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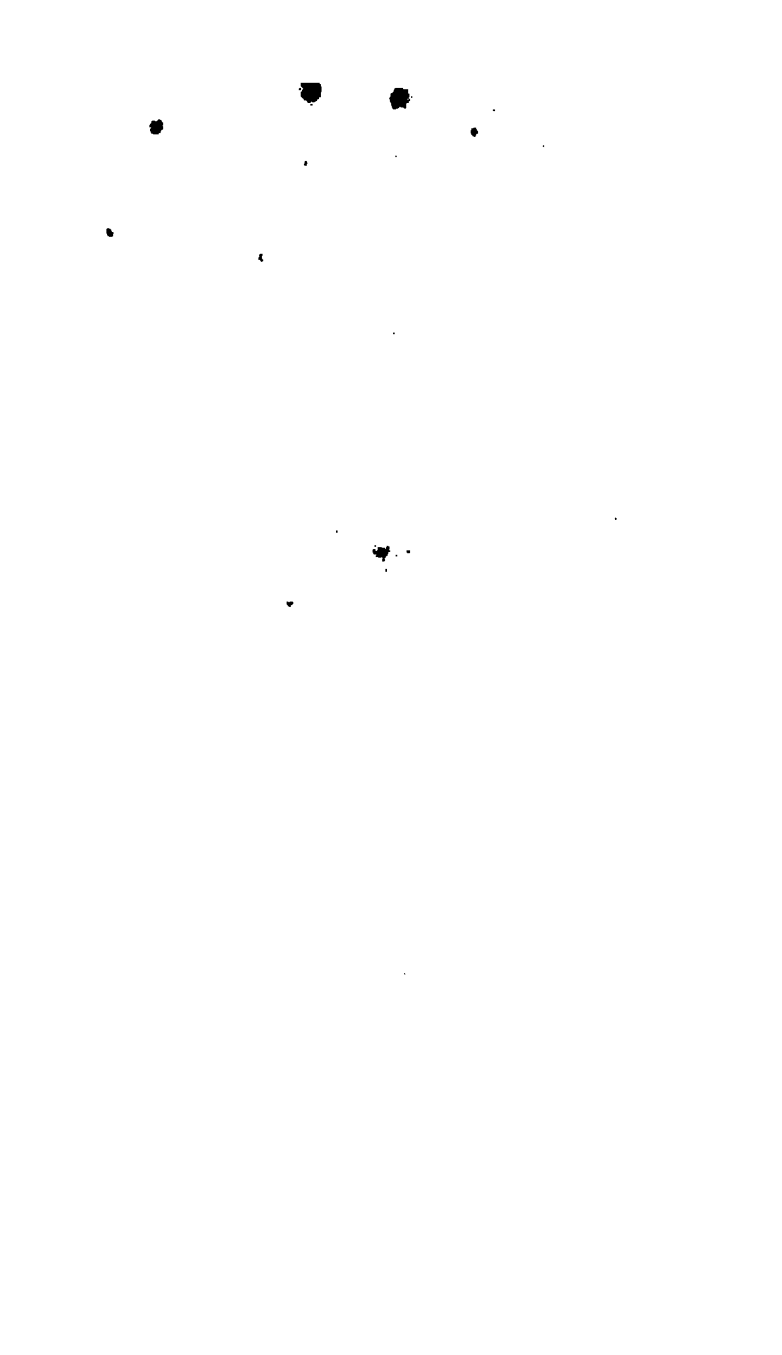
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A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON

The Four Holy Gospels,

INTENDED CHIEFLY
FOR DEVOTIONAL READING.

—
VOL. III.—PART II.

S T. L U K E.

CHAPTERS XIII.—XXIV.
—

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK
THEREIN; AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

JEREMIAH VI. 16.

GRANT, O LORD, THAT IN READING THY WORD, I MAY NEVER
PREFER MY OWN SENTIMENTS BEFORE THOSE OF THE CHURCH
IN THE PURELY ANCIENT TIMES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Bishop Wilson.

LONDON,
JOHN HENRY PARKER.

M DCCC LV.

101. d. 257.



PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 CHRIST preacheth repentance upon the punishment of the Galilæans, and others. 6 The fruitless fig-tree may not stand. 11 He healeth the crooked woman: 18 sheweth the powerful working of the Word in the hearts of His chosen, by the parable of the grain of Mustard seed, and of Leaven: 24 exhorteth to enter in at the strait gate, 31 and reproveth Herod and Jerusalem.

XIII. THERE were present at that season some that told Him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Where our Blessed LORD was, when these tidings were brought to Him, does not appear: neither is the event known to which allusion is here made. But it accords very well with what we elsewhere read of the merciless disposition of Pilate, that he should have butchered certain Galilæans, (whether followers of Judas or Galilee^a, or not,) while they were in the very act of doing sacrifice at Jerusalem; so that the hideous spectacle was presented

^a See Acts v. 37.—The massacre here recorded may also have been either the cause or the consequence of the quarrel recorded in St. Luke xxiii. 12.

of human blood mingling with that of "bulls and goats," and polluting the Holy Place.

Our SAVIOUR's reply to the persons who brought Him this report, discloses what was the secret thought of their heart. They had put their own interpretation on the occurrence, and made up their minds that it was God's just punishment for Sin^b.

- 2 And JESUS answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they 3 suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Our SAVIOUR does not say that the calamity which had overtaken these Galilæans was *not* a punishment for Sin. He "contests not about *that*; but rather seems to agree to them so far, and draws that warning out of it. He only corrects the misconceit it seems they were in, in thrusting it too far off from themselves, and throwing it too heavy upon them that sacrificed^c." Doubtless, the connexion between Sin and Suffering is of the closest kind; but it is not in Man's power to trace that connexion in every particular instance: nor can he scarcely ever pretend to do so, without presumption.—Our LORD proceeds,—

- 4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower

^b Consider St. John ix. 1 to 3: also Acts xxviii. 4.

^c Leighton.

in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

Rather, '*debtors* above all men,'—for the word is not the same as in ver. 2. The expression is a remarkable one, implying that men are *debtors* to fulfil God's Law. The word seems to have been used with reference to the two concluding verses of the foregoing chapter^d.

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, 5 ye shall all likewise perish.

The people whom our SAVIOUR was addressing had described to Him a calamity where *Man* was the immediate agent. He reminds them of another fatal event of recent occurrence, which they would have called *an accident*,—namely, the unexpected falling of a tower in Jerusalem, (somewhere near the Pool of Siloam^e, probably,) whereby eighteen lives were lost. 'Shall there be evil in the City,' (asks the Prophet,) 'and the LORD hath not done it?' Both events, alike, had proceeded from God. He asks them therefore if they supposed that *this* also was a proof of greater wickedness in those eighteen 'above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?' 'I tell you, Nay;' He repeats. And thereby He reproveth as many of our-

^d See St. Luke xii. 58, 59. Consider also the following places, —St. Matth. vi. 12: xviii. 23, 24. St. Luke vii. 21.

^e Nehem. iii. 15. St. John ix. 7. 11. Compare Ia. viii. 6.

^f Amos iii. 6.

selves as are guilty of hasty judgments concerning our neighbours, and rashly presume to interpret the misfortunes which befall others.

Leighton well says,—“Be it a judgment: be the persons great sinners in a sinful course: yet they are not always the greatest of all because they suffer, and others escape. God is to be adored, who useth His own freedom in *this*,—He does injustice to none, yet chooses them whom He will make examples of His justice, and whom He will let pass; and gives not account of this to any. Some, less wicked, have been made examples to them who were much more wicked than they. Why am not *I* made an example to others, as well as so many have been made examples to *me*? Now, let me fall down at His feet, and beg of Him that as He hath not made me an example of justice all this while, He may now make me an example of mercy and free grace to all that shall look on me.”

And in this beautiful spirit, doubtless, Holy Scripture should always be read,—namely, as having a direct *personal* teaching: thus shall we escape the censure which our LORD in this very place bestows on the disposition which prefers barren speculation about Divine things to the living practice of them^s. And yet the historical and national bearing of our SAVIOUR’S words, in this and the 5th verse, is very striking. Except the Jews repented, He here prophesies to them

^s The Reader is referred to the note on St. Luke xiii. 23:

that they should all perish,—(not, ‘*likewise*,’ in the common sense of the word, but,)—‘*in like manner*.’ And so it signally came to pass; for Josephus relates that, at the Destruction of Jerusalem, multitudes of the inhabitants were crushed beneath its ruins; while numbers were slain in the very act of sacrificing within the Temple.

‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’ *Repentance* then, was the end of the preaching of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls^h: and on this text, doubtless, should we ever preach not only to others, but to ourselves. For, as pious Leighton reminds us, “the far more dismal perishing of unrepenting sinners, is *that* death which lies unseen on the other side of the death which we see and are so afraid to look on. Oh, saw we the other, this would appear nothing: *that* would be the only terrible thing. And how terrible soever, it is the unfailing attendant on impenitence. These, God hath linked together; and no creature can sever them,—continuance in sin, and perishing; Repentance and Life. It is Faith indeed that lays hold on our pardon, and life in CHRIST, and by that we are justified and saved; yet, so as this is still true, that there is no *Life* without *Repentance*.”

The connexion of the parable which follows with what goes before, is of the closest kind. ‘All’ should perish like those Galilæans, and like these

^h Consider the following places: St. Matth. iv. 17: ix. 13. St. Mark i. 16.

eighteen, except they repented. To what then were they indebted for their actual preservation? To nothing but the long-suffering patience of ALMIGHTY GOD. This is accordingly set forth in the parable of 'the barren fig-tree;' which enforces the same doctrine of Repentance, upon the motive of God's Forbearance.

- 6 He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig-tree planted in His Vineyard; and He came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

Elsewhere, 'the Vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the House of Israel¹;' but it is not so here. Among the nations of the earth, (the 'Vineyard' here spoken of,) ALMIGHTY GOD, (the 'certain man' in the parable,) had the Jewish people, for 'His pleasant plant,'—or, as it is here said, His 'fig-tree.' The fruit of good works, He had come seeking thereon, for many years, in vain¹. He had found none. Whereupon, He requires of 'the Dresser of His Vineyard,' that this unprofitable tree be at once removed. As it follows:

- 7 Then said He unto the Dresser of His Vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

Rather, 'Why doth it *even*,'—'Why doth it *so*

¹ Is. v. 7.

² Consider Is. v. 1 to 4: and the notes on St. Matth. vii. 16, &c.

much as cumber the ground? But, in the original, something more than 'cumber' is implied. Gregory the Great brings out the meaning very well when he remarks that wherever the unfruitful man is placed, 'he there denies to another the opportunity of working.'

What is even better worth our notice, — We have here set before us a picture of God's merciful manner of dealing with His creatures. For three years had the owner of this Vineyard come seeking fruit of a barren tree which grew within it. 'The axe is laid to the root of the tree^k,' in warning, before the fatal blow is suffered to fall. For, (as an ancient writer remarks,) God does not bring in punishment silently or secretly; but, by His threatenings, first proclaims them to be at hand,—thus inviting the sinner to repentance^l. "Let us not then strike suddenly," (says another,) "but overcome by gentleness; lest we cut down the fig-tree still able to bear fruit, which the care of a skilful dresser will perhaps restore[§]."

Next, the Intercession of the Eternal SON is set before us,—pleading with THE FATHER in behalf of the sinful race. Not however, (be it observed,) in order that they may be spared in their barrenness, does He plead: but that time may be allowed them wherein to become fruitful.

^k St. Matth. iii. 10,—where see the note.

^l Pseudo-Basil. Consider Gen. vi. 3: xviii. 24, &c.

§ Gregory of Nazianzum.

8 And He answering said unto Him, LORD,
let it alone this year also, till I shall dig
9 about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit,
well: and if not, *then* after that Thou shalt
cut it down.

And this is the end of the Parable. Every means and appliance was to be used;—the loosening of the soil in which the tree grew,—and a supply of that which is found to be most congenial to the life of plants, and has the effect of rendering them productive. God is found to have thus dealt with His people,—God thus deals now with us. He offers large measures of His Grace,—He multiplies opportunities. What is all the remainder of the Gospel, from this place onward, but the History of One who had said in behalf of the Jewish nation,—‘LORD, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it?’ The object of His preaching, His parables, and His miracles, was to break the stubborn soil;—His precious blood-shedding was intended to bring forth a plenteous Harvest.

This then, is at once a Prophecy and a Parable,—a Prophecy, which found *typical* fulfilment in the cursing of the barren fig-tree^m; *actual* fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem, and final overthrow of the Jewish nation.

The simplest and most obvious interpretation of the Parable seems the best. Since for three years

^m St. Matth. xxi. 18, 19, or St. Mark xi. 12 to 14, 20, 21.

GOD came seeking fruit of His chosen people, and found none,—it is reasonable to take the ‘three years’ of the parable *literally*: especially since the third year of our LORD’s Ministry had also just come to a close. ‘The Dresser of His Vineyard,’ who pleads for prolonged patience and mercy, (saying ‘Let it alone this year also!’) as already observed, is CHRIST Himself,—who was cut off in the midst of the fourth year of His Ministry.

But the Parable has clearly a personal applicationⁿ, as well as a national one. Year after year, to lead an unprofitable life; to resist God’s visitations ‘in boyhood, in manhood, in old age*,’—putting forth much leafy promise, but producing no fruit,—what is this but to stand like a barren fig-tree in the LORD’s Vineyard? such an one does more than ‘cumber the ground.’ His presence does actual mischief. In the meantime, He who ‘ever liveth to make intercession^o’ is still the merciful Advocate, who pleads for one more year of grace; and during that year, spares no pains to make the man fruitful. The parallel here in the case of individuals is obvious. Pharaoh, Balaam, Saul, Herod, Judas,—no less than the Old World, Sodom, Nineveh, Jerusalem,—every individual, however obdurate, has his warnings, and his prolonged season of probation; during which, the alternative is still admitted as possible,—“*If he bear fruit*” . . . for the door of repentance is left open to all.

ⁿ Consider St. Matth. iii. 10.

^o Theophylact.

^{*} Heb. vii. 25.

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

Consider the places referred to at foot ^p.

11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up *herself*.

She therefore aptly represented the condition of those who have become so bowed down by sin or sorrow that they look not up to Heaven, but fix all their grovelling regards on Earth. St. Luke says that she 'had a spirit of infirmity.' What this means we should not have known, but for our LORD'S express statement that she was one whom *Satan had bound*.

12 And when JESUS saw her, He called *her to Him*, and said unto her, Woman, thou art
13 loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid *His Hands* on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

This then seems to have been one of those Miracles of healing which were wrought without solicitation. But the very presence of such a sufferer, in the Synagogue, was a prayer. It may even be suspected, from the words of the Ruler which follow, that this afflicted creature had 'come' purposely 'to be healed.'

^p St. Luke iv. 16. St. Matth. iv. 23: xiii. 54. St. Mark i. 21, St. John vi. 59: iii. 20, &c.

Our SAVIOUR seems to have proclaimed her release from captivity, first; and then to have removed the physical consequences of the chain by which she had been so long held. It does not appear that He spoke, and laid His Divine Hands upon her, at one and the same time.

And the Ruler of the synagogue answered ¹⁴ with indignation, because that JESUS had healed on the sabbath day; and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

He addresses *the people*,—not *CHRIST*. Hypocrite as he was, the Ruler did not dare to look the Holy One in the face while he brought forward a complaint which, though spoken to *them*, was evidently levelled against *Him*. “He preferred that this woman should, like a beast, look upon the earth, rather than that *CHRIST* should be magnified*.”

The LORD then answered him, and said, ¹⁵ *Thou* hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or *his* ass from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering? and ought not this woman, being a daughter ¹⁶ of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

* Cyril.

Our SAVIOUR, though hitherto carefully shunned by the other, begins by addressing *him*. But after one withering word, He turns to the people, and makes them the umpires between Himself and the Ruler of the Synagogue. Every word of His Discourse is here emphatic. If any of *you*, (He says,) are at liberty on the sabbath day to loose certain of the brute Creation, as ox or ass which yourselves had bound, and to lead these away to watering, an act requiring time and trouble,—ought not this *woman*, being not only a Creature made in the image of God, but also one who enjoys that proudest of titles ‘*a daughter of Abraham*’¹—ought not *she*, who has been bound by *the Enemy of Man*, not for a few hours only, but for *eighteen years*,—ought not *she* to enjoy the benefit of release which has been effected by a word from these Lips and a touch of these Hands in a moment of Time?

Observe how plainly it is here stated that this woman’s infirmity was *the work of Satan*,—who kept her bound, as a prisoner. The same thing is implied of diseases generally, in many other places,—as in St. Matthew x. 1, Acts x. 38, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 1 St. John iii. 8: and it may be worth pointing out that the words translated ‘recovery of sight to the blind,’ (in St. Luke iv. 18,) are, in the Hebrew, ‘opening the prison *to them that are bound*.’ Take notice that our SAVIOUR had ‘first

¹ St. Matth. iii. 9: St. Luke xix. 9: St. John viii. 35, 39: Acts xiii. 26.

² Isa. lxi. 2.

bound the strong man ;' and now was He 'spoiling his house^s.'

And when He had said these things, all 17
His adversaries were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

From which it is found that the Ruler of the Synagogue had not been alone in his wickedness ; but, (like Judas Iscariot, when he complained of the waste of the precious ointment^t;) had carried others along with him, in his hypocrisy.

The foregoing miracle should be compared with that performed on the withered hand, in St. Matthew xii. 9 to 13,—as well as with that on the dropsy, in St. Luke xiv. 2 to 6. All three miracles were wrought on the Sabbath day ; but in this instance, and that which St. Matthew records, the cure was effected in the Synagogue itself.

Our LORD proceeds to shew 'the powerful working of the Word in the hearts of His chosen, by the Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed, and of Leaven^u.'

Then said He, Unto what is the Kingdom 18
of God like ? and whereunto shall I resemble it ? It is like a grain of mustard seed, 19
which a Man took, and cast into His gar-

^s St. Matth. xii. 29. Consider Isaiah xlix. 24 to 26.

^t St. John xii. 3 to 6. Compared with St. Matth. xxvi. 8, &c.

^u See the heading of the Chapter.

den ; and it grew, and waxed a great tree ; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

This parable recurs in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark,—where it has been already so fully considered in the notes, that it shall suffice on the present occasion to refer the reader thither^x. But it is worthy of remark that the grain of mustard seed which, according to St. Matthew ‘ a Man took and sowed in His Field,’ the same Man *here* is said to have cast into ‘ His Garden :’ for who can fail to call to mind that of CHRIST Himself it is recorded that ‘ in the place where He was crucified there was a Garden, and in the Garden a new Sepulchre :’ and that ‘ *there laid they JESUS^y ?*’ Was not *this* the true germ of that Kingdom which, from a very small beginning, has become so supremely great ? “ Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,” (said He of Himself,) “ it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit^z.” There is nothing new in this remark. Gregory the Great made it almost 1300 years ago ; and Ambrose 200 years before him.

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I
21 liken the Kingdom of God ? It is like leaven,
which a woman took and hid in three mea-
sures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

^x See St. Matth. xiii. 31 to 32, and St. Mark iv. 30 to 32.

^y St. John xix. 41, 42.

^z St. John xii. 24. Consider 1 Cor. xv. 35 to 44.

A parable which is also a prophecy ! It is here foretold that, in the end, the Religion of CHRIST shall prevail over all obstacles ; imparting to all Society its own ennobling nature, and conforming whatever it encounters, to itself.—And what is true of nations, is here true of individuals also. “The Gospel,” (says Hammond,) “has such a secret invisible influence on the hearts of men,—to change them and affect them, and all the actions that flow from them,—that it is fitly resembled to Leaven ; so mixed thoroughly with the whole, that although it appeareth not in any part visibly, yet every part hath a tincture from it.”

The discovery is surely a very interesting one that these two Parables, here recorded together, were delivered by our Blessed LORD in the same order, and almost in the same words, more than a year before, to the multitudes assembled on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. For the knowledge of this fact, we are indebted to the first of the four Gospels. The present Parable has been already met with in St. Matthew xiii. 33,—whither the reader is referred for several remarks upon it.

And He went through the cities and vil- 22
lages, teaching, and journeying towards Je-
rusalem. Then said one unto Him, Lord, 23
are there few that be saved ?

Who may this ‘one’ have been ? Was it one of the Apostles ? And what led him to ask the question ? Did it grow naturally out of some un-

recorded discourse which our LORD had been delivering? It is impossible to offer more than a conjecture in reply to these inquiries. But it is reasonable to suspect that it was one of the Twelve,—such an one as St. Peter; for observe, our LORD was on a journey; and the question having been put by *one*, the answer is made to *several*.

On one occasion, our SAVIOUR had said, ‘Many are called, but few are chosen^c :’ and on another,—‘Few there be that find’ the straight gate and narrow way ‘that leadeth unto Life^d.’ But He says not so on the present occasion :—

24 And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate :

Consider on how many occasions our SAVIOUR answered in this manner, questions of the kind here recorded,—if *that* may be called answering, which does not give the information desired, and which is not addressed to the person who asked the question. Inquiries purely speculative, and which are simply the growth of carnal curiosity, are always discouraged : and the attention is guided instead to the *practice* of piety and virtue^e.

Our LORD here uses a stronger word than ‘strive.’ ‘*Agonize*,’ He says^f,—a term indicative of the greatness of the effort, (more literally, of *the struggle*,) required. Blessed be God however,

^c St. Matth. xxii. 14.

^d St. Matth. vii. 14.

^e See the latter part of the note on St. Matth. vii. 5. See also St. Luke x. 29, 36 : xii. 42 : Acts i. 7, &c.

^f St. Paul uses the same word,—Col. i. 29.

that this very expression, denoting the earnestness required in those who would obtain an entrance into Life, shews also that Salvation is within the reach of *all*. . . 'The strait gate' recalls the solemn doctrine concerning the avenues to Life and Destruction, respectively, which are discoursed of in the Sermon on the Mount^g.

It is piously remarked by Leighton,—“What bustle is there made, by sea and land, for scraps of this earth; and Heaven alone is so cheap in our eyes, as if it were worth no diligence, scarce even a serious thought! Surely, either Heaven is but a fancy, or the world is mad.” . . . For this, then, men must toil,—

for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

f Take notice that their 'seeking' will be like that of the foolish Virgins,—of the Rich man in torments,—of Esau, when it was too late, 'earnestly seeking' that blessing^h which he had before, by his own deliberate act, forfeited.

When once the Master of the House is ²⁵ risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, LORD, LORD, open unto us;

^g St. Matth. vii. 13, 14,—where see the notes. Consider St. John x. 9.

^h Hebrews xii. 17. Observe, it was '*the blessing*' which he 'sought,'—not '*place of repentance.*'

and He shall answer and say unto you, I
 26 know you not whence ye are: then shall ye
 begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in
 Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our
 27 streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know
 you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all
ye workers of iniquity.

This is a terrible prophecy, truly; and its most alarming feature seems to be the hint conveyed of the *self-delusion* in which some men will be found to have lived—and diedⁱ. Not only will they plead passionately for admission into that blissful abode whither the Saints will have already entered^k, but they will remonstrate with ‘the Master of the House,’ and remind Him of all their past privileges,—forgetting that these have but increased the measure of their guilt!

‘We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence,’ they will say,—(“as the Israelites who partook of the sacrifices; or, as they with whom CHRIST lived; or, as they who are admitted to His Sacraments: for in all these cases is *that* fulfilled which was declared of the Seventy Elders,—namely, that ‘they saw God, and did eat and drink^l;’”) but they will be reminded that ‘he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself^m.’ . . . ‘Thou hast taught

ⁱ See the latter part of the note on St. Matth. vii. 23.

^k Consider St. Matth. xxv. 10.

^l Williams, quoting Exod. xxiv. 11.

^m 1 Cor. xi. 29.

in our streets,' they will say: but they will be reminded that 'not *the hearers* of the law are just before God, but *the doers* of the law shall be justified^a.' As it is written,—'Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves^o.' . . . No splendour of outward advantages,—neither the daily walk to God's House, nor Sacraments received, nor Sermons listened to,—will be of any avail in and by themselves.

Take notice that, in contrast with the scene here described,—('the door' hopelessly closed,—'the Master of the House' deaf to entreaty,—) concerning our present Day of Grace it is more than once said,—'Knock, and *it shall be opened* unto you.' Nay more,—CHRIST saith of Himself, 'Behold *I stand* at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him^p.' He now invites us freely to receive Himself,—who will then refuse to receive *us*.

On those solemn words of denial,—'*I know ye not* whence ye are,' see the note on St. Matth. xxv. 12. The resemblance of the entire passage to two verses in 'the Sermon on the Mount^q,' is very striking. Scarcely less remarkable are the points of difference. *There*, the warning seemed chiefly addressed to the teachers of religion,—*here*, to the taught.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of 28

^a Rom. ii. 13.

^o St. James i. 22.

^p Rev. iii. 20.

^q St. Matth. vii. 22, 23. Consider also ver. 21.

teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.
 29 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.

These remarkable expressions should be compared with the language which our LORD is found to have used after the healing of the Centurion's servant, in St. Matthew viii. 11, 12,—where the notes may be referred to^r. The admission of the Gentiles to the Kingdom is hereby clearly foretold. Observe the mysterious hint here conveyed that it will be an aggravation of the misery of those whom God finally rejects, *to behold* others in the enjoyment of the bliss from which they will be themselves excluded^s. And notice, by the way, the Love which declares, (in ver. 28 and elsewhere,) the acceptance of *many*; but has no where set on record the final rejection of more than *one*^t.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

This saying, which occurs three times in the Gospel, has been already made the subject of remark in a long note on St. Matthew xix. 30,—to which the reader is referred.

^r See also the notes on St. Luke xiv. 15.

^s Compare St. Luke xvi. 23.

^t St. Matth. xxvi. 24.

The same day there came certain of the 31 Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get Thee out, and depart hence : for Herod will kill Thee.

Rather, '*wishes,*' '*desires* to kill Thee.' This must have happened somewhere in Galilee, or in the district east of the Jordan, called Peræa, for Herod's dominion extended no further. That there were many of the sect of the Pharisees in that region, we know from chap. v. 17.

It has been thought that the crafty king, ('that fox,' as our LORD styles him in the next verse,) himself sent these messengers to our SAVIOUR in order to induce Him to withdraw from a neighbourhood where His presence must perforce have been a source of disquiet to the man who had murdered the Baptist, and who was now living in open adultery with his brother's wife. For this purpose, though himself a Sadducee^u, Herod is thought to have availed himself of the services of some of the opposite sect, in order to convey to our LORD a feigned tale of the danger that awaited Him, if He remained where He was.

But others have supposed, with perhaps more of reason, that the whole was a mere device of the Pharisees to procure our LORD's prompt withdrawal towards Jerusalem,—where snares were laid against His Life^x; and that when He said in reply, 'Tell *this* fox^y,' he aimed his message,

^u See the note on St. Mark viii. 19.

^x St. John vii. 25.

^y So in the original.

in reality, as much at the crafty speaker, as at the King.

32 And He said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.

There is some difficulty here ; but perhaps the obvious sense of the passage, as it stands in our translation, is the true one. Our LORD gives His pretended friends to understand that the duration of His Ministry is fixed, and settled,—and that the season of His Death, in like manner, is determined in God's deep counsels ; not to be hastened or delayed by any act on the part either of Herod or of themselves. The period of His Ministry is noticed, after the Hebrew method,—as for 'to-day and to-morrow^a:' on 'the third day,' He will 'be perfected,'—that is, will finish His course^a, and fulfil His work^b, and receive His complete reward. *Three* days are thus specified,—perhaps in order to intimate a definite predetermined period. 'But our LORD's answer is doubtless for our instruction under similar circumstances ; teaching us that times and seasons are with God. It is ours to do our duty, and leave the event with Him^c.' He proceeds,—

^a Compare Hos. vi. 2. Lonsdale and Hale supply the following valuable references to the margin of the Bible:—Gen. xxxi. 2. Exod. iv. 10. Deut. xix. 6. Josh. iii. 4. 1 Sam. xix. 7. 1 Chron. xi. 2.

^a Compare Phil. iii. 12. Also Acts xx. 24.

^b See St. John iv. 34 : v. 36 : xvii. 4.

^c Williams.

Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to- 33
morrow, and the *day* following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

That is, “ ‘ Nevertheless I must indeed ‘ *depart home,*’ as ye counsel Me, while the time appointed for My Ministry— [‘ to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following’—] continues, and go on My way to Jerusalem; for that City is the place where the prophets of God must perish.’ The word here translated ‘ walk,’ is the same with that translated ‘ depart,’ in ver. 31^d.” Away from Jerusalem, (our SAVIOUR says,) is no danger. *There* is the seat of iniquity. All type and prophecy requires that I, the great Prophet, should suffer where all My goodly fellowship of Prophets have suffered before Me^e. . . . The pathetic lamentation which follows, grows naturally out of our LORD’S recent mention of the City.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the 34
prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you 35
desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me, until *the time* come when

^d Bp. Lonsdale and Archd. Hale.

^e Consider St. Luke ix. 51.

ye shall say, Blessed *is* He that cometh in the Name of the LORD.

The self-same words are heard from our LORD's lips on a quite different occasion,—namely, some months later, when He was crossing the threshold of the Temple, and leaving it for the last time. He repeats the name of the city *twice*, to denote earnestness and affection^f. So much has been already offered concerning this affecting address, that it shall suffice to refer the reader to the notes on St. Matthew xxiii. 37 to 39. It has been thought indeed, by some of the very greatest writers, ancient as well as modern, that our Lord so spoke on only one occasion; and that St. Luke here introduces the address out of its proper place. Surely, an improbable, not to say a monstrous, supposition!

The Prayer.

O GOD, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; We humbly beseech Thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

^f So Chrysostom. Consider St. Luke x. 41, and the note there.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

2 CHRIST *healeth the dropsy on the sabbath*: 7 *teacheth humility*: 12 *to feast the poor*: 15 *under the parable of the Great Supper, sheweth how worldly minded men, who contemn the Word of GOD, shall be shut out of Heaven.* 25 *Those who will be His Disciples, to bear their cross must make their accounts aforehand, lest with shame they revolt from Him afterward,* 34 *and become altogether unprofitable, like salt that hath lost his savour.*

It will be perceived that in this part of the Gospel the hostility of the Pharisees comes prominently before us. Their crafty address was noticed at the close of chap. xiii.^a: Pharisees are found hanging about our SAVIOUR'S footsteps in the next chapter^b: and they are found to be still among His hearers, when He delivers the parable of 'the Unjust Steward,' in chap. xvi.^c Here, a Pharisee of note, (he seems to have been 'a Ruler',) invites the Holy One to a Feast^d,—and many of the same hostile sect are present^e. All this should be noticed, for a reason which will be found suggested below, in the note on ver. 7.

^a See St. Luke xiii. 31.

^b See St. Luke xv. 2.

^c See St. Luke xvi. 14.

^d See ver. 12, below.

^e See ver. 3, below.

We are reminded of those other occasions when our LORD was entertained by a Pharisee^f, and when the motive on the part of the host was anything but a desire to shew hospitality. What, therefore, but words of reproof are to be expected from the lips of our great Example?

XIV. AND it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they 2 watched Him. And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy.

That is, 'the Lawyers and Pharisees'—(mentioned in ver. 3)—'watched Him', as they are related to have done on a former occasion^g, to see whether He would heal this person on the Sabbath day. Indeed, our Blessed LORD, on more than one occasion had made choice of the Sabbath for performing His works of Mercy^h: and this was done in order to shew the true meaning of the Divine Institution, and to teach men that certain works are a fulfilment, not a violation, of the Law. From works of Love, God never rests;

^f See St. Luke vii. 36, 39: xi. 37, and all that follows.

^g St. Luke vi. 7. See also the note on St. Mark iii. 2.

^h Thus, in St. Mark i. 21 to 26, we have the casting out of an unclean spirit:—in St. Matth. xii. 9 to 13, compared with St. Luke vi. 6 to 11, the healing of the withered hand:—in St. Luke xiii. 10 to 17, the woman with a spirit of infirmity: and all these occurred in the synagogue itself. The gift of sight to the man born blind, (St. John ix. 14,) and the present miracle performed on one who had the dropsy, also took place on the Sabbath.

but 'worketh hitherto', as our SAVIOUR Himself declaresⁱ. The miracle which follows seems to have happened the instant He entered 'the House of one of the chief Pharisees:' for we saw in ver. 1, that 'it came to pass as He went into the House.' It is reasonable to believe that the dropsical man spoken of as standing 'before' CHRIST, had so stationed himself in faith^l. But the supposition is no less probable that it was the result of malicious contrivance on the part of our LORD'S hypocritical entertainer, or some of his guests, that one so urgently in need of the Great Physician's help was present on this occasion at all.—Let it be remembered that Dropsy was one of the diseases accounted incurable. .

And JESUS answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day ?

He answered to their wicked thoughts,—as on so many other occasions^k. Once before, in the synagogue, when 'there was a man' present 'which had his hand withered,' 'they' had 'asked Him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse Him!.' The same question they now hear addressed to themselves.

And they held their peace. And He took *him*, and healed him, and let him go ;

ⁱ St. John v. 17.
xiii. 13.

^j Compare what was said on chap.

^k For example, St. Luke vi. 8.

^l St. Matth. xii. 10.

‘*Took hold of him,*’ rather: that is to say, CHRIST laid His Almighty Hands upon the afflicted man, and so healed him,—‘letting him go,’ or rather ‘*dismissing him,*’ afterwards; by which expression, it is implied that He took leave of the man with a solemn form of blessing.—Our attention is called from the object of CHRIST’s mercy to the Pharisees whom He had just put to silence:

5 and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?

Again He ‘*answers them,*’ although they have ‘*held their peace.*’ That is because their minds were full of fierce rebellious thoughts; and *thoughts* are *words* in the ears of Him with whom we have to do^m.

It is impossible to forget that, in the former chapter, we met with an instance very closely resembling the present,—(the healing, namely, of ‘the crooked womanⁿ,’)—as well in respect of the general course of the narrative, as of the reasoning whereby our LORD defended His gracious act. On both occasions, a severe bodily ailment was remedied, and both cures were wrought upon a Sunday. Ox and ass on both occasions supplied the Divine Speaker with an argument; and on

^m The ancient Prayer at the beginning of our Communion Service runs very strikingly in the original:—‘unto whom all hearts be open, all desires *speak.*’ ⁿ See the heading of chap. xiii.

both occasions His enemies were confounded and put to silence. The form of argument is moreover the same,—contrasting the worth of the creatures; the severity of their respective misfortunes; and the amount of labour involved by the effort to relieve them. But the most striking parallel is supplied by the cure of the withered hand in the synagogue, to which allusion has already been made; for there our LORD reasoned exactly as here, in the Pharisee's house,—“What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful for a man to do well on the Sabbath day.”

And they could not answer Him again to these things.

The remark may be worth the making that the recorded discourses of our LORD often meet with the issue here described: that is, they have the effect of putting His enemies to silence. This deserves attention; because it must be allowed that the arguments of the Divine Speaker are often unexpected and extraordinary; while they may be sometimes thought even to admit of refutation, or at least to afford to an adversary some loophole for escape. The inference to be gathered from the statement, (in this or any other place,)

* St. Matt. xii. 11, 12,—where see the notes. The Commentary on St. Mark iii. 1 to 5 may be also consulted with advantage.

that the men whom he addressed 'could not answer Him again to these things,'—is, however, obvious. We perceive that His arguments were felt *to be* unanswerable,—or they would have been answered^p: for He is represented as engaged in controversy with the most learned of the nation.

It will be found therefore that the recorded discourses of our SAVIOUR possess an extraordinary interest and value, beyond what might at first be suspected. Perhaps, had the blessed Speaker been addressing the men of our own day, He would have sometimes reasoned differently. It may, at least, be suspected that He would have silenced *us* with arguments the force of which we should have more readily felt and admitted. But He was reasoning with the learned Jewish Doctors. Much of the traditional meaning of Holy Scripture, they certainly retained; and He was therefore able to meet them on common ground,—appeal to their own familiar teaching,—adopt their own method,—and slay them with their own weapons. Can we doubt moreover that those weapons, that method, and that teaching, as often as *He* condescended to employ them, were divine? Thus, it may well be suspected that the Law contained in Exod. xxiii. 5, and Deut. xxii. 4, was here alluded to by our LORD; and that the spiritual intention of that precept was present to the mind of all who heard. 'Doth God take care for oxen?' (as the great Apostle exclaims;) 'or saith He [not]

^p See the note on St. Matthew xxii. 46.

it altogether for our own sakes? *For our sakes, no doubt, this is written*⁹.

Our LORD may now be supposed to have reached the scene of the entertainment. It follows:—

And He put forth a Parable to those⁷ which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms ;

In some sense, then, what follows is *a parable*. The words have a clear and obvious meaning, doubtless ; but there lies beneath them a deeper lesson ; and in order to draw attention to this, the Evangelist calls our LORD's discourse ' a parable.' .

It is evident, by the way, that the present entertainment was no ordinary meal,—for here were many guests assembled,—who had all been bidden, (that is, formally 'invited,')—and they appear to have been persons of importance ; for we find that there was some rivalry among them for the chief places at table. Doubtless, if our LORD's remarks which follow appear to us unduly harsh or unseasonable, it is a proof that we are utterly mistaken in our conception of the circumstances and the scene. The Reader is referred to some remarks which were offered at the commencement of the present chapter ; where it was suggested that the hostility of all assembled, to the Divine Being who had been invited to partake of the festivity, affords a clue to the severity of His language. We seem to hear One who is Himself sitting in the

⁹ 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10.

lowest room,—that is, who reclines on the couch furthest removed from the place of honour,—

8 saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding,

Mark, by the way, the nature of the ‘parable’ which our LORD is delivering. The present is no wedding-entertainment. Why then this allusion to a wedding? Doubtless to imply that He is covertly speaking of the ‘marriage’ which ‘a certain King made for His SON’,—‘the Marriage of the Lamb^s.’ At this wedding then,—

sit not down in the highest room: lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden
9 of him: and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the
10 lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

Our LORD’s words do more than recal,—they are even a quotation from the Book of Proverbs: “Put not forth thyself in the presence of the King, and stand not in the place of great men; for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up

^r St. Matth. xxii. 2.

^s Rev. xix. 9.

hither, than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of the Prince whom thine eyes have seen^t." 'This shews that the proverbial teaching of the Old Testament, in like manner with that of the New, contains parables of Evangelical Wisdom, wherein more is intended than meets the outward ear^u.'

But what is the present Parable? The Christian Church is the 'wedding,' and the guests are we. All are bidden who are Christians. How then do we behave? Do we covet high places for ourselves? do we desire to take precedence of our fellow-men,—those guests who sit down with us in God's visible Kingdom, here on earth,—presuming upon our wealth or influence, birth or station? If so, we have here our warning. At the end of the World, the Bridegroom will come in to see the guests^v, and then verily will it be found that 'there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last^v.' It will no longer be possible for the base man to lord it over his humbler brother, nor for the meek man, overlooked, to occupy the lowest seat. The standard of honour and merit will be entirely changed the instant the Bridegroom enters. 'He that bade thee and him' alike, will feel Himself aggrieved if ambition and self-conceit have at all been the cause why the guests are so misplaced at His Table. He will come to the less honourable who occupies

^t Prov. xxv. 6, 7.

^u St. Matth. xxii. 11.

^v Williams.

