtue he could discover in it was its commercial value. "Three hundred pence!" As a typical Jew, he knew the price. "To what purpose is this waste?" So lightly did he value the Son of God, that he could bargain away his life for thirty pieces of silver, or about £4 10s.—the miserable price of a slave. (2) This man of commerce had no heart to see what Mary saw so clearly, viz. that nothing can be "waste" that is lovingly done to the honour of the gracious Saviour of mankind. Any demur to this great truth came as a trouble to her noble heart. It is ever a pain to a generous soul to be denied the opportunity of doing good, or when a proffered kindness is refused. (3) Judas had no eyes to see—which perhaps Mary in her modesty had not thought of, but which Jesus saw so clearly—that this action of hers had a moral significance which made it worthy of the attention of the universe and of the ages. The material commercialist is blind to spiritual values. His arithmetic cannot weigh the soul against the world (see ch. xvi. 26). (4) Judas set up the general claims of the poor in opposition to the personal claims of Christ, as though these claims were inimical. Who has done most for the poor—Judas or Jesus? Is not Jesus, even in his absence, ever present representatively in the poor? Are not the poor cared for by his true disciples for their Lord's sake? (5) But this plea for the poor was a cover for covetousness. "This said he, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John xii. 6). How commonly do the covetous evade appeals, say for foreign missions, by suggesting the counter-claims of the "heathen at home," or of "poor relations," or vaguely "so many calls," none of which are, in fact, considered! How Judas-like! 2. *With Iscariot were others who came under his evil influence.* (1) Some think that Judas was the sole troubler of Mary. They contend that the plural is in this narrative to be taken as singular, according to a Hebraistic usage (cf. ch. xxvii. 44, where "the thieves also" is put for one thief; and ch. xxviii. 17, where "some doubted" means one—Thomas). So "when his disciples saw it, they had indignation," is taken to mean one of them—Judas. (2) No doubt Judas was the chief offender. Hence John speaks of Judas only as troubling Mary, which was sufficient for his purpose; but it must be noted that, in quoting the words of Jesus in the sequel, the plural is used as in the other evangelists. (3) The persistent use of the plural throughout the narrative in Matthew and in Mark can scarcely be explained away upon the principle of an *enallagé*, as the rhetoricians call this substitution of the plural for the singular. (4) While, then, it may well be doubted that the whole college of the apostles were compromised in this unenviable distinction of being troublers of the gentle and loving Mary—John, at the least, may be excepted—yet that some of them so came under the evil influence of Judas as to share with him in Christ's rebuke is evident. Are there not still in our Churches many too easily imposed upon by representatives of the covetous traitor, who artfully plead specious pretexts of charity to the grieving and troubling of the spiritual kindred of Mary? (5) There is this great difference, however, between Judas and those apostles who sided with him, viz. they were moved by a real though misplaced concern for the poor, while his only concern was to gratify the greed of his thievish heart. Let us beware how we listen to those who affect to set up philanthropy to the disparagement of religion. Let us beware how we depreciate or discredit the services of the people of God whose methods may differ from our own.—J. A. M.

Vers. 17—30.—*The Lord's Supper.* The institution of the Holy Supper was in connection with the eating of the Passover. The occasion was most appropriate and significant; for the Jewish feast had been instituted to foreshadow what the Christian

festival was founded to commemorate (see 1 Cor. v. 6—8). The two sacraments of Christianity express all that was expressed in the entire circle of the ceremonial law, and more. All the washings are embodied in the sacrament of baptism; all the sacrifices and feasts in the Eucharist. Consider—

I. THE JEWISH PASSOVER. 1. *The lamb typified Christ.* (1) It was a male of the first year, to set forth the excellence and the maturity of his humanity. He was "the Son of David," viz. that Son in comparison with whom the other sons of David are nowhere. He was "the Son of man," viz. in comparison with whom no other son of Adam may be named. (2) It was "without blemish." He was in his birth immaculate, in his life and death perfectly righteous. In all points unique in purity, wisdom, and goodness. (3) It was taken from the flock, to show that the humanity of Christ was to be real. It was accordingly no phantom. He was "bone of our bone." 2. *Its sacrifice foreshadowed his Passion.* (1) "Taken from the flock" in order to be sacrificed, it became a vicarious victim. It became the substitute for those that were spared in consequence of its selection. So Christ, having identified himself with our race, was "taken" as our Substitute. (2) In the original institution the blood of the lamb sacrificed, and sprinkled in faith upon the door-posts and lintels of the houses, protected the inmates from the sword of the destroyer. So is there life and salvation where by a sure faith the blood of the Lamb of God is sprinkled. (3) The place of the sacrifice was ordained to be that which the Lord should choose. Jerusalem was that chosen place. (4) The time was the fourteenth day of the month Abib (cf. Exod. xii. 6—10; John xviii. 28). "Between the two evenings," viz. the "ninth hour," when Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the Ghost. (5) Even the direction respecting the preservation of the bones of the lamb from fracture had its prophetic meaning (cf. Exod. xii. 46; John xix. 36). 3. *The feast anticipated his communion.* (1) The Egyptian had no right to the Passover. It was not for the idolater, but for the believer. So neither are the blessings of redemption in Christ designed for the obstinate sinner, but for the humble believer. (2) It was to be eaten with unleavened bread. Leaven, being a kind of corruption, was an emblem of insincerity and falsehood. The faith which saves is not that of the hypocrite, but that of the true man (see 1 Cor. v. 8). (3) It was to be eaten "with bitter herbs." The unleavened bread and bitter herbs together made the "bread of affliction." So if the sinner would commune with Christ, he must come with contrition and repentance.

II. THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE. 1. *The elements of the sacrament.* (1) Bread. This was to represent, signify, or be an emblem of the body of Christ. (*a*) It was not his very body. "This is" equivalent to a common Hebrew idiom (cf. Gen. xl. 12; xli. 26; Dan. vii. 23; viii. 21; 1 Cor. x. 4; Gal. iv. 24). (*b*) Bread signifies all food which supports the life of the body. So is the body of Christ, discerned by faith, the sufficient and necessary food of the spirit. (2) Wine. This was to represent his blood. (*a*) "This is" cannot be literally taken. For in Luke (xxii. 20) the words are, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood," which it will not be contended is to be literally taken. The drinking of literal sacrificial blood was a custom amongst idolaters. But this was never practised in the service of Jehovah (see Ps. xvi. 4). (*b*) Blood, viz. of the *vegetable* kind is chosen to set forth the life of the resurrection of Christ, which is that in which the true Christian has communion with him. 2. *The treatment of the elements.* (1) The *blessing.* This was observed both in respect to the bread and the wine. This was no miracle of transubstantiation. It was, as explained in the evangelists, "giving thanks." The cup used was the "cup of blessing" of the Passover. Christ, as Man heading the table of the redeemed, gives God thanks. True believers will all say "Amen" to this benediction and thanksgiving. (2) The *breaking* of the bread and *pouring* out of the wine vividly call to remembrance the prominent features of the Passion. And forasmuch as Christ himself broke the bread and poured the wine, he evinced the voluntariness of his suffering for us. But that this breaking of the bread and pouring of the wine was not the actual suffering of Christ as the transubstantiationist must maintain, is evident, for Christ said, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you *before I suffer*" (see Luke xxii. 15). (3) The *participation.* This set forth the believer's communion with Christ, his assimilation to Christ, his incorporation with Christ, and his union in spirit with the Lord. He gave the elements to his "disciples"—mark, not as apostles, which they were, but as *disciples*,

viz. that "all" disciples might claim this privilege. Bread to strengthen; wine to gladden. The cup is by Ignatius called ἀγαπη, as it was the symbol of love. By Paul it is called the "communion" (see 1 Cor. x. 16). (4) The *description*. "My blood of the covenant." It is the sign and seal of the "better promises" of the "new," or excellent, and "everlasting" covenant. (5) The *hymn*. Praise at such time is to us most fitting. "Christ, removing the hymn from the close of the Passover to the close of the Lord's Supper, plainly intimates that he intended that the ordinance should continue in his Church, that is, it had not its birth with the ceremonial law, so it should not die with it" (Henry). (6) The departure, immediately afterwards, to the Mount of Olives, was also significant. For he was destined thence, after his actual Passion, to ascend into heaven to receive for us the blessing of the covenant. 3. *The admonitory incident.* (1) "As they were eating, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." As at its institution the Passover separated between Israel and Egypt in mercy and judgment, so now at its transformation into the Christian sacrament, mercy and judgment were to separate between the spiritual and sordid Israel. Judas was the type of his nation also when his wickedness recoiled upon him, as the wickedness of the Egyptians had recoiled upon them. (2) The presence of treachery in the Church is an occasion of sorrow to the true believer. "They were exceeding sorrowful:" for the Lord, that his great love should be requited with villainy; for their college, that its credit and influence should be compromised. (3) It is also an occasion for heart-searching. "They began to say unto him every one, Is it I, Lord?" The search of true self-examination is particular and special. The evil concealed in us can be fully discovered to us only by the Lord. "He that dippeth," etc. (ver. 23; cf. Ps. xli. 9). External communion with Christ in his ordinances is an aggravation of treachery to him. (4) "The Son of man," etc. (ver. 24). It had been foretold that Messiah should suffer (cf. Isa. liii. 3; Dan. ix. 26). But though Divine mercy brought infinite good out of that suffering, those who inflicted it were none the less criminal. How resolute is the devil of hypocrisy! "Judas answered and said, Is it I, Rabbi?"—J. A. M.

Vers. 31—35.—*Strength and weakness.* After the admonitory incident of the last Passover, which separated the unhappy Iscariot from the apostleship, Jesus, journeying with the eleven towards the Mount of Olives, proceeded to caution them against the weakness which he discerned in them. He is not our truest friend who conceals from us our faults.

I. IN JESUS WE SEE THE ENSHRINEMENT OF DIVINE STRENGTH. 1. *In his all-comprehensive knowledge.* (1) What was "written" was perfectly familiar to him. He was supremely "mighty in the Scriptures." The "Sword of the Spirit" is a trusty weapon, both for defence in parrying the thrusts of Satan and for offence in putting the armies of the aliens to the rout. (2) He knew himself to be the "Shepherd" of Israel. That Shepherd is Jehovah (see Ps. xxiii. 1; lxxx. 1). That Shepherd is Messiah (see Isa. xl. 11; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Zech. xiii. 7). Jesus identifies himself as that glorious Personage (see John x. 11; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. v. 4). As the Shepherd here is the "Fellow" of the "Lord of hosts," he only can be intended who is "equal with God." (3) He knew everything about his sheep. He could foretell the incident of the denial by Peter. He could oppose the limit before the second cock-crowing of that night to Peter's "never." He could forecast his desertion by "all." He knows us infinitely better than we know ourselves. (4) Knowledge is power. Perfect knowledge can never be taken at a disadvantage. It cannot be surprised. It has boundless resources. 2. *In his all-enduring compassion.* (1) With what patience does he endure the unfaithfulness of his disciples! Though he knew they would desert him, yet does he not spurn them from his presence. His kind heart can see, even in the excess of their self-confidence, a sincere and warm affection. The case is different from that of Judas. His sin was deliberate; Peter's was a sin of surprise. That of Judas arose from the state of his heart; the act of Peter was against his habitual feelings and principles. Though he foresaw that all the disciples would leave him to tread the winepress alone, his gentleness made no rejoinder to their protestations of devotion to him even to the death. (2) The Shepherd submits to be smitten for the sheep. For himself he had no need to die. The formidableness of that "sword" of Divine justice

now "awaking" from its slumber of forbearance was fully in his view. He saw the malignity of those human hands into which it was given to be wielded against him. Yet did he not seek to evade its edge. He could already see those "wounds in his hands" with which he was to be "wounded in the house of his friends" (see Zech. xiii. 6). He could have avoided them; but his sheep must be redeemed. (3) The "scattered" ones must again be gathered into their fold. To this end the smitten Shepherd must rise again from the dead. "But after I am raised up I will go before you into Galilee." This implies that he would deliver himself out of the hands of his enemies and theirs. "I will go before you," equivalent to "I will bring my hand again to the little ones" (see Zech. xiii. 7). "I will go before you," viz. as the Shepherd before his gathered flock (see John x. 4). "Into Galilee." He even mentioned the particular hill which was to be the place of their meeting (see ch. xxviii. 16). (4) We have "strong consolation" in the "mercy" which "endureth for ever."

II. IN THE DISCIPLES WE SEE AN EMBODIMENT OF WEAKNESS. 1. *Their weakness appears in their self-confidence.* (1) Peter had more faith in himself than he had in the Scriptures of God. They anticipated the offence which the sheep were to take when the Shepherd should be smitten. In the face of this Peter said, "If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended." It is easy to talk boldly and carelessly of death at a distance. (2) "If all shall be offended." Those who think too well of themselves are apt to be suspicious of others (see Gal. vi. 1). (3) Peter's self-confidence grew with his unbelief. For when Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter saith unto him, Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." He should have been diffident in respect to words which never failed when the most stupendous miracles depended on them. (4) The foremost in self-confidence are the first to fall. Such was the case with Peter. Then—

"Beware of Peter's word,
Nor confidently say,
'I never will deny thee, Lord,
But, 'Grant I never may.'
Man's wisdom is to seek
His strength in God alone;
And e'en an angel would be weak
Who trusted in his own."

2. *Their weakness appears in their unbelief.* (1) They could see that Jesus was in peril of his life. This they inferred rather from their knowledge of the hostility of the rulers than from their faith in the Scriptures of prophecy or from the prophetic words of Christ. They could not see who it was that was in peril. Had they seen the Father in the Son, the peril would not have affrighted them. Note: Offences will come among the disciples of Jesus in times of peril. The cross of Christ is evermore the stumbling-block (1 Cor. i. 23). Satan is busy when our faith is weak. (2) They could not see what it truly is to die with Christ. To die with him is to die to self and the world—voluntarily to crucify our entire evil nature. Because, for lack of faith, they were unprepared thus to die with Jesus, they "forsook him, and fled." The heart can await the hour of temptation when the truth is rooted in it. (3) They could not see that their Lord would rise again from the dead. This unbelief was not for want of being told about the Resurrection, either by the prophets or by Christ himself. They were foolish in the slowness of their hearts to believe (see Luke xxiv. 25, 26). Had they understood and realized the resurrection of Christ on the third day after his Passion, their faith would have steadied them (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 58). (4) If *all* the *apostles* forsook their Lord, who has not reason to fear? Did not the apostles represent all the flock which they were afterwards to bring together? Who can boast? The Lord permits us to be tried, that we may see ourselves as we are, and be humbled by our experience. The strength of pride is but for a moment.—J. A. M.

Vers. 36—46.—*The agony in the garden.* Jesus, with his apostles, after the eventful moonlight walk from Jerusalem, came to a place at the foot of the Mount of Olives, called "Gethsemane," or the *oil-presses.* Here he entered upon a scene the moral

grandeur of which is only exceeded by that of Calvary. The olive in the oil-press, like the grape in the wine-press, was *trodden* (see Micah vi. 15). The sufferings of the Lord in the garden were purely mental; those on the cross were physical also. Meditate upon the trouble of his soul—

I. IN ITS TERRIBLE SEVERITY. 1. *This is expressed in his references to it.* (1) A few days earlier he said, "Now is my soul troubled" (John xii. 27); but here the storm of temptation sets in in earnest. (2) The expression, "to be sorrowful" (ver. 37), conveys the idea of *horror*. The "horror of great darkness" (see Gen. xv. 12). This was the setting in of that last and darkest cloud of temptation which finally descended so low as to darken the earth at the Crucifixion (see ch. xxvii. 45). (3) The word rendered "to be very heavy" (New Version, "sore troubled") implies the loss of pleasure derived from other things. This is characteristic of very deep human grief. Our Lord was truly human. (4) The suffering increases. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The nature of this sorrow also was human, but its severity was beyond all human comprehension. For the love from which he contended was Divine love for the whole human race. What must have been the agony of that sense of death! 2. *It is expressed in the agony of his prayer.* (1) "He fell on his face." Great anguish is expressed as rolling in the dust (see Micah i. 10). Job, in his great grief, fell on the ground. (2) His prayer was importunate. "If it be possible." Mark gives it thus: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee" (Mark xiv. 36). To God all things are not *morally*, though *physically* all things are, possible. "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here is the human will of Christ, in the extremest circumstances, deferring to his Divine will. (3) His supplication was with "strong crying and tears" to be saved from this fearful death-sorrow (see Heb. v. 7). These cries reached the hearing of the disciples, and they observed his tears when he came to them in the moonlight. (4) The petition was thrice repeated. Paul expresses his own importunity in the words, "I besought the Lord thrice" (see 2 Cor. xii. 8). Perhaps the iteration of the prayer of Jesus implied as many distinct temptations. They were, however, related to the same "cup."

II. IN ITS VARIOUS SOURCES. 1. *It partly arose from the contradiction of sinners.* (See Heb. xii. 3.) (1) The treachery of Judas was working to its issue. He sorely felt the ingratitude of that "familiar friend in whom" once he worthily "trusted," but who was now desperately fallen (cf. Ps. xli. 9; John xiii. 18; Acts i. 25). (2) The treachery of the Jews was working with Judas, their type. This also afflicted his patriotic heart. See that wonderful description in the hundred and ninth psalm of the sorrows of Messiah in connection with the treachery of Judas and of the Jews. (3) The wickedness of the world at large was also before him in all its enormity. A specimen of that enormity was soon to be displayed in the conduct of the Roman governor and his men of war. For this he felt acutely, as having taken upon him that humanity which is common to all. 2. *It partly arose from the weakness of his disciples.* (1) They were slow of heart to believe fully in him. This, notwithstanding all the pains he had taken to instruct them, notwithstanding all the miracles to confirm his teaching which they had seen. (2) But they were full of self-assertion. This he had that day witnessed in their professions of readiness to die with him. And though he, in the spirit of prophecy, rebuked it, still they remained self-confident; for they slept when they should have watched. (3) When David wept at this Mount of Olives, all his followers wept with him (see 2 Sam. xv. 30); but when the Son of David was there in tears, his followers were asleep. Yet was not their sleep without sorrow (see Luke xxii. 45). Still it was open to rebuke. "He saith unto Peter," who had been foremost in promising to die with him, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (4) This evidence of their weakness Jesus uses to press upon them the urgent need of their watching and praying, that they might not yield to the approaching temptation. If prayer against the hour of temptation was needful for the Master, how much more so for the servants! "Prayer without watching is hypocrisy; and watching without prayer is presumption" (Jay). (5) "Sleep on now." This is the same as "Why sleep ye?" as it is given in Luke xxii. 46; a rebuke, *e.g.* "I no longer enjoin upon you to watch; the season is now past for that duty, the time of trial for which watching and praying would have prepared you has arrived." He watched and prayed, and received strength to drink the bitter cup (cf. Luke xxii. 43; Heb. v. 7); they slept

away the precious moments, and the hour of trial found them without strength. 3. *It partly arose from the malignity of Satan.* (1) The devil was in Iscariot (cf. Luke xxii. 3; John xiii. 2, 27). (2) The devil was in the Jews. The prevalence of demoniacal possession at the time of Christ's sojourn amongst them was a sign of the condition of the nation. (3) The devil was in the Gentile nations. He was, and still is, to a fearful extent, "the god of this world." (4) That was emphatically "the hour of the power of darkness"—the crisis in which Satan was permitted to put forth all his strength in his conflict with the "Seed of the woman." For the sufferings on the cross were but the complement and sequel of those in the garden. 4. *It principally arose from the anger of God.* We may here make the general observation, viz. that the terrible "cup" which Jesus had to drink was given to him by the hand of his Father (cf. ver. 39; John xviii. 11). The subject will be more particularly considered as we meditate further upon the trouble of the soul of our Lord.

III. IN ITS AWFUL VICARIOUSNESS. 1. *He shares his sorrows with those he loves best.* (1) To the college of the apostles he said, "Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray." Some are able to go only so far with Christ in his sufferings. (2) "And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee" to whom he said, "Abide ye here, and watch with me." "Sit ye here" (ver. 36), and "Abide ye here" (ver. 38), mark a law of progression in following. (3) To these he said, "Watch with me." Watch while I watch. Watch as I watch. The temptations directed against Christ are those directed against his Church. (4) But who were these? They were the three formerly chosen to be the witnesses of the Transfiguration (see ch. xvii. 1). Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ who have seen his glory. So likewise those who suffer with him may expect to reign with him. The sons of Zebedee had offered themselves to drink of his cup (see ch. xx. 20—23). 2. *But there is a limit to their companionship.* (1) "Tarry ye here." Beyond this the best and most perfected cannot go. Christ had lately prayed with his disciples (see John xvii. 1); now he prays alone. Note: Our prayers with our families must not be pleaded to excuse the neglect of secret devotions. (2) But why did he now pray and suffer apart? Because his sufferings now were vicarious, and in these he could have no sharer, for he only was sinless, and he only was Divine. In his pleadings he makes no mention of his virtues, for he was suffering as the Sin-bearer for the world. (3) That this agony in the garden was *for us* is evident, else One so great and glorious as he was would never have "feared" as he did. His fear was not for the loss of natural life to himself. That, to one who on the third day after his death was to rise again, is clearly out of the question. His "godly fear" (see Heb. v. 7, New Version) was for the loss of spiritual and eternal life to the whole world. May it not also have been lest, if the death-sorrow in the garden should prove fatal, the fulfilment of the Scriptures in respect to his death by crucifixion might be imperilled? (4) The "cup" was the Passion which was now beginning, but had to be completed on the cross. The allusion may be to the poison-cup given to criminals. To this Paul possibly alludes when he says, "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, *tasted death* for every man" (Heb. ii. 9). Here the whole world is represented as standing guilty and condemned before the tribunal of God. Into every man's hand is placed the *deadly cup*, and he is required to drink off the poison. But Jesus enters, takes every man's cup out of his hand, drinks off the poison, and thus tastes or suffers the death which every man otherwise must have suffered (see A. Clarke, *in loc.*). —J. A. M.

Vers. 47—56.—*The submission of Jesus.* After the third time praying in Gethsemane, Jesus came to his slumbering disciples, and said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest" —the opportunity for watching is past. Note: Opportunities pass, never to return; therefore we should never fail to improve them in their passing. "Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners"—the hour of trial is come for which watchings should have prepared. "Arise, let us be going," not to run away from the crisis, but to meet it (cf. John xviii. 4). "Behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me. *And while he yet spake, lo, Judas,*" etc. Note here, and admire—

I. THE SUBMISSION OF JESUS TO JUDAS. 1. *He might have avoided him.* (1) He knew of his coming (see vers. 45, 46). Every particular of the tragedy was vividly presented to his prophetic spirit. (2) The Miracle-worker had not lost his resources.

On a former occasion, when hurried by an infuriated rabble to the brow of the hill at Nazareth, that they might throw him headlong, he knew how to pass through the midst of them (see Luke iv. 30). How he did this we are not informed—whether he shut their eyes or overawed them by the sense of his majesty. But Judas knew the fact, and was probably influenced by the recollection of it when he nervously said, "Hold him fast." Instead of avoiding the traitor: 2. *He endured his kiss.* (1) A kiss is the token of allegiance and friendship (see Ps. ii. 12). (2) With Judas the token of friendship was made the sign of treachery. The kiss of Judas came to be an expression for the greatest of all hypocrisies—the betrayal of innocence by simulated love. The "angel of light" seeks hellish ends in heavenly means. (3) By enduring that infamous kiss Jesus permitted the traitor to show himself up. God's permission is judicially given to the sinner to sin. "Do that for which thou art come." Sin is its own chastiser. 3. *He called him "friend," or "companion."* (1) Thus he identified himself as the Ahithophel of prophecy (cf. 2 Sam. xv. 12; Ps. xli. 9; lv. 12—14). (2) He was "one of the twelve." The vilest wretches lurk in the best company. (3) Once, probably, Judas had been as sincere a friend to Jesus as Ahithophel had been to David. The Heart-searcher would not have chosen him for a disciple and promoted him to the apostolate unless he had then been a true man. (4) But how fearfully had he fallen! A leader of the flock of Christ has become the leader of a mob of ruffians against his life. Apostates from religion become its bitterest foes. Julian and Judas are notable examples. (5) There is truth in the irony of the term "friend." The working out of the redemption and salvation of men was the great purpose cherished in the heart of Christ. Judas, therefore, unwittingly befriended him in furthering his sufferings. Jesus called Peter "Satan" for hindering him (see ch. xvi. 22, 23). God brings good out of the evil working of the wicked.

II. THE SUBMISSION OF JESUS TO THE RABBLE. 1. *He might have resisted them.* (1) With what authority did he drive the throng of sacrilegious traders from the temple (see ch. xxi. 12, 13)! (2) He was the same Miracle-worker still. At the utterance of the words, "I am he," they were so overpowered that "they went backward, and fell to the ground" (see John xviii. 6). They never could have approached him without his consent. The power that restored the ear of Malchus could not have been controlled by that of Malchus and his company. (3) He might have had "more than twelve legions of angels." Note: (*a*) The "innumerable company of angels" are marshalled into ranks. (*b*) The angels were to Elisha "chariots of fire and horses of fire," not only to secure him, but to consume his assailants (cf. 2 Kings i. 10—15; ii. 11; vi. 14—17; Ps. civ. 4). (*c*) If a single angel could destroy a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians at a stroke (2 Kings xix. 35), what might not "twelve legions" do? 2. *He forbade an appeal to the sword.* (1) Had he made such an appeal, there would have been a popular response. The people were disposed even forcibly to make Jesus their Warrior-King (see John vi. 15). They readily followed false Christs who relied upon the sword. Peter was in sympathy with his nation when he wielded the sword. (2) But Jesus rebuked the impetuosity of Peter. He struck without asking, "Shall we smite with the sword?" (see Luke xxii. 49). Peter did not intend evil, but intemperate zeal is often evil in its results. (3) He reproved him for appealing to the sword. (*a*) It was needless, for Christ could have received succour from his Father. God has no need of our sins to bring about his purposes. (*b*) It was dangerous, viz. both to himself and his fellow-disciples. For "he that takes the sword shall perish by the sword." (*c*) It evinced ignorance of the Scriptures. They teach that the way to glory is through suffering rather than through fighting. Peter would have the end without the means. (*d*) Peter's unsanctified zeal was another step toward his fall, by increasing his subsequent fear of detection. (4) To show that he did not wish to be defended by carnal weapons, the Lord healed the ear of Malchus (see Luke xxii. 51). The soldiers of Christ do not war after the flesh (see 2 Cor. x. 3, 4). 3. *Instead of resisting, he reasoned.* (1) "Are ye come out as against a robber, with swords and staves?" Judæa at this time was infested with thieves, and every one will lend a hand to stop a thief. (2) The "swords" were those of the "cohort" of the chiliarch, or "chief captain"—probably Roman soldiers from the Tower of Antonia (cf. ver. 45; John xviii. 12). The "slaves" were those of the creatures of the high priest. These classes were usually at variance; but, like Pilate and Herod,

they find a point of agreement in hostility to Christ. (3) Thus they treated as a robber him that came to "restore" that he "took not away" (see Ps. lxix. 4). He became a prisoner that he might set us at liberty. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (see John xviii. 8, 9). (4) "I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." How comes this change in your conduct? Is it not unreasonable and inconsistent? Why come clandestinely in the night? Who looks most like the criminal?

III. THE SUBMISSION OF JESUS TO GOD. 1. *For the vindication of his truth.* (1) "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Jesus carried the Law of God in his heart. (2) They were "a great multitude" that came to arrest him, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled which saith, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!" (Ps. iii. 1). (3) By being pursued as a thief, "he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12). This Scripture met a further accomplishment when he was afterwards crucified between two malefactors (see Mark xv. 27, 28). (4) He was shamefully deserted by his disciples. In their conduct they evinced (*a*) unfaithfulness, (*b*) unkindness, (*c*) ingratitude, (*d*) folly. For why should they through fear of death forsake the Fountain of life (see John vi. 67, 68)? But this desertion was to be a part of Messiah's suffering (cf. Job xix. 13; Ps. xxxviii. 11; Isa. lxiii. 3—5). (5) The Scripture must be fulfilled that Christ should be "led as a *lamb* to the slaughter" (Isa. liii. 7). Had he summoned the angels, he would not have been so led. Note: Nothing must be done against the fulfilment of the Scriptures. 2. *For the vindication of his goodness.* (1) The sword of the Lord was drawn against Christ (see Zech. xiii. 7). The *Great One* had to be smitten that the "little ones" might go free. (2) The Redeemer of mankind had afterwards to become the Intercessor for the salvation of believers. (3) He had to become the Example of the triumph of patience, of the victories of suffering. He accordingly denounced the human doctrine of victory by the sword, by asserting the converse, viz. "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." (4) History has given its verdict. The Jews who put our Lord to death by the sword of the Romans perished by the same Roman sword. The Romans who used the sword against Christ perished by the sword of the Goths. The doom of persecuting Churches and of persecutors also is pre-written here (see Rev. xiii. 10).

Reflect: Are there not still found among the disciples: 1. Those who betray Christ and his cause? 2. Who deny him and his people? 3. Who abandon him, his cause, his people, and his truth?—J. A. M.

Vers. 57—68.—*The demoralized council.* The tribunal before which Jesus was arraigned was composed of "all the chief priests," with the high priest at their head, and all the "elders and scribes." It was the Sanhedrin, by the Jews claimed to have originated in the time of Moses, and by learned critics acknowledged to have been at least as ancient as the time of Jonathan Maccabæus. Once a venerable judicial assembly, it had now degenerated into a cabal.

I. ITS COUNCILLORS ARE MURDERERS. 1. *They had beforehand plotted the death of Jesus.* (1) The faithfulness of his preaching had mortified their pride. The spirit of murder was in the hatred and resentment which they cherished toward him. (2) After the raising of Lazarus, they consulted together what they must do to the Miracle-worker, and Caiaphas gave forth his memorable decision. In advising assassination, he prophesied under an inspiration which he did not understand. His accomplices understood him only as he intended. "So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put Jesus to death" (see John xii. 45—53). "Man proposeth; God disposeth." (3) Fear from the popularity of Jesus alone prevented them from procuring his assassination without even the semblance of a trial (see Luke xx. 19; xxii. 2). How questionable is the virtue that is fostered by fear! (4) Judas knew his market. He knew where "blood-money" could be procured (see ch. xxvii. 3—8). Satan, in the councillors, was "glad" to "commune" with "Satan" in the traitor (see Luke xxii. 3—6). 2. *They assembled to carry their plot into effect.* (1) They first resolve to ruin Jesus, then seek out the means to do it. So notorious was this that it is recorded as an historic fact (cf. ver. 59; Acts vi. 11—13). (2) There is murder in their haste. The Jewish canons enjoin that "Capital causes should be

tried *in the day*, and punished *in the day*." But with indecent haste, in the same night that their treachery succeeded in seizing Jesus, the court is gathered. They were evidently waiting for the summons. And he is condemned in the night. It was "the hour" as well as "the power of darkness." (3) Note: That gate of the city looking toward Gethsemane was called "the sheep-gate," because the animals appointed for sacrifice were led that way. Admire the providence which ordained that through this gate also the very Lamb of God should be led to the slaughter. The Law prescribed that the victims for sacrifice should be led to the priest (see Lev. xviii. 5). Herein also is a prophecy. One evangelist records that Jesus was *first* led to Annas (see John xviii. 13). This was to honour Annas, and to gain time for the assembling of the council. God makes the subtlety of the devil in men to praise him.

II. THE WITNESSES ARE LIARS. 1. *They cannot give a consistent testimony.* (1) No man could be legally condemned upon the testimony of a single witness (see Deut. xvii. 6). The witnesses must also agree in their testimony. They must speak with "one mouth." The unsupported testimony of a single witness is stronger than the conflicting testimony of many. (2) The number of the witnesses against Jesus was sufficient. The retainers of the priests knew that "they sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death," and "many false witnesses" accordingly "came" (cf. vers. 59, 60; Ps. xxvii. 12; xxxv. 11; Mark xiv. 56). (3) But their testimony was conflicting. Suborned men are bound to say something for their hire. But "the legs of the lame are not equal." This would be evident under cross-examination from Joseph of Arimathæa; and possibly Nicodemus also was found to be a protestant (see Luke xxiii. 50, 51; John xix. 39). 2. *They fail to prove an offence against the Law.* (1) Blasphemy was an offence against the Law, punishable with death (see Lev. xxiv. 16). But what is blasphemy? To speak evil of God, or maliciously to rail against or deny his work. (2) The Jews had a traditional disposition to account it blasphemy to predict the destruction of the temple (cf. Jer. xxvi. 11, 12; Acts vi. 13, 14). The Pharisees also confounded their traditions with the Law. (3) By means of this tradition, then, they sought to fasten the crime of blasphemy upon Jesus. Two witnesses deposed, "This Man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." Here note: (*a*) They were in a strait when they had to go back to what had passed three years before (see Mark xiv. 58; John ii. 19). (*b*) This allegation was, in effect, a falsity; for it *suppressed* some words of Christ, with the action which explained them, and *added* words he had not spoken. False testimony lays hold on some basis of truth. Half-truths are often the most vicious lies. (*c*) In perverting the meaning of the words of Jesus, his enemies unconsciously bring about their fulfilment. 3. *The judges themselves became lying witnesses.* (1) Jesus had maintained a dignified silence while the other witnesses gave their evidence. It was too manifestly frivolous and malicious to require explanation or refutation. "There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence." (2) Caiaphas then sought to make Jesus a witness against himself (see ver. 62). Still he held his peace (see Ps. xxxviii. 12—14; Isa. liii. 7). The personal Word, like the written Word, declines to answer questions that are idle and insincere. (3) Unable to make the testimony matter for the charge of blasphemy, Caiaphas had to shift his ground. He now had recourse to adjuration. This was the refuge of rage at the rebuke of that silence which stung him to the quick. What a temper in which to make an appeal to the living God! (4) Jesus now at length responded. For (*a*) had he refused to answer when adjured, they would have accused him of contempt for the Name of God. Note: Persecutors take advantage of the consciences of good men. (*b*) He responded for an example to others of reverence for such a solemn form. (*c*) He answered because now it was no longer a question of admitting or denying a false accusation, but of admitting or denying a great truth—to confess whether he were the Christ or not (ver. 64). The "nevertheless" should rather be "moreover:" "Not only do I confess myself the Christ, but you yourselves will have to confess it when he who now appears before you as in weakness will be revealed in power" (see Rev. i. 7). (5) Then came the climax of rage when he was adjudged worthy of death for speaking blasphemy" (see vers. 65, 66).

III. THE JUDGMENT IS INIQUITOUS. 1. *It ignored the reasons of the claims of Jesus.* (1) The Jews expected their Messiah to be the Son of God. In so expecting they were

justified by prophecy (see Ps. ii. 7, 12). The terms of the adjuration acknowledged this. And they understood the title to express Divinity. To call himself the Son of God was, in their estimation, to make himself equal with God (see John x. 33). (2) Therefore, unless Jesus were Divine, he could not have been the Christ. Otherwise his claim to be "the Christ, the Son of God," would indeed have been a blasphemy. But he had vindicated his claim by infallible proofs. He verified in himself the prophecies concerning Messiah, and wrought many miracles, as his judges very well knew (see John xi. 47). (3) Before proceeding to condemn him, it was their duty to answer the argument from prophecy and miracle. But this they never attempted. Rage and violence were their substitutes for justice and truth. (4) And they aggravated their crime by delivering the Blessed One to the insolence of their myrmidons, who blindfolded him and smote him, and asked him to prophesy as to whose fist was lifted against him (cf. ver. 67; Isa. l. 5, 6; Luke xxii. 64). He well knew; but he refuses to prophesy when men close their ears against the truth. The wretches also spat in his face, which was a mark of the most profound contempt (see Numb. xii. 4; Job xvi. 10; xxx. 10; Isa. l. 6; Micah v. 1). 2. *It will be reviewed at another tribunal.* (1) "What contrasts are here! The Deliverer in bonds! The Judge of all attainted! The Prince of glory scorned! The Holy One condemned for sin! The Son of God accused of blasphemy! The Resurrection and the Life sentenced to die! The High Priest for ever condemned by the high priest for a year!" (Steir). (2) To the eternal confusion of the unrighteous council, God ordered it that our Lord should be condemned on the very evidence of his own innocence, purity, and truth. In accusing him of blasphemy they were the blasphemers. (3) They will yet have to answer before him for their injustice and cruelty. He will one day come with the clouds of heaven, as the Prophet Daniel has described him (cf. Dan. vii. 13, 14). The terrors of that judgment-day will be a sensible conviction to the most obstinate infidel.—J. A. M.

Vers. 69—75.—*Sin in sequence.* From the trial of Jesus before the council the evangelist turns to the trial of Peter's faith. How striking is the contrast! Jesus, forsaken of his friends, and unjustly condemned and cruelly treated by his enemies, betrays no sign of fear or resentment, while Peter, with his Master's exalted example before him, shrinks from the slightest glance of recognition. The history of Peter's fall remarkably illustrates the principle of sequence in sin. We are forcibly reminded—

I. THAT PRIDE COMETH BEFORE A FALL. 1. *Some men are constitutionally self-reliant.* Within proper limits, self-reliance is an admirable quality. (1) It conduces to nobleness. For it saves men from the meanness of hanging on to their fellows. (2) It inspires enterprise. Nothing can be accomplished that is not undertaken. The achievements of the strong are the astonishment of the weak. (3) It is an element of greatness. The weak will submit to the strong. The feeble will serve the mighty. Where self-reliance is strong, other things being equal, there you have a leader of men. 2. *But such are especially in danger of presumption.* (1) Self-assertion may be immoderate, ungenerous, and invidious. "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I;" "I will never be offended;" "Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (see vers. 33—35). (2) Excessive self-confidence leads to the neglect of prayer. Peter's sense of self-security blinded him to his need of Divine help. So he slept in the garden when he should have prayed. Even when exhorted by his Lord to pray, still he slept. (3) It leads to rashness in action. Peter's pride led him rashly to support his strong professions by volunteering the use of his sword. So was he as wanting in watchfulness as he was in prayer. He so looked *in* as to neglect to look *up* and look *around*. (4) After proving his weakness by his shameful flight, his presumption still carried him after his Master into the place of trial, "to see the end." But he "followed at a distance," fearful of being discovered. This dallying with his fears increased them. His case is a standing warning to Christ's disciples never without a call to run into dangers which they may not have strength to meet.

II. THAT SIN MAKES OCCASION FOR SINNING. 1. *One sin leads to another.* (1) Peter was found in questionable company. Having followed Jesus "afar off," he fell in with the "officers" of the high priest and of other enemies of his Master. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Bad company leads to bad deeds (see Ps. cxix. 115). He was now in the arena of temptation. (2) Here a maid came unto him,

saying, "Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilæan." Here was a noble opportunity for Peter to have shown zeal for the Truth suffering under insolence. But he missed it and disgraced himself. It is a disgrace to miss an opportunity of doing right. It leads to the further disgrace of doing wrong. (3) "He denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest." The strong man is thrown over by the breath of a maid. "A damsel," literally, *one damsel*. And probably wishing him no harm. But how great was the sin which sprang from so slight a cause! The publicity of this denial was an aggravation of the sin. (4) The temptation was slight so far as the girl's question went, but greater in regard to the bystanders. We all wield unconscious influence. They probably had no desire to imperil Peter. The careless ones of this world often do more harm or good to the saints than they imagine. 2. *The progress of sin is accelerating.* (1) In the first instance, we find Peter giving the simple emphatic denial, his words being equivalent to "What thou sayest is utterly false" (cf. Luke xxii. 57). In how few words may one commit a grievous sin (see ch. xii. 24; Acts v. 8)! Peter now went into the porch, or portico (ver. 71), doubtless to secure himself from further observation, being now also ashamed of his weakness, if not of his sin. For the enormity of sin is hidden from the conscience by fear and carnal policy. No man gains strength to resist greater by complying with lesser evils. (2) In the second instance, Peter added an oath to his denial. The damsel's pride being now stirred by having the lie turned upon her, she appears to have confided her mortification or indignation to "another maid," with whom she followed Peter into the portico: In his hearing this second maid said, "This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth," upon which a man of the company laid the accusation directly against him (cf. Mark xiv. 69; Luke xxii. 58). "And again he denied with an oath, I know not the Man." The liar, by the suspicion he naturally has, having forfeited his self-respect, that his testimony is not credited, is induced to swear. (3) In the third instance, Peter added cursing to swearing. Probably he had been addicted to swearing before he came under the influence of John the Baptist and of Christ. Old habits are readily revived. Between the second and third temptations an hour elapsed. But time spent without prayer brings no strength to the soul. The charge is now brought close home to him. It is generally preferred by "those that stood by," who marked his Galilæan accent. The rabbins say that the speech of the Galilæans was broad and rustic. Some say it inclined to the Samaritan and Syriac, and that they did not pronounce gutturals well, and changed *sh* into *th*. Better would it have been for Peter had he held his tongue. But the kinsman of Malchus increased his terror by calling to his remembrance his act in cutting off the ear (see John xviii. 26). His denial, therefore, becomes more vehement as the accusation proceeds. To curse is to imprecate Divine vengeance on himself if he spoke falsely, and the profanity of swearing added to this cursing is the language of passion and of the enemies of Christ. "None but the devil's sayings need the devil's proofs" (Henry). (4) An apostle fallen! How great that fall! Lucifer in hell! In the fall of Peter we are admitted to a view of our own tendency to fall, and consequent need of watchfulness and prayer.

III. THAT THE SEQUEL IS DESTRUCTION OR REPENTANCE. 1. *In the case of Judas it was destruction* (see succeeding homily). 2. *In the case of Peter it was repentance.* (1) When he had the third time denied his Lord, "straightway the cock crew." During the long hours in which he waited in the palace, his memory and conscience slept until startled by "the cock's shrill clarion." The words of Christ now rushed into his mind and pierced his heart, and made the crowing of the cock a very John the Baptist to the sinner. Note: The mercy of Christ comes sometimes at the cock-crowing. Since Peter fell through fear of a maid, let us never think contemptibly of the feeblest tempter. Since he rose through the crowing of a cock, let us never think contemptibly of the humblest means of grace. (2) When the cock crew, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (see Luke xxii. 61). Note here the kindness of Christ. Being in bonds, he could not, without a miracle, have gone to speak with Peter. Had he called to him, the disciple would have been discovered to the malice of his tempters. The glance is sufficient. Peter's denial comes in as a part of Christ's sufferings. Nothing more deeply grieves a genuine penitent than the reflection that he has grieved his Lord. (3) Peter "went out," viz. from the scene of his temptation and humiliation, deeply sorrowing that he had ever entered into it, and that he might "mourn

apart" (cf. Zech. xii. 11, 12). (4) He wept bitter tears of repentance for his presumptuous sin. Mark says, "When he thought thereon he wept" (Mark xiv. 72). Those who have sinned sweetly must weep bitterly, if not in penitence, in despair; for sin is bitterness itself. The more bitter the tears of repentance, the sweeter the delight of the regenerated life. His grief and weeping were of long duration (see Mark xvi. 7). Tradition says he never heard a cock crow but it set him weeping. (5) Peter afterwards confessed Christ openly, and made all the house of Israel know what he thought of him. He confessed him openly both in life and death with watchfulness and prayer.—J. A. M.

Ver. 4.—*The final devices of our Lord's foes.* It appears that the priest-party, under the lead of Caiaphas, had resolved to secure our Lord's death in a council held immediately after the raising of Lazarus (John xi. 47—53). But it proved to be a much more difficult matter than they imagined, and weeks passed and found them no nearer to the accomplishment of their purposes. At last they were set upon securing their end by assassination. They tried to devise some way of "taking him by subtlety and killing him."

I. WHY WERE THEY SET UPON NEW DEVICES? Because not only had all their previous devices failed, but they had failed in such ways as had humiliated and angered those who devised them. They could not get an accusation, they could not secure his Person, they would not leave him alone. 1. They tried open arrest; their officers were so impressed by him that they dare not touch him. 2. They tried to make him say such things as they could twist into accusations; they only succeeded in entangling themselves, and humiliating themselves before the people. 3. They had been made the object of our Lord's fiercest denunciations, and this they felt to be so intolerable that they resolved not to lose an hour in seeking their revenge. When men are *humbled*, they give up their self-willed ways. When men are *humiliated*, they push their wilful ways through to the bitter end.

II. WHAT DIFFICULTIES HAD THEY YET TO OVERCOME? Two special ones. 1. The good will of the people, and especially of the visitors to the feast. If they attempted public arrest, there would be a rescue that would mean a riot, and it would bring down on them the vigorous hand of the Romans, and give Pilate another chance of showing his hatred. 2. The approaching feast-time. It was hardly possible to get a good plan arranged *before* the feast; nothing could be done *during* the feast; and Jesus would slip away from the city *after* the feast. We can imagine their delight when the difficulties were got over by the treachery of Judas.

III. WHAT REVELATIONS ARE MADE BY THESE DEVICES? They show up both the times and the people. 1. They reveal the estimate formed of our Lord by the people. They always delight in a man who can fearlessly resist official scheming and wickedness. 2. They reveal the prejudiced, malicious, and unreasonable character of the priest-party. Personal feeling was allowed to carry away judgment. 3. They reveal the character of Christ. He could not be dealt with as a criminal.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The law of waste.* "To what purpose is this waste?" It is interesting to notice that St. Matthew speaks generally, and says, "his disciples;" St. Mark speaks carefully, and says, "some had indignation;" St. John speaks precisely, and singles out the spokesman—it was the man with the narrow, covetous soul, it was Judas Iscariot. His indignation, partly real and partly affected, was perhaps honestly shared by some of the disciples, especially by those of the third or practical group. To see the point and interest of the woman's act—and we understand the woman to have been Mary, the sister of Lazarus—we must keep in mind the Eastern love of perfumes, and the feast-customs that relate to perfumes. Easterns set value on scents that seem to us too strong. Women keep special scents as treasures. A present of perfumes is a mark of reverence and honour. The present sent by Cambyses to the Prince of Ethiopia consisted of "a purple vest, a gold chain for the neck, bracelets, an alabaster box of perfume, and a cask of palm wine." To sprinkle the apartments, and the person of a guest, with rose-water and other aromatics is still a mark of respectful attention. Point out that Mary's perfume would really have been wasted, if it had been *kept* after so good a use for it came into view. For there is a waste in keeping idle and useless,

as well as a waste in spending, and losing by spending. Whether it is or it is not waste to *give* depends on—

I. THE OBJECT THE GIVER HAS IN VIEW. Mary had a most distinct object before her. It was one that glorified her act. She wanted to find suitable expression for her thankfulness to him who had brought back her brother from the dead; and for her personal love to him who had been to her the dearest and noblest of friends. Words would not suffice her; she wanted something that had *self-surrender* in it. Her treasured perfume was not wasted when it did so much.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH THE RECEIVER TAKES THE GIFT. Jesus did not think it waste. To him it seemed richer with meanings and affections than even Mary thought it was. She had, unconsciously, fitted to his mood of feeling. It could be no waste that comforted Jesus in that sad hour.

III. THE POINT OF VIEW FROM WHICH THE OBJECTOR CRITICIZED THE GIFT. He thought the only poor folk were those persons who had no money. Christ was "poor" in a far higher sense. The gift was given to the poor.

Impress: 1. Mary gave up what she prized. 2. Mary gave up without reserve. 3. Mary gave up in order to find expression for thankful love.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The crime of Judas.* "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" The sin of treachery is almost lost sight of in view of the exceeding *meanness* of his trying to make a little money out of the treachery. It is this that reveals the man, and shows the covetousness which, for Judas, was the worm at the root. Loyalties, reverences, and friendships were nothing to him if only he could make a little money. "The history of his base and appalling lapse is perfectly intelligible. He had joined the discipleship of Jesus, as the other apostles also did, in the hope of taking part in a political revolution, and occupying a distinguished place in an earthly kingdom. It is inconceivable that Jesus would have made him an apostle if there had not at one time been some noble enthusiasm in him, and some attachment to himself. That he was a man of superior energy and administrative ability may be inferred from the fact that he was made the purse-bearer of the apostolic company. But there was a canker at the root of his character, which gradually absorbed all that was excellent in him, and became a tyrannical passion. It was the love of money. He fed it on the petty peculations which he practised on the small sums which Jesus received from his friends for the necessities of his company, and for distribution among the poor with whom he was daily mingling. He hoped to give it unrestrained gratification when he became chancellor of the exchequer in the new kingdom" (Stalker). Illustrate by the tiny mountain spring swelling into the flooding river; or by the taint in the blood producing a spot on the skin, this growing into a boil, then developing into a virulent, deadly carbuncle.

I. THE CRIME OF JUDAS IN ITS FAINT BEGINNINGS. Self was more interesting than Christ. To *get* gave more pleasure than to *serve*. This was the trickle through the reservoir-bank which would grow into a flood. Safety lies in putting Christ *first*, and counting serving him *best*. The root-wrong was interest in the mere *possession* of money. To have money for use is healthy; to have money to possess breeds moral disease.

II. THE CRIME OF JUDAS IN ITS STAGES OF GROWTH. 1. It fashioned unreasonable expectations. 2. It was annoyed by delay in their realization. 3. It was fostered by acts of petty unfaithfulness. 4. It made personal advantage appear to be the thing of supreme value.

III. THE CRIME OF JUDAS PROVING TO BE FOLLY AS WELL AS CRIME. For it was the ruin of Judas, and the blasting of all the schemes on which he had set his heart. Covetous Judas ruined himself.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Asking the Lord what we should ask ourselves.* Phillips Brooks sees in the questioning of our Lord by his disciples a state of mind and feeling of which he can approve. "Each man's anxiety seems to be turned, not towards his brother, but towards *himself*, and you hear them asking, one after another, 'Lord, is it I?' Peter, Bartholomew, John, James, Thomas, each speaks for himself, and the quick questions come pouring in out of their simple hearts, 'Lord, is it I?' Certainly there is some-

thing that is strange in this. These men were genuine. There could not be any affectation in their question. A real, live fear came over them at Jesus' prophecy. And it was a good sign, no doubt, that the first thought of each of them was about the possibility of his own sins." This, however, is what lies on the surface; closer study of character reveals something that is not so commendable. The turning of these disciples to question their Lord concerning themselves illustrates the constant disposition of men to shift their responsibilities, and especially the responsibility of searching into and duly appraising themselves. No doubt, self-examination is difficult work, unpleasant, humbling work; but if a man is to be a man, he will have to do it. Over the Greek temple they wrote, "Know thyself." It is man's hardest, it is man's noblest, work.