^v St. Luke xiii. 30.

the higher seat, and bringing forward the virtuous brother of low degree, will say to the former, 'give this man place.' Shame will be the portion of him who shall then begin to occupy, as his abiding portion^a, the lowest room: just as *he* will enjoy great honour, to whom, in the presence of admiring men and angels, those blessed words shall be spoken, 'Friend, go up higher!' . . . This will be the man who in his lifetime chose CHRIST for his pattern, and was content daily to tread in the footsteps of the Crucified. These are the meek ones of the earth. They are found in every class of society, in every calling, doubtless; in the most exalted, as well as in the very humblest of all: yet surely if we were to go in search of such, we should seek them among the despised and afflicted, —among the very poor!

Consider how, both in the Old and New Testaments, it is intimated that *Shame* will befall the wicked in the Day of Judgment^a,—shame, at detection and exposure before all. In the Book of Proverbs, a striking hint is given that it will be a terrible thing in that hour 'to be put lower in the presence of THE PRINCE, *whom their eyes have seen*^b.' Here, the wonder and indignation of our fellow-men is the thing appealed to. And 'the great Proverb of the Gospel^c' follows:—

11. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be

^a That is the meaning of 'taking the lowest room,' in ver. 9.

^b Dan. xii. 2.

^c Prov. xxv. 7: and see Job xlii. 5.

^d Williams.

ased ; and he that humbleth himself shall
be exalted.

Enough has been offered concerning these memorable words in other parts of the Commentary, which it must suffice to refer the Reader^d.

Then said He also to him that bade Him, 12
When thou makest a dinner or a supper,
call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither
thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours ; lest
they also bid thee again, and a recompence
be made thee.

That which is so often sought after, is therefore the very thing we are taught to shun and avoid. Consider St. Luke vi. 32 to 35. It can scarcely be needful to point out that our LORD does not here *prohibit* hospitality to 'rich neighbours ;' but, (according to His well-known method on other occasions^e,) He declares who are *rather* to be entertained. Hospitality towards 'friends, brethren,' and the like, is good ; it is even one of the graces of the Gospel^f. Yet does our SAVIOUR shew unto us 'a more excellent way:' as it follows,—

But when thou makest a feast, call the poor,
the maimed, the lame, the blind : and 14
thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot re-

^d See the note on the latter part of St. Luke xviii. 14 : also on St. Matth. xxiii. 12.

^e See the note on St. Luke x. 20, and the place there referred to.

^f See Rom. xii. 13. Heb. xvii. 2. 1 St. Pet. iv. 9.

compense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the Resurrection of the just.

The needy, and halt, and lame, and blind, have not the means to make thee any return; but thou shalt be blessed, for a return shall be made thee at the Resurrection of the Just. 'Come ye blessed of My FATHER,' (will then be said by the Son of Man to as many as 'have done it unto one of the least of these His brethren,') 'inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink^ε.' Wherefore, (as it is said in another place,) I appoint unto you a Kingdom . . . that ye may eat and drink at My Table^h.'

- 15 And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God.

On the speaker's lips, this saying was probably nothing more than a devout exclamation on hearing our LORD allude to the recompense which should attend the Resurrection of the Just. As if he had said,—Blessed will he be who shall share in that recompense of which Thou speakest so persuasively and well! Or, (to borrow the language of the SPIRIT to St. John the Divine,) 'Blessed are they which are called to the Marriage-Supper of

^ε St. Matth. xxv. 34, 35, 40.

^h St. Luke xxii. 29, 30.

the LAMB!¹ The words probably meant no more; for they appear to have been suggested by what our SAVIOUR had said²,—and we discover from His practice on other occasions that it was the manner of GOD'S ancient people to speak of 'the Resurrection of the Just,' as a '*sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of GOD*'³.

But our SAVIOUR takes the human words as they fall from the unconscious speaker, and straightway moulds them to a higher purpose by imparting to them a divine meaning. He denies not what the other had said,—namely, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God!" Far from it! But He proceeds to shew by a parable that 'the Kingdom' spoken of, hath its beginning *here on Earth*; and He fortels, darkly indeed, yet in wondrous detail, how different would be its reception from what the speaker supposed. Those 'that were bidden,' (namely, GOD'S chosen people,—the 'heirs of the Kingdom,') would reject the gracious invitation to come, when all things were ready. Nay, the very Gentiles, (heirs by adoption) so far from accounting it their supreme blessedness to 'eat bread in the Kingdom of God,' would invent all manner of pretexts for staying away.

This latter is at least one chief meaning of the Parable; and it is the better worth our attention, inasmuch as the Church in her second Exhortation

¹ Rev. xix. 9. Compare St. Matth. xxii. 2, 3.

² St. Matth. viii. 11. St. Luke xiii. 29.

³ Gal. iv. 4.

in the Communion Service, is found so to apply
our LORD's teaching. The Parable follows:—

16 Then said He unto him, A certain Man
17 made a great supper, and bade many: and
sent His servant at supper time to say to
them that were bidden, Come; for all things
are now ready.

GOD is this 'certain man,'—GOD, who 'when the fulness of the time was come, sent forth His SON!' CHRIST Himself therefore, who took upon Him the form of a servant, or any one whom CHRIST sendeth, is the servant in the parable;—His Church and Kingdom 'is the Great Supper;'—the 'things now ready,' are His Word and Sacraments; 'the Vision of God, the society of Angels, the fellowship with the Saints.' Heavenly joys are even spoken of in Holy Scripture under this image of a Feast,—a feast where plenty, instead of cloying, does but add keenness to the appetite; and where fulness, instead of producing satiety, awakens only delight. How strong the call of appetite for earthly food! how soon appeased! when appeased, how small seems the joy! But the reverse is true of the heavenly banquet. We hunger for it but little; yet will the ages of Eternity not suffice to satisfy the soul's desire: and when experienced, how will the joys of Heaven surpass all that the heart has ever imagined of bliss^m! Now, because this Heavenly Banquet

¹ Gregory.

^m See St. Matth. xxii. 1, &c.

begins here on earth, CHRIST's visible Kingdom is likened to a great supper. 'Come; for all things are now ready' Surely in this, the evening of the World, we hear that invitation daily! What are opportunities of obedience,—occasions for the exercise of the graces of the Gospel,—invitations to prayer,—the return of sacred seasons,—the music of Sabbath-bells,—what is each of these but a summons to 'Come, for all things are now ready?'—Mark next the conduct of those invited:

And they all with one *consent* began to 18
make excuse.

Hitherto, the parable of 'the Great Supper' reminds us forcibly of the parable of 'the marriage of the King's Sonⁿ.' When all is ready, the Servants are sent out to call the guests,—but no guests are willing to come. In the case of the Marriage, however, the summons is refused and disregarded,—the field^o and the merchandize still furnishing the greater attraction. But civil excuses are offered by those who were invited to the Great Supper.

The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And 19
another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

ⁿ The word translated 'a piece of ground' in St. Luke xiv. 18, is translated a 'farm' in St. Matth. xxii. 5. ^o St. Matth. xxii. 5.

Thus, 'one goes to his farm, another to his merchandize^p.' The piece of ground and the five yoke of oxen (for ploughing)^q have been bought subject to approval. Hence the first must be inspected, and trial must be made of the second.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

"Yet this Feast is that invisible Kingdom of Grace into which men must press with violence^r!" Land, — oxen, — a wife: "all innocent; perhaps all needful: all certainly fatal. They loved them too much, or the Gospel too little. Their love for them was perhaps not excessive; it might have been but little: but, at all events, their love for the Gospel was less. Or their love for the Gospel might have been great, very great; but their love of the world was greater. Still, it all came to one and the same end; for God will not have a divided heart. It is the choice of the two which is presented at all times. To have married a wife was provided for in the Law as a sufficient plea not to go forth to war^s; but the Gospel is higher in its requirements. 'He that loveth wife or children more than Me, is not worthy of Me^t.'"

It may be observed that, in describing the reception which the Gospel would meet with, our

^p See 1 Kings xix. 19.

^q St. Matt. xi. 12. St. Luke xvi. 16.

^r Williams quoting St. Matth. x. 37.

^s Deut. xxiv. 5.

^t St. Luke xvii. 28.

LORD mentions the very things which He notices in speaking of the old World and of Sodom. "He omits all mention of their great crimes, but chooses out, for their resemblance to the last day, points innocent in themselves, but of an absorbing worldly nature. In the days of Lot, which are likened to the end of the world, 'they bought and sold',—as here the excuse is 'I have bought oxen and I go to prove them.' In the former, 'they planted, they builded,'—as here the plea is 'I have bought a field, and must needs go and see it.' Again, in the days of Noah and of Lot, 'they married and gave in marriage',—and the Gospel in the parable is rejected, because 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' The same things, therefore, are true of the days of the Son of Man, as appears from Scripture; whether we speak of CHRIST'S final Coming, or of the Christian dispensation generally." And can it be needful to point out that for the same causes which are daily seen to be in operation, the Gospel is practically rejected? or that 'a wife' here stands for *all* earthly ties, because Marriage is the closest and most sacred: oxen to be proved, and land which must be visited; for *all* worldly goods and possessions whatsoever?

So that servant came, and shewed his 21
 Lord these things. Then the Master of
 the house being angry, said to His servant,

* Luke xvii. 28.

z Luke xvii. 26, 27.

† Williams.

Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

‘When *thou* makest a feast,’ (our LORD had said in ver. 13) ‘call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:’ and these are precisely the classes of persons which the servant is ordered in the parable to ‘bring in,’ to be partakers of the Great Supper. But of the heavenly banquet here spoken of, it is of course ‘the poor *in spirit*,’ who are desired; and such as, because their hand offended them, cut it off, and so became maimed: because their foot offended them, cut it off, and so became lame: because their eye offended them, plucked it out, and so became blind^a.

22 And the Servant said, LORD, it is done as
Thou hast commanded, and yet there is
23 room. And the LORD said unto the Servant,
Go out into the highways and hedges, and
compel *them* to come in, that My House
may be filled.

As usual, a prophecy of what was to be hereafter, is here set before us. The fulfilment was obvious. The Jews rejected the Gospel. The Publicans and harlots were straightway brought in from the streets and lanes of the Holy City; and yet there was room. Whereupon the offer was freely made to the Gentiles. Consider Acts xiii. 46.

^a Consider St. Mark ix. 43, (hand,)—45, (foot,)—47, (eye.)

For I say unto you, That none of those 24
 en which were bidden shall taste of My
 ipper.

The Parable being brought to a close, our
 lessed LORD, by a single word, gives His auditors
 understand that He is *Himself* the Giver of
 e Supper, and that He is discoursing to them
 ncerning the decrees of His own Providence:
 'For I say *unto you.*' The words are no longer
 ose of the lord of the Feast addressing a single
 essenger. They are the words of God Himself!
 Many of the Jewish nation did indeed, after-
 ards, embrace the Gospel: but it was no longer
Jews that they tasted of God's Mercy. They
 me in with the other nations of the earth. But
 rely these terrible words have a yet broader
 eaning, and are addressed to as many as shall
 ome after, to the end of the world. Those who,
 hen bidden, refuse the Feast, shall afterwards
 nd themselves excluded. See the last part of
 t. Luke xiii. 24, and the note there.

Consider, finally, what an instructive specimen
 here afforded us of our Blessed LORD's method,
 nd His untiring zeal in the shepherding of souls.
 -It is the Sabbath-day, and the Service of the
 ynagogue over, (where doubtless He has been
 elivering a divine discourse^a.) He proceeds to
 at bread at a certain House. A person afflicted
 ith dropsy stands before Him. He heals him.

^a Consider St. Luke iv. 15, 16, &c.

Sinful men are by; and for their sakes, He defends His action, and by His comment upon it, brings the Gospel into harmony with the Law. He enters,—and takes occasion from what He sees, to ‘teach Humility^b’; conveying at the same time a parable of marvellous value and secret beauty. To the giver of the entertainment, He delivers precious counsel concerning ‘feasting the poor^c.’ A guest, in reply to what our SAVIOUR had been saying, ventures an ordinary remark; and our SAVIOUR forthwith addresses to him the parable of ‘the Great Supper’.... It may all have been the work of half an hour!

- 25 And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned and said unto them,
 26 If any *man* come to Me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

Our SAVIOUR had been prophetically declaring that worldly possessions or earthly ties would prove the things to prevent a man from freely embracing the Gospel. But the scene of His discourse is changed. Instead of the festive chamber it is now the weary high-way; and among the ‘great crowds’ which ‘journeyed with Him,’ there may or may not have been those who listened to the parable of the Great Supper which was de-

^b See the heading of the chapter.

^c See the heading.

ered at the banquet. It does not follow, however, because the scene is changed, that the subject of our LORD's discourse is unconnected with what went before. On the contrary, the Evangelist seems to have been divinely guided to select from what our LORD proceeded to deliver, such sayings bore directly on His previous teaching. All sayings, therefore, (it is here declared,) must be relinquished for the Gospel: or, (as our LORD will be found to re-word the matter below, in verse 33,)—'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.' Moreover, the temper requisite in one who would follow the Crucified, is further insisted upon in a saying which is itself almost a prophecy^d.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, 27
and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.

Verses 26 and 27 will be found very nearly repeated in our SAVIOUR's Charge delivered to the Twelve^e. The saying in the latter verse may be considered to recur three times in the Gospel,—being found besides in the discourse which He delivered after His Transfiguration; as all the three Evangelists conspire in recording^f.

For which ^gof you, intending to build a tower,
sitteth not down first, and counteth

^d See the note on St. Matth. x. 38.

^e St. Matth. x. 37, 38.

^f St. Matth. xvi. 24, St. Mark viii. 34, St. Luke ix. 23,—on each of which places the notes may be consulted.

the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish
 29 *it*? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that be
 30 hold *it* begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Take notice how He who created Man such as he is, here, for the second time^g, appeals to Man's sense of *Shame*,—as above (in ver. 10,) He appealed to Man's sense of *Pride*.

So difficult, then, and so formidable a thing is the work of Salvation!—'The foundation' must indeed be laid in Faith in CHRIST,—for 'other foundation can no man lay^h.' But, besides this, it is a work of labour and difficulty; demanding, as our LORD specially notes, great sacrifices,—and to be accomplished only at a large cost of time, and skill, and labour,—even as the building of a tower. Then, besides a great work to accomplish, we have also a powerful King to encounter. And take notice, that the hostile sovereign spoken of in the next verse, is none other than CHRIST Himself. It follows,—

31 Or what king, going to make war against another King, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet Him that cometh against him
 32 with twenty thousand? or else, while the

^g See above, ver. 9.

^h 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

So that our LORD's counsel on this occasion closely resembles that other word of His, which has already twice come before us,—‘Agree with thine Adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with Him¹.’ He comes against us with Might and with Majesty which none may presume to resist. ‘Behold,’ (saith Enoch,) ‘the LORD cometh with ten thousands of His Saints^k,—yea, with ‘ten thousand times ten thousand^l.’ ‘But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth^m?’ Wholly unable are we to meet Him in Judgment, when He shall appear with all His hosts. What remains, then, but to make our peace with Him while He ‘is yet a great way off,’ (being not yet seen coming in Judgment:) to send Him an ambassage of prayers and tears, and earnestly to desire of Him ‘conditions of Peace?’

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My Disciple.

Thus does our LORD gather up into a single sentence the teaching of the seven verses which go beforeⁿ. So slow and laborious is the work of

¹ St. Matth. v. 25, and St. Luke xii. 58,—on which last place, see the note.

^k St. Jude ver. 14.

^l Dan. vii. 10.

^m Mal. iii. 2.

ⁿ See above, the note on ver. 26.

Salvation,—so formidable is He with whom we have to do,—that unless there be a forsaking of all things, a man is not fit to be CHRIST'S disciple. A remark already twice met with, follows :

34 Salt *is* good : but if the salt have lost his
35 savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned ? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill ; *but* men cast it out.

These words have been explained already°. They mean here,—To be a Christian is a good thing : but let the Christian character once lose that which gives it all its savour, and it becomes nothing worth.—Men are hereby taught the consequence of falling away from CHRIST in the hour of trial, from not having well considered beforehand what it would cost them to be His followers. There must be perseverance—*to the end* : and this is the doctrine of all Scripture, to an extent which few persons imagine. ‘He who after the knowledge of the Truth falls back,’ (our LORD says,) ‘is neither able to bring forth the fruit of good works himself, nor to instruct others. He must therefore be cast out.’ And lest this application of His words might be overlooked, He added His well-known saying,—

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

• See the notes on St. Matth. v. 13 : St. Mark ix. 50. Bede.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 The Parable of the Lost Sheep : 8 of the Piece of Silver : 11 of the Prodigal Son.

XV. THEN drew near unto Him all the Publicans and Sinners for to hear Him.

Concerning "Publicans and Sinners,"—of whom such frequent mention is made in the Gospel,—see the note on St. Mark ii. 15. The former were persons who, both from their odious calling, and their sinful manner of life, were deemed infamous, by the rest of the nation. But, among their number, was found the Saint, and Apostle, and Evangelist^a. They supplied, moreover, patterns of Faith^b, of Prayer^c, and of Zeal^d. At their table, the SAVIOUR of the world, homeless Himself and despised of men, was many a time the welcome and the honoured Guest. . . . How unspeakably precious in the ears of all such must have been the gracious words which follow !

And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, 2

^a St. Matt. x. 3.

^c St. Luke xviii. 10—14.

^b St. Matt. xxi. 32.

^d St. Luke xix. 2—4.

saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

There is much of gracious meaning in this intimation that our LORD "*received Sinners.*" Consider such places as St. Luke ix. 11;—where, (as in St. Luke viii. 40: xix. 6; St. John i. 11, 12: iv. 45, &c.), a kind and hearty welcome is evidently implied.

"To eat" with Publicans was evidently deemed a pollution. See St. Matth. ix. 11, and St. Luke xix. 7. This was because the Publicans belonged to a class which was reckoned among *the heathen*,—with whom to eat, was to be polluted: see Acts xi. 3; Gal. ii. 12, &c. Compare St. Matt. xviii. 17, and the note at St. Mark ii. 15.

8 And He spake this parable unto them, saying,

The parable of the Lost Sheep follows: in studying which, we are to remember that our SAVIOUR CHRIST is 'the Good Shepherd,'—as He Himself declared*. Here then, we have explained to us the object and purpose with which He "received sinners, and ate with them." He was "*going after that which was lost.*" . . . The same parable, somewhat more briefly given, is found in St. Matthew's Gospel, xviii. 12—14,—where it stands actually prefaced by the words,—"*The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.*"

* St. John x. 11.

What man of you, having an hundred 4
 heep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave
 he ninety and nine in the wilderness, and
 go after that which is lost, until he find it?

Our Blessed LORD appeals to one of the instincts
 of the human heart. The ninety and nine, which
 are in safety, are left; for the sake of the *one* which
 is lost. But the Heavenly Shepherd's care for "the
 people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand"
 is such, that He rests not "*until He find.*"

Concerning "the wilderness," see the note on
 St. Luke i. 80.

Who, that reads, exclaims not,—"*I have gone
 astray like a sheep that is lost. O seek Thy ser-
 vant?*"

And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* 5
 on his shoulders, rejoicing.

He who "gathereth the lambs with His arm,
 and carrieth them in his bosom^g," "layeth" the
 lost sheep "on His shoulders," also: for "all we
 like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every
 one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on
 Him the iniquity of us all." "Surely He hath
 borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows^h!" And
 beneath this heavy burden, "the Shepherd and
 Bishop of our soulsⁱ" is found to walk "*rejoicing.*"

Observe, therefore, that the purpose with which
 the Good Shepherd goes after His lost sheep, is

Ps. xcvi. 7. ^g Is. xl. 11. ^h Is. liiii. 6, 4. ⁱ 1 St. Pet. ii. 25.

not to *drive* it back to the fold; much less, to *punish* it. He will convey it back, on His shoulders. He will *carry it*, all the way.

- 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

We shall be reminded in the next verse, that *Heaven* is the Good Shepherd's "home:" and from ver. 10 we learn that the "friends and neighbours" are none other than *the Angels of God*. "Friends,"—because they do the FATHER'S will^k: "Neighbours,"—because they stand in His presence^l, behold His face^m, and gather brightness from His glory.

The Heavenly Shepherd having come after us that were lost, until He found us;—after He had taken our Nature upon Him, and borne our sins,—straightway returned home. "I came forth from the FATHER," He said, "and am come into the World: again, I leave the World, and go to the FATHERⁿ."

- 7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Take notice, that it is not said that those who

^k St. Matt. vi. 10, compared with St. John xv. 14.

^l St. Luke i. 19. ^m St. Matt. xviii. 10. ⁿ St. John xvi. 28.

have sinned and repented, are objects of greater *Love* than the righteous. Not *Love* but *Joy*, is the emotion excited by the Penitent's return. *Love* is for those who have *never wandered away* from the Shepherd's side.

The phrase,—“Just persons, which need no repentance,” admits of an obvious explanation. “There is *none* that doeth good; no, *not one*°.” But, compared with the “lost;” compared with those who “were dead, and are alive again;” many are “just,”—and “need no repentance.”

On “Joy shall be *in Heaven*,”—see the note on verses 6 and 10.

Either what woman

8

The SAVIOUR of the World reappears but it is now under another form. Or this may represent Him, in the person of His Church, seeking for one, possessed before; but since, accidentally let slip. The Woman knows that she shall find the lost part of her treasure *within* her House. By the aid of “a burning and a shining light^p,” she therefore commences an anxious search.

having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it* ^q

Under this domestic image, then,—the humble figure of a Woman with a lighted candle, sweeping

° Ps. xiv. 1, 3.

^p St. John v. 35, compared with St. Matt. v. 14, 15.

the House in anxious search of a lost piece of Money,—does the SAVIOUR of the World here set forth to us His zeal for the souls of Men. The lost piece of money was precious because it bore the image and likeness^a of the Great King. Compare the language of St. Luke xx. 24, and of 1 Cor. xv. 49.

- 9 And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

The powers of Heaven are once more made partakers of the SAVIOUR'S joy. See the next note.

- 10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the Angels of GOD over one sinner that repenteth.

How wonderful a view is here opened to us of the sympathy of the Holy Angels with this part of GOD'S Creation! They love us with more than a brother's love. With what intense interest must they behold us! with what assiduity and care must they minister, and watch for us^r; that the tidings of "one Sinner that repenteth," should fill the courts of Heaven with joy!

Most affecting of all, however, is the joy of CHRIST—the Good Shepherd. "Rejoice *with Me*,"—He says. His friends and neighbours are but

^a Gen. i. 26.

^r See the Collect for 'St. Michael and All Angels.'

invited to be partakers of *His* mysterious joy! See the note on ver. 7. Also, the note on ver. 6.

Can we doubt, by the way, that when "the Holy Church throughout all the World" keeps Christmas, or Easter,—celebrates Good-Friday, Ascension-Day, or Whitsuntide;—there must be a corresponding strain of sympathy among the Angels in Heaven, likewise: if the welfare of *one* can fill the skies with joy?

The Parable of the Prodigal Son follows.

And he said, A certain Man had two 11
Sons :

About the "certain Man," in the parable, there can be no difference of opinion. The "two Sons" set forth as well the Jew and the Gentile, as two opposite characters;—the "sinner that repenteth," and the "just person that needeth no repentance." We shall do well to seek our likeness in the former character,—*that*, namely, of the poor prodigal; where we shall assuredly be most likely to find it.

and the younger of them said to *his* 12
father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to *me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

If this be understood nationally,—then, we have here a picture of the portion which the nations of the Gentile world chose for themselves when they wandered forth from the haunts of Shem.

If individually,—then, behold here the impatience of one who cannot brook the restraints of his Heavenly Father's home; but claims his portion and receives it:—health and strength,—youthful spirits and intellectual vigour,—the portion of good things, whatever it may happen to be, which falleth to him. In both cases the gifts of *Nature* are implied, as contrasted with the gifts of *Grace*.

- 13 And not many days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country,

Behold the Youth's impatience! He sets out "*not many days* after. He goes, in fact, whenever, and whithersoever he pleases; for *the will* of man is left perfectly *free*.

And he travels "into a far country;" for this is the fate of all those who forsake God. To be deprived of the light of *His* countenance, is to be in a very "far country" indeed.

"Not many days"—seems to mark the impatience of the natural man to break away from God.

and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

He "wasted his substance," for he made a prodigal and a reckless use of the gifts of Nature: in consequence whereof, (as St. Paul says of the Gentile world,) "he became vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart was darkened." "Professing himself to be wise, he became as a fool*."

* Rom. i. 21, 22.

His high endowments all turned to his shame. His very moral sense was darkened. The candle of the LORD had gone out within him.

And when he had spent all, there arose a 14 mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

Spiritual needs are set forth to us in Scripture under the image of *hunger* and *thirst*^t. "Behold the days come, saith the LORD GOD, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD^u."

Surely, there was a mighty Famine in *all* lands, (typically set forth in the history of Joseph^x), at the time of the Advent of our SAVIOUR CHRIST; and the younger Brother had been made to *feel* the want of which he had long before "begun" to be aware! There was nothing to satisfy the soul's cravings in those systems with which men had beguiled themselves so long; and Faith had departed from them.

Then, besides its national bearing, this part of the Parable sets forth the spiritual misery of an individual who is seeking to live "without God in the World^v." A mighty Famine arises, and it reaches also unto him. He himself, (for so it is in the original,) begins to be in want. Too often

^t St. John iv. 10—14; Isaiah xlix. 10; Rev. vii. 16, 17; Psalm xxiii. 2, &c. &c.

^u Amos viii. 2.

^x Gen. xli. 57, &c.

^v Eph. ii. 12.

however, *the beginnings* of distress fail to recal such an one to a sense of his true position and of his duty. When he only "*begins*" to suffer, his proud heart remains unsubdued. He probably acts in the manner described in the following verse.

- 15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country: and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

Under such a degrading image is the hard service which the younger Son had engaged in exhibited. The "Citizen of that country" is the Devil,—who is "a citizen" and therefore *at home*, where the Prodigal Son is but an outcast and a stranger. Here then, we trace the downward course of one who has fled from the presence, and forsaken the service of God. He straightway enters into the service of the Devil.

The "swine" represent those "filthy dreamers," (as St. Jude speaks^z;) who belong to the Evil One; and in pandering to whose lusts, he employs any miserable being whom he gets into his power. They are fitly called *swine*: those being the unclean creatures with which the devils love most to be,—as we learn from St. Matt. viii. 31. The animal, moreover, was among those which the nation were forbidden to eat, and which they held in peculiar abhorrence.

^z St. Jude, ver. 8.

St. Paul further helps us to the *national* application of this part of the Parable; for, (describing the consequences to the Gentiles, "when they knew God," of "not glorifying Him as God,") he adds,—“Wherefore God also *gave them up to uncleanness.*” “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God *gave them over to a reprobate mind*.”^a

In its individual application,—this part of the Parable reminds us of those who nourish foul desires and unclean thoughts in their soul: despising “Angels’ food^b,” and “serving divers lusts and pleasures^c,” as the Apostle speaks.

And he would fain have filled his belly 16 with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

There is in the East a peculiar kind of bean-shaped fruit, here called “husks,” which is given to swine, and which may be eaten by men also. But the degree of misery here described must be very great: to be reduced so low as to crave a portion for one’s-self of the food one is dispensing to the herd; yet no one found to pity one’s necessity, and supply a more wholesome diet! . . . The Prodigal Son seemed, before, reduced to the lowest depth of misery; but here, a still lower depth discovers itself. His soul was fainting within him; and yet to “fill *his belly*,”—to gratify his lower appetites,—is the utmost object of his desire!

^a Rom. i. 21, 24, and 28.

^b Pa. lxxviii. 25.

^c Titus iii. 3.

17 And when he came to himself,

For one who could so act,—forsake such a Father, and desert such a home, to incur nothing but misery, insult, and the pangs of hunger,—can only be spoken of as one not in his right mind.

He “came to himself,” and forthwith came *home*. From which we may rightly infer that when he “took his journey into a far country” (ver. 13), he altogether *departed from himself*.

he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger !

How pregnant here is every word with meaning ! The “*hired* servants ;” —those labourers, namely, whom the Heavenly Father had hired for a penny a day, according to the Parable^d, and sent to work in His Vineyard. . . . “*Bread* enough ;” —for under that image, God’s Word^e and Sacraments^f are spoken of in the Gospel. All Christian privileges, it may be, are “briefly comprehended in that one saying^g,” “the children’s *Bread*”^h. . . . “*And to spare* ;” —whence arises the duty of imparting and distributing to others.

He who lacks the “Bread” here spoken of, does more than suffer want. He even “*perishes with hunger*.”

^d St. Matt. xx.

^e St. John vi. 35—58.

^f St. Matt. xv. 26.

^e St. Matt. iv. 4.

^g Rom. xiii. 9.

^h St. Matt. x. 8.

I will arise and go to my Father, 18

He will "arise,"—for he has been till now grovelling in the dust. He will "go,"—for he is a very long way off. To his "Father,"—for at present he dwells among swine.

And that he shall be able to "say—*Father!*" is the ground of all his confidence; the foundation of all his hope.

and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee,

This is the language of true Repentance. "I have sinned—*against Heaven.*" Compare that of David,—"*Against Thee, Thee only* have I sinned¹." Compare also 2 Sam. xii. 13; and two earlier instances, in Gen. xx. 6, and xxxix. 9.

and am no more worthy to be called thy 19
son :

Such words do we make our own, as often as we draw near to the Divine presence, in the public services of the Church. Thereby, not only interpreting the Parable, but identifying ourselves with the most conspicuous character in it.

make me as one of thy hired servants.

The entrance into the courts of Glory is by the gate of Humility.

A very ancient writer, (who was also an Archbishop,) commenting on these words, piously ex-

¹ Ps. li. 4.

claims,—“O LORD JESU! Preserve us from such husks as the swine did eat, and instead thereof, give unto us the true Bread; for Thou art Steward in Thy Father’s House. As Labourers, vouchsafe to hire us also, although arriving late; for Thou dost hire men, even at the eleventh hour,—and givest to all alike the same reward of Life eternal.”

20 And he arose, and came to his Father.

In this, lies one of the most instructive lessons which the Parable conveys. The Father was yearning towards the Prodigal with tenderness unspeakable; the robe and the ring, the shoes and the banquet, were all in store; but the Prodigal must first *arise and go*. He was, as yet, “*dead*” in the Father’s sight; ver. 24: “wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and *arise from the dead*, and CHRIST shall give thee light^k.” We must first “draw nigh to God,” and then He will “draw nigh” to us^l. When the Son *has* risen, mark all that follows:—

But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

What can be imagined more affecting? The returning wretch recognised, while “he was yet a *great way off* :” the prevailing feeling of “*compassion*,” which his return excites: the impa-

^k Ephes. v. 14.

^l St. James iv. 8.



HE AROSE, AND CAME TO HIS FATHER.

St. Luke xv. 20.

tience, which must "*run*" to meet him, half way : the love, which "*falls upon his neck ;*" the tenderness, which "*kisses him !*" . . . In the running, says an Ancient, there is Foreknowledge : in the embrace, Mercy.

We do not read that *the Son*,—tied and bound with the chain, and burdened with the weight, of his many sins,—ran to meet the Father. It was *the Father*, on the contrary, who ran to meet *him*. We cannot "run," (as the Psalmist in a certain place declares,) till God has "set our hearts at liberty^m:" sore let and hindered, else, in running the race that is set before us. We *feel after God*,—the heavenly FATHER *finds us*: running to meet us, while we are "yet a great way off!"

When CHRIST so falls upon the neck of the returning Penitent, He removes thence, from the weary and heavy-laden, the yoke of slavery,—and instead thereof, bestows there His own light Burden, and easy Yoke. For this, He invites all men to "come unto Himⁿ."

And the Son said unto him, Father, I 21 have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

The Father does not give him time to say the rest of what he intended to say ; see verses 18,

^m Ps. cxix. 32.

ⁿ St. Matt. xi, 28—30.

19. He would have almost spared him the pain of Confession altogether,—for he has already embraced; and, in act, has forgiven him. Observe how he proceeds to heap blessing upon blessing:—
- 22 But the Father said to his Servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet;

“The best robe” was the robe of honour, and the special property of the eldest son: see Genesis xxvii. 15. The ring was a mark of dignity,—a badge of rank, as well as an ornament: as may be inferred from Genesis xxxviii. 18: xli. 42: and St. James ii. 2. Lastly, *he* wore “shoes on his feet,” who was *invited* to “draw nigh,”—not to a terrific presence, as in Exodus iii. 5, and Joshua v. 15; but to the tender embrace of a most loving Father.

But we have to look for some far loftier meaning than this: for the merciful CREATOR, and the repenting Creature, are here spoken of. Whether we shall succeed in finding what we perceive that we must search after, is another question.

The Father replies not directly *to the Son*, (for our prayers are not answered by *a voice* from Heaven;) but He addresses His answer “to His Servants;”—those heavenly, or those earthly ministers of His, “that do His pleasure,” and “fulfil His commandment, and hearken unto the voice

of His words^o." "The best robe," then, may denote Holy Baptism, for which Repentance is the fitting preparation;—"for," in the Apostle's words,—“as many as have been baptized into CHRIST, have *put on* CHRIST^p.” It is *that* recovered robe of innocence, which, when Adam lost, he “knew that he was naked^q.” Compare 2 Cor. v. 3; Rev. iii. 17, 18, and xvi. 15.

But the meaning of the Ring and the Shoes, is less clear: and it is better to confess ignorance than to venture on merely fanciful and unfounded conjecture. Some have thought that the Ring is a badge of that union with CHRIST, which every member of CHRIST'S Church, (which is the Spouse of CHRIST), should carry. (Compare the language of 2 Cor. xi. 2; Eph. v. 32; Rev. xxi. 2, &c. See also, Hosea ii. 19, 20.) And it is easy to connect the notion of Shoes, with that Christian walk or race^r, which directs attention so constantly to *the feet* of the believer,—as seeking “the path of life^s :” requiring “a light,” and “a lantern^t :” being “shod with the preparation of the Gospel^u :” and the like. But of such things, we can only speak conjecturally.—The Father continues,

and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill 23
it; and let us eat, and be merry :

^o Psalm ciii. 20.

^p Gal. iii. 27.

^q Gen. iii. 7.

^r Gen. v. 22; and places in the margin: 1 Cor. ix. 24: Heb. xii. 1, &c.

^s Psalm xvi. 11; compare xvii. 5, and xxvii. 11; Proverbs iv. 18, 26, &c.

^t Psalm cxix. 105.

^u Eph. vi. 15.

This can be none other than the heavenly banquet of *His* Body,—whose Sacrifice is set forth throughout the whole of the Bible:—the pledge of the reconciliation of us Gentiles to an offended God. *That* banquet is now celebrated throughout the whole World,—feeds the whole House,—and fills the hearts of all with joy and gladness.

- 24 for this my Son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

He who lives in sin, is *dead* in God's sight, even while he liveth. See Eph. ii. 1; 1 Timothy v. 6; 1 St. John iii. 14; and compare with the phrase,—“he was lost and is found,” St. Peter's words,—“Ye were as sheep *gone astray*, but are now *returned* unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls:” by which, the first and last of these Parables are connected together. See 1 St. Pet. ii. 25.

- 25 Now his elder Son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

Here begins the second part of the Parable,—by which the history is carried on beyond the point which was reached in the two former Parables^z. The elder Brother now appears; just in time to witness the merriment and rejoicing which, in each of the three Parables, obtains such prominent Lotice.

^z See the end of the note on St. Matth. xxii. 10.

As before, (see verses 7 and 10,) Angels are the harpers; and the Christian Church swells their Songs of Triumph with her own Hymns of Praise.

And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy Brother is come; and thy Father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in. 28

Even as the Pharisees and Scribes, in ver. 2, "murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." As *their* Father, also, (although they knew Him not,) had come out, and was even now intreating them. It is the same to this day. The Jew is still standing without, and "will not come in."

But to turn from the national, to the individual interpretation of the Parable,—we have here represented to us the envious displeasure of the wicked, at every advance in holiness on the part of the just. For the world does not, by any means, rejoice at the sight of goodness in others: rather the reverse.

Therefore came his Father out, and intreated him.

It has been thought that this indicates what will take place hereafter, when "the fulness of

the Gentiles" shall have come in; that so, "all Israel may be saved."

29 And he answering said to *his* Father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment:

This boastful speech is an apt exhibition of the remonstace of the Scribes and Pharisees, already alluded to. *They* were the elder Brother. In ver. 2, they had, in effect, been saying of themselves the very thing which is here attributed to the self-righteous man, in the Parable. Our LORD Himself, certainly, gave them a very different character. See St. Matthew xxiii. 13, and what follows, especially verse 33.

and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

There is a double emphasis at the end of this verse: "Thou never gavest *me*," so much as "*a kid*." Which may perhaps mean, that no effectual deliverance had been wrought for the Jewish people;—whereas the return of the Gentiles had been celebrated, as well as effected, by the sacrifice of the greatest Victim of all.

The elder Brother will not see that *he* is invited to be a partaker of the same banquet. He contemplates a scene of merriment, apart "with his friends." And yet he is aware that "the fatted

7 Romans xi. 25, 26.

Calf,"—the great Victim which had been so long promised,—has been killed ! . . . He proceeds,

but as soon as this thy Son was come, 30 which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Observe how wickedly he, who in the former verse exaggerated his own obedience, in the present verse magnifies the offence of his Brother! Compare what is here said with what was stated in verse 13.

Also,—“As soon as this *thy Son*” (!) he says, “was *come*” (!). And why not “*my Brother*,”—“was *returned*?”

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever 31 with me, and all that I have is thine.

The Father, who received back the younger Son without reproaches, forbears now to rebuke His elder Son; far less does He charge him with untruth,—reminding him, as He might have done, of countless acts of unfaithfulness and disobedience. He proceeds calmly,—

It was meet that we should make merry, 32 and be glad: for this thy Brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

It was the one thought which filled the Father's heart. See ver. 24.

Notice here the delicacy of the implied reproof. "This *thy Son*," had been the language of the elder Brother, in verse 30. But the Father, entreating with him, says not, "For this my Son was dead and is alive again; but,—"*This thy Brother*:" reminding him, thereby, of the claim which the poor Prodigal had upon *him*.

The frequent preference given to the younger Son over the elder, in Holy Scripture,—had prepared men's minds for that great national dispensation, which, in the present Parable also, is traced prophetically: namely, the ultimate acceptance of the Gentiles. Even where no marked contrast is established, or preference avowed,—as when God said, "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau^a,"—the place of favour is again and again assigned to the younger Son. Seth, Shem, Peleg, Abraham: then Jacob, who has been already noticed: Joseph and Ephraim: Judah and Pharez^b: Moses and David,—are all examples prefiguring what was to happen long after. Consider also the language of Judges vi. 15, and 1 Samuel ix. 21.

Three Parables, so nearly of one tendency, delivered in succession, call for comparison. Each sets forth the concern of ALMIGHTY GOD for every individual soul. We are reminded, in all three, that it is not His will that *any* should perish. And

^a Mal. i. 2, 3; quoted Rom. ix. 13.

^b Gen. xxxviii. 29.

they correspond in noticing the Heavenly Rejoicing which attends one sinner's recovery.

On the other hand, they exhibit some points of contrast. The first Parable describes the case of one who has simply gone astray, and wandered from the Fold: the second,—*that* of one who has been lost through neglect: the last and longest, is the history of a wilfully disobedient man. And the methods adopted for the recovery of each, are found to differ likewise. No pains are spared for the recovery of the first,—who is followed after, until he is found. For the recovery of the second, a patient heart and a vigilant eye are alone required. But the last is left to obey, or to disregard, the motions of the HOLY SPIRIT,—urging him to return. In this last case, the first step towards reconciliation must be taken by the Offender.