I. REFERENCE TO CHRIST OF WHAT WE CANNOT DECIDE OURSELVES IS GOOD. It would have been all right if these disciples had done a little self-examination first, and then, bewildered and uncertain, had sought their Lord's help. Instead of that, impulsively, inconsiderately, exciting one another, hardly knowing what they said, they all said the same thing at once.

II. CHRIST WILL BE SURE TO THROW SUCH QUESTIONERS AS THESE BACK ON THEMSELVES. There was no answer for each one. There was a general answer for all. "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish." But they all did that. That told nothing save to a very keen observer, who might notice that Judas's hand went into the dish at the same moment as the hand of Jesus. Jesus, in effect, bade them ask themselves the question which they were so impulsively asking him.

III. DISCIPLES MIGHT HAVE ANSWERED THEIR QUESTIONS THEMSELVES. Suppose they had begun to examine their own motives, what would the eleven have found? and what would Judas have found? The eleven might have gained satisfaction; for *treachery* was no natural fruitage of the relations in which *they* were standing with their Master.—R. T.

Ver. 28.—*Blood for remission.* "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The word "covenant," not "testament," is almost everywhere the best equivalent for the Greek word. It is manifest that our Lord was using a figure of speech. The liquid in the cup was wine, not blood; our Lord made it represent his blood—the outpouring of his life—which was to be the seal of the new covenant. This is a subject whose treatment must depend on the theological school to which the preacher belongs. The suggestion now made is not intended to fit to any theories, nor is it antagonistic to any other views. It is but one of the sides of a many-sided subject; but it is possible that it may prove suggestive and helpful to some minds. The incident recalled by our Lord's figure is evidently that recorded in Exod. xxiv. 4—8. Moses sealed the covenant between God and the people by sprinkling the representative pillars and altar with blood, which involved the life of a victim. So Jesus undertook to negotiate between God and the people, in order to secure the remission of sins. He conducted that negotiation; he brought it to a satisfactory conclusion; he secured the acceptance of the covenant; he sealed it, signed it, in the name of God and in the name of man, with his own blood. Jesus was the Mediator of the new covenant, as Moses had been mediator of the old. Moses could not seal his covenant with his own blood. He sealed it with the representative blood of living creatures. Jesus could, and did, seal his covenant with his own blood. He could, for God and for man, pledge life upon faithfulness.

I. COVENANTS BETWEEN GOD AND MAN ARE MADE THROUGH MEDIATORS. See cases —Noah, Abraham, Moses. So Christ mediated a covenant.

II. COVENANTS INVOLVE THE TAKING OF MUTUAL PLEDGES. In the new covenant, the pledge on God's side is forgiveness and life; on man's side, the obedience of faith. Christ took the pledges, both in the name of God and in the name of man.

III. BLOOD WAS THE PROPER SEAL OF THE COVENANT. It meant the dedication of the life to faithful keeping of the covenant. Christ stamps the seal in his bloodshedding; his yielding life in keeping covenant.

IV. DRINKING THE WINE IS SYMBOLICAL RENEWAL OF COVENANT. This is needed only on man's side. We take, ever afresh, the solemn pledge that we will stand to the covenant Christ has made in our name.—R. T.

Ver. 34.—*Self-knowledge and Divine knowledge.* Jesus knew Peter better than he knew himself. Any observant man would have told wherein lay peril for such an impulsive, hastily outspoken, warm-hearted man. Our Lord divinely "knew what was in man," and foresaw the coming danger. We are all keen enough at estimating the character of others, but we cannot do it with any certainty, because we can only make our experience of ourselves our standard of judgment. And oftentimes those who are most ready to judge others are the least efficient in appraising themselves, and so their standard is incomplete and unworthy. Divine knowledge is perfect. So the true-hearted can say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my ways."

I. SELF-KNOWLEDGE CAN NEVER BE GOT AT IMPULSIVELY. Impulse can only express a passing mood or feeling; and that may have its explanation in temporary circumstances and excitements. A man acting or speaking on impulse *may* act or speak in strict harmony with his real self. He may; but it is equally true that he may act or speak otherwise than he would if he could quietly resolve. Impulse is good, but it is perilous. Distinguish from the power of quick judgment and decision. Impulses tell the *hour*; they seldom tell the real *man*.

II. SELF-KNOWLEDGE CALLS FOR CAREFUL THOUGHT. We find great differences in characters. Some are easy to read, they belong to recognized classes. Some are very difficult to read; we must watch them a long time; their individuality is more marked than their classification. And men find similar variety in themselves. Some may read themselves easily. St. Peter might, if he had tried. Some never feel quite sure that they know themselves.

III. SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS ALWAYS SUBJECT TO DIVINE CORRECTIONS. The apostle thought he knew himself when he made his stout assertion. But he came into Divine correction. This is often given us by the discipline of disappointment and failure; and often by the providence which offers us work for which we could not have thought that we were fitted.

IV. DIVINE CORRECTIONS SHOULD LEAD TO A RE-READING OF OURSELVES IN THE NEW LIGHT. If we fail to do this, we shall have to go on with St. Peter, and learn to know ourselves through a bitter experience.—R. T.

Ver. 36.—*Truths learnt in Gethsemane.* A little garden on the side of the Mount of Olives is now shown to travellers as the garden of Gethsemane. It is enclosed with a wall. A few olive trees remain, possibly the descendants of those that covered Jesus with their shade. This spot is, however, too close to the city, and too near a main road, to have provided our Lord with the seclusion that he sought. Dr. Thomson tells of gardens a little further off, less than a mile from the city, and says that he found one, in a sheltered vale, suiting exactly our Lord's purpose, only a few hundred yards north-east of the exhibited site. Three things are impressed on us by the scene in Gethsemane.

I. WE GAIN IDEAS CONCERNING OUR LORD'S HUMANITY. It was Divine-humanity, so we may expect to find some unusual elements. But it was veritable humanity, so we may expect to find more likeness to us than diversity from us. Brotherliness of feeling and experience is seen: 1. In the restlessness of Christ's spirit. We know what it is to be restless when we have forebodings of coming calamity. 2. In our Lord's desire to be alone, and yet longing to have some one to be present and sympathize with him. 3. In our Lord's resistance of anticipated physical sufferings. 4. In his gentle way of dealing with disciples who were weak rather than wilful, and therefore failed to watch. Gethsemane helps us to feel "he was in all points tempted like as we are."

II. WE GAIN IDEAS CONCERNING THE CAUSE OF OUR LORD'S SUFFERINGS. No doubt he felt, as no one ever felt before, (1) the separation between God and man; and (2) the hatefulness of sin. And he estimated, as no one else ever has, the awful curse and penalty which wilful sin has brought upon humanity. The woe he had so soon to pass through seemed to reveal the penalty to him. This made the burden of deliverance so heavy—made it involve so much. It all crowded on his mind and heart, and forced the earnest cry and prayer.

III. WE GAIN IDEAS CONCERNING OUR LORD'S WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER. The soul-

offering—the will-offering for sin—was made in Gethsemane. God required the full sacrifice of a completed, tested obedience. Calvary completed the testing. Christ was a perfect offering. He freely, willingly, gave himself unto God.—R. T.

Ver. 39.—*Gethsemane a representative conflict.* Wherein does the scene of Calvary differ from the scene of Gethsemane? It would be easy to point out the sameness, the essential oneness, of the two scenes. But there is a difference. It lies in this: At Calvary the physical suffering is prominent. Our thought is sympathizingly occupied with our Lord's bodily agonies, and bleeding, breaking heart. At Gethsemane the physical is subordinate, the mental and spiritual are prominent; we are in the presence of an awful soul-struggle. Life is everywhere a conflict. Earth is a great battle-field. What does it all mean? Conflict in the heart. Conflict in the home. Conflict in the nation. Conflict everywhere. If we get light on the mystery anywhere, we get it in the garden of Gethsemane, where the Son of man is seen in bitter, almost overwhelming conflict.

I. THE CONFLICT OF LIFE IS REALLY A CONFLICT OF WILLS. God is the supreme will; and his will ought to be supreme with his creatures. But to man has been entrusted a limited free-will. That free-will man has exercised until it has become masterful, and is constantly setting itself against God's will. Bodily conditions, the slavery of the senses, the attractions of the seen and temporal, all help to the strengthening of man's will, man's wilfulness, so that the fight sometimes becomes severe. Our Lord, in taking on himself our human nature, took on him our sense-conditioned human will. And this in Gethsemane tried a wrestling with the will of God.

II. THE TRIUMPH IN THE CONFLICT OF LIFE IS YIELDING OUR WILL TO GOD'S WILL. This is the triumph of Gethsemane. Our Lord did not want the Divine will to be altered. He wanted to gain the full surrender of his whole nature—body, mind, soul—to the acceptance of the will. Man never gives up his will save as the issue of a fierce struggle. What force can renew and strengthen man's will so that it shall accept God's will, and make it his? 1. The truth as it is in Jesus. 2. The work wrought through for us by Jesus. 3. The grace won for us and given to us by Jesus. 4. The actual present power exerted on us by Jesus. 5. The constrainings of the love of Jesus. Christ came to make the will of God infinitely attractive to us. He is the gracious Persuader of the human will.—R. T.

Ver. 41.—*The recognition of good intentions.* "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Our Lord dealt very tenderly with these disciples. No reproachful word passed his lips. He was considerate of the influence which bodily frailty can exert upon the will; and did not immediately take up the idea that the will had swerved. "The priests on duty in the temple were expected to keep awake all night, and were severely punished if the temple-captain found them asleep. Peter and James and John could not watch for one-tenth part of that time, yet their Lord upbraids them very gently, and ascribes their seeming indifference to physical exhaustion." When God refused to permit David to build his temple, he graciously recognized his good intention: "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." And yet we have a familiar proverb showing the uselessness of "good intentions:" "Hell is paved with good intentions." On what conditions, then, can our intentions be recognized and accepted? We can ourselves see that an intention may be sometimes right and sometimes wrong.

I. WHEN AN INTENTION IS A MERE SENTIMENT, IT IS WRONG. It need not be wrong as a sentiment; it is wrong if it is treated as an intention, and its acceptance is expected as such. It is a mere sentiment when there is (1) no resolve of will in relation to it; and (2) when there is no watching for opportunity of carrying it out. Our intentions are revealed as mere sentiments whenever we let the chance of fulfilling them pass. This we are constantly doing, and this fact has created the proverb.

II. WHEN AN INTENTION IS A REAL PURPOSE, IT IS RIGHT. Then it is thoughtfully, not impulsively, formed. Due account is taken of circumstances and abilities. Fitting occasion is watched for, and energy is shown in overcoming difficulties.

III. AN INTENTION IS NOT MADE WRONG BY BEING HINDERED IN EXECUTION. People often mistake by assuming that failure shows our purpose to have been wrong.

But there are other things to take into account beside our intentions. We can always have this assurance, God knows whether we *would* have done what we intended if we *could*.—R. T.

Ver. 52.—*The place for the sword.* "Put up again thy sword into his place." We need not suppose that our Lord intended to give any general directions concerning the use of the sword. The question of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of warfare cannot even be connected with our Lord's expression to St. Peter. Our Lord's words strictly fit the occasion. "Resistance at that time would have involved certain destruction. More than that, it would have been fighting, not for God, but against him, because against the fulfilment of his purpose." It is rather strange to find St. Peter with a sword. No doubt he had anticipated a conflict, and therefore provided the weapon. It is not likely that he knew how to use the sword, and he evidently slashed with it very dangerously.

I. THE SHEATH IS NOT ALWAYS THE PLACE FOR THE SWORD. We may wish that it could be kept there, but while human nature is what it is; while society finds it needful to guard itself against itself; and while nations will press claims against other nations, the sword can neither be kept in its sheath nor turned into a ploughshare. We can see three types of persons who must still, on occasion, take the sword out of its sheath. 1. The executioner, who carries out the decisions of the law in relation to criminals, disturbers of the public peace, who have been fairly tried and honourably condemned. 2. The vindicator, who must take the sword out of its sheath to avenge public wrongs, ill treatment of ambassadors, etc., as lately at Manipur. 3. The defender, who meets the foe who would rifle his home or imperil his nation's liberty.

II. THE SHEATH IS ALWAYS THE PLACE FOR THE CHRISTIAN SWORD. The "weapons of our warfare are not carnal." We triumph by submission, not by resistance. "In whatever other cause it may be lawful to use carnal weapons, it is not wise or right to draw the sword for Christ and his truth" (Plumptre). Christ's law is "Resist not evil." Christianity has found a strange, but a triumphant, method of dealing with evil. It lets it do its worst. This was our Lord's way. He yielded, gave himself up, endured, let evil show itself fully; and the consequence is, the whole world knows how utterly bad and base evil is.—R. T.

Ver. 70.—*Peter's time of strain.* "But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest." The nature of Peter's sin has been so fully dealt with that we may safely venture to inquire what can be said on behalf of him, and in mitigation of his very grievous fault. It is not wise to say harsh and inconsiderate things concerning our erring brethren. It is well to remember the counsel, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." No temptation took Peter but such as is "common to men." Even a Cranmer repeats his story in these latter times. We do not excuse Peter's sin when we try kindly to estimate the time of strain through which he passed. Every man has such a testing-time put somewhere into his life. Sometimes it comes in the opening manhood, but perhaps it is more usually reserved for the advanced middle life, as we see in the cases of Abraham and of David. In some way the life-principle is proved, and it is seen whether the will has become dissociated from the principle professed, so that the principle is only weak sentiment that can stand no strain. On behalf of Peter, it may be urged—

I. THAT HE WAS PHYSICALLY OVERWROUGHT. Long hours of watching and anxiety must have wearied him out; and that sleep in the garden was not refreshing. Body prepared a way for temptation.

II. THAT HE WAS DOING A VERY VENTURESOME THING. Making his way actually into the court of the palace, and among the high priest's guard and servants. It was a noble thing to do, but it was a very perilous one. He did not know whether the scheme against the Master included the servants; but he risked the danger because of his longing to see what became of the Lord he loved. No doubt he thought that showing a bold front was the best way to escape observation. He would have managed well if it had not been for his Galilæan brogue.

III. THAT HE WAS DISAPPOINTED IN HIS HOPES CONCERNING JESUS. He had thought that an earthly kingdom was to be set up; the arrest of Jesus dashed that

hope to pieces for ever. He was in the hands of his foes. This did not affect Peter's personal feeling toward Christ, but it did suggest that he had better not profess open connection with him.

1. There is a test-time for every man. 2. It is a self-revelation. 3. It is a culture. 4. The test-time is precisely relative to every man. 5. The relativity is the thing to discover.—R. T.

Ver. 75.—*Quick penitence revealing character.* St. Peter had become entangled through making one false step. He had never anticipated what happened. He began with half a lie, which he excused as merely a putting aside of uncomfortable and even perilous questions. But the "beginning of evil is as the letting out of water." Soon the tempter plunged poor Peter over head and neck in evasions, lyings, cursings, and swearings. Then came the moment when Jesus was passing from the council-chamber, and as he passed he turned, and gave Peter a *look*, only a look, but we can imagine the wealth of pitying that was in the look. It went right home; it recalled warning words; it revealed, as by a lightning flash, the darkness into which Peter had fallen; and he rushed out of the place, and could not restrain the tears that told of bitterest shame and humiliation. What does this penitence tell concerning Peter?

I. His sensitiveness. When we see how quickly he responded to Christ's "look," we begin to understand how he came to respond so readily to the peril which the maid's question brought him. He was too sensitive; he responded too soon; he was always in danger of speaking and acting before he had time to criticize his own impressions. There are many among us like him. They feel too soon. They respond too quickly. And they respond to evil suggestion and to calamity as readily as to good and success. We call it highly nervous organization.

II. His affectionateness. We must keep in mind how truly he was attached to his Lord; and how *open* that attachment made him to all influences exerted on him by Christ. It was his safeguard in that sad time, that he had personal love to Christ. That disposition often brings men round right again after they have gone astray. Fathers and mothers know the anchor-hold that a child's affectionate disposition gives to them.

But there is a gushing and impulsive penitence that is not good. Sometimes there is too easy confession of sin—confession before the really humbling sense of sin is felt. Easy penitence is little more than regret; and it is usually very gushing in expression. Easy penitence has little force on the moral nature. Penitence needs to be made deep and searching by the help of serious thinking.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Jesus brought to Pilate.* (Mark xv. 1; Luke xxii. 66; xxiii. 1; John xviii. 28.)

Ver. 1.—When the morning was come. This is the early morning of Good Friday, the 14th of Nisan. If the rulers had had special regard to legality, they could not have condemned Christ to death at night, as they had done at the late informal assembly; but their respect for conventional rules was overborne by passion and hatred. They had decreed his death by general consent, and then retired for a few hours' necessary rest. Now they again met together, still in the palace of Caiaphas (John xviii. 28), in order to complete their evil work, to endorse the previous sentence, and, under some pretence, hand their Victim over to the Roman governor, who alone could execute their murderous purpose. The particle δὲ (*πρωΐας δὲ γενομένης*), omitted by the Authorized Version, takes us back to the conclusion of the council (ch. xxvi. 66), the account of its further proceedings being interrupted by the episode of Peter. **All the chief priests and elders of the people.** It was a large assembly of the Sanhedrin, many members, doubtless, taking part in these proceedings, now that the capital sentence was past, who would not have deliberately planned a judicial murder. Such was the course of Jewish casuistry. **To (ὥστε) put him to death.** The council had merely to determine how to formulate such a political charge against Jesus as would compel the Romans to punish the offender with death. They were determined that he should die by an ignominious and cursed death, that his pretensions, as being

sent by God, might be disposed of for ever. Hence arose the persistent cry, "Crucify him!" (vers. 22, 23). The Jewish view of crucifixion is seen in Deut. xxi. 23 and Gal. iii. 13. They possibly feared some outbreak if they delayed the execution, and kept him prisoner till the conclusion of the feast.

Ver. 2.—**When they had bound him.** With his hands tied by a rope behind his back. This was the treatment inflicted on condemned malefactors. During the actual official proceedings it was customary to release the accused person from bonds; hence this new binding was necessary. What passed in the council before this indignity was inflicted is, perhaps, told by St. Luke: the Sanhedrists satisfied themselves that they had a case against Jesus sufficient for their purpose, and they proceeded in a body to lay it before the governor. **Pontius Pilate the governor** (*τῷ ἡγεμόνι*). Some good manuscripts omit "Pontius," as in Mark and Luke; but there seems to be no doubt that he bore this *nomen gentilicium* (see *e.g.* Tacitus, 'Ann.,' xv. 44), which connected him with the Samnite *gens* of the Pontii. He was the sixth Roman Procurator of Judæa, and his title in Greek was *ἐπίτροπος* rather than *ἡγεμών*, which was a more general term for a commander or chief possessing more extensive powers. He held the office under the Præfect of Syria for ten years, at the end of which time he was removed for cruelty and extortion, and banished to Vienne, in Gaul, where he put an end to his own life. The turbulence and national animosity of the Jews had rendered it necessary to invest the procurator with the power of life and death, which he used in the most unscrupulous manner, so that he was universally hated and feared. The quarters of the Roman governor were called the Prætorium, and to this Christ was led. Pilate usually resided at Cæsarea, but came to Jerusalem at the great festival, to be ready to quell any fanatical outbreak that might occur. So nowadays the Turks keep a body of troops in the same city to preserve the peace between Christian worshippers at Easter (!). Whether Pilate occupied the barracks at the fortress Antonia, or the magnificent palace of Herod, situated at the north-west angle of the upper city, is uncertain; but as we know that the Roman procurators did reside in Herod's palace, and as on this occasion Pilate was accompanied by his wife (ver. 19), it is most probable that he took up his abode in the latter, and that Jesus was brought before him there. Herod had a house of his own on the east of Zion, opposite the castle, which he seems to have occupied more often than his father's palace, thus leaving the latter at the pleasure of the Roman governors. Assuming this to be the case, Dr. Edersheim writes, "From the slope of the eastern angle, opposite the temple mount, where the palace of Caiaphas stood, up the narrow streets of the upper city, the melancholy procession wound to the portals of the grand palace of Herod. It is recorded that they who brought him would not themselves enter the portals of the palace, 'that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover'" ('Life and Times of Jesus,' ii. 565).

Vers. 3—10.—*Remorse and suicide of Judas, and the use made of the blood-money.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew; cf. Acts i. 18, 19.)

Ver. 3.—**Then.** This transaction took place either when Jesus was being conducted to the Prætorium, or during the interview with Herod (Luke xxiii. 7—11). A great number of the Sanhedrists had now withdrawn to the temple, and were sitting in conclave there. **When he saw that he was condemned.** He evidently had not contemplated the full consequences of his crime; he never expected that the Jewish rulers would proceed to such extremities. It is probable that, in his lust for gain and his loss of love for his Master, he had thought of nothing but his own sordid interests, and now was appalled at the share which he had had in bringing to pass this awful result. The excuse made in modern days for Judas, that he wished only to force our Lord to exert his Divine power, and to declare himself Messiah, is refuted by one out of many considerations (see on ch. xxvi. 14). His remorse at this moment has to be accounted for. If he still believed in Christ's Divine commission, he would not have despaired of a happy result even after his condemnation, nay, even when he was hanging on the cross. Christ's power to deliver himself and to assume his Messianic position remained unimpaired by these seemingly adverse circumstances, and a believer would have waited for the end before he surrendered all hope. Judas's character is not bettered by considering that he did evil that good might come, or that he was led to his base course by the hope that his worldly interests would be improved by the establishment of Messiah's temporal kingdom. That he had now any desire or ambition for a place in a spiritual kingdom cannot be conceived, for he had evidently lost all faith in Jesus, and followed him only for the most sordid motives. **Repented himself** (*μεταμεληθείς*). This word (differing from *μετανοέω*, which expresses change of heart) denotes only a change of feeling, a desire that what has been done could be undone; this is not repentance

in the Scripture sense; it springs not from love of God, it has not that character which calls for pardon. "Mark," says St. Chrysostom, "when it is that he feels remorse. When his sin was completed, and had received an accomplishment. For the devil is like this; he suffers not those who are careless to see the evil before this, lest he whom he has taken should repent. At least, when Jesus was saying so many things, he was not influenced, but when his offence was completed, then repentance came upon him, and not then profitably." Only now did he fully realize what he had done; in the light of his crime his conscience awoke and confounded him with vehement reproaches; the object for which he had sinned seemed utterly unworthy and base; its attraction vanished when no longer pursued. **Brought again** (*returned*) **the thirty pieces of silver.** He had received the whole price for which he had bargained, but he could not retain the money now; it was a silent witness which he could not endure. He may have thought that he would throw away the guilt of his crime as he deprived himself of its wages, or that he could repair its consequences by this tardy restitution.

Ver. 4.—**I have sinned.** He confesses his sin, indeed, yet not to God, but to the partners and instigators of his crime, and this, not with godly sorrow, but in self-disgust and vexation of spirit that could not be repressed. His was the sorrow that worketh death (2 Cor. vii. 10). **In that I have betrayed [the] innocent blood** (*αἷμα ἀθῷον*, or, according to some manuscripts, *αἷμα δίκαιον*, but in either case without the article). By speaking of "blood," he showed that he knew the murder was certain. Judas seems to have had no faith in Christ's Divinity, but he had perfect assurance of his holiness and innocence, and felt, and endeavoured to make the rulers feel, that an iniquitous sentence had been passed, and that a guiltless person was condemned to death. This consideration added to the bitterness of his regret. But he obtained no comfort from the hardened and unfeeling priests. They had gotten what they had desired. The question of Christ's moral guilt or innocence was nothing to them; equally indifferent to them was the fierce remorse of Judas. **What is that to us?** *Τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς;* **See thou to that** (*σὺ ὄψει, tu videris*, equivalent to "that is your concern," as in ver. 24). A more unfeeling, nay, fiendish answer could not have been given. It threw the wretched man back on himself, left him alone with his remorse, the blackness of his night unrelieved by any ray of human sympathy. In their own obduracy and impenitence they scorn the weakness of their miserable tool. As Bengel well moralizes, "Impii in facto consortes, post factum deserunt; pii, in facto non consortes, postea medentur." To sympathize with repentance is the duty and the privilege of the Christian; to deride and scoff at the returning sinner is devilish. It is profitable to contrast the sincere repentance of Peter after his fall with the remorse of the despairing Judas.

Ver. 5.—**He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple** (*ἐν τῷ ναῷ, in the sanctuary*, or, as good manuscripts read, *εἰς τὸν ναόν, into the sanctuary*). The priests were in the priests' court (which would be included in the term *ναός*), separated by a stone partition from the court of the Gentiles. Into the latter area Judas had pressed; and, hurrying to the wall of division, he flung the cursed shekels with all his force into the inner place, as if to rescind the iniquitous contract and to cast away its pollution. **He departed.** He rushed away from the temple and the city into solitude, down into and across the valley of Hinnom, up the steep sides of the overhanging mountain—anywhere to escape human eyes, and, if it might be, to flee from himself. Vain endeavour! The memory of his useless crime haunts him; he has no hope in earth or heaven; life under this burden is no longer supportable. **Went and hanged himself** (*ἀπήγξατο, he strangled himself; laqueo se suspendit*, Vulgate). He mounted some precipitous rock, and unwinding the girdle (for it was unnecessary to find and take a rope with him) which he wore, and in which he had doubtless carried the pieces of silver, fastened it round his neck, and securing it to some tree or projecting stone, flung himself from the height. The horrible result is told by St. Peter in his first address to the disciples (Acts i. 48), "Falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." This may have resulted from the breaking of the girdle. A fragment of Papias gives another explanation, recounting that he was crushed and disembowelled by a passing waggon. Thus Judas, the only man concerning whom the terrible expression is used, went "to his own place" (Acts i. 25). He is the Ahithophel of the New Testament (2 Sam. xvii. 23; Ps. xli. 9; lv. 12—14).

Ver. 6.—**Took the silver pieces.** They picked up the coins which Judas had flung away on the marble pavement of the court, but were perplexed to determine what they should do with them. It is not lawful. These men, who had felt no doubt or hesitation in compassing the death of an innocent Man by the foulest treachery and perversion of justice, have, or hypocritically professed to have, religious scruples about the disposal of this blood-money thus thrown on their

hands. While they calmly outraged all moral feeling, they punctiliously observed certain outward ceremonial decencies. "They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." **The treasury** (τὸν κορβανᾶν). The temple treasury, supplied by the offerings (*corbans*) of the pious for the expenses of Divine worship. It is most probable that these scrupulous priests had taken from this treasury the silver which they now deemed it sinful to replace. **The price of blood.** The wages of murder. It was inferred from Deut. xxiii. 18 that no money unlawfully gained, or derived from an impure source, might be used in purchasing things for God's service. Under Jewish Law such money must be restored to the donor; if circumstances rendered this impossible, or the offerer insisted on giving it, it was to be expended for some public object, the original owner being considered, by a legal fiction, to be its possessor still, and that which was paid for by the money being deemed as his gift to the community (comp. Acts i. 18, "This man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity").

Ver. 7.—**They took counsel.** They deliberated how to dispose of this blood-money. This deliberation may have taken place after the Crucifixion. **The potter's field.** The spot was well known at the time. It is traditionally said to have lain on the south of Jerusalem—on the hillside across the valley of Hinnom, on what is called the Hill of Evil Counsel. Here is found a tract of clay, which is still used by the potters of the city. In the time of our Lord the clay probably was considered to be exhausted, and the area, excavated in all directions, and useless for agricultural purposes, was sold for a trifling price. **To bury strangers in.** The "strangers" are probably not pagans, but foreign Jews and Gentile proselytes, who came to Jerusalem to attend the festival, and died there. Others think that foreigners (Greeks and Romans, etc.) exclusively are meant, the Jews regarding their very presence in the holy city as defilement, and a cemetery purchased by unclean money a fitting spot for their interment. The "field" was set apart in the Crusaders' times as a burial-place for pilgrims, and to this day contains a charnel-house wherein are deposited the poor and unhonoured dead of Jerusalem.

Ver. 8.—**The field of blood.** Aceldama (Acts i. 19), the Syriac name. It was so called (διὸ) from the circumstances attending its purchase, which gave it an evil notoriety, and which the priests must have divulged. "This also," says Chrysostom, taking the blood to be that of Jesus, "became a witness against them, and a proof of their treason. For the name of the place more clearly than a trumpet proclaimed their blood-guiltiness." **Unto this day.** Until the time when this Gospel was published, the new appellation obtained. It is implied that a considerable interval had elapsed. Such chronological hints are often found in the Old Testament (cf. Gen. xix. 37, 38; Josh. iv. 9, etc.).

Ver. 9.—**Spoken by Jeremy the prophet.** The prophecy, which St. Matthew says was fulfilled by the use made of Judas's pieces of silver, is found, not in Jeremiah, as we now possess his text, but, with some variations, in Zech. xi. 12, 13. It must be noted, however, that, though the passage in Zechariah has many remarkable affinities to the quotation in our evangelist's history, it is not identical with it. In the prophet's vision there is no mention of the field, and the money is to be "cast to the potter in the house of the Lord." The Septuagint Version gives a very different reading, "Lay them in the foundry [or, 'furnace'], and I will see if it is approved, as I was approved for their sakes." And the last part of our quotation is hardly a representation of the Hebrew, "Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prised at of them." In the face of these discrepancies, it is supposed by many that St. Matthew had in his mind some utterance of Jeremiah not now extant; but if, as most expositors affirm, he was citing, more or less accurately, the words of Zechariah, we have to account for their being attributed to a wrong author. Of this difficulty, as it is considered, many solutions are offered. For instance: (1) The evangelist added no name to "the prophet;" and a scribe, hazily remembering the transaction in Jer. xxxii. 6, etc., interpolated the word "Jeremiah." It is true that the Syriac omits "Jeremiah," but all other versions, and nearly all the Greek manuscripts, insert it; so there can be no reasonable doubt that it existed in the original text. (2) The two words written abbreviated thus, Ζρου, Ιμιου, might be easily mistaken. (3) The evangelist fell into error, by oversight or lapse of memory, as is supposed to be the case in Mark ii. 26 and Acts vii. 4, 16. (4) The last chapters of Zechariah were really the composition of Jeremiah. (5) Jeremiah, being set at the head of the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, gave his name to all the writings following, which were cited indiscriminately as the utterances of Jeremiah. (6) St. Matthew has made (as in ch. ii. 23, and so Mark i. 2, 3) a conto of passages derived from Jer. xviii. 2, etc.; xix. 1, 2; xxxii. 8—14, combined with the prediction in Zechariah, and attributed the passage thus formed to the most celebrated prophet. Plainly the evangelist has not confined himself to the actual words of his author or authors, but has written a Targum thereon,

being divinely guided to see in the present transaction a fulfilment of an obscure announcement and prefiguration in olden days. There are many other solutions proposed, with which we need not concern ourselves; the one last stated is reasonable, and may be adopted safely by those simple Christians who believe that the writers of the Bible were supernaturally preserved from errors, not only in doctrine and precept and fact, but also in chronology, grammar, geography, citation, etc. The whole difficulty is of little importance, and too much has been made of what, after all, may be simply an *erratum* perpetuated from an ancient copy. **They took** (ἔλαβον, which might mean, "I took," as in Zechariah). In the prophecy it is the despised Shepherd who casts the money to the potter; but "gave" in the next clause is plural. **The price of him that was valued** (*priced*), **whom they of the children of Israel did value** (*price*) (ὃν ἐτιμήσαντο ἀπὸ υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ). The Authorized Version supplies *of* before ἀπὸ υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ. The Revised Version supplies τινες, "whom certain of the children of Israel did price." The words are ironical, answering to the prophet's expression, "the goodly price that I was prised at of them"! The preposition ἀπὸ may be rendered "on the part of;" so the evangelist means that the priests offered this mean price for the Shepherd at the instigation of, at the instance of, the children of Israel, who thus shared in and authorized the iniquitous transaction.

Ver. 10.—**Gave them for the potter's field.** This part of the citation is borrowed from Jeremiah's purchase of the field of Hanamel (ch. xxxii.). The Christian writer introduces a second fulfilment of the ancient word. **As the Lord appointed me.** This must be the equivalent of Zechariah's "the Lord said unto me" (xi. 13). The destination of these wages of iniquity was foreordained. They could not be used by the Shepherd, nor stored in the temple treasury, nor kept by Judas or the priests; they were to be employed for another purpose.

Vers. 11—14.—*Jesus examined by Pilate.* (Mark xv. 2—5; Luke xxiii. 2—5; John xviii. 29—38.)

Ver. 11.—**Jesus stood before the governor.** St. Matthew omits here many details which the other evangelists, and especially St. John, supply. Pilate from the first had shown much reluctance to proceed, not being satisfied with the vague accusation that Jesus was a malefactor, and proposing that the Sanhedrists should try him according to Jewish Law, as if the question was merely a religious one. This treatment forced the priests to formulate a charge of which the Roman authorities must take cognizance. They therefore stated unblushingly that Jesus had said that he was himself Christ a King (Luke xxiii. 2). At this point St. Matthew's account steps in. **Art thou** (σὺ εἶ) **the King of the Jews?** This examination took place within the Prætorium, where Christ was detained in the custody of some guards. The accusation of the Jews had been made outside, as they had scruples about entering the building. Jesus had never actually (so far as recorded) called himself King, though the appellation had been applied to him by Nathanael (John i. 49), and the hosannahs of the multitudes had virtually so greeted him. His accusers had added the charge that he perverted the nation, and forbade to give tribute to Cæsar. There is scorn and surprise, mingled with some awe, in Pilate's interrogation, "Thou—such a one as thou—art the King of the Jews?" **Thou sayest.** What thou sayest is true. A strong affirmation. Christ accepts in its fullest sense that which the governor puts as a question (comp. ch. xxvi. 25, 64). St. Paul alludes to this scene in 1 Tim. vi. 13, "Christ Jesus, who before Pilate witnessed the good confession."

Ver. 12.—When Pilate went forth again to the door of the judgment-hall, he was met by a storm of accusations from the chief priests and elders, who, seeing the impression produced on him by Christ's bearing, vied with each other in vociferating charges against the meek Prisoner. **He answered nothing.** With Divine patience he bore it all; he would not defend himself before people who cared nothing for truth and justice, and wanted only to secure condemnation and death. As for Pilate, he had told him expressly that his kingdom was spiritual and not of this world, and therefore his claims did not interfere with the sovereignty of Rome. To him and to the rest there was nothing more to be said.

Ver. 13.—**Hearest thou not how many things** (πόσα, *quanta, what great things*) **they witness against thee?** Among the charges was one that Jesus stirred up the people to revolt, both in Galilee and Judæa. The mention of Galilee offered to Pilate a chance of escaping the responsibility of the trial, and led to his sending Christ to Herod, as St. Luke relates (xxiii. 6—12). It was on the return from Herod that the final scene took place. Pilate evidently did not believe that this dignified, meek, inoffensive Man was guilty of sedition, and he desired to hear his defence, which he was willing to receive favourably (Acts iii. 13).

Ver. 14.—**To never a word** (πρὸς οὐδὲ ἕν ῥῆμα, *not even to one word*). He made no reply to a single one of the accusations made against him. He had determined **to**

dic; he was a willing sacrifice; so he acted as his prophet had foretold, "He opened not his mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). **Marvelled greatly.** The Roman governor in all his experience had never beheld such calm resignation, such unshaken equanimity, such intrepid resolution in the face of death.

Vers. 15—26.—*Barabbas preferred to Jesus.* (Mark xv. 6—15; Luke xxiii. 17—25; John xviii. 39, 40.)

Ver. 15.—Pilate now tries another expedient for delivering himself from the responsibility of condemning Jesus. **At that feast** (*κατὰ ἑορτήν, at a feast*, at feast-time). Doubtless the Passover is meant, which was *the* feast especially of the Jews, and it is very improbable that the practice mentioned in the clause was allowed at any other of the feasts. **The governor was wont to release unto the people** (*τῷ ὄχλῳ, the multitude*), etc. St. Luke says, "Of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast." The custom is not elsewhere mentioned. It was, however, most probably an institution established of old time in memory of the Exodus (John xviii. 39), and continued by the Romans when they became masters of the country. A similar custom obtained at Rome and in Greece on certain great festivals. **Whom they would.** The governor usually left the priests and people unfettered in their choice; on the present occasion he desired Jesus to be selected.

Ver. 16.—**They had then a notable prisoner.** The plural verb must refer to the multitude, to whose class the man belonged. The Vulgate, with Origen, reads, "he had," *habebat*, referring to Pilate, whose prisoner he was. The man was notorious; as St. Mark tells us, "He lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, men who had committed murder in the insurrection." We have no account elsewhere of this particular rising, nor of its leader, but such commotions were very common, and under the guise of political aims were utilized for purposes of robbery and assassination. **Called Barabbas.** The word means "Son of the father," which some explain "Son of a rabbi," which is improbable; and it is a question whether this was his real name, or one applied to him with reference to his pretensions to being "a political anti-Christ"—"a hideous caricature of the true Jesus, the Son of the eternal Father." It is a strange fact that in some (not very trustworthy) manuscripts the name is given as Jesus Barabbas, which affords a remarkable antithesis in Pilate's question in the following verse, "Will ye that I release Jesus Barabbas or Jesus called Christ?" There can be no reasonable doubt that the prefix is not genuine, but has crept into some texts inadvertently.

Ver. 17.—**Therefore when** (*when then, οὖν*) **they were gathered together.** The illative particle refers to the fact just mentioned that the notorious Barabbas was at that time in prison. The multitude, together with the Sanhedrists summoned from their meeting in the temple, were gathered at the doors of the Prætorium, when Pilate came out and spoke to them. **Whom will ye that I release unto you?** He had great hope that their answer would favour Jesus. When it came to choosing between a vile robber and murderer and a beneficent, moral teacher, common sense would guide the choice aright. **Which is called Christ** (ver. 22). In Mark Pilate terms him, "the King of the Jews." He puts before them these two names as the limit of their choice, minor offenders being not worthy of consideration in the face of these celebrated prisoners. And he names Christ's claims, as if he would remind the people that in Jesus they possibly had the Messiah whom they desired.

Ver. 18.—**For he knew.** He had recourse to this expedient because he was well acquainted with the motives which led the Sanhedrists to desire his death. They had shown their envy of Christ's influence with the people; they were jealous of his reputation and success; grudged him his marvellous powers; were embittered by his attacks on rabbinism, and the undermining of their popularity. Pilate saw much of this; he penetrated behind their flimsy pretence of averting some possible danger from the Roman dominion, and he laboured in this indirect way to save the victim of this vindictive plot. Of course, Pilate could not fully appreciate Christ's character, nor enter into the question of his supernatural claims; he saw only that he was brought before him from the basest motives, that no real offence was proved against him, and that no fear could be entertained of his heading a popular tumult.

Ver. 19.—**When he was set down** (*was sitting*) **on the judgment-seat.** This was a curule chair placed on a raised stone platform in front of the Prætorium, where the Roman governors sat to give judgment in cases brought before them (see John xix. 13). It was while he was waiting to hear the decision of the multitude with respect to the selection of the prisoners that the episode that follows (mentioned alone by St. Matthew) occurs. **His wife.** Her name, according to ecclesiastical tradition, was Claudia, the addition of Procula being probably a mistake. In the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus (ch. ii.) she is said

to have been a convert to Judaism. Other accounts affirm that she ultimately became a Christian; and the Greek Church has canonized her, and inserted her in the Menology on October 27. It is probable that she was well acquainted with, and favourably disposed towards, the claims of Christ; and if she had impressed her husband in some degree with her own views, this fact may have influenced him to make some effort to save Jesus. Doubtless she had thought much upon the subject, and talked it over with Pilate; hence her dream was the natural sequence of that with which her mind had been filled in her waking moments, though providentially ordered. It speaks for the accuracy of the evangelist's account, that lately the governors had been allowed to take their wives with them into their official districts, a law previously having forbidden this indulgence (see Tacitus, 'Annal.,' iii. 33, 34). **Have thou nothing to do with that just Man.** Wordsworth well remarks, "In the whole history of the Passion of Christ no one pleads for him but a woman, the wife of a heathen governor, the deputy of the emperor of the world." This was another warning given to Pilate to arrest him in his criminal cowardice. The expression used means literally, "Let there be nothing to thee and that Righteous One," which is equivalent to "Do nothing to him for which you will be hereafter sorry." **I have suffered** (ἔπαθον, *I suffered*) **many things this day in a dream because of him.** It is useless to inquire the nature of her dream. From the way in which it is here introduced, and from what we know of God's employment of dreams in other cases to communicate his will to men, we may reasonably conclude that this was divinely sent to convey a lesson to Pilate through his wife, who alone, perhaps, was able to arouse the better feelings of his heart. The mention of her suffering shows that she had some dreadful experiences to relate in connection with the fate of the righteous Jesus. As at the beginning of Christ's life, so at its close, such communications were addressed to strangers. Pilate's superstitious fears would be excited by this mysterious dream, but they were not able to overpower counteracting influences.

Ver. 20.—**But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude.** For a short time the people appear to have wavered in their choice, and Pilate had hopes that his stratagem worked well. But the Sanhedrists were at hand with their insidious suggestions; not a voice was raised for Christ; all his friends were scattered or silenced; and his enemies easily swayed the fickle crowd. **That they should ask** (*ask for*) **Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.** By directing popular favour to Barabbas, they could make the condemnation of Jesus more certain. The expression in the Greek implies that they used their persuasive powers in order that (ἵνα) the people should demand the release of Barabbas, and compass the death of Jesus.

Ver. 21.—**Answered,** to the various cries which reached him. **Whether of the twain?** *Which of the two?* He repeats the question before asked (ver. 17), having given the multitude time for deliberation, and offering them no alternative but to choose one of these two prisoners. **Barabbas.** They prefer a murderer to the Prince of life—a selection on their part guilty and malevolent, but on the part of God necessary for our salvation (Quesnel). **Truly, Jesus "was despised and rejected of men."** If he had been released now, his liberation would not have been, as it ought to have been, an act of simple justice, but an imperial concession, an act of grace, in which the character of the prisoner was not regarded.

Ver. 22.—It was with disappointment and indignation that Pilate heard the rabble's decision. He could not refuse to release the robber and murderer; but he still entertained some hope of a better feeling in the crowd which would allow him to acquit Jesus. **What shall I do then with Jesus?** Τί οὖν ποιήσω Ἰησοῦν; *What then shall I do to Jesus?* As you demand the release of Barabbas, what am I to do with the other prisoner? He dared not act boldly, as his conscience and the justice of the case dictated; if the popular voice was not with him, he would take no open step. He added, **which is called Christ,** or, according to Mark, "whom ye call the King of the Jews," in scorn of the title itself, and of the fickleness which honoured him one day and now clamoured for his destruction. **Let him be crucified!** They have their dreadful answer ready. He is a political offender; he is a mover of sedition against the Roman supremacy; let him meet the punishment to which Rome dooms her lowest criminals and runagates. This was the death which Christ had foretold for himself (ch. xx. 19), the most painful, barbarous, and ignominious punishment which the cruelty of man ever invented.

Ver. 23.—**Why, what evil hath he done?** Τί γὰρ κακὸν ἐποίησεν; The particle γάρ implies a certain reasoning in the question, the speaker for the nonce putting himself in the people's position, and demanding the ground of their decision. The authorized translation is adequate. Pilate thus showed his pusillanimity and irresolution, while exercising no control over the feelings of the excited mob. **But they cried out the more**

(*περισσῶς ἔκραζον, they kept shouting out exceedingly*). The very sight of the governor's predilection, combined with his indecision, excited them to more vehement clamour; they saw that he would end by yielding to their violence. Jerome refers, in illustration, to Isa. v. 7, "He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

Ver. 24.—**He could prevail nothing** (*οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ, he prevailed nothing*). Naught that he did altered the determination of the multitude. **But that rather a tumult was made** (*γίνεται, is arising*). The present tense gives a graphic touch to the narrative. The delay and hesitation of the governor exasperated the people, and there were ominous signs of a riot, which must be suppressed at any sacrifice of principle or equity. He feared that a report might reach Rome of his having occasioned dangerous excitement at the Passover by refusing to punish a pretender to the Jewish throne. He submits to the popular will, but endeavours to save himself from the guilt of an accomplice in a most atrocious murder. **Took water, and washed his hands before the multitude.** This symbolical action would appeal to the Jewish sentiment, as it was a mode of asserting innocence prescribed in the Mosaic Law (Deut. xxi. 6; Ps. xxvi. 6). Pilate thus publicly, in the sight of all the multitude who might not have been able to hear his words, attested his opinion of the innocence of Christ, and weakly cast the guilt upon the people, as if the administration of justice lay with them and not with him. Such lustrations were not exclusively Jewish, but were practised both among Greeks and Romans in expiation of guilt (see Wetstein, *ad loc.*; and Kuinoel, *ad* cap. iii. 6). **I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.** Some manuscripts, followed by Alford, Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort, omit "just Person (*δικαίου*)." If the word is genuine, it must be regarded as an echo of the wife's message to Pilate (ver. 19). The cowardly governor thus shakes off the responsibility of the perversion of justice which he allows. **See ye to it** (*ὑμεῖς ὄψεσθε, vos videritis*, as ver. 4). You will take all the responsibility of the act; the blame will not be mine. Vain hope! Pilate may wash his hands, he cannot purify heart or conscience from the stain of this foul murder. As long as the Church lasts so long will the Creed announce that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Ver. 25.—**Then answered all the people.** Instigated by the Sanhedrists working insidiously among them, the multitude, now very numerous, respond with fiendish alacrity to Pilate's deprecation. It was a unanimous, a national assumption of guilt, lightly undertaken, terribly vindicated. **His blood be on us, and on our children.** The consequences of this condemnation, be they what they may, we are willing to suffer. Let God visit it, if he will, upon us and our children; we and they will cheerfully bear the penalty. A mad and impious imprecation, the fulfilment of which quickly commenced, and has continued unto this day. The terrible events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, the overthrow of the theocracy, and the eighteen centuries of exile and dispersion, bear witness to the reality of the vengeance thus wantonly invoked. "As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them" (Ps. cxl. 9).

Ver. 26.—**Released he Barabbas**—"him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired" (Luke). **When he had scourged Jesus.** This was the usual preliminary to crucifixion, especially in the case of slaves, and was a punishment of a most severe and cruel nature. The verb here used, *φραγελλόω*, is formed from the Latin *flagellum*, and denotes the employment of that terrible implement the Roman scourge. This was no ordinary whip, but commonly a number of leather thongs loaded with lead or armed with sharp bones and spikes, so that every blow cut deeply into the flesh, causing intense pain. The culprit was stripped of his clothes, pinioned, and bound to a stake or pillar, and thus on his bare back suffered this inhuman chastisement. To think that the blessed Son of God was subject to such torture and indignity is indeed a lesson for us written in blood. When "he gave his back to the smiters" (Isa. l. 6), he was taking the punishment of our sin upon his sacred shoulders. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5). Possibly Pilate thought that the sight of Christ's suffering might arouse at this last moment the pity of the Jews (John xix. 1—16). But he was mistaken. The appetite of the bloodthirsty crowd was only whetted by this anticipatory taste; they insisted on the whole programme being carried out, and Pilate yielded to the demand, giving up the useless struggle. **He delivered him to be crucified.** Pilate delivered Jesus to the will of the people, directing the soldiers to carry out the ordered execution. On the view taken by the Romans themselves of crucifixion, commentators quote Cicero, 'In Verr.,' ii. 5. 66, "It is a crime to bind a Roman citizen; to scourge him is an act of wickedness; to put him to death is almost parricide: what shall I say of crucifying him? An act so abomi-

nable it is impossible to find any word adequately to express."

Vers. 27—30.—*Jesus mocked by the soldiers.* (Mark xv. 16—19; John xix. 2, 3.)

Ver. 27.—The soldiers of the governor. The brutal soldiers, far from feeling compassion for the meek Sufferer, take a fiendish pleasure in torturing and insulting him. They fling upon his bleeding body his upper garments, and take him **into the common hall** (*πραιτώριον, the Prætorium*). This name was applied to the dwelling-house of the provincial governor, and here refers to the open court of the building, outside which the preceding events had taken place (see on ver. 2). **The whole band** (*σπεῖραν*), which usually signifies "a cohort" (Acts x. 1), but sometimes only a maniple, which was a third part of the same (Polybius, xi. 23. 1). This is probably what is meant here, as they would not denude the barracks of all its occupants, who consisted of one cohort of about six hundred men (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' ii. 15. 6). The soldiers summoned their comrades on guard at the palace or in the Tower of Antonia to come and join in the cruel sport. "The devil was then entering in fury into the hearts of all. For indeed they made a pleasure of their insults against him, being a savage and a worthless set" (Chrysostom, *in loo.*).

Ver. 28.—**They stripped him** (*ἐκδύσαντες*). Some manuscripts read *ἐνδύσαντες*, "when they had clothed him;" but this seems to have been derived from St. Mark, and to be here somewhat tautological. They had heard of his claim to be a King, so they determined to deride him with the mockery of royal honours. They tore his garments from his mangled form, thus opening afresh his half-dried wounds. **Put on him a scarlet robe** (*χλαμύδα κοκκίνην*). This was probably the short military woollen cloak worn by officers, in colour either scarlet or purple, and fastened by a buckle on the right shoulder. Some think it was a cast-off garment from the wardrobe of King Herod, which they found and appropriated to this purpose. Whatever it was, its bright hue was suitable for this mockery of regal splendour.

Ver. 29.—**Platted a crown of thorns.** In carrying out their mockery, the soldiers next supply a regal crown. Palestine was a country thickly set with brambles and thorn-growing bushes. They would have no difficulty in finding plants to suit their cruel purpose, and in plucking with their gauntlet-covered hands sprays sufficient to weave into a rude coronet. What was the particular shrub employed cannot be known for certainty. The *zizyphus, Spina Christi*, a kind of acacia with long reflex thorns, is of too brittle a nature to be used in this way. Some variety of the cactus or prickly pear may be meant. "Hasselquist, a Swedish naturalist, supposes a very common plant, *naba* or *nabka* of the Arabs, with many small and sharp spines, soft, round, and pliant bushes, leaves much resembling those of ivy, being of a very deep green, as if in designed mockery of a victor's wreath, 'Travels,' 288" (F. M.). Thorns were the fruits of the primal curse, which Christ, the second Adam, was now bearing, and by bearing removed. **A reed in his right hand.** By way of sceptre. This must have been a reed or cane of a thick and solid character (see ver. 30, and note on ver. 48). **Bowed the knee before him.** Doing mock obeisance to him as King. Thus these wretched heathens did that in derision which some day all Gentiles shall do in solemn earnest, when "all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him" (Ps. xxii. 27). **Hail, King of the Jews!** Doubtless they cried, "Ave, Rex Judæorum!" in imitation of the "Ave, Imperator!" addressed to the Emperor of Rome.

Ver. 30.—**They spit upon him.** Repeating the atrocious outrage already offered (ch. xxvi. 67). **Smote him** (*ἔτυπτον*, imperf., *kept smiting him*) **on the head.** They tore the mock sceptre from his trembling hands, and one after the other, as they passed, struck him with it on the head, at every blow driving the thorns deeper into his flesh. Here must be introduced some other attempts of Pilate to save him, narrated by St. John (xix. 4—16), especially the episode of "Ecce Homo!"

Vers. 31—33.—*Jesus is led to crucifixion. Via dolorosa.* (Mark xv. 20—23; Luke xxiii. 26—33; John xix. 16, 17.) In these accounts, those of Matthew and Mark are most alike, though varied in expression and in some details; that of Luke is the fullest; that of John distinct from the rest.

Ver. 31.—St. Matthew, omitting some details, hurries to the final scene. **Took the robe off from him;** *i.e.* the scarlet robe with which they had arrayed him (ver. 28). Whether they removed the crown of thorns is uncertain. The Lord is always depicted wearing it upon the cross. **His own raiment** (*τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ, his garments*). The term would include the outer and inner garments, especially the seamless tunic for which the soldiers cast lots (John xix. 23; Ps. xxii. 18). Thus unknowingly they were preparing to fulfil prophecy. **Led him away to crucify him.** This must have been about 9 a.m. Executions took place outside the city walls (see Numb. xv. 35, 36; Acts vii. 58). "The bodies of those beasts, whose

blood is brought into the sanctuary by the priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 11, 12). Lange describes the procession: "Instead of being led forth by lictors, the command of whom Pilate, as sub-governor, did not enjoy, Jesus is conducted to the cross by the soldiery. A centurion on horseback, called by Tacitus 'Exactor mortis,' by Seneca 'Centurio supplicio præpositus,' headed the company. A herald, going in front of the condemned, proclaimed his sentence." Behind him walked the prisoner, bearing the instrument of his punishment; a small company of soldiers completed the cavalcade.

Ver. 32.—**As they came out**; *i.e.* from the city gate which led to the place of execution. **They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name.** He was, as the other synoptists mention, coming out of the country to Jerusalem, where probably he lived. Cyrene was a district in the north of Africa, under Roman rule, and colonized by a large number of Jews (Josephus, 'Cont. Apion.,' ii. 4; 'Ant.,' xiv. 7. 2), who had a synagogue of their own at Jerusalem (Acts vi. 9). Simon doubtless became a follower of Christ, and St. Mark mentions his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, as well-known believers (see Rom. xvi. 13). Probably the guards saw in him some tokens of sympathy with Christ and compassion for his sufferings; or they used his services simply as being a foreigner, and not likely to resent being put to a task which a Hebrew would deem the lowest degradation. **Him they compelled** (*ἠγγάρευσαν, impressed*) **to bear his cross.** The verb translated "compelled" is derived from the Persian, and implies the compulsory power possessed by couriers of requisitioning horses and carriages in forwarding despatches (see ch. v. 41). The cross was probably the ordinary Latin cross, *crux immissa*, of which, however, the lower limb below the transom was longer than the upper; and this latter afforded a place where could be affixed the board containing the inscription. It was not as tall as usually represented; we are told that beasts of prey were able to gnaw the bodies hung thereon. In fact, the culprit's feet were only just raised above the ground, being drawn up till the soles lay flat on the upright beam. Nails were driven through the hands and feet, and the body was supported partly by these, and partly by a projecting pin of wood called the seat. The rest for the feet, often seen in pictures, was never used. A slight covering was allowed for decency's sake, the rest of the body being stripped of clothing; and thus the condemned, exposed to scorching sun, bleeding from the cruel scourge, suffering untold agonies, was left to die. Whether Jesus carried the whole cross or only the transom is uncertain. It is possible that the two were tied together by a rope at one end, so as to form an inverted V, and fastened in the proper position at the place of execution. However this may be, it proved too heavy a burden for him to bear. Spent with his long vigil and lack of food, his spirit afflicted by the agony in the garden and the unknown sufferings then and afterwards, his body tortured with open wounds and weakened with loss of blood, he sank beneath the weight, as he staggered wearily along the rough and hilly streets. Either from a momentary compunction, or more probably from impatience at the slowness of the poor Sufferer's movements, the soldiers gladly seized on Simon to relieve the Prisoner of the cross, or to share its weight, and thus enable them sooner to complete their cruel task.

Ver. 33.—**A place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull**; *quod est Calvariæ locus* (Vulgate). Hence the Latinized name Calvary. The word means "a skull;" but why the spot was so called is a doubtful question. That it was the usual place of execution is a suggestion with no proof, and one would expect the designation in this case to be "the place of skulls." Tradition (authorized by Origen) pointed to it as the spot where Adam was buried, and where his skull was found—a story that seems to have arisen from the typical reason that it was congruous that the first Adam and the second Adam should meet in death, the latter winning the victory there where the former showed his defeat. Most probably the name was given to it as descriptive of its appearance, a bare space of rock (not a hill) denuded of verdure, and bearing a distant resemblance to a human skull wanting hair. The actual situation of Cavalry is hotly contested by exegetes and travellers, and is still far from being determined. The only criterion offered by our accounts in the Gospels is that it was without the then walls of the city, not far from one of the gates, and by the side of one of the principal roads leading from the city to the country. A certain knoll on the hill Gareb towards the north-west, by which the Damascus road led, and to which Jeremiah (xxxi. 39) refers, is supposed, not very happily, to answer these requirements. If the present Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the north-west of Jerusalem, really contains the actual Golgotha and the tomb of our Lord, the course of the second wall as usually drawn cannot be correct, as it embraces this site completely (see the *Guardian*, August 30, 1893, p. 1353). Opinion, always altering, has lately been inclined to endorse the

authenticity of many of the traditional sites in the holy city and its neighbourhood. Further discoveries will set this and other matters at rest. Meantime, judgment must be suspended (see on ver. 51).

Vers. 34—44.—*The Crucifixion and the mockery.* (Mark xv. 23—32; Luke xxiii. 32—43; John xix. 18—24.)

Ver. 34.—**Vinegar . . . mingled with gall** (χολῆς). Instead of "vinegar" (ὄξος) very many manuscripts, followed by Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and others, read here, as in Mark, "wine" (οἶνον). *Dederunt ei vinum bibere* (Vulgate). Doubtless the two words represent the same fluid, a wine of a sharp and acrid taste. The received reading in our text is supposed to be derived from Ps. lxix. 21, "They gave me gall for my meats, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." "Gall" here signifies some bitter ingredient (St. Mark calls it "myrrh"), which was infused in the wine to impart a narcotic quality. It was the custom to offer this draught to criminals about to undergo crucifixion, either as an anodyne or to give them adventitious strength to bear their sufferings. The beverage is said to have been prepared by some benevolent ladies in Jerusalem, and to have been owed to a gloss on Prov. xxxi. 6, 7, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul; let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." This was not an additional insult offered to Jesus, as some have opined, but a usual act of kindliness. **When he had tasted** thereof, **he would not** (οὐκ ἤθελε) **drink.** He accepted the kindly offer so far as to put his lips to the cup, but, recognizing its stupefying qualities, he refused to drink it. He willed to endure all the coming pains without mitigation; he would meet all with the powers of mind and body undarkened; he would have his senses and his self-consciousness unimpaired to the end.

Ver. 35.—**They crucified him.** We should try to realize the utter degradation as well as the anguish of such a death. No modern form of punishment carries with it the abhorred ignominy with which crucifixion was regarded, and we must put ourselves back eighteen centuries, and enter into the feelings of Jews and Romans, if we would view it in its genuine aspect. The narrative of this harrowing scene could not be simpler. The writer leaves it reverently to speak for itself, without any attempt at sensational adjuncts or rhetorical amplification. There is no indignation at the outrage, no compassion for the Sufferer, no commendation of the Divine patience. These are suppressed, because they needed no words; the unvarnished details are more than sufficient to place the reader by the Saviour's side, and make him feel every pang, sympathize with the grief, the shame, the horror, that rent the heart of Jesus. The sacred authors have said little about the mode of crucifixion, and have left untold many particulars which we should have liked to hear. This horrid punishment was too well known at that time to need description, and they saw no necessity for dwelling on its revolting details. (For some of these, see on ver. 32.) Whether in the present case the upright beam of the cross was fixed in its position before the Prisoner was fastened to it, or whether it was laid flat on the ground, set in order, and the Sufferer was nailed thereto before it was raised and settled in its place, we are not informed. The former was the method commonly employed. To carry out the execution a quaternion of soldiers (Acts xii. 4) was appointed under the command of a centurion (ver. 54) **Parted his garments, casting lots.** The clothes of criminals were the perquisite of the soldiers charged with the execution. They divided these amongst the four, casting lots to determine what each should take. Further details are supplied by St. John (xix. 23, 24). **That it might be fulfilled . . . they cast lots.** These words are retained in the Clementine Vulgate and a few cursives, but omitted by the best uncials and most other manuscripts. Modern editors almost universally have rejected them as an interpolation from the parallel passage in St. John. There can be no doubt, however, that, whether genuine or not in this place, they represent the truth. The soldiers' act did fulfil in marvellous fashion the psalmist's enunciation (Ps. xxii. 18), where the stripping of the Lord's Anointed and the disposal of his raiment are prophetically stated.

Ver. 36.—**They watched him there.** The soldiers, in relays, had to guard the criminal from any attempt of his friends to remove him from the cross—a long and tedious duty, during the performance of which they were allowed to sit. Crucifixion was not accompanied by immediate death. It was one of its greatest horrors that the tortured sufferer sometimes lived for days before death relieved him from his agony. Till this supervened, the guard had to keep watch. That this caution was not superfluous, we have intimations in ancient history, which tells of crucified persons being sometimes removed by their friends and restored to the use of their limbs and faculties. Josephus ('Vita,' 75) relates that he thus took down three criminals after a lengthened suspension, one of whom completely recovered, though the others succumbed to their injuries. This vigilance

of the soldiers was providentially ordered as one of the means of proving the reality of Christ's death.

Ver. 37.—**Set up over his head his accusation written.** This was the *titulus*. A wooden tablet smeared with gypsum, had on it, written in black letters, the charge on which the prisoner was condemned. This, which had been hung round the criminal's neck or carried before him on the way to execution, was now affixed to the upper portion of the cross over his head. **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** The title had been prepared by Pilate (John xix. 19, 22), and was conceived in terms studiously offensive to the Jews, with whom he was deeply indignant. It was written in three languages, so that all of whatever nationality might read it—in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek (for the order, see Westcott on John xix. 20); *i.e.* the national Aramaic, familiar to all Jews; the official Latin, understood by the soldiers and Romans; the current Greek, the dialect of Hellenistic Jews, and largely used by all classes. "These three languages gathered up the results of the religious, the social, the intellectual preparation for Christ, and in each witness was given to his office" (Westcott). The title is given by the four evangelists with some verbal variations, which are owing in part to the actual differences existing in the three versions of the inscription. They run thus: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matthew); "The King of the Jews" (Mark); "This is the King of the Jews" (Luke); "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (John). Of these titles, those given by Mark and Luke probably represent the Latin; that of Matthew, the Greek; while that of John was intended for the national population, who alone would understand the veiled sneer contained in the addition, "of Nazareth." The legend of the finding of the cross and its inscription is given by Butler, 'Lives of the Saints,' on 'The Invention of the Holy Cross.' A supposed fragment of the title is preserved at Rome, in the Church of the Holy Cross, and declared by a papal bull to be authentic. In this case infallibility has rather overstepped its limits.

Ver. 38.—**Then.** St. Matthew does not give the exact sequence of events, generally grouping them together for ethical and other kindred reasons. Probably these two malefactors were crucified immediately after our Lord. **Thieves;** λῃσταί: *robbers*, brigands (ch. xxi. 13). Thus was Christ "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12). St. Luke alone relates the acceptance of the penitent thief. If he was the one set on the right hand, possibly the careful mention of the position of the two robbers, which is found in the other evangelists, may have a silent reference to this episode. We know from Josephus ('Ant.,' xvi. 10. 8; xx. 8. 10; 'Bell. Jud.,' ii. 12. 2, etc.) that Palestine was infested with banditti, who were rigorously pursued by the Romans, and were commonly crucified when captured. Doubtless these two criminals had been taken red-handed in some act of robbery and murder, and it was an exquisite malice that treated Jesus as their comrade and accomplice, and placed him in the position of their leader. But Augustine sees a spiritual signification in this scene: "The very cross was the tribunal of Christ; for the Judge was placed in the middle; one thief, who believed, was set free; the other, who reviled, was condemned; which signified what he was already about to do with the quick and dead; being about to set some on his right hand, but others on his left."

Ver. 39.—**They that passed by.** Golgotha being near a great high-road and a much-frequented city gate (John xix. 20), passers-by were numerous, even without counting those who were attracted by the woeful sight. Many of them knew nothing of Christ's case, but seeing him punished in company with the two malefactors, thought that he was doubtless guilty of the same crimes as they; others, perhaps, who had seen his miracles and heard something of his teaching, conceived the notion that one whom the priests and rulers condemned must be a dangerous impostor, and deserved the cruelest of deaths. **Reviled him;** ἐβλασφήμουν: *railed on him; blasphemabant* (Vulgate). The expression, indeed, is true in its worse sense, for they who could thus revile the Son of God were guilty, however ignorantly, of gross impiety and irreverence. **Wagging their heads.** In mockery and contempt, thus fulfilling the psalmist's words, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head;" and, "I am become a reproach unto them; when they see me, they shake their heads" (Ps. xxii. 7; cix. 25).

Ver. 40.—**Saying.** Some manuscripts (but not the best) insert οὐά after "saying." So the Vulgate (*vah!*) and other versions. But it seems to be derived from the parallel passage in Mark. What the evangelist gives is only a specimen of the insults hurled at the meek Sufferer, who looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but found none (Ps. lxix. 20). **Thou that destroyest the temple,** etc. They shamelessly revive the old accusation (ch. xxvi. 61; John ii. 19), doubtless at the instigation of the Sanhedrists who mingled with the crowd (ver. 41). The saying rankled in the rulers' mind, and we see it playing a part later in the condemna-

tion of Stephen (Acts vi. 13, 14). **Save thyself.** Thou who boastest of thy power to destroy and rebuild this magnificent and solid temple, employ that power in delivering thyself from thy well-deserved death. Little they knew that Christ was then fulfilling his own prediction, which would ere long be fully accomplished. As little did they understand that by his words ("I am able to destroy," instead of, "Destroy ye") they were bearing witness to the truth that he was voluntarily laying down his life, and that but for this surrender they could have had no power over him. **If thou be the Son of God,** etc. Some manuscripts and versions read the passage thus: "Save thyself, if thou be the Son of God, and come down from the cross." But the Received Text is most probably correct. These revilers are doing the devil's work, and are quoting his words (ch. iv. 6), in thus taunting Jesus. They refer to our Lord's own statement before Pilate (ch. xxvi. 64), thinking it expedient to keep this claim before the people's mind. He might, indeed, have answered the jibe by coming down from the cross; but then, as Bishop Pearson says, in saving himself he would not have saved us.

Ver. 41.—**Likewise also.** All classes that composed the Sanhedrin were present at the execution, and took part in the reviling; but, unlike the soldiers (Luke xxiii. 36) and the mob, they did not address him personally, either from supreme contempt, or because they stood aloof from the herd, and spake among themselves. Some few authorities of no great weight, after "elders" add "and Pharisees;" but the words are an interpolation, though they are without doubt true in fact. That these leaders should presume thus to revile One whom they knew to be innocent is unspeakably iniquitous.

Ver. 42.—**He saved others.** They knew something of his many miracles of healing; many among them had witnessed the cure of the man blind from his birth (John ix.); most must have heard of the raising of Lazarus;—they made these very works of mercy a reproach against him. He had proved himself a beneficent Saviour; he had shown superhuman power, and yet they say, **Himself he cannot save.** There was indeed a sense, not their sense, in which this was true. Christ willed to die; it was his purpose thus to redeem mankind; in adhering to this steadfast determination he could not deliver himself from suffering and death. Some read the clause interrogatively, "Cannot he save himself?" It is then parallel to the expression used at the grave of Lazarus (John xi. 37). **If he be the King of Israel.** "If" (*εἰ*) is omitted by ℵ, B, D, L, etc., and many modern editors. Its omission is more concinnous to the other taunts, *e.g.* "He saved others;" "He trusted in God." His claim to be Messiah would involve the Kingship of Israel (ch. ii. 6), which the title over his head asserted. **We will believe him** (*πιστεύσομεν αὐτῷ*). We will believe (not subj., "let us believe") what he says. The Sinaitic, Vatican, and other good manuscripts read *ἐπ' αὐτόν*, "on him." So Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf, etc. This form of expression would imply that they would put their trust in him, become his followers. A confident boast! for they were so fully persuaded of the final triumph of their malice, that they deemed they might safely make such a promise. And yet Christ did a greater thing than come down alive from the cross; he rose from the dead; but they believed not in him. And if the sign which they asked had been vouchsafed, they would have explained it away, or evaded its meaning, and have been no nearer to salvation than now.

Ver. 43.—**He trusted in** (*ἐπί, on*) **God.** These scoffers cite a passage from Ps. xxii. 8, "He trusted unto the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him" (Hebrew); or, according to the Septuagint, "He hoped in the Lord; let him deliver him, let him save him, because he desires (*θέλει*) him." **Let him deliver him now, if he will have him** (*εἰ θέλει αὐτόν*). *Θέλω* is used in the Septuagint in the sense of "I love," "I wish for" (see Deut. xxi. 14; Ps. xvii. 19; xl. 11). But the Vulgate, by omitting the first *αὐτόν*, possibly takes the verb in the usual sense, *Liberet nunc, si vult, eum.* The Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts and others support this reading, which is followed now by Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort, so that the clause will run, *Let him now, if he will, deliver him.* But the Received Text and the Authorized Version are in closer agreement with the original language of the psalm. **For he said, I am the Son of God.** Insultingly they allude to his own assertions concerning his Divine nature, implying that, were he such as he pretended to be, he would not now be dying on the shameful cross. There are wonderful coincidences in thought and language between this passage and one in the Book of Wisdom (ii. 13—20), which speaks of the oppression of the righteous, *e.g.* "He professeth to have the knowledge of God; and he calleth himself the child of the Lord. . . . Let us see if his words be true; and let us prove what shall happen in the end of him. For if the just man be the Son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his enemies." The similarity of expression is to be attributed to the typical nature of the treatment

of Christ, which the writer of Wisdom, with remarkable insight, thus forcibly delineated.

Ver. 44.—**The thieves also . . . cast the same in his teeth** (*ὠνείδιζον αὐτῷ, were reviling him*). The mention of the penitent robber is found only in Luke (xxiii. 39—43). It does not seem to have occurred in the traditional account followed by Matthew and Mark. Augustine thought that these synoptists used the plural for the singular, referring, in fact, to the impenitent malefactor. It is more likely that both the thieves at first joined the mob in their abuse and ribaldry, but that one, after a time, persuaded by the Divine patience and meekness of the Saviour, and awed by the gathering darkness, repented, confessed, and was forgiven.

Vers. 45—50.—*Supernatural darkness. Last words, and death of Jesus.* (Mark xv. 33—37; Luke xxiii. 44—46; John xix. 28—30.)

Ver. 45.—**The sixth hour**; *i.e.* noon. Christ was crucified about 9 o'clock a.m., the hour of the morning sacrifice; he had therefore by this time been hanging three hours on the cross. His agonies, his sufferings mental and spiritual, were at their height. **There was darkness over all the land** (*ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν*). The historical accuracy of this darkness there is no more reason to doubt than there is to doubt the death of Christ itself. The great fact and its details stand on the same basis. How the phenomenon was produced we know not. That it could not be an ordinary eclipse is certain, as the moon was then full, it being the Paschal time, and the darkness thus produced would have lasted but a few minutes. Nor had it any connection with the subsequent earthquake (ver. 51), as some unscientific exegetes have supposed. On such occasions a thickness of the atmosphere has been noticed, but such an occurrence could never have been described in the words used by the synoptists; and the earthquake itself was no ordinary event, and took place in no ordinary manner. We cannot doubt that the darkness was supernatural, conveying a solemn lesson to all who beheld it. When we consider what was being done on Calvary, who it was that was dying there, what was the object of his Passion, what was the infinite and unspeakable effect of the sacrifice there offered, is it wonderful that the Divine Architect controlled Nature to sympathize with her Creator, that as a supernatural effulgence heralded the Saviour's birth, a supernatural darkness should shroud his death? We are in the region of the Divine. What we have learned to regard as natural laws (but which really are only our formulary for expressing our experience of past uniformity) were superseded for the time by the interference of the Lawgiver; he used the material to enforce the spiritual, being the Lord of both. Whether the darkness extended beyond Judæa unto all that part of the earth which was then illumined by the light of the sun, we cannot tell. Some of the Fathers refer to it as if it was universal. A supposed allusion was made by Phlegon, a writer of the second century, whose work, called 'Annals of the Olympiads,' is not extant, but is quoted by Julius Africanus and Eusebius (see Wordsworth, *in loc.*); but it seems certain that Phlegon is speaking of an astronomical eclipse which occurred in the ordinary course of nature. Tertullian states that a notice of this darkness was to be found in the archives of Rome ('Apol.,' xxi.); but we have no further information on this point. There are some other uncertain references, as that of Dionysius the Areopagite, who is related to have said on the sudden obscuration, "Either the God of nature is suffering, or the machinery of the world is being dissolved;" but none of these will stand the test of criticism; and perhaps it is safer to determine that Gentile notices of the phenomenon are not forthcoming, because the darkness was confined to Palestine. It had, doubtless, a doctrinal and typical significance. Chrysostom considers it a token of God's anger at the crime of the Jews in crucifying Jesus; others see in it an emblem of the withdrawal of the light of God's presence from this wicked land. It was, indeed, to all who would receive it, a sign of some awful event in the spiritual world of unspeakable consequence to the children of men. **The ninth hour.** Three o'clock p.m., about the time of the evening sacrifice.

Ver. 46.—**Cried** (*ἀνεβόησεν, cried out*) **with a loud voice.** The loud cry at this terrible moment showed that there was still an amount of vitality in that mangled form from which extreme anguish of soul and body forced that pleading utterance. **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say** (*that is*), **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken** (*ἐγκατέλιπες, didst thou forsake*) **me?** This is the only one of our Lord's seven sayings from the cross recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark. The other evangelists do not mention it at all. The language is Aramaic, doubtless that used commonly by our Lord. He quotes the words of the twenty-second psalm as applicable to himself, as offering a fore-ordained expression of his agony of soul. Into the full meaning of this bitter cry we cannot venture irreverently to intrude. At the same time, thus much may be said. It was not mere bodily anguish

that elicited it; it arose from some incalculable affliction of soul. He was bearing the sins of the whole world; the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all; there was no one to comfort him in his heaviness; and the light of God's countenance was for the time withdrawn from him. He was "left" that he might bear man's sins in their full and crushing weight, and by bearing save. Yet there is no despair in this lamentable outcry. He who could thus call upon God has God with him, even in his utter loneliness. "Amid the faintness, or the confusion of mind, felt at the approach of death, he experiences his abandonment by God; and yet his soul rests firmly on, and his will is fully subject to, God, while he is thus tasting death for every man through God's grace. . . . He held firmly to God and retained the Divinity of his life, at the time when in his unity with mankind, and in his human feeling, the feeling of abandonment by God amazed him" (Lange). The verb "forsaken" is not in the perfect tense, as translated in the Authorized Version, but in the aorist; and it implies that during the three hours of darkness Christ had been in silence enduring this utter desolation, which had now come to its climax. The Man Christ Jesus asked *why* he was thus deserted; his human heart would fain comprehend this phase of the propitiatory sufferings which he was undergoing. No answer came from the darkened heaven; but the cry was heard; the unspeakable sacrifice, a sacrifice necessary according to the Almighty's purpose, was accepted, and with his own blood he obtained eternal redemption for man.

Ver. 47.—**Some of them that stood there.** These could not have been the Roman soldiers, for they would not have understood the Saviour's language, and could have known nothing about Elias. Edersheim supposes that the guards were provincial soldiers, and not necessarily of Latin extraction. At any rate, the speakers are Jews standing near enough to the cross to catch more or less the words uttered by Jesus. **This man** (οὗτος, *he*, pointing at him) **calleth for Elias.** Whether they wilfully misinterpreted the half-heard cry, "Eli, Eli!" or whether they really misunderstood it, is an undecided question. In the first case, we must suppose that they spoke in cruel mockery—the last of the brutal insults vented on the meek Sufferer. He cannot save himself; he appeals to the old prophet to come to rescue him; was there ever such presumption? There are two considerations which militate against this supposition. The time of ribaldry and abuse is now past; the supernatural darkness has had a calming and terrifying effect; and there is no spirit of mockery left in the awed bystanders. Besides this, it is not likely that Jews, who with all their errors and vices paid an outward respect to holy things, would have presumed to make a play on the sacred name of God. Therefore it is no more reasonable to hold that, misunderstanding Christ's words, they spoke seriously, with some vague, superstitious idea that Elijah might appear at this crisis, and rescue the Sufferer (see ver. 49).

Ver. 48.—**Ran, and took a sponge.** According to St. John, Jesus had just said, "I thirst." The sponge and the wine were provided for the purpose of ministering some relief to the crucified. Common humanity was not quite extinct even in the executioners and spectators. Vinegar. The acid wine used by the soldiers, and called *posca* (see on ver. 34). **Put it on a reed.** St. John calls it a stalk of hyssop; and if this is the caper plant, it, though of a climbing nature, can produce a stick some three or four feet long (see on ver. 29). **Gave him to drink** (ἐπότιζεν, imperf., *was offering him to drink*); perhaps with the idea of helping him to endure till Elijah came. Thus was fulfilled the psalmist's word, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps. lxix. 21).

Ver. 49.—**The rest** [*but the rest*] **said, Let be** (ἄφες). This is a common expression, meaning, "Stand off!" "Be quiet!" "Soft!" The bystanders addressed the person who had presented the drink. In St. Mark the verb is in the plural, ἄφετε, that is, the giver of the drink calls upon the others to keep quiet and wait. **Let us see whether Elias will come** (ἔρχεται, *cometh*, is coming). They speak in a kind of superstitious mockery, half deriding and half believing in the possible appearance of the great prophet. Between this verse and the following, the Sinaitic, Vatican, and some other manuscripts, together with some few versions, insert a passage borrowed from John xix. 34, "And another taking a spear pierced his side, and there came out water and blood." This evident interpolation has been introduced by a scribe, who deemed it expedient to rectify an omission on St. Matthew's part, and clumsily inserted it in a wrong place. It is to be rejected, not only on critical, but on historical and theological grounds, seeing that it makes the piercing of the side to precede Christ's death, and conveys the impression that it was this spear-wound that cut short his life.

Ver. 50.—**When he had cried again.** He had cried aloud once before (ver. 46). But he does not repeat the former words; the horror of great darkness was past. Probably the cry here resolved itself into the words recorded by St. Luke, "Father, into

thy hands I commend my spirit." **With a loud voice.** This loud cry at the moment of death proved that he laid down his life voluntarily; no man could take it from him (John x. 17, 18); he himself willed to die; and this preternatural voice proceeded from one who died not altogether from physical exhaustion, but from determined purpose. **Yielded up the ghost** (ἀφῆκε τὸ πνεῦμα); literally, *dismissed his spirit; emisit spiritum*). The phrase has been interpreted to signify that Christ exerted his power to anticipate the actual moment of dissolution; but there is no necessity of importing this idea into the expression. It is used ordinarily to denote the act of dying, as we say, "He expired." Perhaps the exertion of uttering this great cry ruptured some organ of the body. We know from the effect of the piercing of his side that his sacred heart was previously broken; and thus he verily and really died upon the cross. He, being in the form of God, and equal with God, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, suffered death for every man. It is to be noted that the death of Christ occurred at 3 p.m., the very time when the Paschal lambs began to be slain in the temple courts. Thus the long-prepared type was at last fulfilled, when "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us."

Vers. 51—56.—*Signs following the death of Christ.* (Mark xv. 38—41; Luke xxiii. 47—49.)

Ver. 51.—**And, behold.** St. Matthew thus introduces his account of the portents which attended the death of the Son of God. The rending of the veil is mentioned by the synoptists as consequent on, and occurring simultaneously with, the completion of the ineffable sacrifice. **The veil of the temple** (τοῦ ναοῦ). There were two principal veils in the present temple—one between the vestibule and the holy place, and one other which is that here referred to, a constituent part of the edifice. This was the veil between the holy place and the holy of holies, which was moved aside only once a year to admit the high priest to the shrine on the great Day of Atonement (Exod. xxvi. 33). It was large and costly, some sixty feet high, and made of rich materials. Josephus ('Bell. Jud.,' v. 5. 4) tells us of one of the veils in the temple, that it was a Babylonian curtain, embroidered with linen in various colours, woven together with wonderful art, such as the eye loved to rest upon. **Was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.** An apocryphal Gospel ('The Gospel of the Hebrews'), quoted by St. Jerome, *in loc.*, asserts that the exquisitely carved lintel to which the veil was fastened was at this moment shattered to pieces, and in its fall tore the curtain asunder. The direction of the rent would show that no human hands had torn it apart, and the rending seems to have preceded the earthquake. The violent act was supernatural, and of a typical nature, as we are taught by Heb. ix. 6—12. The sanctuary enshrined the presence of God, from which the veil excluded every one but the high priest on one special occasion, thus denoting the imperfect reconciliation between God and his people, and that the way to the holiest was not yet made manifest. The rending of this veil betokened the opening of the access to heaven through the wounded body of Christ; as we read in Heb. x. 19, 20, "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." The distinction between Jew and Gentile was abolished, the mysteries of the old Law were opened and manifested, all rites and ceremonies were made of sacramental efficacy, and ministered grace. How soon this ominous occurrence was discovered, we know not. The priest who offered incense at the evening sacrifice about this same hour must have seen it, and spread abroad among his comrades the news, to which many would attach a meaning fatal to the security of their religion. But this was comparatively a private sign; the next one was of a more comprehensive and public character. **The earth did quake, and the rocks rent.** The last verb is the same as was used just before in the case of the veil. There was a local earthquake at this awful moment, as if the very land shuddered at the terrible crime that had been committed. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem is supposed to cover the Golgotha of the Crucifixion (see on ver. 33). "An opening, faced with silver, shows the spot where the cross is said to have been sunk in the rock, and less than five feet from it is a long brass open-work slide, over a cleft in the rock, which is about six inches deep, but is supposed by the pilgrims to reach to the centre of the earth. This is said to mark the rending of the rocks at the Crucifixion" (Geikie, 'Holy Land and Bible,' p. 447). The fact of the earthquake is testified by Phlegon, whose words were quoted by Julius Africanus, in his 'Chronographia' (fragments of which work have been published by Routh and others), and by Eusebius, in his 'Chronicon' (the passage, no longer extant in the original, being preserved by Jerome, and in an Armenian version; see Morison, on ver. 45). The rending of the rocks is attested by St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem ('Cateches.,' xiii. 33), who speaks

of the remarkable fissure in Golgotha, which he had often noticed.

Ver. 52.—**The graves** (*the sepulchres*) **were opened.** The earthquake tore away the stones that closed the mouths of many of the adjacent tombs. This and the following fact are mentioned only by St. Matthew. **Many bodies of the saints which slept** (*τῶν κεκοιμημένων, who had fallen asleep*) **arose.** Matthew anticipates the time of the actual occurrence of the marvel, which took place, not at this moment, but after our Lord's resurrection, who was "the firstfruits of them that slept" (see the next verse). Who are meant by "the saints" here is doubtful. The Jews probably would have understood the term to apply to the worthies of the Old Testament (comp. 2 Pet. iii. 4). But the opening of the sepulchres in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem would not have liberated the bodies of many of those who were buried far away. The persons signified must be those who in life had looked for the hope of Israel, and had seen in Christ that hope fulfilled; they were such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, true believers, who are called saints in the New Testament. How did these bodies arise? or how were they raised up? They were not mere phantoms, unsubstantial visitants from the spirit-world, for they were in some sense corporeal. That they were not resuscitated corpses, as Lazarus, Jairus's daughter, and the son of the widow, who lived for a time a second life, seems plain from the expression applied to them in the next verse, that "they appeared unto many," *i.e.* to persons who had known them while living. Some have thought that in them was anticipated the general resurrection, that, delivered from Hades and united to their bodies, they died no more, but at the Ascension accompanied Christ into heaven. Scripture says nothing of all this, nor have we any reason to suppose that any human body, save that of our blessed Lord (mediæval legends add that of the Virgin Mary), has yet entered the highest heaven (see Heb. xi. 39, 40). Another opinion is that these were not strictly resurrections, but bodily appearances of saints like those of Moses and Elias at the Transfiguration; but it is a straining of language to make the evangelist describe such visitations as bodies arising from open sepulchres. Farrar tries to elude the difficulty by a supposition, as baseless as it is dishonouring to the evangelist's strict and simple veracity. He writes, "An earthquake shook the earth and split the rocks, and as it rolled away from their places the great stones which closed and covered the cavern sepulchres of the Jews, so it seemed to the imaginations of many to have disimprisoned the spirits of the dead, and to have filled the air with ghostly visitants, who, after Christ had risen, appeared to linger in the holy city. Only in some such way," he adds, "can I account for the singular and wholly isolated allusion of Matthew." Because a fact is mentioned by one evangelist only, it is not on this account incredible. St. Matthew was probably an eye-witness of that which he relates, and might have been confuted by his contemporaries, if he had stated what was not true. An early witness to the fact is found in Ignatius, who, in his 'Epistle to the Magnesians,' ch. ix., speaks of Christ when on earth raising the prophets from the dead. The whole matter is mysterious and beyond human ken; but we may well believe that at this great crisis the Lord, who is the Resurrection and the Life, willed to exemplify his victory over death, and to make manifest the resurrection of the body, and this he did by releasing some saintly souls from Hades, and clothing them with the forms in which they had formerly lived, and permitting them to show themselves thus to those who knew and loved them. Of the future life of these resuscitated saints we know nothing, and will not presumptuously venture to inquire. When they have demonstrated that the sting was now taken from death, that the power of the grave was broken, that men shall rise again with their bodies and be known and recognized, they pass out of sight into the unseen world, and we can follow them no further.

Ver. 53.—**Came out of** (*ἐξελθόντες*) **the graves after his resurrection.** The masculine participle, not agreeing with "bodies" (*σώματα*), denotes the personality of the bodies of the saints, that these arose perfect in soul and body. They could not rise before Christ rose. "Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's." Ewald and others have understood "after his resurrection" to mean "after he raised them from the dead." But the language is against such an interpretation, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the words refer to Christ's own resurrection. If it be contended that the word used, *ἔγερσις*, is active in sense, we may reply that, granting this, it merely emphasizes Christ's voluntary action in raising himself. As was said above, St. Matthew anticipates the regular sequence of events in order to complete at one view his accounts of the portents that attended the death and resurrection of Christ. **The holy city.** Jerusalem, as in ch. iv. 5. The guilty Jerusalem is still the holy city, as retaining the temple, with its services, the ministry, the Scriptures. Some would understand the heavenly Jerusalem,

into which these spiritual bodies entered; but the context is wholly against such an exposition. **Appeared unto many.** They were permitted to show themselves openly in their well-known forms to pious relations and friends, as witnesses and proofs of the resurrection. If they had already gone to heaven, they could not have thus appeared. It may be right to add that many of the Fathers and modern commentators hold that these resuscitated saints were those to whom Christ preached (1 Pet. iii. 19) when he descended into hell, and that they accompanied him into glory when he ascended into heaven.

Ver. 54.—**The centurion, and they that were with him.** The officer with the small body of soldiers appointed to perform and take charge of the Crucifixion. St. Matthew relates the impression which these events made upon the soldiers' minds. **Saw those things that were done.** Instead of this reading, which has high authority, Alford, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort read, "that were being done," as the Vulgate, *quæ fiebant*. This would point especially to the loud cry, in accordance with the words of St. Mark, "saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost." But there is no sufficient reason for altering the Received Text; and plainly it was not merely the closing incident that affected the soldiers, but the whole course of events which they witnessed. They saw the darkness, the earthquake, the rending of the rocks, the Divine meekness of the Sufferer; they heard his last words, his loud cry, and marked his patient death. All these things contributed to their awe and fear. **They feared greatly.** This crucified Man must be something more than human, for all these wonders to accompany his death: will he not visit upon us our part in his crucifixion? Have we nothing to fear from his vengeance? Some such course their apprehensions may have taken. But they learned something beyond selfish dread of possible danger. **Truly this was the Son** (*Υἱὸς*, anarthrous, *Son*) **of God**; or, according to St. Luke, "Certainly this was a righteous Man." They recognized his innocence, and acknowledged that he suffered unjustly. What the centurion meant (for the words appear to have been his) by calling him "Son of God" is more doubtful. It may have been on his lips merely an affirmation that Jesus was holy and beloved by God; but more probably it meant much more than this. He knew that Christ claimed to be the Son of God, and in this hour of overwhelming awe he felt that the claim was just, whatever it might mean. This crucified Person was at least a hero or a demigod, or that which the words would imply in a Jewish sense, though he knew only imperfectly what was signified thereby. Tradition affirms that the centurion's name was Longinus, that he became a devoted follower of Christ, preached the faith, and died a martyr's death.

Ver. 55.—**Many women.** These are mentioned as witnesses of all these events which the apostles are not recorded to have seen. Courageous and loving, they had followed the procession to Calvary, and at a distance watched the woeful proceedings there. Some, we know, had ventured to come closer to their dying Lord (see John xix. 25). **Which followed** (equivalent to *had followed*) **Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him.** They had accompanied Jesus on his last journey to the Passover at Jerusalem, tending him during all the time, and of their substance ministering to his wants (Luke viii. 3).

Ver. 56.—The historian mentions the most prominent of these pious women. **Mary Magdalene** (*ἡ Μαγδαληνή, the Magdalene*). She was a native of Magdala (ch. xv. 39, where see note), a small village on the shore of Gennesaret. Some have identified her with the sister of Lazarus, chiefly because, taking her to be the "sinner" mentioned in Luke vii. 37, she is related to have behaved in a somewhat similar way to our Lord as her namesake. But this is clearly a mistake. Of the two events, the locality, the scene, the occasion, the circumstances, are different. Of this Mary of Magdala we really know nothing, except that out of her Jesus had cast seven devils (Mark xvi. 9; Luke viii. 2). That these were demons of impurity, or that she was the sinful woman who anointed our Lord, there is nothing whatever to prove; though the notion connected with the name Magdalene is so rooted in men's minds and language that it is impossible to eradicate it, however erroneous it may be shown to be. She had probably been one who was melancholy mad, and subject to fits; Christ had seen the spiritual cause of this malady, and removed it by freeing her from demoniacal possession. What wonder is it that she followed him from Galilee, tending him lovingly and anxiously until the end? **Mary the mother of James and Joses.** Some manuscripts read *Joseph;* but the Received Text is correct. These two persons are mentioned among our Lord's "brethren" in ch. xiii. 55. The former is called "James the Less" (Mark xv. 40), and is the apostle of that name. Mary is usually supposed to be the wife of Cleophas (John xix. 25), and the sister of the mother of our Lord; so that these two disciples would be Christ's first cousins. The matter is shrouded in difficulty, and cannot be decided with

absolute certainty. From the present passage, at any rate, one fact is shown, that they were not Christ's uterine brothers—a truth which needed no mention, were not the dishonouring heresy of Helvidius still rife among us. **The mother of Zebedee's children.** Salome (ch. xx. 20; Mark xv. 40). The rejection of her ambitious petition had not lessened her love and devotion to Christ.

Vers. 57—61.—*The burial of the body of Jesus.* (Mark xv. 42—47; Luke xxiii. 50—56; John xix. 38—42.)

Ver. 57.—**When the even was come.** This was what was called the first evening, the time between the ninth hour, or three o'clock, and sunset, and the great sabbath would shortly be beginning. It was the Roman custom to leave criminals hanging on the cross for days, till their bodies were devoured by birds and wild animals; the Jewish Law enacted that when bodies were penally suspended, they should be taken down and buried before night (Deut. xxi. 22, 23), that the land might not be defiled. To-morrow (beginning at sunset), being a specially solemn day, as combining the sabbath and the Passover celebration, the Jews were particularly anxious that the crucified bodies of our Lord and the two robbers should be taken away and put out of sight before the sabbath began. To effect this object, they went to Pilate, and begged him to put an end to their sufferings by the sharp, short process of breaking their legs. St. John's account must be referred to for this and the result of the soldiers' examination of our Lord. **There came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple.** He is further said to have been "an honourable counsellor," *i.e.* a member of the Sanhedrin, "a good man and a just, who also waited for the kingdom of God, and had not consented to the counsel and deed" of the rest of the rulers. "It was divinely appointed," says the Ven. Bede, "that Joseph should be rich, in order to have access to Pilate, for no mean man could have access to the governor; and that he should be a just man, in order to receive the body of our Lord." This man's native place was Arimathæa, a town with much probability identified with Ramathaim-Zophim of 1 Sam. i. 1, which lay in Mount Ephraim, and was the birthplace of the Prophet Samuel. That he was "a rich man" naturally gave him some influence with Pilate, and, joined with his position as a Sanhedrist, made his request more likely to be granted. "One Joseph was appointed by God to be guardian of Christ's body in the virgin womb, and another Joseph was the guardian of his body in the virgin tomb, and each Joseph is called a 'just man' in Holy Scripture" (Wordsworth).

Ver. 58.—**He went to Pilate.** St. Mark says, "came and went in boldly unto Pilate." He had hitherto been a disciple of Christ, "secretly for fear of the Jews" (John xix. 38); now that Christ was dead, and his death accompanied with such manifest wonders, according absolutely with ancient prophecy, and fulfilling Christ's own predictions, he hesitated no longer, he openly professed his partisanship, and threw in his lot with the Crucified. If from expediency or pusillanimity he had refrained from taking a prominent position as a favourer of this wonderful Teacher, he had lately learned a new lesson, and hailed the opportunity of publicly honouring him deceased whom in his heart he had loved and reverenced while alive. So he went to the Prætorium to see the procurator, whose sanction was required for removing the body of a criminal from the cross. It was probably after the deputation of the Jews to Pilate, mentioned by St. John (xix. 31), that Joseph had his interview. **Begged the body of Jesus.** It was not unusual for friends to obtain leave to pay the last rites and to give decent sepulture in such cases; otherwise the corpses were thrown carelessly into nameless graves, if they were not left to rot on the cross. The indignities which Christ had suffered during life now began to be reversed. **Commanded the body to be delivered.** Pilate first, we are told, sent for the officer in charge of the execution, and finding from him that Jesus was really dead, granted Joseph's request. Perhaps he desired at the same time to flout the chief priests, and likewise to make some slight reparation to the innocent Victim of his policy.

Ver. 59.—**When Joseph had taken the body.** In order to effect this, the cross would be taken up and deposited upon the ground, the nails would be drawn from hands and feet, the cord unbound (if cord there was), and the corpse laid reverently down. We must remember that this act of Joseph and his friends was not only a bold proceeding, but an act of great self-denial. Contact with a corpse caused ceremonial defilement of seven days' duration, and thus they would be debarred from taking their part in the great Paschal solemnity, with its solemn and joyful observances. But the love of Jesus and the unselfish desire to render him honour enabled them to rise superior to religious prejudices, and willingly to make the required sacrifice. **Wrapped it in a clean linen cloth;** literally, *swathed it in clean linen.* The body was enveloped in a sheet of fine linen, pure and clean, as was

fitting. The linen was a fine Indian cloth or muslin, much used for such purposes in Egypt. The body would then be taken to its destination on an open bier. St. John adds the fact that Nicodemus took part in the entombment, bringing a large amount of myrrh and aloes for a temporary embalming, the near approach of the sabbath leaving no time for more elaborate offices. All had to be done with the utmost expedition consistent with propriety and reverence, to avoid encroachment on the rest of that high sabbath. Some of the preparations for burial would doubtless be made in the vestibule of the tomb, which was a small court, but spacious enough for the purpose. Here the limbs would be separately bound with folds of linen, between layers of spices, the head being wrapped in a napkin.

Ver. 60.—**Laid it in his own new tomb.** It was placed on one of the shelves or recesses formed in the sides of the sepulchre. Thus did the Saviour make "his grave with the wicked" (dying between two thieves), "and with the rich in his death" (Isa. liii. 9). It was fitting that he whose body saw no corruption should be buried in a grave which had never been tainted by a human corpse. Thus also it was ensured that no other body could rise thence except his who alone was buried therein. This tomb, St. John tells us, was quite close at hand, which at that hurried time would be an additional reason for making use of it. **Which he had hewn out in the rock.** The tomb was a chamber artificially excavated in the face of the rock, with one entrance only. The wealthy Jews were especially fond of appropriating vaults for the burial of themselves and their families. The neighbourhood of Jerusalem (as other parts of Palestine) abounds with tombs cut in the solid limestone. Recent opinion has veered round to adherence to the traditional site of the holy sepulchre, of which the identification dates from the earliest days; that which is known as "Gordon's tomb" meeting with scant acceptance from experts, and other sites not fully answering the requirements of the case. The existing Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, in the church of that designation, is thus described by Dr. Geikie ('Holy Land and Bible,' pp. 437, etc.): On entering the church, "immediately before you is 'the stone of unction,' said to mark the spot on which our Lord's body was laid in preparation for burial, after being anointed. It is a large slab of limestone. . . . A few steps to the left is the place where, as they tell us, the women stood during the anointing, and from this you pass at once, still keeping to the left, into the great round western end of the church—the model of all the circular churches of Europe—under the famous dome, which rests on eighteen pillars, with windows round the circle from which the dome springs. In the centre of this space, which is sixty-seven feet across, is the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, about twenty-six feet long and eighteen feet wide, a tasteless structure of reddish limestone, like marble, decorated all along the top with gilt nosegays and modern pictures, and its front ablaze with countless lamps. Inside it is divided into two parts, the one marking, as is maintained, the spot where the angels stood at the Resurrection, the other believed to contain the sepulchre of Christ. . . . In the centre, cased in marble, stands what is called a piece of the stone rolled away by the angel; and at the western end, entered by a low doorway, is the reputed tomb-chamber of our Lord, a very small spot, for it is only six feet wide, a few inches longer, and very low. . . . The tomb itself is a raised table, two feet high, three feet wide, and over six feet long, the top of it serving as an altar, over which the darkness is only relieved by the dim lamps." **A great stone.** Joseph and his friends closed the entrance to the cave by rolling up to it, and partly in it, a huge stone, to obviate all danger of the sacred body being meddled with by evil beasts or men. The Jewish sepulchres were often furnished with real doors, either of stone or wood, as is proved by existing remains, which show grooves and marks where hinges have been; Joseph's tomb was not thus supplied, either from being still in an unfinished state, or constructed on a different principle. We cannot reason from the present state of the sepulchre that it is too unlike what we must conceive the original to have been to permit of the supposed identification. If other criteria point to this site, the difficulties connected with present appearances may be overcome by the consideration that the whole features of the place were altered by Constantine, the Crusaders, and other builders. The surrounding rock has in many parts been cut away, and the surface levelled or lowered, and the only portion left *in situ* is the inner chamber where the Lord's body was laid. Captain Conder objects to the traditional site. His own theory, which points to a rock-hewn tomb near the Grotto of Jeremiah, may be seen in the *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund, April, 1883. **And departed.** He had done what he could: sorrowing, he left the place of sepulture. Tradition has traced the later life of Joseph. He is said to have been sent by the Apostle Philip to Britain, in company with other disciples, and to have settled at Glastonbury, in Somersetshire, then much nearer to an arm of the sea than it is now. Here he erected a little oratory of wicker-work,

the first Christian house of prayer that England saw, which was afterwards superseded by the noble abbey whose remains we admire to this day. There is no certain foundation on which the story rests; the only evidence of visitors from Palestine having ever arrived at Glastonbury is the existence of an Eastern thorn-tree on Wearyall Hill, which possesses the curious property of blossoming at Christmas. The original tree, which sprang from Joseph's staff, is reported to have flourished till the reign of Charles I., when it was destroyed by the Puritans; but scions or cuttings were taken from it, and many such bushes are still to be found in different parts of the country.

Ver. 61.—**The other Mary.** The mother of James and Joses (ver. 56). These pious women could not tear themselves from the spot where their Lord was buried. The last to leave him dead, they were the first to see him risen. And now they watch the last ceremonies at a distance, intending to complete the imperfect embalmment with loving care as soon as ever the sabbath was over. "Seest thou women's courage?" says Chrysostom; "seest thou their affection? seest thou their noble spirit in expending money [Mark xvi. 1; Luke xxiii. 56]? their noble spirit even unto death? Let us men imitate the women; let us not forsake Jesus in temptations." We may note that the care of Joseph in providing an inviolable tomb, and the preparations of these good women, showed that they as yet had no faith in the incorruptibility of Christ's body or of his corporeal resurrection from the dead.

Vers. 62—66.—*The great sabbath. The sepulchre sealed and watched.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.)

Ver. 62.—**The next day, that followed the day of the preparation;** ἥτις ἐστὶ μετὰ τὴν παρασκευήν, *which is* [the day] *after the preparation.* The language of the original implies that the day was one of a class. The present day was the 15th of Nisan, and both a sabbath and the chief day of the Passover festival. The term "preparation," or "prosabbath" (Judith viii. 6), was applied by the Jews to the day preceding the sabbath or the chief festivals (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xvi. 6. 2); but by the time the gospel was committed to writing, Paraskeuē had become among Christians the usual designation of the day of Christ's death; hence the sabbath, which was of less importance than the crucifixion day, is here called, "the day after the Paraskeuē." The language of the synoptists leads to the conclusion that the action of the Sanhedrists in applying to Pilate took place on the sabbath, their uneasy conscience and fear of some surprising event overcoming that scrupulous regard to the sanctity of the holy day which they would have strictly enforced upon others. It is just possible, however, that they postponed their application till the evening, having nothing to fear till "the third day." **Came together unto Pilate;** *were gathered together.* A large deputation of the chief men presented itself before the procurator, anxious to obtain his aid to prevent all tampering with the buried body of Jesus, at the same time apprehending some event, they knew not what, which might tend to corroborate his claims. Neologians have argued against the credibility of this section of the gospel history, and have been followed by some commentators of greater faith. A refutation of the most prominent objections will be found in Alford's notes on ver. 62.