And the recovery of one *in a hundred*,—of one *in ten*,—and of the other of *two*,—seems intended to repress all curious inquiries into a subject with which we have no practical concern: namely, the spiritual condition of *our neighbours*; and God's dealings with them; and whether few persons, or many, stand in need of the Recovery here spoken of. Our SAVIOUR's words on a recent occasion, when He sought to discourage unprofitable speculations of a similar class, are strictly applicable in this place:—“*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*”

The following remarks by a good and thoughtful man, are too apposite and beautiful to be omitted

here,—where God's *Love* is so strikingly shewn in three successive Parables. "There is nothing more worthy of observation" (he says,) "than the way in which the natural habits and affections of men are used in Scripture to illustrate the dealings and dispositions of the Invisible God; nor can anything be imagined more likely to bring the Truth and Love of God home to our hearts, than when we are thus made to feel an image of it in ourselves. It is to be observed however that the habits and affections of mankind, thus taken and made use of, are purely natural,—as God made and willed them; and no ways connected with the degeneracy of the sinful state. We may then feel the justness of their use in this way, to make known to us the things of God. For God not only made Man upright, but He made him in His own Image: and if so, then in the Human Nature, (that is, our own,) we may see as in a glass the truth of God's. For an image is but the resemblance of something original, which only is the reality, the substance,—of which the other is a shadow. We may understand, moreover, that there is in the Creature a natural capacity and fitness, given it no doubt by its CREATOR from the first, for setting forth His own Love, and Goodness, and Glory. For otherwise, how could the SON of GOD have taken upon Himself the form,—and been made in the likeness,—of Man^c?"

* From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. W. J. Palmer.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 *The Parable of the Unjust Steward.* 14 *CHRIST reproveth the hypocrisy of the covetous Pharisees.* 19 *The rich glutton, and Lazarus the beggar.*

THE Parables of our SAVIOUR here succeed each other with marvellous rapidity. We met with three, in the former chapter. In the present, two more are recorded. The parable of 'the Unjust Steward,' which comes first, is certainly one of the most difficult of our LORD's parables; partly, because after bringing forward, and stating in detail, a case of great dishonesty, the Divine Speaker not only withholds His censure, but even *seems* to dismiss it with words of commendation: partly also, because of the doctrinal application of the Parable, which is certainly far from obvious. Much of this difficulty will be found to disappear, on a careful study of the narrative: but there will remain much to make us thoughtful; and to impress us with the strangeness, even in its minutest details, of a Revelation which comes from GOD.

The three last Parables were addressed to the Pharisees and Scribes. Not so the Parable of 'the

Unjust Steward,'—though the Pharisees are found still standing by. It was spoken to the Disciples:—

XVI. AND He said also unto His Disciples, 'There was a certain rich Man, which had a Steward; and the same was accused unto Him that he had wasted His goods.

So far, all seems plain. The 'Rich Man' is God; the 'Steward' is one of ourselves: and this reveals to us one very important relation in which we all stand towards our MAKER, namely, that of *stewards*,—stewards of the opportunities with which His Providence hath entrusted us. Now, 'it is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful*^a.' Elsewhere, we are taught to regard ourselves as Traders: but in either case, our opportunities are His 'goods;' the *ownership* rests with *Him*, not *us*; and terrible is the responsibility of those who '*waste* His goods.' Verily there is one that ever accuseth us unto Him,—even Satan, who from that very circumstance is called *the Accuser of the brethren*^b.

2 And He called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer Steward.

And God calls us in many ways:—by afflictions, by illness, by the signs of decay in ourselves or

^a 1 Cor. iv. 2.

^b Rev. xii. 10.

others, by the sight of Death. Whatever speaks to us of departure, and of Judgment to come, is a call from God. Of course, the actual requirement to give up our stewardship, comes with the Day of our Departure,—when God will call us to our Great Account. But it is plain that Death itself is not what is referred to in the Parable, but rather a warning that Death is at hand; else would the Steward have found it impossible to act as he acted: and it is clearly unfair to press the Parable, so as to make its details applicable to what may take place upon a death-bed.

Then the Steward said within himself, ³ What shall I do? for my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to ⁴ do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

Hitherto, he who reads the Parable readily admits that under the names of 'a certain Rich man,' and 'a Steward,' he is hearing about God and Man. The transactions which follow, beginning with the last words in ver. 4, seem to shew that this is a mistake: that we are, in fact, hearing of a purely human transaction,—the conduct of a shrewd, but wholly unprincipled servant with respect to a confiding employer. And yet, our LORD's comment recalls our original conviction. Indeed it proves that it was correct. The difficulty consists, (as we at once discover,) in de-

cluding on *the extent* to which the details of the Parable are capable of being applied to ours.

Now, the Steward's perplexity we can readily apply and explain. He has no strength of his own,—('I cannot dig:') he is ashamed to beg help of his fellows,—('to beg I am ashamed') Neither from within nor from without does he find security. He resolves on a proceeding therefore, which, when he becomes houseless, may be the means of providing him with a refuge.

5 So he called every one of his Lords and debtors *unto him*, and said unto them,

6 How much owest thou unto my Lord?

he said, An hundred measures of oil.

he said unto him, Take thy bill, and

7 down quickly, and write fifty. Then

he went to another, And how much owest thou

And he said, An hundred measures of wheat.

And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and

write fourscore.

The lord of the Steward had evidently many possessions, — oliveyards and harvest-fields which were farmed by tenants, on condition of their paying him a fixed proportion of the produce. One of these tenants had yet a hundred measures of oil to send in; another, still more, his lord as many measures of wheat. The Steward bids them both sit down quickly, (for no

written acknowledgment of their respective debts,)—and bids them alter the amount to a far less sum.

And the *lord* commended the unjust Steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of Light.

'*The lord*,'—namely, *of the Steward*. Not *our LORD*, observe. This is often overlooked, but is much to be noted. *Our LORD* does not commend the servant; nay, He calls him '*unjust*.' But the man's master, on hearing the history of what he had done, praised him *for his shrewdness*,—commended *the prudence* he had shewn in providing for his own temporal interest. The Steward had, in fact, so availed himself of his position,—so improved his remaining opportunities,—that though displaced from his office and driven from his home, he found himself provided at once with a place of refuge, and with friends.

Next, let *our LORD*'s comment on what precedes, be carefully noted. He has told us nothing about the Steward,—except that he was '*unjust*.' Concerning the entire transaction, however, He has this remarkable observation,—that '*the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of Light*.'

Let it be observed, therefore, that these words supply the true clue to the Parable; and that it is at our peril that we seek to draw our SAVIOUR'S words aside from their declared intention, in order

to elicit from them teaching which they were never meant to convey. He is discoursing of the Use and Abuse of Riches,—or, (as He calls them in the next verse,) ‘the Mammon of Unrighteousness:’ and He has shewn how a man of shrewd foresight would act with respect to the unrighteous Mammon, in the prospect of dismissal from his stewardship. That he would act *unrighteously*, was to be expected. He was an unrighteous man,—one who had wasted his lord’s goods. But the man’s *character* is not the question. He acted *providently*,—and that was all. As in the Parable of ‘the Unjust Judge,’ so here, our attention is invited to a single circumstance. Since *here*, the Steward,—as *there*, the Judge,—is ‘unjust,’ the argument may be considered to stand in this case, somewhat as in the other:—‘See how the unjust Steward acted, in order to secure for himself mere temporal comfort. And shall not the children of Light display the same anxiety to provide for themselves an eternal home^e?’ Our LORD’s declaration, in the verse before us, is in fact little else than this question, thrown into a different shape. The Prudence displayed by worldly persons, so far surpassing *that* of many Christian men,—is the thing we are called upon to notice; and a striking thing it certainly is.—Our LORD proceeds:

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;

^e Compare the language of St. Luke xviii. 6.

that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

On this, it may be observed first, that 'When ye *fail*,' means nothing else than 'when ye *die*:' but it is an uncommon, as well as a very beautiful expression, implying a peaceful and happy end^d, like that of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob^e:—a mere 'failing' in respect of bodily strength, and passing out of this visible world. 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me,' (saith our SAVIOUR,) '*shall never die*!.' But the next words present graver difficulty, and more require explanation.

'Mammon,' though a word of foreign origin, was a familiar term, in the language of the ancient Jews, for '*riches*.' On our LORD's lips, therefore, it denotes worldly wealth generally^g. And because the goods of this world are so often obtained by unfair, unholy means,—so often expended in a selfish, unholy manner,—He here calls Riches 'the Mammon of unrighteousness,' or 'the unrighteous Mammon^h.' 'They are so frequently and so generally *misused*,' (says a good man,) 'as from that *to have acquired a name*!.' But it is of Money, nevertheless, unrighteous though it be, that our LORD here bids us 'make to ourselves friends;' and the mysterious reason is added,—'that, when ye fail, they may receive you into

^d So Bp. Pearson. ^e See the ancient Greek version of Gen. xxv. 8: xxxv. 29: xlix. 33,—where we render the word 'give up the ghost.' ^f St. John xi. 26. ^g Compare St. Matth. vi. 24.

^h See below, ver. 11.

ⁱ Rev. W. J. Palmer.

everlasting habitations :’—concerning which striking mode of expression the reader is referred to the note on St. Luke xii. 20. This counsel, in fact, it is, which is so pregnant with difficulty; for we are actually required to do something with respect to *money* which, in its result, shall so resemble the proceeding of ‘the unjust steward,’ ‘that, when we are put out of the stewardship, they may receive us,—not indeed into their houses, but,—into everlasting habitations^l.’

It is useless therefore to overlook this difficulty. It might be truly remarked, for example, that since our LORD’s debtors are sinful men, and their *debts, sins*; he who turns the sinner from the error of his way, causes him who in reality owes an hundred to write fifty or fourscore,—and makes for himself friends who will become powerful intercessors for him with God^k. But then, how is this ‘a making friends with *the mammon of unrighteousness*?’ Our business is clearly to ascertain what this means, and how this is to be done.

The inference from our LORD’s words, then, is unavoidable. It is possible so to exercise the stewardship of our opportunities,—so to conduct ourselves in the management of our wealth,—that the great Work of our Salvation, (so far as it is to be wrought out with fear and trembling by ourselves^l;) shall be forwarded thereby. Let each one consider this matter for himself, and apply to his own particular case the principles by our LORD here so

^l Compare ver. 4.

^k Williams.

^l Phil. ii. 12.

emphatically laid down. By *Faith*, doubtless, are men saved; not by *Works*: yet is Faith, if it hath not Works, dead^m,—or rather it is *not* Faith. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath Faith, and have not Works? Can Faith save himⁿ? ‘Faith which worketh by Love^o’ is what God requires: and doubtless great signs of Love towards man may be displayed by the distribution we make of our worldly wealth. “Now, we have by some means become very jealous of such statements, and very unwilling to admit that any reward hereafter is promised to good works and alms-deeds: but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that such promises are made in Holy Scripture; and it is not our business to set them aside, but to interpret them rightly^p.”

Can we then do exactly as the Steward did in the Parable? Certainly not: and it is obvious that if, by any strictly similar proceeding, we *could* secure to ourselves the good-will of any order of beings in the great and terrible Day, it would be a crime to do so. It may be thought, in fact, that the analogy fails altogether in this respect; since it will be the holy Angels who will receive the just into everlasting habitations^q.

And yet,—(for the sayings of CHRIST may not be disposed of as if they were common sayings, of which we are sure that we understand entirely

^m St. James ii. 17.

ⁿ St. James ii. 14.

^o Gal. v. 6.

^p From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. C. Marriott.

^q See St. Matth. xiii. 48, 49.

the meaning,) — what if it should prove that ‘*friends*’ is the word to be supplied before—‘receive you?’ and what if it were our LORD’s actual intention in this place to set before the rich the affecting warning that they will be themselves hereafter welcomed to the bowers of Bliss by those very persons whom their bounty had in life sustained,—the poor of this world, rich in Faith, whom He expressly describes as the heirs of the Kingdom? ‘Make friends of the poor,’ (the meaning will therefore be,) ‘by ministering to their wants; for to them belong those everlasting tabernacles into which thou wilt hereafter desire to be thyself admitted.’ It must be allowed that the Parable of Lazarus, which comes next, strongly supports this view. Or, “if we were to interpret these by other words of our LORD, we might say that since He graciously considers what is done for His poor as done for Himself^r, we are making *Him* our Friend when we devote our means to their relief; and that *He* will receive us into everlasting habitations^s.”

Enough has perhaps now been offered concerning this very difficult Parable. What is most dark, we must be content to leave so. The suggestions already offered concerning what is doubtful, we forbear to press. It remains that we hold fast the great lesson which the Parable was meant to convey,—and clearly apprehend its *undoubted*

^r St. Matth. xxv. 40.

^s From a MS. Sermon by the Rev. C. Marriott.

point. The Steward was wondrous *prudent* in his conduct, displaying a great amount of worldly wisdom. How is it that Christian men display so little of that better Wisdom which they have been taught in the School of CHRIST?—Again, it was in respect of the unrighteous Mammon that he shewed his wisdom. How does it happen that we, the Stewards of a LORD dividing to every man severally as He will^t,—whence is it that *we* overlook the similar result with which that same unrighteous Mammon may also be dispensed by ourselves; namely, so, that when ‘flesh and heart faileth^u’ we may be received into an everlasting home^v?

The strangeness of the History adduced by our Blessed LORD in order to establish this lesson, was freely admitted at the outset. In taking leave of it, the pious suggestion of a living writer well deserves attention; namely, that it may be one object of the narrative, (which, like the next, has been supposed to be a true History), “to shew that all the occurrences of the world, however bad and unworthy in themselves, yet should minister to the spiritual edification and wisdom of God’s children; that whatever language they may speak to others, they contain within them another better language which they speak to these . . . Here was an instance of great iniquity, crowned with success,

^t 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^u Ps. lxxiii. 26.

^v Consider the following places,—St. Matth. vi. 19 to 21: xix. 21. St. Luke xii. 21, 33. 1 Tim. vi. 17 to 19, &c.

and admired by the world for its wisdom; and which might, therefore, have been supposed to serve as a stumbling-block to the good: yet, on the contrary, it comes forth with the greater force and beauty as bearing witness to the transient nature of things below, and of eternal habitations with God. There is a peculiar sweetness and power in such teaching. It seems to shew the world as God's world: all things as working for good to His elect. It corrects the error of looking upon the things of the world in any way as apart from God; as if, because iniquity aboundeth, it were not His world. Thus Love itself is instructed, and need not wax cold, nor be stifled, but burn the brighter; while the very evils of the world are made to minister to the divine flame of Charity, and the wisdom of the just*."

Our SAVIOUR proceeds 'to lay down a rule upon which God's judgment will be justified in withholding the enjoyment of the greater good in Heaven from those who have not used aright the things entrusted to them on Earth':—

- 10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

'Which is as much as if He had said,—The use which men make of the goods of this present world, which are comparatively of small value, shews the use they would make of such as are far

* Williams.

† Rev. W. J. Palmer.

greater, were the same committed to them, and which belong to the children of God in Heaven. If they have used these aright, so would they use those; and if they have abused these, they would abuse those likewise. *Faithfulness* and *Injustice* are properly applied to the use and abuse of things not our own, but committed to us for the honour and purposes of the owner. For to apply them to our *own* uses and purposes, and not *His*, would be a breach of trust, and therefore unfaithful and unjust in a very high degree^a.'

This then supplies the answer to any doubt which may arise concerning the dignity of the little concerns of daily life. 'The Saints of God will hereafter 'judge Angels^a.' Can then the petty concerns of an earthly stewardship be worthy of their attention? "It is in these small matters that the fidelity is to be proved which shall be found meet to inherit eternal treasures; in these shadows of good is to be shewn worthiness for the Divine realities^b." Hence it follows,—

If therefore ye have not been faithful in 11
the unrighteous mammon, who will commit
to your trust the true *riches*?

'Assuredly, no wise person will; and therefore,

^a From a sermon by the Rev. W. J. Palmer,—late Rector of Mixbury and Finmere: a man of truly primitive piety and exemplary goodness; who gave in the account of a most blessed stewardship, on the 28th September, 1853.

^a 1 Cor. vi. 3.

^b Williams.

neither in this case will God commit to your power the riches of the world to come.

‘But,’ (proceeds the pious man just now mentioned at the foot of the page,) ‘the very nature of the possession of present and future good is different. The present is not our own: the future, by God’s gift, will be. The present belongs to another: it is only committed in trust to those who enjoy it for a season. To GOD and CHRIST present things belong: to us, they are only committed in trust, being lent; graciously lent, that by them we may work out an inestimable reward. If we have not been faithful in these,—if we have not done the works for the doing of which they were entrusted to our care, and concerning which we know that we shall have to render an account,—never must we expect to be put in possession of those better things, which at a future day, and if we have used these aright, we may hope to call *our own*.’ As it follows:

- 12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?

‘*Our own*,’—because ‘no account will be required concerning them; and in respect of them our will, will be as God’s. The force of the argument is clear to the apprehension of those who bear in mind what is revealed of the conditions of that glorious state, where God shall be ‘all in all;’

° 1 Cor. xv. 28.

and where we shall be as Kings and Priests before GOD and the FATHER of our LORD^d?'

So far, a good and faithful man, but lately gone to his reward. Let us not fail to notice the singular light thrown by the preceding words of Scripture on the life to come,—concerning which so little has been revealed, that every fresh communication on the subject from the lips of CHRIST Himself is unspeakably precious. The *social* character of the future Life,—the bliss which will spring out of the preservation and the perfection of human ties,—St. Paul distinctly notices^e. The promotion to a loftier trust and a more splendid stewardship is further declared by our SAVIOUR in other places of the Gospel besides the present^f. And we may not fail to observe that, on more than one occasion, a difference in *the nature* of the Tenure is proclaimed. No longer Service, but *Rule*^g,—no longer another's goods, but *our own*,—will occupy as many as are greeted with the blessed salutation,—'Well done, good and faithful Servant!'

It only remains to notice the sayings with which our SAVIOUR takes leave of the subject.

No servant can serve two masters: for 13 either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and

^d Rev. i. 6.

^e 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

^f Consider St. Luke xix. 17, 19.

^g See the note on St. Luke xix. 17.

despise the other. Ye cannot serve GOD and Mammon.

‘Mammon,’ in this place; denotes the pleasures of this Life generally; because Money is the means of procuring them. And the intention of these words seems to be, to convey to our LORD’s hearers a solemn warning against any attempt to effect a compromise between the Service of GOD and the service of the World: that is, to declare the impossibility of doing GOD’s pleasure here, and our own pleasure after the flesh, at the same time. In the Sermon on the Mount, we have met with this saying already^h; but take notice that instead of ‘no *man* can serve two masters,’ (as there,) it is here ‘no *servant*,’—in allusion to the Steward in the parable which goes before.

- 14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided Him.

They perceived that the Parable of ‘the Unjust Steward,’ was directed against *the sin of Judas*ⁱ. The Pharisees were themselves largely infected by the same vice. Accordingly, they seek to turn into derision what the Holy One has spoken.

- 15 And He said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but GOD knoweth your hearts: for that which

^h St. Matth. vi. 24, where see the notes.

ⁱ See the notes on St. Mark xiv. 25.

is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

These last few words seem to contain an awful foretaste of the parable which is to follow;—if *that* may be called a parable which has every appearance of being a true history. Our LORD's meaning is probably very well represented by the expression 'highly esteemed;' but what He actually said, was—'that which is *lofty*.' He was addressing a dominant sect among the Jews, notorious for nothing so much as for their ambition, self-righteousness, and vainglorious pride^k; and who fenced themselves within the sanctions of the Law,—of which they may have meant to imply that our SAVIOUR was an unauthorised Teacher. He therefore informs them that,

The Law and the Prophets *were* until 16 John : since that time, the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

In other words, the entire fabric of the Law had already effected its purpose; and the predictions of the Prophets, having now found fulfilment, both 'the Law and the Prophets' belonged in a manner to the past. 'The preaching of John,' as it was the birthday of the Gospel^l, so was it also the day of departure for the Law and the Prophets^m. 'Thenceforward, the good

^k Consider St. Matth. xxiii. (the whole chapter): St. Luke xi. 37 to 44: xiv. 7.

^l Acts i. 22.

^m See the note on St. Matth. xvii. 8.

tidings of God's Kingdom are proclaimed; and every one forceth his way in:' that is, the Kingdom is being taken by violence, like Canaan of old, from you its ancient possessors,—who 'dwell careless, after the manner of the Zidonians^a.'

Not that the Law had *indeed* failed by the bringing in of the Gospel. Its deeper meanings had but thereby been discovered, and its true intention seen. Hence, the words which follow :

- 17 And it is easier for Heaven and Earth to pass, than one tittle of the Law to fail.

CHRIST therefore was not about to destroy the Law. He came not to destroy but to fulfil,—and to convict them of their wickedness in making that Law of none effect by their lax interpretation of it. Adverting to their wicked teaching on the subject of divorce, He proceeds to give one instance of the inviolability of the Law : saying,—

- 18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery : and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

Full of instruction it surely is to find the sanctity of Marriage, and the indissoluble nature of the Marriage bond, so often insisted upon by our SAVIOUR ; and here, singled out of the whole Law, to be a sample of it. Consider St. Matthew v. 31, 32: also xix. 9, and the notes on both

^a Judges xviii. 7,—quoted by Williams.

places. The Reader is also requested to read what has been offered on St. Matthew xix. 10.—He is further requested to take notice that the four verses we have just been considering are but costly samples of our LORD's teaching on this occasion,—precious fragments of a long, and lost, Discourse.

Hitherto, our SAVIOUR “has been shewing how by a certain right use, Riches may be made available even to our being received into everlasting Happiness when we die. In what follows, He inverts the picture; shewing the loss of one who uses the good things with which his life may have been blessed, upon himself alone,—namely, in advancing his state and condition in the world, serving in various ways his own ease, pleasure, and gratification°.” The Parable of Lazarus is in fact a most astonishing Revelation. Whereas all the other parables of our LORD, refer either to the Life present or to the Life to come, this parable refers to that mysterious Life which lies between the two. It follows the soul of man beyond the limits of the Grave, uncovers the unseen World, and tells us many things concerning that hereafter concerning which we cannot but feel such deep and awful interest. The constant belief of the Church that what follows is a true history, adds to the sense of wonder with which we read it.

There was a certain rich man, which was 19
clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared

° Rev. W. J. Palmer.

20 sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus,

The name of the 'certain rich man' is not mentioned; but the beggar bore the name of our SAVIOUR'S friend^p,—and that, for a mysterious reason which will be found suggested below, in the note on ver. 31. It is the *only* proper name which occurs in any of our LORD'S parables. 'Does He not seem to have been quoting,' (asks Augustine,) 'from that book where He found the name of the poor man written, but where the name of the rich man was blotted out^q?'

What is said concerning these two persons must be carefully noticed. No sins are laid to the rich man's charge. It is only related of him that his outer and his inner garments were habitually of the most costly and luxurious kind; and that he 'fared sumptuously,'—(literally, 'feasted^r splendidly')—'every day.' From this last circumstance, he is styled in the heading of the Chapter^s '*the rich glutton*;' and without pretending to defend such an interpretation of our LORD'S words, we may yet remark that the man *is* a glutton whose fare is sumptuous *every day*^t.

As the rich man is charged with no single crime,

^p St. John xi. 5.

^q Consider Exod. xxxiii. 12: also the note on St. Luke x. 28.

^r See the note on St. Luke xii. 19,—where the same word is found.

^s From the Vulgate.

^t Consider St. Matth. vi. 16, and the note there. See also the note on St. L. ke xviii. 12.

so neither does the beggar obtain a word of praise. [It is simply said that,—so far from sharing the luxurious life of the rich man,—he was one,

which was laid at his gate, full of sores, ²¹ and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

Words, few indeed; yet conspiring to exhibit a case of truly abject misery. The picture of the dogs approaching to lick the beggar's sores, is surely more than affecting—on the lips of such a Speaker! Take notice, however, that it is not implied that the beggar was *habitually* laid at the rich man's gate. It is only said that on a certain occasion he 'had been laid' there. On the other hand, it *does* seem to be implied that he wished, but *wished in vain*, to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the other's table; and further, that his bodily ailments were as little regarded as his bodily needs. The poor sufferer, it may be, having been once laid near the rich man's threshold, remained there till he died; having had the sense of his own misery heightened by the sight of the other's enjoyment,—whose selfish hardness of heart was also thus left without excuse.

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, ²² and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom:

Let us notice, one by one, the several points

which are here revealed to us concerning the of the soul after death: and first, the state that the souls of the just are 'carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom,'—that is, in a place where Abraham is; a region of Peace and Joy, where, (as it is said in ver. 25) the souls of the just are 'comforted.' The beggar died, oh, blessed change! He who knew no friends on earth, finds that 'the sons of God'^u are appointed to minister to his bliss. Yesterday, dogs licked his sores: to-day,—'not one Angel carries but many; for many are eager to bear^x:^y rejoicing to touch such a burthen^y.' "Are not all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of Salvation^z?" follows,

the rich man also died, and was buried.

Note the contrast. After a time, 'the rich man also died,—and was buried.' Nothing more related. His end was marked by a splendid funeral and that was all. (Weeping friends, of whom the rich man was unconscious,—instead of rejoicing Angels, whose embracing arms the beggar enjoyed.) Whether Lazarus was buried or not, we are not told; neither do we care to inquire. . . . All this is set down for the comfort of the poor, who have but humble funerals.—The rich man, however, was buried; 'but he carried nothing away with him; glory did not descend after him^a.' Far from

^u Job i. 6.
^y Ludolphus.

^x Heb. i. 14.

^z William
^a See Ps. xlix

and in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in 23 torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Further, and yet more wondrous disclosures, are here made. A state of torment, in the case of the wicked, is found to *precede* their final condemnation,—‘a certain fearful looking for of judgment^b,’ as the Apostle speaks. Their souls are gathered into the chambers of the departed, and they are ‘tormented.’ Is it not also implied that they *behold* the Saints afar off in bliss? It would indeed seem so, from another place of Scripture as well as the present^c: and, in such case, the remark would be as true as it is striking, that “as the poor man, while he lived, had his sufferings heightened by beholding the other’s abundance; so does it now add to the torment of the rich man to behold Lazarus in bliss^d.” But it may be unsafe to take our LORD’S words concerning this matter quite literally. What is certain, the regions occupied by the wicked and the just are not only different, but they are so entirely distinct that there is no longer any possibility of passing from the one to the other. This is made plainer by the words which follow, in ver. 26.

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, 24 have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that

^b Heb. x. 27.

^c See St. Luke xiii. 28. Compare Isaiah lxx. 13.

^d Chrysostom.

he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.

Truly *that* was 'a great and exceeding bitter cry^e!' The rich man is now the beggar; and see how piteously he pleads! Release, he knows to be impossible: some relief, he thinks he *may* obtain. Moreover, he can apprehend no channel of mercy so obvious as the hands of the very beggar whom in life he had slighted! Consider this in connexion with what was offered above in the note on ver. 9,—fourth paragraph from the end.

Many of the Fathers observe that 'he who had refused crumbs of bread, now asks for a drop of water:' but, (as a thoughtful writer observes,) 'it is more than this. Lazarus desired to be filled with the crumbs: the rich man prayed for but one drop of water on the tip of his finger; and that for his tongue only^f.' And this is a safer remark than the other; for it is not *stated* that the rich man refused crumbs to the beggar.

The suffering wretch addresses himself to Abraham; and calls him his 'Father,' because, being a Jew, he was himself a son of Abraham^g: but our LORD's warning in this matter had been very emphatic,—'Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father^h!' More-over the rich man knows that he is addressing

^e Gen. xxvii. 34.

^g Consider St. Luke xiii. 16.

^f Williams.

^h St. Matth. iii. 9.

one who was hospitable to strangersⁱ; and surely (he thinks) Abraham will not turn a deaf ear to such a small request from himself! But in this respect also, he has to be undeceived.

Gregory the Great, in his Commentary on the Book of Job, has a striking remark on the rich man's complaint that *his tongue* was the seat of his suffering. "Almost always," (he observes,) "is unbridled speech the attendant of banqueting. Hence, the man who used to 'fare sumptuously every day,' in the end is declared to have coveted a drop of water to cool *his tongue*. The punishment is a hint as to what had been his sin." But the force of this remark would not be diminished if it should be thought that in respect of *gluttony* also the rich man had greatly offended. The narrative however is severely brief. Not one of the rich man's sins are recorded.

The mention of 'eyes,' 'finger,' 'tongue,' in this place, is of course figurative. So we speak of the eyes, the finger, the mouth of God. But it has been well remarked that "as, in this latter case, there may be some secret reference to the Incarnation, so there may be, in the former, to the *Resurrection of the Body*^k."—To proceed :

But Abraham said, Son, remember that 25 thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things :

ⁱ Heb. xiii. 2, alluding partly to Gen. xviii. 3.

^k Williams.

but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

The discourse of Abraham reminds us of the discourse of Him whose day 'Abraham saw, and was glad¹.' 'Woe unto you that are rich,'—'that are full,'—'that laugh now;'—'for ye have received your consolation^m!' Indeed, the two places should be compared; for we are thereby guided to a right understanding of the case before us.

It is sometimes pointed out concerning the present parable, not only that the Rich man is not related to have been guilty of any heinous offence; but that he appears to have gone to the place of torment less for sins of commission, than for sins of omission;—that he had failed to *do* anything in order to serve and please God;—and the like.

But we must be very careful as to the inferences we draw from Holy Scripture. True indeed it is that nothing actually sinful is distinctly recorded concerning the Rich Man; but then, (as already observed,) neither is there a syllable spoken concerning *the Beggar*, in the way of *praise*. We must reason backward concerning them therefore: and since the one was finally accepted,—the other, miserable,—their lives must have been such and such. The one certainly was not rewarded *because* he had been poor; any more than the other was punished *because* he was rich. Of Abraham, with whom the beggar had his eternal por-

¹ St. John viii. 56.

^m St. Luke vi. 24, 25.

tion, it is even expressly recorded that he was 'very richⁿ.' The reason, therefore, of their respective fates is to be sought in some unrelated cause: and it is not difficult to see of what nature that cause must have been. Indeed, the rich man's sin is contained, and all but formally stated, in the reproof addressed to him by Abraham: 'Son, remember that *thou*,' (the word is emphatic,) 'didst in thy lifetime *have out*,' or 'fully take, *thy* good things.' The things spoken of were not *really* good: true. But the rich man in this parable, (like the rich Fool, in another*,) had made them his 'good' things, all the same. He had lived for this world only: and had no treasure, no hope, no concern in the world to come. '*Thou*,' (says Abraham,) 'in *thy lifetime*,'—for the rich man had cared for no life but *that*.

But the Beggar had received 'evil things' only, all his days: that is, he had suffered poverty, disease, hunger, abject misery,—all those things which the world accounts 'evil.' It is to be supposed further that he had hungered and thirsted after heavenly consolation, even more than earthly: had been patient in suffering; and become perfected by the discipline of pain. His loathsome condition will have bred in him the most abject sense of his own vileness: whereby it came to pass that he found favour with Him who 'raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-

ⁿ Gen. xiii. 2.

* See St. Luke xii. 19.

hill^o.’ How plainly, at all events, are we taught hereby that such an estate is a favourable condition to future Blessedness;—but that the possessor of Riches, on the contrary, because he is in danger of *trusting* in his Riches^p, incurs the further peril of forgetting his God! It seems to be the object of our LORD’s discourse to shew the fatal tendency of a luxurious life to close the heart against want and misery; and to set forth, in solemn warning, the contrast which may exist between the conditions of men in Time and in Eternity. . . . Such, then, seems to be the general tendency of the parable,—severe in its brevity, and wondrous sparing, (as the manner of Scripture is,) in its details. “It is a setting forth, in living representation, of the concluding maxim of the foregoing parable,—namely, ‘Make to yourselves friends’ of the poor, by the use of riches: for here the rich man is shewn as having failed to make Lazarus his friend. ‘The poor,’ says Augustine, ‘have no habitations here on earth into which they can receive us; but they have habitations which are Eternal^q.’”—Abraham continues,

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

^o 1 Sam. ii. 8,—which must be compared with St. Luke i. 52, 53.

^p St. Mark x. 23, 24.

^q Williams.

The gulf is 'great,'—because it sunders the evil from the just, as the West is severed from the East: 'fixed,'—because God hath separated good from evil by an everlasting barrier which can never be disturbed. And this seems as express a statement as an honest mind can desire against the doctrine that after a season of purgatorial suffering the souls of the departed may be transferred from the place of torment to the place of rest. *Life*, it is implied, is the season for Repentance: whence it follows,—

Then he said, I pray thee therefore Father, 27
that thou wouldest send him to my father's
house: for I have five brethren; that he 28
may testify unto them, lest they also come
unto this place of torment.

We are thus presented with another striking disclosure: namely, that in the state of departed souls, not only consciousness remains, but "the recollection of what was done on earth, and of the persons of those with whom the dead formerly conversed." 'The rich man's knowledge and memory are preserved for his punishment; for he knew Lazarus whom he had despised, and he remembered his brethren whom he had left.'

Take notice that whatever the sins of the Rich man may have been, (and they were doubtless great,) a *kindly disposition* seems yet to have been his. Very little is revealed concerning him; but

† Rev. W. J. Palmer.

* Gregory the Great.

the anxiety he displays to provide for the safety of his 'five brethren' is an affecting indication of feelings not yet wholly blunted,—a heart by no means callous to the claims of family and kindred.

It is even better worth our observation, however, that we behold here as in so many other places of Scripture, the strivings of fruitless Remorse. As the foolish go in search of oil when it is too late,—as the wicked begin to knock 'when once the Master of the House hath shut to the door',—as Judas brings back the price of blood, and seeks to make a miserable restitution, after His LORD has been condemned^u,—as Esau, with 'a great and exceeding bitter cry,' demands of his Father the blessing which he has already forfeited,—so here does the rich man, when it is too late, begin to think of sending a preacher to those brethren with whom, in Life, he had so often made a mock of Heaven and Hell,—of the unseen World,—of Religion itself! Unavailing sorrow becomes henceforth part of his torment; and probably its most bitter ingredient.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

'As if he said, Thy brethren are not so much thy care as *His* who created them, and appointed them teachers^x.' 'They have sufficient means o

^u St. Luke xiii. 25.

^v St. Matth. xxvii. 3 to 5.

^x Chrysostom.

grace afforded them: let them act up to their light⁷.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but 30 if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

It is ever thus with sinners: they fancy that had they but greater opportunities they must surely become saints. This man supposed that clearer *evidences* of Religion would have made of himself and all his brethren, true believers. In the meanwhile, his perseverance in the argument is no less affecting than it is striking. But Abraham is unmoved:

And he said unto him, If they hear not 31 Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

He does not *say* that he will not grant the thing asked for; but that it will be unavailing. Thus, a Lazarus *was* actually sent from the dead, at the end of four days, to the Jewish people; but without effect. And it may be thought that it was in order to draw the attention of the nation towards this circumstance, that our SAVIOUR assigned to the beggar beforehand the name of him whom He would hereafter awake out of sleep⁸.

“This part of the Parable,” (writes a good man,)—“prophetic as it was of the continued

⁷ Williams.

⁸ St. John xi. 11, &c.

unbelief of the Jews, who, refusing to h
 Law and the testimony of the Prophets,
 believe the miracles which JESUS our Lo
 done before their eyes, failed to be conve
 that greatest miracle of all, His own Resur
 from the Grave,—teaches us this lesson,—
 is of the very last moment immediately
 about performing the will of GOD in such
 as it hath been once revealed: for, by the e
 of the Jews, we may understand that other
 reason can render intelligible a dispensation
 we do not like; no evidence can persuade
 truths which we are not willing to receive^a

This, in truth, is the sum of the matter.
 is not,—there never hath been,—any lack
 dence. A change of heart, not a more im
 teacher, is the one thing needed. Concern
 impenitent sinners of these latter days, Ab
 words declare thus much:—If the Old an
 Testaments,—the Gospel of JESUS CHRIS
 means of Grace by GOD Himself provide
 craments, and the services of the Sanctua
 the teaching of the Prayer-Book,—CHRIST
 ing with us, invisibly, by His HOLY SPIRIT
 the countless helps afforded to Christian m
 Christian country;—if all *these* prove una

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 CHRIST teacheth to avoid occasions of offence. 3 One to forgive another. 6 The power of Faith. 7 How we are bound to GOD, and not He to us. 11 He healeth ten lepers. 22 Of the Kingdom of GOD, and the Coming of the Son of Man.

It is obvious to suppose that some interval elapsed between the delivery of the Parable of Lazarus, with which the former chapter ended, and the discourse which follows. The first word ('then') has no relation, in this place, to Time.

XVII. THEN said He unto the Disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come : but woe *unto him*, through whom they come ! It were better for him that a millstone were ² hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves. 3

Whether our LORD is here speaking particularly of children in age^a, or of men with childlike hearts^b, does not appear.

^a As in St. Matth. xviii. 2, 6.

^b As in St. Matth. x. 40, 42.

We have already met with these sayings in St. Matthew's Gospel^c; but the clauses are not found in a contrary order. Moreover, they were then delivered in quite a different connexion.

But it will be asked,—What connexion is there between our SAVIOUR's words in this place, with the words which follow? And it must be freely admitted that they do not appear, at first sight, to have any connexion at all. The same thing may be said of verses 3 and 4, and of verse 6,—in all of these places, sayings of our LORD are recorded which are found more or less exactly given in different parts of St. Matthew's Gospel^d. We are not, however, on that account at liberty to assume that these sayings are scraps of those other discourses selected at random by St. Luke, and here set down by him, in utter disregard of Time and Place. It is yet, this is so frequently assumed by writers of good repute, and the suspicion seems so likely to cross the mind of an ordinary reader, that a few remarks shall here be offered on the subject. They will not be out of place, and certainly they are not uncalled for.

It may be regarded as quite certain, then, that the Discourses of our Blessed SAVIOUR are *only partially* set down in the Gospels. *Perfectly* indeed, those discourses are, as they stand recor-

^c St. Matth. xviii. 6, 7; where see the notes.

^d With St. Luke xvii. 3, 4, compare St. Matth. xviii. 1-5. With St. Luke xvii. 6, compare St. Matth. xvii. 20: xxi. 2 (Mark xi. 23.)

(that is, there is nothing in them to change, or add, or take away: there has not been one word set down which it concerns us not to possess; nor has there been one word withheld which it would concern us to recover:) yet have those Discourses been *not entirely* given. This is obvious. The World itself would not contain the record of our LORD'S actions^e; and is it to be supposed that Four short Gospels contain more than a sample of His oral Teaching? That those Divine Discourses have been seldom, *if ever*, given *entire*, is surely obvious. This then will explain why it is often so difficult to trace the connexion between one sentence and another; and to detect the nature of every transition. A link often seems,—doubtless often *is*,—wanting: so that what must once have been beautifully connected in all its parts, is often presented to us in a state which, for want of a better word, we must term *fragmentary*.

But we are not at liberty to assume that there *never was* any connexion, because there does not appear *to be* any connexion *now*. The beads are unstrung. True. But it does not follow that nothing ever held them together. And if, (as not seldom happens,) the fragmentary sayings in question are found to recur in a different part of another Gospel, it is surely a mark of singular impatience, or uncommon weakness, that the suspicion should be so readily admitted that those sayings were uttered only once; and that the Evan-

* St. John xxi. 25.

gelist has been putting together, at random, and which were uttered at a different time, and widely different occasion. The jewels may resemble each other, and yet the threads on they were once strung may surely be wholly distinct. How much worthier, (as well as more virtuous,) is the belief that those words were than once delivered; and that, out of a long course, for some good reason, they alone have preserved on this, the second time of their delivery. In *such* cases, it will often be useless to seek to recover the lost links of thought or expression. They are perhaps hopelessly gone. And the originals must be studied, (like those in the Book of Proverbs,) each by itself.