Ver. 63.—**We remember,** etc. The prophecy concerning Christ's resurrection on the third day might have been made known to them in various ways. Thus they may have heard and partially understood our Lord's allusion to Jonah (ch. xii. 40), or the words on which the false accusation was founded (John ii. 19); or the apostles themselves may have divulged the mysterious announcement, and a general impression had been produced that Jesus had constantly affirmed that he would rise on the third day. It is true that the apostles and the good women were far from believing in the realization of this assertion in the manner in which it came to pass. They probably looked for Christ's return in glory to establish his kingdom and to reign as Messiah. The rulers received the prediction in its literal sense, "hatred being more keen-sighted than love;" hence they took practical precautions against its collusive or pretended fulfilment. **That deceiver** (ἐκεῖνος ὁ πλάνος: literally, *that vagabond yonder*). That impostor, who has become so famous, and whom you know all about. They imply that without further definition, Pilate understands whom they mean; and their calumnies and reviling cease not even with their Victim's death. **While he was yet alive.** These bitter enemies of Jesus, who had the best means of ascertaining the truth, certainly regarded him as now dead. Yet some modern sceptics resort to the theory of a trance to account for the Resurrection, whose historical accuracy they cannot gainsay. **After three days.** A popular form of expression, which would denote any space which embraced portions of three days, in the present case being part of Friday, all Saturday, and part of Sunday. **I will rise again** (ἐγείρομαι, *I rise*). The present tense implies greater and more assured certainty than the future.

Ver. 64.—**Command therefore.** In con-

sideration of the fact which we have stated, and of our apprehension of some imposture. The rulers had no power in themselves to take the measures which they required. Jesus was a state criminal, and they dared not assume the responsibility of guarding his tomb from invasion. **Until the third day.** Which was all that was necessary, as Christ had promised to rise on that day—neither before nor after it; and if it passed without the predicted event, he would be proved to be an impostor. **Come by night** (*νυκτός*). This word is absent from the best manuscripts and from the Vulgate. It seems to have been an early interpolation. **And steal him away.** A most unlikely hypothesis under the circumstances. The disciples had forsaken Christ while alive, were now hiding in terror, and utterly demoralized and depressed; were they likely to incur further danger for the sake of supporting an assertion, which, unless it proved absolutely true, would only further crush their faith and hope? The rulers seem to have had an uneasy feeling that Jesus might reappear, and they thus prepared themselves to cast discredit upon him, even if, like Lazarus, he rose from the dead. This explanation of the Resurrection has obtained among the Jews from the time of Justin Martyr ('Dial. c. Tryph.,' xvii.; cviii.), and has scarcely yet died out, though in many quarters what is called the "vision-hypothesis" has taken its place (see on ch. xxviii. 15, and Edersheim, ii. pp. 626, *etc.*). **The people.** The Pharisees were always disdainful of the vulgar herd. "This people who knoweth not the Law are cursed" (John vii. 49). **The last error . . . the first.** "Error" is *πλάνη*, as they had called Christ *πλάνος* (ver. 63), so the word here may be taken actively, as meaning "imposture." The deception arising from his death and supposed resurrection would be of graver consequence than that concerned with his previous life. Morison, considering the word to have its usual meaning of "error," regards it as used by the Pharisees in a political sense, in accordance with the governor's standpoint: "If that deceiver's body should be stolen by his disciples, the fickle people will undoubtedly leap back to their old conclusion, that after all he was what he professed to be. This conclusion would be, as we all know, an 'error;' but yet it would be most injurious to the interests of Cæsar. There would be more political disaffection than ever." It is more simple to say that the first error, the acceptance of Christ's Messianic claims, was not of such decided and far-reaching consequence as would be the belief in his resurrection. They do not, indeed, see all that such belief involves; but they understood enough to know that it would give supernatural importance to all the words and acts of his life.

Ver. 65.—**Ye have a watch** (*ἔχετε κουστωδίαν, take a guard*). Pilate answers briefly and haughtily, "Well, I give permission; do as you like; take a body of soldiers as a guard, and go your way." This last verb is imperative, so the former is most probably imperative also. If taken as indicative, the question arises—What guard had they? This is difficult to answer, unless, as Alford supposes, it may refer to some detachment placed at their disposal during the feast. But of this we know nothing historically. **Make it as sure** (*ἀσφαλίσασθε, secure it for yourselves*) **as ye can**; literally, *as ye know how*. Take any precaution you think fit to employ.

Ver. 66.—**So they** (*οἱ δὲ, and they*) **went.** They left the procurator's presence, relieved at having gained their request and precluded all fear of collusion. **Sealing the stone, and setting a watch** (*μετὰ τῆς κουστωδίας, with the watch; cum custodibus*). The last words are variously rendered. Thus: "sealed the stone by means of the watch" (Alford); "sealing the stone, the guard being with them" (Revised Version); "as well as having the watch" (Webster and Wilkinson); "in concert with the guard" (Morison). This last expositor has best seized the complex notion contained in the evangelist's language: "They made the sepulchre sure by sealing the stone in concert with the guard (and thereafter leaving the guard to keep watch)." The stone was sealed probably in this manner: a cord was passed round the stone that closed the mouth of the sepulchre to the two sides of the entrance; this was sealed with wax or prepared clay in the centre and at the ends, so that the stone could not be removed without breaking the seals or the cord (comp. Dan. vi. 17). Thus carefully did Christ's enemies obviate the possibility of any fraud or collusion; thus did they themselves prove unanswerably the truth and reality of the resurrection of that same Jesus whose dead body they so carefully guarded. "Everywhere deceit recoils upon itself, and against its will supports the truth. It was necessary for it to be believed that he died, and that he rose again, and that he was buried, and all these things are brought to pass by his enemies. . . . The proof of his resurrection has become incontrovertible by what ye [his enemies] have put forward. For because it was sealed, there was no unfair dealing. But if there was no unfair dealing, and the sepulchre was found empty, it is manifest that he is risen, plainly and incontrovertibly. Seest thou how even against their will they contend for the proof of the truth?" (St. Chrysostom, *in loc.*).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The end of Judas.* I. THE FORMAL CONDEMNATION OF OUR LORD. 1. *The Sanhedrin.* "When the morning was come," St. Matthew says—the morning which followed the long sad hours of that night of mockery and shame; the morning which ushered in the greatest day in the world's history, the day signalized by the darkest crime ever wrought upon this sinful earth, illustrated by the one all-sufficient Sacrifice for sin, by the noblest deed of holiest self-devotion which has brightened the annals of the human race;—on that memorable morning all the chief priests and elders of the people came together. They met now to pronounce the formal sentence of death. Their previous meeting was illegal. A capital cause could, by their own rules, be tried only during daylight. This meeting, which St. Luke describes at greater length than the first two evangelists, was held to render valid the irregular sentence passed in the night. They were careful to observe forms and precedents; they heeded not the awful guilt which they were contracting. 2. *The delivery to the Gentiles.* Again they bound him who is the King of kings. And then they fulfilled his own prophecy—they delivered him "to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him" (ch. xx. 19). They had determined on his death. It was "not lawful for them to put any man to death;" but they scrupled not to employ the agency of the hated Romans to accomplish their wicked purpose. They hated Pilate; he had deserved their hatred by his cruelties and by his scornful contempt of their religious prejudices. But they hated the holy Jesus more than they hated the cruel and haughty Pilate; and they delivered Jesus, that is, they betrayed him; they completed the evil deed of Judas. As he betrayed his Master to them, so they betrayed their King, their Messiah, to the Roman Pilate. It was an act of treason, awful treason, against the Divine King of the Jews. Indeed, they knew not what they did. "I wot," said St. Peter, after the Ascension, "that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts iii. 17). They would not have dared thus to treat the Lord, had they believed him to be the long-expected Messiah. But their ignorance was guilty ignorance. If they had searched the Scriptures with a single heart, they must have seen in the Lord's life the signs of the Messiah. Some of them were old enough to remember the visit of the Magi, and the excitement which it caused in Jerusalem. All knew more or less of the Lord's beautiful life, of his holy teaching, of his works of love and power. But they were blinded by hypocrisy and self-interest. They had long sought his death. The solemn entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the "Hosanna!" shouts, the enthusiasm of the multitude, followed by the controversies in the temple, with the Lord's awful parables and his stern condemnation of the dominant religionism, deepened their resentment and confirmed them in their wicked purpose. They proposed to seize him after the feast-day; but the unexpected treachery of Judas enabled them to take him at once without uproar or danger. They knew his absolute innocence; they saw his holy calmness, his meek, patient self-possession in the midst of insults; they heard his majestic assertion of his Divine office and dignity. They would not believe; they were blinded by their prejudices, their pride, their interest; they made the guilt of Judas their own; they completed his fearful treason, and delivered their King into the hands of the merciless Roman governor, whose cruel contemptuous character they knew so well, and whom they expected to be the ready and willing instrument for carrying out their evil design.

II. JUDAS. 1. *His remorse.* He had probably mingled with the crowd of spectators, like Peter. He had nothing to fear, as Peter had. It is said that there is a strange, awful attraction which draws a murderer irresistibly to the scene of his crime; some such feeling forced Judas to linger about the high priest's palace. We know not what his thoughts were during that fearful night. It is possible (though there is no Scripture foundation for the theory) that he may have looked forward, even more eagerly than the other apostles, for the expected earthly reign of the Messiah; he may have been vexed and angry with the Lord for not claiming the throne of David, and thus raising his followers to rank and eminence. It is just possible (very improbable it seems to us) that he may have designed by his treachery to force the Lord to declare himself as the Messiah, to exert his supernatural power, and to set up his kingdom in

Jerusalem. It is certain that his avaricious spirit was troubled exceedingly by what he called the waste of Mary's precious ointment, and that the Lord's reproof, though gentle and loving, irritated his dark and gloomy temper, and became, through the temptations of the evil being to whom he had sold himself, the goad which drove him to his deadly sin. He brooded over his supposed wrongs; he fretted himself till he was moved to do the most evil deed the world had ever seen. He gave place to the devil; Satan entered into him, and filled him with malice and hatred, and whispered that he might by one act have his revenge, and compensate himself for the fancied loss caused by Mary's generous offering. Perhaps evil thoughts like this, bitter recollections of supposed slights, cruel exultation over his successful treachery and his ill-gotten gains, filled the traitor's heart during the night, and for a while kept him from feeling the horror of his crime. But in the morning he saw that Christ was condemned. He had not exerted his Divine power; the twelve legions of angels had not come to his aid. He was condemned like any common malefactor, and delivered to Pilate for the cruel death of the cross. And Judas was the cause of this. He had murdered his Friend, his Master, his Lord, the Innocent, the Holiest One. He repented now; but his repentance was not *μετάνοια*—not a change of heart, not repentance unto life; it was only *μεταμέλεια*, a change of thought as to his crime (comp. Trench, 'New Test. Syn.,' sect. 69). He saw his sin now in a different point of view. He could no longer gloat over the luxury of revenge, the evil pleasure of wicked gains; for his crime seemed to glare upon him with fiery eyes; he saw its full horror, its blackness, its hideousness. The thirty pieces of silver which he had coveted were cankered now; they were a witness against him, a witness of his infamy and of his foul treachery; they seemed to eat his flesh as it were fire. He loathed, he hated them; he returned them to the chief priests and elders. "I have sinned," he said, "in that I have betrayed innocent blood." Can he have thought that by returning the price of blood he might stay the accomplishment of that deed of blood? If he had such a thought, his hope was at once extinguished by the cold cruelty of the answer, "What is that to us? see thou to that." The guilt was his, they said. They forgot that it was equally theirs. Pilate very soon after forced them to admit it; he was innocent of that blood, he said, "See ye to it." But now they derided the misery of their companion in guilt; he was their tool; he had served their purpose; they would fling him away. 2. *His despair.* There was no hope for him; those cruel words drove him to madness. Perhaps he remembered words more awful still, though they were spoken in warning, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born." He had not listened to the Saviour's warning voice; he had thought more of that paltry bribe than of his own poor soul. Avarice, that degrading vice, had eaten all good and holy thoughts out of his mind; his heart was hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Could he not even now in his misery see his guilt and own his sin, and weep like Peter, and like Peter be forgiven? Alas! no. A horror of great darkness seemed to engulf him; he could not see that look of love and sorrow which had won Peter to repentance. He had trodden underfoot the Son of God; he could not bear even to think of Christ. He had done despite to the Spirit of grace; the Spirit had departed from him. He had no hope either in this world or in the world to come. He could not enjoy the miserable wages of his treason; he threw the pieces of silver back to the priests as they sat or officiated in the sanctuary. He departed; he went and hanged himself. His death was attended by strange circumstances of horror; his name has become a word of reproach; his memory is associated with all that is hateful and accursed. Yet he was an apostle, "one of the twelve," one of the princes of the Church, who were to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. His history is full of awful warning to all Christian people, especially to the ministers of Christ's Holy Word and sacraments. It reminds us that the highest places in the Church are not always safe, that we may not dare to trust in external privileges, however great they may be. It warns us that the deadly sins of ambition and avarice may ensnare those who seem very near to Christ. It adds force and weight to the Lord's solemn lesson, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." 3. *The conduct of the chief priests.* They would not put the money into the temple treasury, because it was the price of blood; yet they themselves had brought about the bloodshedding of which that money was the price. The money was accursed in their eyes, but not the

wicked deed. Very strange is the self-deceit with which hypocrites blind their hearts and cheat their consciences. They bought with the pieces of silver the potter's field to bury strangers in. It was the field, it seems (comp. Acts i. 18), in which Judas had put an end to his miserable life, the field which he had designed to purchase with the reward of his iniquity. It was well called "the field of blood;" it was defiled with that scene of blood and horror, and it was bought with the price of blood. The chief priests perhaps regarded this purchase as a work of charity. So again and again in the course of history have men sought, by charitable foundations of various kinds, to atone for past transgressions. Many such gifts have been given in true repentance; and as the earnest and expression of repentance they are, we may not doubt, accepted. Without repentance and faith they can no more help the guilty soul than the gift of the potter's field could atone for the blood-guiltiness of the chief priests. 4. *The fulfilment of prophecy.* St. Matthew again, as in so many other places, refers to the writings of the prophets. His thoughts seem to have dwelt much in reverent awe on the great mysteries of the sovereignty and foreknowledge of God, and of that overruling providence which ever brings to pass the counsels of the Most High. There is, apparently, an ancient transcriber's error here, and other difficulties, which this is not the place to examine. But the passage (Zech. xi. 12, 13) is very remarkable. The price to be given is weighed, it is to be fixed at thirty pieces of silver. The Lord speaks of it as the "price that I [the Lord God] was prised at of them." The price is cast down in the house of the Lord; it comes ultimately to the potter. The prophecy was fulfilled. The price of the Saviour's blood bought a resting-place for the bodies of Gentile strangers in the neighbourhood of the holy city—an illustration of the great and blessed truth that by the blood of Christ those are made nigh who sometime were afar off, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; but now, through him, are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

LESSONS. 1. "The love of money is the root of all evil." Fight hard against it. 2. It grows and strengthens with years. Resist it in its beginnings. 3. Ill-gotten gains bring misery. Flee from them. 4. Mark the strange inconsistencies of hypocrisy. Pray to be true and real.

Vers. 11—25.—*Christ before Pilate.* I. THE ACCUSATION. 1. *Pilate's question.* Pilate was proud and cruel; he despised and hated the Jews. But he had something of the old Roman love of justice—he would not condemn the Lord unheard, as the Jews at first desired (John xviii. 30, 31). He rejected their request contemptuously, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your Law." They kept back at first the charge of blasphemy, which they knew Pilate would dismiss at once, as Gallio afterwards dismissed a similar accusation. They invented fresh charges in their cruel injustice—charges which would, they thought, force Pilate to act as they wished. "We found this fellow," they said, "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a King." The first two charges were utterly and manifestly false; the third had some show of truth. Pilate put the question to the accused, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" 2. *The Lord's answer.* "Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest." It is an emphatic affirmation; he was the King of the Jews; he is the King of the Israel of God. At his nativity the Wise Men came from the East, asking, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" At the beginning of his ministry he permitted Nathanael to address him as the King of Israel; at his solemn entry into Jerusalem he would not listen to the Pharisees when they bade him rebuke those who were welcoming him as "the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord." He would not conceal the great and solemn truth; but neither would he leave Pilate in ignorance of the true nature of his claims. "My kingdom is not of this world," he said (John xviii. 36). Pilate understood the hollowness of the charge of sedition; he was not deceived by the clamour of the Jews, "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." He understood enough of the Lord's words and position to feel that the kingdom which he claimed was of a spiritual character, not opposed to the rule of Cæsar; he felt that the accusation was false and malicious. 3. *The Lord's silence.* He had answered Pilate; he would not answer the false charges of the chief priests

and elders. Pilate had some sense of justice; they had none. Their one object was to compass his death; they cared not for truth or justice, but only for the accomplishment of their wicked purpose. They brought charge after charge, all alike untrue. The Saviour heeded them not. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." He stood before them in calm majestic silence. Pilate, anxious, it seems, to hear his defence, pressed him to answer; but still "he answered him to never a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." He had never seen such a Prisoner before, so calm and collected in the immediate prospect of a death of agony, so meek and yet so dignified; he felt the nobleness of Christ, and he strove to deliver him.

II. JESUS OR BARABBAS. 1. *The choice offered to the Jews.* Pilate was, as St. Peter afterwards said (Acts iii. 13), determined to let the Saviour go. He tried every expedient. At first he declined to hear the case: "Take ye him, and judge him." Then, when forced to hear it, he declared himself convinced of his innocence: "I find in him no fault at all." Then he sent him to Herod. Now he appeals to the people, hoping, perhaps, that they would reverse the judgment of the chief priests, or possibly wishing to shift the responsibility of the decision from himself. He was ready, according to custom at the Passover, to release a prisoner. There was a prisoner called Barabbas, probably a mere robber and murderer (Acts iii. 14); possibly, as some have thought, a leader of a band of patriots, who sought to do what Christ was accused of seeking—to put down the Roman power and to restore the Jewish kingdom. Pilate waited till a multitude was gathered together. He gave them the choice between the two prisoners—Jesus the Christ or Barabbas the robber. He had heard, perhaps had seen, how the Lord had been welcomed into the city five days before; he thought that the people would ask for his release, and that so he should be saved from the ungrateful task of condemning One whom he knew to be innocent. 2. *Pilate's wife.* She had had a dream that morning. She saw in a vision the holy and innocent Saviour. It may be she saw his awful sufferings; it may be she saw him in his majesty sitting on the throne of his glory to judge the world. Whatever the dream was, it caused her much anxiety. She sent at once to Pilate. He was sitting on the judgment-seat, awaiting the decision of the multitude. The message was, "Have thou nothing to do with that just Man." It seems, then, that something was known of the Lord Jesus in the household of Pilate. The governor had heard, perhaps, of his miracles; probably of the great influence which he had possessed in Galilee. He had heard also of his innocence; he was no leader of sedition, no conspirator against Cæsar. Pilate's wife had no hesitation, no fears of consequences, such as her husband had. She bade him deliver the falsely accused, the Innocent One. Happy would it have been for him if he had followed her advice! 3. *Barabbas chosen.* The people, left to themselves, might, perhaps, have chosen rightly. We are not told what was the composition of the crowd; whether there was a large Galilæan element in it; whether or no many were present out of those great multitudes which had received the Lord on Palm Sunday with so much enthusiasm. Some of them, surely, must have been there; they must at least have felt an interest in the fate of One who a few days ago had been so conspicuous; curiosity, if no better motive, would have brought them there. But however this may have been, the chief priests and rulers, who ought to have guided the people aright, led them astray. They mingled with the crowd, they stirred them, they appealed to their Jewish prejudices, they used all the arts of persuasion; and they succeeded in turning the current of popular opinion. The voice of the people is by no means always the voice of God. Crowds are apt to be led by sudden impulse, by a cry, by ignorant party spirit. Alas! for a nation, when its clergy or its chief men guide it into error. The chief priests must have been astonished at the rapidity the completeness of their own success. Five days before, the Pharisees had "said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him." But now, when after a pause for consideration, the governor put the question to the multitude, "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" they all said, "Barabbas." They denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them. And when Pilate asked again, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" the fierce cruel answer burst from the crowd, "Let him be crucified!" It was the first mention of the cross, save in the prophetic

language of the Lord himself. It was known, perhaps, that that fearful punishment awaited Barabbas and the two other malefactors; and the chief priests, it may be, thought that by bringing about that mode of death they would both satisfy their own cruel hatred and exhibit the Lord as a raiser of sedition, a conspirator against the Roman government. The question had shown Pilate's want of courage. A judge should not devolve his responsibility upon the populace. He made now a weak attempt to check the violence of the crowd. "What evil hath he done?" he asked. But the fierce cry only gathered fresh strength. Stimulated alike by the persuasions of the chief priests, by the faint opposition of Pilate, and by the excitement of numbers and noise, it became every minute more and more violent and menacing, "Crucify him! crucify him!" 4. *Pilate washes his hands.* His defence of the Lord had been only half-hearted. He knew that he was absolutely innocent; he evidently had some vague undefined awe of him. He would have saved him if he could have done so without endangering himself. But Pilate feared a Jewish mob. It was at all times formidable, but especially so at the seasons of the great national festivals. His previous experience gave him reason to fear an accusation at Rome. He began to yield; but he made a weak attempt to throw the responsibility of the crime upon the people. He washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it." He thus at the same moment pronounced the innocence of the Accused, and his own guilt; for by this symbolical action he declared that it was out of fear of the people that he delivered Jesus to their will. Cowardice often leads to guilt. Very earnestly we ought to pray for holy courage and strength of purpose to persevere in the path of rectitude. Pilate, who despised the Jews, now used a significant act prescribed on certain occasions by the Mosaic Law (Deut. xxi. 6, 7), and shared apparently some of the feelings which led the Jews to attach so much importance to ceremonial washings. But as the outward washings of the Jews could not cleanse the heart, so Pilate's act could not remove the guilt which rested on him. He condemned the Innocent through selfish fear; his hands were full of blood. No mere outward rite can purge the soul. There is only one fountain opened for sin and uncleanness—the precious blood of Christ, which applied by faith can cleanse the conscience and make the penitent sinner whiter than snow. The people understood the meaning of Pilate. They were willing, in their wild infatuation, to take the guilt upon themselves; they answered and said, "His blood be on us, and on our children!" A fearful imprecation, and fearfully fulfilled. Some doubtless of those who uttered it, very many of their children, were sharers of the dreadful calamities which attended the siege and capture of Jerusalem less than forty years afterwards. They had said, "His blood be on us!" the streets of Jerusalem were deluged in blood. They had cried, "Crucify him! crucify him!" they perished in thousands by the cross. Still the guilt of his blood rests on that outcast race; and only that blood can wash away the stain. For the blood of Christ could cleanse even those who shed it. It is "the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." It could cleanse Pilate, Caiaphas, the fierce bloodthirsty multitude, the Roman soldiers, who indeed were obeying the orders of the governor, but plainly took an evil pleasure in the cruel deed. "His blood be on us!" the crowd shouted in their frenzy. The guilt of that blood must rest even now in a greater or less degree upon all who sin wilfully against the light of the knowledge of Christ; who, knowing what the Lord most holy suffered for them, live as though the cross had never been, as though the blessed Saviour had never suffered there for them that they might live. And the holy influence of that blood is upon the hearts of those who come to Christ in faith and love, who live under the shadow of the cross, walking in the royal way of the cross, seeking ever to realize in all its depth and fulness the precious and stupendous truth that "the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me." Pilate knew that that blood was innocent blood; but he knew not its sanctity and exceeding preciousness. He quailed before the wild clamour of the multitude; he gave sentence that it should be as they required; and he released Barabbas unto them, whom they had desired.

LESSONS. 1. Silence is sometimes golden. The Lord was silent amid false accusations. Let us learn of him. 2. Selfish fear often leads to great sin. Pray for holy courage. 3. The favour of the multitude is uncertain. Trust not in popularity.

4. We must wash our hands in innocency. Outward rites will not cleanse the impure soul.

Vers. 26—34.—*Preparations for the Crucifixion.* I. THE SCOURGING. 1. *It had been predicted.* "I gave my back to the smiters," Isaiah said in the spirit of prophecy; and again, in words very solemn and very precious to sin-laden consciences, "By his stripes we are healed." The Lord himself had told his disciples beforehand that he should suffer this cruel indignity (ch. xx. 19). The circumstances of the Lord's sufferings were revealed to the prophets ages before the time. This fact shows their solemn importance and deep spiritual significance. We should meditate in awe and adoring love on all those touching details which the Holy Ghost so long before made known to the prophets, that men should see the day of Christ by faith, and should anticipate the saving power of his atonement. 2. *The intention of Pilate.* Pilate had hoped to substitute the scourge for the cross. He had at first pronounced the Lord innocent. Then when the chief priests had stirred up the people and there were signs of gathering tumult, he thought of the act of grace usual at the Passover as a means for releasing him. Now when the frenzy of the excited crowd had become uncontrollable, he resorted to the scourge as a means for saving his life. "I will chastise him, and let him go" (Luke xxiii. 22). He thought that the hatred of the chief priests might be satisfied, that the pity of the crowd might be moved by the anguish of the scourge. It was a pitiful exhibition of weakness. He would commit what seemed the lesser crime to avoid the greater. But sin ever leads on to sin. We may not do evil that good may come; we may not follow the multitude to do evil. The Christian must sometimes stand alone against an angry multitude if he knows that what is required of him is wrong in the sight of God. 3. *The severity of the punishment.* It was a sickening sight. The shame was cruel; the torture terrible. Holy Scripture records it in a few simple words. Ancient writers give us harrowing descriptions of the sufferings of Christian martyrs under the horrible lash. We must remember the Divine dignity of the awful Sufferer. We are treading on holy ground; we must approach these last scenes of the Lord's Passion with reverence and godly fear. He is God, and he is suffering for us. We must draw near with deep sympathy for him, and with humble contrition, remembering our many and grievous offences which brought this agony upon him. And we must come with the deepest gratitude, with fervent love; for these his bitter pains manifest the unutterable strength and tenderness of his great love for us.

II. THE MOCKERY. 1. *The scarlet robe.* The Lord had already been derided by the attendants of the chief priests, and afterwards by Herod; now the Roman soldiers were guilty of the like brutal insults. It was a scene of studied and gratuitous cruelty, which shows the depth of wickedness of which human nature is capable. The Lord had done them no wrong; some of them, at least, had heard the trial, and knew that he was innocent. But he was in their hands; he was to be put to death; and they would have their wicked pleasure; they would make sport of his agonies. They gathered round him the whole cohort to share their cruel game. They had heard of his claims to royal dignity; they put on him a scarlet robe, some cast-off military mantle, in imitation of the imperial purple. 2. *The crown of thorns.* They platted a crown of thorns to represent the wreath of laurel worn by the Cæsars at Rome; they pressed it down, with its sharp spines, upon that holy head. They put a reed for a mock sceptre into his bound hands; and then the whole cohort, soldier after soldier, passed before him, each bowing the knee in pretended homage, each addressing him with the derisive title, "Hail, King of the Jews!" When they were wearied of this wicked sport, these bitter taunts, they spat upon that gracious face; they took the reed, and smote him on that thorn-crowned head, till, tired in turn of these insulting outrages, they took off the scarlet robe and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And he who suffered all this bitter mockery was indeed a King—King of kings, and Lord of lords. At any moment throughout his long protracted agony he might, by one word, one look, have swept his torturers into utter death. He suffered in silence, patiently, calmly, setting us an example of meekness, of holy endurance. If the Lord most holy bore these outrageous insults, we sinful men may well take it patiently when we are called to suffer wrong when men speak ill of us.

III. THE WAY OF SORROWS. 1. *Simon of Cyrene.* The heavy cross was laid upon the Lord. "He, bearing his cross, went forth." He was worn and wearied. The awful agony of Gethsemane, the cruel scourging, the many sufferings, bodily and mental, which in his blessed love he endured for us, had utterly exhausted his strength. He could not bear the cross; he sank beneath the burden. The soldiers, perhaps simply impatient of delay, perhaps in contempt of Simon, who may have been a disciple, and may have shown his sympathy with the suffering Lord, laid the Lord's cross upon this stranger of Cyrene, "that he might bear it after Jesus." It was done in insult, but it was in truth the highest honour. Simon was privileged to bear the Saviour's cross, to help him in his seeming helplessness, to alleviate in some small degree his overwhelming sorrow. Simon has become the type, the figure of faithful Christians. They must bear the cross; the cross of suffering, in one form or another, is surely laid upon them all; they bear it after Jesus. That sad procession is a fitting representation of the Church of the elect. The Lord goeth at the head of them. After him follow in long order all his chosen, each bearing his cross, each learning of the Lord Jesus who first bore the cross, themselves to bear it patiently and with meek submission, glorying in the cross, for the royal way of the holy cross is the only way to life eternal, and without the cross there cannot come the crown. 2. *Golgotha.* We cannot certainly identify the spot where the dear Lord suffered. It would be consecrated by the holiest, the tenderest memories; we might well regard it as the most sacred spot in all the earth. The knowledge is hidden from us; and there is meaning in this. We may find Christ everywhere; every place, the whole world over, is hallowed by his blood. We may realize his death, and draw very near to the cross, and live under its shadow in England as well as at Jerusalem. Not all who saw him die were saved. It is the sight of Christ by faith that saves the soul. Blessed be God, we may bear about with us, wherever we go, the dying of the Lord Jesus, and in those who thus bear about that precious death, the life also of Jesus shall be manifested. The word "Golgotha" means "a skull." It reminds us of death; it tells us what we must one day be. But in that place which is called "a skull," he who is the Life of the world suffered and died; and by his death he hath abolished death; and we know that through him this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality in that day when he shall change the body of our humiliation, fashioning it like unto the body of his glory. 3. *The stupefying drink.* They gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. Perhaps the women who bewailed and lamented him had provided it. It was offered in kindness, to stupefy the senses and dull the feeling of pain. The Lord acknowledged the kind intention by tasting the offered potion; but he would not drink it. He did not refuse the vinegar which was given afterwards in answer to the cry, "I thirst." But he would not take the opiate; he would meet death with clear untroubled intellect. We cannot comprehend the nature of that spiritual work of atonement which he had to complete ere the great cry of victory, "It is finished!" could issue from his dying lips. He would keep his consciousness calm and serene, that he might fulfil that sacred work. Let Christians imitate their Lord; let them never, in times of pain or distress, allow themselves to seek relief in strong drink; let them learn submission from the blessed Master.

LESSONS. 1. The Lord was scourged. Repine not in pain and agony, in unmerited disgrace. 2. He was mocked. Endure derision if it comes in his providence. 3. He bore the cross. Learn to bear it after Christ.

Vers. 35—50.—*The Crucifixion.* I. THE ROMAN SOLDIERS. 1. *They crucified him.* The evangelists relate the awful deed with that grand simplicity which is characteristic of Holy Scripture. There is no rhetorical description, nothing sensational in their accounts. But it was beyond all comparison the most stupendous event that has ever happened on this earth of ours. They crucified him. He was the Son of God, the Word of the Father, by whom all things were made. He was the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his Person; and they crucified *him.* He gave himself to die. That tremendous sacrifice must imply tremendous necessities, deep incomprehensible causes hidden in the mysteries of the awful holiness of God, and the terrible corruption of humanity. It must mean that the accumulated guilt of the sin of the world was a burden which none could bear, a curse which none could take away,

but God himself. It must involve issues deep-reaching and mysterious, very blessed and sacred, but very, very awful. And oh, it sets before us a love beautiful above all beauty, holy above all holiness, tender, compassionate, intense, above all that our selfish hearts can conceive of sweetest pity and most entire self-sacrifice. The cross is the central point of the world's history; all the great lines of our deepest moral and spiritual interests meet in it or radiate from it. It was once a thing most hateful and most horrible, far more suggestive of shame and horror then than the gibbet is now. But the Lord most holy died thereon for our salvation; and the glory of his precious love has shed an aureole of golden light around the tree of shame. And now the cross is to Christian hearts of all things dear the dearest and the most sacred; for it tells us with its silent eloquence the blessed story of the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ. *They* crucified him, the four Roman soldiers; they knew not what they did; they knew nothing, probably, of the Lord's life, of his holiness, of his works of power and love; they were but obeying orders; they were less guilty than Pilate, than Caiaphas, than Judas. Perhaps they took a wicked pleasure in that deed of blood. They may probably have taken part in the insults and mockery which preceded the Crucifixion; they had no awe for Christ at first. Afterwards the centurion in command, and (it seems from St. Matthew's account) the soldiers also, recognized the Divine majesty of the awful Sufferer. It may be, we cannot tell, that that centurion, that those very soldiers, were saved by the precious blood which was shed by their hands. They pierced the Lord; they pierced his hands and his feet; in another and a more guilty sense it was the Jews who pierced him; in another sense, a true and deep sense, it was all sinners, especially those who have sinned against his cross, against light, and against knowledge. But it is written, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;" "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." We have pierced the Lord by our sins and hardness; but if the great love of the crucified Lord brings us to penitence, he will forgive, he will comfort, he will save. They *crucified* him. We can scarcely conceive the horrors which that word expresses, the shame, the cruel pain, the protracted torture. Thank God, those dreadful sights are seen no longer; the cross of the Lord saved humanity from the cross. The first Christian emperor forbade the infliction of that dreadful punishment. Christianity has done much to soften the hardness of human nature; that cruelty which was once so common seems to us now horrible and revolting. But the dear Lord suffered all that the most atrocious brutality could inflict, unrelieved by any touch of pity except the offer of the stupefying draught, and the sponge full of vinegar; unrelieved by any offices of love save the silent sympathy of the five, or four, faithful ones who "stood by the cross of Jesus." We should think much of those sufferings, and bring them home to our hearts, and try to realize them in all their touching details. The daily, constant thought of the cross is a great safeguard against wilful sin, against ingratitude, against ambitious dreams, against murmuring and repining. In our sufferings, when we are oppressed and ready to sink, let us remember the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us, by an act of faith, offer our sufferings to God, uniting them by faith with the one great acceptable Sacrifice, that he may make us accepted in the Beloved, that through faith in the crucified Saviour our sufferings may become a cross; for the cross, we know, raises the Christian man nearer to God, nearer to heaven. 2. *They parted his garments.* Virtue had come out of those garments, and had healed those who had touched the very hem. They would have been regarded by Christians as most sacred relics. But the rough soldiers thought nothing of the dignity of him who had worn them. Perhaps they despised them as poor and valueless; but, such as they were, they were their perquisites; they divided them, and cast lots upon the seamless tunic. Thus they fulfilled the prophecy of the twenty-second psalm—that psalm which describes sufferings such as were never borne by David or by any of the Old Testament worthies, but which was so wonderfully fulfilled in the circumstances of the death of Christ. The soldiers little thought that they were doing what God had foreordained. How strange it seems to us that they could cast lots, perhaps shake the dice in their brazen helmets, at the very foot of the cross! Sacred symbols will inspire reverence only in those who have a reverent spirit. They will not keep careless men from irreverent talk, or even from drinking or gambling. 3. *They watched him.* They watched lest

his disciples should take him down. They sat there and watched, whiling away the tedious hours with vulgar jests and rough talk and idle games. Not for a long time did the awful scene touch their stern uncultured hearts. It seems to us a marvellous thing that that great sight should have had at first so little influence on the surrounding multitude. But human nature is the same in all ages. Men's hearts are as hard now as they were then. Those who read in vain, without sympathy and without emotion, the gospel story of the blessed Saviour's death, in vain had seen him die. Let us watch the dying Lord, but not as those soldiers watched him. Let us live much under the shadow of the cross, watching that precious death with sorrow and contrition and adoring thankful love. We know what was not known to those Roman soldiers—it is "the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me." 4. *The title.* Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. The four evangelists give the title with slight differences. They did not heed the exact form of the expression. They all give the essential words, "The King of the Jews." It was not the accusation of blasphemy which caused the Saviour's death. That would have had no weight with Pilate. It was the charge of making himself a King which forced the Roman governor to condemn the Innocent. Pilate, by this writing, showed at once the real grounds on which his consent had been wrung from him, and his own angry contempt of the Jews. This was their King—this poor, bleeding, crucified One. And, it may be, he meant to imply his secret half-belief that the Lord was in some sense a King, far more noble, high-souled, king-like, than those hypocritical chief priests whom he so thoroughly despised, who had driven him to a deed which he so utterly hated. We know that he is the King, the King of God's ancient people, the King of the Israel of God, the King who shall one day sit on the throne of his glory to judge the world. He reigneth from the cross. The cross is the throne which has raised him to a more than royal empire—an empire over the hearts of men, over all the best and honest and holiest human souls from that time ever onwards. 5. *They crucified two robbers with him.* Robbers they were rather than thieves—perhaps accomplices of Barabbas—possibly insurgents against the Roman government. And thus the Lord, the Most Holy One, was numbered with the transgressors, for they were punished justly. One was set on the right hand of Christ, the other on the left—an anticipation of the great gathering on the right and left of the Judge in the awful day. In the centre was the cross of atonement; on the right, the cross of repentance; on the left, the cross of despair. Man is born to sorrow. All of us must bear, in some form, at some time, the cross of suffering. But in the midst of a suffering world rises the cross of atonement, the cross which the holy Son of God alone could bear. The cross of atonement draws many by its constraining power to take up the cross of repentance—repentance not to be repented of. But alas! there are some who reject and despise the atoning love of Christ; and their portion must be, at the last, the awful cross of despair.

II. THE MOCKERS. 1. *The passers-by.* Mockery was a bitter ingredient in the Lord's cup of sorrow. He had been mocked by the servants of the high priest, by Herod and his men of war, by the Roman soldiers, and now, alas, that cruel mockery was renewed and intensified as he hung dying on the cross. Surely, we think, a crucified man might be left alone to die; surely that cruelty must be truly Satanic which in the presence of that intense suffering was not only without pity, but sought to embitter by insulting taunts the agonies of the dying. The indifference of others is very distressing to sufferers. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." But how much worse was that heartless, wicked scorn! And the dear Lord, we are sure, must have felt it all the more deeply, because he was dying there for the souls of men, for the souls of those very men who were mocking him in his anguish; and he knew that that mocking meant that their hearts were hardened against his dying love, that for most of them that tremendous sacrifice was offered up in vain. This mockery was prophesied (Ps. xxii. 6—8); it is mentioned again and again in the predictions of the Saviour's sufferings. This shows its importance. The Lord must drink to the dregs the cup which the Father had given him; every element of woe in that cup has its part, we may be sure, in working out our redemption; nothing was in vain. The Lord must suffer scorn and contempt as well as bodily pain, cruelty of the lips as well as of the hands, that, suffering all the forms of anguish, he might make an atonement for all the forms of sin. He listened

in silence; his followers must learn of their dying Lord the Christian lesson of meekness. "When thou art reviled," says Chrysostom, "set the sign of the cross upon thine heart; think how the Lord upon the cross endured that cruel scorn, and learn of him." The passers-by reviled him; they fulfilled unconsciously the predictions of the twenty-second psalm; they repeated the misrepresentations of the false witnesses; they repeated the taunt of the tempter, "If thou be the Son of God." The Son of God, the tempter had suggested, should not suffer pain and hunger; the Son of God, the mockers said, could not hang and die upon the cross. They little thought that it was because he was the Son of God that he would patiently suffer, that he would meekly die. None other than the Son of God could suffer that anguish, could die that death—"the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." 2. *The chief priests.* They came too with the scribes and elders; they did not think it unbecoming to join in the shameless insults of the vulgar crowd; they forgot the dignity of their sacred office; they taunted the dying Saviour with his seeming helplessness. "He saved others," they said; they acknowledged the truth of his miracles, his works of love; and in their blind wickedness they upbraided him with those very works, with that very love. In their ignorance they proclaimed a great truth, though they knew it not. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Yes, it was because he would save others that he could not save himself. He was laying down his life of himself; at any moment during those long hours of torture he might have put forth his almighty power; but how, then, should the Scriptures be fulfilled? How should God and man be reconciled? How should sin be put away, and sinful man be saved? He who would save others must forget himself. The Lord is the Divine example of the most entire self-sacrifice: let us adore him; let us imitate him. "He is the King of Israel," they said in their biting, wicked irony; they said the truth, though they said it in mockery. They bade him come down from the cross; then, they said, they would believe on him. But he knew their hearts; they would not have believed had he done so. He had raised Lazarus; he did afterwards raise himself from the dead; but they would not be persuaded. Faith and love cannot be forced by a display of power. The Lord would win the love of men by his own constraining love. Love is free; it springs from the true heart to meet the love which calls it forth. It was his blessed death upon the cross, not a descent from the cross in awful majesty, which was to draw all men to him. The chief priests derided him for his seeming weakness; they dared even to deride him for his trust in God. "He trusted in God," they said, and then unconsciously used the very words of prophecy, the words of the twenty-second psalm, in their wickedness, "Let him deliver him now, if he will have him;" repeating the insults of the passers-by, and taunting him with his assertion of his Divine nature; for he said, "I am the Son of God." 3. *The crucified thieves.* They too reviled him, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." Affliction does not always soften; sometimes it leads to discontent, murmuring, rebellion. The near approach of death does not always bring men to repentance; sin hardens the heart; men commonly die as they have lived. The outward cross cannot save the soul; in the very presence of the cross of atonement, in the very sight of the precious blood, there was one miserable death—a death of agony without hope, without repentance, without forgiveness. The cross of the Lord Jesus is very awful, but his most blessed love sheds around it a glory of unearthly radiance. The cross of the penitent thief is awful too; but his repentance, faith, and hope are full of sweet comfort for the contrite sinner. The cross on the left hand is dreadful beyond all words; for, alas! there is nothing to relieve the horror of that death of agony and blasphemy. Let us beware and take heed to ourselves; there is but one case of deathbed repentance recorded in Holy Scripture. There is one; then we may hope for others even against hope: there is only one; then we may not dare to trust for ourselves to a hope so slender.

III. THE END. 1. *The three hours' darkness.* It was about the sixth hour. The noonday sun should have been pouring its full light upon Jerusalem. But there was a horror of great darkness—a darkness that could be felt. It might well be so. He was hanging on the cross by whom all things were made. He was dying who upholdeth all things by the word of his power. So stupendous an event, the death of him who is the Life of the world, must be attended by wonders, by strange and awful signs. That fearful darkness was a stern rebuke to the cruel brutal mockers. Nature was mourning

for the Lord of nature, whom man, his noblest creature, was thus maltreating. The supernatural blackness of the sky figured the black wickedness of that fearful crime. The great darkness wrapt the dying Lord like a funeral pall, hiding from unsympathizing eyes that most awful spiritual conflict by which the loving Saviour wrought out our salvation. It seems to warn us that we may not pry too curiously into the mysterious secrets of his atoning work. It is his work; he alone can accomplish it. "I have trodden the winepress alone: and of the people there was none with me" (Isa. lxiii. 3). We stand afar off, and beat our breasts in the consciousness of great sin and utter unworthiness, and adore the most gracious Redeemer, who loved us with that exceeding love which passeth knowledge. 2. *The great cry.* The ninth hour was almost come. The Lord's last moments were now very near, when an exceeding loud cry pealed through the encompassing darkness. The Lord's holy human soul was emerging from the awful struggle. He had been bearing, we may reverently and sorrowfully believe, the extreme burden of the sins of the whole world. They had been pressed upon him, in all their horror and loathsomeness, in that hour when he was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin." The Lord looked back in clear consciousness upon the fearful strife. "My God," he said. He quoted that wonderful twenty-second psalm, in which, ages before, he had by his Spirit depicted his own future sufferings. He teaches us by his own example to use the blessed words of Holy Scripture in our distress, in our death-agony. "My God." The Son of God never lost his trustfulness in his heavenly Father. Never for one moment could there be a darkening of the perfect love, of the ineffable communion, of the Father and the only begotten Son; and then came those mysterious words, "Why didst thou forsake me?" Did those words relate to some strange awful experience of the Lord's human soul? Was that soul left as it were alone for a while in the presence of sin—the sin of the whole world? Had that blessed soul to bear (we may say each one to himself) the guilt of my sin, and to feel that horror of great darkness when the face of God is hidden from the sinner? We cannot but ask ourselves these and such-like questions. We cannot answer them. It is a subject less suitable for words than for prayer and solemn meditation. But if it is most awful, it is also full of precious comfort. In the extreme anguish of spiritual depression the Christian soul is not cut off from Christ. There is no sorrow so great as this; and sometimes God's holiest children seem very severely tried by it. Yes, in those saddest hours when we seem well-nigh hopeless, when we have lost heart, and there is no joy, but only darkness all around, even then let us draw closer to the cross, and strain our eyes to see the Crucified One, and think of the great darkness that hung around his cross, and listen to his dying words. Let us say, "My God, mine ever in gloom and spiritual dryness and chill joyless depression—my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Only let us trust him, and we shall know at last, even in that bitterest of sorrows, that "whom he loveth he chasteneth." We shall hear at last in our inmost hearts the words of comfort, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." 3. *The vinegar.* A strange dread came upon the souls of the surrounding multitude; there was no mockery now, but awful expectation. They thought that the Lord had called for the great prophet Elijah, the prophet who was to appear before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Would he come? they said to one another, in excited whispers. And now there was some sympathy, perhaps springing from fear, for the dying Lord. One of them gave him to drink. The Lord did not refuse the vinegar as he had refused the medicated potion. He received it in gracious condescension. He had nothing of that haughtiness which prompts men to reject acts of kindness from those who have wronged them. There was a solemn hush among the crowd, a stillness of awe, such as we feel sometimes when a great darkness comes over the heavens at the approach of some tremendous storm. Would Elijah come? they whispered one to another. He came not. The Lord needed him not; he was giving his life for the love of souls. 4. *The Lord's death.* The Lord cried again with a great voice. Perhaps that cry was the word of triumph recorded by St. John, "It is finished!" He had finished the work which the Father had given him to do; he looked back upon his finished work, and summed it up in that one loud cry of victory. That loud cry from the cross peals through the world; still its echoes fall upon our ears. It calls for our devout contemplation of that finished life of holiness and beauty. It calls upon each

Christian so to live, in the imitation of that perfect life, that he too may, through the grace of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing power of the precious blood, look back in some poor measure on a work in some sense finished, when his last hour is come. That loud cry spoke not of exhaustion; but at once, when his work was finished, the Lord bowed his head, and yielded up the ghost. The physical antecedent of his death was probably a broken heart; the true cause was his own sovereign will. He yielded up the ghost; he let his human soul pass from the body. It was his act, his will; none took his life from him; none could take it from him; he laid it down of himself. The holy body hung lifeless on the cross; the holy soul passed into Paradise.

LESSONS. 1. The cross is the central fact in the world's history. Let it be the central motive in our hearts. 2. The Lord suffered cruel pain. Let us lift up our hearts to him in our anguish. 3. He is the King of the Jews. Let us take him for the King of our hearts. 4. He was cruelly derided. Let us take insults patiently. 5. He died. Let us learn of him how to die.

Vers. 51—56.—*Witness to the Lord's Divinity.* I. THE WITNESS OF PORTENTS. 1. *The rending of the temple veil.* "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." It may be that Christ, the Lamb of God, yielded up the ghost on the day and at the hour when they killed the Passover. It was the hour of evening prayer. The priests as they entered into the holy place found the great veil, which hid the holy of holies from the eye of man, rent in twain from the top to the bottom. This had happened at the moment of the Lord's death; it was closely associated with that tremendous event. St. Matthew and St. Mark mention the Lord's death first, St. Luke puts first the rending of the veil; the two events were so very closely connected in time and meaning. The evangelists felt the deep spiritual significance of the rending of the veil; so doubtless did that great company of priests, who afterwards became obedient to the faith. It was a supernatural event, not the result of the earthquake or of any ordinary cause. It had a deep and blessed meaning. The holy of holies was the one spot in all the earth where God had been wont to manifest his immediate presence in a special manner. That manifestation had been surrounded with circumstances of awe. The sacred place where the Most High had dwelt between the cherubim was hidden from men by the great heavy veil, shrouded in awful darkness. Only on one day in the year might that veil be lifted; only one mortal being might dare to enter, and that with solemn rites of propitiation, with great fear and trembling. But now the veil was rent; it was rent at the moment of the Saviour's death: and evidently by the Divine interposition. The solemn ritual of the great Day of Atonement was fulfilled in the one Sacrifice now offered upon the cross. Such rites were no longer needed. God himself opens the way into the most holy place. His people may draw near, very near, into his immediate presence. All may come, not the high priest only, but all faithful Christians; for he who washed us from our sins in his own blood hath made us priests unto God and his Father, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God through him. But the rent veil figured also the pierced body of the Saviour; for thus saith the Scripture, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, though the veil, that is to say, his flesh, . . . let us draw near with a true heart" (Heb. x. 19—22). The Divine Word dwelt ("tabernacled," John i. 14) in the body of Christ. Now that tabernacle was rent. While he was in the flesh, that veil of mortal flesh hung, like the temple veil, between him and the true holy of holies. When it was rent, the way into the holiest was made manifest, and the Lord in his glorified humanity, "by his own blood entered in once into the holy place," that is, "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." There he is making intercession for us, and in the power of that prevailing intercession we may draw near to God. The veil is rent. There was a veil over all nations (Isa. xxv. 7, 8); it was destroyed when death was swallowed up in victory. There is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian nor Scythian, but Christ is all, and in all. The veil is rent. There was a veil upon the hearts of men, that veil is done away in Christ. They that are his, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the

Lord. 2. *The earthquake.* "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent." It might well be expected. Prodigies such as these are nothing in comparison with that greatest of all wonders which had just taken place. These lesser signs attested the tremendous power of that moral earthquake which the death of Christ would cause. Old beliefs would be shattered, old superstitions rent; there would be a great heaving in men's hearts, a severing of old lines of thought, a mighty change in the spiritual order of the world. 3. *The opened graves.* There was a strange excitement in the realm of the dead. It might well be so. Isaiah represents the nations of the dead as stirred at the coming of the King of Babylon (xiv. 9—12). But what is the death of the greatest of earthly monarchs compared with the death of him who is the Son of God? "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." The "loud voice" of the dying Jesus was heard in Hades. The graves were opened. And when he arose, who is the Firstborn from the dead, many bodies of the saints came out, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. A wondrous miracle, but not wondrous compared with that chiefest of all wonders, the death and resurrection of the Lord. It is not strange that smaller wonders should cluster round that great central wonder.

II. THE WITNESS OF MEN. 1. *The centurion and soldiers.* They feared greatly, the centurion especially. It seems from St. Mark's account that he was deeply moved, not only by the earthquake, but by the words and bearing of the Lord. He felt not only that the Lord was wholly innocent (Luke xxiii. 47), but that he was more than man; that that title which the mockers had ascribed to him in scorn was truly his; he *was* the Son of God. That centurion "glorified God;" he probably became one of that noble band of Roman soldiers, like the centurion at Capernaum and Cornelius of Cæsarea, who believed in the Lord. The cross of Christ, and the Lord lifted up thereon, could draw all men unto him, even the Roman centurion, even the soldiers who had pierced him, who had sat dicing beneath the cross. May we, one and all, feel its constraining power! 2. *The women.* The Lord's mother had stood by the cross; probably St. John had led her away before the Saviour's death. But there were still many women beholding afar off—good and holy women, who had followed Christ from Galilee, and ministered to him of their substance. Mary of Magdala was there, out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils, who loved him with the devoted love of deepest gratitude; Salome, who had asked for her sons the chief places in the Saviour's kingdom, and now saw the two crucified malefactors, one on his right hand and the other on his left. They had ministered to him in life, gladly giving their worldly means to supply his wants; now they were faithful even unto death. Let us imitate them in their loving almsgiving, in their holy steadfastness, in their watching round the cross. Christians should give freely, Christians should be faithful in danger and in death, Christians should ever gaze upon the cross of Jesus.

LESSONS. 1. The veil is rent. Use the Christian's privilege; draw near in faith and love and reverence. 2. The cross won those Roman soldiers. Let us be ashamed of our hard hearts; let us pray for the strength of deep conviction. 3. Be faithful, like those Galilæan women.

Vers. 57—66.—*The Lord's grave.* I. THE BURIAL. 1. *Joseph of Arimathæa.* He was a rich man and a counsellor. Like Nicodemus, he believed in Christ; but, like Nicodemus, he had not had the courage to avow his convictions. His rank, perhaps, and his riches had kept him back. It was hard for a man in his position to espouse the cause of the despised Prophet of Nazareth. He had, perhaps, absented himself from the council at which the Lord was condemned. He would not take part in that awful crime, but probably he had not dared to oppose it openly. Yet, notwithstanding his timidity, he was a good man, and a just; he waited for the kingdom of God (Luke xxiii. 50, 51). God judges more tenderly than men. We are apt to condemn a man wholly when we see one great fault in him. God sometimes sees sincerity, a real yearning after truth and goodness, where we refuse to see anything save the one obvious defect. And now Joseph shook off his weakness. The Lord's majesty in suffering confirmed his wavering faith. He was ashamed of his cowardice. He had not done his best to save his Master. He would at least honour him now, cost what it might. He went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. It was a brave deed. Friends of martyred Christians again and again brought the death of martyrdom upon themselves by doing

the like. But Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. He had washed his hands before consenting to the Saviour's death. Perhaps he thought that respect for the lifeless body might help, like that poor outward form, to atone for his guilt. 2. *The sepulchre.* The holy body was to receive no more indignities. It was not thrown, as the chief priests had probably expected, into some dishonoured grave with the two malefactors; it was not left to the eleven, who could provide only some poor interment. He was "with the rich in his death." Joseph and Nicodemus, both rich men and honourable, cast aside their shame and their fears. They took the sacred body from the cross with reverent care, wrapped it in clean and fine linen, with the costly gift of myrrh and aloes brought by Nicodemus, and laid it in Joseph's own tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. Thus they confessed Christ before men. While the eleven were still overcome with terror and despair, these two men, who had been so fearful, shook off their fears, and showed openly their reverence for the Lord. They feared neither the fierce anger of the Jews nor the ceremonial defilement which would keep them from the Passover rites. The cross of Christ could make the timid brave. He was laid in a tomb hewn out of the rock. The rocks about Jerusalem are full of tombs. The whole world, indeed, is one vast cemetery. Countless multitudes of the dead lie everywhere around us. Christ hath hallowed the grave by himself resting there. We may be well content that our poor bodies should be where his sacred body lay. Only let us seek first to be buried with him by baptism unto death; let us seek to realize in our inner souls that burial with Christ of which holy baptism is the token and the pledge—a burial out of the reach of the defiling touch of sin, in the rock where the allurements of sin cannot penetrate, if that spiritual burial is *with* Christ. 3. *The women.* Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were sitting over against the sepulchre. "Seest thou the courage of these women?" says Chrysostom; "seest thou their affection? seest thou how they continued faithful unto death? Let us men imitate these women, and let us not desert the Lord in the hour of trial."

II. THE SEALING OF THE TOMB. 1. *The fears of the chief priests.* The awe of the last hours of the Crucifixion was still upon their souls. The Lord was dead, but they could not rest, not even on the sabbath. Even on that holy day they came with the Pharisees to the Roman governor; they shrank not from telling him their fears and from asking his help. They knew of the Lord's prophecy of his resurrection on the third day, though they perverted it for their own ends. Some of them were present when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They may have heard from Judas or others something of his more distinct predictions; they would prevent the fulfilment. The body was safe, hidden in the rock; they would keep it there. 2. *The guard.* Pilate haughtily dismissed them. It was their business; he would do nothing more for them. They had a guard. Probably there was a small body of soldiers put at their disposal to keep order during the Passover celebration. "Go," the governor said sternly, "secure it as you best can." "So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch." So all through that sabbath day, and all through the night that followed, the Roman sentries paced up and down before the sealed stone. And now the chief priests felt secure. The Lord's body lay still and lifeless in the sepulchre; his own followers had laid it there. They had tended it with reverent care; but they had no thought, no hope of a resurrection. They had forgotten the Lord's words; they understood them not. They never seemed able to realize what he told them from time to time of his approaching sufferings and death, and of the glory that should follow. They laid the sacred body in myrrh and aloes; they rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. The chief priests completed the work; they sealed the stone; they set there an armed guard; they knew that the Lord's disciples, few and terrified as they were, would never dare to encounter those dreaded Roman soldiers. They had succeeded in accomplishing their awful sin; and, if their consciences allowed them to sleep, they slept that night securely.

LESSONS. 1. We must not judge men hastily. Joseph, once so fearful, showed holy courage at last. 2. The Lord was buried. Let us not fear the grave. 3. His burial has a lesson for us. We are buried with him by baptism unto death. "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" 4. The wicked may exult in the seeming success of their designs; but the Lord reigneth.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—*Judas's confession.* The wretched traitor got no satisfaction out of his crime. No sooner had he committed it than he was horrified at the enormity of the deed. Covetous as he was, he could not hold the blood-money, and he flung it down as though the very touch of it burnt his fingers. It is not often that the revulsion from an act of wickedness follows so swiftly. Very probably Judas was aghast at the consequence of his treason, never having imagined that it would issue fatally. He may have aimed at forcing the hand of Jesus, assuming that at the last his Master would exert miraculous powers and claim his Christly rights. If so, the man was grievously mistaken, and the discovery of his deadly error appalled him. Then a great darkness fell upon him, and the madness of suicide took possession of him. He seems to stand alone in the enormity of his crime, but his very despair shows him to be human, and his confession almost gives us a glimmer of hope that even in this miserable man there is a possibility of better things.

I. THE TRAITOR CONFESSED HIS SIN. He knew that he had acted vilely, and his accomplices, who were glad to use him as their tool, had no pity for such a scoundrel. But it is something that he was brought to own himself a sinner. The vilest sinner is the man who tries to hide his sin, who plays the hypocrite before men, and who even endeavours to excuse himself in his own conscience by sophistical arguments. There are sins, however, whose scarlet hue so blazes in the sunlight that the rankest hypocrite does not attempt to deny them. Confession is good, but it is not repentance, much less is it regeneration.

II. JUDAS OWNED THE INNOCENCE OF CHRIST. He knew it was innocent blood that he had betrayed. It is striking to notice how many of the leading actors in the murder of Christ testify to his merits. Pilate could find no fault in him. The centurion at the cross acknowledged him as a Son of God. Even the traitor is constrained by his own conscience to own his treason and to vindicate the innocence of his Master. Many men have a fair appearance in the distance, but they will not bear too close a scrutiny. But those who knew Jesus most intimately, and those who examined him in the most critical moments, were able to discover no flaw in his perfect character.

III. CONFESSION OF SIN AND A RECOGNITION OF THE MERITS OF CHRIST ARE NOT SUFFICIENT FOR SALVATION. In Judas there were the beginnings of better things. But alas! they ended in despair and death. If we only see our sin and Christ's goodness, we may well shrink from entertaining any hope for ourselves. We need to go a step further. Judas never fled to Christ's cross; therefore he ran to his own gallows. The only deliverance from the tyranny and the doom of sin is to be found in the redemption which Christ has wrought on the cross. Even the murderers of the innocent Saviour come within the scope of his wonderful grace. There would be hope for a Judas, if Judas would but turn from his awful sin in real repentance to Christ as even his Saviour.—W. F. A.

Ver. 21.—*Barabbas.* The name of Barabbas has become odious throughout Christendom, although we really know very little against him. That he was a rebel against the Roman government only means that he furthered the cause of liberty which all his people cherished in their hearts; so that his name might have been associated with the names of Tell, Wallace, and other well-known patriots, if only he had been successful. That he combined brigandage with insurrection is only too characteristic of the revolt of a wild, determined, lawless man in desperate straits, although this fact spoils much of his heroism. Still we do not know enough against him to account for the detestation which his name has attached to it. That detestation does not arise from anything in his character or conduct. It simply springs from the accident that it was he whom the people had an opportunity of preferring to Jesus. Therefore it is their treatment of him that is of significant interest when we consider the place of Barabbas in the gospel story.

I. BARABBAS WAS PREFERRED TO CHRIST. 1. *An indication of the people's hatred to Christ.* There is no reason to think that Barabbas was a popular hero. His insur-

rection was covered with the ignominy of failure, and his patriotism was stained with the lawlessness of brigandage. Yet he was chosen and Christ rejected. So intense was the passion of hate in the mob under the influence of their unprincipled leaders in the Jewish hierarchy! It is strange that any could hate the gracious Christ; and yet, since he was the deadly enemy of all sin, he provoked the opposition of sinners. A person who clings to his sin will come in his heart to what is virtually a hatred of Christ. 2. *A sign of the people's blindness to the merits of Christ.* The wickedness of hypocritical rulers was the driving force behind the fury of the mob; with many of the unthinking multitude there was doubtless no great antipathy to our Lord until this had been roused by malignant agitators. But the people did not perceive the attractions of Christ, or they would not have preferred Barabbas. The leaders were wicked, the people were blind. It is possible to be in very close external contact with Christ, and yet not to know him.

II. BARABBAS WAS SPARED INSTEAD OF CHRIST. This was not fair or reasonable, for Barabbas was guilty and Christ was innocent. Nevertheless, the unjust thing was done. This is typical of another substitution. Sinners are spared and Christ is crucified. That too would be monstrously unjust if our Lord himself had taken no part in the transaction. We can never see the bare outline of the atonement even till we perceive Christ's own free action in the matter. Though the substitution of Jesus for Barabbas is suggestive of Christ's great sacrifice for mankind, the cases are not parallel, because our Lord gave himself up for the world's redemption. What is unjust and wrong in those who slay him does not affect the right of the Saviour to surrender himself; and it is in this voluntary giving up of himself that the atonement, as a part of the Divine economy of redemption, is just and right.

In conclusion, let us remember that we may be in danger of sinning like the people who preferred Barabbas to Christ, when we are tempted to sacrifice our Lord's claims to any earthly considerations. Money, pleasure, self-will, may be our Barabbas, chosen to be saved though Christ is renounced.—W. F. A.

Ver. 29.—*The crown of thorns.* The wreath that the unfeeling soldiers pressed on the brow of the patient Christ, in mimicry of the victor's crown, with its cruel thorns to lacerate and pain, was only meant for an insult. It was one element in the torture of rude mockery to which our Lord was subjected. Yet, though quite beyond the perception of the brutal legionaries, this was wonderfully representative of the true Kingship of Jesus. He is a King crowned with thorns. Let us look at the fact from two points of view.

I. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST NECESSITATED A CROWN OF THORNS. 1. *Because he was King he could not but suffer.* That is a vulgar notion of royalty which regards it as a state of enviable pleasure. The king of the fairy tales may live in a palace of delights; but the king of history is better represented by Shakespeare, one of whose monarchs exclaims, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!" Most kings find some thorns in their crowns. 2. *The peculiar Kingship of Christ involved peculiar suffering.* No other king wore a crown wholly woven of thorns. No other king ever suffered as he suffered. It was not the common fate of kingship that bruised and crushed the heart of the Divine King. He came to rule in the souls of men, and the rebellion of men's souls wounded him. He came to rule the wills of his people, and the resistance of self-will hurt him. He came to rule with righteousness, to cast out all unrighteousness, and the wickedness of the world turned against him. His great aim was to overthrow the kingdom of Satan and to set up his own kingdom instead of it. That is to say, he came to conquer sin and to reign in holiness. But the victory over sin could only be had through suffering and death.

II. THE CROWN OF THORNS CONFIRMED THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST. If they had only known it, those heartless, mocking soldiers were really symbolizing the right of their victim to be their king. Their mimicry of a coronation was most typical of his real coronation. Jesus is a King crowned with thorns, because he is crowned with sorrows, because his sufferings give him a right to sit on his throne and to rule over his people. 1. *The sufferings of Christ give him a right to the highest honour.* After describing his self-emptying and obedience even to the death of the cross, St. Paul adds, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him the Name above every name," etc. (Phil.

ii. 9). There is no merit in mere pain, but there is great honour in suffering for a noble cause. Christ went further; he was more than a martyr. He drank a more bitter cup than any other man has tasted, and he took all this suffering upon him for the saving of the world. Such a crown of thorns worn for the good of others marks its wearer as worthy of the highest honour. 2. *The sufferings of Christ give him the kingdom over which he rules.* He had to win this kingdom for himself, and it is his now by right of conquest. But he did not use any weapons of carnal warfare. He did not fight with the sword. The sufferings of the war were not inflicted on the territory he was conquering, but on himself. He won the world to himself by dying for the world on the cross.—W. F. A.

Ver. 34.—*Christ refusing an opiate.* The charitable ladies of Jerusalem are said to have provided some stupefying drug for the use of condemned criminals, in order to alleviate the intolerable torments of death by crucifixion. Apparently it was this drug that some people offered to Jesus; but he refused to take it. The taste of it revealed its benumbing influence, and he would not submit to this.

I. CHRIST WOULD NOT SHRINK FROM HIS ALLOTTED SUFFERING. This scene is strangely contrasted with the scene in Gethsemane but a few hours earlier. In the garden Jesus had besought God, with tears and in agony, that if possible the cup of his Passion and death might pass from him. Now he will not take the cup that brings alleviation to his sufferings. How shall we account for this difference of mental attitude? The answer is that Christ knew that it was God's will that he should suffer. Before he had only prayed that the cup of his sufferings might pass, if it had been God's will to release him. But he discovered that it was not God's will. Then there was not a moment's hesitation. Christ was human in his shrinking from pain and insult and death. But he was strong and absolutely brave in facing whatever he might have to meet in doing or in bearing the will of God. He was no weak, effeminate sufferer, as pictures of the Correggio school represent him. His courage was perfect. Manly and strong in soul, he faced death and its accompanying torments without flinching, when he saw his way led him through those horrors.

II. CHRIST HAD A WORK YET TO FINISH. We are thankful for the anodyne which medical science is now able to apply to great suffering. The chloroform that renders the patient unconscious during a surgical operation, and the morphia that relieves acute pain, are welcomed as gifts of God. Surely it cannot be wrong to employ such things. There is no merit in the mere endurance of pain. But in our Lord's case there was much more to be considered than the suffering of a painful death. He had a testimony to bear. His words from the cross are among the most precious memorials of his earthly ministry. He could not say, "It is finished!" until he was about to bow his head and give up the ghost. Therefore he felt it necessary to preserve his consciousness to the last. Then his suffering was itself a part of his work. The way in which he endured what was laid upon him entered into the very process of his atoning sacrifice. As our great High Priest, he was made perfect through suffering (Heb. v. 8, 9). Would he have been the perfect Christ he was if he had left one drop of the bitter cup? If he had taken the opiate which would have allayed his pains at the expense of his consciousness, would he have made the complete atonement for sin? If it is too much to say "Yes" to these questions, at least we may see that his great and awful work could only have been accomplished by the willing and conscious surrender of himself, and this surrender would have been obscured to our view if he had accepted the offered relief. Thus we see how to the very last he would not care for himself, how he gave himself utterly in suffering and death for the world's redemption.—W. F. A.

Ver. 35.—*The Crucifixion.* "And they crucified him." There is a way of regarding the crucifixion of our Lord which we may be sure he himself must disapprove of. This is to paint it in all its horrors of physical torment, so as to harrow the feelings of the spectator, and to excite the deepest commiseration for the Sufferer. Jesus bade the women of Jerusalem not to weep for him, but to weep for themselves and their children (Luke xxiii. 28), and this he did when in all his human weakness he was just going to his death. Much more would he say the same now that he has risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God. He does not want our pity. This

would be a wasted and mistaken sentiment. How, then, should we to-day regard the crucifixion of our Lord?

I. IT IS THE CONDEMNATION OF SIN. 1. *Sin killed Christ.* (1) The immediate cause was the wickedness of the Jews, who would not submit to his reforming and spiritual reign. Judas's treason, Caiaphas's rage, Herod's jealousy, Pilate's weakness, were all wicked things. Christ's death was a murder, an awful crime. (2) Behind these particular causes the world's sin led to the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. Our sin crucifies him afresh. Thus his cross bears witness to the exceeding wickedness and the awful results of sin. 2. *Christ kills sin.* He condemned sin by dying under its assault. He bore the crushing weight of the world's sin in his own Person. But in so doing he faced and conquered the spirit of evil. Christ on the cross makes our sin look hideous and hateful; thus he slays it.

II. IT IS THE REVELATION OF LOVE. Never before or after has so great a love been tested so severely, or revealed so truly in its absolute purity, in its invincible strength. God crowned the love that is shown in creation, providence, and his merciful spiritual work in our consciences, by the supreme gift of his Son. Thus Christ, as the manifestation of One whose name is Love, makes the love of God known to us. He does this throughout his life by the graciousness of his ministry to the sick and suffering and sinful, by his kindness to little children, by his mercy to weeping penitents. But here at the cross is the crown of love. He loves his sheep so much that he will lay down his life for them. His love is stronger than death. He chooses death rather than the sacrificing of his love.

III. IT IS THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD. There is a great purpose in Christ's death. The wicked men who bring it about have their low, selfish objects. But behind and above these is God's great plan, Christ's glorious aim. This is no less than the saving of the world that rejected him—we may say that of the very men who nailed him to the cross; for he died for his enemies as well as for his friends. We must not be satisfied with contemplating the tragic scene of the Crucifixion by itself. We must look at its deep meaning. Here is the sacrifice for sin—the cross, the altar; Christ, the willing Victim. Here, then, is the hope and promise of our salvation.

IV. IT IS THE INSPIRATION OF SACRIFICE. The apostles rarely point to the cross without speaking of the example of Christ for our following. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," says St. Paul (Phil. ii. 5). Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, is St. Peter's teaching (1 Pet. ii. 21). His fidelity, his unselfishness, his courage, his patience, his love in giving himself for others, are the great models for Christians to follow.—W. F. A.

Ver. 46.—*Forsaken by God.* We cannot fathom the depths of the dark and mysterious experience of our Lord's last mortal agony. We must walk reverently, for here we stand on holy ground. It is only just to acknowledge that the great Sufferer must have had thoughts and feelings which pass beyond our comprehension, and which are too sacred and private for our inspection. Yet what is recorded is written for our instruction. Let us, then, in all reverence, endeavour to see what it means.

I. CHRIST AS A TRUE MAN SHARED IN THE FLUCTUATIONS OF HUMAN EMOTION. He quoted the language of a psalmist who had passed through the deep waters, and he felt them to be most true in his own experience. Jesus was not always calm; certainly he was not impassive. He could be roused to indignation; he could be melted to tears. He knew the rapture of Divine joy; he knew also the torment of heart-breaking grief. There are sorrows which depend upon the inner consciousness more than on any external events. These sorrows Jesus knew and felt. We cannot command our phases of feeling. It is well to know that Jesus also, in his earthly life, was visited by very various moods. Dark hours were not unknown to him. Having experienced them, he can understand them in us, and sympathize with our depression of spirit.

II. CHRIST AS THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN FELT THE DARK HORROR OF ITS GUILT. He could not own himself to be guilty when he knew he was innocent. But he was so one with man that he felt the shame and burden of man's sin as though it had been his own. As the great Representative of the race, he took up the load of the world's sin, *i.e.* he made it his own by deeply concerning himself with it, by entering into its

dreadful consequences, by submitting to its curse. Such feelings might blot out the vision of God for a season.

III. CHRIST AS THE HOLY SON OF GOD WAS UNUTTERABLY GRIEVED AT LOSING THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS FATHER'S PRESENCE. There are men who live without any thought of God, and yet this is no trouble to them. On the contrary, they dread to see God, and it is fearful for them to think that he sees them. These are men who love sin, and therefore they do not love God. But Jesus lived in the love of his Father. To lose one whom we love with all our heart is a cause for heart-breaking anguish. Jesus seemed to have lost God. To all who have the love of God in their hearts any similar feeling of desertion must be an agony of soul.

IV. CHRIST AS THE BELOVED SON IN WHOM GOD WAS WELL PLEASED COULD NOT BE REALLY DESERTED BY GOD. Not only is God physically near to all men, because he is omnipresent, but he is spiritually near to his own people to sustain and save them, even when they are not conscious of his presence. The vision of God is one thing, and his presence is another. We may miss the first without losing the second. Our real state before God does not rest on the shifting sands of our moods of feeling. In the hour of darkness Jesus prayed. This is enough to show that he knew that he was not really and utterly abandoned by his Father. In spiritual deadness, when it is hard to pray at all, the one remedy is in prayer. Our cry can reach God through the darkness, and the darkness will not last for ever; often it is the gate to a glorious light.—W. F. A.

Vers. 57—61.—*The burial of Jesus.* We may consider this in relation to all the persons concerned—Jesus himself, Joseph of Arimathæa, Pontius Pilate, and the Marys.

I. JESUS SUBMITTING TO BURIAL. Jesus himself had departed. It was only the deserted house that was now left. Still, this was the body of Jesus, and the burial of it had a significance in regard to the spirit that had once inhabited it. 1. *The burial proves the death of Christ.* If he had risen immediately it would have been said that he had never died at all—that he had only fainted. But that in his state of exhaustion he could have been torn down from the cross and sealed up in a tomb without receiving any nourishment; that he could then have come forth and walked about with no traces of suffering upon him,—all this is simply impossible. 2. *The burial completes the humiliation of Christ.* It is an humiliation for the body to be handled by others as lifeless clay, and then to be laid in the tomb, put out of sight as a dreadful thing, soon to become repulsive and loathsome. Christ's body never saw corruption; but it was humbled to the grave.

II. JOSEPH BEGGING THE BODY OF JESUS. 1. *This reveals his true discipleship.* Joseph was a rich man in a high position. It was highly dangerous for such a man to avow himself a Christian. But the privilege of burying the body of his beloved Master encouraged him to run the risk. We are best known as Christ's by what we will do for him, especially when our service involves sacrifice. 2. *This also reveals the tardiness of his confession.* It was a late avowal. Why had not Joseph owned his faith during the lifetime of Christ? He was too like those who build the tombs of the prophets. His courage was real, but it was half spoilt by the fact that it was not manifested when it would have been most valuable. How many opportunities of Christian service are missed by delay in coming out openly on the Lord's side! It is well to treat the bodies of our departed friends with respect; but this is a small service compared with the help and love we could show them during their lifetime. The Josephs who can only bury a dead Christ are not of the stuff out of which apostles are made.

III. PILATE SURRENDERING THE BODY OF JESUS. The miserable man should have protected the life of the Prisoner whom he knew to be innocent. His surrender of Jesus to death at the clamour of the Jews was more than an act of weakness, it was treason against justice. Now it is too late to save the life of the Prophet of Nazareth. The awful crime has been committed, and it can never be undone. Through all the ages it will brand the name of Pilate with an indelible mark of ignominy. Yet the governor will make a little concession. A friend of Jesus—especially as he is rich and influential—may have the lifeless corpse. Thus we see men who are false to their

real duty and the sacred trust that is laid upon them showing a reasonable kindness in small things. But this cannot atone for their great, black wickedness.

IV. THE MARYS AT THE TOMB. Sorrowful and loving, they sit and watch by the tomb. It is all they can do for their Lord, and they cannot bear to leave him. Their faithful love is rewarded. To them is given the first news of the Resurrection. Cleaving to Christ will be rewarded by many a surprise of joy. From the very tomb new hope will come to those who hold faithfully to him.—W. F. A.

Vers. 1, 2, 11—14.—*Christ before Pilate. No.* 1. Caiaphas had a purpose to serve by giving Jesus up to the Romans. Little did he know that while he thought he was making a tool of every one, he was merely God's tool for accomplishing his purposes. The harmony of the purpose of God, the scheme of Caiaphas, the law of Rome, and the relation of the Jewish court to the Roman procurator, explains fully how, when the Sanhedrin took counsel against Jesus to put him to death, the result was that they resolved to deliver him to Pilate. In their conduct notice: 1. *Their scrupulosity about entering the palace.* They would not cross a Gentile threshold during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Types in this of all who are able to be religious without being moral; who shrink from violating some ceremonial rule, but without scruple violate their own convictions—whited sepulchres, outwardly spotless, but inwardly full of rottenness and corruption. 2. *The satanically prompted cunning* of their accusation. They had but an hour ago been obliged to acquit him of such charges, and to condemn him on the ground of his claiming to be the Son of God. But Pilate is too keen-sighted to be deceived by their show of loyalty. He cannot believe that since last Passover this great conversion from hatred to love of his government has taken place. One cannot but reflect *what a pregnant moment this was for Pilate*, when our Lord seemed to wish to open the deepest desires of that severe Roman heart, and prompt him to long, with the Jews, for a spiritual kingdom. Before answering his question, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" he must first know, as John tells us, in what sense Pilate uses the words, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself? Is it not possible that thou too for thine own sake shouldest seek to know this King of the Jews for whom Israel has longed?" There were officers under Pilate whose heathen upbringing had not prevented them from discovering the spiritual grandeur of Jesus, and desiring to belong to his kingdom. But it was too much for Roman pride to be taught by a Jew how to find peace, and even to submit to this bound Jew before him as to a King. A mirror is here held up to those of us who do not "of ourselves" ask Christ what his claims are, who think it quite right that other people should accept and acknowledge him, but cannot bring themselves to do so. Pilate was a man who represents thousands in every age, who persistently and on principle live for the world, and seal up the deeper nature in them that the world does not satisfy; who try, as it were, to live down their own nature, their own immortality. Have your own spiritual necessities taught you the meaning of God's promise of a King to the Jews?—D.

Vers. 15—30.—*Christ before Pilate. No.* 2. The other evangelists tell us of Pilate's first and fatal mistake, in offering, while convinced of his Prisoner's innocence, to chastise him and let him go. He showed the Jews he was afraid of them; and from this point onwards we see him tossed between his own convictions and his fears—a type of all who in their own souls have convictions about Christ and their duty to him, which they do not act out lest they thereby incur loss or abuse. Apparently, before the Jews have time to do more than utter a murmur of discontent at his proposal, another plan suggests itself, by which he may possibly extricate himself. The governors were in the habit of releasing some well-known prisoner at the Feast of the Passover, and he offers to release Jesus. No sooner had he done so than his attention is called away by the extraordinary message from his wife. Nothing is more remarkable in the Roman history of the period than the strength of character developed by the women, their keen interest in public affairs, and the prominent part they play in them. A law forbidding the wives of the governors to accompany their husbands to the provinces had lately been repealed, and Claudia Procula was not only with Pilate, but apparently keenly interested in his work and tenderly solicitous for his honour and safety. And

still God often thus speaks to men; and some woman's anxious look or word, or some child's innocent question, will give the conscience new strength or arm it with new weapons. The moments given to ponder this message are not neglected by the leaders. They wind through the crowd, and prompt the people to ask for Barabbas. By offering them the alternative between a Man whom both he and they knew to be innocent of sedition, and a man notoriously guilty of it, he put them into the very difficulty they sought to fix him in. But they have already seen that he has a deeper conviction than the innocence of Jesus, namely, a fear of them, and this they use. Pilate, therefore, having done, as he persuaded himself, all he could to save Jesus, gives him up to the scourging—a barbarous punishment, under which many died. He may have interfered to prevent the full amount being inflicted. He did not interfere when the soldiers proceeded to mock their victim. In this mockery we have a concrete and visible representation of the manner in which Christ is continually used. We salute him as King; but what is the sceptre we put in his hands? Is it not in many cases a mere reed, in hands that are bound? Is it not as real a mockery for us to profess allegiance to him, and use the strongest language we can command to express our adoration, and then go and show that he has not the slightest control over our lives? In this would-be equitable Roman governor coming to the people and saying, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" we see: 1. The predicament of many among ourselves who would gladly be rid of the question. But it cannot be. There is this judgment to pronounce. Even if there were no blessedness in following Christ, the fact remains that he is presented to you, and that it is your duty to accept him. 2. We see how futile was the attempt of Pilate to transfer the guilt of this action to the Jews. They were willing to take the blood of Christ on their heads; but, though history shows how terrible has been their share in the vengeance they ignorantly invoked, Pilate was not necessarily exempt. Men frequently mistake the point at which their own power, and therefore their own responsibility, ends. They consent to iniquity, and say they were forced to it. *How* were you *forced?* Would every man in your circumstances do as you are doing? Or, men invite you to share their sin, persuading you that the guilt is theirs, if there is any; you will find that they cannot bear your share, and that you vainly seek to lay the guilt on them. The very fate Pilate feared, and to avoid which he sacrificed the life of our Lord, came upon him. Six years later he was deposed from his office, and died by his own hand. We are apt to say of him that he was weak rather than wicked, forgetting that moral weakness is that which makes a man capable of any wickedness. And who is the weak man but the one who is not single-minded, who attempts to gratify both his conscience and his evil or weak feelings, to secure his own selfish ends as well as the great ends of justice and righteousness? Such a man will often be in as great a perplexity as Pilate, and will come to as ruinous, if not so appalling, an end.—D.

Ver. 62—ch. xxviii. 15.—*The Resurrection.* The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely the greatest event of history, it is the hinge on which all history turns. If Christ died and lies still in his grave like other men, then the whole preaching of the apostles falls to the ground. It is plain he can afford us no help of the kind we especially need—he cannot hear our prayer, he cannot guide our life. His own word has failed, for he said he would rise. The whole revelation of God he made, all the information about things unseen and future, has doubt cast upon it. It is the resurrection of Jesus that establishes a clear and close connection between this world and the unseen and spiritual world. If he rose from the dead, then the world into which he is gone is real, and his invitation to us to join him there is one we may confidently trust to. It becomes us, therefore, to consider with candour and seriousness whatever difficulties men have felt in accepting as true this stupendous fact. May not some mistaken and ill-advised person have surreptitiously conveyed away the body and have given out that a resurrection had taken place? The authorities took the most effectual means they could think of to prevent this. So beyond doubt was it that the grave was emptied by an actual resurrection, that when Peter stood before the Sanhedrin and affirmed it, they could not deny it. This idea, therefore, may be dismissed. It is agreed, by those who deny the Resurrection as much as by those who affirm it, that the disciples had a *bonâ fide* belief that Jesus had risen from the dead and was alive.

The question is—How was this belief produced? There are three answers. (1) The disciples saw our Lord alive after crucifixion, but he had never been dead. (2) They only thought they saw him. (3) They did see him alive after being dead and buried. The first is scarcely worthy of attention,—it is so obviously inadequate. We ask for an explanation of this singular circumstance, that a number of men arrived at the firm conviction they had an Almighty Friend, One who had all power in heaven and on earth, and we are told they had seen their Master after crucifixion, creeping about the earth, scarcely able to move, pale, weak, helpless. This supposition is no explanation of their faith in him as a risen, glorious, almighty Lord. The second would suffice had we only to explain how one person believed he or she had seen the Lord. But what we have here to explain is how several persons, in different places, at different times, and in various moods of mind, came to believe they had seen him. He was recognized, not by persons who expected to see him alive, but by women who went to anoint him dead; not by credulous, excitable persons, but by persons so resolutely sceptical and so keenly alive to the possibility of delusion that nothing but handling his body could convince them. Nothing will explain the faith of the apostles and of the rest but the fact of their really seeing the Lord, after his death, alive and endowed with all power. They were men animated by no paltry spirit of vain-glory, but by seriousness, even sublimity of mind—men whose lives require an explanation precisely such as is given by the supposition that they had been brought into contact with the spiritual world in this surprising and solemnizing manner. It is not denied that the evidence for the Resurrection would be quite sufficient to authenticate any ordinary historical event. It can be refused only on the ground that no evidence, however strong, could prove such an incredible event. The supernatural is rejected as a preliminary, so as to bar any consideration of the most important evidences of the supernatural. No account of the belief in the Resurrection has ever been given more credible than that which it seeks to supplant—the simple one that the Lord did rise again. The position of the Resurrection in the system of Christian facts and motives is all-important.

I. It is the chief proof that Jesus was not mistaken regarding his own Person, his own work, his relation to the Father, and the prospects of himself and his people. It is also the Father's attestation to the sufficiency of his work.

II. If our Lord's work be viewed as a revelation of the Father, the Resurrection will equally be seen to be necessary. Were there no resurrection, we should be obliged to seek our highest ideas of God in the tomb, not in the Divine condescension and love which are visible on the cross, but in a being overcome and defeated by the same ills that overwhelm us all.

III. In the risen Lord we find the source of all spiritual strength. Any one who passes through death uninjured, who conquers that which conquers all other men without exception, shows that he has some command over nature which does not belong to other men. And he who shows this superiority in virtue of a moral superiority, and uses it in the furtherance of the highest moral ends, shows a command over the whole affairs of men which makes it easy to believe he can guide us into a condition like his own. Especially does the Resurrection enable us to believe that our Lord can communicate the Holy Spirit. Salvation is reduced to very small limits indeed, and the Christian religion becomes a mere system of morality, if there be not now a living Christ able to bestow a living Spirit.

IV. In the risen Lord we see the character of the life to which we are called in fellowship with him, and also the destiny that awaits us in him. As he passed to God, and lives with him, so must we now live wholly to God, letting this great gulf of death stand between us and our past life of self-pleasing and worldliness. In him risen, with a human body and not a bare spirit, we see what we ourselves are to be in that future life. The Divine Spirit is the source both of holiness and of immortality; if we now have the one evidence of his indwelling, we shall one day have the other.—D.

Vers. 1—10.—*The price of blood.* The day, whose dawn brought repentance to Peter, found the Jewish rulers still plotting how they might effect the murder of Jesus. They had in the night infamously condemned him as a blasphemer, thereby exposing him to the penalty of death by stoning. Almost a hundred years before this Judæa

was conquered by Pompey, and made tributary to the Romans, yet it was not until about two years before this that it was made part of the province of Syria. Then the power of capital punishment was taken from the Jews. Surely the sceptre had now departed, and Shiloh must have come (see Gen. xlix. 10). Doubting whether the Roman governor would put Jesus to death for an alleged offence in religion, the Sanhedrin resolve to accuse him of treason against the Romans on the ground of his having allowed himself to be saluted as King of the Jews (cf. ver. 11; Luke xxiii. 2; John xviii. 31). This decision brought Judas again upon the scene (ver. 3, etc.).

I. WHAT COULD THIRTY SHEKELS DO? 1. *They could sell Christ into the hands of murderers.* The prophecy in Zechariah sets forth: (1) That God appointed one eminent Shepherd to feed the Jewish people, who are called "the flock of slaughter," evidently in anticipation of what they should suffer from the Romans. This blessed Person is Divine, and confessedly Messiah (see Zech. xi. 7). (2) That the ordinary guides had no regard for their charge: "Their own shepherds pity them not" (Zech. xi. 5). This was literally the case with the Jewish rulers, Pharisees, scribes, and priests, in our Lord's time. (3) That between these unworthy shepherds and the shepherds of God's appointing there was strong enmity: "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." So Christ had a holy loathing for the pride, hypocrisy, and wickedness of the scribes and Pharisees, and they cherished a malignant hatred of him for his purity and truth. (4) That he gives up his charge in judicial visitation. And here follows an awful description of the ruin to be brought upon them by the Romans (see ver. 9). (5) That the covenant between him and his people was broken, viz. the Sinai covenant, and his people rejected, because they refused the covenant from Zion which came to replace it (Zech. xi. 10). (6) That some of the people, however, should admit Messiah's claims. "So the poor of the flock," etc. (Zech. ix. 11). These were evidently the disciples of Jesus, who were chiefly from the humbler classes. (7) That in contrast to these, the heads of the nation estimate Messiah at the price of a slave: "thirty pieces of silver"—the "goodly price," as he sarcastically observes, "that I was prised at of them" (Zech. xi. 12, 13). When they had an opportunity of withdrawing from their infamous bargain with Judas, they refused it. 2. *They could purchase "the potter's field, to bury strangers in."* This field was thenceforth called "The field of blood," and thereby became: (1) A monument to the truth of Scripture. Zechariah continues, "And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (cf. vers. 3—10; Zech. xi. 13). (2) A monument of the innocence of Jesus. This act of Judas was ordained by Providence to refute the sceptic who otherwise could object that Jesus was crucified as an impostor, on the testimony of a disciple who knew him well. In confessing Jesus innocent, Judas acknowledged his Messiahship, for otherwise he would not have been innocent. In this confession of Judas we have a specimen of the victory of Christ over Satan, and a warning to persecutors. (3) A monument of the infamy of the traitor and of the rulers. And it remained so when Matthew wrote. Jerome also says that in his days it was to be seen in Ælia (the name of the city built on the site of Jerusalem), on the south side of Mount Zion. (4) It was "to bury strangers in." The unclean "stranger" must not, even in his burial, come near to the "holy" villains who murdered their Messiah! The "stranger" has a Friend in Jesus. As the priests by procuring the Lord's death had been unwitting agents in procuring the redemption of the world, so in the final disposal of the price of his blood they unconsciously did an act which represents the reception of the Lord's salvation by the Gentiles. He that has his burial through the blood of Christ may hope also for a resurrection through it.

II. WHAT COULD THE SHEKELS NOT DO? 1. *They could not redeem Christ from death.* (1) Over that mile lying between the house of Caiaphas to that of Pilate, they led him away, "from prison and from judgment" (see Isa. liii. 7, 8), to "deliver him to the Gentiles," according to his prediction (cf. ch. xx. 19; John xviii. 32). The Churchmen of the Apostasy imitated their Jewish predecessors when they called in the civil power to shed for them the blood of the martyrs. (2) The bonds in which Jesus was now led differed from those in which he was carried to Annas. They were those special bonds which marked it to be the will of his persecutors that he should be *crucified* (see John xxi. 18). So we note that Jesus was put to death by his own countrymen in his true character as the "Son of God;" and by the Romans as

"King of the Jews." (3) The true bonds which bound Jesus were those of his wondrous love to man. Other bonds could not have held him. He suffered himself to be bound, that man might be loosed from the bands of sin (see Prov. v. 22; Lam. i. 12—14). So likewise "by his stripes we are healed." 2. *They could not purchase the repentance of the rulers.* (1) "What is that to us?" These men did not concern themselves about the innocency of Jesus. They did not say, "What is that to us?" when Judas came to them saying, "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?" They paid the price of blood, and were determined to shed it. If the elders of Jezreel, to please Jezebel, murder Naboth, is it nothing to Ahab (see 1 Kings xxi. 19)? (2) "See thou to that." Thus they disclaim the guilt of their own wicked instrument, and turn him over to his terrors. Obstinate sinners stand on their guard against convictions. Those who betray Christ, and justify themselves, are worse than Judas. The resolutely impenitent look with disdain upon the penitent. The wicked encourage men to crime, and desert them after its commission. (3) The cold villainy of the priests and elders bears testimony to the injustice with which they had treated Christ. (4) "And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury." An astonishing amount of rascality may be associated with the utmost ceremonial scrupulosity. Probably they had taken the money out of the treasury to pay the price of blood (see ch. xxiii. 24). They were fearful of defiling the temple with blood-money, while ruthlessly defiling their consciences with innocent blood. Men are often scrupulous about trifles who stick not at great crimes. 3. *They could not redeem Judas from perdition.* (1) Some think Judas was partly induced to betray his Master by the expectation that, as Messiah, he could not suffer death, and that he would deliver himself from the rulers as he had done before. He might, therefore, have calculated that in this case Christ would have the honour, the Jews would have the shame, and he would have the money. They are mistaken who imagine that Christ will work his miracles in the interests of selfishness. But actions are not to be estimated by their consequences, but by their relation to the Law of God. (2) How differently did the silver appear to the traitor before and after his transgression! He "cast down" the price of the innocent blood. How the victim now hates the snare! That which is ill gotten brings sorrow to the getter (see Job xx. 12—15). (3) As Judas was actuated by avarice in his sin, so was he possessed with despair in his repentance. Remorse, sharpened by the sense of the contempt and abhorrence of good men, is unbearable. Miserable is the wretch who must go to hell for ease. The repentance of Judas was that of the damned at the judgment, when mercy's door is shut. (4) There is little reason to believe that the repentance of Judas was more than the remorse of an upbraiding conscience (cf. ch. xxvi. 24; John xvii. 12; Acts i. 25). It was a repentance which needs to be repented of (2 Cor. vii. 10). Had he returned the money before he had betrayed Christ, he would have *agreed while yet in the way* (see ch. v. 23—26). Had he gone to Christ, or even to the disciples of Christ, in his distress, he might have obtained some relief. Sinners under conviction of sin will find their old companions miserable comforters. The devil by the help of the priests drove Judas to despair. Despair of the mercy of God is a fatal sin. One may know his sin, repent, confess, make restitution, and yet be like Judas! —J. A. M.

Vers. 11—31.—*The actors in a momentous tragedy.* The scene is laid in Jerusalem, in the palace of the Roman governor. The occasion is the trial of the Lord Jesus for his life. The whole human race and all the ages are interested. Behold—

I. THE PRISONER AT THE BAR. 1. "*Now Jesus stood before the governor.*" (1) But who is this Jesus? Immanuel! The Creator and Upholder of all things, mysteriously enshrined in human nature. (2) Then what a miracle of condescension is here! The stoop was wonderful from the throne of glory to the manger of Bethlehem. But what a marvel that he should submit to be arraigned before a mortal! (3) The condescension will be set in its strongest light by a grand reversal of this scene. He will yet appear as Judge of all. Pilate will then have to answer at his bar. The accusers also will then have to give account of their accusations. (4) We shall all do well to keep that solemnity evermore in mind (see Ps. l. 3, 22). 2. *Listen to his confession.* (1) To implicate him with the Romans, he is accused of claiming to be the

King of the Jews (see Luke xxiii. 2). He shrinks not from the avowal without explanation or qualification. He is King over Jews and Romans, over angels and devils, over heaven, earth, and hell. (2) But he explains the spiritual nature of the kingdom he came there to establish (see John xviii. 33—37). While asserting his royalty without qualification, he takes care that Pilate should not proceed in ignorance upon the malicious suggestions of the priests. (3) Cæsar, then, evidently, had nothing to fear from Jesus. In the face of this "good confession" (1 Tim. vi. 13) the accusation was utterly broken down. 3. *Mark his silence.* (1) When accused of the chief priests he answered nothing. There was nothing to refute. Lo, here the dignity of innocence! (2) This might well astonish Pilate, that One whose life was sought by charges so manifestly false should not utter a word to repel them. It was a new thing in the experience of the governor. Such conduct plainly showed that Jesus was no common person. (3) To Pilate still he answers nothing. The written Word, like the Lord, does not accept the challenge of the unbeliever. It leaves every man to work out his own conviction, as it leaves him to work out his own salvation. (4) Innocence is its own vindication. It can afford to wait for justice. Hence we must not render railing for railing (see 1 Pet. ii. 23).

II. THE WITNESSES IN COURT. 1. *The leaders were the rulers of the Jews.* (1) They were those hypocrites whose enormities Jesus had so unsparingly rebuked in his preaching. Of this hypocrisy they never repented, but nursed their resentment against him. (2) They had vindicated the truth of the account he gave of them, by the manner in which they proceeded against him. (*a*) In their plot to destroy him. (*b*) Their bribery of Judas. (*c*) The indecent haste in which they gathered the council in the night. (*d*) Their false accusation against him of blasphemy. (3) They vindicated it still in their proceeding. In accusing him before Pilate they proceed under a new accusation. They artfully concluded that the charge of sedition would be that by which the Roman governor might be moved. Rank, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is no security against rascality. 2. *The multitude were under their inspiration.* (1) They are moved by them to clamour for Barabbas. (*a*) At the Paschal Feast, which commemorated the release of the Hebrews from the bondage of Egypt, it became a custom, probably of Roman origin, to release some criminal (see ch. xxvi. 5). At our gospel Paschal Feast sinners are liberated from the bondage of sin. (*b*) In accordance with this custom, Pilate gave them the option of releasing Barabbas, a notable offender, guilty at once of treason, murder, and felony (see Luke xxiii. 19; John xviii. 40), or Jesus. Note: Barabbas was really guilty of the particular crime of which they falsely accused Jesus (see Mark xv. 7). Here, then, is the choice between good and evil, between which every man has to decide. (*c*) They preferred Barabbas. "Not this man, but Barabbas!" is still the cry of every one who hates good and loves evil. Herein the Jews violated their Law, which inflicts death "without mercy" upon criminals (see Heb. x. 28). (*d*) How their injustice here proclaims the innocency of Jesus! The guilty Barabbas thus released that Jesus might die, was a fitting representation of that countless multitude of pardoned sinners to whom his death brings everlasting life. (2) The multitude, moved by the rulers, demand the crucifixion of Jesus. They did this against reason. They did it against the expostulation of Pilate. What an opportunity they had of defeating the purposes of the rulers! They fatally preferred the evil to the good. (3) They are moved to take the guilt of his blood upon them. (*a*) This was intended to indemnify Pilate, who wavered between justice and expediency. It is a bold undertaking to be bound for a sinner to the Almighty. None but Christ can effectually bear another's sin. (*b*) But they shared Pilate's guilt by sharing his sin. (*c*) They cruelly involve their children also; and without limiting the terrible entail. By this act they renounced that ancient charter, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed." Wicked men are the natural enemies of their own children. (4) How dreadfully this imprecation was verified! Within forty years they suffered with singular resemblance to the manner in which they caused Jesus to suffer. Josephus says, "When they [the Romans] had scourged them [the Jews], and tormented them before death all manner of ways, they crucified them over against the wall of the city." He proceeds to describe the horrors that he witnessed, and says they were crucified by Titus, five hundred in a day, till "room was wanting for crosses, and crosses for bodies."

III. THE GOVERNOR IN THE JUDGMENT-SEAT. 1. *He was convinced of the innocency of Jesus.* (1) His good sense showed him that nothing was proved against him. The best men often have been accused of the worst crimes. He saw that "envy" had instigated the rulers. This is worse than hatred; for it is hatred without a cause. Hatred presumes the imputation of a fault, but envy acknowledges an excellence. The eye of the ruler was evil because Jesus was good. (2) In this judgment he was confirmed by his wife's dream. It was clearly a Divine testimony to the innocence of Jesus. It was probably of such a nature as to fill her with apprehensions of the consequences of her husband's consenting to the death of Jesus (cf. Gen. xx. 3). The "suffering" of Pilate's wife on this account was creditable to her conscience. Tradition calls her Claudia Procula, and she is canonized in the Grecian Church. Note: This reference to Pilate's wife marks the time of the event, and proves the veracity of the narrative, for we learn from Tacitus that in the reign of Tiberius the wives of governors had permission to attend them in the provinces. (3) He therefore sought to release Jesus. He declared that he "found no fault in him." In naming such a wretch as Barabbas as the alternative to Jesus, in the release at the feast, he hoped to secure that of Jesus. He pleaded with the multitude against their clamour for the blood of Jesus. 2. *Yet he sacrificed justice to expediency.* (1) He knew that Tiberius was jealous and sanguinary, and he feared the malignity of the Jews. Philo describes Pilate as "naturally inflexible, rigid, and self-willed." But he had already had to contend with two insurrections of the Jews, viz. when he attempted to bring the Roman standard into Jerusalem, and when he applied the wealth of the sacred treasury to secular uses. (2) He ought never to have appealed to the people; but he loved power rather than justice. He was prepared to do unscrupulous things rather than risk his procuratorship, if not his liberty or life. There are occasions in every life to test character. (3) He would fain relieve himself of his responsibility. He tried to devolve it upon Herod (see Luke xxiii. 5, etc.). He then tried to devolve it upon the people (ver. 24). No ceremony of washing the hands can free them from the stains of blood-guiltiness. To protest innocence, while practising crime, is to sin against conscience. "Sin is a brat nobody is willing to own" (Henry). The priests threw it upon Judas; Pilate now throws it upon them. "See ye to it." (4) Still God finds it at the sinner's door (see Acts iv. 27). Not long after this, Pilate was deprived of his office through the accusations of that very people, and, being banished to Gaul, ended his life by suicide.

IV. THE SOLDIERS IN THE PRÆTORIUM. 1. *They were in the pay of Cæsar.* They were by their profession jealous of the honour of their master. But there is a King of kings, to whom subjects of earthly sovereigns owe the first allegiance. In mistaken zeal: 2. *They mock the royalty of Jesus.* (1) They invest him with a scarlet robe, in derision, as though he wore the crimson or purple of kings (cf. Mark xv. 17; John xix. 2). They crown him with plaited thorns. The frail reed is made to serve as his sceptre (cf. ch. xi. 7; Ps. xlv. 6). (2) In this character they pay him insolent homage. They spat upon him, as he had been before abused in the high priest's hall (see ch. xxvi. 27). They smote him with the reed, making his ensign of mock royalty an instrument of cruelty. (3) The soldiers seem to have taken their cue from Herod (see Luke xxiii. 11). It was ordained that the contempt of men should in all this signally confess the truth of God. (4) The evangelists record no word of Christ's during these tortures. He sustained them with unresisting submission (see Isa. liii. 7). How completely is he left alone! The Jews persecute him, Judas betrays him, Peter denies him, the rest forsake him; and now the Roman is with his enemies. No plot could have been better contrived to show the moral grandeur of a hero, not braving but enduring the accumulated wrongs of an evil world with the dignity of meekness.—J. A. M.