It has, indeed, many times been the reward of Piety and Learning to supply the wished-for clue; and great is the gratification which results from the discovery that the members of a long course which at first seemed unconnected, and in the contrary, marvellously cohere. Yet, frequent variety of opinion reminds us that there is seldom any real *certainty* in such criticism. It is the duty of a human artist to supply what the Divine Artist has purposely left incomplete. Hence the difficulty, and indeed the danger, of attempting to supply absent words, and to recover the missing link of thought.

The remarks thus made, once for all, shall not be repeated: but they will be called to mind to the advantage by those who love to ponder over

sayings of their LORD; and who desire to entertain worthy notions of the Book wherein those sayings stand recorded.—In a case like the present, it seems to be the safer plan gratefully to recognise the fragments of one of His many long, and lost Discourses: and carefully to gather them up, that nothing, through neglect of ours, be lost. Surely, the fact that the same sayings have already been met with elsewhere, should only serve the more to awaken our attention,—suggesting as it does their uncommon weight, dignity, and importance.

Our LORD proceeds to speak of forgiveness of injuries. What follows should begin with the word 'Moreover,'—

If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if ⁴ he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Sayings very closely resembling these, (as already explained), yet clearly *not* the same, are found in St. Matthew's Gospel^f. It is interesting to discover that in St. Matthew also, they are preceded by a discourse concerning the 'little ones.'

Can it require stating that 'seven' in this place is indefinite^g, and stands for an unlimited number? There are to be no bounds to our forgiveness. 'Not until seven times, but until seventy times seven^h.'

^f St. Matth. xviii. 15, 21.

^g Compare Prov. xxiv. 16.

^h St. Matth. xviii. 22.

5 And the Apostles said unto the LORD, Increase our Faith.

How beautiful a prayer! and in itself, how strong a proof of Faith in the blessed speakers! They knew therefore that their hearts and minds were in their Master's Hands: that He could mould and fashion them according to His own sovereign will.—As Williams truly says,—“For Faith they ask; and by asking, shew their Faith. Thus Prayer ever increases Faith, and Faith ever inclines to Prayer.” The reader is referred to the latter part of the note on St. Luke xviii. 8.

6 And the LORD said, If ye had Faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

Though this precise saying occurs nowhere but here, its resemblance to the words which our LORD delivered on two other occasions,—namely, after His Transfigurationⁱ, and during the last Week of His Ministry^k,—is too striking to escape notice. The points of difference however, are both numerous and considerable. On the first occasion, our LORD was speaking of the Faith required to work miracles; and He mentioned mustard-seed, and the removing of a mountain, but nothing was said of the sea.—On the present occasion, He has been

ⁱ St. Matth. xvii. 20.

^k St. Matth. xxi. 21.

speaking of the Forgiveness of Injuries; and He mentions mustard-seed, and the sea, but nothing is said of the mountain. A tree, (one of the *fig* species,) to be plucked up by the root, is discoursed of instead.—On the third and last occasion, we shall find Him speaking both of Forgiveness of Injuries¹ and the working of miracles; and though no mention is made of mustard-seed, both the moving of a mountain, and the drying up of a fig-tree ‘from the roots^m,’ obtain notice. So much likeness with so much variety deserves attention.

It has been already freely admittedⁿ that the six preceding verses appear at first sight to have no manner of connexion either with what goes before, or what comes after them; and in the long note at the beginning of the present Chapter, the possible reason of this was suggested, as well as the risk encountered by him who endeavours to furnish the missing links of thought. It is only right, however, before dismissing the passage, to point out that a bond of connexion,—neither improbable nor far-fetched,—between the several parts may be easily supplied. Thus, the case of the rich man (in the parable of Lazarus) is one of the most striking ‘offences’ (that is, *stumbling-blocks*), with which we are acquainted. The prosperity of the wicked ‘offended’ the prophet Jeremiah^o; and the Psalmist declared concerning himself that the sight of it had so ‘offended’ him, that

¹ St. Mark xi. 25, 26.

^m St. Mark xi. 20.

ⁿ See the beginning of the note on ver. 3.

^o Jer. xii. 1.

his 'steps had well-nigh slipped^p.'—The transition from 'offending' little ones, to the duty of 'forgiveness of injuries,' in verses 2, 3, finds a striking precedent in St. Matth. xviii. 2 to 14, and 15 to 35. It may be that 'offences' of a certain class cause men to stand in need of forgiveness at the hands of their fellow-men. The Disciples however, deeply conscious that so large a measure of Forgiveness as their Divine Master required could proceed only from a large measure of Faith^q, apply to Him who is the Fountain of all Goodness, for this great gift: and their request gives rise to the remarkable saying which we have just been considering.

What follows, takes the same form as certain Parables,—that of 'the lost sheep' for example': and it is therefore sometimes called a Parable. But, by the same rule, ought not St. Luke xi. 11: xiii. 15: xiv. 5 and 28, to be called Parables? —Our LORD asks:

- 7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? and will not rather
- 8 say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

^p Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3.

^q The connexion is established by St. Mark xi. 22, 25, 26.

^r St. Luke xv. 4. Compare xv. 8: xi. 5: xvii. 7.

Now, what does this mean? and above all, how is it connected with what immediately goes before? The meaning and the connexion may possibly be of this nature.

The Apostles had asked for a large measure of Faith. They knew doubtless of the *moral* wonders which Faith can work: their request in fact *shews* that they knew it. They knew also that they were asking for a gift which would enable them to perform *miracles*. Of this their Divine Master had assured them on a former occasion^s; and He reminds them of it now. But was this request of theirs,—(the request that a double portion, as it were, of their Master's Spirit might rest upon them^t),—a reasonable request at this time? Such gifts 'had not yet been given because CHRIST had not yet been glorified^u.' 'It was expedient for the Disciples that He should go away: for if He went not away, the COMFORTER would not come unto them; but if He departed, He would send Him unto them^x.' 'Greater works than those which they had seen Him do, would then be done by themselves: but not now,—because He had not yet gone to the FATHER^y.' Their request was therefore ill-timed; and not more reasonable, (our LORD seems to say,) than that a servant should be directed to sit down and refresh himself before his Master. It is implied therefore that the Apostles

^s St. Matth. xvii. 19, 20.

^u St. John vii. 39.

^y St. John xiv. 12.

^t 2 Kings ii. 9.

^x St. John xvi. 7.

must wait,—(perhaps until the Day of Pentecost,)—and in the meanwhile be content to minister unto their LORD. Short indeed, as yet, had been their labour at the plough^a,—slight indeed had been their shepherding^a,—and they were not to claim at once the rewards of prolonged service; nor anticipate the hour when their LORD would ‘gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth, and serve them^b.’—In the meantime, He proceeds to remind them that they had no *claims* upon Himself whatever; and shews, (in the words of the heading of the Chapter), ‘how we are bound to God, and not He to us.’ When a master has been duly waited upon by his servant, (our LORD asks,)—

9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

Rather,—Doth he *feel obliged to* that servant? (for *thank* him he doth, doubtless.)

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

^a St. Luke ix. 62. Consider 1 Kings xix. 19, 1 Cor. ix. 10: and see the note on St. Luke iii. 17.

^a There is nothing said about ‘feeding *cattle*’ in the original. The word (and it is presumed the allegorical meaning) is the same as in St. John xxi. 16: Acts xx. 28: 1 St. Pet. v. 2.

^b St. Luke xii. 37.

Thus ends this mysterious and difficult Parable; which we have read so often, that its strangeness no longer strikes us. The general purport of the first half was explained above, in the note on ver. 8. In this latter portion, (namely verses 9 and 10,) it is no longer the duty of patiently serving our divine Master until the appointed time of refreshment,—which is enjoined; but the duty of forming a lowly estimate of the relation in which we stand towards God. And this was necessary; because impatience of reward can only spring from a mistaken view of the relation in which we stand towards Him who deigns to employ us, and from an over-estimation of our service.

We are therefore ‘unprofitable servants,’ at best; but if this is to be said by those who have ‘*done all,*’ what should be the language of those who have offended by thought, word, and deed, against God’s Divine Majesty; and that grievously? what should be *our* language? The Church embodies the text in her xivth Article against the Romish Doctrine of ‘voluntary works besides, over and above, God’s Commandments.’

And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

Because their touch would have brought pollu-

tion. As companions in misfortune, they
together^c; yet do they hold themselves alo
all. "They were obliged to keep with
city^d; in type of those unclean ones who
shut out from the City of God, by Him wh
the keys of the House of David *."

The reader is referred to the notes on th
of the Leper in the viiith. chapter of St. Ma
Gospel^e. "There has been already occas
speak of the nature and meaning of Lep
the Law of Moses^f; that it was the outwar
bol of Sin in its deepest malignity,—of Sin
fore as involving entire separation from God
of spiritual sickness only, but spiritual l
since absolute separation from the one fo
of Life must be no life^g."

13 And they lifted up *their* voices, and
14 JESUS, Master, have mercy on us.
when He saw *them*, He said unto the
shew yourselves unto the priests. A
came to pass, that, as they went, they
cleansed.

On the sanction of the Law of Moses i
by the command (Co show yourselves un

Priests, but by CHRIST Himself that these men were released from that malady which is the great type of Sin. Neither were they commanded to 'shew themselves' to the Priests with any view to their *cleansing*. The office of the Priest was (and is) merely to pronounce with authority on the sufferer's state: for who can forgive sins save God only? Enough has been already offered on this subject in the second note on St. Matthew viii. 4.

"Most instructive is it," (observes Mr. Trench,) "to observe the differences in our LORD's dealing with the different sufferers and mourners who are brought in contact with Him; how the Physician who is all wisdom and tenderness varies His treatment according to the varying needs of His patients^h: how He seems to resist a strong Faith, that He may make it stronger yetⁱ; how he meets a weak Faith, lest it should prove altogether too weak in the trial^j: how one, He forgives first, and heals after^k; and another, whose heart could only be softened by receiving an earthly benefit, He first heals and then pardons^l. There is here, too, no doubt a reason why these ten are dismissed as yet uncleansed, and bidden to go shew themselves to the priests; while that other, whose healing was before recorded, is first cleansed, and not till

^h See the notes on St. Luke viii. 39: St. Matth. xi. 5: St. Mark v. 19.

ⁱ As in St. Matth. xv. 24 to 27,—where see the notes.

^j As in St. Mark v. 36,—where see the notes.

^k As in St. Mark ii. 5,—where see the notes.

^l As in the present instance.

afterwards bidden to present himself in the Temple. Doubtless there was here a heavier trial of Faith:” for, while yet in their uncleanness, they were bidden to do that which implied they were clean,—“ to take a journey which would have been ridiculous, unless CHRIST’s implied promise proved true. They could not have thought that they were sent to the priests in order to be cured : for they must have well known that this was no part of the Priest’s office,—but only to declare cured.”

- 15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

As he had been loud in Prayer^m, so is he now loud in Praise. But the Prayer had been uttered in impurity, and therefore at a distance : the Praise, because it was spoken after his cleansing, was poured forth by the Leper at our SAVIOUR’s feet. How far the party had got on their way, when the blessing overtook them, does not appear : but they were probably out of sight of their Benefactor ; and once removed from His presence, they were unmindful of His benefits also. Only one returned ; but *this* man pressed up to the very feet of the Holy One, whom He had discovered to be ‘mighty to saveⁿ.’ As it follows,—

- 16 and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks : and he was a Samaritan.

^m See above, ver. 13.

ⁿ Is. lxiii. 1.

And JESUS answering said, Were there not 17 ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine?

Rather,—‘Were not *the ten* cleansed?’ . . . How striking an expression of surprise on the lips of our SAVIOUR! He adds,—

There are not found that returned to give 18 glory to GOD, save this stranger.

For the Samaritans were looked upon as strangers and ‘aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel^o.’ Thus was it typically shewn that “the Gentiles were not excluded from the Kingdom of GOD; nay, rather might find a place in it before others who by birth were children of the Kingdom;—that the ingratitude of these might exclude them, while the Faith of those might give them an abundant entrance into all its blessings^p.”

“The nine others were already healed and hastening to the Priest,—that they might be restored to the society of men, and their life in the world: but the first thoughts of the Samaritan are turned to his Deliverer. He had forgotten all, in the sense of GOD’s mercy, and of his own unworthiness^q.” Like Naaman, the Syrian, when recovered from the same terrible disorder, he had come back to his Benefactor, saying,—‘I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant^r!’

^o Eph. ii. 12. See the note on St. Matth. x. 6.

^p Trench.

^q Williams.

^r 2 Kings v. 15.

19 And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy Faith hath made thee whole.

From which words it is obvious to suspect that some higher good had befallen this man than his nine companions in suffering. All had been made clean; but nine ungrateful ones were hastening back to the World. Only one was found eager to remain with his SAVIOUR. It seems to have been the design of that blessed assurance, 'Thy Faith hath saved thee,' to imply that the Samaritan had experienced an inward as well as outward cleansing: that, in *his* case, the soul as well as the body had been the object of saving Love.

How strikingly was the history of Israel itself displayed in the conduct of those nine men! "When He slew them they sought Him, and they returned and inquired after God . . . Nevertheless . . . their heart was not right with Him . . . Yea, they turned back, and . . . remembered not His Hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy^t." And is it not the way with every one of ourselves? Under the pressure of calamity,—under disease, and in the near prospect of Death,—all are prone to lift up their voices from afar, and cry aloud to God for mercy: but when His heavy Hand has been removed, what man can say that he has remembered to be duly thankful for the release?—"We open our mouths wide," (says Sanderson), "till

^t Ps. lxxviii. 34 to 42.

He opens His Hand ; but after, as if the filling of our mouths were the stopping of our throats, so are we speechless and heartless.”

Not only a joyful ^u, but a *thankful* spirit also, is of great price in God's sight. Hence that pious outbreak of the Psalmist,—‘ Bless the LORD, O my soul ; and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, *and forget not all His benefits*.’ What follows might have been fitly spoken by the Samaritan himself.

Our LORD was at this time on the way to Jerusalem ^v : and it is reasonable to think that either from the eager anticipations of His Followers, or from something which He may Himself have said, a suspicion had arisen that the Kingdom of MESSIAH was at hand ^z. This may have suggested the inquiry which follows.

And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation :

The Pharisees knew not what they asked. If the Apostles themselves put forth a similar question in ignorance ^a, how much more the enemies of our SAVIOUR ! These men in fact were inquiring after the visible Advent of that MESSIAH whom they had not eyes to discern, nor the hearts to

^u See the note on St. Matth. xi. 30.

^z Ps. ciii. 1, 2.

^v See above, ver. 11.

^a Consider and compare St. Luke xix. 11.

^z See the note on St. Matth. xxiv. 3.

desire, when they saw Him^b. How then was it possible to satisfy their question? The answer which our SAVIOUR returned was one which contained as large a measure of the truth as they were able to bear. "In another place indeed we are told that both Comings of the Kingdom, the first and the last, are with observation; and may be known by the signs of the times^c: but it is here meant that it was not with such signs as the Pharisees intended,—of which the bodily eye and ear could be witnesses; but with such indications as Faith alone could perceive^d." Our LORD's reply suggested to them that the Kingdom after which they inquired had begun *already*; that it was secret in its nature, and silent in its progress; that it was not only above and around them, but within them likewise. As it follows,—

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.

That is,—“Not a Kingdom seen, material, and temporal; but invisible, spiritual, and eternal: an unseen Kingdom, whose door is opened by Faith, which has its seat in the soul itself^e.” “The kingdom of God” (says the Apostle) “is Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the HOLY GHOST^f.”

^b Isaiah liii. 2.

^c See St. Mark xiii. 29, and the notes there.

^d Williams.

^e Williams.

^f Rom. xiv. 17.

But having returned this general answer to the Pharisees, our SAVIOUR proceeds to give to His Disciples a more particular account of the great mystery after which the others had inquired. His discourse, which partakes of the prophetic character of that delivered as He sat on the Mount of Olives, begins with the near Future; and straight-way stretches on to the end of the World,—embracing the terrors of the second Advent, in its span.

And He said unto the Disciples, The days 22 will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see *it*.

He speaks of the season, now close at hand, when He should be taken from them; and prophecies, (how truly, what heart does not *feel*?), that they would then wish for one of those days back, of which as yet they so little knew the value. He proceeds to warn them of what would prove to them a source of especial danger :

And they shall say to you, See here; or, 23 see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of 24 the one *part* under Heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under Heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in His day.

These words have been already discussed, and at length, in the Commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, — to which it must suffice to refer the

reader^s. It shall only be repeated that as 'false Christs' arose both before and after* the Fall of Jerusalem, so it is evident from Prophecy that Pretenders will attend the second Advent of MESSIAH. Of *both* sets of Deceivers therefore, our LORD here speaks; although it is plain that His words point chiefly to what will happen in *the end of the World*,—that tremendous Day when the glorious Advent of MESSIAH will be no matter of private opinion, and vague rumour, but a thing patent as the lightning which fills the air with brightness, and makes itself seen in an instant from one extremity of Heaven to the other.

25 But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

Thus does He ever check the ardour and impatience of His Disciples, by some allusion to His Passion,—some assurance that of Himself, no less than of the humblest of His followers, it holds true that He must endure the Cross, before He wears the Crown. Very brief however is the allusion to His own coming humiliation;—after which, He at once resumes His Prophecy concerning the end of all things,—as a comparison of what follows, with St. Matthew xxiv. 36 to 39, is enough to prove. The direct connexion in which our SAVIOUR thus presents to our view His own lowest depth of

^s See the notes on St. Matth. xxiv. 23 to 27.

* As St. John expressly informs us. See 1 St. John ii. 18, &c., and iv. 3,—where the allusion is clearly to the present place, or to St. Matth. xxiv. 5, 24.

Humiliation and loftiest height of Glory,—departing as a despised criminal, and returning as a triumphant Judge,—is surely very striking!

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall 26 it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, 27 they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the Ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

The sudden destruction of mankind by the waters of the Flood is cited by our Lord in another place as a great type of the sudden destruction which will come upon the World in the Last Day^b. In this place, besides the vengeance which was taken on mankind by the Element of Water, 'in the days of Noe,'—the overthrow of Sodom, 'in the days of Lot,' by Fire, is adduced (in respect of its sudden and unexpected nature) as typical of the great and terrible Day.—It will be remembered that St. Peter in like manner connects these two tremendous Judgments, in his Second Epistleⁱ.

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; 28 they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the 29 same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. Even thus shall it be in 30 the Day when the Son of Man is revealed.

^b St. Matth. xxiv. 37 to 39.

ⁱ 2 St. Peter ii. 5 to 7.

“What is here said of the end of the World is fulfilled and multiplied in little images in the life of each : in every case these are, by Divine appointment, preceding judgments which warn of the suddenness and surprise with which Eternity overtakes each man. And for the same reason that from each, the day of his Death is hidden, in order that he may be always living in expectation of it, —so is it also with the End of the World, that by every generation it may be expected. ‘Behold,’ (says Chrysostom), ‘we know *the signs* of old age, but we know not *the Day* of Death ; so we know not the End of the World, though we know the signs of its approaching¹.’”

ε1 In that Day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away : and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

This striking warning also forms part of the Prophecy which our SAVIOUR delivered on the Mount of Olives ; but, (what is remarkable,) in *that* place it as unmistakeably forms part of the predictions relative to the Destruction of Jerusalem, as in *this* place it must be considered to relate to the Destruction of the World : for, to suppose that the Divine Speaker discourses of the Day of Judgment from ver. 26 to ver. 30, and again from ver. 34 to the end of the chapter,—

¹ Williams.

and yet, that He interposes some remarks (in ver. 31 to ver. 33) relative only to *the Fall of Jerusalem*,—is absurd. In the Commentary on the two first Gospels, perfect order and method were shewn to exist in the Prophecy on the Mount ^k; and we are loathe to believe, or rather we cannot for a moment admit the suspicion, that there exists any want of order and method here.—What, then, is to be thought of the words before us?

We are compelled to inquire in what sense the warning which was to be *literally* understood by those Christians who were alive at the Destruction of Jerusalem, will be capable of being acted upon by the Church of CHRIST in the great and terrible Day: and our first impulse is to point it out as manifest that since, in the Day of Judgment, there can be no 'turning back,'—only in a figurative sense can the present precept be intended for the Church's guidance *then*.

But he who revolves the matter maturely, will perhaps be led at last to adopt a more diffident mode of expression. We know absolutely *nothing* concerning the nature of the End, and the manner of our Blessed LORD's second Coming,—*except what He has been pleased to reveal*. Should we not therefore reverse the process of remark; and rather occupy ourselves in silence with the strangeness of the Revelation here made to us?—the assurance, namely, that a trial resembling that of Lot and his family, in the Day of Sodom; a trial re-

^k See the notes on St. Matth. xxiv. 3, 35, &c.

sembling that of the early Christians, in the Day of Jerusalem; will befall the Church of CHRIST in the latter Days: when delay will be Danger, and return—Death?—Something more will be found on this subject in the notes on verse 83.

But in the meantime, does not one great object with which the words are here introduced seem to be, to suggest to us that the Fall of Jerusalem, no less than the overthrow of Sodom, was typical of the Destruction of the World? “Then, let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains,” (said our LORD concerning the first event). “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!^l” What our SAVIOUR here says is clearly connected with the end of Sodom, and carries on what He had been saying in ver. 29. “The same expression of warning, therefore, comes down to us with the force of an additional type, wherein the figure has been twice already fulfilled,—both in Sodom and in Jerusalem^k.” That our LORD, in ver. 31, is carrying on the allusion contained in verses 28, 29, is proved by the very striking words which follow,—

32 Remember Lot’s wife.

Referring to Genesis xix. 17 to 26.—“This allu-

^l St. Matth. xxiv. 16 to 19.

^k Williams.

sion to Lot's wife is remarkable, as shewing how every incident in the Old Testament is replete with 'instruction in Righteousness': for it deduces a type from what appears to be nothing more than one of the miraculous incidents of history; and leaves it as a proverbial warning unto the end of the World^m." Compare St. Luke ix. 52: also Philippians iii. 13, 14.

Whosoever shall seek to save his life 33 shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

This is one of those sayings, so full of deep Evangelical meaning, the exact bearing of which on the matter in hand it is often (as in this place) very difficult to determine. This difficulty arises probably from our entire ignorance of what will take place at the Last Day. It may be that during that terrible overthrow,—that destruction of the Earth and the works that be therein,—the heavenly-minded will be able to give signal proof of their heavenly-mindedness; and the worldly, of their hankering after the things of this World. Regardless of the warning of 'Lot's wife,' the men who refused to be seasoned with the salt of *her* sad history will 'return back' at the last,—and be involved in the tremendous fate of which *her's* was but the type or shadow. Then will he who thought to save his life, lose it; while he whose obedience caused him to pursue the path of apparent danger,

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

^m Williams.

will in the end be saved. All this, however subject which nothing but the event will intelligible. We do well to meditate on filled Prophecy. It is our bounden duty do". But we have no *right* to understand it

Our SAVIOUR proceeds to foretel "some ordinary interpositions of a discriminating dence, which will preserve the righteous in tions of the greatest danger from certain calamities which in the last ages of the Wor fall upon wicked nations°." His first ex: (the two men asleep on one couch,) is pecu the present Gospel; and seems to be added other two, in order to increase the doubt uncertainty in which 'that Day and Hour' volved. Will CHRIST come during the ho Light? Nay, but it will be in the season men sleep' that He will come. Will it be Night, then? Nay, but the hind will be : field, and maid-servant at the mill.

- 34 I tell you, in that night there shall b
men in one bed; the one shall be taker
 35 the other shall be left. Two *women* sh
 grinding together; the one shall be t

be implied that the greatest discrimination will be used in distinguishing between the righteous and the wicked, at the Last Day. And it is worth observing, that both the examples here given, are selected from very humble life. One, of two labouring men in the field,—one, of two female slaves grinding at the mill,—are mentioned as examples of those who shall be heirs of future glory. They will be 'taken' at the last Day, caught up,' as it is elsewhere said^r;) 'to meet the LORD in the air.' The wicked will be 'left,' and incur their tremendous sentence.

And they answered and said unto Him, ³⁷ Where, LORD? And He said unto them, Wheresoever the Body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

That is,—No doubt will exist as to *where* all this shall be. As the eagles about the slain^s, so will the saints of GOD^t be seen in that Day gathered about 'the LAMB that was slain from the foundation of the World^u.' Wheresoever 'in the clouds^x' the Human Body of the Incarnate SON, thither will His thousand thousands be gathered together! See more on the notes in St. Matthew

^q Consider 1 Cor. i. 26 to 29.

^r 1 Thess. iv. 17.

^s "Her eyes behold afar off; . . . and where the slain are, there is she." Job xxxix. 29, 30.

^t "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." Isaiah xl. 31. Compare Ps. ciii. 5.

^u Rev. xiii. 8.

^x 1 Thess. iv. 17.

xxiv. 28; and take notice that what *there* is called '*the Carcase*' is here called '*the Body*.' The reason is perhaps that in that place, (as already suggested,) the Divine language is so shaped as to have indirect reference to the slaughter which attended the Destruction of Jerusalem; whereas here, the reference is to the Day of Judgment only.

In terms purposely dark, rather than vague, did our SAVIOUR return this reply to the curious inquiry of His Disciples. They cannot have understood all that He intended: perhaps they understood Him not at all. Yet was it doubtless more edifying to them thus to have their doubts resolved, than to be favoured with any more explicit statement. The interpretation of our SAVIOUR'S saying offered above, we hold to be the true one: yet would we by no means deny that such wondrous words as His may embrace within their scope a yet wider meaning, and convey a message of comfort, as well as a note of warning, to all. "It is probable that the eagle and the carcase was a proverbial image among the people of the East, expressing things inseparably connected by natural affinities and sympathies." So that it may be a true, although only a partial paraphrase of our LORD'S words, to understand Him to say,—“Wheresoever sinners shall dwell, there shall My vengeance overtake them; and there will I interpose to protect My faithful servants”.

† Bp. Horsley.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

3 *Of the importunate Widow.* 9 *Of the Pharisee and the Publican.*
 15 *Children brought to CHRIST.* 18 *A Ruler that would follow*
CHRIST, but is hindered by his riches. 28 *The reward of them*
that leave all for His sake. 31 *He foresheweth His death,* 35 *and*
restoreth a blind man to his sight.

THE Parable of 'The Importunate Widow^a,' which follows, "is addressed to the Disciples; and stands in closest relation with what has gone immediately before,—with the description of the sufferings and distress of the last times, when even the Disciples shall desire to see one of the Days of the Son of Man, and shall not see it^b.'" 'Watch and pray' is the injunction which our SAVIOUR delivers in connexion with every prophecy of the suddenness of His second Coming: and the same lesson is here taught by a Parable,—the last words of which contain express mention of the great events alluded to.—It follows,

XVIII. AND He spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

^a Sometimes less happily called 'The Unjust Judge;' but see the heading of the Chapter.

^b Trench.

Rather, — “that *they* ought always to pray.” The precept is addressed to *the Disciples*.

Such a statement as is found here, and in verse 9, seems to demand our gratitude; for, in both places, the Author of the Gospel becomes His own Interpreter, and directs us to the scope and intention of the parable which follows, by Himself openly declaring it. Deprived of such assistance, the Parable of ‘the Labourers in the Vineyard’ may convince us of our real helplessness in the Interpretation of God’s Word.

“Men ought *always* to pray.” The duty is urged, in the same language, in other parts of the New Testament^d: from which it will appear that the Christian Life should be one continuous Prayer, —one long reaching out of the heart to God. For “the soul which is accustomed to direct itself to God upon every occasion,—which, whatever chord be struck, is ever turned towards *Him*,—that soul prays sometimes when it does not know that it is praying^e.” The knee cannot indeed be bent for ever; but the desire and longing of the soul should never cease.

Our LORD adds “and not *to faint* ;” knowing how prone is the heart of man to weary, despond, and grow slack, if it does not at once obtain the thing it prayed for. This precept will also be found urged in countless places of Scripture. See below, the second note on verse 5.

^e St. Matth. xx. 1 to 16.

^d See Ephes. vi. 18, and 1 Thess. v. 17.

• Donne.

saying, There was in a city a Judge, which 2
feared not God, neither regarded Man :

A fearful character is drawn in two words. Here was one who was neither restrained from crime by the fear of God's anger ; nor deterred by regard for the good opinion of mankind. He was recklessly wicked. And this man was a *Judge* !

and there was a Widow in that city ; and 3
she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

'A widow,'—the very type of weakness, poverty, and affliction throughout God's Word! Surely, hers was a hopeless case, having to do with such an one as the former verse describes. However, she did what she could : St. Luke says 'she kept *continually* coming to him,' with the petition that he would 'do her justice' against her Adversary.

And he would not for a while : but after- 4
ward he said within himself,

That is, "he *thought* within himself:" but "*said*" is better, for it sets forth the close connexion between evil thoughts and evil words. The voice of the heart is a loud cry in the ears of God. He said at last,

Though I fear not God, nor regard Man ;

' See the note on St. Luke vii. 12 : and consider such places as Exod. xxii. 22. Deut. x. 18 : xxiv. 17. Job xxix. 13. 1 Kings xvii. 9 to 12. St. Mark xii. 42. 1 Tim. v. 5, &c. See also the note (and references) on St. Matth. xxiii. 14.

5 yet because this Widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

He used a much stronger word than "*weary me.*" He was a bold bad man,—unscrupulous in language as in conduct; and his impatience here finds vent in a metaphor which transforms the poor, helpless, persevering widow into a spiteful pugilist.

GOD, (as will be presently more fully shewn,) is not *like* the Unjust Judge; but the course He pursues towards His elect 'which cry day and night unto Him,' is so far like that of the man described in the Parable, that '*He bears long with them.*' This truth He set forth by a Miracle, when He caused the blind to follow Him into a house^h,—and when He heeded not at first the cry of the blind at Jerichoⁱ,—and when He suffered the waves well nigh to engulf the ship, in which He sailed the Lake^k. Above all, He set forth this way of His Providence in His dealings with the woman of Canaan^l,—whom He not only neglected for a while, but even repulsed. Nor may we doubt that what our LORD enforced twice by a Parable, so often by a Miracle, and on countless occasions by precept, it especially concerns every Christian man to carry in his constant remembrance. The

^g See below, verse 7.

^h St. Matth. ix. 27, 28.

ⁱ St. Matth. xx. 30 to 34.

^k See St. Mark iv. 38, and the note there.

^l St. Matth. xv. 22 to 26.

Reader is referred to the notes on St. Luke xi. 8, —St. Matthew vii. 7, 8, and xv. 24, 27, 28.

And the LORD said, Hear what the unjust Judge saith. And shall not God 6 7

‘The *unjust* Judge;’—not touched with *pity*, but *weary* of molestation; not mindful of *the widow's* wrongs, but careful for *his own* ease and quiet; not desirous of drawing her to himself, but of being rid of her importunity!

‘Hear what *the unjust* Judge saith:’ and shall not the ‘LORD, *the Righteous Judge*,’

avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?

Our LORD often reasons in this manner. “Which of you, *though he be but a man*,” &c.^a: “If a son shall ask bread of any of *you* that is a Father,” &c.^o

God is not therefore *like* the unjust Judge in this Parable; neither is He like the churlish neighbour of whom we read in the Parable of ‘the Friend at Midnight^p.’ The argument is,—If the unfriendly and the unrighteous can thus be moved by persevering prayer and entreaty, how much more “the Holy One and the Just^q,” who “*tires*

^a 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^o St. Matth. vii. 9,—where see the note. See also verses 10, 11.

• St. Luke xi. 11 to 13.

^p St. Luke xi. 5 to 8, where see the notes.

^q Acts iii. 14.

only when we are silent,”—as one of the beautifully remarks^r.

But it is time to advert to the intention of the Parable; which doubtless sets forth to the Church in these the days of her Widowhood ‘when the Bridegroom is taken from her’ she cries to God ‘the Righteous Judge,’ ‘Avenger of mine Adversary,’—that is, the Devil^s and those powers of the World which she continually arrayed against her. “O GOD, I shall the Adversary do this dishonour^u?”

For, in the words of a thoughtful Writer^v “The World is *always*, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether by unwholesome example, or by hostile violence, oppressing the Church, and Satan is evermore seeking to hinder the work of God in every one of her members. Hence the cry ‘out of the deep’ which the elect are continually calling in of a mightier to aid, when they are in danger to be earnest lest the enemy should prevail against them^v.”

And like other parables, the present has a personal and private application. What is true of the Body is true of each of the members. “My soul” (says a great Father,) “conscious of its weakness, conscious that it has no help save in God only, is a widow^x.” What do we else do but continually repeat the Widow’s prayer, when we

^r Chrysostom.

^s St. Matth. ix. 15, and St. Mark ii. 20,—where see

^t 1 St. Peter v. 8. ^u Ps. lxxiv. 11. ^v Trench. ^x

“Deliver us from Evil,” or rather “from *the Evil One*?” We may not doubt that as many as are conscious of a conflict with the powers of Darkness and the World, find here their lesson; are taught what must be their own special course.

But to return to the precious assurance of the text:—If the *unjust* Judge could act thus towards the *despised widow*, who made a feeble wail at his gate, during the short period when causes might come before him,—shall not the *Righteous* Judge attend to the desire of *His own elect*, (His ‘jewels’,) whose great and exceeding bitter cry resounds in His ears all day and all night?—“Though He *bear long* with them,” may perhaps mean, “Though He be *patient* with respect to *them*,” that is, although He displays, even towards those who oppress *them*, that long-suffering Patience whereby He seeks to lead men to Repentance^a. For, (as St. Peter explains,) “The LORD is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering,” or, “*patient* towards us; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance^b.” “How long, O LORD, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the Earth^c?”—is the cry of the souls of God’s martyred Saints beneath the altar. And we hear God’s answer in the words which follow:

^r See St. Matth. vi. 13, St. Luke xi. 4,—and the notes there.

^s Mal. iii. 17.

^a Rom. ii. 4.

^b 2 St. Peter iii. 9.

^c Rev. vi. 10.

8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find Faith on the Earth?

This entire passage will be found to derive singular illustration from that part of St. Peter's second Epistle, where he speaks of CHRIST'S second Advent, — delayed indeed, yet certain: delayed moreover, only because of that very *long-suffering patience* of God which has been already noticed^d

. . . "I tell you," (the Righteous Judge Himself here declares,) "He will avenge them speedily." And these, which are the concluding words of the Parable, are the concluding words of the Volume of Revelation also,—“Surely I come quickly!” “For He cometh,” (says the Psalmist,) “for He cometh to judge the Earth^f.”

“Nevertheless,” — (it is mournfully added,)— “*when* the Son of Man cometh, shall He find Faith on the Earth?” Or rather, ‘*the* faith: that is, ‘the faith which cries and prays to God continually.’ For we know that, in the last days “false Christs and false prophets shall arise,” — shewing signs, and working miracles enough to “deceive, if it were possible, the very elect^g.” The faithful will then be reduced to a very little band for, “because Iniquity shall abound, the Love of the many will wax cold^h ;” and doubtless their *Faith*)

^d See 2 St. Peter iii. 9 and 15.

^e Rev. xxii. 20.

^f Ps. xcvi. 13. ^g St. Matth. xxiv. 24. ^h St. Matth. xxiv. 12

also. Nay, even *their* Faith, (as our LORD Himself here assures us,) will have well-nigh died away.

One of the Fathers remarks that our LORD spoke these words "to shew that when Faith fails, Prayer dies. In order to pray, then, we must have Faith; and that our Faith fail not, we must pray. Faith pours forth Prayer; and the pouring forth of the heart in Prayer, gives stedfastness to Faith^l." See the note on St. Luke xvii. 5.

And He spake this Parable unto certain 9 which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others :

It was the object of the foregoing Parable, then, to set forth the duty of praying *earnestly*. The Parable which follows teaches the duty of praying *humbly*. Or, the one may be regarded as setting forth the duty of Prayer: the other, as teaching in what spirit that duty is to be performed.

Two men went up into the Temple to 10 pray ;

We shall be told in the next words who and what these 'two *men*' were. "They are as yet called by that name only, in which all of every degree stand equal before their common LORD." They 'went *up*,'—for the Temple stood on Mount Sion^k; and to *pray*,—for the Temple was a 'House

^l Augustine.

^k Ps. xxiv. 3.—Accordingly, in verse 14, below, it is said that the Publican 'went *down* to his house.'

of *Prayer.*' "They entered severally the Court of the Israelites out of the hours of stated worship, in order to perform this excellent duty!¹ They went up *really* to pray. The difference between them was great indeed; yet should it be noticed how much they had in common. And these men were,

the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican

Concerning the Publicans, that is, the Jews who collected the taxes for the Roman conquerors of Judæa, something has been said already^m. "The persuasion was most popular and general that for the free-born children of Abraham, it was unlawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or any heathen government; and the Jews who could so far forget their sacred character as to be the collectors of such tribute, or to inform against their countrymen who paid it not, hence came to be regarded with horror as sinful men,—apostates from the character and profession of true Israelites.—The Pharisees, on the other hand, were men whose exactness in the observance of the Law was proverbial among the people; indicated by their very name, which denoted their *separation* from all others . . . Hence therefore, to say of these two men that the one was a Publican, the other a Pharisee, is to say that one passed among the people necessarily for a *sinner*,—the other, necessarily for a *saint*. How they were viewed in this respect by the ALMIGHTY, who

¹ Dr. W. H. Mill.

^m See the note on St. Mark ii. 15.

sees the heart^a," the rest of the Parable sufficiently shews.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,

They *both* stood to pray. Standing was anciently a more usual attitude of prayer than now^o.

God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the 12 week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

Although a single fast-day in the year, was all that was *required* by the Divine Law^p, God's ancient people, (like some branches of the Christian Church,) observed *two* weekly fasts; not *one* only, as our Church directs. These were kept on Monday and Thursday: and these, the Pharisee faithfully kept.—By his profession of giving a tithe of all he possessed, or rather, 'of all his *gains*,' he means,—“Not only the portion which the Law exacts for Religion, and its ministers; but from everything, however minute, which at any time becomes my property,—from mint and anise and cummin,—I scrupulously measure off

^a Dr. W. H. Mill.

^o Hannah stood (1 Sam. i. 26.) while she poured forth her passionate prayer,—1 Sam. i. 9 to 13. See also St. Matth. vi. 5, and St. Mark xi. 25.—*Kneeling*, however, has ever been the approved attitude of addressing God. Notice how 2 Chron. vi. 13 supplies what 1 Kings viii. 22 omits. See also Dan. vi. 10, &c. &c.

^p Levit. xvi. 29: xxiii. 27: Numb. xxix. 7,—alluded to in Acts xxvii. 9

and lay aside a tenth part for the same purpose¹.”

And here, the character of the Pharisee's thanksgiving and profession must be not for it cannot be called a *Prayer*. “If you enter into his words,” (says Augustine,) “you will find that he asked nothing of God. He goes upon duty to pray; but instead of praying, he praises himself.” In thanking God for having kept him from the commission of heinous sin, he was, every way, undoubtedly right. His practice of fasting was sanctioned both by the example, and the precept of our Lord²; and his strictness in this behalf was a commendable thing. All will allow that the dedication of a part of his substance to pious uses was religious and praiseworthy: while it is fair to suppose that he imputes to God's goodness no less what he had actually *done* of good, than what he had *avoided* of evil; and therefore he ‘thanks’ Him for *all*. There was no ‘righteousness’ here.

But all that can be said in his favour, has been said. His utter absence of Humility comes out forcibly in the form which his profession took:—‘God, I thank Thee that I am not *as other men*’ for, “by what right does he introduce the consideration of *other men*, as objects of comparison with himself, when he is approaching the presence of God?” Consider too, above all, the uncharitableness of that clause,—‘*or even* as this Publican

¹ Dr. W. H. Mill. ² St. Matth. vi. 16 to 18. ³ Dr. W. H.

“To despise the whole race of man was not enough for him: he must yet attack the Publican^t.” Surely, the very sight of one who pursued an infamous calling, coming into the Temple for the mere purpose of approaching God, and engaged in the manner which the next verse describes, should have inspired a good man with cheerful hopes concerning him! “When *thou* returnest thanks to God,” (says an excellent preacher,) “let Him be all in all to thee. Turn not thy thoughts to men, nor condemn thy neighbour^u.” A pious Writer has said,—“If we desire that God should not enter into judgment with us, two great rules are given us in Holy Scripture, for each of which this Parable furnishes an example. ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged^v:’ and, ‘If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged^w’ of the LORD.”

And the Publican, standing afar off, would ¹³ not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto Heaven,

He stood *afar off*, because he thought himself unworthy to join the rest of God’s worshippers: yet was he “not afar off from God; for the LORD is ‘*nigh* unto them that are of a contrite heart^x.’” He would not ‘so much as lift up his eyes unto Heaven,’ being self-abased before the Majesty of Him whom he was approaching. He felt as Ezra

^t Chrysostom.

^u Chrysostom.

^v St. Matth. vii. 1.

^w 1 Cor. xi. 31. The quotation is from a Sermon by the Rev. C. Marriott.

^x Trench from Augustine, quoting Ps. xxxiv. 18.

felt, of old,—“O my GOD, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my GOD.”

but smote upon his breast, saying, GOD be merciful to me a sinner.

He smote his breast again and again, as a sign of the grief of his Spirit^a. “He not only felt himself unworthy to draw near to GOD, but had a strong sense of his deserving punishment; and a desire to condemn and chastise Sin in himself, which he expressed by beating on his breast. We must take the action for what it naturally means, because our LORD bears witness to him^a.”

The language which he used is moreover highly remarkable; for it is found not only to express his desire of mercy, and of reconciliation with GOD, but to contain the notion of a propitiatory offering as being needed also. “Besides, he meant more in calling himself a *sinner* than we do, who have learned to call ourselves *sinner*s. It is rather what we should mean by ‘a wicked man,’ or ‘a guilty man;’ and is what a man would not say of himself unless he were under a very deep conviction of his own faults^b.”

His words of Confession and Prayer were of course “inaudible to the Pharisee, as they were meant to be; yet the Publican’s attitude and gesture, might have been marked by him. They must

^a Ezra ix. 6.

^a Consider St. Luke xxiii. 48.

^b Rev. C. Marriott.

^b Rev. C. Marriott; referring to St. Luke v. 8.

have been seen, as the Publican is so present to the mind of the Pharisee in his prayer: yet, instead of inspiring the kind interest which a just man should ever take in a sincere penitent, these marks of humiliation seem to him only evidences of the guilt of his fellow-worshipper. Far different from this vain estimate is the decision of Him to whom he thus presumed to address himself. The man whose prayer was so remarkable for all the features which the other's wanted,—the man who realized the Divine presence, and spread his full wretchedness before Him without a word or thought of extenuation,—who never compares himself with others more guilty, or pleads their evil example in arrest of judgment, but asks of mere mercy what it is for Divine Mercy alone to bestow,"—

I tell you, this man went down to his house ¹⁴ justified *rather* than the other :

The one, found acceptance with God. The other, stands on record, as a warning to mankind for ever. For it is not by any means implied that the Pharisee was justified *a little*, and the Publican *much*. Nothing of the kind. The one was accepted; (that is, his prayer had been heard, and God had had mercy on him;) the other was rejected.

And let us be well persuaded that "the spiritual pride which was the characteristic of the Pharisee, may lurk under the humblest theory of Religion; supposing even, (which is not always the case,) that

the view, presumed to be humble, is such in reality. The Religion, whatever be its theory, of which the main effect is to establish in the mind a persuasion that there is something in ourselves which belongs not to others of CHRIST'S Brotherhood and Family,—which makes the ruling feeling of any to be to thank God that he is not as other men,—is in great danger of producing also the worst points of Pharisæism^c.”

He ‘went *down* to his house,’ because he was returning from Mount Sion^d. The remark is obvious. Of how different a character is the following observation which a pious and thoughtful Writer has made on the text! “The words of our LORD” (he says) “clearly point to the truth, that our several actions pass under His judgment. For He says that ‘this man *went down to his house* justified rather than the other;’ clearly meaning that the very act of worship he had been performing at the Temple was approved, as well as that his person was accepted. And we should do well to bear this in mind in every action, that judgment is passed on it; and that we go from it justified in it or not, in respect of what we have done^e.”

It were, of course, a mere abuse of this parable to infer that external observances,—as Fasting and Almsgiving,—are worthless forms, because in the Pharisee’s case they happened to be united with a self-righteous spirit: or, that the essence of Re-

^c Dr. W. H. Mill.

^d See above, on verse 10.

^e Rev. C. Marriott.

ion consists in an occasional abject cry to God for mercy, however careless the life may be of external helps. This were indeed to trifle with Divine Truth. The uncharitable Pharisee was wanting; in Humility; the Publican stands forth the good model of that great virtue. Hence, alone, the sentence passed upon either by our SAVIOUR.

‘Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Rather, ‘he that *abaseth* himself shall be exalted.’ The present Parable therefore is not only preceded, like the last, by a sentence declaring its general scope and purpose, but it also concludes with a proverbial saying,—which, in the way of inference, it were, gathers up its heavenly teaching. The same thing was also observed in the case of the Parable of ‘the Labourers in the Vineyard’^f.

The words alluded to may be regarded almost as the very motto and moral of the Gospel itself. They are found in many shapes; but they still embody one and the same great truth, or rather solemn warning;—whether they occur in the Blessed Virgin’s Hymn of Praise, where mention is made of the proud and the humble^g; or in the Sermon on the Mount, where the fate of the rich and the poor, the hungry and the full, is contrasted^h; or whether they be spoken of first and

^f See St. Matth. xx. 16.

^g St. Luke i. 52, 53.

^h St. Luke vi. 20, 21, and 24, 25.

last¹; or, (as here,) of those who humble, and those who exalt themselves^k.

Wondrous anticipations of this, as of so many other great Gospel truths, exist in the Old Testament^l. The words of Proverbs iii. 34, in particular, are found to have supplied St. Peter^m and St. Jamesⁿ with all they required, when they wished to remind the Church that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Our LORD's last saying forms a beautiful transition to the incident which follows.

- 15 And they brought unto Him also Infants,
that He would touch them: but when His
16 Disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. But
JESUS called them *unto Him*, and said, Suffer
little Children to come unto Me, and forbid
them not: for of such is the Kingdom of
17 God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever
shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a
little Child, shall in no wise enter therein.

Concerning this precious incident, which is related both by St. Matthew and St. Mark, the Reader is referred to the notes on the earlier Gospels^o.

- 18 And a certain Ruler asked Him, saying,
Good Master, what shall I do to inherit

¹ St. Matth. xix. 30: where see the note.

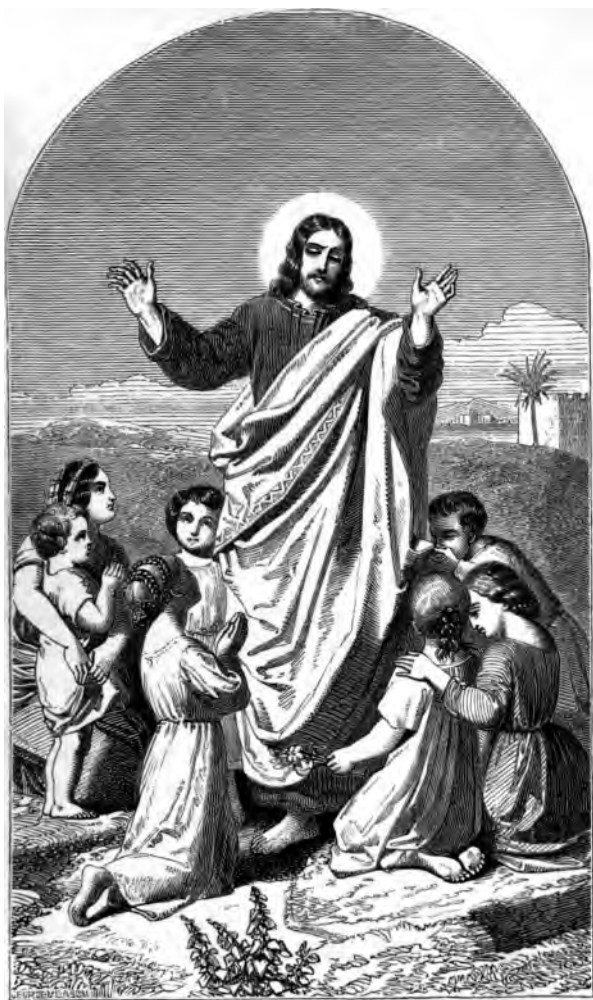
^k See also St. Matth. xxiii. 12, and St. Luke xiv. 11: where the saying will be found to recur.

^l It is obvious to refer to 1 Sam. ii. 4 to 9.

^m 1 St. Peter v. 5.

ⁿ St. James iv. 6.

^o See on St. Matth. xix. 13 to 15; and St. Mark x. 13 to 16.



SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME.

St. Luke xviii. 16.



Eternal Life? And JESUS said unto him, 19
Why callest thou Me good? none *is* good,
save one, *that is*, God. Thou knowest the 20
commandments: Do not commit adultery,
Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false
witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.
And he said, All these have I kept from my 21
youth up. Now when JESUS heard these 22
things, He said unto him, Yet lackest thou
one thing: sell all that thou hast, and dis-
tribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have
treasure in Heaven: and come, follow Me.
And when he heard this, he was very sorrow- 23
ful: for he was very rich.

And when JESUS saw that he was very 24
sorrowful, He said, How hardly shall they
that have riches enter into the Kingdom of
God! For it is easier for a camel to go 25
through a needle's eye, than for a rich man
to enter into the Kingdom of God. And 26
they that heard *it* said, Who then can be
saved?

These verses have been commented on elsewhere^p.

And he said, The things which are impos- 27
sible with men are possible with God.

That which unassisted man finds impossible,

^p In the notes on St. Matth. xix. 16 to 26, and St. Mark x.
17 to 26.

(namely, this making of himself 'poor in spirit,') God's grace can accomplish: for the Kingdom of Grace knows of greater marvels than the Kingdom of Nature. "The impossible thing, which yet is possible with God, is not the saving of the Rich man, but the making of the Rich man poor."

28 Then PETER said, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee.

'What shall *we* have therefore?' he added: to which our LORD returned a wondrous answer. See St. Matthew xix. 27, 28, and the notes there.

29 And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left House, or Parents, or Brethren, or Wife, or Children,
30 for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the World to come Life Everlasting.

Not only ye, but every one, to the end of the World, who shall forsake the thing which he loves best, when called upon to do so 'for My sake and the Gospel's^q,' shall 'in this present time' be recompensed an hundredfold; and in the world to come shall be everlastingly rewarded.

This portion of St. Luke's Gospel is also found in the two earlier Gospels. The Reader is therefore again referred thither^r.

^q St. Mark x. 29, where see the note.

^r See on St. Matth. xix. 25 to 30; and St. Mark x. 27 to 31.

Then He took *unto Him* the Twelve, and ³¹ said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished.

Take notice how He guides them to that sure word of Prophecy which He had prepared concerning Himself. In the writings of Moses and of the Prophets, and in the Psalms, all that was to befall the Son of Man might be found written of Him^a.

For He shall be delivered ³² unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall ³³ scourge *Him* and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again.

And they understood none of these things: ³⁴ and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

But they understood it afterwards, and called to mind everything which their LORD had so spoken; as we are often reminded in the later pages of the Gospel^b.—These verses have been already made the subject of Comment; to which it shall suffice, in this place, to refer the Reader^c.

And it came to pass, that as He was ³⁵ come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind

^a Consider St. Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

^b St. Luke xxiv. 8. St. John ii. 22, &c.

^c See on St. Matthew xx. 17 to 19, and St. Mark x. 32 to 34.

36 man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked
37 what it meant. And they told him, that
38 JESUS of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, JESUS, *Thou* Son of David,
39 have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.

This rebuke then is found to have proceeded from them 'that went before.' Doubtless there was much of majesty in the common events of our LORD's daily life, notwithstanding the depth of Humiliation to which He submitted Himself. Here was a crowded thoroughfare,—the close of a weary day's journey,—an impatient multitude. Yet are there found persons to walk in advance, as if to herald His august coming; and when a beggar begins to cry out 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me,'—'many' are heard rebuking him, and charging him to hold his peace while the 'Prince of Peace' passes by. It has been piously suggested that CHRIST "was teaching as He went, and they would not have Him interrupted*."

Viewed as conveying a lesson to ourselves, we are reminded of what may sometimes befall those who are most earnest in the matter of their Salvation. Their conduct procures for them the rebuke not only of the enemies of CHRIST, but even

* Trench.

of those who walk with Him, and profess zeal for His Honour. Observe, however, what follows :

And JESUS stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him :

Whereupon, "they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee."

This too, (observes an ancient Father,) "repeats itself often in the spiritual history of men's lives. [If a man will only despise these obstacles from a World which calls itself Christian; if, despite of them all, he will go on until CHRIST is plainly with him; then, they who began by blaming, will finish by applauding: they who said first, He is mad, will end with saying, He is a saint*."

and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, LORD, that I may receive my sight. And JESUS said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy Faith hath saved thee.

Thus, the Chapter ends as it began,—by shewing the fruits of importunity in Prayer!

And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

† St. Mark x. 49.

* Augustine, quoted by Trench.

The miracle performed by our LORD on the *two* Blind men of Jericho, will be also found fully related by St. Matthew and St. Mark. The Reader is therefore referred to the notes in the earlier Gospels^a. But it is well worth observing how these blessed Writers, when describing one and the same transaction, although, to a careless observer, they may seem to have employed nearly the same terms, will yet be found, by countless minute touches, to have achieved immense variety; and by consequence to have supplied a large amount of unsuspected information, as well as of most precious teaching.— Without dwelling further on this remark, it shall suffice to point out that St. Luke, in this place, is the only Evangelist who preserves the beautiful circumstance of *the gratitude* manifested by this object of our SAVIOUR's mercy. St. Matthew informed us that he 'followed' CHRIST^b; and St. Mark explains that he 'followed JESUS *in the way*'^c. But St. Luke declares that he followed Him, with praises on his tongue; and not only so, but that his example was followed by the people, who, '*all, when they saw it, gave praise unto GOD.*'

^a See on St. Matth. xx. 29 to 34: and St. Mark x. 46 to 52.

^b St. Matth. xx. 34.

^c St. Mark x. 52.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 *Of Zacchæus a publican.* 11 *The ten pieces of Money.* 28 **CHRIST** *rideth into Jerusalem with triumph: 41 weepeth over it: 45 driveth the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple: 47 teaching daily in it. The Rulers would have destroyed Him, but for fear of the people.*

XIX. AND JESUS entered and passed through Jericho.

The narratives of the two earlier Evangelists transport us at once from Jericho, the scene of the miracle performed on the two Blind men, to Jerusalem; or rather, to the Mount of Olives, which stands on the Eastern side of the City^a. St. Luke interposes an incident, full of the deepest interest and beauty, and subjoins a Parable: taking up the narrative of the other Evangelists, at verse 29. What follows, is the history of what took place as our LORD 'was passing through Jericho.'

And, behold, *there was* a man named Zac- 2 chæus, which was the chief among the Publicans, and he was rich.

^a St. Matth. xx. 34: xxi. 1, and St. Mark x. 52: xi. 1.

Enough has been said elsewhere, concerning the class of men to which Zacchæus belonged^b. The farmers of the Revenue were probably all wealthy men: well may '*the chief* among the Publicans,' (or rather, '*a chief Publican,*') have been '*rich!*'

After the interview in which we beheld our LORD so recently engaged with a young Ruler having great possessions, and the Discourse concerning Riches which followed^c, it becomes a matter of special interest to notice what took place on the present occasion, when the SAVIOUR is brought into direct contact with another rich man. Nor should it escape us that here was one, not only rich, but who had acquired riches in a disreputable, even in a dishonest way. It will be observed that CHRIST does not bid *him* go and sell all that he has and give to the poor. He simply commends him for his virtuous resolution to give up *half*. Cornelius, in like manner, was assured that his alms had gone up '*for a memorial before God*^d;' without any hint that GOD required larger sacrifices at his hand. Then further, instead of an intimation that the needle's eye would prove too narrow for His present Entertainer, we shall find our LORD graciously declaring that this day had Salvation come to the House of Zacchæus. Bede accordingly remarks, "See here the camel disincumbered of his hunch," and of his burthen!

^b See the note on St. Mark ii. 15, and the second note on St. Luke xviii. 10.

^c See St. Luke xviii. 18 to 30.

^d Acts x. 4.

And he sought to see JESUS who He was ; 3 and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

Zacchæus, like Herod Antipas, desired to see CHRIST^e: but in how different a spirit did they entertain this desire ! Mere carnal curiosity was the motive in the case of the King : in the case of the despised publican, it was the result of sincere piety ; the act of one who desired ' to see what sort of person JESUS was,' in order that he might the better *love*^f the Being of whom he had heard so much, and whose Disciple he was already so well prepared to become.

Hastening therefore along the road whereby our LORD was travelling, and getting in advance of the crowd, (from among^g which he had found it impossible on account of his smallness of stature to behold the person of CHRIST,) he availed himself of one of the fruit trees which grew by the wayside to obtain a view of the Holy One who must needs presently approach the spot. As it follows,

And he ran before, and climbed up into⁴ a sycamore tree to see Him : for He was to pass that *way*.

Much has been written on the subject of the tree into which Zacchæus climbed. Its name is here literally translated 'Sycamore,'—a word which denotes 'Fig-mulberry.' Accordingly, some have

^e See St. Luke ix. 9.

^f See 1 St. John iv. 20.

^g Instead of '*for the press,*' it should be '*from among the crowd.*'

thought it was a Fig, some, a Mulberry-tree. A great botanist thus settles the question:— Out of two hundred known species of the Fig, only two are eatable, *that* in common use, (*Ficus Carica*,) and the inferior kind here noticed, (*Ficus Sycomorus*), which, as its name denotes, has leaves resembling those of the mulberry. “ ‘I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son;’ (says the Prophet Amos ^b,) ‘but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of *Sycomore fruit*:’ from which, and from other passages of Scripture, it may be inferred that this tree was of very great importance among the Jews ⁱ.”

Screened by the foliage of such a tree, Zacchæus may well have expected that he should remain unseen. But he had to do with the same All-seeing Eye which had spied Nathanael beneath the fig-tree, ‘before that Philip called’ him ^k. Of this, he was soon made conscious; for it follows,

5 And when JESUS came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus,

(For ‘the LORD knoweth them that are His^l:’
‘He calleth them all by their names^m.’)

make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

^b Amos vii. 14: where see the margin.

^l Sir W. Hooker’s ‘Guide to Kew Gardens.’—See the note on St. Luke xvii. 6. ^k St. John i. 48. ⁱ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

^m Ps. cxlvii. 4: compare St. John x. 3. Consider also Gen. xvi. 8.

Zacchæus desired no more than to *see* CHRIST ; but He who does for us more than we can either ask or think, was prepared to grant him a much greater favour, and one for which he was little prepared. “ Our SAVIOUR comes uninvited to his house ; for though He had not heard the word of invitation, He had already seen the will to ask Him ⁿ.” Nothing but humility, like that of the Centurion^o, had kept Zacchæus silent.

And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.

Such verses as this, are for the reader to pause at, and for his imagination to picture. The astonishment of the man, detected through his leafy screen, when the Mighty Stranger halted on ‘ coming to the place,’—looked up,—spied him out,—kindly called him by his name,—and even expressed impatience that he should come down ; with the gracious announcement that He ‘ must needs pass this day in his House :’ then, the haste and joy with which the other obeyed the welcome summons, — the wonder of the populace, who, a moment ago, had witnessed the vain efforts of the man as he stood among them, to obtain even a glimpse of our LORD’s person,—and the final withdrawal of the Blessed One and His Disciples to the House of the delighted host :—all this is matter for *the heart* rather than for *the pen*. If the Gospel were indeed sweet to our taste, — ‘ sweeter

ⁿ Ambrose.

^o See St. Matth. viii. 8.

than honey and the honey-comb,' — we should read it more slowly; and be made sensible that the purely narrative portions, in their literal sense, yield abundant delight, as well as instruction.

- 7 And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

They called him a 'sinner' only because he was 'a publican.' The reader is requested to refer to the second note on St. Luke xviii. 10, for some remarks on this subject. There is no reason whatever for doubting that Zacchæus was a *Jew*.

An entertainment must have followed; after which we are perhaps to fancy much of lofty teaching. What need to say *who* will have been the most attentive listener? At last, we read,—

- 8 And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the LORD; Behold, LORD, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.

He seems to have come forward in presence of the assembled guests, and standing before his LORD and ours, to have made this declaration of what henceforth he was resolved to do, in testimony of the sincerity of his belief and repentance; as well as of his hearty acceptance of the sublime precepts to which he had been listening.—He may have heard our SAVIOUR declare that the Estate

of Poverty is holy and precious in God's sight; that Riches are an encumbrance to him who would enter by the 'strait gate;' and that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive^q.' Then, as St. John Baptist when asked by the Pharisees for a rule, bade them 'exact no more than that which was appointed them^r;' it is obvious to suppose that our SAVIOUR will have discoursed to this man of Truthfulness and Mercy. 'Behold, LORD,' (he therefore replies,) 'half of every thing I have, I this day give up to the poor; and if I retain the other half of my property, it is chiefly in order that I may have wherewith to fulfil the further resolution which I have made, to give back four-fold to every one whom I have ever wronged by false accusation' On this, Williams remarks kindly, — "The expression seems to indicate that his gains had been comparatively innocent, in an occupation proverbial for extortion: else, how could he restore four-fold out of the remainder?"

Concerning the proposed measure of restitution, it is to be observed that Zacchæus imposed upon himself the severest measure enjoined by the Law concerning any one *convicted of theft*; (as it is written, 'he shall restore four sheep for a sheep^s:') but this was exacted only of him who had made away with the property he had stolen. 'If the theft be certainly *found in his hand alive*,' whether 'ox, or ass, or sheep,' he was only to 'restore

^q Acts xx. 35.

^r St. Luke iii. 12, 13.

^s Exod. xxii. 1. Consider 2 Samuel xii. 6.

double ^u.’ Whereas, with respect to him who *confessed* his crime, it is but said, ‘he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it *the fifth part thereof*, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed ^z.’ Zacchæus therefore judged himself, and *that* severely: a pattern surely to us all! “for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged ^v.”

9 And JESUS said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

It seems likely that St. Luke means that our SAVIOUR spake thus ‘*concerning,*’ ‘*with reference to,*’ Zacchæus: not actually *to* him. He may have turned and addressed the company. His words imply, that the Gospel message had come to the wealthy publican’s doors; and that he had closed at once with the offer of Mercy. Salvation had therefore come to him, on that day; for that *he* also, by that day’s conduct, had recovered his birthright, heretofore forfeited, and shewn himself a true descendant of ‘faithful Abraham.’

CHRIST “well says ‘He also;’ to declare that not only those who have lived justly, but those who are raised up from a life of injustice, belong to the sons of promise ^z.” “He says not that he ‘was,’ but that he now ‘is.’ For before, when he was chief among the publicans, and bore no like-

^u Exod. xxii. 4.

^v 1 Cor. xi. 31.

^z Numb. v. 7.

^z Bede.

ness to righteous Abraham, he was *not* his son ^a." Hence, the fitness of the words which follow :

For the Son of Man is come to seek and ¹⁰ to save that which was lost.

That is, 'the lost sheep of the House of Israel ^b.' Take notice then, that CHRIST the Good Shepherd was 'seeking' this one lost sheep, as He prepared to depart from Jericho. The saying is found to recur, with the exception of one affecting word, in St. Matthew xviii. 11. But observe, that a parable immediately follows (in St. Matthew,) which more than supplies the omission of that word ^c.

How great a consolation to many a burdened conscience, may this entire portion of Scripture well prove ! Dishonest gains do not exclude a man hopelessly from the Kingdom. The door of Repentance yet remains open,—while there is Life. But then, the offer of Mercy may not be trifled with. Zacchæus acted promptly. It is worth observing that he acted *openly* also.

And as they heard these things, He added ¹¹ and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of GOD should immediately appear.

That is, 'the Kingdom of *Israel*;' for compare Acts i. 6. That the Kingdom of MESSIAH could not be far away, the Jews knew from prophecy; but they had formed a wrong notion of its nature.

^a Theophylact.

^b St. Matth. x. 6.

^c See St. Matth. xviii. 12.

Is it perhaps implied that our SAVIOUR'S announcement of the purpose of His coming, (in ver. 10,) and the allusion to Abraham which is found in verse 9, had already awakened proud hopes in the breasts of his hearers? as if He had declared that it was His intention *now* to "gather together in one the children of GOD that were scattered abroad^d," 'and to perform the oath which He swore to their father Abraham^e?'

The parable of 'the Pounds,' which follows, and which St. Luke alone relates, resembles in many respects the parable of 'the Talents,' which is peculiar to St. Matthew's Gospel^f. Yet are the two parables strikingly contrasted. Both, however, are prophecies; and the present parable opens with the express mention of 'a Kingdom' yet future.

- 12 He said therefore, A certain Nobleman went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom, and to return.

He 'went into a *far country*' (!), in order to obtain for Himself the right and title to that Kingdom which, on His return, He should 'receive:' for consider the language of ver. 15.—This is that 'far country^g,' from which the 'good news' is 'as cold waters to a thirsty soul.'

- 13 And He called His ten servants, and delivered them ten Pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

^d St. John xi. 52.

^f St. Matthew xxv. 14 to 30.

^e St. Luke i. 72, 73.

^g Proverbs xxv. 25.

It matters nothing what is the particular sum here spoken of^h. The thing to be observed is, that calling 'ten of His servants,' this Nobleman entrusted each of them with *the same* amount,—bidding them 'employ,' or 'trade with' it, till His return. The Knowledge of the Way of Salvation, ('one Faith, one Baptismⁱ,') seems to be the 'pound' given to all alike. And here, one of the points of contrast between the Parable of 'the Talents,' and of 'the Pounds,' presents itself. See St. Matthew xxv. 15, and the note there.

Take notice that there are *Ten* Servants, as there were Ten Virgins^j. This was a favourite number with God's People. It seems not unlikely, however, that the number of servants specified, so nearly corresponding with the number of the Apostolic body, was meant to quicken the Twelve to strenuous exertion after their Master's departure. *Can* we be mistaken in seeing a warning addressed to the Traitor, in every hint which fell from the lips of CHRIST of *one* who proved faithless, and who alone acted in a manner unworthy of his lofty calling? See the note on St. Mark xiv. 25.

But his citizens hated Him, and sent a 14 message after Him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.

We shall hear more of them, and of what befel

^h It is called a *mina*, which is rather more than 3*l*. See the margin of a reference Bible.

ⁱ Eph. iv. 5.

^j St. Matth. xxv. 1.

them, in verse 27.—Was it perhaps especially the victims of persecution,—St. Stephen, St. James, and the rest,—whose blood cried to Heaven, and whose souls carried into the unseen World this message from those ‘of whom, as concerning the flesh, CHRIST came^k ;’ and who were therefore ‘His citizens?’ When the Jews exclaimed, ‘We have no King but Cæsar ;’ and ‘Write not, The King of the Jews^l,’ they did nothing else in effect but say ‘We will not have this Man to rule over us,’ even before His departure.

But the Parable may not be thus limited in its application. The disobedient in all ages find here their picture ; and, in verse 27, they read their final doom. As many as refuse subjection to the yoke of CHRIST, send the same message after Him : and this will continue to the end. See Ps. ii. 2, 3.

15 And it came to pass, that when He was returned, having received the Kingdom, then He commanded these Servants to be called unto Him, to whom He had given the money, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading.

And thus, we are transported at once to the end of the World, and to the great Day of Account. Then will ‘the Kingdom’ have ‘come ;’ for CHRIST will have ‘received’ of the FATHER ‘the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for His possession^m.’ Then will be “given

^k Romans ix. 5.

^l St. John xix. 15 and 21.

^m Ps. ii. 8.

Him Dominion, and Glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, shall serve Him: His Dominion is an Everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed ^a."

Then came the first, saying, LORD, Thy 16 pound hath gained ten pounds.

Spoken as becomes a Servant of CHRIST! '*Thy pound* hath gained;' as conscious that it was GOD who had 'given the increase ^o.' So, after saying 'I laboured more abundantly than they all,' St. Paul suddenly checks himself, and adds, — 'Yet not *I*, but *the Grace of GOD which was with me* ^p.'

And He said unto him, Well, thou good 17 servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

How mighty a reward is here hinted at! The man who before had *to toil*, as a servant, with a single piece of money, now *reigns*, like a King, over ten cities ^q. Verily, now was "judgment given to the Saints of the Most High; and the time came that the Saints possessed the Kingdom ^r!"

And we may notice that the riches and magnificent resources of CHRIST'S Kingdom are here not obscurely hinted at, although in figurative language: a spur, surely, to increased exertion while yet our LORD 'delays His coming!'

^a Dan. vii. 14.

^o 1 Cor. iii. 6.

^p 1 Cor. xv. 10.

^q See notes on St. Luke xvi. 12, and xx. 38.

^r Dan. vii. 22.

18 And the second came, saying, LORD, Thy pound hath gained five pounds.

Observe, he uses the same pious language as the former 'good servant.' They seem to have been of one mind, and to have said day by day as they toiled,—'Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give the praise * !'

19 And He said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

The reward, we find, was proportioned to the work.—Only one other servant is told of. The remaining seven may have gained some more, some less. But these three represent classes,—the very faithful, the very faithless, and those who have simply done well. The reader is requested to read the note on St. Matthew xxv. 17.

The third servant next comes forward, "with that self-confidence ever found in the rejected †:"

20 And another came, saying, LORD, behold, here is Thy pound, which I have kept laid
21 up in a napkin: for I feared Thee, because Thou art an austere man: Thou takest up that Thou layedst not down, and reapest that Thou didst not sow.

22 And He saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere

* Ps. cxv. 1.

† See the note on St. Matth. xxv. 44.

man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then 23 gavest not thou My money into the bank, that at My coming I might have required Mine own with usury? And He said unto 24 them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds.

The resemblance of these five verses to as many in the parable of 'the Talents' in St. Matthew's Gospel, (xxv. 24 to 28,) is very striking. The reader is referred to the notes on St. Matthew xxv. 24 and 27.—A Talent is too large a sum, (being nearly 200*l.*), to be 'laid up in a napkin;' it must needs be buried in the Earth. Hence the variety of circumstance between the two Parables.

(And they said unto Him, LORD, he hath 25 ten pounds.)

The meaning of these words, it is hard to discover. Do the Angels, then, (for it is *they* who 'stand by,' and execute the LORD's commands,) testify surprise at the directions given them? They seem to say,—Nay, but he hath already *ten* of these, and hath been set over as many cities. He therefore hath no need of more . . . But it is hard to see *why* such a saying was introduced into the Parable. Indeed there are several points in the Parables of 'the Pounds' and 'the Talents' which have never yet been satisfactorily explained.

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one
 which hath, shall be given ; and from him
 that hath not, even that he hath shall be
 27 taken away from him^a. But those Mine ene-
 mies, which would not that I should reign over
 them, bring hither, and slay *them* before Me.

This recalls what went before, in verse 14 ; and reminds us that the present Parable is a complex one. It will be observed that nothing is said of any punishment which awaited the unprofitable servant, as in the other Parable^x. His punishment here seems only to have been the forfeiture of that which he had. Attention is directed instead to the doom of those rebellious citizens, who sent the message of defiance recorded in verse 14.

28 And when He had thus spoken, He went
 29 before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

And it came to pass, when He was come
 nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the
 Mount called *the mount* of Olives, he sent
 30 two of His Disciples, saying, Go ye into
 the village over against *you* ; in the which
 at your entering ye shall find a colt tied,
 whereon yet never man sat : loose him, and
 bring *him hither*.

St. Mark and St. Luke are careful to notice that on this ass' colt, 'never man sat.' The mys-

^a See the note on St. Matth. xxv. 29. ^x See St. Matth, xxv. 30.

cal meaning of this statement will be found fully noticed in the note on St. Mark xi. 2.

And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose 31
him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because
 the LORD hath need of him.

And they that were sent went their way, 32
 and found even as He had said unto them.
 And as they were loosing the colt, the 33
 owners thereof said unto them, Why loose
 ye the colt? And they said, The LORD hath 34
 need of him. And they brought him to JE- 35
 SUS: and they cast their garments upon the
 colt, and they set JESUS thereon. And as He 36
 went, they spread their clothes in the way.

And when He was come nigh, even now 37
 at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the
 whole multitude of the Disciples began to
 rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for
 all the mighty works that they had seen;
 saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in 38
 the Name of the LORD: Peace in Heaven,
 and Glory in the highest. And some of the 39
 Pharisees from among the multitude said
 unto Him, Master, rebuke Thy Disciples. 40
 And He answered and said unto them, I tell
 you that if these should hold their peace,
 the stones would immediately cry out.

What a soul-stirring declaration! proceeding,

A PLAIN COMMENTARY

as it does, from the very Author of Creation are we reminded of the mysterious pangs soon after shook the Earth ; when the Sun derwent an eclipse, and the whole frame of Nature became convulsed with portentous and
“ Surely, if the LORD of Angels, amid His visitation, was not to receive even this acknowledgment from the poor, the very lifeless stones re-echo back the Voice of Prophecy which sounded from the beginning of the World !

41 And when He was come near, He saw the City,

Which lay beautifully spread before Him, covering the whole of the rising ground on the side of the valley. The Temple crowned the sacred height ; and the everlasting hills stood about,—an emblem of His own undying Kingdom. How mysterious is the sorrow which we admitted next to witness ! ‘ He beheld the City

42 and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

That is, ‘ O that thou hadst known !’ thy Day,—that is, the day foretold in Prophecy as that on which thy King should visit the

43 For the days shall come upon thee

† Ps. cxxv. 2.

‡ See St. Matth. xxi

thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

There is more on this subject in St. Luke xxi. 20. 44 and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

The allusion in our Blessed LORD's words to the language in which the prophet Isaiah denounced 'Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the City where David dwelt^a,' seems unmistakeable. But what is principally brought to mind, is our SAVIOUR's own passionate lamentation over the Holy City, recorded in a former chapter^b; and which, like the present place, intimates that the Day of Grace and Probation had at last closed upon Jerusalem for ever. Many a time would He have gathered her children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,—and she 'would not!' Judicial blindness had therefore overtaken the City. The things which belonged unto her peace were now hid from her eyes.

Take notice that the SAVIOUR *weeps*, even while foretelling the utter destruction of Jerusalem: somewhat as Joseph, (His type,) wept, even while he bound Simeon before the eyes of his breth-

^a Isaiah xxix. 1 to 8.

^b St. Luke xiii. 34, and St. Matth. xxiii. 37 to 39.

ren^e. He does not however withdraw His threatened judgments, tremendous though they be, on *that* account. Very terrible is His wrath, although it be 'the wrath of the LAMB^d.' And *who* so blind as not to see the private and personal teaching of the text? To the spiritual Jerusalem, as well as to the very least of 'her children within her,' doubtless God declares His Almighty Power most chiefly in shewing *Mercy and Pity*: but does He therefore cease to be a God of *Justice* also? And have not *they* the time of their Visitation?

45 And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them
46 that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the House of Prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Several remarks will be found on this incident and these sayings in the notes on St. Matth. xxi. 12, 13; and especially on St. Mark xi. 16, 17.

47 And He taught daily in the Temple. But the Chief Priests and the Scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him,
48 and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

The expression in the original is striking. It denotes that the people '*hung upon*' the words of CHRIST. See the last note on St. Matthew vii.

^c Gen. xlii. 24.

^d Rev. vi. 16.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

- 1 CHRIST avoucheth His authority by a question of John's Baptism.
 9 The Parable of the Vineyard. 19 Of giving tribute to Cæsar.
 27 He convinceth the Sadducees that denied the Resurrection.
 41 How CHRIST is the Son of David. 45 He warneth His Disciples to beware of the Scribes.

XX. AND it came to pass, *that* on one of those days, as He taught the people in the Temple, and preached the Gospel, the chief Priests and the Scribes came upon *Him* with the Elders, and spake unto Him, saying, 2 Tell us, by what authority doest Thou these things? or who is he that gave Thee this authority?

The expression used in verse 1, denotes that these assailants of the Holy One came *suddenly* into His presence with their imperious demand. Our LORD's reply has already been the subject of sufficient comment in the notes on the two earlier Gospels,—as will be presently indicated.

And He answered and said unto them, I 3 will also ask you one thing; and answer Me:

4 The Baptism of John, was it from Heaven,
or of men ?

5 And they reasoned with themselves, say-
ing, If we shall say, From Heaven ; He will
say, Why then believed ye him not ? but and
6 if we say, Of men ; all the people will stone
us : for they be persuaded that John was a
7 Prophet. And they answered, that they
could not tell whence *it was*.

8 And JESUS said unto them, Neither tell I
you by what authority I do these things.

Concerning all this, the reader is referred to
what has been already offered in the Commentary
on St. Matthew and St. Mark^a.—The parable of
'the Vineyard let out to Husbandmen' follows,
which is found in all the three Gospels.

9 Then began He to speak to the people
this parable : A certain man planted a Vine-
yard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went
10 into a far Country for a long time. And at
the season He sent a servant to the husband-
men, that they should give Him of the fruit
of the Vineyard : but the husbandmen beat
11 him, and sent *him* away empty. And again
He sent another servant : and they beat him
also, and entreated *him* shamefully, and sent
12 *him* away empty. And again He sent a third :

^a See the notes on St. Matth. xxi. 27, and St. Mark xi. 28, 30,
31 and 33.

and they wounded him also, and cast *him* out. Then said the Lord of the Vineyard, What shall I do? I will send My beloved Son: it may be they will reverence *Him* when they see Him. But when the husbandmen saw *Him*, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the Heir: come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be our's. So they cast *Him* out of the Vineyard, and killed *Him*.

What therefore shall the Lord of the Vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the Vineyard to others.

And when they heard *it*, they said, God forbid.

Concerning this remarkable Parable, which is none other than a Prophecy, so much has been already said, that it must suffice to refer the reader to the notes on St. Matthew,—xxi. 33 to 41; and on St. Mark xii. 1 to 9. “God, the great Householder, was pleased to mark off, as it were, one part of the Earth to be more particularly His own: He ‘planted a Vineyard,’ when ‘He chose Jacob unto Himself and Israel for His own possession^b.’ This Vineyard was kept separate from the rest of the world. The rite of Circumcision, the whole of the Ceremonial Law, was the ‘hedge’ round about it, which shut out the Gen-

^b Ps. cxxxv. 4.

tiles. It had its 'wine-press' in the altar of burnt offerings, and its 'tower' in the Temple. But what fruit did the Vineyard produce to Him that planted it?" The rest of the Parable is Prophecy.

The only circumstantial difference to which the reader's attention shall be directed is, that *here* the Parable is represented as spoken 'to the people^d,' rather than, (as in the former instance,) to their teachers.

17 And He beheld them,

That is, He looked them steadily in the face; as His Divine manner seems to have been when He was about to deliver any saying of unusual solemnity,—

and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner?

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

The reader is referred to the notes on St. Matthew xxi. 44, and on St. Mark xii. 11.

19 And the chief Priests and the Scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on Him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that He had spoken this Parable against them.

* Dr. Jacobson's Sermons.

^d See above verses 9 and 16.