Vers. 32—44.—*The reproach of the cross.* Upon the release of the infamous Barabbas, the innocent and righteous Jesus was delivered to be crucified; and now we see him suffering the reproach of the cross.

I. THE CROSS ITSELF WAS A REPROACH. 1. *It was a symbol of shame.* (1) As a tree was the means of introducing the curse into the world, so hath God ordained that a tree should be the means of its removal. Hence from the earliest time, whoever was

hanged upon a tree was accounted accursed of God (cf. Gen. iii. 12—19; Deut. xx. 22, 23; Josh. viii. 29; x. 26, 27). Those curse-bearers were types of Christ (see Gal. iii. 13). (2) Crucifixion amongst the heathen is traced back to the age of Semiramis. It was chiefly inflicted on slaves; on free persons only when convicted of the most heinous crimes. Hence Paul's emphatic "even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). (3) It was a part of the reproach of a criminal that he had to carry his own cross to the place of execution. Plutarch says, "Every kind of wickedness produces its own peculiar torment, just as malefactors when brought forth to execution carry their own crosses." So Jesus carried his cross until he sank under it (see John xix. 17), overcome by exhaustion through his agony in the garden followed by his sufferings in the Prætorium. He carried it as Isaac carried the wood upon which he was to be offered up. (4) So shameful a thing was the cross, that no Jew or Roman citizen could be induced to carry one. Hence Simon the Cyrenian was impressed to bear the cross of Jesus. Probably he was pointed out as a disciple of Jesus (cf. Mark xv. 21; Rom. xvi. 13). He became thereby the honoured representative of the suffering followers of Christ in every age (cf. ch. xvi. 24; Heb. xiii. 13). 2. *It was an instrument of shame.* (1) There was a cruel torture inflicted upon the victim before he came to his crucifixion. Jesus was accordingly delivered by Pilate to be scourged, preparatory to his being crucified. The soldiers to the scourging added cruel mockings. (2) At the place of execution he was stripped of his garments. "The poorest man dies with some clothing on, Jesus with none; and his garments fall not to his friends, but to the soldiers who crucified him" (Harmer). David said in the spirit of prophecy of Christ, for it was never true of himself, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Ps. xxii. 18). (3) Then came the actual crucifixion. The stretching of the victim upon the wood. The transfixing. The concussion through the striking the foot of the cross into the hole dug for its reception, by which the bones became dislocated (see Ps. xxii. 14). The lingering torture, the vitals being avoided. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."

II. REPROACH WAS ASSOCIATED WITH IT. 1. *In the place of the crucifixion.* (1) "A place called Golgotha, that is to say, The place of a skull." It had its name from being the place of common execution. Christ being crucified *there* gives expressiveness to the prediction of Isaiah, "numbered with the transgressors." (2) The ghastly place was an emblem of the devastated state of the Church that crucified Christ. So of every Church-member who crucifies him afresh. But to the repentant sinner it is the end of death and beginning of life. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate (Heb. xiii. 12). (3) "Golgotha" (גלגלת) resembles "Gilgal," with the Syriac addition (ת־). The latter place was named by Joshua to commemorate the temporal redemption of Israel from the reproach of Egypt. In the former place Jesus freed his people by a spiritual redemption from the reproach of sin (see Josh. v. 9). 2. *In the inscription on the cross.* (1) "His accusation written" (ver. 37). It was common to affix a label to the cross, giving a statement of the crime for which the person suffered. (2) But the accusation of Jesus alleged no crime. It was really an accusation of the priests. They condemned Jesus for blasphemy, but had him crucified for treason. It impeached them as murderers. (3) The accusation of Jesus asserted a glorious truth. The truth was emphasized by being three times written, viz. in three languages. Pilate could not be induced to alter what he had written (see John xix. 21). Like Balaam, he blessed when he was entreated to curse (see Numb. xxiv. 10). (4) When we look at the cross as the emblem of suffering, we see over the head of the Sufferer the promise of triumph and the hope of glory. Sanctified suffering evermore brings forth this fruit. 3. *In the characters crucified along with him.* (1) "Two robbers, one on the right hand, and one on the left." Placing the Lord between the robbers was intended to stigmatize him with peculiar infamy, as if he were the greater criminal of the three. (2) Herein note a further fulfilment of the words of Isaiah, "He was numbered with the transgressors." He was so numbered that we may be numbered with his saints.

III. REPROACH WAS CAST UPON HIM. 1. *By those that passed by.* (1) "They railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Here is a shameful misconstruction of his words. Cruelty has its refuge in falsehood. "Save." They mock at the name of *Jesus*, equi-

valent to "Saviour." (2) "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross." Had he not by many miracles proved himself the Son of God? He *would* not save himself by coming down from the cross, his gracious purpose being to sacrifice himself in order to save sinners. The sign he had given them was not his coming down from the cross, but his coming up from the grave. (3) Why have they not the patience of the "three days" to which they referred, and they might see the raising of the temple of his body? (4) The wagging of the head was the expression of a malicious triumph. Little did they consider that this very gesture was the fulfilment of a prophecy to their dishonour (see Ps. xxii. 7). 2. *By the heads of the nation.* (1) "In like manner also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders said, He saved others; can he not save himself?" A Saviour who saves not, but sacrifices himself to be the victim for salvation to others, they cannot understand. (2) "He is the King of Israel." Here is irony founded on the inscription which they could not induce Pilate to alter. "Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him." Sceptics are ever ready to prescribe to God what miracles he must work in order to gain their confidence, as though that confidence also were an infinite benefit to him. When Christ gave them the more astonishing evidence of his Messiahship by rising from the dead, they did not believe. His completing his work and not coming down from the cross is the reason why we believe. (3) "He trusteth in God; let him deliver him now if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God." In this railing they unwittingly fulfil a remarkable prophecy of the Messiah (see Ps. xxii. 8). The fulfilment of the predictions concerning the sufferings of Messiah by the enemies of Jesus establishes his claims. 3. *By the impenitent malefactor.* (1) "And the robbers also," or one of them "that were crucified with him, cast upon him the same reproach." The plural is sometimes put for the singular as, "They are dead," meaning only Herod (ch. ii. 20); and, "When the disciples saw it they had indignation," meaning only Judas (ch. xxvi. 8; John xii. 4). (2) The arguments used by the railers are the stock arguments of infidels. Libertines like the Jews are offended at the paradoxes of a High Priest who designs to destroy the temple; at a Saviour who saves not himself; at the Son of God submitting to be crucified. But in these very paradoxes the believer finds the sources of the joys of salvation.—J. A. M.

Vers. 45—54.—*Prodigy rebuking levity.* Levity had diabolical revelry while the blessed Lord Jesus meekly suffered injustice the most outrageous, and cruelty the most refined. At its height it was rebuked—

I. BY A HORROR OF DARKNESS. 1. *This was preternatural.* (1) It was not the result of an ordinary eclipse of the sun. The Passover was celebrated at full moon, when such an event could not have taken place. A solar eclipse never continues beyond a quarter of an hour. This darkness continued three hours. (2) It may have been produced by the intervention of dense clouds. Such an intervention would have been unusual in Judæa in the spring of the year during the brightest hours of the day. But whatever may have been the secondary causes, they were commissioned by the same Providence that sent the plague of darkness upon the Egyptians (cf. Exod. x. 21—23). (3) It was no chance that so intimately connected this darkness with the event of the Crucifixion. It was "over all the land," viz. of Judæa, where Christ suffered, and prevailed during the latter three hours of his suffering. It terminated also with the termination of those sufferings. To explain such coincidences as purely accidental is but to substitute a miracle of chance for a miracle of Providence. What is gained? 2. *It was portentous.* (1) It expressed the moral anguish of spirit which Jesus then endured for us. For in those three dreadful hours he was enduring the punishment of our offences. This experience of Divine anger drew from him the pathetic exclamation, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (2) It expressed the present triumph of the powers of darkness over the Sun of Righteousness (cf. Gen. iii. 15; Luke xxii. 53). An extraordinary illumination heralded the birth of Christ, an extraordinary darkness signalized his death. (3) It indicated the spiritual darkness of the Jewish people, who obstinately closed their eyes upon the Light of the world, and filled up the measure of their iniquity by crucifying the Just One. It presaged also the desolation which in consequence they were destined to suffer. (4) It expressed a mourning spread over nature for the horrible crime then perpetrated by men. This

sentiment is put into the mouth of Dionysius the Areopagite, who, witnessing a wonderful eclipse of the sun at Heliopolis, in Egypt, said to his friend Apollophanes, "Either God himself suffers or sympathizes with the sufferer."

II. BY THE RENDING OF THE TEMPLE'S VEIL. 1. *This also was preternatural.* (1) The matter of fact cannot be disputed. For it occurred at the time of the evening sacrifice, while the priest was offering incense in the holy place, and on the occasion of a great festival when the people in vast numbers were praying without. The testimony of Matthew might therefore have been readily contradicted had it not been true. It is too late in the day to attempt to contradict it now. (2) We are not informed how the wonder was effected, whether by lightning or by invisible hands; but the veil was thick and strong, and could not have been "rent from the top to the bottom" by any ordinary force. God can work his miracles immediately or by secondary causes. (3) That this was a Divine thing is evident from its coincidence with the moment of the Redeemer's yielding up his spirit. To say this was a mere accident is but to make the miracle of chance all the more stupendous. 2. *This too was portentous.* (1) Paul teaches us to regard the rending of the veil of the temple as emblematical of the rending of the body of our Lord, the sacrificial efficacy of which opened to the guilty the way of access to God, and opened to all who believe, the way into his glorious presence in the future life. (2) It intimated also the abolition of the Jewish ceremonial Law, which, by its interposition of imperfect and mystic rites, had obstructed free and direct approach to God. (3) It signified the revealing and unfolding of the mysteries of the Old Testament, so as to make the face of Moses to shine in the radiance of the gospel. In Christ we discover the true Propitiatory, or Mercy-seat. He is that Ark of the covenant who contains in his heart the unbroken tables of the Law. He is that precious golden pot of incorruptible Manna, the very Bread of life from heaven.

III. BY THE PORTENTS FROM THE EARTH. 1. *The earthquake.* (1) Travellers have observed marks of extraordinary convulsions in these rocks. The fissures lie across the natural cleavage. Though earthquakes are produced by natural causes, yet are they under the control and direction of Providence. (2) This earthquake attested God's approbation of the Sufferer, as it expressed also his anger against his persecutors (cf. Amos viii. 8; Nah. i. 6). So as the rending of the veil intimated the removal and abolition of the Jewish Church, this rending of the rocks imported the ruin that was coming upon the nation. (3) The phenomenon occurring at that critical moment when Jesus dismissed his spirit, significantly evinced that the dreadful act of rejecting and crucifying the Christ provoked the desolation. (4) It may also be taken as a token and earnest of that mighty convulsion of nature which will attend Christ's coming to the judgment (cf. Heb. xii. 26). 2. *The opening of the tombs.* (1) This showed that the power of death and the grave was vanquished by the death and resurrection of Christ. When our Lord gave up the ghost it was not life but death itself that died. This was the great death out of which life was educed. He triumphed over death in the "place of a skull"—where the trophies of death lay around. His Divinity was proved, for he imparted life to the bodies of the sleeping saints (see John v. 25). (2) "This opening of the graves was designed both to adorn the resurrection of Christ, and to give a specimen of our resurrection, which also is in virtue of his" (Flavel). (3) It was a strong confirmation of the resurrection of Christ. For those who came forth from the tombs after his resurrection "appeared to many" to whom our Lord himself did not appear. Returning with Jesus to heaven, they were also pledges to angels and spirits of men of the general resurrection to come. See now—

IV. THE EFFECT UPON THE SPECTATORS. 1. *Upon the Jews.* (1) The horror of darkness interrupted their raillery. It struck them with terror. Guilt trembles in darkness. It did not change their hearts. (2) Until near the close of this period of horror, Jesus suffered silently in the sorrowfulness of his soul for the sin of the world, and distressed with the awful loneliness of being forsaken of his God. This was the worst part of his sufferings, and extorted from him that loud pathetic cry. This roused again the courage of his revilers to say, "This Man calleth Elijah." They misunderstood him, as carnal men do evermore, substituting trust in the human for trust in the Divine. (3) Jesus then said, "I thirst" (see John xix. 28). This moved one standing by to fix a sponge soaked in vinegar on a hyssop stalk, and put

it to his mouth, but the kindness was interrupted by others who, in the same obdurate spirit, said, "Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to save him." The heart is desperately wicked. (4) The prodigies which followed made them "smite their breasts" (see Luke xxiii. 48). The wicked will wail amid the convulsions of the last day (cf. Isa. ii. 19—21; Rev. i. 7). 2. *Upon the soldiers.* (1) They had reviled him before (see Luke xxiii. 36), but now they "fear exceedingly," and the centurion in particular is thoughtfully affected, for he makes a true confession. (2) In his reflections he thought upon the manner of the death of Christ (see Mark xv. 39), for his death was evidently a voluntary act. (*a*) Luke tells us that the last utterance was, "Father, unto thy hands I commend my spirit." This he uttered with a loud or great voice. Then immediately he "yielded up his spirit." His strength was unbroken. He died as the Prince of life. (*b*) The circumstance of his expiring sooner than was usual with crucified persons (see Mark xv. 44), as well as the loudness of his voice in the very act of his dying, showed the voluntariness of his death (see John x. 17, 18). (*c*) Our Lord is nowhere said to have *fallen asleep* (cf. ver. 52), but always to have *died.* "Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, breathed their last; Ananias, Sapphira, Herod, expired; Jesus gave up the ghost, dismissed or delivered up his own spirit" (A. Clarke). In the manner of his death, then, behold the manner of his love. (*d*) Christ's loud voice was like the trumpet blown over the sacrifices. 3. *Upon the women.* (1) They followed him in love. They had ministered to him. They seem now to have been the only disciples, excepting John, present at the Crucifixion. They were "afar off." This expression may only intimate that they had come from far, even from Galilee. For the mother of Jesus stood by the cross with John, and Mary of Magdala and others also were near. Yet when Christ suffered, his friends were but spectators. Even angels stood aloof when he trod the winepress alone. (2) Their faith and love were strengthened. All that the centurion saw they also saw, and with wider and deeper conviction.—J. A. M.

Vers. 57—66.—*The treatment of the body of Christ.* The body of Christ is mystically taken to represent his Church (see 1 Cor. x. 17; Eph. iv. 16; Col. i. 18). In this figure the fact is strongly set forth, viz. that Christ takes home to himself whatever treatment his Church may receive (see Prov. xix. 31; ch. xxv. 35—46; Acts ix. 1, 4, 5). This also applies to individual members. And agreeably to this analogy, what was done to the literal body of Jesus is suggestive of the treatment he also receives as he is represented in his followers. The actors may be described as—

I. THOSE LOVINGLY SOLICITOUS FOR HIS HONOUR. 1. *Christ has disciples, secretly so through fear.* (1) Joseph of Arimathæa was a "rich man" and yet "Jesus' *disciple.*" Things impossible with men are possible with God (see ch. xix. 23—26). "Judge nothing before the time." (2) He was an "honourable counsellor," a member of that wicked Sanhedrin that condemned Christ, but "he had not consented to the counsel and deed of them." In difficult circumstances he was true. He was "a good and righteous man, who was looking for the kingdom of God" (cf. Mark xv. 43; Luke xxiii. 50). Genuine honour is the associate of goodness and righteousness. These come to us through Christ. (3) Yet he had been a disciple "*secretly* through fear of the Jews." Probably he had been converted by his friend and fellow-ruler, Nicodemus, and his timidity was in keeping with the caution which prompted Nicodemus to visit Jesus under the cover of "night" (see John iii. 1, 2). Note: There are family likenesses in spiritual relationships. (4) But he did not allow his timidity to involve him in the wickedness of the council. He doubtless gave his voice as well as his vote against their crime. It was he probably who cross-examined the suborned witnesses, making their disagreement too apparent for the comfort of the priests (see Mark xiv. 56, 59). In his protest he probably took some such line of argument as that of Gamaliel on a subsequent occasion (see Acts vi. 34—39). 2. *They will show kindness to his body.* (1) The righteous soul of Joseph was grieved at the indignities to which it had been subjected, and at the earliest opportunity he went to Pilate and asked for it. He then proceeded without loss of time to remove it from the accursed tree (see Acts xiii. 29). He had it decently swathed in linen, and laid in his own new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock. His friend Nicodemus laid in with it "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight" (see John xix. 39). Then, rolling a

great stone to the door of the tomb, they departed. God can find fit instruments for his work. His providence had reserved these two secret disciples for this solemn duty. Secret disciples are more generally employed in rendering service to the *body* of Christ, or *material* interests of his Church. (2) God honours the faithfulness of his secret disciples by encouraging and strengthening their faith. Had Joseph listened to the promptings of human prudence, he would have hesitated to interfere for the body of Christ, lest he should be brought under suspicion, incapacitated for doing good, perhaps utterly ruined. Probably his timidity had been removed by the prodigies at our Lord's death, working in him a stronger conviction that Jesus was the Messiah. Now he went "boldly" to Pilate (Mark xv. 43). 3. *Thereby they advance the interests of his truth.* (1) The riches and honourable station of Joseph are mentioned, not only because of the influence they would have with Pilate, but to show the fulfilment of the words of Isaiah, "And his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb" (liii. 9, Lowth's translation). His grave would have been with the malefactors had not Joseph interposed. How infallibly the providence vindicates the truth of God! (2) See here also an admirable Divine propriety. It was proper that the grave of Jesus should be *borrowed*, because the grave is the *heritage* of sinners (see Job xxiv. 19; Ps. cxlvi. 4). It was proper it should be *new*—never tainted with corruption, for in no sense should the Holy One see corruption. It was proper that the cavil should be obviated, as if the body of Christ had been resuscitated by touching the bones of some prophet (see 2 Kings xiii. 20). Christ's burial takes off the terror of the grave, and we may now be *buried with him.* 4. *Christ has disciples who openly confess him.* (1) The women were at the tomb. There was Mary of Magdala. She was a respectable woman, out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils, whose power over her was probably her affliction rather than her crime. She is without warrant confounded with the woman who was "a sinner," but whose name is not mentioned. There was "the other Mary," evidently "the mother of James and Joses," mentioned in ver. 56, who appears to have been a sister of the mother of our Lord. There was also Salome, unless "the other Mary" and Salome are the same, which is doubtful (see Mark xvi. 1). Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, appears to have been there too (see Luke xxiv. 10). The mother of our Lord had probably at this time been taken to the home of John (see John xix. 26, 27). (2) These noble women had followed Jesus, some of them at least from Galilee, were ever ready to minister to his temporal necessities, were present at his crucifixion, and here they are again at his burial. They are in the posture of mourners, and so testify to his innocency, for the Jews had forbidden to show any external marks of mourning at the burial of malefactors. They had heard the Lord speak of his resurrection, but probably interpreted him in some figurative sense. But though their faith was confused and unsettled, their love was strong. Where love is there is everything; and it will all come out as the ways of Providence unfold. (3) These women were there gratefully to witness and commend the kindness of Joseph and Nicodemus. And after the men had retired, they went into the city just before the setting in of the sabbath, to purchase spices for the embalming of the body as soon as the sabbath should have passed. Their love was constant (cf. ch. xxvi. 12, 13).

II. THOSE MALICIOUSLY ANXIOUS TO DISCREDIT HIM. 1. *Notice the villainy of the rulers.* (1) See it in their guilty fears. The kindness of the friends of Jesus gave him a tomb; the malice of his enemies would keep him in it. Should he rise again his blood will be upon them. They cannot forget the raising of Lazarus. Resurrections are terrible things to the wicked, especially of those murdered by them for their testimony to the truth (see Rev. xi. 11). If the disciples of Jesus had lost all hope, his enemies had not lost all fear. The fears of the wicked should encourage the hopes of the good. (2) See it in their nervous promptitude. They are with Pilate soon after Joseph had left him. The morrow after the preparation was just after six in the evening. The celerity of hatred is only exceeded by that of love. (3) See it in their sycophancy. They were "gathered together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said." Pilate is "Sir," Jesus "That deceiver." What an outrageous inversion of propriety! "The malicious slanderers of good men are commonly the most sordid flatterers of great men" (Henry). (4) See it in their unscrupulousness. They had often quarrelled with Christ for doing works of mercy on the sabbath, they

hesitate not themselves to be busied with a work of malice on it. Neither do they hesitate to procure soldiers to mount guard upon it. Again they say, "We remember," etc. Thus these base hypocrites made it evident that they well enough knew that the words of Christ, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," referred to "the temple of his body," when they perverted them at the trial (cf. ch. xxvi. 61). 2. *See how Providence rebuked it.* (1) By their confession it was publicly known that Jesus had uttered the prediction that he should rise again the third day. The prediction, then, was not read into the narrative after the event of the Resurrection. They were anxious "until the third day," because he had "said while yet alive, After three days I rise again." Note: The mode of computation was that which still obtains in the East. "After three days" means "until the third day." (2) They relied upon the seal and the guard. The seal supplied the place of a lock. It was in use as anciently as the time of Daniel (see Dan. vi. 17). The sepulchre was cut into the rock, so had but one entrance, which was not only blocked by a great stone sealed, but guarded by sixty soldiers. The disciples could not possibly "steal him away." Their case rendered the evidence of the Resurrection all the more convincing. (3) "So the last error," etc. The devil never speaks the truth but when he intends to promote some evil purpose by it. The rulers were true prophets against their will. Little did they imagine that the measures they adopted would in the most powerful manner contribute to the result they dreaded. There is neither might nor council against God (see Acts v. 23; xvi. 23).

III. THOSE WHO AFFECT INDIFFERENCE TO HIS CLAIMS. 1. *Pilate affected a haughty indifference.* (1) He conceded the body of Christ to the request of Joseph. He was the more willing to do so, having found no fault in Jesus at his trial. (2) He also conceded the guard to the request of the rulers. (3) He leaves the watch to the priests, not caring to be seen himself in such a thing. "Make it as sure as ye can," looks like banter. 2. *The soldiers of the watch were mercenaries.* (1) They guarded the tomb because they were paid to render obedience to command. Can a man reduce himself to the condition of an automaton? (2) When they took the bribe of the rulers to conceal the resurrection of Christ and give publicity to a lie, they acted as free agents. (3) There can be no neutrality in relation to Christ. To affect it cannot be innocent. Every age has its Pharisees, who make the written Word of God a sealed book, perverting the letter and denying the spirit (cf. Rev. xxii. 10). "Do thou hinder the resurrection of thy sin; seal it down with strong purposes, solemn covenants, and watch it by a wakeful, circumspect walking" (Gurnall).—J. A. M.

Ver. 4.—*The uselessness of remorse.* "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." There are various estimates of the character and motives of Judas Iscariot. Dr. A. Maclaren does not give sufficient scriptural reason for crediting him with mistaken zeal, and the intention of forcing Christ to act. He says, "Judas was simply a man of a low, earthly nature, who became a follower of Christ, thinking that he was to prove a Messiah of the vulgar type, or another Judas Maccabæus. He was not attracted by Christ's character and teaching. As the true nature of Christ's work and kingdom became more obvious, he became more weary of him and it. . . . His burst of confession does not sound like the words of a man who had been actuated by motives of mistaken affection." The word "repented," found in ver. 3, is the word which merely means "regret," a simple change of feeling; it does not suggest humbled feeling, or sense of sin. A man may be vexed at the results of his conduct without any recognition of the sin and shame of his conduct. Two of the apostolic band openly failed in those hours of strain. Penitence and remorse are illustrated in their two cases. Peter, through penitence, found recovery. Judas, through remorse, found doom. Penitence is useful. Remorse is useless.

I. REMORSE IS BUT THE SHAME OF HAVING FAILED. The word means "to bite back." It may be illustrated by biting one's lips through vexation. It involves shrinking from the results of having failed. It is the annoyance of having miscalculated; it is the feeling of being convicted of stupidity; it is the regret of seeing a scheme fall about us in ruins because we made a false move. It may include some regret at the mischief we have made for others, without doing any good to ourselves. But there is no sense of the sin and shame of the thing done. The seeming confession, "I

have sinned," does but lightly pass the lips. Judas would have done it again, if he could have been sure of succeeding the second time. Remorse includes no self-revelation, no humbled feeling. There is anger with one's self, but not shame or humility. So there is no chance of betterment for a man while his feeling keeps mere remorse.

II. REMORSE KEEPS A MAN AWAY FROM GOD. You cannot take remorse to God. You never want to do so. It drives you away from him. Judas never offered a prayer to God; never thought of pardon for his offence. Remorse made him hopeless and desperate. He took the life that seemed worthless. Penitence always moves towards God; it seeks him. There is in it prayer and hope. God is the All-merciful One.—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*The silence of innocence.* "He answered nothing." "We have to realize the contrast between the vehement clamour of the accusers, the calm, imperturbable, patient silence of the Accused, and the wonder of the judge at what was so different from anything that had previously come within the range of his experience" (Plumptre). Attention may be given to the silences of Jesus during his trials. They are at least as striking and as remarkable as his speeches. Look especially at these. 1. His silence before the high priest. False witnesses, bribed witnesses, made an accusation, by twisting one of his figurative sentences. The high priest was prepared to twist any reply that Jesus might make. "But he held his peace." And the silence made the consciences of his judges speak out, and accuse them of unscrupulous and malicious wickedness. 2. His silence before Herod. "Herod poured out a flood of rambling remarks, but Jesus did not vouchsafe him one word. He felt that Herod should have been ashamed to look the Baptist's Friend in the face. He would not stoop even to speak to a man who could treat him as a mere wonder-worker who might purchase his judge's favour by exhibiting his skill. But Herod was utterly incapable of feeling the annihilating force of such silent disdain." 3. His silence before Pilate (as in text). It does not seem that our Lord was silent *to* Pilate. It was when the clamour of the priest-party arose, interrupting the trial, that Jesus preserved silence. Observe the very important distinction between the silence of moodiness and sulkiness and the silence of conscious innocence. Only the latter silence has the true, reproachful, conscience-quickening power. "A silent lamb amidst his foes." The lamb is the type of innocence. Christianity has glorified the silent endurance of wrong, and has made such "silent endurance" one of the most masterful forces that sway humanity. Illustrate these points.

I. INNOCENCE CAN AFFORD TO BE SILENT. 1. Because it sufficiently speaks in attitude and in countenance. 2. Because God is always on its side. 3. Because time works its vindication.

II. INNOCENCE CONVICTS THE INJURER BY SILENCE. 1. It takes away all possibility of contention. 2. It prevents the injurer keeping up the excitement of rage and malice. 3. It compels the injurer to question his own doings. 4. It takes away all the pleasure of the injurer, when a man bears the injury meekly and silently. The silence of Jesus searches priest-party, Herod, and Pilate.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Pilate's character-reading.* "He knew that for envy they had delivered him." Pilate was never under any sort of delusion concerning Christ. Experience as a magistrate made the criminal's face, and attitude, and speech, and ways, quite familiar things to him. He watched Jesus, and was perfectly certain that he was no criminal, and no dangerous revolutionist. And Pilate had not had contention after contention with that priest-party without knowing the party well; and his estimate of it we can well imagine. It did not flatter them, and it was just. Of course, he saw everything from the Roman's point of view, and he made some mistakes, as every one must who fails to put himself in the place of him whom he appraises; he was, however, right in this case. But what he read seriously increases the guilt and shame of his act. He has no excuse of even self-deception.

I. PILATE'S READING OF THE CHARACTER AND MOTIVES OF THE PRIEST-PARTY. Pilate "was a typical Roman, not of the antique, simple stamp, but of the imperial period; a man not without some remains of the ancient Roman justice in his soul, yet pleasure-loving, imperious, and corrupt. He hated the Jews whom he ruled, and, in times of irritation, freely shed their blood. They returned his hatred with cordiality,

and accused him of every crime—maladministration, cruelty, and robbery." "Pilate understood their pretended zeal for the Roman authority." He may not have known the precise occasion for their strong feeling against Jesus; but he saw plainly that it was a case of malice and revenge, and they were prepared to humiliate themselves utterly in carrying out their evil purpose. But, if Pilate knew them so well, we must judge his guilt in yielding to them by the light of his knowledge.

II. PILATE'S READING OF THE CHARACTER AND MOTIVES OF JESUS. He seems to have known something of Jesus. The story of the triumphal entry had been duly reported to him; and he formed his opinion when he found that Jesus took no material advantage of that time of excitement. He settled it—Jesus was a harmless enthusiast, of no account politically. "He questioned Jesus in regard to the accusations brought against him, asking especially if he pretended to be a King." He may have laughed cynically at our Lord's answer, but he knew well that nothing of the demagogue lurked behind that calm and peaceful face. Again and again he declared him innocent—he found no fault in him. Pilate read him aright, but condemned himself in the reading. Our guilt is always measured by our knowledge.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*Guilt that will not wash off.* By the Mosaic regulations, the elders of a city in which an undiscovered murder had been committed were to wash their hands over the sin offering, and to say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it" (Deut. xxi. 6). Pilate thinks that "when he gets the Jews to take the crucifixion of Jesus upon themselves, he has relieved himself, if not entirely, yet in a great measure, of the responsibility. But just as the outward washing of hands could not clear him of his share in the guilt, so guilt contracted by our being a consenting or co-operating party in any deed of injustice and dishonour cannot be thus mitigated or wiped away" (Hanna). Hand-washing as a symbolic action is familiar at all times. Lady Macbeth cannot wash off the murder-spot which her conscience clearly sees on seemingly clean hands.

I. THE GUILT OF IGNORANCE WILL WASH OFF. We may do things that are wrong without knowing them to be wrong. They may do mischief and bring trouble; but they do not involve soul-stain; so the sins of ignorance—if the ignorance is not guilty ignorance—will wash off.

II. THE GUILT OF FRAILTY WILL WASH OFF. We sometimes do wrong through body-bias. Sometimes even against our will. Sometimes by temporary swerving of the will. If there be no set purpose, only human infirmity, the guilt will wash off.

III. THE GUILT OF FORCED DOING AGAINST OUR WILL WILL WASH OFF. We may be compelled, by circumstances or human persuasions, to do what we would not do. That may bring trouble and spoil our lives, but it does not soil our souls, and it will wash off.

IV. THE GUILT OF WILFUL SIN WILL NOT WASH OFF. That involves inward stain. It must be got *out*. That can only be done (1) by regeneration, or (2) by judgment. "Oh! if a man could roll off his deeds on other men; if a man that is a partner with others could only roll off his portion of crime upon his confederates, as easily as a man can wash his hands in a bowl of water, and clean them, how easy it would be for men to be cleansed from their transgressions in this world! Pilate was the guiltiest of all that acted in this matter. He was placed where he was bound to maintain justice. He went against his better feelings." He *willed* the death of One whom he knew to be innocent. Pilate's guilt will not "wash off."—R. T.

Ver. 32.—*The honourable ministry of Simon.* "Sentence of death having been passed against Jesus, he was led forth to Calvary, bearing his cross, guarded by a band of Roman soldiers, and followed by a multitude of people. Exhausted by what he had passed through in the course of the previous night, the load he carried seemed too heavy for him. The procession was met by one Simon, a Cyrenian—who may possibly be identified with the "Niger" of Acts xiii. 1—coming out of the country; and the soldiers laid hold upon him, and compelled him—the term is a military one, 'pressed him into the service'—to help our Lord with his burden. Perhaps they laid the whole beam on his shoulder, perhaps only the light end, Jesus still going foremost and continuing to bear the principal weight; so that in the most literal way Simon bore

it after him." Dr. Hanna says, "It was part of the degradation of a public crucifixion that the doomed one should assist in carrying to the place of crucifixion the instrument of death." But the reason why this particular man was seized upon for this ministry is not suggested. We may suppose either (1) that it was a simple act of wantonness on the part of the soldiers, who feared their victim would die before they could get him to the place of execution; or (2) that he was known as a secret disciple, and the people pointed him out to the soldiers; or (3) that he had reproached the soldiers for treating Jesus so cruelly, and, in spite, they made him bear the cross. However it was, we certainly envy Simon the honourable and helpful service he was permitted to render to our suffering Lord. Fix attention on him as the one and only man who helped Jesus in the time of his sorest need. From his arrest to his death no apostle helped him, no disciple helped him; he was alone. This unknown Simon breaks the loneliness, and shares with him the burden of his cross.

I. SIMON'S MINISTRY WAS A SYMPATHY. There must have been something that drew the attention of the soldiers to Simon. It might well have been an expression of sympathy with the fainting cross-bearer. It was a sight to move a sympathizing soul.

II. SIMON'S MINISTRY WAS A COMPULSION. Yet evidently a willing compulsion. He could not have offered to bear the cross—that would have been against the rules. He gladly did what he was made to do.

III. SIMON'S MINISTRY WAS A SERVICE. Just the service of the hour. The thing Christ needed just then. The thing to do for Christ *just now* is what we all need to find out.—R. T.

Ver. 37.—*Christ as King of the Jews.* It is not difficult to understand Pilate. He is a commonplace, and in no sense a complex character. His act in putting this inscription above Christ's head reveals the mean-souled man who, because he cannot have his way, will have his revenge in a paltry, petty way. Not an outrageously wicked man, the key to his character lies in his love of distinction, power, and self-indulgence. A man of weak, and, with his temptations, of corrupt character, he was anxious to conciliate the Jews, so he surrendered Jesus; but he would force his stubborn way in the trumpery matter of the superscription. To all expostulations he replied, "What I have written I have written."

I. TO CALL CHRIST "KING OF THE JEWS" MAY PRODUCE A FALSE IMPRESSION. 1. Old prophecies had indeed suggested the kingship of Messiah, but the kingship anticipated was a theocracy rather than an earthly rule. 2. Disciples had taken up the idea that Christ was to be an earthly King. There was a materializing tendency in that age, because material deliverance from Roman bondage seemed to be the one thing needful. 3. Christ never claimed such a title, and never acted as if he claimed it. There is a royal tone in Christ's words and works. He spoke of himself in relation to the "kingdom of heaven;" but never of himself as "King of the Jews." 4. Christ emphatically declared, even to Pilate, that in such senses as men attached to the words, he was not "King of the Jews." "My kingdom is not of this world." Christ is not an earthly king, and never will be. He is King of truth, King of souls, King of righteousness.

II. TO CALL CHRIST "KING OF THE JEWS" MAY EXPRESS THE TRUTH CONCERNING HIM. He is King of the Jews, but not of those who are only nationally such. He is King of all who are the true children of Abraham, because they have the faith of Abraham. Christ may be called a "King" if we understand by that term: 1. King of truth-seekers; of all truth-seekers everywhere. 2. King of the spiritually minded; of those who cannot be satisfied with the seen and temporal, but must breathe the atmosphere of the unseen and eternal. 3. Christ, as we see him on the cross, is Champion-King. 4. Christ, as now in the spiritual realm, is King of his Church. "On his vesture and thigh his name is written, King of kings, and Lord of lords."—R. T.

Ver. 42.—*He who saves others cannot save himself.* The leaders of the Jewish nation looked with grave suspicion on every one who claimed to be Messiah; and as they fully believed that when Messiah came he would "abide for ever," the crucifixion of Jesus was the plainest possible proof that he was *not* Messiah. This text is the taunt founded on this idea. "He saved others" is satire. They did not believe that

he had saved anybody. To them his imposture and his helplessness were at once shown in this—"himself he cannot save." Those mockers were wrong every way.

I. CHRIST DID SAVE OTHERS. Illustrate, by specimen cases, the following three points: 1. He did save from disability and disease. He gave sight to the blind, and cleansed the leper. 2. He did save from death. He brought Lazarus back from the grave. 3. He did save from sin. Authoritatively saying to the paralytic, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He did "save to the uttermost."

II. CHRIST COULD HAVE SAVED HIMSELF. Had he so wished, he could have commanded the service of "twelve legions of angels." "There was not a moment, from beginning to end of his human career, in which our blessed Lord might not have turned back from shame and suffering. At the very moment when these words were uttered, he had but to speak, and he would have been surrounded by the responsive hosts of heaven, and in one moment his pain would have been exchanged for triumph." Nails could not hold him against his will. He *could* have come down from the cross.

III. CHRIST WOULD NOT SAVE HIMSELF. There is the mystery of the great self-sacrifice. Because he *would* save others, he *would not* save himself. Relatively to the work which our blessed Lord had undertaken, it was necessary that he himself should not be saved. His mission required: 1. That his submission to God's will should be fully tested. And the last test of a man is this—Can you die just *when* God pleases, just *where* God pleases, just *how* God pleases? 2. That mission required the surrender of a human life as a sacrifice for sin. That was the Divine plan for the redemption of men from sin; Jesus must offer that sacrifice, so he would not come down from the cross. Our Lord's own will gave the virtue to his sacrifice. He *could* have saved himself, but he *would* not. He meant to yield himself, in a voluntary act of obedience to God. "By the which will we have been sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all."—R. T.

Ver. 46.—*The mystery of the forsaking.* Keble tenderly sings—

"Is it not strange, the darkest hour
That ever dawned on sinful earth
Should touch the heart with softer power
For comfort, than an angel's mirth?
That to the cross the mourner's eye should turn,
Sooner than where the stars of Christmas burn?"

The conflict of Calvary reaches its climax in this text. It brings before us the sublimest moment of our Saviour's life. It is the moment in which our Champion closed with the spiritual foe of evil in the last death-struggle. He spent his bodily life in the effort. He gained the soul-life of obedience and trust; that soul-victory was his triumph for us. Watching with the Galilæan women, a little distance off, within sight of the cross, within sound of this great, this dying cry, what should be our first thought?

I. MANIFESTLY THIS WAS THE DEATH OF A MAN. It is singular that, in the early Church, no evident effort was made to maintain the truth of our Lord's *Divinity*; early controversy dealt with the reality of our Lord's *humanity*. And an important part in the impression of that humanity was taken by the scenes of his death. These sufferings are a man's sufferings; these cries are a man's cries; this death is a man's death. The humanity is brought home to us by his dying a violent death, a death which was certified by a public officer. Our text, whatever else it may be, is certainly the cry of a dying man, the element of the flesh, the body, is now added to our Redeemer's struggle. Medical science tells us that the accounts of our Lord's dying accurately represent what occurs in a case of ruptured or broken heart. The same spasm of dreadful pain, forcing a great cry, and the same flowing of mingled blood and water, when the heart-sac is pierced. There is a very striking thing, further bringing out to view the real humanness of the cry of the text. Our Lord did not make a new sentence, separating his experience from that of men, but he used words spoken by a psalmist as an utterance of his own distress (see Ps. xxii. 1). Our Lord evidently intended to identify his struggle with that of man. It may be said that this text embodies and expresses the effect of intense bodily suffering, and of approaching death, *on a man's*

will. The will of Christ was set, not on submission only, but on active obedience to the will of the Father. In Gethsemane the resolve had no present actual pain to battle with, only the anticipation of it. At Calvary the will was borne upon by actual, intense, overwhelming, physical pain; it had to struggle to hold its own. The text represents a supreme moment, when intense pain seemed to force the will aside, and darken the soul with a moment's shade. Can we estimate what dying is in its influence on the will? What is dying when it comes consciously to a man in full health? No falling asleep, and passing away; but the soul in some awful way dropping down, losing everything—light, breath, God, all; passing under, and in that dread moment seeming to be left in utter desolation. If we could know what that means, we should begin to understand our Lord's great cry. It is a dying man's cry.

II. MANIFESTLY THIS WAS THE DEATH OF THE SECOND MAN, THE LORD FROM HEAVEN. This is a Scripture term. It is the peculiar relation which Christ bears to us that gives his death-scene its profounder significance. He has undertaken for man the removal of sin, and that undertaking of necessity brings him into contact with sin, and makes its consequences and its burdens rest on him. Christ undertook the work of saving men from sin; that is, of saving the life of love and obedience to God in their souls from being utterly crushed out by sin. Then he must come into conflict with it. Its burden of disabilities must lie on him. He must keep his own soul-trust and obedience while all the burden, disability, agony, death of sin, buffet him. If he can keep his obedience and his love perfect under the worst that sin and Satan can do, then he breaks their power over man for ever—he breaks that power for us. Sin so far succeeded as to kill the body, sin failed utterly to touch the soul; in the last moments the soul is full of affection and devotion—it cries, "My God, my God!" So the power of sin was broken. Man is freed, in Christ's triumph, from the soul-bondage hitherto laid on by sin. Christ was made perfect, through his sufferings, to become the "Bringer-on of sons to glory." He is "able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God through him."—R. T.

Ver. 54.—*The natural impression of the Crucifixion.* We may call it the *natural* impression, because it was made on an outsider, who had come into no relations with Christ, and is not likely to have had any prejudices either for or against him. It was made on a Roman officer, who would be calm and self-restrained, inclined indeed to be cynical, familiar with death-scenes, and hardened by the familiarity, and not at all susceptible of emotional influences. We can easily see what the Crucifixion was to the Marys, who stood watching it through the telescope of their tears from afar off; but it surprises us to find what a power it had on that cold and self-restrained Roman. The man appears before us but for a moment, and then vanishes for ever away. But the vision of him reminds us that the crucified Christ has been a larger, wider power in the world than we have reckoned who did but count the number of his professed adherents. The truth is larger than we have ever thought it to be, which Jesus uttered when he said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

I. WHAT IMPRESSED THE CENTURION AS SO STRANGE? Remember he had seen criminals die before that day. Watching Jesus, he was smitten with the conviction, "That Man is not a criminal." 1. He contrasted him with the two thieves who were being crucified with him. There was a calm dignity about Jesus which the other sufferers did not and could not show. Compare the things spoken. Thieves reviled; Jesus reviled not again. 2. He could compare Jesus with other victims he had crucified. And the comparison had to be a contrast, a most striking and impressive contrast. Account must be taken too of the influence on the Roman of the darkened sky and the quaking ground.

II. WHAT WAS THE IMPRESSION PRODUCED ON THE CENTURION? St. Luke reports him as saying, "Truly this was a righteous Man." He felt his innocence. A Roman would not put our high meaning into the term "Son of God." What he felt was that the man was a victim, a sacrifice; he was suffering no just reward of his deeds. The natural impression of the Crucifixion confirms our view of Jesus as "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," and fit to be, what he was, the world's Sacrifice for sin.—R. T.

Ver. 57.—*Joseph's opportunity.* The entire forsaking of our Lord's apostles and disciples has not been sufficiently considered. It must have been one of the sorest ingredients in his bitter cup of woe. Not one of them came into any relation with his suffering-time. They must have been wholly bewildered by their fears. They left their Master to the tending of strangers, if he had any tending at all. But we may do honour to Simon of Cyrene and Joseph of Arimathæa, who found their opportunity.

I. JOSEPH'S WEAKNESS IN NOT ACKNOWLEDGING CHRIST BEFORE. Whatever allowances we may be able to make for him, it certainly was a weakness—it always is a weakness—to try to be a *secret* disciple. Joseph was placed in very difficult circumstances. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. He must have known of the schemes of the high priest's party. His soul must have revolted against them, and yet he dared say nothing. He was not strong man enough to brave opposition. He was a timid soul; but, like timid souls, he could on occasion do a strangely brave thing. "Spirit was willing, but flesh was weak."

II. JOSEPH'S COURAGE IN ACKNOWLEDGING CHRIST AT LAST. For in going to Pilate, as a known member of the council, to beg the body of Jesus, Joseph declared himself. Pilate would quite understand that he cared for this "Enthusiast." And Joseph was obliged to do this publicly, so the news of his request would be spread abroad; and our Lord's enemies would not be satisfied until they found out what had become of the dead body. This act of Joseph's, we may be sure, made him a marked man henceforth in the council. He confessed Jesus by his act.

III. JOSEPH'S ONE ACT IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST. It was precisely the thing which only a man having the authority and the wealth that he had could do. 1. Christ's body had to be saved from insult, and not one of his disciples dare advance to claim it. If it had been left to the Romans, it would have just been flung, with the other bodies, into the common pit, or burned in the valley of Hinnom. Joseph did this good service—he saved it from desecration. 2. Christ's body ought to have the honourable burial of a king, and the kindly tending of loving hands. Joseph provided both. Gentle handling, reverent preparing, tender carrying, loving burial in his own new tomb.—R. T.

Ver. 61.—*Womanly devotion.* "Last at the cross, first at the grave." It does not appear that the women dared do any more than watch our Lord's death, watch his taking down from the cross, and watch where they took his body. But that watching was devotion. They did not feel that the men could do what was really needed for the dead body, and so their devotion planned loyal and loving womanly service as soon as ever the sabbath was over, and they would be clear of our Lord's bitter enemies, and of the rough Roman soldiers. They planned in their womanly way; they prepared for their intended embalming; they started to begin their work almost before the morning broke; and, though they could not do what they purposed, they did well that it was in their hearts.

I. THE WOMEN WATCHING THE CROSS. There seems to have been quite a little company of them, and we know that Mary, our Lord's mother, was one of them. Custom made them keep together, and stand a little apart from the men; but they were not far off, not out of the sound of our Lord's voice, and they could see everything. But what must that sight have been to them? Suffering is sacred to woman; a son's suffering is an infinite woe to a mother. Not a dry eye; and oh! what heaving breasts!

II. THE WOMEN WATCHING THE GRAVE. Only two of them now. When the last sigh came from that cross John tenderly upheld the fainting mother, and bore her away, some of the women going with them to help in tending her. Two of them felt as if they could not go. We know those two. They were Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany. They watched the taking down. They followed, as loving mourners, the sad procession. They saw the men carry the body into the tomb, come out, roll the stone to the door, and go away. But they were fascinated. They sat down over against the sepulchre; they waited until the gathering shadows and the cold night winds drove them to seek shelter. Dear women! Their love was helpless: it could do nothing for its loved One. Oh, say not so! Love does everything for its loved one, when it loves on through all woe, faithful, true, self-denying, unto the very end.—R. T

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vers. 1—10.—*Jesus rises from the dead, and appears to the holy women.* (Mark xvi. 1—8; Luke xxiv. 1—12; John xx. 1—10.) It is to be noted that there are great and important variations in the four (or, with St. Paul's, 1 Cor. xv., the five) accounts of the events of the Resurrection, which have given welcome occasion to the sceptic to cast doubts upon the whole transaction. The divergences in the narratives are plainly to be ascribed to the facts that the writers did not depend upon one another, nor draw their accounts from one source; that each gives only an incomplete history, introducing those details with which he was familiar, or which it suited his plan to recount. On all main points the agreement is perfect, and every difference could be easily reconciled, if we knew the whole of the circumstances and the exact sequence of each word and act during this momentous period. Attempts at harmonizing the various accounts have been made with more or less success by writers from St. Augustine to the present time; but as they vary in many particulars, and have no authoritative basis, dependence cannot be placed upon them. The narrative in St. Matthew is brief and imperfect, and we shall chiefly confine our remarks to the exposition of the actual text before us, without importing much matter from the other evangelists.

Ver. 1.—**In the end of the sabbath;** *ὀψὲ σαββάτων: late on the sabbath;* Vulgate, *vespere sabbati.* The expression is obscure. In the parallel passage of St. Mark we read, "When the sabbath was past." We must take it that St. Matthew is thinking of the sabbath as extending, not from evening to evening, but till the following morning. "So that it is not the accurate Jewish division of time, according to which the sabbath ended at six on Saturday evening, but the ordinary civil idea of a day, which extended from sunrise to sunrise (or at least adds the night to the preceding day)" (Lange). We have, then, now arrived at the commencement of the first Christian Easter Day. **As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week;** *εἰς μίαν σαββάτων: in prima sabbati* (Vulgate); literally, *unto one day of sabbath;* i.e. one day after the sabbath, the Jews reckoning their days in sequence from the sabbath, and Christians at first carrying on the same practice, as we see in Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Later Christians named the days of the week in sequence from the Sunday, which was the first day, Monday being the second day, *feria secunda,* and so on. **Came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary** (see on ch. xxvii. 61) **to see the sepulchre.** Love cannot abandon its object, living or dead. There were probably other women with these two, or perhaps there were two separate bands of women who in this early morning visited the sepulchre. Among these Mary Magdalene stands prominently forward, first in love and first in care. She and the rest evidently knew nothing of the sealing of the stone or the posting of the guards. St. Matthew's expression, "to see (*θεωρῆσαι,* "to gaze upon," "contemplate") the sepulchre," conveys only a partial notice of the object of their visit. They came not only to take a view of the tomb, but also to embalm the Lord's body, for which necessary preparations had been made, the approach of the sabbath on the evening of the Crucifixion having cut short the arrangements. We know from St. Mark that they were perplexed about the difficulty of removing the stone, and St. Matthew may be referring to a preliminary inspection made in regard of this impediment. Our Gospel omits mention of the intention of embalming the corpse, as the Resurrection rendered it impracticable; and, indeed, the Lord's body had already been anointed for his burial by Mary of Bethany.

Ver. 2.—**And, behold.** A wonderful sight met their eyes. The following event took place before their arrival; they saw only the result. No mortal eye beheld, and no pen has recorded, the actual issuing of the Lord from the closed tomb. **There was a great earthquake.** St. Matthew does not attempt to give the exact sequence of events. Probably the shock, caused by the sudden advent and action of the angel, befell as the women were approaching the cemetery. Christ had risen before this occurrence, nothing being a barrier to his spiritual body. **For the angel of the Lord . . . from the door.** The narrator accounts for the phenomenon just mentioned. The words, "from the door," are omitted by the best manuscripts, the Vulgate, and modern editors, and seem to be a marginal interpolation. The angel rolled away the stone which Joseph had rolled up (ch. xxvii. 60), not in order to afford passage to the body of the Lord, who had already raised himself, but to give the women and others entrance to the empty tomb, and to strike terror into the heart of the soldiers. In the case of

Lazarus the stone had to be removed to give exit to the resuscitated body—a natural body (John xi. 39, 41); in the case of Jesus such removal was not necessary, as his was a spiritual body, possessed of supernatural powers and qualities (John xx. 19). **And sat upon it.** In triumph, and to show that it was not to be replaced; death had done its work, and now was vanquished. Angels' appearances had always accompanied the great events in the history of the chosen people; angels had shown themselves at Christ's birth, at his temptation, at his agony; now they guard his tomb, proving that he was well-pleasing unto the Lord, and was raised from the grave by him. The narration of this awful incident was probably given by the soldiers, who alone witnessed it.

Ver. 3.—**His countenance** (*ἰδέα, appearance*) **was like lightning.** The angel's aspect was as bright and startling as the flash of lightning (comp. Ezek. i. 14; Dan. x. 6). **His raiment white as snow.** Pure and glistening, like the effect of the Transfiguration on the Lord (ch. xviii. 2; comp. Acts i. 10; Rev. x. 1).