And they watched *Him*, and sent forth 20 spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the Governor.

And they asked Him, saying, Master, we 21 know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of *any*, but teachest the way of God truly: is it 22 lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no ?

They felt sure that He would return a negative answer to their question: for they had, with perfect truth, set forth the fearless character of our LORD's teaching; and they knew that He was influenced solely by regard for GOD's Honour, without any admixture of worldly considerations. They cared not, however, which way His answer might incline. For if He allowed the payment of Tribute to their Roman Masters, they foresaw that His reputation with the people would be at an end: if, on the contrary, He forbade the practice, they would have a valid charge to bring against Him before Pilate, the Roman Governor of the Province.—Concerning the character of these assailants of CHRIST, whom both St. Matthew and St. Mark describe as 'Pharisees and Herodians,' the reader is referred to the note on St. Matthew xxii. 17.

23 But He perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye Me?

“Ye hypocrites!” adds St. Matthew*; and such, they truly were; seeking, as “a ground of accusation against Him, that which of all things they most desired themselves, namely, the exemption of their nation from Tribute.” Here, again, were men who sought to “procure His condemnation by the Romans as a rebel against Cæsar; whereas, if He had possessed that character, and sustained it with vigour, they would themselves have flocked eagerly to His standard. He found means, however, so to answer their inquiry as at the same time to display their hypocrisy and to elicit the Truth, in sight of that very multitude†” whose indignation they sought to draw down upon Him: saying,

24 Shew Me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar’s.

They brought him a piece of money, called *denarius*,—a Roman coin, of silver, (worth about 7*d.* or 8*d.*),—which bore upon it the name and portrait of Tiberius Cæsar.

“The coin which they affected to scruple about paying into the Roman Treasury, itself bore the Emperor’s effigy and legend,—the mark of *his* sovereignty, and *their* subjection. This money they hesitated not to circulate among themselves

* St. Matth. xxii. 18.

† Dr. W. H. Mill.

in all matters of traffic and exchange; and they well knew the import of its image and superscription. The absurdity of scrupling to withhold from a sovereignty thus acknowledged, the necessary homage of obeying its import; as well as the consistency of such a payment with the higher claims of the one supreme and unchangeable LORD of all^g,"—our SAVIOUR proceeds to make manifest in the famous words which follow.

And He said unto them, Render there-
fore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's,
and unto GOD the things which be GOD's.

"This sentence, which confounded and baffled those blind guides of the people, extends further in its application than to the mere question in reply to which it was given. Since Tribute here represents the whole of that allegiance of which it is an essential part and symbol, we may view our LORD'S sentence as embracing these two propositions:—First, that there are certain duties which we owe to Cæsar, the sovereign power of the State, as such; Secondly, that these duties, rightly comprehended, cannot interfere with those to which they should ever be united, the duties which we owe directly and immediately to GOD^h."

And they could not take hold of His
words before the people: and they marvelled at His answer, and held their peace.

^g Abridged from Dr. W. H. Mill.

^h Dr. W. H. Mill.

27 Then came to *Him* certain of the Sad-
ducees, which deny that there is any Re-
28 surrection; and they asked Him, saying,
Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's
brother die, having a wife, and he die with-
out children, that his brother should take
his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

They allude to the Law found in Deuteronomy xxv. 5; which prescribed that the next of kin should marry the widow of a deceased kinsman, under the circumstances spoken of. "And it shall be," (so ran the law,) "that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel." It was a remarkable enactment, truly; the mystical intention of which was to shadow forth the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead. This has been more fully shewn in the note on St. Mark xii. 19.

29 There were therefore seven brethren: and
the first took a wife, and died without
30 children. And the second took her to wife,
and he died childless. And the third took
31 her; and in like manner the seven also:
32 and they left no children, and died. Last
33 of all, the woman died also. Therefore in
the Resurrection whose wife of them is she?
for seven had her to wife.

And **JESUS** answering said unto them, The 34 children of this World marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be ac- 35 counted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection from the dead, neither 36 marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more:

Rather, "*for* neither can they die any more:" by which words our **SAVIOUR** assigns the object of Holy Matrimony,—which chiefly is the procreation of children; in order to supply the losses which Death occasions. And of this, the Church is faithful to remind us, in the Marriage Service.

for they are equal unto the Angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the Resurrection.

"**CHRIST** is 'the first-born from the deadⁱ;' and we, 'the children of the Resurrection.' The Spirit of **CHRIST** abiding in us maketh us the members of **CHRIST**; and by the same **SPIRIT**, we have a full right and title to rise with our Head^k."

Now, that the dead are raised, even Moses 37 shewed at the bush, when he calleth the **LORD** the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a 38 God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him.

ⁱ Col. i. 18.

^k Bp. Pearson.

“Our LORD’s answer seems to imply that the Patriarchs had not, and needed not, any express declaration of this doctrine; for that an affectionate piety, and a due apprehension of God’s power, had in these words the fullest assurance that it was capable of receiving¹.”

‘At the bush’ denotes that section of Scripture which contains the history of the burning-bush. Moses, because he wrote that history, is here said to have ‘called the LORD, the GOD of Abraham,’ &c.: but GOD was, of course, the Speaker. Our SAVIOUR is, in fact, explaining now the words which He spoke *then*.

The reader is referred to the notes on St. Mark’s Gospel,—xii. 18 to 27, for an exposition of the preceding most precious portion of the Gospel. It shall suffice, in addition, to call attention to the fact that many more hints are supplied in Holy Scripture of the Future Life than is commonly supposed. How often are we reminded of its joyous character^m;—of its social aspectⁿ, (if the expression be allowable);—of the perfection to which every earthly relation, (as *that* which subsists between a Pastor and his flock^o;) will then attain! In the former chapter, the enlarged sphere of stewardship then to be revealed, was not obscurely indicated^p. In this place, the ennobled and exalted nature of the Body, is as plainly declared.

¹ Williams.

^m St. Matth. xxv. 21,—where see the note.

ⁿ St. Matth. viii. 11,—where see the note.

^o 1 Thess. ii. 19.

^p St. Luke xix. 17, 19: also the notes on St. Luke xvi. 12.

Then certain of the Scribes answering 39 said, Master, Thou hast well said.

By comparing the present Gospel, with those of St. Matthew and St. Mark, it will be found that the saying of the Scribes here recorded has reference to a portion of narrative which St. Luke omits,—namely our LORD's reply to a Scribe who had asked Him which is the first, or great commandment? All the three Evangelists concur in the statement that, 'from that day forth,' the Holy One was never more molested with questions by His adversaries. As it follows,—

And after that, they durst not ask Him 40 any *question at all*.

We next behold our LORD,—who has already put to silence the chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders^r, the Pharisees and the Herodians, the Sadducees, and last of all the Scribes, or expounders of the Law,—Himself addressing a question to the most conspicuous of His enemies. They have hitherto assailed *Him*. It is now *His* turn to be the assailant.

And surely, we have grown *too* familiar with the contents of the Gospel, if we can approach the words which He employed on an occasion like this, without the deepest reverence and attention. Before Him lay the whole volume of Inspiration.

^s See St. Matth. xxii. 36. St. Mark xii. 28 and 32.

^r St. Luke xx. 1.

pride in a literal but very superficial knowledge of the Scriptures." Still addressing the Pharisees, therefore, our SAVIOUR turns Himself to the populace, (who may be supposed to have watched the progress of His recent dialogue with wonder and marked its close with admiration,)—

And He said unto them, How say they that CHRIST is David's Son? and David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

(God the FATHER is addressing God the SON.)

David therefore calleth Him LORD, how is He then his Son?

Our LORD here quotes the first words of the *cxth* Psalm, which prophesies of "The Kingdom of the Priesthood, the Conquest, and the Passion of CHRIST;" and declares both that David was the author of that Psalm, and that the Psalmist was inspired by the HOLY GHOST while he wrote it. The present text is, in fact, three times quoted in the present place, and once referred to in the course of the New Testament, as descriptive of the LORD's subsequent exaltation.—Does there

* See the heading of the Psalm. also St. Matth. xxii. 43; and consider

† 13: x. 12, 13.

See the last note on St. Matthew xxii.

He knew its manifold resources, for His Divine Spirit had inspired it in every part; and out of all that various store, He was about to select somewhat which might at once silence His opponents, and edify the bystanders.

We find that, "when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together^o;" and, while they were yet "gathered together, JESUS asked them saying, What think ye of CHRIST? whose Son is He?" (This quotation from St. Matthew's Gospel is made here, in order to render the more concise narrative of St. Luke which follows, fully intelligible.) "They say unto Him, The Son of David^p."

There is nothing unexpected in the reply; which, in fact, expressed the general belief of all the nation^q. At the same time, the words were used in a *merely* human sense. Our SAVIOUR does not blame the Pharisees therefore because they confess Him to be the Son of David; but because they did not believe Him to be the SON of GOD. Now, it seems to have been His design, in this brief dialogue, to 'lift up their hearts;' and to suggest to as many as had 'ears to hear,' that far more is implied in Scripture concerning the nature of MESSIAH than they supposed. It has been truly pointed out that one "great source of the unbelief which filled these Pharisees, was a low sense of the MESSIAH; and

^o St. Matth. xxii. 84.

^p St. Matth. xxii. 41, 42.

^q St. Matth. ix. 27: xii. 23: xv. 22: xx. 30, 81: xxi. 9, 15, &c.

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Our LORD here quotes the first words of the cxth Psalm, which prophesies of "The Kingdom, the Priesthood, the Conquest, and the Passion of CHRIST^a;" and declares both that David was the author of that Psalm, and that the Psalmist was inspired by the HOLY GHOST while he wrote it^t. The present text is, in fact, three times quoted^u, (besides the present place,) and once referred to, in the course of the New Testament^x, as descriptive of our LORD's subsequent exaltation^y.—Does there

^r Williams.

^a See the heading of the Psalm.

^t See St. Mark xii. 36: also St. Matth. xxii. 43; and consider Acts i. 16: ii. 30.

^u Acts ii. 34, 35. Heb. i. 13: x. 12, 13.

^x 1 Cor. xv. 25.

^y See the last note on St. Matthew xxii.

not seem to be a peculiar adaptation of the text quoted, to the circumstances under which it was now uttered? Surrounded by enemies whom He had even now subdued with 'the sword of His mouth', does not the Divine Speaker seem to imply that what had been that day witnessed was but the prelude to Victories and a Dominion yet future; when He who was now enthroned only in the hearts of a few Disciples, (for St. Mark declares that the people 'heard Him gladly',) should occupy the Right Hand of the Majesty on High?

But the suggestion which has been already offered, (in a note on St. Mark xii. 27,) here recurs; namely, that there is reason to suspect that we ourselves 'know not the Scriptures,' nor indeed that we thoroughly understand our LORD's interpretation of them. For it is easy to see what answer a captious carnal reasoner of the modern school would have returned to our LORD's inquiry. David, (it might be said,) does indeed speak of his illustrious Descendant, as his 'Lord;' but is not *that* only because CHRIST was to be so much greater a King than David? CHRIST is still David's *Son*, because He is David's *Descendant*.

And indeed it must be admitted that our LORD's question "does not, by the passage referred to, solve any difficulty; but rather throws out a difficulty which might arrest the attention of a Scribe desirous to know the Truth, such as would lead him to see there was something far higher and

▪ Rev. i. 16: ii. 16: xix. 15, 21.

▪ St. Mark xii. 37.

ore mysterious about the MESSIAH than he supposed Our LORD's words were a clue, by which Faith might apprehend the secret nature of the Kingdom. To Reason, they proved nothing: but to Faith, they opened lofty views of the Divine Economy in the Gospel; as far surpassing anything which Reason could have inferred, or imagination could conceive, as Heaven is above Earth^b."

"And I think," (adds the excellent Writer therto quoted,) "it may be stated generally, that they who expect clear and express warrant in the words of Scripture as concerning the Doctrine of the TRINITY, and the like, will find nothing of this kind promised in our LORD's Teaching; but, on the contrary, hints and allusions thrown out, which He, by and by, in His Church, or in the ways of a particular Providence, will solve to those who will obey Him; and to those alone."

Then in the audience of all the people 45
He said unto His Disciples, Beware of the 46
scribes, which desire to walk in long robes,
and love greetings in the markets, and the
highest seats in the synagogues, and the
chief rooms at feasts; which devour widows' 47
houses, and for a shew make long prayers:
the same shall receive greater damnation.

These sayings form but a part of the long Discourse which our Lord proceeded to deliver at this

^b Williams.

time,—the weighty denunciations which an entire chapter in St. Matthew's Gospel which will be found fully commented upon where. See particularly St. Matt. xxiii. 5, 6,

Thus ends this remarkable portion of the narrative; remarkable, as presenting a series of assaults made by carnally-minded men on the SAVIOUR of the World, and which were attended with the same result. Not only the same net which they hid privily, is taken^c, but some fresh aspect of Divine Power is vindicated at every step. A thoughtful writer has said,—“One circumstance arises accidentally after another; and new inquiries take place of various spirit and temper. But whatever the nature of the question may be, it is the object at the same time of answering what is in the heart of the Speaker, of instructing the curious crowd, and of putting forth to all the highest truths of God. And perhaps what takes place in the Temple is a type of God's providence generally in His Church, to be seen forth in its History:—that by disputes, discussions and questionings among those who were present in them, under various feelings and

A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 CHRIST commendeth the poor Widow. 5 He foretelleth the destruction of the Temple, and of the city Jerusalem : 25 the signs also which shall be before the last Day. 34 He exhorteth them to be watchful.

THE truly affecting incident with which the present chapter commences, is found only in the Gospels of St. Mark^a and St. Luke. The place where the History of 'the poor' (or, as she may fairly be termed, 'the munificent') 'widow,' occurs, is highly remarkable; for take notice that it stands midway between the weighty discourses of the former chapter, and the tremendous prophecies contained in the present: so that it occupies the little halting place between our LORD's leaving of His enemies, and His anticipation of the vengeance which was to be wrought upon them,—first, by His avenging armies; next, by His legions of Angels. It immediately follows His refutation of chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders^b,—of Pharisees and Herodians, Sadducees and Lawyers^c;

^a St. Mark xii. 41 to 44.^b St. Luke xx. 1.^c St. Matth. xxii. 16, 23, 35.

together with His eight withering denunciations of Woe against those ‘Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,’ whose enmity He had borne with so long^d; and it immediately precedes His prophecies concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem and the End of the World. But before entering upon that far-sighted prophecy, the whole tenor of which shews that the Blessed Speaker’s eye was already filled with images of magnificence and grandeur unspeakable, — the destinies of the whole Human Race, and the consummation of all things,—being now about to leave the Temple, St. Mark says that He took His seat ‘over against the Treasury;’ (that is, opposite to the great money-chest of the Temple, which stood ‘on the right side as one cometh into the House of the Lord,’—the work of Jehoiada the priest, in the reign of King Jehoash^e) :—

XXI. AND He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

Are we perhaps to understand from this expression, (which also occurs in many other places of the Gospel,) that our SAVIOUR had been sitting till now with *downcast* eyes? Be this as it may, —Looking up, He “beheld how the people cast money into the Treasury; and many that were rich, cast in much^f :” —

2 And He saw also a certain poor Widow casting in thither two mites.

^d St. Matth. xxiii. ^e 2 Kings xii. 9. ^f St. Mark xii. 41.

So then, amid all the weariness of His Human Body, and the anguish of His Human Soul,—amid griefs unrevealed and bitterness of Spirit inscrutable,—the LORD of Heaven and Earth was at leisure to sit down and watch the ways of one of the humblest of His creatures! He saw before Him the Destruction of the Temple, and the fall of Jerusalem; the wreck of Nature, and the crash of Worlds, and the setting up of the great White Throne, and the gathering together of all the Tribes of the Earth: all this, He saw. But 'He saw also *a certain poor Widow*;' and it was His Divine pleasure to scrutinize her act, and weigh it in a balance, and to pronounce upon it, calmly and at length, as if Life and Death hung upon the issue. 'He called unto Him His Disciples^s,'—

And He said, Of a truth I say unto you, 3 that this poor Widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had. 4

The language of our LORD is even stronger. *They* had given of what they had over and above: *she*, of her short supply.

So carefully then are the little things noted by God! So true also is it that He seeth not as Man seeth! What is remarkable, the days of the Temple were numbered. The offerings, even of 'the rich

^s St. Mark xii. 43.

men,' were therefore no longer of any avail. But the sum cast in by this very poor Widow, could not, under any circumstances, from its exceeding smallness, have been of any real use. It was but *a farthing* ! And yet we find it attracted the notice of the LORD of all Creation, and drew from Him words of loftiest praise. Learn from this, to mistrust the reasoning, (however plausible it may sound,) of those who would discourage offerings intended for GOD'S Honour. Learn also, (and from His own lips,) the manner in which He who weighs acts of munificence in a heavenly balance, forms His estimate of their importance and value. . . . For a few words more on this subject, see the last note on St. Mark xii.

The present Evangelist is not careful, like St. Mark ^g, and still more St. Matthew ^h, to point out that the conversation which follows took place when the Blessed Company *had left* the Temple: when our SAVIOUR indeed had 'departed' from it,—never to enter its courts again. The Disciples appear to have directed their LORD'S attention to the huge stones of which the Temple was builtⁱ, and to the royal offerings which it contained,—such as are alluded to in Judith xvi. 19, and 2 Maccabees v. 16 : ix. 16.

- 5 And as some spake of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He

^g St. Mark xiii. 1.

^h St. Matth. xxiv. 1.

ⁱ See the note in St. Mark xiii. 1.

said, *As for* these things which ye behold, 6 the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

‘ This prophecy of the total overthrow of buildings, which at the time when the prophecy was uttered seemed to defy assault, was fulfilled to the very letter in forty years from that very time. Titus, who conducted the siege, had given orders that the Temple should be preserved ; but one of the soldiers, moved, (as the Jewish Historian Josephus relates,) by a divine impulse, set it on fire, and every effort to extinguish the flames was ineffectual.’ The Reader is referred to the notes on St. Matthew xxiv. 2, and St. Mark xiii. 2.

And they asked Him, saying, Master, but 7 when shall these things be ? and what sign *will there be* when these things shall come to pass ?

Four of their number are found to have approached our LORD with this question, as He sat on the Mount of Olives¹ : and to them, apart from the rest of the Twelve, our LORD delivered the stupendous predictions which ensue. St. Andrew on this great occasion is admitted to share the privilege of those other three most favoured of our LORD’S Disciples, — St. Peter, St. James, and St. John. Well may the whole company of the Dis-

¹ St. Mark xiii. 3.

ciples have been disquieted by the sentence of desolation which they had just heard their Lord pronounce upon the beautiful structure which lay full in view before them,—covered with plates of gold, and of a dazzling whiteness. “It had been so sanctified by the ALMIGHTY in ancient days, and their Religion was so bound up with that spot, that they looked upon it with an awful reverence beyond what we can understand^k.” They are found to have asked Him *two* questions. (1st.), *When* these great buildings should be overthrown; and *what sign* there should be when these things should come to pass? (2ndly),—What sign there should be of CHRIST’S Coming, and of the end of the World? St. Luke only records the former of these inquiries,—as will be found fully explained in the note on St. Matthew xxiv. 3.

- 8 And He said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in My Name, saying, I am *CHRIST*; and the time draweth
9 near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass: but the end *is* not by and by.

That is,—‘But not immediately [cometh] the end: *for* nation shall rise against nation,’ &c., as in the two earlier Gospels; where see the notes^l.

- 10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise

^k Williams.

^l On St. Matth. xxiv. 5, and St. Mark xiii. 6.

against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences : and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from Heaven. 11

‘These are the beginnings of birth-pangs,’—as it is elsewhere added^m. And all these things actually happened before the Destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem. Civil dissensions, and hostile movements abounded ; the famine foretold by Agabus, “which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsarⁿ,” made itself severely felt in Judæa^o ; while in Jerusalem, many actually perished for want of food. Pestilence is known ever to follow at the heels of Famine. During the extremities of the siege, these two scourges prevailed to an extent which was altogether appalling. Many earthquakes are recorded to have taken place, throughout the East ; while the portents and prodigies which are described by an eyewitness, (who knew nothing of the Gospel, nor would have believed it had he known it,) were regarded by the people themselves as unmistakeable signs of something tremendous which was to follow. A flaming meteor, like a fiery sword, hung over the city by the space of a year : one night, a radiance like the light of noon, shone about the Temple and altar, for half an hour’s space : a

^m St. Mark xiii. 8. Compare St. Matth. xxiv. 8.

ⁿ Acts xi. 28.

^o Consider Rom. xv. 25, &c.

heifer, as it was being led to sacrifice, brought forth a lamb in the Temple : the eastern gate, which was of brass, and so heavy that twenty men could scarcely shut it, although secured by deep bolts, swung open at midnight of its own accord. Josephus mentions one more prodigy, which he admits would be thought a fable, but for the evidence on which it rests. Chariots and troops of armed soldiers were seen at sunset, careering in the clouds, and besieging cities in the air. The Roman Historian Tacitus records the same thing.

12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before Kings and Rulers for
 13 My Name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

That is, 'It will afford you an opportunity of bearing witness to your Religion^p.'

14 Settle *it* therefore in your hearts, not to
 15 meditate before what ye shall answer : for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

And so it came to pass ; for, as it is said in the case of St. Stephen, "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which He spake^q."

^p Burton. See St. Mark xiii. 9, and note.

^q Acts vi. 10. Consider Exod. xiv. 14.

These four verses should be compared with four others which are found in a much earlier part of St. Matthew's Gospel; namely, in our LORD's charge to His Twelve Apostles^r. More briefly, the substance of the prophecy, the injunction, and the promise here delivered, may be also seen in St. Luke;—but in quite a different connexion^s. Take notice that on all the three occasions where this solemn subject recurs, it is expressly promised that the HOLY GHOST shall speak by the mouth of the Apostles^t.

And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, 16
and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends;
and *some* of you shall they cause to be put
to death. And ye shall be hated of all *men* 17
for My Name's sake. But there shall not an 18
hair of your head perish.

The substance of these verses also will be found in our LORD's Charge to the Twelve^u; including the precious assurance that the very hairs of the head are all numbered in His sight^x. "The truth contained in these words is the foundation of all Christian courage; which consists in an entire dependance on God, as taking the most watchful and particular care over the very minutest circum-

^r St. Matth. x. 17, 18, 19, 20; where see the notes. See also below, the notes on verses 18 and 19. ^s St. Luke xii. 11, 12.

^t See St. Matth. x. 20: St. Luke xii. 12: and St. Mark xiii. 11, which answers to the present place.

^u See St. Matth. x. 21, 22, 30.

^x St. Matth. x. 30: St. Luke xii. 7.

stance that can appertain to us. And yet it is very remarkable, and most important to observe, that this, the strongest description of a particular and protecting Providence, implies no relief from temporal evils, while at the same time it promises the most assured safety⁷.” We are nowhere encouraged to expect, or hope, that Christian men shall pass their days without danger and distress. The pledge is but given that they shall *be safe* under the shadow of the Almighty wings,—that *no real harm* shall befall those who put their trust in God.

Having thus assured the Disciples of their safety, our SAVIOUR adds :

19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

These words, however, do not at all give the meaning of our LORD’s saying; which should rather be translated,—‘ Save your lives by your patience.’ The injunction, in fact, corresponds to the promise which is found in the two earlier Gospels,—‘ He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved⁸.’ And thus, the grace of *Patience*, which is so often singled out for Divine commendation⁹, is held up to the Church’s notice as of prime importance to secure her safety in the coming strife.

The passage answering to this in St. Mark’s Gospel is found to be transcribed, word for word,

⁷ Williams.

⁸ St. Matth. xxiv. 13 (compare x. 22); and St. Mark xiii. 13.

⁹ See the note on St. Matth. iv. 7.

from our LORD'S Charge to the Twelve, in St. Matthew ^b.—The Blessed Speaker continues :

And when ye shall see Jerusalem com- 20
passed with armies, then know that the de-
solation thereof is nigh. Then let them which 21
are in Judæa flee to the mountains ; and let
them which are in the midst of it depart out ;
and let not them that are in the countries
enter thereinto.

By ' the midst of *it*,' and ' *thereinto*,' the Evan-
gelist means Jerusalem,—which he mentioned in
verse 20. These then are the directions which our
SAVIOUR gave to the faithful for their guidance
when ' the end ' should come. The remoter signs
of coming danger He specified from ver. 8 to ver.
11. ' But before all these' things, (He said,) His
followers must be prepared for the hardships and
persecutions, which He enumerates from ver. 12 to
ver. 19. Next follow, (in ver. 20,) the signs of
danger, no longer remote, but at the very doors ;
and from which, safety must be procured by flight.
And the reason follows :

For these be the days of vengeance, that 22
all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Every instructive it is, and full of delight, to turn
prophecy to the pages of the Jewish His-

^a xiii. 12, 13 :—compare with St. Matth. x. 21, 22.

^b iv. 14.

torian Josephus ; who little thought that, in writing the History of the siege of Jerusalem, he was recording the fulfilment of our SAVIOUR'S predictions, and a wondrous illustration of His words.

It is found that thirty-seven years after this discourse was delivered, Cestius Gallio, the president of Syria, with a large army, marched against Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, and encamped within a mile of the city. At the end of four days, he advanced to the very walls ; and for five days assailed them from every quarter. Next day, the attack was formally begun ; the walls were undermined, and the enemy were about to set fire to the gate of the Temple, when contrary to all expectation, and without any apparent reason, the Commander, (*"most unaccountably,"* says Josephus, A.D. 66,) *"retired from the City!"* A fierce sally of the inhabitants, and a successful onslaught, was the consequence. The Romans fled and the Jewish army returned in triumph ; whereupon it is recorded that a large number of the inhabitants 'swam away from the city, as from a ship about to sink.' This took place in the beginning of October.

Unaccountable indeed, in the eyes of the impatient soldiery as well as of the terrified inhabitants of Jerusalem, must the withdrawal of the enemy at such a moment have appeared : but the Christians who were immured within its walls mindful of their SAVIOUR'S words, must have known very well how to account for the oppor-

tunity of departure thus unexpectedly afforded them. They had the sure promise of the Eternal God that 'not a hair of their heads should perish ^b.' They had received directions to flee from the city when they should see it 'compassed with armies.' Hath He then said, and shall He not do it? Hath He counselled flight, and shall He not also provide *a way* to escape? Doubtless, if it was not 'a blast' and 'a rumour,' (as in the days of Sennacherib ^c), it was that the heart of the Roman 'melted, neither was there spirit in him any more,' and the terror of the Jews fell upon him ^d: but, for whatever reason, the enemy withdrew; and the Christians suddenly found themselves at liberty to follow their LORD's direction, and to escape.

Those however within the city, who missed the sign alluded to, cannot have mistaken the indications of danger three years later, when Titus came in person against Jerusalem and formally besieged it. After wasting some time before the walls, the Roman resolved to encircle the city with a fortification, five miles in extent; and the work was conducted with such spirit, that *in three days* it was completed. *This* may well have been the special sign of danger, to which our LORD alluded; for the inhabitants from the walls must then have beheld their City literally 'compassed with armies ^e,'—('compassed round, and kept in on every

^b See above, ver. 18.

^d See Josh. ii. 9 : v. 1.

^c See 2 Kings xix. 7.

^e See above, ver. 20.

side,' as it is elsewhere said * :) and it is worth remarking that to cut off from them further opportunities of egress and escape was one of the special objects which the enemy had in view. At the critical moment when this work was first being undertaken, it is obvious to suppose that as many as were resolved to save their lives by flight, availed themselves of the opportunity to retire from the devoted City.—Our SAVIOUR continues :

- 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

The sufferings which, in the time of the Siege, should befall the Wife and the Mother in her hour of greatest need, are twice alluded to by our LORD. "Behold, the days are coming," (He prophesied as He was being led to Crucifixion,) "in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck^f."—See the note on St. Mark xiii. 17.

- 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations :

And so indeed it came to pass : for the entire number of the slain in the war was reckoned at upwards of a million ; while ninety-seven thousand are said to have been carried away captive. "Spread as it were on the surface of the Ocean,

* St. Luke xix. 43.

^f St. Luke xxiii. 25.

but not blended with its waters; scattered through the mass of mankind, but still preserved distinct^g,"—they remain a living witness of the Sacred Narrative we are here considering. God hath set a mark upon the members of that nation by which they are at once known; and there is no land where their name is not a by-word and a reproach, no land where they are not identified with transactions in money,—through the lust of which, Judas fell. "The children of Israel," (as it was foretold concerning them,) "abide without a King, and without a Prince, and without a sacrifice^h:" sifted and dispersed "among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieveⁱ."

Take notice, that as forty years elapsed between the institution of the Passover and the entering of the Promised Land, so between the sacrifice of the true Paschal Lamb and the loss of that Land, did forty years elapse also. The men of Nineveh had forty days of warning, and they repented at the preaching of Jonah: but the unbelieving Jews, though they had forty *years* of warning, (and behold, a greater than Jonas was there,) yet repented not.—Our Lord proceeds:
and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

So trodden under foot is she, at this day; but her restoration is promised, and glorious things are spoken of it, and of her^k. "If the casting

^g Churton. ^h Hos. iii. 4. ⁱ Amos ix. 9. ^k Is. lx. 15 to 20.

away of them," (exclaims the Apostle,) "be the reconciling of the World, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead¹?" In the meanwhile, a fixed period of time, known only in the deep counsels of God, ('the times of the Gentiles,' as it is here called,) must elapse: concerning which remarkable expression, consider such places as the following:—St. John ii. 4: vii. 6, 8: xiii. 1: xvii. 1. Acts i. 7: xvii. 26. Gal. iv. 4. Eph. i. 9. 1 Tim. ii. 6: vi. 15. Rev. ix. 15.

The dew of Heaven, which at first was on the fleece alone, (the little flock of Israel,) while it was 'dry upon all the Earth,' hath been transferred, in turn, to the nations of the Earth. God hath said, in Gideon's words, 'let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew^m:' and it is so. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come inⁿ;" but when 'the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,' the dew of Heaven shall refresh all the Earth, 'and there shall be one fold, and One Shepherd^o.'

But our attention is invited to 'the signs' which shall precede the coming of the great Day.

25 And there shall be signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars; and upon the Earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's

¹ Rom. xi. 15.

^m Judges vi. 37 to 40.

ⁿ Rom. xi. 25

^o St. John x. 16. The thought in the text is borrowed from Churton.

hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the Earth: for the powers of Heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.

St. Luke is more full and particular in the two former verses, than either of the other Evangelists. Concerning what precedes, see the notes on St. Matthew xxiv. 29, 30: and observe how parallel are not only the two great events which form the subject of our Lord's prophecy^p, but also the signs which were to precede the one, and are to precede the other. The remoter tokens, in both cases, are declared to be false Christs and false prophets^q: the nearer tokens,—fearful sights, and signs in Heaven^r.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your Redemption draweth nigh.

Consider this place, and St. Matthew xxiv. 8, where see the note,) in connexion with the following: "We know that the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but . . . even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit *the Redemption* of our body^s."

^p See the latter part of the note on St. Matth. xxiv. 26.

^q Compare St. Matth. xxiv. 5 with ver. 24 of the same Chapter.

^r Compare ver. 11, with verses 25 and 26 of the present Chapter.

^s Rom. viii. 22, 23: see also verses 18 to 21.

29 And He spake to them a parable : Behold
30 the fig tree, and all the trees ; when they
now shoot forth, ye see and know of your
own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.
31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things
come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of
32 God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you,
this generation shall not pass away, till all
33 be fulfilled. Heaven and Earth shall pass
away : but My Words shall not pass away.

With these verses, which are found very closely repeated in all the three Gospels^t,—(but notice that St. Luke adds, ‘*and all the trees,*’)—St. Luke takes leave of our LORD’s reply to the twofold question with which the chapter commences^u ; adding only certain words of general caution. There was the less need why this Evangelist should say anything about the ‘day and hour’ of CHRIST’s final Coming^v, since he had not recorded the Disciples’ inquiry concerning that event.—See the notes on St. Matth. xxiv. 33 and 35, and especially on St. Mark xiii. 29, for some remarks on these verses.

34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that Day come upon you una-

^t St. Matth. xxiv. 32 to 35 : St. Mark xiii. 28 to 31.

^u See the note on St. Matth. xxiv. 3. See also, above,—the note on verse 7.

^v See St. Matth. xxiv. 36, and St. Mark xiii. 32.

wares. For as a snare shall it come on all 35
them that dwell on the face of the whole
earth.

Rather, 'that *sit* on the face:' implying a state of carelessness and ease, unconscious of its misery and unsuspecting of its danger^x.

The Reader is referred to some remarks in the latter part of the note on St. Mark xiii. 29. He will observe that what, in St. Matthew's Gospel, takes the form of a warning, derived from the conduct of the men before the Flood,—('eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage',)—is here delivered as an exhortation. 'Lest,' (says our LORD,) 'your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.'

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that 36
ye may be accounted worthy to escape all
these things that shall come to pass, and to
stand before the Son of Man.

For "who may abide the Day of His coming? or who shall *stand* when He appeareth?" "Wherefore," (says the Apostle,) "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; and having done all, to

^x Consider Is. ix. 2, as quoted in St. Matth. iv. 16.

^y St. Matth. xxiv. 38.

^z Mal. iii. 2. Compare Nahum i. 6. Also Ezra ix. 15. Ps. i. 5,

stand^a:" that is, to appear as those who are acquitted by their Judge.

"The one great point to which our LORD is attracting notice throughout the whole of these warnings, is in some sense true of all generations of Christians, as well as it will be of the last: that their final day overtakes them unawares, not from want of warnings, of which they have had great abundance; but from want of attention,—their minds being occupied by worldly pursuits^b."

Having thus finished his narrative of our LORD's great Prophecy, the Evangelist adds :

37 And in the day time He was teaching in the Temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount of Olives*.

38 And all the people came early in the morning to Him in' the Temple, for to hear Him.

Such is the Evangelist's brief record, and summary, of the manner in which these solemn days were spent! At night, our LORD's habit was to repair to the village of Bethany,—(the village of Lazarus and his sisters,)—which was about two miles from Jerusalem: but first, He seems to have frequented the Garden of Gethsemane, situate at the foot of the Mount of Olives; where, lighted by the Paschal moon, He spent the earlier hours of the night in the company of His Disciples^c.

^a Ephes. vi. 13.

^b Williams.

^c See the note on St. Matth. xxi. 17.

A

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 *The Jews conspire against CHRIST.* 3 *Satan prepareth Judas to betray Him.* 7 *The Apostles prepare the Passover.* 19 *CHRIST instituteth His Holy Supper,* 21 *covertly foretelleth of the Traitor,* 24 *dehorteth the rest of His Apostles from ambition,* 31 *assureth Peter his faith should not fail:* 34 *and yet he should deny Him thrice.* 39 *He prayeth in the mount, and sweateth blood,* 47 *is betrayed with a kiss:* 50 *He henleth Mulchus' ear.* 54 *He is thrice denied of Peter,* 63 *shamefully abused,* 66 *and confesseth Himself to be the SON of GOD.*

XXII. Now the Feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief Priests and Scribes sought ² how they might kill Him; for they feared the people.

It was now the Wednesday in Passover week. It therefore wanted 'two days' of the Feast, as we learn from the earlier Gospels,—where some remarks have been offered on the preceding verses, to which it must suffice to refer the reader*. Our LORD had withdrawn from Jerusalem to Bethany on the evening of this day, and a brief period of

* See the notes on St. Matth. xxvi. 1 to 5. Also St. Mark xiv. 1, 2, with the note prefixed to those verses.

rest is thus interposed between the terrible evils which are immediately to follow. In the meantime, His enemies are intent on nothing less than His death; and are seeking for some means of effecting their wicked purpose 'by craft^b,'—daring to apprehend Him openly, and on Feast Day. All this, which St. Matthew and St. Mark explain at length, St. Luke omits; contenting himself with assigning *the reason* of his conduct,—namely, '*for they feared the people*' is clear from verse 6, below, that this is the meaning of the present Evangelist's briefer record.

Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the Twelve.

The word 'then,' in this place, does not refer to time. In fact, the period when 'Satan entered into Judas,' is not specified by St. Luke, but it is carefully marked by the two Evangelists who wrote before him, (especially by St. Matthew^c), as the period of the Supper at Bethany on the evening of the Sabbath previous^d.

Notice however that St. Luke supplies what the others omit,—namely, the remarkable state of mind that it was '*Satan*' who '*entered into*' the Betrayer before the commission of his crime.

And this circumstance suggests the remark that among the points of difference between the Bible and every other Book, not least striking

^b St. Matth. xxvi. 4: St. Mark xiv. 1. ^c St. Matth. xiii.

^d See the note on St. Matth. xxvi. 5.

the fact that *here*, and here *only*, is the veil removed from Creation, and the true cause of an event assigned. Does a dumb creature refuse to proceed on its journey? It was because it 'saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand^e.' Is Elisha secure amid the hosts of Syria? The LORD opened the eyes of his servant, 'and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about^f.' Does Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah prophesy falsely? A lying Spirit had gone forth from the LORD, and spoke by his lips^g. Does David offend God by numbering the people? It was at Satan's suggestion that he offended^h. And does Disease in consequence ravage Jerusalem? It was the work of the Angel of the LORDⁱ. —So again,—Has a woman been bowed together for eighteen years? lo, Satan hath bound her throughout all that long period^k. Is the surface of a pool ruffled, and a healing virtue straightway communicated to its waters? It was once more the work of an Angel, 'which went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water^l.' The agent on the present occasion was none other than Satan himself,—the chief of the fallen Angels, and the great Enemy of the Second Adam. Judas was possessed by *him*.

^e Numb. xxii. 23. ^f 2 Kings vi. 17. ^g 1 Kings xxii. 21, 22.

^h 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Compare 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

ⁱ 1 Chron. xxi. 15, 16.

^k St. Luke xiii. 16.

^l St. John v. 4.

4 And he went his way, and communed
with the chief Priests and Captains, how
5 he might betray Him unto them. And they
were glad, and covenanted to give him
6 money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Such then was the accursed work of Judas on the Wednesday of Holy Week,—and Wednesday has evermore preserved the impress of his crime, and partaken in the solemn observance of Friday. For some remarks on this subject, see the notes on St. Matth. xxvi. 15, 16, and St. Mark xiv. 11.

7 Then came the day of unleavened bread,
8 when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat.

The beginning of the 14th day of the month Nisan, is spoken of. This may have been either the evening of Wednesday or the morning of Thursday; but it was most probably the former. St. Luke alone it is who mentions the names of the favoured pair of Disciples who were sent from Bethany to Jerusalem on this great errand,—the same, it may well be thought, whom our SAVIOUR had sent on a former occasion to bring Him the ass and the ass-colt on which He made His triumphant entry into His Capital^m.

^m See St. Matth. xxi. 1 to 3, &c. St. Mark xi. 1 to 6, &c. (when see the notes,) St. Luke xix. 29 to 34.

And they said unto Him, Where wilt 9
Thou that we prepare ?

And He said unto them, Behold, when 10
ye are entered into the City, there shall a
man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water ;
follow him into the house where he entereth
in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of 11
the house, The Master saith unto thee,
Where is the guestchamber, where I shall
eat the passover with My Disciples ? And 12
he shall shew you a large upper room fur-
nished : there make ready.

All this has a most mysterious air ; and the
suspicion is unavoidable that there must be more
in the narrative than meets the eye. Why did
our LORD give the Disciples *a sign* whereby they
should know the House in which it was His divine
pleasure to eat His last Passover ; instead of telling
them the name of the owner of the House ? and
further,—What meaning may be supposed to at-
tach to the peculiar sign He gave them, of one
bearing water ? Our reply to both of these ques-
tions may well be brief, since conjecture on such
a subject is all that can be offered.