Ver. 4.—**And for fear of him**; *but from the fear of him.* From the fear inspired by this awful angel. It would seem, from this expression, that the soldiers were sensible, not only of the earthquake and the movement of the stone, but also of the presence of the heavenly messenger, in this respect differing from the companions of Daniel and St. Paul, who were only partially conscious of the visions beheld by the two saints (see Dan. x. 7; Acts xxii. 9). **Did shake.** The verb is cognate with the noun "earthquake;" they were shaken, convulsed with terror. If these were some of the company that had watched the Crucifixion, they were already possessed of some feeling respecting the unearthly nature of the Occupant of the tomb which they were guarding, and had a vague expectation of something that might happen. At any rate, they must have heard the late events discussed by their comrades, and were not without apprehension of a catastrophe. **Became as dead men.** They fell to the ground in deathlike faintness, and, when they recovered from the trance, fled in terror from the tomb into the city (ver. 11).

Ver. 5.—**The angel answered and said.** The women arrived probably while the guards were lying unconscious on the ground. They saw them, and they saw the angel sitting on the stone, or, according to St. Mark, "a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe;" St. Luke says that "two men stood by them in dazzling apparel," *i.e.* first one had shown himself, and then another. Doubtless innumerable angels were thronging around, and one or more became visible to certain persons as they were capable of receiving spiritual impressions, or as these spirits were directed to show themselves. The women spake not, were too affrighted to ask questions; but their amazed look, their blank surprise, were themselves interrogative, and the angel replied to their inward emotion. **Fear not ye** (*ὑμεῖς*, emphatic). The soldiers have cause to fear; they are the enemies of the Lord; but ye are his friends, and need feel no alarm. **Ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.** Ye are seeking him, to do honour to his body; I know your pious intention, but it is useless. The angel shrinks not from the mention of Christ's shameful death, which is now his glory, "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). "It was the good pleasure of the Father . . . through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross . . . whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Col. i. 19, 20). The crucifixion "was not simply a temporary incident in the life of Christ. It is an eternal principle in his kingdom" (Milligan).

Ver. 6.—**He is not here.** He is not in this tomb; his bodily presence is removed from this his whilom resting-place. St. Matthew's account is greatly condensed, and omits many details which harmonists try to fit into our text. The attempt is not to be commended, for it really involves greater confusion, and, after all, is forced and only conjectural. **For he is risen, as he said.** If they had believed Christ's often-repeated announcement, they would not have come seeking the living among the dead. (For Christ's predictions concerning his resurrection, see ch. xii. 40; xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 19.) On this simple, but pregnant sentence, "He is risen," depends the phenomenon of Christianity, in its origin, existence, continuance, extension, and moral power. "Death began with woman; and to women the first announcement is made of resurrection" (Hilary, quoted by Wordsworth, *in loc.*). **Come, see the place where the Lord lay.** The angel invites them to satisfy themselves that Christ's body was no longer in its resting-place. That Jesus was designated as "the Lord," *ὁ Κύριος*, by the disciples is obvious (see John xx. 18; xxi. 7, etc.), but it is doubtful whether the words are genuine here, though they are found in many good manuscripts and in the Vulgate. They are omitted by ℵ, B, 33, etc., and by Tischendorf and Westcott and Hort in their editions. Regarding them as genuine, Bengel calls them "gloriosa appellatio," which indeed it is, for it is equivalent to "Jehovah." Harmonists suppose that the

angel was at first not seen by the women; that Mary Magdalene, observing the stone removed, at once hurried to the city to tell Peter and John; that, the rest of the women remaining, the angel made himself visible to them and bade them enter the sepulchre; and that, doing so, they beheld another angel sitting on the right side of the recess. Thus, it is conjectured, the accounts in Mark and John may be harmonized with that in our text. (See also Westcott on John xx., where is given a provisional arrangement of the facts of the first Easter Day.)

Ver. 7.—**Go quickly, and tell his disciples.** St. Mark significantly adds, "and Peter." The disciples were to believe without seeing. They had deserted Christ in his hour of need, had not stood by the cross, nor aided in his burial; so they were not to be honoured with the vision of angels or the first sight of the risen Lord. This was reserved for the faithful women, who thus received their mission to carry a message to the messengers—a foretaste of the ministry which they should perform in the Church of Christ. **He goeth before you** (προάγει ὑμᾶς) into Galilee. The verb is noticeable. It is that used by our Lord himself on his way to the garden of Gethsemane (ch. xxvi. 32), and it implies the act of a shepherd at the head of his flock, leading them to new pastures (comp. John x. 4). The good Shepherd had been smitten, and the sheep scattered; now under his guidance they were to be reunited. The apostolic band had been temporarily dissolved and disintegrated; the college was again to be re-formed, and was to receive its renewed commission in seclusion and peace, that it might return to Jerusalem with unimpaired strength to commence its arduous labours. The place of meeting is in Galilee, where most of his mighty works were done, and where it was safer for the disciples to assemble than at Jerusalem. The majority of them came from this region, and thither they returned some ten days (John xx. 26; xxi. 1—4) after the Resurrection, to resume their ordinary occupations (ver. 16). Thus they would realize that it was the same Jesus who met them there with whom, these three past years, they had held familiar intercourse. It was ordained, for some reason not expressly stated, that from Galilee should proceed Christ's spiritual kingdom which he came to establish—that "word which," as Peter said (Acts x. 37), "was published throughout all Judæa, beginning from Galilee." We read of only two appearances of Christ in Galilee—once at the lake, mentioned in the last chapter of St. John, and again in ver. 17 of this chapter of St. Matthew. It is, however, possible that the appearance named by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6), when he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at one time, may have occurred in Galilee. If this is the case, it would be remarkable as the only public revelation of Christ after his resurrection, and the comparative seclusion of the northern district may have been one reason for its selection as the scene for this great demonstration. There was doubtless some moral fitness in the humble and despised Galilee being made the starting-point of his Church who was despised and rejected of men, of whom it was contemptuously said, "Doth the Christ come out of Galilee?" (John vii. 41). "As in all things God sets at naught the pride of mankind, and chooses persons, instruments, and places mean in the eyes of the world, teaching us that in humbler and more retired abodes, secret from the world, we are to seek for the strength of God, who hideth himself" (I. Williams). **Lo, I have told you.** The angel thus solemnly confirms what he had just said. The Authorized Vulgate gives, *Ecce, prædixi vobis*, which is warranted by no existing Greek manuscripts, the uniform reading of the original being εἶπον or εἶπα.

Ver. 8.—**They departed** (ἐξελθοῦσαι, better ἀπελθοῦσαι) **quickly from the sepulchre.** At the angel's invitation (ver. 6), they, or some of them, had entered into the inner chamber of the tomb (Luke xxiv. 3), and now came hurrying out. **With fear and great joy.** With a mixture of emotions—fear at the sight of the heavenly visitant, the supernatural presence, and joy at the assurance that their beloved Master had risen again, having burst the bonds of death. **Did run.** They did as they were bidden with all possible speed, acting as heralds of good tidings to the disconsolate disciples.

Ver. 9.—**As they went to tell his disciples.** This clause is omitted by the best manuscripts, and the Vulgate and other versions, and is rejected by modern editors. It is not quite in St. Matthew's style, and seems to be rightly regarded as a gloss. There is one advantage in its omission, in that the actual moment of this appearance of our Lord is left undecided, and we are at liberty to harmonize it, if so minded, with other details. Now the women, according to our history, receive the reward of their faith and love. **Behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail!** Χαίρετε: literally, *Rejoice ye!* This is not the usual Eastern salutation, "Peace be unto you!" but one that came with peculiar significance on their lately sorrow-stricken hearts. So he had said to his apostles, "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John xvi. 20), and now he made good his word. This is the only one of Christ's appearances in Jerusalem or its neighbourhood that St. Matthew relates. **They came and**

held him by the feet (*took hold of his feet*). As soon as they saw him, they went to him with glad surprise, and yet with such awe, that they could only fall down before him and tenderly clasp his feet. He had appeared before this to Mary Magdalene (Mark xvi. 9), but had not permitted her to touch him, because he had not yet ascended to the Father (John xx. 17), implying thereby either that she would have other opportunities of holding converse with him, as he was not going to leave the earth immediately, and she must not detain him now; or, more probably, that the spiritual body demanded, not the touch of earthly affection, but the attitude of awe and reverence, and that all future contact would be supernatural and spiritual, realizing his presence after a heavenly and supersensuous manner by faith. But these women clung to Christ with something higher than natural, earthly affection, acknowledging his superhumanity, and he allowed them, like Thomas, to assure themselves of his corporeity by touch as well as sight. **Worshipped him.** They remained at his feet in profound adoration.

Ver. 10.—**Be not afraid.** So he spake on other occasions when his acts had caused terror and amazement (comp. ch. xiv. 27; xvii. 7). With all their joy and love, the women could not help feeling fear at his sudden appearance and at the nearness of this unearthly yet familiar form. **Go, tell my brethren.** He here for the first time calls his disciples his brethren, intending thereby to assure them of his love and good will in spite of their cowardly desertion, and to signify that he was in very truth the Man Christ Jesus, their Lord and their Master, whom they had known so long and so well. He had called them friends before his Passion (John xv. 14, 15); now he gives them a tenderer title; he is not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb. ii. 11). **That they go** (*ἵνα ἀπέλθωσιν, in order that they may depart*) **into Galilee.** The message is the same as that given by the angel (ver. 7). It was meant to comfort them in the absence of daily intercourse with him. But they were not to set out immediately; some other incidents were first to befall them. **And there shall they see me.** Galilee was to be the scene of the most important revelation, though the Lord vouchsafed to individuals many proofs of his risen life before the promised great announcement. Why St. Matthew mentions none of these we may form conjectures, but we cannot determine (see on ver. 16).

Vers. 11—15.—*The Roman soldiers bribed by the Jewish rulers to give a false account of the Resurrection.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew.)

Ver. 11.—**When** (*while*) **they were going.** Into the city, in order to find the disciples and to deliver to them their Lord's message. This account takes up the narrative of ch. xxvii. 63—66 and ver. 4 of this chapter. As soon as they recovered from their swoon and had assured themselves that the tomb was empty, the soldiers hurried in affright to the Jewish rulers, under whose orders they had temporarily been placed, and told them **all the things that were done.** They could speak of the earthquake, of the appearing of the angel, of the removal of the stone, of the absence of the body which they were appointed to watch. Their task was done; the corpse was gone, they knew not how taken; they could not be expected to contend with supernatural visitants, or to guard against supernatural occurrences. St. Matthew seems to have introduced this incident in order to account for the prevalence of the lying rumour which he proceeds to mention, and which had been widely disseminated among his countrymen.

Ver. 12.—**When they** (*i.e.* the chief priests) **were assembled with the elders.** On hearing the report of the soldiers, the Sanhedrists held a hurried and informal meeting, to consult about this alarming matter. It would be fatal to their policy to let the real truth get wind. Such testimony from unprejudiced heathens would infallibly convince the people of the validity of Christ's claims, and produce the very effect which their unusual precautions had been intended to obviate. One course alone remained, and that was to prepare a circumstantial lie concerning one part of the story, and to deny or ignore utterly the supernatural details. The plainest evidence will not persuade against wilful blindness. These rulers acted according to Christ's sad foreboding on another occasion, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). **They gave large money** (*money enough*) **unto the soldiers.** They bribed the soldiers with a sum of money sufficient to satisfy their cupidity. This they did personally, or more probably through some trusty agent. They never doubted the facts to which the guards bore witness; they never attempted to discredit their story by suggestion of error or superstitious invention. They accepted the tale, and took most dishonourable means to make it innocuous. They had bought the aid of the traitor Judas; they now buy the silence of these soldiers. It is suggested by St. Jerome that in both cases they made use of the temple funds, thus employing against the cause of God that which was devoted to his service.

Ver. 13.—**Say ye, etc.** They put the lie into the soldiers' mouth, directing them to

answer inquiries in this way. The last resource of an infatuated obstinacy! If they were asleep, how could they know that the disciples stole the body? St. Chrysostom comments well on the infamous transaction, "How did they steal him? O most foolish of all men! For because of the clearness and conspicuousness of the truth, they are not even able to make up a falsehood. For indeed, what they said was highly incredible, and the falsehood had not even speciousness. For how, I ask, did the disciples steal him, men poor and unlearned, and not venturing so much as to show themselves? What? was not a seal put upon it? What? were there not many watchmen and soldiers and Jews stationed round it? What? did not those men suspect this very thing, and take thought, and break their rest, and are in anxiety about it? And wherefore, moreover, did they steal it? That they might feign the doctrine of the resurrection? And how should it enter their minds to feign such a thing—men who were well content to be hidden and to live? And how could they remove the stone that was made sure? How could they have escaped the observation of so many? Nay, though they had despised death, they would not have attempted without purpose and fruitlessly to venture in defiance of so many who were on the watch. And that moreover they were timorous, what they had done before showed clearly: at least, when they saw him seized, all rushed away from him. If, then, at that time they did not dare so much as to stand their ground when they saw him alive, how when he was dead could they but have feared such a number of soldiers?" ('Hom.,' xc.).

Ver. 14.—**And if this come to the governor's ears**; *if this be heard before the governor;* i.e. if the matter be brought officially before the procurator. For a Roman soldier to sleep on his post was to incur the penalty of death. Pilate would not be likely to hear of what had taken place, as vulgar rumours were not encouraged by his stern and unsympathizing attitude towards the Jewish people, but it was just possible that some officious person might bring the report before him, and ask him to take measures to ascertain the truth, and, if necessary, to punish the delinquents. **We** (ἡμεῖς, emphatic) **will persuade him.** Such persuasion usually took the form of bribery, Roman officials being notoriously venal (comp. Acts xxiv. 26); but perhaps the rulers intended to make him believe that the story was not true, but merely a *ruse* to keep the populace quiet. The soldiers must have fully believed in the Sanhedrists' assertion, or they would never have imperilled their lives by promulgating such a condemnatory tale. **Secure you**; *rid you of care.* They promise the guard indemnity and freedom from all penal consequences. Pilate, however, later learned the great fact of Christ's resurrection, and though, as far as we know, he took no steps towards punishing the guard (being probably convinced of its supernatural occurrence), yet, according to a fragment of Hegesippus, and Eusebius, 'Chronic.,' ii. 2, he sent an account of the matter to Tiberius, who, in consequence, endeavoured to make the senate pass a decree enrolling Jesus in the list of Roman gods. This fact is attested by Tertullian ('Apolog.,' v.).

Ver. 15.—**This saying**; viz. the theft of the body by the disciples. **Is commonly reported** (*was spread abroad*) **among the Jews until this day**; *i.e.* and continues to be reported until this day. This was true when St. Matthew wrote, and it is true at the present time, though thoughtful Jews of late years have adopted the idea that the apostles, in their excited state, were deceived by visions of Christ which they took for substantial realities (see on ch. xxvii. 64). In the passage of Justin Martyr ('Dial. cum Tryph.,' cviii.) we are told that the Jews sent emissaries in all directions to spread this false report. The evangelist shows the origin of this most improbable tale, and virtually challenges any other explanation of the miracle than the authentic one.

Vers. 16—20.—*Our Lord appears to the disciples in Galilee, and gives them a commission to teach and baptize.* (Peculiar to St. Matthew; but comp. Mark xvi. 15—18.)

Ver. 16.—**Then the eleven disciples.** There is no note of time in the original, which gives merely, *But the eleven*, etc. The meeting here narrated took place on some day after the first Easter week. The number "eleven" shows the loss of one of the sacred college, whose complement was not filled up till just before Pentecost (Acts i. 15—26). **Went away into Galilee.** St. Matthew takes pains to show the exact fulfilment of Christ's very special injunction and promise concerning Galilee (see vers. 7, 10, and notes there, and ch. xxvi. 32). The evangelist's object being to set forth Christ in his character as King and Lawgiver, he puts aside all other incidents in order to give prominence to this appearance, where Jesus announces his supreme authority (ver. 18), gives the commission to his apostles, and promises his perpetual presence (vers. 19, 20). **Into a mountain** (τὸ ὄρος, *the mountain*), **where** (οὗ instead of οἱ) **Jesus had appointed them.** We do not know the locality intended, though it must have been some spot familiar to the disciples, and was probably plainly desig-

nated at the time when Christ appointed the meeting. Some have fixed on Tabor as the scene of this revelation, others on the Mount of Beatitudes; but where nothing is stated it is best to lay aside conjecture and accept the designed indefiniteness. Many commentators have determined that this appearance on the Galilæan mountain was that mentioned by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6), as manifested to five hundred brethren at once. This is a mere conjecture, probable, but not certain. If it was the case, we must consider that St. Matthew singles out the eleven apostles as the most eminent among the company, and those to whom the Lord specially addressed the commission which he mentions. Of the five hundred brethren, St. Paul, writing some twenty years or more after this time, testifies that the greater number were still alive, only some having "fallen asleep." There never was, indeed, any historical fact the authenticity of which was more remarkably and irrefragably certified than the resurrection of Christ.

Ver. 17.—**They worshipped him.** Evidently here they, or the majority of those present (for it is plain that others beside the apostles were there), adored him as God and Lord. This is the first time that this action of supreme worship is mentioned in connection with the disciples, though the women had offered the same homage to him (ver. 9). **But some doubted** (*οἱ δὲ*—without *οἱ μὲν*—*ἐδίστασαν*). (For the verb, comp. ch. xiv. 31.) The doubters could not have been any of the eleven, for they had seen the Lord more than once at Jerusalem, and had had indubitable proofs that he had risen from the dead, and was no mere spirit or spiritual appearance, but possessed of his former body, with new powers, faculties, and laws. Those who for the moment doubted did not hesitate to acknowledge his resurrection, but his identity. They were, perhaps, at a distance. Christ may have appeared surrounded with heavenly glory; at any rate, in a shape, or vesture, or with an aspect with which they were not familiar; hence in this majestic form, they failed to recognise the "despised and rejected of men," the lowly Jesus whom they had known (*cf.* John xxi. 4).

Ver. 18.—**Jesus came.** Some mediæval exegetes have deemed that this verse refers to the time of the ascension; but there is no valid reason for dissociating this portion from the rest of the account. If we do this, we lose the great reason for the oft-enjoined meeting on the Galilæan mountain, which seems to have been expressly and with much care arranged to notify at large the fact of Christ's Resurrection and of his supreme authority, and to convey the Lord's commission to the apostles in the presence of many witnesses. We may suppose that Jesus, who had been standing apart, now drew near to the company, so that all, especially the doubting, might see him closely and hear his familiar voice. **Spake unto them** (*ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς, talked unto them*). Doubtless he said much more than is here recorded, resolving doubts, confirming faith, infusing comfort. "Thus it is even now; we worship him, and then he draws near, and, by his nearer approaches and secret manifestation of himself to our hearts, we are confirmed in the faith, and see in him God and man" (I. Williams). **All power** (*ἐξουσία*) **is given** (*ἐδόθη, was given*) **unto me in heaven and in earth.** Jesus here asserts that he, as Son of man, has received from the Father supreme authority in heaven and earth, over the whole kingdom of God in its fullest extent. This is not given to him as Son of God; for, as God, naught can be added to him or taken from him; it is a power which he has merited by his incarnation, death, and Passion (Phil. ii. 8—10), which was foretold in the Old Testament, by psalmist (Ps. ii. 8; viii. 5—8) and prophet (Dan. vii. 13, 14), and with which he was indued on the day that he rose victorious from the grave. So the verb "was given" is in the past tense, because it refers to the dotation arranged in God's eternal purpose, and to the actual investiture at the Resurrection. The power is exercised in his mediatorial kingdom, and will continue to be exercised till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and destroyed death itself (1 Cor. xv. 24—27); but his absolute kingdom is everlasting; as God and Man he reigns for ever and ever. This mediatorial authority extends not only over men, so that he governs and protects the Church, disposes human events, controls hearts and opinions; but the forces of heaven also are at his command, the Holy Spirit is bestowed by him, the angels are in his employ as ministering to the members of his body.

Ver. 19.—**Go ye therefore** (*οὖν*). The illative particle is perhaps spurious, but it is implied by what has preceded. It is because Jesus has plenary authority, and can delegate power to whom he will, that he confers the following commission. He is addressing the eleven apostles, of whom alone St. Matthew makes mention (ver. 16); but as they personally could not execute the grand commission in all its extent and duration, he lays his commands upon their representatives and successors in all ages. They were to go forth, and carry the gospel throughout the world. Doubtless herein is implied the duty of all Christians to be in some sense missionaries, to use their utmost efforts to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ, and to make men obedient to his Law. The

propagation of the gospel is a work for all in their several spheres. Teach; *docete* (Vulgate). These are unfortunate renderings of the verb *μαθητεύσατε*, which means, "make disciples." Teaching is expressed in ver. 20, as one of the elements or components of full discipleship. The imperative aorist *μαθητεύσατε* is, as it were, decomposed by the two following present participles, "baptizing" and "teaching." In the case of infants the process is exactly what is here represented; they are admitted into the Christian society by baptism, and then instructed in faith and duty. Adults have to be instructed before baptism; but they form a small minority in most Christian communities, where, generally, infant baptism is the rule, and would be regarded rather as exceptions. Teaching alone is not stated by the Lord to be the only thing necessary to convert an unbeliever into a Christian; this is effected by the grace of God applied as Christ proceeds to explain. All nations (*πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, all the nations*). The apostles were no longer to go only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (ch. x. 6); they were to Christianize all the nations of the world, Jew and Gentile alike. The gospel is adapted to all the varying minds and habits of men, barbarous and civilized, near and remote, ignorant or cultivated; and it is the duty and privilege of Christ's ministers to make it known and acceptable in all quarters of the globe. Baptizing them; *i.e.* individuals of all the nations. The present participle denotes the mode of initiation into discipleship. Make them disciples by baptizing them. Christ thus explains his mysterious announcement to Nicodemus (John iii. 5), "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." To the disciples the notion of baptism was no new thing. As a rite typifying the cleansing of the heart and the purpose of leading a new life, it had been long practised in the case of proselytes to the Jewish faith; they had seen it employed by John the Baptist (ch. iii. 6), and had used it themselves (John iv. 1, 2). Christ adopts the old rite, gives it a new solemnity, a most sacred formula of administration, a new meaning, new spiritual effects. The persons to whom and in whose presence he spoke would understand his injunction as applicable to all who were capable of its reception, children and adults, the subjects of the initiatory ceremony of proselytism. There was no need of closer specification. Or, if any such instruction was needed, the rules concerning circumcision would be a sufficient guide. In (*εἰς, into*) the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Our version follows the Vulgate, *in nomine*, which does not give the right force to the expression. The phrase does not mean merely invoking the Name, under the sanction of the great Name, but something more than this. It signifies into the power and influence of the Holy Trinity, into faith in the three Persons of God, and the duties and privileges consequent on that faith, into the family of God and obedience unto its Head. The "into" shows the end and aim of the consecration of baptism. The "Name" of God is that by which he is known to us—that which connotes his being and his attributes, that by which there exists a conscious connection between God and ourselves (comp. ch. xviii. 20). So being baptized into the Name of God implies being placed in subjection to and communion with God himself, admitted into covenant with him. It is to be observed that the term is "name," not "names," thus denoting the unity of the Godhead in the trinity of Persons. The Lord's words have always been taken as the formula of baptism, and have in all ages been used in its administration. The three Divine Persons were revealed at the baptism of Jesus (ch. iii. 16, 17); they are invoked at every Christian baptism. It is true that we read, in the early Church, of persons being baptized "in the Name of the Lord Jesus," and "in the Name of the Lord" (Acts viii. 16; x. 48); but this expression by no means assumes that the names of the other Divine Persons were not used; it denotes that the converts were admitted into the religion which Jesus instituted, in fact, were made Christians. The above formula has from primitive times been considered indispensable for the valid administration of this sacrament (see 'Apost. Can.,' 41; Tertull., 'De Bapt.,' xiii.; Justin Martyr, 'Apol.,' i. 79). "From this sacred form of baptism," says Bishop Pearson, "did the Church derive the rule of faith, requiring the profession of belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, before they could be baptized in their Name" ('On the Creed,' art. i.).

Ver. 20.—Teaching (*διδάσκοντες*) them (*i.e.* all the nations) to observe all things, etc. The word for "teaching" is quite different from that used in ver. 19, and there wrongly translated. Instruction is the second necessary condition for discipleship. In the case of adults, as was said above, some teaching must precede the initiation; but this has to be supplemented subsequently in order to build up the convert in the faith and make him perfect; while infants must be taught "as soon as they are able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession they have here

made." All must be taught the Christian faith and duty, and how to obtain God's help to enable them to please him, and to continue in the way of salvation, so that they may "die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all their evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living" ('Public Baptism of Infants'). "He gives," says St. Chrysostom, "the one charge with a view to doctrine [*i.e.* the form of baptism], the other concerning commandments" ('Hom.,' xc.). All that Christ commanded, both in doctrine and morals, all that he had taught and enjoined during the three past years, they were henceforward to take as their text-book, and enforce on all who were admitted into the Church by baptism. As the Greek is, "I commanded," being aorist and not perfect, it may be rightly opined that Christ here alludes also to various details which he set forth and enjoined during these great forty days, between his resurrection and ascension, when he gave commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, and spake to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts i. 2, 3). **And, lo.** "After that, because he had enjoined on them great things, to raise their courage, he says, Lo!" etc. (Chrysostom). **I am with you alway** (*ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας*). Every word is emphatic. The Ascension was at hand; this implied an absence of his visible presence, to be replaced by a spiritual presence, more perfect, potent, effectual, infinite. It is I myself, I, God and Man, who am (not "will be") henceforward ever present among you, with you as Companion, Friend, Guide, Saviour, God. I am with you in all your ministrations, prayers public and private, baptisms, communions, exhortations, doctrine, discipline And this, not now and then, not at certain times only, but "all the days" of your pilgrimage, all the dark days of trial and persecution and affliction; all the days when you, my apostles, are gathered to your rest, and have committed your work to other hands; my presence shall never be withdrawn for a single moment. Often had God made an analogous promise to his servants under the old dispensation—to Moses (Exod. iii. 12), to Joshua (Deut. xxxi. 23), to Jeremiah (Jer. i. 8); but this spiritual presence of Christ is something unknown to previous history, a nearness unspeakable, in the Church at large and in the Christian's heart. Even **unto the end of the world**; *the consummation of the age*, as ch. xxiv. 3 (where see note). When the new era is ushered in, evangelizing work will cease; God shall be all in all; all shall know him from the least unto the greatest. And they shall ever be with the Lord; "wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 18). **Amen.** The word is here an interpolation, but it expresses what every pious reader must say in his heart, "So be it, O Lord; be with us unto the end; guide and strengthen us in life, and bring us safely through the valley of the shadow of death, to thy blessed presence, where is the fulness of joy for evermore!"

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The Resurrection.* I. THE ANGEL AT THE SEPULCHRE. **1.** *The holy women.* The great sabbath was over. It had been a busy day in the temple; all had been done as usual. The priests little thought, while performing their elaborate ritual, that the one great Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, the Sacrifice of which all their sacrifices were but figures, had been offered up on Calvary. Yet the great darkness and the portents which had marked the moment of the Saviour's death must have excited attention at Jerusalem, must have harrowed the consciences of many, and filled the whole city with uneasiness and doubt and awe. Strange anxieties must have disturbed the rest of that sabbath. Men went about asking strange questions of one another. Strange forebodings filled the air. The priests especially must have been full of excitement and anxiety. Their chiefs had been foremost in urging the Crucifixion; and the rent veil must have filled them with wonder and terror. What could it mean? The holy of holies lay exposed—the awful place, which no human being might behold, save only the high priest, and that but once a year, with solemn rites of expiation. It must have seemed to them a tremendous portent, foreboding some great change, some stupendous event. Even the cold indifferent Sadducees must have been stirred into anxious expectation by a prodigy so significant, so startling, so plainly preternatural. This feeling had constrained them to apply to the hated Gentiles even on the sabbath. Herod had employed his soldiers to slay, if it were possible, the infant King of the Jews. The chief priests employed the Roman soldiers to prevent, if it were possible, the resur-

rection of him whose cross had borne the title which the Wise Men from the East had attributed to the holy Child Jesus. But if that sabbath had been a disturbed and anxious day to the enemies of our Lord, what must it have been to his disciples? They had watched, some few of them, the awful scene on Calvary. Most of them had fled in terror. The Lord had put forth no supernatural powers, as perhaps they had hoped; there had been no armies of angels coming to his help, no display of Divine glory to crush his foes. He was dead, buried out of their sight. They forgot all that the prophets had spoken, all that the Lord himself had said about his resurrection on the third day. Even the circumstances of his death, its calm majesty, its attendant wonders, did not restore their lost faith. "We were hoping," they said, "that it was he which should redeem Israel." But now their hopes were crushed, their faith was gone. The one terrible fact of his death had overwhelmed them in utter despair. They had expected an earthly kingdom in spite of all his many warnings. That Jewish notion of the Messiah's reign had taken entire possession of their hearts. And now that hope had vanished altogether. The Lord had not taken the throne of David; he had died upon the cross, the death of extremest ignominy. They were sunk in misery and disappointment and despondency. The chief priests called to remembrance that they had been told of his predicted resurrection. Hatred is sometimes more keen-sighted than love. The disciples seem to have had no hope at all. That sad sabbath day must have been clouded by many remorseful memories of broken promises and selfish fears—how all, save one, had left him at the last, and forsaken him in his agony who had loved them with so great a love. But the long hours of that sorrowful sabbath were over at last; the first day of the week was dawning—that day which was to be the first day of a new life, which was to be consecrated throughout the great Christian Church as the beginning of new hopes, new aspirations; the first great Easter Day was shedding its faint glimmering light through the surrounding darkness; and the holy women came—Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and afterwards, it seems from St. Mark and St. Luke, Salome and Joanna. They had watched the burial —some of them, at least. Perhaps they were not allowed to approach at the time; perhaps only Joseph, who had obtained the governor's leave, and Nicodemus, a man of rank and authority like Joseph, were permitted on that Friday afternoon to touch the body of the Lord. But the women followed after, and beheld where he was laid. They were last at the sepulchre on the first Good Friday; they were the first to see the empty tomb on the first great Easter Day. They came to see the sepulchre—"to anoint," St. Mark says, the body of him whom they had regarded with a love so deep and reverent. They had prepared spices and ointments before the sabbath; they came as soon as the sabbath rest permitted to fulfil their work of love. But that very love, deep and true as it was, expressed itself in preparations which showed that they understood not the Saviour's words, or at least that the awful events of Friday had shaken their belief and destroyed their hopes. Neither Joseph and Nicodemus nor the holy women seem to have had any thought of seeing the Lord in life again. Joseph willingly gave his own new tomb to receive the dear remains. Perhaps he thought that one day his own bones might rest with the honoured body of him whom he so loved and reverenced. None of the followers of the Lord, not even those apostles who had been nearest to him, seem to have remembered those words of his which ought to have been their greatest comfort in the hour of darkness. The shock had been so great; they were so horrified, terror-stricken, bewildered. So it is with us sometimes in great pain, in overwhelming sorrow. We cannot collect our thoughts; we can scarcely pray; there seems to be no hope, nothing but darkness. It may give us some comfort to think that even saints, even apostles, shared this human weakness. But let us remember that in their despair they still loved the Lord; if they had lost hope, they still came to the sepulchre; if they thought that he could give them no help, that they had a living Lord no more, at least they clung to his sacred memory, and came to watch over and to care for his lifeless body. Let us in our sufferings try to keep the thought of the suffering Lord close to our very hearts. If there are times when we cannot find joy in the thought of his glory and majesty, let us try to find peace in the thought of his cross, his death, his burial. Let us pray that our anguish may be made the means of bringing us into closer sympathy with the suffering Lord, into "the fellowship of his sufferings;" "for if we have become united with him by

the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection." 2. *The descent of the angel.* The women had said among themselves, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" It was a task beyond their strength, and they were troubled. There was no need for their anxiety. So we often trouble ourselves about the future; we wonder how this or that difficulty shall be overcome; who shall save us from this or that threatening calamity. "Let not your heart be troubled," saith the Lord; "ye believe in God, believe also in me." "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Those fears of ours, those anxious thoughts which almost wear us out, come from want of faith. How often the event proves that there was no ground for them! We fretted ourselves vainly, we made needless vexations for ourselves; for after all the threatened trouble never came; or, if it did come, it was not so terrible; God gave us strength to bear it. It was so now. One stronger than they had rolled away the stone. There was a great earthquake. A mighty angel had come down from heaven; his appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow. What could the Roman soldiers do in the presence of that effulgent, blinding radiance? For fear of him the watchers did quake (the very earth had quaked at his approach), and became as dead men. The mere sight of one angel of the Lord affrighted them into utter helplessness. How would it have fared with the presumptuous multitude who seized the Saviour in Gethsemane, had he, who is the Lord God of hosts, summoned those heavenly legions? Then he meekly yielded himself; for he willed to suffer and to die that we might live for ever. Now his humiliation was over, the hour of his triumph was come; one angel of the Lord scattered the Roman guard. The strength of man is helpless to withstand the will of God. 3. *His address to the women.* He had done what the women knew was beyond their strength; he had rolled away the stone; they found him sitting on it in his glorious beauty. The blessed angels terrify the enemies of the Lord; they bring joy and gladness to his chosen. The soldiers lay on the ground prostrate, like dead men. The holy women started at the glorious vision, but the heavenly music of the angel's voice soon gave them peace and joy. "Fear not *ye*," the angel said. The pronoun is emphatic. The guards had cause to fear; not so those faithful women. The angel knew what had brought them there—their love and devotion for the crucified Saviour. But there was no need of their ointments and spices; there was no use for them; for the angel said, "He is not here; he is risen, as he said." There was something, perhaps, of gentle reproof in those words. The Lord had said again and again that he would rise again the third day; his disciples should have remembered his words; they should not have been thus hopeless and despairing; they should have looked forward, despite the agonies of the cross, despite the sealing of the tomb, to the glory of the Resurrection. That prophecy was now fulfilled; they might see the empty tomb: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." They entered into the sepulchre, St. Mark tells us; they saw that the Lord was gone. The angel sent them to bear the great Easter tidings to the apostles. The apostles had not shown the courage, the affectionate devotion, of these holy women. St. John alone had stood beside the cross; no apostle, as far as we are told, had witnessed the burial. The women, too, were the first to visit the sepulchre; their devotion was rewarded; they first heard the glad tidings; they had the privilege of bearing the blessed news to the apostles, who were to be the witnesses of the Lord's resurrection and to preach his glorious gospel throughout the world. Holy women have often been the means of bringing to the faith of Christ those who have afterwards laboured most abundantly in the Saviour's cause. The angel repeated his charge: "Lo, I have told you," he said. They might not doubt; they had heard the great truth from an angel's lips.

II. THE RISEN LORD. 1. *The women on their way.* They went at once, they ran. Their hearts were filled with mingled feelings. There was fear,—they could not look upon that form, bright as the lightning-flash, without something of dread; but there was a great joy which overcame their fear. The Lord was risen. The thought was too great for them; it thrilled their hearts with strange, unwonted throbbings. But they went as they were bidden; and as they went a holier than an angel's voice fell upon their ears. The Lord manifests himself to those who work for him, who in obedience and faith carry to others the blessed story of his cross and his resurrection. 2. *The meeting with the Lord.* Jesus met them on their way. Suddenly, in a

moment, they saw the gracious form of their beloved Master; they looked once more upon that holy face, no longer stained with blood or fixed in death, but gazing on them with his wonted look of heavenly love in the full majesty of manifest Deity. "All hail!" he said; "rejoice!" Fear and joy were struggling in their hearts; but joy was the right feeling; there was no need to fear. "All hail! rejoice!" it was an ordinary formula of salutation; often a mere conventional greeting, but coming from those lips it spoke volumes; it was full of meaning, deep, holy, blessed meaning. It was the fulfilment of those precious words of his, "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." The presence of the Lord bringeth joy. There is no joy so full and so holy, so sweet and so abiding, as that joy in the Lord which is granted to those who in patience and humility have taken up the cross, denying themselves daily for Christ's sake, recognizing in their hearts and lives the great truth that, since the Lord died for all, they which live should live no longer unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again. These women loved the Lord; they had ministered to him; now they were going to tell the glad tidings of his resurrection. He met them himself; he bade them "Rejoice!" There, and there only, is true joy to be found, in the love of Christ, in work for Christ, in communion with Christ. They came and held him by the feet and worshipped him. They bowed themselves to the ground before him in lowliest adoration. They felt something of that great awe mixed with exceeding joy which the next Sunday forced from the lips of the once unbelieving Thomas the exclamation of adoring faith, "My Lord and my God!" Their joy was too great for words; they could only offer him the worship of their hearts, prostrating themselves, holding those holy feet which three days before had been nailed to the cruel cross, scarcely able to look into his face for awe and wonder and overpowering joy. So the Christian falls down in adoring worship when the Lord reveals himself to the longing soul. When we see him by faith, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, when he manifesteth himself to his chosen as he doth not unto the world, when he saith, "Rejoice!" then they feel the truth of that most precious beatitude, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed;" then, though they see him not as the Marys saw his gracious face, yet, believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In such moments his people offer up to him a holy worship—worship in spirit and in truth, such as, in his condescending love, he seeketh; a worship not selfish, not prayer for our own sakes, for the supply of our own needs, but higher than prayer; a worship which thinks not of self, but only of the Lord, which loses sight of self in the contemplation of his love, his holiness, his majesty, his glory. Such is the worship of his saints in heaven; so we must seek to worship in our poor way on earth. 3. *The message.* The Lord calmed their agitation. "Be not afraid!" The angel had said the same, but the Lord's words were sweeter music even than the angelic voice. Fear was mingled even now with their great joy; human nature cannot but fear in the awful presence of God. But the Lord in his tender mercy taught them that, though risen now from the dead, he was still, not only very God, but also very Man. He sent them with the first Easter greetings to the apostles—to his brethren, as for the first time he deigned to call them. It was a message of love, a message of forgiveness. They had not acted as brethren should; they had forsaken the Lord in the hour of danger. But he recognized the truth of their love; he forgave their weakness, their terrors; he was "not ashamed to call them brethren." It was a gracious message indeed, full of sweetness to the sorrowing, conscience-stricken apostles. They were to meet the Lord in Galilee; there he would announce to them his assumption of Divine power and majesty; there they should receive the full apostolic commission and the promise of his continual presence unto the end. There were other meetings during the great forty days; but St. Matthew, who was led to dwell mainly upon the majesty and glory of the risen Lord, hastens to that great meeting, so full of momentous consequences, when the Lord in his royal power gave authority to his apostles to baptize all nations into the most holy Name.

LESSONS. 1. The holy women loved the Lord. Let us imitate that affectionate reverent love. 2. They said, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Let us trust in God; the Lord will provide. 3. The angel said, "Fear not *ye*." The holy angels minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation. 4. The Lord met the holy women;

he said, "Rejoice!" May we share that holy joy! 5. They worshipped him. Let us learn to worship here, that we may one day worship in heaven.

Vers. 11—15.—*The watch and the chief priests.* I. THE REPORT OF THE WATCHERS. 1. *Their flight.* They were all aghast with terror; they knew not well what had happened. The earthquake had terrified them at first; then there came a vision dazzling like the lightning. From that moment they were as dead men; they knew nothing more. When they recovered from that deathlike swoon the angel had vanished; all was still and quiet. Perhaps they examined the sepulchre. The stone was rolled away; the tomb was open; it was empty. What could they do? They had been posted there to guard it; they were in danger of death. Some fled away in terror; some, bolder than the others, or deeming perhaps that to tell the truth was the safest course, came into the city. 2. *Their account.* If they were, as it seems most probable, Roman soldiers, they were responsible to the governor; but they felt sure that he would disbelieve their story, and punish them for neglect of duty. It seemed safer to go to the chief priests, who were the persons most interested in the safety of the tomb, who might advise them what to do under the circumstances. They told them all the things that were done; they told them the facts of the case; the earthquake, the vision which they had seen, their own prostration, the empty tomb; they left the chief priests to draw their own conclusions.

II. THE ACTION OF THE CHIEF PRIESTS. 1. *The council.* A meeting of the Sanhedrin was hastily called. The chief priests were Sadducees; they believed that there was no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit. Now they must have been in a difficulty. The great darkness of Friday, the earthquake, the rent veil, had appalled many hearts. The very thing had happened which they had anxiously tried to prevent; the sacred body had disappeared, and the soldiers brought strange stories of awful apparitions, of earthquakes and lightning, and the supernatural removal of the great stone from the door of the sepulchre. But men can always discover reasons for disbelieving truths which they wish to repudiate; they can always invent difficulties, discrepancies, explanations. The chief priests probably affected to believe that the guards, worn out by long watching, had been so bewildered by the earthquake as to see in the lightning-flashes the fancied form of an angel. The Pharisees in the council did not share in the Sadducean heresies; but they had joined with the chief priests in the application to Pilate for a guard (ch. xxvii. 62). They were, equally with the Sadducees, hostile to the Lord, equally interested in preventing the people from believing his resurrection. Doubtless those few counsellors, such as Joseph and Nicodemus, who had taken no part in compassing the Saviour's death, were not summoned to the meeting. To the rest the Resurrection involved awful consequences. It threw them into such an abyss of tremendous guilt and terrible condemnation, that we are not surprised if men who were evidently selfish, cruel, hypocritical, obstinately refused to admit the evidence of its truth. So, in the face of all testimony, in spite of the fact that the holy body was gone, and the certain knowledge that foe would not, and friend could not, have borne it away, they deceived themselves, or forced themselves into a disbelief of the Lord's resurrection. 2. *Their decision.* They pretended that what they had feared had really taken place. They made an arrangement with the soldiers; they were to say that while they slept his disciples came by night and stole him away. It was a dangerous thing for the soldiers; they might be punished with death for sleeping at their post, as Herod afterwards treated the keepers of the prison from which St. Peter was released by the angel. So the chief priests undertook to secure them; they promised to persuade the governor if he should hear of the matter. They meant probably to bribe him; and so they would set the soldiers free from anxiety. It was a wicked falsehood, an awful sin; for they were fighting against God; but the only alternative was an open acknowledgment of the truth, and that would have brought upon them a tremendous disgrace. It would have been a confession of guilt—a confession that they had been in the wrong throughout, that they had been selfish, hollow, hypocritical, and that the Prophet of Galilee whom they so utterly hated, whom they had murdered, was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God. They could not bring themselves to this. They were the rulers of the people, the chiefs of the hierarchy; they could not humble themselves. They chose the alternative of falsehood. Thus it is that sin leads on to

sin. One sin forces a man (or seems to force him) to commit another; each wilful sin strengthens the grasp of Satan upon his soul, and brings him nearer to that awful state when repentance becomes impossible. Let us beware, and take heed to ourselves. 3. *The conduct of the soldiers.* They did as they were taught. Interest and fear combined to make them the willing tools of the chief priests. The priests bribed them largely, and the soldiers were absolutely in their power. If the priests accused them of neglect of duty, they must have been condemned; their only chance of escape seemed to coincide with their interest; so they took the money offered them, and repeated the falsehood which the chief priests put into their mouths. 4. *The acceptance of the story.* It was commonly reported among the Jews. But it is a manifest falsehood; it is encompassed with all manner of improbabilities. The soldiers, if they had slept, could not have known what had happened. The disciples, terror-stricken as they were, could not have dared to attempt to break open the tomb. They did not wish to remove the sacred body; it had been laid in an honoured grave. Their only wish was to render the last offices of love and reverence. If they had removed it, what would have been the value of a dead body to them? Could a dead body have kindled that zeal, that intense enthusiasm, which urged them to forsake home and all earthly comforts for the love of Christ? Would they have embraced a life of hardship and constant danger, with the almost certain prospect of violent death, for the sake of preaching a lie? It is impossible that zealous, self-denying men like the apostles, could have been impostors; it is impossible that men who wrote what they wrote—simple, artless records, full of indications of truthfulness, full also of little differences which show that there could have been no concert, no collusion; or letters of Christian counsel beautiful in their transparent simplicity, full of high, holy, heavenly teaching, such as the world had never heard before—it is simply inconceivable that such men should have invented a lie, should have suffered, should have died, for what they knew to be false. But perhaps no one maintains this incredible hypothesis now. Then could they have been deceived by others? Who could have deceived them? Whose interest was it? Who could have wished to deceive them? Could they have deceived themselves as to the Lord's resurrection? Did they so treasure in their hearts their Master's promise? Did they so constantly expect to see him again? Did they look for his reappearing so eagerly that they imagined that they saw his form and heard his words? Did they in honest enthusiasm unconsciously create supposed appearances of the Lord out of the lightning's flash, or the uncertain moonlight, or the thousand causes which have from time to time deceived honest men? But the Scripture narratives, artless and truthful as they are, completely exclude this hypothesis. The disciples had forgotten the Lord's promise, or had wholly lost faith in it; they regarded him as dead, as lost to them. Two of them had laid him in the tomb, and had closed it with a great stone. The women were preparing to anoint the body. None of them had any expectation of seeing the Lord again. Even the empty tomb, strange as it may seem to us, did not at once suggest the Resurrection. St. John, indeed, believed when he went into the sepulchre; in the sepulchre itself, in the home of death, he saw by faith the victory over death. But it seems doubtful whether St. Peter even then realized the truth of the Lord's resurrection. And certainly the absence of the body brought sorrow, not joy, to Mary Magdalene. She stood at the sepulchre weeping, and that because, as she said, she knew not where the body of the Lord was laid; her one wish was to recover those loved remains, and, it seems, to remove them to a grave where they might lie in peace (John xx. 6—15). Thank God, the central fact of Christianity rests on the surest historical evidence. The great Christian Church has not risen out of a dream, a vision. The greatest moral and spiritual revolution which the world has ever seen was not the work of a few honest but unintelligent and easily misled enthusiasts. Nothing but the truth of the resurrection of the Lord can account for the immense and sudden change from the deepest despondency to the most wonderful zeal and joy and courage and endurance. Nothing but the presence of the risen, living Lord can account for that strong conviction, that dauntless energy, that sustained persevering labour, which overcame all the superstitions of heathenism, all the inertness of religious scepticism, all the mighty power of Rome, and went on conquering and to conquer till the victorious eagles bowed before the mightier cross, and kings and emperors bent the knee in worship of the Crucified.

LESSONS. 1. Guilt conceals itself by falsehood. Hate sin, love the truth. 2. To offer bribes or to receive them is alike evil. Covetousness is idolatry. 3. The fact of the Lord's resurrection is incontrovertible. Let us cling to it as the ground of all our hopes; let us seek to realize its spiritual power.

VERS. 16—20.—*The great meeting in Galilee.* I. THE APPEARANCE OF THE LORD. 1. *The place.* This was the one only meeting by appointment. The other appearances of the risen Saviour were sudden and unexpected. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us that the Lord, just before his agony, had announced to his apostles that, after he was risen again, he would go before them into Galilee. After the Resurrection the angel first, and, then the Lord himself, had made the same appointment. Evidently it was a meeting of especial importance; the preparation for it, its striking circumstances, the fact that it is the only meeting with the apostles recorded by the first evangelist, invest it with peculiar solemnity. The Lord had chosen some mountain in Galilee as the place of meeting. Thither came the eleven disciples—probably only the eleven. Some have thought that this meeting is the appearance mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 6, when more than five hundred disciples, most of whom were living when St. Paul wrote, saw the risen Saviour. But it seems altogether improbable that the presence of so great a number should have been left unnoticed, that the evangelist should have mentioned only the eleven apostles, when there was an assembly of more than five hundred gathered round the Lord. 2. *The effect of the Lord's first appearance.* They worshipped him. Before the Resurrection we read from time to time that others worshipped him; we are not told that the apostles did so. Now they felt the majesty of his Person. "When they saw him, they worshipped." We know not how he appeared, whether suddenly, as at other times, or standing afar off on the mountain-top, or possibly in the air above them. Certainly he appeared in the glory of his resurrection-body—the body of his glory (Phil. iii. 21), the same, yet not the same, with that body which was born of the Virgin Mary, which had hung upon the cross, which had lain in the tomb of Joseph; the same, as the risen bodies of his saints will be the same with their present corruptible bodies; yet not the same, as the spiritual body will differ from the natural body. The Lord appeared; and the glory of his presence filled the hearts of the apostles with unwonted awe and reverence. They prostrated themselves before him in lowliest adoration, offering up that worship which the kneeling Church offers to the risen Lord at all times, especially on that day which is his; and with deepest thankfulness, with most devoted love, with most fervent adoration on that greatest of festivals, when we commemorate the resurrection of Christ our Lord from the dead. But, the apostle tells us with the characteristic truthfulness and simplicity of Holy Scripture, "some doubted." We are not told what their doubts were. It was not sinful, obstinate doubt; for the Lord came nearer and dispelled it; he did not reprove them. It may possibly have been doubted whether worship should be offered to him; and, if so, the Lord's first words, "All power is given unto me," may be regarded as an answer to that unspoken doubt. More probably it was doubt of his identity when they first saw him. None of the eleven could then doubt the fact of the Resurrection. But when they first saw the glorious form in the distance, some of them failed to recognize the Lord; just as they knew him not at first on the Sea of Galilee, when he came to them walking upon the water; as Mary Magdalene "knew not that it was Jesus," when first she saw the risen Lord. He came nearer in his gracious love, he came and spoke unto them. None could doubt longer, when they saw him close at hand, when they heard the well-known tones of that much-loved voice. So Christian men doubt sometimes now whether the Lord has really called them, whether they have the high privilege of his presence. He will not leave them in doubt if they love him and keep his word. He will come nearer; he will fulfil his blessed promise, manifesting himself to them as he doth not unto the world.