It seems not unlikely, then, that one great pur-
pose of the Divine directions which St. Peter and
St. John now received, was to impress the minds
of those Disciples, (and through them, the minds
of all the rest,) with the dignity and solemnity of

the errand on which they were now sent: to awaken the attention of all, to this Paschal Supper, as unlike those former three of which they had been partakers with their LORD,—not only in its actual progress, but also in the very circumstances of its preparation. Next, to convince them at once of His own Divine Foreknowledge, and Almighty Power: Foreknowledge,—since He was able to describe what should befall them; and Power,—since He was about to shew them how mysteriously, (according to His ancient Name^a;) He could ‘provide.’ The hearts of men are in His Hands, and the Human Will becomes obedient at His bidding; while the ‘large upper room’ proves furnished and prepared, when His mysterious necessity makes itself felt.

As for the particular sign,—it shall suffice to remind the reader of the many occasions when singular mercies are described in Scripture as having befallen men in connexion with that element which our SAVIOUR consecrated to the mystical washing away of Sin. Thus an Angel found Hagar at the well Lahai-roi^o, (the first instance of Angelic ministration on record;)—and near the same well, Rebekah met Isaac^p. For the second time, at a well of water, the Angel found Hagar^q; and Eliezer met Rebekah^r; and Jacob met Rachel^s; and Moses met Zipporah^t. By a well, also,

^a Gen. xxii. 14,—see the margin.

^o Gen. xvi. 7, 14

^p Gen. xxiv. 62, 63.

^q Gen. xxi. 19.

^r Gen. xxiv. 11 to 20. ^s Gen. xxix. 2 to 10. ^t Exod. ii. 15 to 17.

our LORD revealed Himself to the Woman of Samaria^u.—Whether we are right in connecting these many incidents with the event recorded in the text, can only be matter of conjecture: but it is hard to resist the suspicion that there exists some secret affinity between them; and it shall suffice to have thrown out the hint, in this place.—The reader may further be reminded how, almost 1900 years before, one bearing a pitcher of water proved a sign to the servant of Isaac^v; at a time also, when that eminent type of CHRIST was about to take to himself his Bride,—as in truth our SAVIOUR CHRIST was now.—On the preceding verses the reader is requested further to refer to the commentary on St. Matthew xxvi. 17 and 19.

And they went, and found as He had said **13** unto them: and they made ready the Passover.

And when the hour was come, He sat **14** down, and the Twelve Apostles with Him.

When the hour of evening had arrived, the Son of Man, attended by the Twelve, proceeded from Bethany to the place of entertainment so mysteriously provided for their reception. What first occurred is related by St. Luke alone, in the four verses which follow:—

And He said unto them, With desire I **15** have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer:

^u St. John iv. 6.

^v Gen. xxiv. 14, 15, and 43 to 45.

“Very vehement desire is on no other occasion attributed to our LORD, either by Himself or others. So great was this occasion, when, before He left His Disciples, He had to give to them the New Covenant of His Body and Blood ^z.”

16 for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

The Passover was ‘fulfilled in the Kingdom of God’ when He, the true Paschal Lamb, was offered on the bitter Cross ^y. ‘The Kingdom of God,’—which in one sense had come already ^z, and which, in the highest sense of all, is yet to come*,—*that* Kingdom would then in a special manner have arrived; for the Veil of the Temple having been rent in twain, the shadows of the Law would have departed, and the substance would have been at length revealed. CHRIST ‘came not to destroy, but to fulfil,’—as He Himself declared ^a; and the fulfilment of the Passover, which was to take place on the morrow, was the prime end of His Coming.

‘Until,’ in this place, has the same meaning as in St. Matthew i. 25, and elsewhere ^b. Our SA-

^z Williams.

^y See the note on St. John i. 29. Also on St. Matth. v. 17.

* See the note on St. Matth. xvi. 28, and especially the note on St. Luke ix. 27; also, on St. Luke xvii. 20, 21. Consider St. Matth. xi. 12, St. Luke xi. 20, &c.

^a See St. Matth. vi. 10, St. Luke xiii. 28, &c.

^b St. Matth. v. 17.

^b Besides the note on St. Matth. i. 25, see on St. Matth. xviii. 34; and the last paragraph of the Commentary on St. Matthew.

SAVIOUR'S words obviously imply that He will *never* partake of the Paschal Supper any more.

And He took the cup, and gave thanks, 17 and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not 18 drink of the fruit of the Vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come.

Rather,—‘And He took *a cup*:’ for this cup of wine mingled with water was one which was drunk by the ancient Jews before the celebration of the Paschal Supper. It has been called ‘the Cup of the Old Testament;’ and is evidently a thing apart from that ‘cup *after* Supper’ which our SAVIOUR converted into the Sacrament of His most precious Blood. See what has been already offered on this subject, and on the method observed at the Paschal Supper generally, in the note on St. Mark xiv. 21.

Two things are here to be noticed: first, that from the language of our Blessed LORD in verses 17, 18, it would appear that He denied Himself the refreshment of the Cup on the occasion of this, His last Supper. And next, it will be perceived that our SAVIOUR, (in verse 18), varies the phrase which He used above, in ver. 16. The reason is obvious. The Wine which was drunk at the Paschal Supper, symbolized no spiritual Blessing: there could be no ‘fulfilment’ therefore, here, as in the case of the Paschal Lamb. The words—‘I will drink no more of the fruit of the Vine till

the Kingdom of God shall come,'—may be compared, and their meaning safely gathered, from our LORD's declaration with respect to 'the Cup of Blessing;' namely, that He 'would drink no more of the fruit of the Vine, until the day when He should drink it new with His Disciples in the Kingdom of GOD^c:' concerning which words, the reader is referred to an earlier part of the present Commentary^d.

And now, the Paschal Supper was actually proceeding, as St. Matthew and St. Mark are careful to inform us^e.

- 19 And He took Bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is My Body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

Which loving command, 'to continue a perpetual memory of that His precious Death until His coming again,'—the Church pleads evermore at the celebration of the LORD's Supper.

St. Luke, in his account of the Institution of this great Sacrament, is thought to have followed closely in the footsteps of St. Paul,—who declares that he received his account of the first LORD's Supper from the LORD Himself. "For I have received of the LORD that which also I delivered unto you, that the LORD JESUS, the same night in

^c St. Matth. xxvi. 29: St. Mark xiv. 25.

^d See the note on St. Matth. xxvi. 29.

^e St. Matth. xxvi. 26: St. Mark xiv. 22.

which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My Body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me^f." Here was "not a typical or prefigurative rite, therefore, but commemorative, as St. Paul himself explains it: 'for as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the LORD'S Death till He come^g.'"—But the reader must be requested to examine what has been already offered on this great subject in the Commentary on the two earlier Gospels^h.

What interval of time may have elapsed between the appointment of the Bread in the Holy Eucharist, and the consecration of the Wine to the same great mystery, does not appear. But that the Paschal Supper was now ended, is clear from the form of words in which both St. Paul and his companion in travel, St. Luke, describe that part of the Institution. As it follows:

Likewise also the Cup after Supper, say- 20
ing, This Cup is the New Testament in My
Blood, which is shed for you.

“‘Likewise,’—for if these two were not connected together by the time of their appointment, yet there was something, either in the marked and emphatic manner of our LORD, or some other circumstance, that distinguished these two actions

^f 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24.

^g Williams, quoting 1 Cor. xi. 26.

^h See all the notes on St. Matth. xxvi. 26, and on St. Mark xiv. 22.

beyond all the other transactions of that memorable evening; drawing them out, and putting them forth together, as the two cardinal ordinances of which the Old Dispensation spoke in type and figure^l." Once more, however, it must suffice to refer to what has been already offered on this subject^k.

'The New Testament' (or 'Covenant') 'in My Blood,'—is said with reference to the words used by Moses concerning the Elder Covenant: 'This is the Blood of the Testament which God hath enjoined unto you^l,'—as St. Paul quotes the language of Exodus xxiv. 8. 'For where a Testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood and without shedding of blood is no remission'. . . . Now, 'if the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of CHRIST, who through the Eternal SPIRIT offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God^m!'—See more, in the first note on St. Matthew xxvi. 28.

Thus then hath 'Wisdom builded her House,' and 'mingled her Wine,' and 'furnished her Table.' 'Come,' (saith she), 'Eat of My Bread, and drink of the Wine which I have mingledⁿ.'—Thus was

^l Williams.

^k See all the notes on St. Matth. xxvi. 27, 28, and on St. Mark xiv. 23, 24.

^l Heb. ix. 20.

^m Hebr. ix. 16, 18, 22, 13, 14.

ⁿ Prov. ix. 1 to 5.

the great Sacrament of CHRIST'S Body and Blood instituted: and who can fail to be struck with the brevity of the record? How many words do we waste on trifles; and on this, the grandest of all occasions, how few and simple are the words spoken! — words which have nevertheless filled the Church with divisions, and occasioned endless strife and debate, although conveying the most precious legacy of Love. Yet has not this, in great measure, proceeded from carnal curiosity; which seeks to reason and dispute, where God has rather willed that men should believe and adore? The reader is referred on this subject to the famous language of Hooker quoted in the Commentary on the latter part of St. Matthew xxvi. 28.

The Divine Author of this blessed mystery is straightway found to renew the awful declaration which He had made while the Paschal Supper was yet proceeding°.

But, behold, the hand of him that betray-
eth Me is with Me on the table. And truly
the Son of Man goeth, as it was determined:
but woe unto that man by whom He is be-
trayed!

On this terrible announcement, see the note on St. Matthew xxvi. 24. Some remarks will be found elsewhere offered on the extraordinary circumstance that although our SAVIOUR, at an earlier stage of the Last Supper, not only announced the

° St. Matth. xxvi. 21 to 25, and St. Mark xiv. 18 to 21.

presence of the Traitor with Him at the Table, but even gave a sign whereby it might be known which was he; nor only so, but in reply to a question addressed to Him by Judas, further proceeded to reveal the Traitor to himself^p; it should be found that by no one of those present, except Judas himself, was this last intimation understood^q. Our SAVIOUR therefore repeats, but in a more solemn manner, His former warning: whereupon, strange to say, it is added concerning the Twelve Apostles,—

- 23 And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

The remarks which have been already offered on a similar passage of St. Matthew's Gospel are so applicable here, that the reader is requested to refer to the Commentary on the earlier Evangelist^r.—Strange as to *us* it may appear, eleven of the Apostles, in their guileless love, and simplicity of character, find it impossible to realize the notion of such villainy as our LORD foretold, and as one of their number was actually contemplating.—To know what happened next, we should probably read St. John xiii. 22 to 30,—from which it will be perceived that at this juncture, Judas Iscariot, (' Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,

^p St. Matth. xxvi. 25.

^q See the note on St. John xiii. 29. See also, on St. Matth. xxvi. 22.

^r See the note on St. Matth. xxvi. 22.

which did eat of My Bread!'), left the table and went forth on his accursed errand.—It follows :

And there was also a strife among them, 24 which of them should be accounted the greatest.

A sufficient proof by the way, that no superiority over the other Apostles had been yet bestowed upon Simon. Consider what has been said on this subject in the note on St. Matthew xvi. 19. It is not very evident what should have led to contention on such a subject at such a time ; and perhaps this is one of those places where the connecting link has been withheld by the Evangelist. The train of thought may be other than can be gathered from the perusal of a single Gospel.

And He said unto them, The Kings of the 25 Gentiles exercise lordship over them ; and they that exercise authority upon them are called Benefactors.

As if He had said,—‘ You are right in supposing that you are on the point of being established in My Spiritual Kingdom over the World, in order to do good to Mankind : but think not that from the benefits you shall confer on the World, you are to bring any honour or credit upon yourselves ; for My Kingdom is of a far different character.’—“ The Kings of the Gentiles,” (says our SAVIOUR,) “ lord it over them ; and their oppres-

sors are called 'Benefactors:.' alluding at on the well-known course followed, and to the known title assumed, by many of the he Sovereigns of Antiquity; who, while laying to an appellation which implied that they en the love of a grateful people, were observed guilty of a tyrannical exercise of absolute po

- 26 But ye *shall* not *be* so: but he th greatest among you, let him be as younger; and he that is chief, as he doth serve.

"The Nobles, and Princes, and Judg CHRIST'S Kingdom, were to be formed or type and model of Him, who being in the of God took on Him the form of a servant".'

- 27 For whether *is* greater, he that sitte meat, or he that serveth? *is* not he sitteth at meat? but I am among you; that serveth.

Words, of which we should not have susp the full force and significancy, but for the ex record which St. John's Gospel supplies o SAVIOUR'S gracious condescension in washin Disciples' feet on this occasion ^x.

It will be remembered that sayings very resembling these, have been met with alread was with such measured language of reprop

^a Dr. W. H. Mill,—quoting Phil. ii. 6, 7.

^x St. John xiii. 1 to 15.

our SAVIOUR addressed the Ten, when He beheld them 'moved with indignation' against James and John, at the request of those two brethren that they might be permitted to occupy the two places of highest honour in His Kingdom⁷. "But on this occasion, He takes pains not only to repeat the words, but by that expressive action to engrave,—as it were by the finger of the HOLY GHOST,—that lesson on their heart: for those expressions in St. Matthew and St. Mark, as well as these now in St. Luke, seem like comments on that which had just before taken place⁸."

Ye are they which have continued with 28 Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto 29 you a Kingdom, as My FATHER hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink 30 at My Table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

"In this sentence," (says Dr. Mill,) "our LORD describes the highest honours of that Kingdom which, in the verses preceding, He had distinguished from all others founded by man^a." "There is hardly any passage in the Scriptures," (observes an excellent living writer^b) "in which the high and glorious estate of the Church, the personal feebleness and insufficiency of those who are called

⁷ St. Matth. xx. 25 to 28, and St. Mark x. 42 to 45,—where see the notes.

^a Williams.

^b Contrast this, with the four Empires which had gone before it: Dan. ii. 31 to 35, and 38 to 40: also 44, 45. ^b Dr. Moberly.

its pillars, and the true secret of its strength and glory, are more strikingly exhibited," than in the seven preceding verses.

"Ye which have followed Me," (said our LORD to Simon Peter, on a previous occasion,)—"in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of His Glory, ye also shall sit upon Twelve Thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel^c." The two places closely resemble each other; but the points of difference are very significant and striking. Thus, the nearer approach of CHRIST'S *Kingdom* may have suggested the distinct allusion to it by name, in this place; while it seems impossible not to connect the promise that the Disciples should 'eat and drink at the LORD'S Table, in His Kingdom,' with the recent institution of the Blessed Sacrament of CHRIST'S Body and Blood^d. It will be observed, further, that there is no mention here of *Twelve* Thrones, —as in the other place referred to.

- 31 And the LORD said, Simon, Simon, behold,
Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may
32 sift *you* as wheat: but I have prayed for
thee, that thy faith fail not:

Satan had earnestly desired to get *them* into his power: ('*you*,' not '*thee*:') he was 'seeking to devour' them *all*: (that phrase, observe, is St. Peter's own:) but especially did the Enemy of

^c St. Matth. xix. 28,—where see the notes.^b

^d Compare and consider St. Luke xiii. 26.

Souls desire to have St. Peter. Hence, our LORD adds,—‘But I have prayed *for thee*.’ And who may describe the power of that prayer? It was not, however, a prayer that Simon might not *fall*; (for fall he did, and that grievously;) but that his faith might not eventually *fail* him.

How striking a revelation, by the way, of what had been taking place in that darkest place of the Realm of Darkness, (the heart of Satan,) for the last three years! He had longed beyond all things to deal with the Twelve violently and mercilessly, —exposing them to sharp and sudden trials, (even as when he had to do with the patriarch Job^e;)—so, in short, to deal with them, as the husbandman deals with a sieve of mingled wheat and chaff! For Satan is at once a Serpent and a Lion; a Serpent in craft,—a Lion in assault^f.

And let not the beauty of the present saying be overlooked: still less let it be suspected that since the object of ‘sifting’ is the purification of the good, the image which our SAVIOUR has here employed is inappropriate. Satan does indeed sift in order to destroy,—in order that nothing may be preserved which can possibly be scattered and caused to perish. On the other hand, he does no more harm than GOD is graciously pleased to permit: nor, (what is especially to be noted,) when

* See Job i. 15, 16, 17, 18,—while one messenger ‘*was yet speaking*,’ the bearer of fresh evil tidings coming in.

^f This was a favourite remark of Augustine. It occurs five times in the course of his writings. Hence the language of our Litany, —‘From Sin, from the crafts and assaults of the Devil,’ &c.

he rages most fiercely, can he do more than *sift* the Disciples. The chaff is indeed reserved for the burning; and that which is chaff, Satan causes straightway to appear: but the wheat will the Heavenly Husbandman gather into His garner[†],—purified by affliction, and rendered more precious by the fiery trial through which it has been made to pass. These words are therefore found to convey a message of comfort and assurance to all.—Our SAVIOUR adds:

and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

The phrase ‘when thou art converted,’ is apt to convey a very wrong impression to an English reader; and yet it cannot perhaps be mended. The popular sense of the term ‘Conversion,’ be it however observed, is as much excluded here, as in chap. xvii. 4,—where the same word recurs; though it is there translated ‘turn,’ instead of ‘be converted.’ Our LORD is in fact here giving St. Peter an indirect hint of that desertion and denial, which, in ver. 34, He foretels more distinctly.

‘Strengthen thy brethren.’ What is this but the command,—‘Feed My Sheep^h?’ Now, this was to be when St. Peter was ‘converted:’ which seems to mean after his fall, and subsequent recovery,—when it is to be supposed that he became an altered manⁱ. And such, in truth, his Epistles

[†] St. Matth. iii. 12, where see the notes.

^h St. John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

ⁱ See the note on St. Matth. xxvi. 75.

prove him to have become: for, contrast the impetuous protestations of ver. 33, and again of St. Mark xiv. 29, 31, with those words of counsel which he afterwards delivered to the Church,—“Give an answer...with Meekness and Fear;” and —“Be clothed with Humility^l.”—Notice, lastly, that the Divine purpose with which strength is imparted, is the confirmation of the weak brother: according to that of the Psalmist,—‘O give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free Spirit; *then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked*^k.’

The resemblance of part of the verse under consideration, and that which follows, to the Greek version of 2 Samuel xv. 20, 21, is extraordinary.

And he said unto Him, LORD, I am ready 33 to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the 34 cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me.

Thus does the Holy One for the first time predict that Simon will deny Him^l. It is remarkable that on this occasion, (*and on no other,*) our SAVIOUR should be related to have addressed Simon by his name of Strength,—*Peter*^m.

^l 1 St. Peter iii. 15 : v. 5.

^k Ps. li. 12, 13. Compare also the language of 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

^l For the second prophecy, see St. Matth. xxvi. 33, 34,—and the note there.

^m See St. Matth. xvi. 18.

5 And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

He alludes to the mysterious charge which He had given to the Twelve^a, and again repeated to the Seventy^o: as if He had said,—When I bade you provide yourselves with no human aids, did ye not find My words come true that neither would ye require any?

6 Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

Rather,—‘and he that not [a purse], let him sell his garment, and [therewith] buy a sword.’—Words which it is obvious *to us* are purely symbolical, and will admit of none but an allegorical interpretation. They do but imply that a season of exceeding trial was at hand; when the lives of the Apostles would be endangered, and when every other personal concern would be swallowed up by the need of providing for the preservation of life.

The Blessed Speaker proceeds to give the reason why every means, at once of support and defence, would henceforth be needed by His Disciples. The time was at hand when He, whose presence had so long been their protection, would be withdrawn from them; nor only so, but by the Death

^a St. Matth. x. 9, 10.

^o St. Luke x. 4.

He should die, He would leave them a legacy of shame and reproach. As it follows :

For I say unto you, that this that is ³⁷ written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors : for the things concerning Me have an end.

Our SAVIOUR quotes certain well-known words of Prophecy^p, as still requiring fulfilment ; (for *that* is the meaning of the expression 'have an end ;') and take notice that St. Mark points out how, on the morrow, "*the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors^q.'*"

The citation of such a prophecy at such a time may, to some readers, seem strange : and it may be well that readers of every class should be reminded how frequent are the appeals to ancient prophecy,—(whether in the way of direct quotation, or indirect allusion),—throughout this, the concluding scene of our LORD's earthly Ministry^r.

^p Isaiah liii. 12.

^q St. Mark xv. 28.

^r The reader will do well to verify the following references :—St. Matth. xxvi. 28. (alluding to Ex. xxiv. 8.) :—31, (quoting Zech. xiii. 7) :—38, (alluding to Ps. xlii. 5.) :—54, (alluding to such places as Is. liii. 7, &c.) : 56, (referring generally to all that now took place) :—64, (alluding to Dan. vii. 13.) :—xxvii. 9, (quoting Zech. xi. 12.) :—34, (alluding to Ps. lxix. 21.)—43, (quoting Ps. xxii. 8) :—46, (quoting Ps. xxii. 1.) :—St. Mark xv. 28, (quoting Is. liii. 12.) :—St. Luke xxii. 37, (quoting the same prophecy) :—69, (alluding to Dan. vii. 13.) :—xxiii. 30, (quoting Hos. x. 8.) :—34, 35, (alluding to Ps. xxii. 7.) :—46, (quoting Ps.

The reason of those references is obvious. Like a wise Master-Builder, the Author of our most holy Faith was careful, before He departed out of the World, to neglect no part of that foundation on which the Spiritual fabric of His Church was presently to rise. For take notice that *the fulfilment of Prophecy* in our LORD's person,—not *the reality of His Miracles*,—was the evidence on which the Apostles rested their proof that Christianity was a Revelation sent from God. “The invariable purport of all their arguments, the end which they kept before them, in whatever they said or wrote, was to prove that the subject of all the various prophecies with which the Old Testament Scriptures were filled, was the Gospel which they preached; and, so far as appears, this only it was which the Jews denied.”

Our LORD had been warning His Disciple therefore of the need they would experience of every means of defence :

38 And they said, LORD, behold here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough.

Observe how literally these holy men understood

xxxi. 6.):—St. John xiii. 18, 19, (quoting Ps. xli. 9.):—xix. 28 (quoting Ps. xxii. 18.):—28, (alluding to Ps. lxxix. 21.):—30 (quoting Exod. xii. 46, or Numb. ix. 12, and Ps. xxxiv. 20.):—37, (quoting Zech. xii. 10.): and there may be a few more places

• Dean Lyall.—‘*To Him give all the Prophets witness,*’ said St. Peter, when ‘he preached CHRIST to Cornelius and his company Acts x. 43. See St. Luke xxiv. 25, 26; and the note there.

our SAVIOUR'S words^t. Two of their number, (St. Peter was certainly one^a; and what if St. John were the other?), shew that they have provided themselves each with a weapon: but of what avail would 'two swords' have been, had a contest ensued? Clearly of none. 'It is enough,' however, says our LORD: thereby plainly shewing how different a meaning from what they supposed, His divine words were intended to convey. By that exclamation He simply puts the subject aside for the moment; leaving to the events of that terrible night, to discover His real meaning^x.

The Paschal Supper having been concluded with the customary Hymn^y, there followed that long and affecting discourse which 'the disciple whom JESUS loved' has alone recorded^z; and the blessed company, eleven Apostles and their LORD, (for Judas, after receiving the Holy Eucharist, had left the Table^a;) moving slowly through the moonlit streets of Jerusalem, at last left the city by the gate which led to the Mount of Olives.

And He came out, and went, as He was 39 wont, to the Mount of Olives; and His Disciples also followed Him.

^t Consider the evidences of this disposition on the part of the Apostles supplied by St. Matth. xvi. 6 to 12. St. John xi. 12: xxi. 23, &c.

^a For see St. John xviii. 10.

^x Consider below, ver. 49 to 51. St. Matth. xxvi. 51 to 53. St. John xviii. 10, 11; and, not least of all, 36.

^y See St. Matth. xxvi. 30, and the note there.

^z St. John xv, xvi, xvii.

^a See the conclusion of the note on ver. 23, above.

After descending a slight declivity, they crossed the brook Kidron, and again ascending, made their way towards the retired spot which was to be the scene of our SAVIOUR'S mysterious Agony: but as they went, He is found to have prophesied St. Peter's denial, and the cowardice of all^b.

"Then cometh JESUS with them unto a place called Gethsemane^c: where was a Garden, into the which He entered, and His Disciples^d." Thus was a Garden made the scene of our SAVIOUR'S Passion, as it was the place where He made His Grave^e: and thus, the curse which was entailed on our race in a Garden, by the first Adam, was *there* also, by the second Adam, undone.

40 And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

These words do not seem to have been addressed to all the Eleven: but only to those three Disciples,—('Peter and James and John'),—whom our SAVIOUR selected out of the entire number to be the witnesses, or rather to be the companions, of His greatest Agony. To the rest He said on first entering the Garden, 'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder': but to these, He appears to have spoken the words of the text, after withdrawing with them to a more retired part of the Garden.

^b See St. Matth. xxvi. 31 to 35.

^c St. Matth. xxvi. 36.

^d St. John xviii. 1.

^e St. John xix. 41.

^f St. Matth. xxvi. 36.

There,—‘sore amazed and very heavy,’—He is found to have added, ‘My Soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me^ε.’—Concerning such passages, we know not how to speak. The reader is, however, referred to the notes on the earlier Gospels^h.

And He was withdrawn from them about 41 a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, FATHER, if Thou be willing, remove 42 this Cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.

The two earlier Gospels here discover to us our Blessed REDEEMER as ‘fallen on His face’ ‘to the groundⁱ,’ while He poured forth these mysterious words of resignation to the FATHER's Will.—‘I seek not Mine own Will,’ (said He on another occasion,) ‘but the Will of the FATHER which hath sent Me^j.’

And here, it is obvious to remark how completely the text establishes the existence of a *Human*, as distinct from a *Divine* Will, in the one Person of our SAVIOUR CHRIST,—‘Very God, and Very Man.’ Not that it is here implied that His own ‘Will’ was *at variance* with the Will of the Eternal FATHER: but the very instincts of Humanity cause us to shrink from Agony; and here

^ε St. Matth. xxvi. 38: St. Mark xiv. 33.

^h See the notes on St. Matth. xxvi. 37 and 38. Also on St. Mark xiv. 34.

ⁱ St. Matth. xxvi. 39: St. Mark xiv. 35.

^j St. John v. 30.

was Agony the sharpest that had ever been endured by any of the sons of Adam. See the note on St. Matthew xxvi. 42.

“The expression ‘Not My Will, but Thine, be done,’ uttered with respect to that which would then only become sinful if followed *in preference* to the Divine Will, may inform us where mere Temptation ends, and where Sin (which in our LORD had not the remotest place) begins. And may we not conceive also that the more acute apprehension of things which the perfect contexture of His Humanity brought with it,—the keener sense of pain and distress, as well as of others’ ingratitude and treachery, which His sinless soul entertained,—might give a sharper edge to this description of trial in Him; and far more than counterbalance, in respect of hardness of endurance, that which less holy and duller spirits have to encounter from what in Him had no place,—the remnants of native corruption, and ill desires imperfectly mortified*?”—These valuable remarks prepare us for the memorable statement which follows, and which exhibits to us the LORD of Angels sustained in His hour of mysterious extremity by one of His own creatures.

43 And there appeared an Angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him.

‘In such infinite condescension did He deign as Man to suffer agony, and in that suffering to

* Dr. W. H. Mill.

receive support from one of His own creatures, who was made and who lived by the breath of His mouth¹.'

Consider the comment of the SPIRIT on this mysterious transaction. After mentioning our REDEEMER'S 'strong crying,'—and noticing a circumstance nowhere else recorded, namely the precious '*tears*' of CHRIST,—St. Paul, (who derived his Gospel by immediate revelation from GOD^m), declares,—He '*was heard*,—in that *He feared*ⁿ.' It seems to be implied that He was 'heard' by this sending of the Angel; whose appearance, (says Theophylact,) is recorded for our sakes, to teach us the efficacy of Prayer^o. But the precise occasion of 'Fear,' in the case of our Blessed LORD, seems too awful a matter for the speculations of such as we are. It may suffice to remind the reader of a place in the Psalms where this article of the Passion finds express prophetic notice:—'*My heart is sore pained within Me; and the terrors of Death are fallen upon Me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon Me, and horror hath overwhelmed Me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest*^p.'

A living writer remarks,—“When our LORD was tempted in the Wilderness, it was not till after

¹ Williams.

^m Gal. i. 12.

ⁿ Heb. v. 7.

^o Thus it fared with Hagar, (Gen. xxi. 17.) with Daniel, (Dan. ix. 20 to 23.) and with Cornelius, (Acts x. 3, 4.)

^p Ps. lv. 4, 5, 6.

His Temptation was ended, that ‘Angels came and ministered unto Him⁹.’ Here, an Angel comes from Heaven to strengthen Him during His trial; from which we may infer that this was a far more severe struggle than the former. The same inference may be drawn from the accounts of the Evangelists, and from our LORD’s own language and demeanour, on this latter occasion^r.” This was, in fact, that ‘season,’ darkly hinted at in St. Luke iv. 13, (where see the note,) until which, Satan had departed from the Holy One; and for which, he had doubtless gathered up all his strength, in order to make one tremendous assault. ‘The Prince of this World cometh^s,’—our LORD had said a few hours before. He had now, doubtless, *come*^t.—It follows :

- 44 And being in an Agony He prayed more earnestly: and His Sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Every word here is full of dignity, awe, and wonder. By that ‘Agony and Bloody Sweat,’ the Church evermore prays to her Good LORD for deliverance. Was it not, in a manner, the undoing of a part of the ancient curse, that the second Adam should have thus watered the earth, (which was cursed for the transgression of the first Adam,)

⁹ St. Matth. iv. 11.

^r Bishop Lonsdale and Archd. Hale.

^s St. John xiv. 30.

^t See ver. 53, below, and the note thereon.]

ith the Sweat, not only of His sinless Brow, but of
 l His Divine Person? Surely CHRIST bore that
 arse now in its fulness; not in a figure, but lite-
 ally: even as when, on the morrow, He submit-
 ed to wear a crown of thorns. Consider the first
 ote on St. Matthew xxvii. 29.

The heavy burthen of our SAVIOUR'S Suffering
 n this tremendous Night is noticed by all the four
 vangelists, and confessed by Himself^u. "Yea,
that His strange and never else heard of Sweat,—
 rops of blood plenteously issuing from Him all
 ver His Body, no man then touching Him, none
 eing near Him;—*that* Blood came certainly
 rom some great Sorrow, wherewith His soul was
 ierced." So, Bishop Andrewes, who dwells on the
 ircumstance with pious wonder; remarking that
 when no manner of violence was offered Him in
 ody,—no man touching Him, or being near Him,
 —in a cold Night, (for they were fain to have a
 ire within doors,)—lying abroad in the air,—and
 upon the cold Earth,—to be all of a Sweat! and
 hat Sweat to be Blood! and not a thin faint
 sweat, but of great drops; and those, so many,
 o plenteous, as they went through His apparel
 nd all; and through all, streamed to the ground,
 nd *that* in great abundance! Read, enquire, and
 onsider if ever there were sweat like this Sweat
 of His? Never the like Sweat certainly, and
 herefore never like Sorrow That hour, what
 His feelings were, it is dangerous to define. We

^u St. Matth. xxvi. 37, 38: St. Mark xiv. 33, 34: St. John xii. 27.

know them not ; we may be too bold to determine of them. To very good purpose it is that the ancient Fathers of the Greek Church, in their Liturgy, after they have recounted all the particular pains as they are set down in His Passion,—and by all, and by every one of them, called for Mercy,—do, after all, shut up all with this : ‘ *By Thine unknown Sorrows and Sufferings, [felt by Thee, but not distinctly known by us,] Have mercy upon us and save us* * !’ ”

45 And when He rose up from Prayer, and
was come to His Disciples, He found them
46 sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them,
Why sleep ye ? rise and pray, lest ye enter
into temptation.

Allestree has some striking remarks on this. “ Truly ” (he says) “ of two visions which our SAVIOUR gave to His most intimate Apostles, Peter, James and John,—the one of Glory on Mount Tabor, the other of sufferings in Gethsemane: shewing in the one, Heaven and Himself transfigured, a glimpse of beatific vision ; and in the other Hell transfigured, and a sad scene of all its agonies,—He thought this a more concerning sight : for when they fell asleep at both, at His Transfiguration, ‘ Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep ;’ yet does He not rouse them up to behold His glory. When they did awake indeed, they saw a glimpse of it, but

* Andrewes.

† St. Luke ix. 32.

straight 'there came a cloud, and overshadowed them^a.' But at His Passion, He bids them 'watch with Him^a:' and when He findeth them asleep, He says 'What, could ye not watch with Me one hour^b?' and bids them 'watch' again^c, and comes again a third time and upbraids their drowsiness^d. So much more necessary was it to behold His Agonies, than to see His felicities! Glory does not discover or invite to Heaven, so much as sufferings drive to it; and we are more concerned to take a view of that Garden of Gethsemane, than that of Paradise; and the going down from the Mount of Olives does more advantage us in climbing the Eternal Hills, than all Mount Tabor's height."

The narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark, which are somewhat fuller in this place, should here be consulted^e. Little or nothing will be found in the way of Commentary, however, on the verses in question. In truth, the entire History of our SAVIOUR'S Passion is a subject for Meditation and Prayer: not for criticism and dry discussion. Solemn and affecting, past all words, we pass by the most striking passages, not knowing how to speak of them as we should. . . . 'Rise,' (said our REDEEMER, at last, to His slumbering Disciples,) 'let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me.'

^a Ver. 34. ^a St. Matth. xxvi. 38. ^b Ver. 40. ^c Ver. 41.

^d Ver. 45. ^e See St. Matth. xxvi. 41 to 46: St. Mark xiv.

38 to 42. ^f St. Matth. xxvi. 46: St. Mark xiv. 42.

47 And while He yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the Twelve, went before them, and drew near unto JESUS to kiss Him.

For this was the concerted 'sign' or 'token by which the traitor had promised to indicate the Divine Person of his LORD to his partners in crime^g. St. Luke alone of the Evangelists remarks that Judas walked *in advance* of the rabbi and soldiery who came to apprehend our Blessed LORD. It will be remembered that St. Peter in another place notices the same circumstance, when he proposes that a witness of the Resurrection should be ordained in the place of Judas,—'which was *guide* to them that took JESUS^h.'

48 But JESUS said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?

'Yea,' (as it is elsewhere written,) 'Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Meⁱ. Concerning this act of treachery, the reader may refer to the notes on the first Gospel^j.

49 When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him
50 LORD, shall we smite with the sword? An one of them smote the servant of the high

^g St. Matth. xxvi. 48: St. Mark xiv. 44.

^h Acts i. 1

ⁱ Ps. xli. 9.

^j See the note on St. Matth. xxvi. 47 to 50

Priest, and cut off his right ear. And JESUS 51 answered and said, Suffer ye thus far.

‘ Shall we smite with the sword ?’—the Apostles had enquired. ‘ Suffer ye thus far,’—was the Divine reply: whereby our SAVIOUR evidently forbade His followers to use the sword in His defence. But in the meantime, ‘ Simon Peter having a sword drew it,’—and performed the act of violence here recorded. ‘ The servant’s name was Malchus ^k.’—See St. Matth. xxvi. 51 to 53, and the notes there ; for the first Evangelist has recorded at greatest length our LORD’S discourse on this occasion. But St. Luke, (the Physician¹!), alone it is who describes the miracle which follows:—

And He touched his ear, and healed him.

This, by the way, is the only case recorded of the miraculous healing of a wound inflicted by external violence. Whereby our LORD set forth in example that heavenly precept of His,—‘ Love your enemies,’ ‘ do good to them that hate you^m.’—Consider the graciousness of such an act,—performed in favour of such an one,—and in such an hour!—‘ One might indeed be curious to know what effect so wonderful a cure and miracle might have had at such a time. Possibly, in the heat of the moment, the man neither noticed the wound nor the miraculous cure: but still, it may have

^k St. John xviii. 10.

¹ Col. iv. 14.

^m St. Matth. v. 44.

had the effect, in the end, of reclaiming him, and withdrawing him from that service.'

It has also been pointed out that 'in all other miracles, Faith seems to have been the essential requisite in all who required and received the benefit. But this appears to have been performed in favour of an enemy, in whom therefore we should not look for such faith; and as a pure act of our LORD's charity and forgiveness. One cannot but suspect, however, that there might have been secretly some good in him, known to our LORD, which rendered him meet for this mercy being vouchsafed to him^m.'

52 Then JESUS said unto the chief Priests, and captains of the Temple, and the elders, which were come to Him,

Take notice, by the way, what a motley company had come forth from the City on this accursed errand: a great multitude bearing lanterns and torches, swords and stavesⁿ,—a band of soldiers with their captain, and officers of the Jews^o,—and among them, the chief Priests, and captains of the Temple, with the Elders!—To them, said the Holy One:

53 Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, ye stretched forth no

ⁿ Williams.

^o St. John xviii. 3. St. Matth. xxvi. 47.

^o St. John xviii. 12.

hands against Me: but this is your Hour, and the power of Darkness.

As if He said,—‘Why do ye treat Me as if I were a robber, thus coming out armed to seize Me by night? What have I done to deserve or require this? Daily have I been teaching in the Temple, and that openly. Why did ye not take Me *then?*’ The reason *why*, our LORD proceeds, in very remarkable language, to assign,—or rather, He leaves His enemies to infer. They had not taken Him till now, because not till now had He surrendered Himself into their hands: but this was ‘their Hour;’ and, (it is mysteriously added,) ‘the Power of Darkness.’ For a short period of time, —predetermined in the eternal counsels of God,—were they permitted to display their malice; and ‘the Power of Darkness’ was suffered to have the ascendancy,—to bruise the heel of Him who was about to bruise his head^p. Consider what has been already offered on this subject, above, in the note on ver. 43. All this illustrates, and helps to explain, the marked manner in which St. John declares concerning the Traitor that ‘*it was Night*’ when he went out^q from the Paschal Supper and from the presence of his LORD.

Take notice that Christian men are declared by the SPIRIT yet to wrestle ‘against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual wickedness in high

^p Gen. iii. 15.

^q St. John xiii. 30.

places^r:' but, (as it is elsewhere said,) God 'hath delivered us from *the Power of Darkness*, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son¹.'

—It follows, in the earlier Gospels, that at this juncture, 'all the Disciples forsook Him and fled!'

54 Then took they Him, and led *Him*, and brought Him into the high Priest's house.

55 And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

This is related more particularly in St. John's Gospel, to which the reader is referred^u. From the house of Annas, (whither our Blessed LORD was first conducted^x;) He was led to the palace of Caiaphas, the High-priest,—followed at a distance by St. Peter and St. John. Owing to the coldness of the weather, (for the nights in Palestine at the Passover season are intensely cold,) a charcoal-fire had been kindled in the outer part of the Hall, where the servants and officers of the High-priest stood; and St. Peter, after standing for a while with them^y, sat down to warm himself at the fire^z.

It will be perceived that St. Matthew and St. Mark in this place record the proceedings of the

^r Eph. vi. 12. ^s Coloss. i. 13. Compare Acts xxvi. 18.

^t St. Matth. xxvi. 56: St. Mark xiv. 50.

^u St. John xviii. 12 to 18,—where see the notes. See also the note on St. Mark xiv. 54.

^x St. John xviii. 13.

^y St. John xviii. 18.

^z St. Mark xiv. 54.

Sanhedrin, (who find 'two false witnesses;') together with the High-Priest's behaviour towards the Holy One,—who is charged with Blasphemy, and declared to be 'guilty of Death^a.' The terrible course which events were thus taking at the upper end of the Hall prepares us for the sad but instructive spectacle to which St. Luke next invites our attention. Having described St. Peter as seated among the servants, at the fire, he adds :

But a certain maid beheld him as he sat 56 by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him.