II. THE LORD'S WORDS. 1. *He talked to them.* The Greek word implies more than a short, set speech. He said, doubtless, much more than the evangelist has recorded. We know that the Lord did and said many things which are not written in this book; but God has provided for the preservation of all that is necessary for our faith and for our salvation. "These things are written, that we might believe that Jesus is

the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through his Name." 2. *The mediatorial kingdom.* "All authority was given to me," said the risen Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect Man. It was given long ago in the eternal purpose of the blessed Trinity. It had been announced in prophecy, more or less clearly, from the time when sin first entered into the world, when it was foretold that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Now it was given. "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living." That kingdom was won by his death, sealed and ratified by his resurrection. It was because he took upon himself the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, that God highly exalted him, and gave him the Name which is above every name, that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is King over the kingdom of heaven which he established. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." His authority is unlimited; he is "the Head of all principality and power." His authority extends over the heavenly host: "Angels, authorities, and powers are made subject unto him" (1 Pet. iii. 22). The angels were bidden to worship him at his incarnation (Heb. i. 6). They are his ministers; his angels he called them, even in the days of his flesh (ch. xiii. 41). He employs them for the service of his kingdom, for the saving of souls. His authority extends over all the earth. All souls are his, bought with his blood; all are bound to render to him obedience, honour, worship. In his Name every knee must bow. All hearts must be yielded up to him in willing love and reverence, for the cross has lifted him up to the eyes of the world as the Incarnate Love, and the Resurrection proves that that Sacrifice of holiest love has been accepted by the Father. 3. *The apostolic commission.* As the Lord's authority extended over all the earth, so should the commission of his apostles. The limits assigned to their first mission (ch. x. 5) are now withdrawn. Because all authority was his, they were now to go forth in his Name and in virtue of that worldwide authority. They were to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" they were to "make disciples of all the nations." It seems a strange injunction when we think that it was delivered to eleven poor, humble, unlearned Jews; but not strange when we remember who gave that solemn charge—the Lord whom all the angels worship, "who is over all, God blessed for ever." His servants speak in his Name by his authority; the humbler they are, the more deeply they abase themselves and feel their own weakness and sinfulness, the more effectually does his grace work in them: "My strength is made perfect in weakness," saith the Lord. And the answer of his servants, in faith and self-abasement, is, "I can do all things through Church that strengtheneth me." From this time the Church of Christ was to be catholic, universal, open to all who would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations." The apostles were to begin the work of gathering all nations into the kingdom of heaven, which is the Church of Christ. And that: (1) By baptizing them. We have here the institution of the sacrament of baptism. It is the initiatory sacrament of Christianity. In the ordinary course of things it will precede Christian teaching, though whenever it has not been administered in infancy, candidates must be prepared by careful instruction. In virtue of our baptism we become disciples, scholars in the school of Christ. Our baptism binds us to learn of him, to sit at his feet and hear his Word, to follow him, imitating his great example, walking in the blessed steps of his most holy life. And Christian baptism is into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It is not only *in* the Name of Christ (as Acts x. 48), that is, by his authority; nor only *on* the Name of Jesus Christ (as Acts ii. 38, if ἐπὶ be the right reading there), that is, on condition of a confession of Christ, of faith in him; but it is also into the one Name of the blessed Trinity. The children of Israel were baptized into Moses (1 Cor. x. 2), that is, into the society of which Moses was the head—into his authority. We are baptized into the Name of God, into that Church which is his, called by his Name; into the family of God the Father, into the mystical body of Christ the Son, into the communion of the Holy Ghost. The Name is One, and yet Three. "The Lord our God is one God." Yet in that eternal unity there is a Trinity of Persons. Into this mysterious, this awful Name, we are baptized. May he whose name we bear keep us steadfast in the true faith of his holy gospel! (2) By teaching them. Baptism is an initiatory rite. Teaching must

follow. Christ's apostles, Christ's ministers, must teach, not by word only, but by holy example, and that continually, perseveringly. They must teach all things whatsoever the Lord commanded; not merely this or that favourite doctrine, but the whole range of Scripture truth. They must keep nothing back, but "declare the whole counsel of God"—the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the fact of human free-will and responsibility; the doctrine of justification by faith and the necessity of good works; a simple reliance on the merits and death of Christ, and the absolute necessity of holiness of heart and life; the doctrines of grace and the doctrine of the sacraments; all the truths of the Christian religion, all the practical duties of the Christian life, must have their due place in the teaching of the Church. 4. *The last promise.* "Behold, I am with you always." It is a repetition of the promise made before his sufferings: "I will come again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." The Lord had come again. He would never again leave his servants; he would be with them always, all the days, all the appointed days of the world's history, to the consummation of all things. Not one day would he be absent from them. Though after the Ascension they would see him no more with the outward eye, he would be with them by his Spirit, dwelling in their hearts, present always, every day; present in the administration of the sacraments which he had ordained, giving by that presence virtue and efficacy to those outward visible signs which without that presence could convey no inward and spiritual grace; present in their teaching, guiding them into all truth, filling them with zeal and ardent love for souls, giving them the eloquence of deep conviction, the inspired eloqnence which comes from the promptings of the Holy Spirit; present always in the daily life of faith and obedience and self-sacrifice, and that for ever—unto the end, not only in apostolic times, but present now; present with us, if we are faithful; present as surely and certainly as he was with the apostles whom he had chosen; present with those who have succeeded the apostles in the ministry; present to help them in the administration of the sacraments, in their public teaching, in the daily ministrations; present with all faithful Christians, and that all the days, at all times, in joy and health and prosperity, in sorrow, in sickness, in bereavements, in the hour of death; present always, guiding, teaching, comforting, encouraging, making all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. The Church may well say "Amen" to that gracious promise. "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus; be with us always according to thy blessed Word; for without thee we can do nothing, and in thy presence is the fulness of joy."

LESSONS. 1. The soul that sees the Lord falls down before him in adoring worship. Oh, may we see him now by faith, that we may worship in spirit and in truth! 2. If we come to him in earnest supplication, he will draw near to us, he will remove our doubts and perplexities. 3. All power is his: in earth,—then let us obey him and imitate him in love and reverence; in heaven,—then let us trust in him in the full assurance of faith. He can prepare a place for his chosen in the many mansions of his Father's house.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 6.—*The vacant tomb.* Jesus did not only appear after his death, as ghosts are said to have appeared, startling nervous people in haunted places. His tomb was left vacant. His body had disappeared. This is an important fact in regard to the Resurrection.

I. THERE IS A NEGATIVE AS WELL AS A POSITIVE EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION. The positive evidence is in the appearance of Christ to his disciples; the negative evidence is in the empty tomb. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, men could have pointed to his sealed tomb, could even have torn it open and shown the corpse within. Why did none of the enemies of Jesus do this? No effort appears to have been made to take this simple means of confuting the preaching of the apostles. Yet it was manifestly in the interest of the Sadducean rulers of the Jews to have followed this course. But if the body of our Lord was not to be found, what had become of it? His enemies could have had no interest in hiding it—quite the contrary. M. Renan

has suggested that Mary Magdalene carried the body away and hid it. Even if we can think the daring deed practically possible, psychologically it is impossible. Such an ugly fraud would certainly have been found out; for still the body would need to be disposed of. But in their despair none of the disciples were in the mood to invent a fiction of a resurrection. Their sudden transformation from despair to joy and confidence cannot be accounted for on the hypothesis of a fraud. The very lameness of this extraordinary theory, considered as the best that a great imaginative critic can devise, is a proof of the reality of the event he would fain find some means of explaining away.

II. CHRIST HAS RISEN IN THE FULNESS OF HIS POWER AND LIFE. It may seem to us of little moment that he should have brought his body out of the tomb. If he himself still lived, if his soul was still alive, could we not dispense with his body? Here we reason about a region of which we have no knowledge. We do not know how a disembodied spirit can act; we do not know what necessity there may be for some bodily instrument to enable it to communicate with other beings. It is enough to know the fact that Christ's full resurrection-life was corporeal as well as spiritual. For us the important truth is that it was and is now a perfect, wakeful, and energetic life. Jesus is no dim shade flitting through the abodes of the dead; he is no sleeping soul like those of our blessed dead who, as some think, sleep in him awaiting their resurrection. He has risen into his perfect life. He is with us now, more truly living than during his earthly ministry.

III. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IS A TYPE OF THE CHRISTIAN'S RESURRECTION. The physical circumstances must be different in the case of other people whose bodies have long since mouldered to dust, perished by fire, melted away in the sea, or been devoured by wild beasts and cannibals. But the fact of a full and perfect life is what is alone important. Jesus, the firstfruits from the dead, is the promise of this life for his people. They who sleep in him will awake in his likeness.—W. F. A.

Ver. 17.—*Doubts as to the Resurrection.* If some doubted when they saw Jesus, it is not surprising that some doubt now that it is nearly nineteen centuries since our Lord was on earth among men in visible form. Therefore it is not just or charitable to turn savagely against people who are seriously perplexed. The only right and Christian course is to try to help them.

I. THERE MUST BE MUCH MYSTERY IN RELIGION. It reaches out beyond our everyday experience, and deals with things of God and the unseen world, and therefore we should be prepared to see the clouds gathering over many of its difficult regions. If we look for a mathematical demonstration or a scientific verification of the facts and doctrines of our faith, we shall often be disappointed. At present, in this world of partial lights, such things are not always to be had on demand. Religion belongs to the region of practical life. If we have enough evidence for a reasonable conviction, this is all that we really need. Absolute freedom from all questions we cannot have; nor do we need it; we are disciplined by our mental difficulties.

II. THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES WHICH OUR OWN IGNORANCE WILL ACCOUNT FOR. We do not know why "some doubted." Was our Lord's appearance greatly altered? We cannot for a moment imagine that some one else was personating the dead Christ. The very fact that some who saw him doubted about him shows that even the more sceptical Christians did see the risen Christ. But how mysterious are these vague hints! They just show that we have not yet full light. In the twilight there are many obscurities.

III. IT IS OUR DUTY TO EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE OF THE RESURRECTION. Too often doubt feeds on itself. Some people devour sceptical books, but they have not patience to examine the other side. They give a large welcome to doubts of all kinds, thinking this conduct fair and generous and liberal-minded; but they are very grudging of receiving what is urged in favour of Christian truth. Then there are those who are too careless to think at all seriously. They catch the floating doubts and play with them indolently—no more. Others are earnest in the pursuit of truth. These people would do well to consider the cumulative evidence for the resurrection of Christ. 1. There is the alternative—What became of his body if he did not rise? 2. How could men who had despaired suddenly wake up to a great confidence if no resurrection had occurred to revive their faith? 3. If one or two hysterical fanatics might have fancied they had

seen a flitting ghost in the twilight, is that a reason for believing that a dozen men could have had a similar hallucination—not to mention the five hundred to whom St. Paul refers—many of whom he knew to be alive in his own day? St. Paul's undoubted Epistle to the Corinthians sums up the evidence with great force.

IV. FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON OUR IDEA OF CHRIST. This is not merely a question of an historical fact. The resurrection of Christ is not to be compared with the fabled resurrection of Nero. We have first to learn who Christ was. The unique nature of Christ, seen in his earthly life, prepares us to believe in his resurrection. It is not merely *a* resurrection; it is *the* resurrection of Christ that we are to see, as the crowning of his wonderful life on earth.—W. F. A.

Vers. 18—20.—*The great commission.* This is the grand missionary charter. Here is more than our justification for urging on missionary work, more than our encouragement for maintaining it; here is our positive duty to evangelize the world. Let us look at the source, the object, and the encouragement of this great commission.

I. ITS SOURCE. The authority and commandment of Christ. 1. *The authority of Christ.* Jesus speaks these words after his resurrection. He is now to be exalted to the right hand of God. But his exaltation is not to a place of idle honours. It is to a throne of power. The authority which he has won by his triumph over sin and death he will now use in conquering the world. (1) This is authority in heaven; therefore it will involve heavenly blessings—pardon, regeneration, eternal life. (2) It is also on earth; therefore it will bring numberless blessings, and will help men here and now 2. *The command of Christ.* He uses his authority by commissioning his disciples to preach his gospel. The first claim of missionary work does not come from the misery and need of the heathen; it does not come from the blessings of the gospel, which it would be so well for all to share in; though here are two powerful motives. It springs from the direct command of Christ. The Church that neglects missions is disregarding the express orders of her Lord.

II. ITS OBJECT. 1. *To go.* The disciples are to become apostles; Christians are to be missionaries. When it is possible, the Church is to spread abroad. We are not to wait for the world to come to Christ; we are to go out into the world to preach Christ. Christianity must be aggressive, and Christians must be active in carrying the gospel to all who have not yet received it. 2. *To make disciples.* It is not enough to live among the heathen. Many do this for purely selfish reasons. The gospel is spread by teaching. There is a teaching of great power in the true living of a Christian life. But we must add definite instruction in the truths of our faith. The kingdom of heaven rests on truth, it finds its way best through the making known of its facts and principles. It does not dread the light; it welcomes it and spreads it. Evangelistic appeals in which there is no teaching, unless they follow on good sober instruction, must vanish in the smoke of shapeless emotions. 3. *To baptize.* Not merely is the truth to be preached; Christ requires a confession of discipleship. He expects his people to be bound together in Church-fellowship. The great central revelation about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is to be the foundation of our teaching and the bond of our union. This does not mean that we must comprehend the Trinity; it means that we must know the Fatherhood of God, the Divinity and saving power of Christ, and the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit. 4. *To discipline.* "Teaching them to observe," etc. Mission converts must be taught the will and commandments of Christ—trained in Christian ethics.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT. 1. *The living presence of Christ.* We do not preach a dead or an absent Christ. We have not only to do with the Jesus of ancient history. The living Christ is with us. But that is not all. It is a mistake to detach this verse from the preceding verse, as is often the case in popular discourse. Christ is with us in our missionary work. We have no right to expect the encouragement of his presence if we do not fulfil the condition he lays down. The missionary Church is the Church that has most of Christ. The power and inspiration of missionary work is his presence in our midst. 2. *The abiding presence of Christ.* He is with his people in their missionary work to the end of the world. (1) Then missionary work is to be continuous. (2) Then Christ is with us now in this work as truly as he was with the apostles. We cannot fail with such a presence. We are to preach to all nations, and

in the end all nations will be won, and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."—W. F. A.

Vers. 1—10.—*Lessons of the Resurrection.* The four evangelists concur in setting forth the three successive steps in the evidence by which our Lord's incredulous followers were at length persuaded of the reality of his resurrection. These are: 1. The fact of the sepulchre being found empty. 2. The testimony of the angels who were seen in it. 3. The appearances of our Lord himself. On these points we shall not now particularly dwell, but direct attention to certain side-lights which the narrative affords. Thus it teaches us—

I. THAT THERE ARE SPIRITUAL BEHIND THE MECHANICAL AGENCIES IN NATURE. 1. *This is evident in the angel's work.* (1) The earthquake is attributed to him. "Behold, there was an earthquake; *for* an angel of the Lord," etc. The rolling away of the stone, in like manner, is ascribed to him. Whatever mechanical agencies were in commission here, angelical energy was behind them. (2) This is not the sole example of the exertion of such energy in the production of physical effects. Angels smote the Sodomites with blindness, and brought down a torrent of fire and brimstone upon the cities of the plain (see Gen. xix. 11, 13). They brought the pestilence upon Israel in the days of David, by which seventy thousand were destroyed, and in the days of Hezekiah they smote a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians (see 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; 2 Kings xix. 35). An angel dissolved the chain that bound Peter in Herod's prison, and made the doors fly open before him (see Acts xii. 6—11). (3) Within narrower limits human spirits exert energy in the material world. The microcosm, the body, responds to the will. Through the medium of the body we act upon the macrocosm around. We change the course of rivers, tunnel mountains, cut waterways through continents, modify climates, alter the flora and fauna of a country, give direction and development to instincts in animals. (4) The universe is dual, viz. spiritual and material. These complements mutually act and react. The spiritual cannot be divorced from the physical. Any system of natural philosophy that fails to recognize this is essentially deficient. (5) One grand use of miracles is to force this truth upon our consideration. A miracle is not necessarily an inversion of the laws of nature, though to a limited knowledge such may appear to be the case. It is rather the evidence of the presence behind materialism of a superior spiritual agency. "The works which none other did" (see John xv. 24). 2. *In the manner in which he impressed the senses.* (1) He rendered himself *visible.* The watch saw him, and were in consequence stricken with terror. This terror was deepened by their having felt the earthquake and seen the rolling away of the stone. He sat upon the stone in tranquil triumph in their presence, as if defying the armies of earth and hell to replace it or to hinder the resurrection of the Redeemer. The women also saw him. His appearance generally was that of a *young man* (see Mark xvi. 15). But his countenance, or rather his whole form, was bright, "like lightning." His raiment was white as snow—whitened by the lightning-brightness transmitted from his Person. This white radiance was the emblem at once of purity, joy, and triumph, and eminently suitable to the tidings he bore (cf. Acts i. 10; x. 30). (2) He rendered himself *audible.* He used the voice and language of humanity to give to the women comfort, instruction, and direction. (3) Whether, however, these visual and audible impressions were made upon the physical organs of the witnesses or upon the spiritual senses in them corresponding, is not certain, though the presumption is that the physical senses were addressed, since mechanical force was undoubtedly exerted in producing the earthquake and in the removal of the stone. We should ever recognize God in nature.

II. THAT THE RESURRECTION-BODY IS ENDOWED WITH ETHERIAL PROPERTIES. 1. *Such was the case with the body of Jesus.* (1) His resurrection was not witnessed by the watch. They felt the earthquake; they saw the angel; they witnessed the rolling away of the stone; but Jesus they saw not. Note: He does not reveal himself to the incredulous and disobedient. He did not appear even to the women until he had first tried their faith and obedience by his ministering angel. (2) The resurrection of Jesus appears to have taken place before the stone was rolled away. Taking the narrative as it lies before us in Matthew, the women appear to have seen the angel roll away the stone and seat himself upon it, and witnessed also the effect of the vision

upon the watch. The accounts in Mark and Luke may be harmonized to this view. Then, descending from the stone, he conducted them into the tomb, where they saw a second angel, but otherwise a vacant sepulchre. "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The stone was not removed to let the Saviour out, but to let the witnesses in to see that he was already gone. (3) The presumption, then, is that the body of Jesus had undergone such a change that it passed out of the sepulchre through the pores of the stone, as the electric matter freely passes through concrete substances. The following remarkable words are ascribed to the Rabbi Judah Hakkodesh: "After three days the soul of Messiah shall return to its body, and shall go out of that stone in which he shall be buried." (4) This same etherial property was afterwards exhibited whenever Jesus vanished from the sight of those to whom he had appeared. It was likewise remarkably exhibited on those occasions in which he stood in the midst of his disciples when they were assembled with closed doors (see John xx. 19—29). 2. *But the body of Jesus is the pattern resurrection-body.* (1) "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (cf. Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. xv. 20, 44, 48, 49; 2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 11; Phil. iii. 20, 21). (2) The bodies of the saints that arose after his resurrection exhibited the same etherial qualities (see ch. xxvii. 53). (3) This will let in light upon the subject of the mingling of the saints of the first resurrection with living men during that great period of the reign of Christ, which is the burden of prophetic hope (cf. Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 8—12; Rev. v. 10; xx. 6). (4) Jesus rose the third day, not only to answer the type of the Prophet Jonah, and to verify his own words (see ch. xii. 40), but to indicate the time of the first resurrection of his saints (cf. Hos. vi. 2). "A day is with the Lord as a thousand years."

III. THAT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST BRINGS HEAVEN NEARER TO BELIEVERS. 1. *It brings them into communion with angels.* (1) The *appearance* of the angels to the women evinced that through the risen Saviour we come to a heavenly communion (see Heb. xii. 22). Angels own Jesus as their Lord as well as we. Their communication is concerning him. (2) The women had comfortable assurance in their *action*. It announced to them that the Lord who had been delivered for our offences had rendered satisfaction to Divine justice, and therefore received his legal discharge from the prison. (3) They had this also in their *words*. (*a*) "Fear not ye." The watch were left to their fears. Not so the women. True daughters of Sarah (see 1 Pet. iii. 6). (*b*) "For I know that ye seek Jesus, which hath been crucified." Love seeks Jesus *because* he hath been crucified. Those who seek the Crucified One need never fear. (*c*) "He is not here: for he is risen, even as he said." Those who seek Jesus crucified will find him risen. "He is risen!" This is joyful news, not only to the women, but to all disciples of Christ in every age. The risen Christ is our consolation. If we find him not immediately in sensible comfort, the assurance that he is risen will be followed by that comfort in good time. Henceforth let us seek Jesus as One that is risen, viz. not with carnal thoughts of him (see 2 Cor. v. 16), but with heavenly mind and spiritual communications (cf. Rom. x. 6—8; Phil. iii. 20; Col. iii. 1—3). (*d*) "Go quickly." Those sent on God's errands must not loiter. (*e*) "Tell his disciples." The disciples of Jesus are more honoured than kings. The apostles should believe without seeing. The women are sent to testify to them, and thus to test their faith. We must not monopolize our comforts (see 2 Kings vii. 9). "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (*f*) "Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee." Angels are in the secret of the Lord. 2. *It brings them into new relations with their Lord.* (1) He spiritually manifests himself to them. The women were highly honoured to be the first to whom the risen Lord appeared. That favour expressed the removal from the sex of its ancient reproach (cf. 1 Tim. ii. 14). (2) He speaks comfortable words to them. "All hail!" equivalent to "Rejoice ye!" Let joy triumph over fear. The risen Christ is his people's Joy. "All hail!" equivalent to "All health!"—spiritual and saving health to you! (3) He affords sensible proofs of his love. "And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him." They were now sure it was no phantasm, but the very body of the real Jesus. (4) He gives them his gracious commission: "Fear not; go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me." He went to Galilee to multiply his witnesses. The greater part of his disciples were Galilæans. There it was probably that "he was seen of more than five hundred brethren"

(cf. Acts i. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 6). (5) He calls his disciples his "brethren." Here for the first time we find him using this condescending and endearing appellation. The Resurrection, which declared him the Son of God with power, declared also all the sons of God to be his brethren. The spirit of the servant now gives place to that of the son. First we are "servants," then "friends" (see John xv. 15), finally "brethren" (see ch. xxv. 40; John xx. 17). (6) The Christian discipleship is now constituted into a sacred brotherhood.—J. A. M.

Vers. 11—17.—*The commotion.* The earthquake which accompanied the resurrection of Christ had its counterpart in the moral commotion which this event occasioned. Thus—

I. THE WATCH WERE MOVED. 1. *They were alarmed for their lives.* (1) By "the things that were come to pass." They had felt the shock of a "great earthquake." The stoutest heart will shake in the presence of a force that moves the foundations of the earth. To this terror was added the appearance of the angel whose form shone like lightning, while his raiment glittered as the snow. The effect was paralyzing. "For fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men." Who can abide amidst the wonderful visions and tremendous elemental uproar of that great day of the Lord, when in the glory of his majesty he shall arise to shake terribly the earth? (2) By the fear of military discipline. They were responsible with their lives for the safe custody of the body of Jesus, and the security of the sealed stone. But the stone has been rolled away and the sepulchre is vacant. What are they to do? The ways of God are perplexing to the sinner. (3) The soldiers tremble for their lives when they should have trembled for their sins. The death of the sinful is of all deaths the most terrible. Unhappily, this is too seldom and too partially seen. 2. *They acted with the wisdom of the world.* (1) We have no proof that they deserted their post. Some of them went into the city to report to the elders the things that had come to pass. This probably they did by order of their captain, while the rest waited to receive their official discharge. The steady discipline of the Roman soldier has its lessons for the Christian soldier. (2) They entered into the wicked plot of the elders. Covetousness conquered the Roman soldier. What a mass of evidence did he consent to set aside for a bribe! The mercenary tongue will sell the truth for money. Fear may have wrought with their covetousness. They might doubt whether the governor would believe the truth, or whether the rulers might not set up another plot against their fidelity. They elected to take the money and trust to the promise of the rulers to secure them against the terror of the military discipline. (3) What a glorious opportunity did the soldiers miss of becoming honourable witnesses for Christ! But God made them his witnesses in spite of their unworthiness. He can make men efficient preachers of his gospel without giving to them a particle of the preacher's honour or reward.

II. THE ELDERS WERE MOVED. 1. *The hypocrite is alarmed for his credit.* (1) The murderer would appear a saint. To free themselves of the guilt of the murder of Christ, the rulers had accused him of being a "deceiver" (see ch. xxvii. 63). But his resurrection from the dead is a triumphant refutation of that wicked defence. (2) What will the elders do now that blood-guiltiness is brought home to them? Will they, even at the eleventh hour, confess their hypocrisy and sue for mercy for their aggravated sin? Or will they at the peril of their damnation defend their credit and persist in their hypocrisy? How solemn are the resolutions of the will! (3) They elect to persist in their impenitence. What a melancholy example of the power of unbelief! It often pleads want of evidence. Here is an instance of determined unbelief against admitted evidence. An evil, churlish heart will repel the clearest evidence. Note: The waywardness of unbelief prevents the Saviour from rising in our hearts. 2. *But he vainly seeks to preserve it.* (1) His efforts may be desperately impudent. The elders deliberately resolved to oppose a lie to the living Truth. They give "large money" to the soldiers to encourage them to publish the lie. How deeply did they sin in thus casting a stumbling-block in the way of the soldiers! They teach them to lie speciously. "By night," etc. But the war is toilsome which falsehood has to wage with truth. "If," etc. (ver. 14). Note: The "large money" is the sequel of the small money paid to Iscariot. Iniquity begets iniquity, and the descents

are with an aggravating speed (see Ps. lxix. 27). If the wicked give "large money" to promote a lie, the good should not give small money grudgingly to propagate the saving truth. (2) His confusion will be all the more signal. (*a*) The disciples were not likely to attempt the stealing of the body. For had they thought Christ a deceiver, they would not have run any risk for him. Had they believed him the Messiah, they could have had no occasion or inducement. The pilgrimage of the women was one of devotion, to weep over the dead, and pour some fresh ointment over One whom they desired to preserve, but dreamt not of being able to restore. They were perplexed as to who should roll away the stone, being ignorant both of its being sealed and of the watch being set over it. They were not likely to be in any plot for the stealing of his body to trump up a story of his resurrection. (*b*) The soldiers were not likely to have allowed the removal of the body. A watch of sixty armed men could not have been overpowered by a few terrified disciples. The whole watch could not have been asleep, and asleep so soundly as not to be awakened by the rolling away of a stone so large that a company of women despaired of moving it, and by the entrance into the sepulchre of a number of men, and their subsequent exit from it bearing the body. This is all the less likely to have occurred when it is remembered that, according to Roman military law, it was instant death that a guard should be found off their watch. And if they were asleep, how did they know what happened? (*c*) The elders painfully felt the clumsiness of their story, else why did they not search the lodgings of the disciples for the body said to have been stolen by them? Were they likely to have been careful for the safety of the Roman soldiers unless they had some reason for it? Do not the words of Gamaliel (see Acts v. 38, 39) assume that the resurrection might be true? Could this argument have been pleaded in the council had the senators continued to maintain their story?

III. THE DISCIPLES WERE MOVED. 1. *What is sorrow to the wicked is often joy to the good.* (1) While the soldiers went to the elders with the news of the Resurrection, to fill their faces with shame, the women went to the disciples with the same news, to fill their hearts with gladness. They were commissioned to gather the disciples to a particular mountain in Galilee, there to meet their risen Lord. The "names" in Jerusalem were "a hundred and twenty;" in Galilee the number was greater. This was probably the occasion upon which the Lord appeared to "above five hundred brethren" (see 1 Cor. xv. 6). Matthew passes by at least five different appearances of our Lord, and proceeds to speak of one which seems, from its previous appointment, to have been an occasion of peculiar solemnity and importance. His object evidently was to refute the tale respecting the stealing of the body. (2) The fact of the Resurrection is eminently joyful, as it settles for ever the Messiahship of Jesus, and with it the absolute truth of his teaching and the trustworthiness of his glorious promises. 2. *Holy joy is deepened with the assurance of faith.* (1) When the disciples saw Jesus they worshipped him. Here was a recognition of his Divinity (cf. ch. xviii. 26; Acts x. 28; Rev. v.; vi.; xix. 10). By accepting their worship Jesus acknowledged himself to be God. Christian worship is the adoration of Christ as "the true God and Eternal Life" (see 1 John v. 20, 21). To worship in truth is to serve in love. (2) "Some doubted." They doubted that we may believe. For the disciples were the reverse of credulous men. They doubted transiently, viz. while Jesus was yet at a distance; but when he "came to them, and spake unto them," they doubted no more (cf. ver. 18; Luke xxiv. 37; John xx. 24). Doubts may transiently trouble the sincere worshipper, but in due time Jesus will come nearer and blessedly manifest himself (see John xvi. 21). The wickedly obstinate will not believe, though they see (see John ix. 41).—J. A. M.

Vers. 18—20.—*The commission.* The angel at the sepulchre directed the women to announce the resurrection of Christ to his disciples and summon them to meet him in Galilee. Jesus himself afterwards appeared to them and repeated this instruction. The eleven accordingly repaired to the appointed place, and with them probably the five hundred brethren (see 1 Cor. xv. 6). "Some" of this number—some of those who had not seen him, like Thomas—"doubted" of the reality of the Resurrection, until they were convinced by the evidence of sense. In the words he addressed to them we have: 1. The commission he received from God. 2. The commission he gave to his disciples. 3. The promise of his presence with them. The commission to the disciples

includes three particulars: (1) The universal publication of the gospel. (2) The baptizing of such as should embrace it. (3) Their instruction in its doctrines and precepts. We shall now direct particular attention to two points, viz.—

I. CONSIDER BAPTISM AS A SIGN OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP. 1. *This is evinced in its history.* (1) The Israelites were recognized as disciples of Moses when they were baptized "in the cloud and in the sea" (see 1 Cor. i. 2). From that period, amidst all their rebellions, they never called in question the Divinity of his mission. In this baptism also they were separated from the abominations of the Egyptians, and initiated into the pure precepts and blessed promises delivered to them by the hand of Moses. (2) Those baptized by John are called his disciples. So far convertible are the terms "baptism" and "disciple" that John's *doctrine* is called his "baptism" (cf. ch. iii. 1, 2; Luke iii. 3; Acts xix. 4). (3) Jesus made disciples by baptism after John was cast into prison (see John iv. 1). (4) Baptism is clearly made a sign of Christian discipleship in the terms of the commission. The Greek term here translated "teach" differs from that afterwards rendered "teaching," and literally signifies "to disciple," and is accordingly in the margin construed "make disciples" or "Christians" of all nations (cf. Acts xi. 26). "Make disciples" is the reading of our New Version in the text. (5) This is recognized in the practice of the apostles (see Acts ii. 37, 41; x. 48; xix. 1—7). 2. *Persons are baptized in order to being taught.* (1) This follows from what has been advanced. A disciple is simply a learner. Men are not baptized because they are instructed, though a preliminary instruction may be necessary. The Church, to which baptism introduces us, is a school in which the sons of God are educated for heaven. This discipleship continues to the end of life. (2) The commission sets forth the subjects of our learning. "Teaching them," etc. (ver. 20). The teaching is doctrinal and practical also. Life-lessons in all good senses. (3) Since Christian teaching is to follow baptism rather than to precede it, and since holy teaching cannot be begun too early, there is great propriety in the baptism of infants. Preliminary confession of faith is necessary for adults who have errors to renounce, but infants are happily not in this evil case. (4) Hence because baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of God's covenant, baptism is called "the circumcision of Christ," *i.e.* of Christianity (see Col. ii. 11, 12). If baptism be not regarded as taking the place of circumcision, then the covenant has now no initiatory rite. The Lord's Supper is not initiatory, but of regular habitual observance, as the Passover formerly was.

II. CONSIDER THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH OF THE BAPTIZED. 1. *It is a unity.* (1) Disciples are all baptized into one faith: "Into the Name," etc. The discipleship of the faith. Whatever diversity there may be in non-essentials, there must be unity in cardinals (see Eph. iv. 5). (2) The baptized constitute one mystical body (see 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13; Gal. iii. 27, 28; Eph. iv. 5, 6). Hence schism is represented as a setting up of human names in competition with the one great Name (see 1 Cor. i. 12—15). (3) Love is the badge of Christian discipleship (see John xiii. 34, 35). 2. *It is catholic.* (1) The commission to baptize overarches ethnic distinctions. "All nations." This may have been at first understood to refer to the Jews, wherever dispersed among the nations; but it was soon taken in the wider meaning (see Gal. iii. 27, 28). We are Christians first, then Britons, or Franks, or Germans. (2) It connects heaven and earth. "All power," etc.; "therefore," etc. (see Eph. iii. 14, 15).

"One family we dwell in him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

(3) It extends throughout the ages. It is not strictly correct to speak of the patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian Churches. The Church of God is one under the successive dispensations so distinguished (see Gal. iii. 16, 29). We are grafted into the olive that grew in Abraham's garden. 3. *It has visible and invisible parts.* (1) There is no *visible* Catholic Church. We find no Scripture warrant for the idea. It would necessitate a division in the unity of the Church. It would introduce the monstrosity of two bodies to the one Head. (2) The major part of the one Church is the invisible part. Disembodied saints from all the ages are in it. Hence it takes its name from its head-quarters in heaven (see Heb. xii. 23). The spiritual members of it here on

earth are the permanent members from amongst those that are visible (see Rom. ii. 28, 29). But they cannot be certainly known until the judgment. (3) The Church of the baptized is a very noble corporation. It is a great honour to be connected with it. To be permanently so connected, we must have vital union with Christ. (4) This is that Church so built by a true faith in the Son of God, that the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it (ch. xvi. 18). For the weeding out of the tares, at death, is a benefit, not an injury to it. The dissolution of the body does not for an instant interrupt the life of faith in Christ (see John xi. 26).—J. A. M.

Ver. 2.—*Angel-ministries.* Concerning the nature or the location of angels we do know, probably we can know, nothing. When they have come into the earthly spheres they have always appeared to be men like ourselves; their peculiarity has not been their wings, but their purity and radiancy. But one thing does come out quite clearly and impressively from every case of angel-visitation. They are always ministers, engaged in some form of ministering. Whatever dignity we may think to belong to the angels, it is the dignity that lies in *service*. Here in our text the angel is no mere figure; he has something to do; he waits upon the rising Lord, rolls back the stone from the door, and sits upon it. Summarizing the work of the angels, it is said, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

I. THE HIGHEST DIGNITY IN THE OTHER WORLD. Angels are beings that belong to the other world; and if we can get to know about them, we get to know something of the occupations, interests, and sentiments of the other world. And this is the thing which the angels more especially teach us—in that other world their highest and noblest idea is "serving one another in love." There is one characteristic of the eternal state. It is even so characteristic as to seem to be the only characteristic worth mentioning—it is ministry. Heaven is heaven because every member can say, "I am among you as he that serveth." They learn this of Christ.

II. THE HIGHEST DIGNITY IN THIS WORLD. The angels illustrate it, and the Lord Jesus taught it. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant." Instances may be taken from the several ages, pre-Christian and Christian; and it may be shown that we never have an angel exhibiting himself or getting for himself; they are always doing two things—*obeying* and *serving*. Then show what an impression of the grandeur of angels we have. But what is our notion of them? Do we think of them as having extraordinary privileges? That is not their dignity. This is it—they have risen into the full joy of ministering. The circle is complete: God, Christ, the Spirit, beings of the other world, redeemed men and women in this world, are one in this—all are ministering.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Christ's resurrection the acknowledgment of man's soul-victory.* Our Redeemer's work lacks completeness until his soul-triumph of trust and submission has manifestly, in some open way, gained the acknowledgment and acceptance of God. And this is precisely what we have in the Resurrection. In Gethsemane a soul-triumph of obedience and trust was won. That soul-triumph was tested by the physical woes of Calvary. That soul-triumph was seen to have gained Divine acceptance on the morning of the Resurrection. And the acceptance of the perfect Son involves the acceptance of that humanity of which he was the Head and Representative. Our Lord's humanity was headship. By natural generation all men are in Adam; by spiritual regeneration all men are in Christ, or may be in Christ. Examine this relation carefully.

I. THINK OF GETHSEMANE. There is the conflict between flesh and spirit, between the shrinking from duty which involved suffering, and the obedience and trust of the Son. Just the kind of struggle carried on in our souls many a time since then. We may say, "That conflict was undertaken *for me*. It was a necessary part of the working out of salvation for me which the Lord Jesus undertook." But we may also say, "That conflict was *mine*." The fight between flesh and spirit was always ending in the mastery of the flesh, while I managed it myself. But I watch that great soul-fight of Gethsemane with the holiest and intensest feeling, *because it is mine*. In Christ its Champion, humanity won liberty from the bondage of self, won the trust and the obedience of the Son.

II. THINK OF CALVARY. There the conflict was renewed. The first victory, which had been altogether one of the soul, of feeling, must be yet again proved in a conflict whose main element should be bodily, physical suffering. Shame, weariness, pain, death-agony, all tested the reality of the triumph that had been gained in Gethsemane. And here too we can see the representative character of our Redeemer's work. We have often thought that we had won a right state of mind and feeling; but we have gone forth to actual life and relations, and found that *our* soul-victory failed to stand the actual testings of life. We may say, "Jesus died on Calvary *for me*; a Sacrifice and Propitiation for my sins." We may also say, "That death on Calvary was *mine*. I could not make my soul-victory stand the test of the worries and pains and trials of life. Jesus took up the matter for me, and on Calvary I see myself in him; my burden on him; my fight fought by him; and his victory is victory for me,—it is my victory."

III. THINK OF THE RESURRECTION. It may be said, "But Jesus died." It may seem as if his conflict ended in defeat. At Calvary we have no decided sign of victory. The disciples went away in hopelessness and tears. Can a word be spoken that shall relieve the darkness? We may find it in our text. Look at the burial-place, and hear the angel say, "He is not here: for he is risen." And we may say, "That resurrection was *mine*. It is the seal of my triumph. I stand now in all the joy and strength of a victor. In Christ my foot is on self and sin and death. I can enter into the 'power of his resurrection.'" Are we then to expect freedom from temptation, deliverance from all the outward ills of life? Nay, not so. If I had said so, you would have smiled, as you remembered what cares worried, burdens pressed, and sins still humbled you. It is this—life, toil, suffering, look and are wholly different things when we realize Christ in us, we in Christ, and his victories involving ours in them. The resurrection of our Lord is the Divine acknowledgment of man's soul-victory over sin —evil consequences; and over sin—evil power. Those who are united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ enter daily into his triumph; it is repeated in them again and again; and day by day they are "more than conquerors through him that loved them." We often dwell on salvation from penalty. We should often realize that victory over sin and over self which is won for us by Christ. Too often we are satisfied with saying that we may have strength from Christ to wrestle with evil if we ask for it. But we ought to go on to say that we *have* the victory in having the risen and living Christ. Every form of evil Christ has met for us and beaten; that is, I, in Christ, have met and beaten. Sickness is a beaten foe; pain, loss, disappointment, suffering, are beaten foes; death itself is a beaten foe. And God has openly acknowledged man's soul-victory in raising his Son Jesus Christ from the dead.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Surprise—worship.* Canon Liddon, in an impressive sermon on this text, asks, "How did these women receive Jesus when thus (suddenly) he met them? The fear and great joy with which they had come out of the sepulchre must surely now have been intensified: fear,—for here, beyond all question, was he who was so lately a tenant of the tomb, who had traversed the unseen world, the world of the dead; and great joy,—for here was indisputable proof of the truth of the angel's message, 'He is risen.' He was here himself, the same figure, the same form, the same gracious countenance, lately marred and bruised, now lighted up with an unearthly radiance, the pierced hands, the pierced feet. What did they do? They came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. There are three features in this action of these humble and deeply religious women that are especially deserving of our attention. 1. Their forgetfulness of themselves. 2. Their reverence. 3. Their tenacity of purpose;" this is taken as being suggested by their act of holding him by the feet. Attention may also be fixed on the fact that the women were taken by surprise, and that revealed much concerning them.

I. THEIR ACT UNDER SURPRISE SHOWED THAT THEIR FEELINGS TOWARDS CHRIST WERE GENUINE. Men are constantly found out by being "taken at unawares." But a man who is thoroughly genuine never minds being "taken at unawares." These women were sincere. In an instant genuine feeling worthily responded to the Christ-revelation.

II. THEIR ACT UNDER SURPRISE SHOWED THEIR EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS. Notice

particularly what they did under impulse. It was what women would do under such circumstances, not what men would do. Women get round to Jesus by the heart rather than by the head; but he accepts the worship of emotion as freely as the worship of intellect. Let woman serve Christ woman's way.

III. THEIR ACT UNDER SURPRISE NEEDED DIVINE CORRECTION. It was dangerously impulsive; it was unspiritual; it was a satisfaction in *material* presence; it lacked thought.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The helplessness of a foolish excuse.* If ever there was a foolish excuse offered, this was it. If they were Roman soldiers who composed the watch, everybody must have known it was untrue, for sleeping on duty was punished by death. If they were part of the temple-guard, everybody would know that they had been set up to tell this tale by the enemies of Jesus. If inquiry be made concerning the source of St. Matthew's information, it may suffice to remind that two at least of our Lord's friends, Joseph and Nicodemus, were members of the Sanhedrin, and would be fully cognizant of the Sanhedrin secrets. The invention of an excuse, and bribing men to make it, show how bewildered the priest-party was by the facts and incidents reported. They never attempted to deny the facts; they invented an excuse which they knew had no atom of foundation in fact. Those watchmen could not declare that one single disciple had been seen near the place. It is ever true that they are in grave danger of accusing themselves who attempt to excuse themselves.

I. THIS EXCUSE DECEIVED NOBODY. 1. It did not deceive the watchmen; they must have laughed as they looked into the anxious faces of these officials, and pocketed their hush-money. 2. It did not deceive the priest-party. They knew perfectly well that it was all their own invention, and never a disciple had touched the body. 3. It did not deceive Pilate, to whom the report was sure to come. He enjoyed the confusion of the men who had mastered him and compelled him to do a wrong. 4. It did not deceive the disciples. For they had absolutely silent consciences, and the idea of stealing the body had never come to them. 5. It does not deceive us; for we can see that making such a lying excuse is just what the priest-party was capable of; but stealing the body is just what the disciples were incapable of.

II. THIS EXCUSE DID NOT HELP THOSE WHO MADE IT. It did not touch the fact that the body was gone. It did not prevent the circulation of the report that Jesus was risen from the dead. These men spent their money for nothing, and only made themselves laughing-stocks.

III. THIS EXCUSE DID HELP THOSE AGAINST WHOM IT WAS MADE. It drew attention to the disciples; it set men upon inquiring what had really happened; it made the fact of miraculous resurrection stand out all the more clearly.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Power in the risen Christ's hands.* I. No one of us needs proofs of the fact of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Yet that resurrection remains an unsolved mystery. No one can explain it, but we inquire concerning its significance. One point only now engages our attention. Everybody who dies lives after death. Our dead friends are not dead. We never think of them as dead. They are dead in the sense of ceasing to respond to their present environment, but they are not passed out of existence. Moses and Elias passed away from mortal scenes ages before, but they spake with Jesus in the holy mount. What is true of man is also true of the Divine Man. If never a word had been spoken about his resurrection, we should have known that Jesus lived after and beyond death. That cross could not end Jesus; it only liberated a human spirit. Have we learned the lesson which our Lord almost in vain tried to teach Martha? She cried, in her blinding agony, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." He answered, "Thy brother shall rise again." She misunderstood his reply, and away went her thoughts, coursing down the ages, until they came up against a great resurrection and judgment day. We need not so misunderstand our Lord. He did but wrap up his meaning in the usual figurative fashion. What he said was this, "Lazarus lives; is living now. What you really want, is not requickening of life, but restored relations of the living Lazarus to the body of Lazarus."

II. There is a marked difference between our Lord's living after death, and every-

body else's living after death. When a man dies his *life-work is done*. He lives, but he cannot carry on his work. Moses dies on Mount Nebo; nay, Moses lives; but he cannot carry on his work, and lead Israel through into the Promised Land. The artist is visited by the angel of death with the half-finished picture on his easel. The artist lives, but he cannot perfect the picture. Charles Dickens died with his work 'Edwin Drood' half written, and the plot undisclosed. Sir Edgar Boehm was caught away from his studio with the part-moulded statue before him. They live, but they cannot touch and finish their incomplete work. If the dead are active in some unknown sphere, they are certainly dormant in relation to all their earth-work. For them death ends all enterprise. But it was not so with Christ. Death did not end all. His redemptive mission was not closed with his death. He resumed his earth-work. After death he took it up again. Call it a picture, Jesus worked again at the picture. Call it a book, Jesus wrote on at the book. Call it the redemption of man from sin. Call it the sanctification of men unto righteousness. Jesus, living after death, goes on redeeming, goes on sanctifying. And the full convincement of this fact is the real meaning and purpose of our Lord's resurrection. It was forty days of showing us that he was at work again; of helping us to realize what his work was, and what his work would be for ever. Our dead Lord is not only alive, he is active in relation to his life-work. "Alive for evermore;" his power is thus symbolized, "He has the keys of hell and of death."

III. The text declares the renewal of our Lord's commission. All power is given into the hands of Christ, but the only power Christ knows of or cares for is *spiritual* power. What the world calls "power" was to Christ illusion, mockery, play. To be Earth-King of humanity presented no attraction to him. The power given to Christ is the spiritual power, for which alone he cared. It is power on the souls that we *are*, and not mere power over the bodies that we *have*, and the relations that our bodies can sustain.

IV. How did Jesus come to have this spiritual power? It is easy to say that God gave it to him; but there must be some good reason why God gave it to him, and to no one but him. And it seems that God's giving was really this—sealing to him the power which Jesus himself had won; and putting Jesus in the place or office where his power could have free, full exercise. Christ's life on the earth was the moral discipline, the varied testing, the range of experiences, which prepared him for the trust of power to save which he now holds. Moral forces on moral beings are gained only through moral experiences. He who would save man must be man, must know man, must go at least a representative round of human experiences.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The threefold Name.* "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Sometimes the Name of the Lord Jesus only is mentioned in the formula. Here our Lord gives one Name with three sounds. Each separate Name giving a distinct relation of the one Being to men. Our Lord did not say, "in the names," but "in the Name." However we may present the threefoldness, we must keep it manifestly consistent with the Divine unity. "The union of the three names in one formula (as in the benediction of 2 Cor. xiii. 14) is in itself a proof at once of the distinctness and equality of the three Divine Persons." The apostles were to go forth, and *disciple* all nations, that is, bring them all into the full joy of sonship with God, into which they had themselves been brought; and they were to receive their pledge and seal their sonship by baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The significance of the threefold Name is seen in the light of this recovered sonship of men.

I. THE NAME OF THE FATHER, WHO CLAIMS THE SONSHIP. It is the relation to himself in which God set his creatures. They are his children. He designed to give them fatherly care; he expected from them sonlike obedience. Men are sons of God, and they ought to have lived and served like sons. Man's sin lay in refusing his sonship. But man's wilfulness could not affect God's claim. God still demands sonship of every child born in his image.

II. THE NAME OF THE SON, WHO SHOWS THE SONSHIP. In his own earth-life of trust and obedience. Men who, in their wilfulness, refused their sonship, came at last to lose their sense of sonship; they needed to have the very idea recovered; they

needed to see it as an actual realized fact, and that is the meaning of Christ's living through a Son's life here on earth.

III. THE NAME OF THE HOLY GHOST, WHO WORKS THE SONSHIP. For the sonship must not be a mere external fact, a formal ordering of the conduct and relations. True sonship is a cherished spirit, which finds expression in outward relations. And the Holy Ghost is God working within us, in the spheres of thought, of motive, and of feeling. He ever freshly inspired the spirit of sonship. One Name—God who asks response in sonship.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*The vision of the abiding Christ.* Christ ever with us must be, in some way, effectively apprehended by us, or it will be but vague, helpless sentiment. We must be able to *see* him who is thus "with us always." What, then, is seeing the living Christ?

I. THE WORLD'S WAY OF SEEING CHRIST. The "world" is our Lord's term for men who are outside his special renewal, who are left to the guidance of the senses and the mind in their "feeling after God, if haply they might find him." The man in Christ is the man to whom God is the inspiration and the life. The man of the world is the man who is satisfied to be his own inspiration and his own life. The "world" represents such a seeing of Christ as is possible to the senses; and even to the senses God "manifest in the flesh" has been shown. The "world," on its own terms, and in its own ways, has seen the Christ. He has been looked upon, handled, and listened to. He has made his impressions on lawyer and Pharisee, Sadducee and scribe, priest and princely governor, as well as on the common people. The senses could see Christ, but they could not see much. And so to the "world," Christ is really lost, gone away. "He is not," says the world; "for I cannot see him." And with this it thinks to settle the question. But exactly what we have to contend with is the world's incapacity to *see the unseen.* It is not best to have our Lord in the sphere of our senses. Once having had, for a while, the sense-manifestation of Christ, it is better, every way better, that the sense-limits should be removed. Want we want now, and what we have, is an "unlocalized, invisible, spiritually present, everywhere-present Saviour."

II. THE DISCIPLES' WAY OF SEEING CHRIST. For their good, their Master often puzzled those disciples. As they sat at table with him in the upper room, they were in a most bewildered state of mind. They could not get at their Lord's meaning. He was going away. He was coming again. He was going away in order that he might come again. Others would *not* be able to see him, but they would be able. Perhaps they lighted on this explanation. He means that the memory of his life and character, and the influence of his wise teachings, will abide with us, and that will be, in some sense, like having him present with us. And that would be a wonderful advance on the "world's" way of seeing Christ. And yet even that way is too limited. For those first disciples it put Christ into the limits of their personal knowledge and experience of him, and that could not have been his meaning when he said, "But ye see me." For us it limits the apprehension of Christ to the Gospel records. He would have us reach something altogether higher than that. *He himself* is "with us all the days."

III. CHRIST'S WAY OF SHOWING HIMSELF TO US. Jesus, in the upper room, talked much to his disciples about the Spirit. They could not at first think of their Lord as Spirit, because they had him with them in the flesh. But he tried to make them feel that this Spirit would do for them permanently just what he had done for them temporarily. He would comfort them, watch over them, teach them, sanctify them. And at last he ventured to say, "When your eyes are fully opened, you will see that the Comforter, who 'abides with you alway,' will really be *me* come back to you again." "I will not leave you comfortless: *I* will come to you." It is as if he had said, "I pass from the region of bodily senses. I shall not be only a mental memory. To the opened, trusting, loving heart I shall come, to be the spirit and life of his spirit; to be a new and nobler self in him." In their measure the great apostles seem to have caught their Lord's meaning. St. Peter, standing beside the sick Æneas, spoke as if he actually saw the Lord there present, and said, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." St. John seems to be always with Christ. You never see him but you seem to see also his Master. You never listen to a word from his lips, or read a word from his pen, but you feel that, behind the words, is the inspiration of the Master himself.

St. Paul seems to gain a twofold sight of the ever-present Christ. Sometimes he sees himself, as it were, *enspheared* in Christ: "I knew a man *in Christ*." Sometimes he realizes Christ as a mysterious *other One*, Divine One, who dwells within us. He speaks of "Christ in us," and says, with the most surprising spiritual insight, "I live: yet not I; Christ liveth in me." Christ is with us all the days, and we may know that he is; we may even *see* him.—R. T.

NOTE.—The Exposition in this volume, from ch. xv. to the end, is written by the Rev. W. J. Deane, M.A.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

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