See the note on St. Mark xiv. 67.—It has been pointed out, as worthy of notice, "that the women introduced on this occasion are the only women mentioned as taking part with the enemies of our LORD: and even *they* are not concerned in bringing about His condemnation, nor any further than to detect St. Peter. It is remarkable that no woman is mentioned throughout, as speaking against our LORD in His life, or having a share in His death. On the contrary,—He is anointed by a woman for His burial, women are the last at His grave, the first at His Resurrection: to a woman He first appeared: women ministered to His wants from Galilee: women bewailed and lamented Him: a heathen woman interceded for His Life with her husband, the Governor; and above all, of a woman He was born^b."

^a St. Matth. xxvi. 59 to 66 : St. Mark xiv. 55 to 64.

^b Williams.

57 And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I
58 know Him not. And after a little while
another saw him, and said, Thou art also of
them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.
59 And about the space of one hour after, an-
other confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth
this *fellow* also was with Him: for he is a
Galilæan.

See the notes on St. Mark xiv. 68, 69, 70.

60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what
thou sayest. And immediately, while he
yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the LORD turned, and looked upon
Peter. And Peter remembered the word of
the LORD, how He had said unto him, Before
the cock crew, thou shalt deny Me thrice.

“What was expressed in that look of our
Blessed SAVIOUR, thought of man cannot con-
ceive, and words cannot utter. That it spoke of
all that had passed in our LORD’s long intimacy
with St. Peter, and especially of the conversation
of that night, and that it derived a peculiar force
and meaning from the indignities which our LORD
was suffering,—that it implied something of this,
we may well suppose, but what more we cannot
tell. The conciseness and sublimity with which
it is mentioned, resembles the account in Genesis
of His Word being spoken, at which the World
was created. CHRIST looked,—and Light filled

he soul of Peter. The thought of his LORD'S Divinity, which he had believed, but had forgotten, now rushed afresh on his mind. In the darkness and silence of the night, his eyes were opened to all that had passed :'

And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. 62

The reader is requested to read the remarks which have been already offered on St. Peter's fall, in the Commentary on the two earlier Gospels^c.—St. Luke proceeds with the history of our SAVIOUR'S PASSION.

And the men that held JESUS mocked Him, 63 and smote *Him*. And when they had blind- 64 folded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee? And many other things 65 blasphemously spake they against Him.

Concerning this portion of the Divine Narrative, the reader is referred to the notes on St. Matthew xxvi. 67, and on St. Mark xiv. 65.—Now was CHRIST that 'poor helpless Man,' of whom we read in the Book of Psalms; 'persecuted,' and 'vexed at the heart;' 'helpless and poor,' and His 'heart wounded within' Him^d: 'despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief.' 'He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth^e.'

How certain does it become, by the way, from a

^c See the notes on St. Mat'h. xxvi. 75, and St. Mark xiv. 72.

^d Ps. cix. 15, 21.

^e Is. lii. 3, 7.

careful study of the Gospels, that the Divinity of our Blessed LORD's person cannot have been so apparent a matter as, in our devotion towards our REDEEMER and our GOD, we are sometimes apt to imagine! There must have been a very thick mantle spread over His Godhead. The Glory of His Deity must have been curtained close,—so very close that scarcely a ray, if even so much as a ray, could ever break through and meet the eyes of men. Every thing in the Gospels tends to shew this. He spoke in the accent of despised Galilee. He was called 'the carpenter;' and deemed the son of a very poor man. No one is ever said to have been struck by His aspect. His voice did not by any means always persuade. His speech was cavilled at. Men asked Him to depart out of their coasts. At the close of His Ministry, soldiers could strike Him with their fists and smite Him with their open palms,—blindfold Him,—force a thorny crown into His pure temples,—scourge Him,—spit upon Him,—torture His parched lips with gall,—crucify Him,—thrust a spear into His lifeless side!—None of these things could have happened, had He seen fit to reveal Himself to His enemies. Once only He appeared to three of His Disciples in the nearest approach to His proper Glory which their mortal eyes could bear to look upon; and next day, when He descended 'the Holy Mount,' the multitude came running to Him! See St. Mark,—ix. 15.

It depends upon the heart of man therefore,

ow as then, whether CHRIST shall be discerned :
 not : discerned in the common round of daily
 duty,—in the lowly task,—in the unadorned path-
 way of common life. If we perceive Him not, it
 is not because He is not there, but because we
 have not the eyes to see Him.

And as soon as it was day, the elders of 66
 the people and the chief Priests and the
 Scribes came together, and led Him into
 their Council, saying, Art Thou the CHRIST? 67
 tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell
 you, ye will not believe :

For our LORD had already told the High-Priest
 that He *was* 'the CHRIST'.

and if I also ask *you*, ye will not answer Me, 68
 nor let *Me* go.

For, when our SAVIOUR asked questions of His
 enemies, they either would not, (being afraid ^g),—
 or they could not, (being convinced and refuted ^h),
 —return Him any answer.—Take notice that He
 now repeats the splendid prediction which is also
 found on His lips on the occasion alluded to above,
 in the note on ver. 67ⁱ.

Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the 69
 Right Hand of the Power of God.

^g See St. Matth. xxvi. 63, 64: St. Mark xiv. 61, 62.

^h As in St. Luke xx. 1 to 7.

^h As in St. Matth. xxii. 41 to 46, and St. Luke xx. 23 to 26.

ⁱ See St. Matth. xxvi. 64,—and the note there.

70 Then said they all, Art Thou then the SON of God?

A most remarkable question, truly: shewing how entirely His learned auditory recognized our LORD's reference to Daniel vii. 13, and how well they understood that prophecy. He had only said, 'the Son of *Man*.'

71 And He said unto them, Ye say that I am.

And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth.

This entire portion of narrative, (namely, from ver. 66 to ver. 71,) will be discovered to be peculiar to the present Gospel. It describes what took place when our LORD was brought before the high Court of Sanhedrin, — 'their Council,' as it is called in ver. 66. It was now early morning, (the interval between three and six;) and the Court seems to have sat for a very brief space of time. The words of our SAVIOUR Himself, when interrogated, rendered the calling of witnesses a superfluous form; and every instant was now precious. His judges therefore availed themselves of His declaration that He was indeed 'the Son of God,' to bring the solemn mockery of their judicial proceedings to a close. And now, they are prepared to conduct Him before Pilate, and require the execution of their sinful sentence ^k.

^k Compare St. Luke xxiii. 1, with St. Matth. xxvii. 1, 2, and St. Mark xv. 1.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 JESUS is accused before Pilate, and sent to Herod. 8 Herod mocketh Him. 12 Herod and Pilate are made friends. 13 Barabbas is desired of the people, and is loosed by Pilate, and JESUS is given to be crucified. 27 He telleth the women that lament Him, the destruction of Jerusalem: 34 prayeth for His enemies. 39 Two evildoers are crucified with Him. 46 His Death. 50 His Burial.

XXIII. AND the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate.

To understand the meaning of this, the concluding note on the *xxiind* Chapter should be borne in mind. From this place, a new aspect of our LORD'S Humiliation is presented to our notice,—namely, His sufferings at the hands of the Roman Governor. Here begins, therefore, that train of events which ended in the memorable truth,—He 'suffered under Pontius Pilate.'

Having hurried the Holy One through the mock formality of a Trial before their own Court, and so far gratified the pride of their nation, these impious men are impatient to transfer the execution of their sentence to the Roman Governor;

as the shortest, as well as the safest, method of contriving the Death of their Prisoner. Hence, the transaction which follows. It is likely that on witnessing this result of the proceedings of the Sanhedrin, Judas set the seal upon his iniquity, —in the manner St. Matthew describes^a.

Our LORD was now brought before Pilate. To have taxed Him, in such a presence, with pretending to be the SON of GOD, would have been clearly ridiculous. They must charge Him with the violation of some *Roman Law*; and accordingly, as we learn from the present Gospel, the formal charge brought against Him, was that of claiming to be a King. As it follows:

- 2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is CHRIST a King.

He is accused of making Himself a King by the very people who would themselves by force have once made Him one^b. Consider how Joseph, (an eminent type of CHRIST,) submitted to punishment for the very crime which he abhorred to commit^c. And yet, in a far different sense from what His enemies intended, CHRIST *was* a King; so that, by successfully urging the present charge, they bear unwilling witness to a solemn truth:

^a See St. Matth. xxvii. 3 to 10,—where the reader is requested to see the notes.

^b St. John vi. 15.

^c Genesis xxxix.

and finally (albeit in mockery) procure the true title of the SAVIOUR to be affixed to His very Cross^d. 'The fierceness of man,' (it is written in a certain place,) 'shall turn to Thy praise^e.'

Take notice also that He is accused to Pilate of the very crime from the imputation of which He had in the fullest manner cleared Himself, on a recent occasion; namely, of 'forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar^f;' and this too by the very nation who would have rejoiced in nothing so much as in having Him for their leader in such a cause. Consider St. Luke xx. 23, and the note thereon.

And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art Thou ³ the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, Thou sayest *it*.

A memorable question, truly; recorded by all the Four Evangelists in the self-same words^g: and a yet more memorable reply. It is that 'Confession' noticed by St. Paul in his first Epistle to Timothy, as the 'good Confession' which CHRIST JESUS 'witnessed before Pontius Pilate^h.' For a fuller account of His dialogue with the Roman Governor, St. John's Gospel must be consultedⁱ. St. Luke records nothing but *the result* of that

^d See below, the note on ver. 38.

^e Psalm lxxvi. 10.

^f See St. Luke xx. 20 to 26.

^g St. Matth. xxvii. 11: St. Mark xv. 2: St. Luke xxiii. 3: St. John xviii. 33.

^h 1 Tim. vi. 13. See also the note on St. Matth. xxvii. 11.

ⁱ See St. John xviii. 33 to 37.

interview, in the words which follow, and which are only found besides related by St. John.

- 4 Then said Pilate to the Chief Priests and to the people, I find no fault in this Man.
 5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

To all of which, our SAVIOUR is found to have 'answered nothing.' 'As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth*.' Pilate thereupon asked Him if He heard not the accusation of His enemies; 'but JESUS yet answered nothing¹;' 'returned him,' (as St. Matthew says,) 'not even a single word of answer; so that the Governor wondered greatly^k.' There was doubtless something in our LORD's manner, so different from what is usual in a criminal, that the Judge felt something of awe and wonder before Him^l. In the meanwhile,

- 6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilæan. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

* Is. liii. 7.

¹ St. Mark xv. 4, 5.

^k St. Matth. xxvii. 14.

^l Williams.

'*Also*,'—because Jerusalem was not the usual residence either of Pilate or of Herod. The Roman Governor usually lived at Cæsarea.

Pilate is the very type of a weak, irresolute statesman. Sufficiently able and inclined to recognize the right, to shrink from the commission of open and flagrant wrong; yet too fearful of consequences, to dare to be strictly just; he rejoiced in the opportunity of transferring to another the burthen of a responsibility which he dared not incur in person. It must have also seemed to him a master-stroke of policy, in this manner to conciliate Herod's friendship by the self-same act which secured his own safety. And here, a new scene in our LORD'S Humiliation is unfolded to our gaze. He is transferred from Pilate's judgment-seat, to that of the Idumæan Herod: whereby, the remote descendant of Jacob is confronted with the remote descendant of Esau; and experiences the same cruel treatment from him which had been experienced by all His ancestors at the hands of the same family^m. Herod, who slew the Forerunner, must have a hand in the death of MESSIAH likewise.

Herod's is indeed a wonderful history. His name comes before us at the beginning of the

^m Consider the following places: Gen. xxv. 22: xxvii. 41. Ex. xvii. 8, (Compare Gen. xxxvi. 12.) Numb. xx. 14 to 21. 1 Sam. xxi. 7: xxii. 18: xxx. 1, 2, &c. Obad. x. 14. Ps. cxxxvii. 7. 1 Esdr. iv. 45. Lam. iv. 22. 2 Chron. xxviii. 17: xx. 1, &c. St. Matth. ii. 16: xiv. 3 to 10, &c.

Gospel, as the disciple of the Baptist; next, as his destroyer: then, disturbed by a guilty conscience, it will be remembered that he supposed the murdered Saint to be the author of the miracles which were wrought by our LORD. 'And Herod said, John have I beheaded; but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see Him^a.' Last of all, we behold the Tetrarch face to face with the SAVIOUR of the World: and with how fearful a result!—On this entire subject, the reader is referred to a long note on St. Luke ix. 9.

8 And when Herod saw JESUS, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long *season*, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.

Well may Herod have 'heard many things' of our SAVIOUR,—being Tetrarch of the Province where our LORD had worked so many miracles; having moreover a Steward, whose wife was a most devoted disciple of CHRIST^o. From those about him, he must have become acquainted with many a divine, many a wondrous history; and he seems to have fallen into that fearful, but as it may be thought not uncommon state, where Religion becomes a mere sentiment of the heart, or matter of intellectual curiosity; but forms no essential part of the inward life, and produces no effect on the daily practice. He retained his vices, yet took an

^a St. Luke ix. 9.

^o St. Luke viii. 3, and xxiv. 10.

interest in heavenly things. He listened to John; yet lived in open adultery. Just one year had elapsed since the period when Herod Antipas had 'desired to see' CHRIST; and now that he saw Him, the result might have been anticipated. He was altogether surprised and disappointed. There was no Beauty in the SAVIOUR that he should desire Him^p: no wonders were displayed in proof of His Dominion over the powers of Nature: no reply vouchsafed to any of the curious questions with which the Tetrarch plied Him. As it follows,

Then he questioned with Him in many 9 words; but He answered him nothing. And 10 the Chief Priests and Scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod with 11 his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked *Him*, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.

Herod caused our SAVIOUR to be clad, not 'in a gorgeous,' but 'in a *white* robe,'—such a dress as persons wore who were candidates for any high office. Here was One accused of aspiring to nothing short of the crown royal: yet He made His appearance unsupported by a single friend,—poor and silent,—'a worm and no man; a very scorn of men, and the out-cast of the people^q.' Claims to kingly honours, if set up by such an one, seemed to Herod a subject for ridicule, rather

^p Is. liii. 2.

^q Ps. xxii. 6.

than for punishment: and to mark his sense of this, he pursued the course described in the text,—mocking Him, *by* arraying Him in a white robe.

12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

It has ever been thus. Men who before were at enmity will combine, and become friends, when CHRIST Himself, or the Church of CHRIST, is to be persecuted^r. The occasion of the quarrel of these two is not recorded, and therefore not certainly known^s. Far more important was it to notice this, the occasion of their reconciliation; whereby were fulfilled those words of ancient prophecy—‘Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The Kings of the Earth set themselves, and the Rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed’—that is, ‘His CHRIST.’ Consider the quotation of Psalm ii. 1, 2 in Acts iv. 25, 26; and the comment supplied by the united voice of the Apostles, in verses 27 and 28, on those words of David.

It now became necessary for Pilate to act; and he is found to have summoned together not only the members of the Sanhedrin, but ‘the people’ also, (among whom the Holy One certainly had many followers, many humble yet devoted friends^t.)

^r See the note on St. Matth. xvi. 1.

^s See St. Luke xiii. 1.

^t Consider St. John ii. 23: vii. 31: viii. 30, 31: xi. 45, 48: xii. 11. Also St. Matth. xxi. 46. St. Luke xix. 48: xxi. 38, &c. &c.

in order that he might have the better chance of effecting his purpose; which was, to procure our LORD'S release. But no blessing ever attends crooked endeavours to do good. It follows:

And Pilate, when he had called together 13 the Chief Priests, and the Rulers, and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this 14 Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *Him* before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent 15 you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him.

Rather,—‘nothing deserving of death has been done *by* Him.’ Pilate is arguing that, in Herod's judgment, our LORD can have done nothing which deserves the punishment of death,—for He has been acquitted by the Tetrarch.

Take notice by the way, in passing, how many, and what various persons bear testimony to the innocence of the Holy One. Pilate^u, and Herod^x, and Pilate's wife^y; Judas himself^z, the Thief on the Cross^a, and the Centurion^b.—Pilate adds:

I will therefore chastise Him, and release 16

^u St. Matth. xxvii. 24.

^y St. Matth. xxvii. 19.

^a See below, ver. 41.

^x See above, ver. 11.

^z St. Matth. xxvii. 4.

^b See below, ver. 47.

17 *Him.* (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the Feast.)

To set a prisoner free, at the Feast of the Passover, seems to have been a privilege which the Romans granted in pursuance of a Jewish custom; and, as far as Pilate was concerned, it must have been of modern date: but it had evidently become absolute. St. Mark records that, 'the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them^c.' Now the eager desire of the Roman Governor was, that Jesus of Nazareth might be He whom the people would desire; but the friends of the Holy One were silent, or their voices were overpowered by the rabble whom their Rulers had persuaded to procure His death.

18 And they cried out all at once, saying,
Away with this *Man*, and release unto us
19 Barabbas: (who for a certain sedition made
in the city, and for murder, was cast into
prison.)

Thus 'denying the Holy One and the Just, and desiring a murderer to be granted unto them^d,'—as St. Peter afterwards boldly declared.

Now, the Roman Governor knew well that it was for envy that the Chief Priests had delivered Him. Rugged, therefore, and little inclined to mercy as he is known to have been by nature^e, he appears to have been so wrought upon by the calm

^c St. Mark xv. 8.

^d Acts iii. 14.

^e See St. Luke xiii. 1, and the note there.

majesty of his Prisoner, that he made repeated efforts to procure His release. As it follows :

Pilate therefore, willing to release JESUS, 20 spake again to them. But they cried, saying, 21 Crucify *Him*, crucify Him. And he said 22 unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him : I will therefore chastise Him, and let *Him* go. And they were instant 23 with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the Chief Priests prevailed.

And Pilate gave sentence that it should 24 be as they required.

“Three times did he challenge the whole nation of the Jews, ‘Why, what evil hath He done?’ Three times did he make that clear profession, ‘I have found no cause of death in Him.’ His own wife, admonished in a dream, ‘sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man :’ and when Pilate heard that He made Himself the Son of God, ‘he was the more afraid^s.’” Notwithstanding all this, he condemned and crucified the LORD of Glory^h. It was in order to pacify the people, and retain possession of his office undisturbed and unmolested, that the Roman Governor thus acted. But his policy proved unavail-

^f St. Matth. xxvii. 19.

^s Bp. Pearson, quoting St. John xix. 7, 8.

^h 1 Cor. ii. 8.

ing. At the end of a few years he was summoned to Rome, to meet certain charges which were brought against him; and an old Greek Chronologer, (quoted by Eusebius,) relates that he destroyed himself in desperation.—It follows:

25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered JESUS to their will.

Then was He scourged, and stripped by the soldiers, and arrayed in the mock ensigns of Royalty,—a crown of thorns, a purple robe, and a reed in His right hand instead of a sceptre: while those wretched miscreants smote Him on the head, and bowed the knee before Him in derision; and even spat in the faceⁱ of Him who is ‘the brightness of’ the FATHER’S ‘Glory, and the express image of His person^k!’ All this, St. Luke omits. He likewise passes over in silence the memorable interview between our SAVIOUR and Pilate, and the many efforts which were made by the irresolute Roman to procure His acquittal, —‘when,’ (as St. Peter expresses it,) ‘he was determined to let Him go^l;’ yet could not prevail with the multitude to consent to His release. On all this subject, the Gospel of St. John must be referred to, and the remarks should be read which

ⁱ St. Matth. xxvii. 28 to 30: St. Mark xv. 15 to 19.

^k Heb. i. 3.

^l Acts iii. 13.

are there offered.—It has been already pointed out^m, and the remark deserves repetition, that the monstrous violence of the soldiery on this terrible occasion, as well as the length of wickedness to which their rulers proceeded, can be referred to nothing short of the Prince of Evil himself, who with all his forces conducted this assault against the Son of Man. St. Paul not obscurely hints at the various ranks of those Powers of Darknessⁿ; and declares that it was in ignorance of the marvellous scheme which God had devised for Man's Redemption, that they procured the Death of the REDEEMER: "for had they known it," (remarks the great Apostle,) "they would not have crucified the LORD of Glory^o." Of a truth they would not; for what was the Cross but the marvellous instrument of His own victory, and their undoing? With this, the choice weapon of the Enemy, was the Enemy himself slain. As it is written,—'David stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof; *and slew him, and cut off his head therewith* *.'—But to return.

Some hours had now elapsed. It was in fact almost nine o'clock in the morning; the formal abandonment of our SAVIOUR into the hands of His blood-thirsty enemies having taken place at six^p. On reaching the City-gate, up to which

^m See the note on St. Matth. xxvii. 35.

ⁿ Compare Eph. iii. 9 to 11, with vi. 12. • 1 Cor. ii. 8.

• 1 Sam. xvii. 51.

^p St. John xix. 14.

time He had Himself borne the Cross on which He was condemned to suffer,—

26 And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear *it* after JESUS.

Concerning this incident, the reader is requested to read what has been offered on St. Matthew xxvii. 32 and St. Mark xv. 21.—Pleasant it is to believe that this highly favoured person will have become a Disciple from this hour, even if he were not so already; for he was one who not in figure, but in actual truth, had fulfilled that injunction of his SAVIOUR, — ‘Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and *take up his cross, and follow Me*.’

27 And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed
28 and lamented Him. But JESUS turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

‘Your *children*,’—for in their time, (namely, forty years after the Crucifixion,) would the Siege of Jerusalem and the Fall of the City take place: and, ‘Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days’,—the same

¶ St. Matth. xvi. 24: St. Mark viii. 34: St. Luke ix. 23.

¶ See the heading of the present chapter.

¶ St. Luke xxi. 23,—where see the note.

Divine Speaker had already declared of that occasion. He adds a saying to the same effect, now :

For, behold, the days are coming, in the 29 which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they 30 begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us ; and to the hills, Cover us.

Compare with this, the language of Isaiah ii. 10, 19, 21 ; and for a yet stricter parallel, see Rev. vi. 16. But so exact is the resemblance of the present place, in point of expression, to Hosea x. 8, that it may be regarded almost as a quotation from that ancient prophet.

For if they do these things in a green 31 tree, what shall be done in the dry ?

If such sufferings can befall the Innocent Man, —what shall be the fate of the ungodly Nation ? If the ‘ tree planted by the water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season,’ is thus shamefully cut down,—what shall become of ‘ trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead’ ?

And there were also two other, malefac- 32 tors, led with Him to be put to death.

These men are called ‘ thieves’ in the two earlier Gospels^u. One of them afterwards obtains such

^t Ps. i. 3. St. Jude ver. 12. And compare Ezek. xx. 47 with xxi. 3, 4.

^u St. Matth. xxvii. 38 : St. Mark xv. 27.

conspicuous notice, that a few words concerning the class to which they belonged, will not be out of place here. They were probably offenders of a kind which had sprung up in Palestine in consequence of the convulsed and lawless state of the country^v; among whom must have been found every grade of guilt,—from that of the bold insurgent and outlaw, who with misguided patriotism seeks to revenge his country's wrongs by violent means of his own devising; down to that of the common thief, whose trade is plunder, and who scruples not to add to his other crimes the guilt of blood. It seems reasonable to conjecture from St. Mark xv. 7, that the two malefactors mentioned in the text were seditious men of the kind first spoken of.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him,

It had been written full a thousand years before,—‘They pierced My hands and My feet. I may tell all My bones. They stand staring and looking upon Me^x.’

“The mystery here unfolded,” (remarks a good man,) “far transcends ordinary thought. With hearts undisciplined, we shall never comprehend it; neither with the best preparation can we do more than imbibe to our soul's health some por-

^v Consider St. Mark xv. 7. Acts v. 36, 37 : xxi. 38.

^x Ps. xxii. 16, 17.



THEY CRUCIFIED HIM.

St. Luke xxiii. 38.



ion of that which passeth knowledge, and which angels but imperfectly apprehend.”

Scarcely endurable, when the thoughts are engaged on a subject of such awful interest, are remarks of a purely critical character. It may, however, be thought worthy of passing notice that ‘Calvary’ (*Calvaria*) is merely the Latin word for ‘a skull;’ retained (but only in this Gospel) from the Vulgate version of the Scriptures. The other three Evangelists mention that the spot to which these sinful men had now conducted our SAVIOUR, was called in the Hebrew, ‘Golgotha.’ ‘There they crucified Him,’—

and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said JESUS, 34 FATHER, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

This was the first of our LORD’S seven sayings on the Cross. Thus did He ‘*make intercession for the transgressors,*’—as His ancient prophet had foretold²; and confirm, in His hour of bitter agony, one of His loftiest precepts³, by His own most holy example. And surely, a truer notion may be obtained of the stupendous nature of the transaction we are here considering, from this short Prayer of the SAVIOUR for His murderers, than could be conveyed by many words of painful explanation from ourselves. The occasion is one

¹ Dr. W. H. Mill. ² See Isaiah liii. 12. ³ See St. Matth. v. 44.

of those where, (in the pious language of Hooker,) "our safest eloquence is our silence."

But in proportion to our sense of the terrible sin of the actors in this black transaction, should surely be our hatred of sin in ourselves. No less alarming than instructive is the warning of the great Apostle against sin in Christian men,—conveying as he does an intimation that all that shocks and confounds us in the history of our SAVIOUR'S Crucifixion is, after some mysterious fashion, thus repeated and renewed,—'seeing,' (he says,) 'they crucify to themselves the SON of GOD afresh, and put Him to an open shame^b.'

And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.

This will be found more particularly related by the other three Evangelists^c. See especially the notes on St. John xix. 23 and 24.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *Him*, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be CHRIST, the chosen of God.

For strange as it may appear, yet is it "next to certain, that the Death of the MESSIAH at the hands of His own, or any other people, was never apprehended by the Jews as one of the events by which His Advent would be declared. This part of His future history is foreshewn indeed as clearly

^a Heb. vi. 6.

^c St. Matth. xxvii. 35, and St. Mark xv. 24.

as words can express, in the xxiind Psalm, in the ixth of Daniel, and in the liiird of Isaiah; and though other parts of these same chapters are by the Jews themselves referred to the MESSIAH," (the liiird of Isaiah, more expressly and more frequently than any other single prophecy of the Old Testament;) "yet does this event appear, from the very beginning, to have been entirely concealed from their Church." Had it not been anciently foretold concerning this remarkable people, that they should 'grope at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkness?' that 'the spirit of deep sleep' should be 'poured out upon them,' and 'their eyes be closed?' that they were 'to hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not!' Nay, to this day, are they not 'blinded;' and 'when Moses is read,' is not 'the veil upon their heart'?"

Refer besides to the notes on St. Matthew xxvii. 40, 42, and 43; and on St. Mark xv. 31, 32.

And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar,

'They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall,' St. Matthew says^e. Whereby those marvellous words of ancient prophecy were fulfilled,—'They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst, they gave Me vinegar to drink^f.' This they did, mocking Him:

^d Dean Lyall,—quoting Deut. xxviii. 29. Is. xxix. 10: vi. 9. 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

^e St. Matth. xxvii. 34.

^f Pa. lxix. 21.

37 and saying, If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself.

In explanation of which circumstance,—('If Thou *be,*')—the Evangelist adds :

38 And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

An inscription was set over the Head of our crucified SAVIOUR, in conformity with the Roman practice; which was, on such occasions, to specify in writing the crime for which the offender suffered. In calling our LORD 'the King of the Jews,' it may, however, well be suspected that Pilate intended indirectly to spite the people who had forced him to violate the dictates of his own conscience. Accordingly, it will be remembered that they wanted him to alter the terms of the charge,—to which request of theirs, it was divinely overruled that the Roman Governor did not accede. And thus was our LORD's real character and office proclaimed to all men. He was a *King*^h.

The writing was in Greek,—because Greek was then the language of the World: in Latin,—because Judæa was already a Roman Province: in Hebrew,—because the Mighty Sufferer belonged by birth to the commonwealth of Israel. Grotius

¶ See St. John xix. 21, 22.

h See notes on St. Matth. xxvi. 65, and xxvii. 38.

finely connects the diverse languages which surmounted the Cross of CHRIST, with the custom of the Roman Emperors to carry before them the names of the 'people, nations, and languages,' who were subject to their sway.

Our attention is next directed to the conduct of the two malefactors; who, as we have already seen, were crucified with the Holy One. St. Luke alone of the four Evangelists relates the striking circumstance, "that the two men thus placed, the one on the right hand, the other on the left of our LORD, in His last agony, bore in a manner the image of those who should stand at His right and at His left in Judgment,—the elect of GOD and the reprobate. Wonderful indeed may it appear,—if any thing after CHRIST crucified can seem wonderful,—that one of the former class should be found there, where every thing told of extreme guilt and extreme punishment: but even thus did He who came to save the lost,—and who, while we were yet sinners, in due time died for the ungodly,—even thus did He choose to manifest, even in the scene of His Death, its atoning virtue to the worst of sinners repenting¹."

And one of the malefactors which were 39 hanged railed on Him, saying, If 'Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.

The sinful man read the inscription upon the

¹ Dr. W. H. Mill.

Cross, and heard the furious railing of the appointed rabble, as they called upon our Saviour to save Himself,—if indeed He had any claim to the proud title written above Him^k. “Could I wonder that he should have beheld only the contrast of his own extreme misery with the omnipotence which could save, but did not,—which was not even its professed possessor; and that, in bitterness of anguish at the contrast, he should have cast in the teeth of his fellow-sufferer the taunts of the chief priests and people,—‘If Thou art CHRIST, save Thyself,—and us?’ Can we wonder that the perception which could alone suppress these bad thoughts was wanting to the miserable man in that hour of agony,—the perception of the majesty which yet sat on the bleeding brow of CHRIST beside him, self-resigned, and praying for His murderers?

“For there is nothing in suffering, in itself considered, which has power to bring these and other gracious feelings to minds before strangers to them: rather does it harden the heart of the carnal man, by centering his thoughts on his own woe, to the exclusion both of God and his fellows. Awful in this respect are all the trials which sever soul and body. Not without reason, therefore, has the Church taught all her faithful children to say,—‘Suffer us not, in our last hour, for any pains of Death, to fall from Thee.’ Thus it is with those whose hearts have been

^k See above, ver. 37.

ciplined and sanctified in the School of CHRIST,—how in that dismal struggle must it fare with such as have put off their repentance and piety to the last!?”—So asks a good man, whose observations are directed against the danger of those who defer the work of repentance to the end of life, in the vain hope that it may fare with them as it fared with the repentant malefactor. He is bent on shewing that *that* man's blessed example is balanced by this other example of final impenitence.

But the other answering rebuked him, 40

It is impossible to say with certainty whether *both* of those who were crucified with our SAVIOUR were, at first, blasphemers or not: but it seems the safest plan to take the statements of the two earlier Evangelists, according to their literal force and meaning. And if *both* ‘the thieves which were crucified with Him,’ at first reviled Him^m, then we have the marvellous picture of one repenting at the very latest hour, and accepted.

Be this as it may, we shall derive a sufficiently striking lesson from the wonderful history before us, if we hold fast by the revealed details of the case. Here was one who may, or may not, have been an old and hardened offender; one who may, or may not, have added the guilt of murder to robbery. What is certain, he was “a felon justly convicted, justly executed: one, whom public jus-

¹ Dr. W. H. Mill.

^m St. Matth. xxvii. 44: St. Mark xv. 33.

tice had adjudged to the most disgraceful as well as cruel of punishments; and to whom public mercy,—which had just saved Barabbas from a murderer's death,—had not been extended. To such a person, therefore, was that signal mercy shewn, which the brief narrative of St. Luke enables us to trace. The repentance of the malefactor is evinced in his confession, when he rebuked his hardened comrade (who had joined the soldiers' mockery against the Royal Messiahship of JESUSⁿ,)"—

saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou
41 art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:

To Repentance thus hearty, at the very moment also when he was writhing beneath the bitter consequences of his crime, "he adds a Faith no less admirable; when, pointing to the Man beside him, then under that load of wrath which obscured His sacred Person from all common sight, he adds to his self-condemnation and to his rebuke, the sentence,"—

but this Man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto JESUS, LORD, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.

Rather,—“when Thou comest *in* Thy kingdom:” a striking prayer indeed, and worthy even of one

▪ Dr. W. H. Mill.

who had companied with the Apostles 'all the time that the LORD JESUS went in and out among' them^o. What is it but a confession that CHRIST, having taken to Himself His Kingdom, would return^p in the Glory of that Kingdom^q, in the latter day, to be the Judge of quick and dead? This despised criminal could hardly have spoken more aptly had he been one of those who heard our LORD foretel His future coming in Glory^r.

And JESUS said unto him, Verily I say 43 unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.

Not, When I *come* in My Kingdom, will I *remember* thee: but, *This day* shalt thou be *with Me*. This is the third of our LORD's seven last sayings.

'In *Paradise*:'—how memorable a word to be found on the lips of the Second Adam, and at such a time! What else does it imply but that, having undone the curse,—having overcome Death by dying,—He was about to reinstate Mankind in the lost privilege of their race; to reconduct them back to that happiness from which, by the disobedience of their first Parents, they had been expelled?—So remarks the great Athanasius, and Ambrose, with many others.

Thus did our SAVIOUR convey to this man the blessed assurance of "a passage with Him through

^o Acts i. 21.

^p See St. Luke xix. 12.

^q Compare St. Matth. xvi. 28.

^r See St. Matth. xvi. 27, 28: xxv. 31.

His Baptism of Blood to His rest and to His final Glory. 'To-day—in *Paradise*:' not in the Highest Heaven, to which our LORD Himself ascended not till afterwards; whither also, as St. Peter afterwards preached to the Jews, David himself had not yet ascended^a; and whither to ascend at this time was surely no privilege of this penitent thief;—but in that intermediate state of faithful souls, the blessed division of that unseen region, to which on that day our LORD descended, (according to the prediction of the Psalmist^b, and the confession in our Creed,) was the penitent Thief to be that day with CHRIST. With the souls in that safe custody, as St. Peter writes^c,—to whom CHRIST then declared their Redemption accomplished, and their more perfect felicity surely approaching,—was this penitent to await the full consummation of his bliss, both in body and soul^x.

“And the conclusion from it can be none other than this,—that there is no sin so great but that the blood of CHRIST can expiate it; no sinner to whom the glad tidings of that Redemption have been borne, who may not by repentance and faith plead its benefit^y.” Thus will the example of the dying thief ever afford unutterable consolation to the real penitent.

Let none however presume on this single re-

^a Acts ii. 34.

^b Ps. xvi. 10.

^c 1 St. Pet. iii. 19.

^x So in effect, writes one who had been a disciple of the Apostles,—quoted by Irenæus.

^y Dr. W. H. Mill.

orded instance of the Divine Mercy extended to a dying Malefactor; for, of a truth, very rarely in its essential features can such a case be repeated,—in its accidental features, *never*. For aught that appears to the contrary, here was a conscience *only at last* awakened; yet embracing the offer of Mercy with a free Confession, a hearty Repentance, and the prompt exercise of a most mighty Faith. When even Peter had denied his Lord, and all but St. John had forsaken him and fled, this suffering man comes forward, an almost solitary witness to the Divinity of CHRIST: recognizing Him when ‘His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men;’ and confessing “a Kingdom which had the ignominious Cross as its foundation, when that mystery,—to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness,—was even to the faithful Disciples yet unknown.” What possible encouragement such a history can be supposed to afford to those who delay their Repentance, reserving it for a dying bed,—it is hard to discover. Scarcely is it too much to say that the cases have no manner of resemblance. He who would be a partaker in the promise vouchsafed to the accepted malefactor, must rather imitate him in the prompt devotion of his remaining opportunities, whatever they may be, to the active service of God. “For while in Him we have a solitary instance of one accepted through Faith without

* *Ia. lii. 14.*

external works, (for which he had not the opportunity,) yet, by no means do we see in him a faith destitute of works, in the larger and fuller meaning of the word. For Confession and Humiliation are works; the charitable admonition of sinners is a work; and Faith itself, the direction of the mind to unseen realities against the bent of carnal feeling, is a work of no small difficulty^a.”—But enough has now been offered on this great subject.

- 44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until
45 the ninth hour. And the Sun was darkened, and the Veil of the Temple was rent in the midst.

Concerning these three hours of miraculous darkness,—at the close of which, (namely, at three in the afternoon,) our SAVIOUR expired on the Cross,—see what has been already offered in the note on St. Matth. xxvii. 45. About the rending of the Veil, see also the notes on the earlier Gospels^b; in St. Matthew, the other prodigies which occurred on this occasion will be found recorded^c.

- 46 And when JESUS had cried with a loud voice, He said, FATHER, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the Ghost.

^a Dr. W. H. Mill.

^b St. Matth. xxvii. 51, and St. Mark xv. 38.

^c St. Matth. xxvii. 51, 52, 53.

‘With a *loud* voice,’—(a miraculous circumstance insisted upon by all three Evangelists^d),—did our REDEEMER resign His sinless Soul into the Hands of the Eternal FATHER: applying to Himself the language of the xxxist Psalm^e; (which is the last of His seven sayings on the Cross;) and thereby “teaching us in whose hands the souls of the departed are^f.”—St. Peter alludes to these dying words of his LORD, in his first Epistle^g; and take notice, how the first Martyr, St. Stephen, sought to die like CHRIST in respect of his two latest sayings^h.—‘The souls of the righteous,’ (it is said in a certain place,) ‘are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch themⁱ.’

Now when the Centurion saw what was 47 done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man.

The reader is requested to read the note on St. Mark xv. 39: also that on St. Matthew xxvii. 54.

And all the people that came together to 48 that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all His acquaintance, and the women 49 that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

^d St. Matth. xxvii. 46, 50 : St. Mark xv. 34, 37. See the note on St. Mark xv. 39.

^e Ver. 5.

^f Bp. Pearson.

^g 1 St. Pet. iv. 19.

^h See Acts vii. 59, 60.

ⁱ Wisdom of Solomon iii. 1.

Compare St. Matth. xxvii. 55, 56, and St. Mark xv. 40, 41; and see the notes on the former place. See also St. Luke viii. 1 to 3.

The keen eye of Prophecy had noticed that mournful group long before. David, speaking in the person of his great Descendant, complains,—“My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off^k.” It is worth observing how much is said in the Psalms of the desertion of the Disciples, (with the single exception of St. John,) throughout this dreary scene; for it would seem to have constituted a special ingredient in our LORD’s Cup of Sorrow. Thus, in the xxxist Psalm,—‘I was a reproach among all Mine enemies, but especially among My neighbours, and a fear to Mine acquaintance. They that did see Me without, fled from Me!’ ‘Thou hast put away Mine acquaintance far from Me; Thou hast made Me an abomination unto them Lover and friend hast Thou put far from Me, and Mine acquaintance into darkness^m.’

50 And, behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a counsellor; *and he was* a good man,
51 and a just: (the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) *he was* of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the Kingdom of God.

In such terms is the disciple who, with Nicode-

^k Ps. xxxviii. 11. ^l Ps. xxxi. 11. ^m Ps. lxxviii. 8, 18.

mus, enjoyed the sublime privilege of providing for the Burial of his LORD, introduced to our notice. He proves to have been a member of the high Court of Sanhedrin; but, like that other member of the same Court already named, he had had no share in the sinful proceedings of the morning^a.—To 'wait for the Kingdom of God,' as already explained^o, denotes the hope of every faithful Israelite for the Advent of MESSIAH.

This *man* went unto Pilate, and begged 52 the Body of JESUS. And he took It down, 53 and wrapped It in linen, and laid It in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

Some remarks on these incidents will be found in the notes on St. Matthew xxvii. 58, 59, and St. Mark xv. 42 to 46.

And that day was the Preparation, and 54 the Sabbath drew on.

The last Jewish Sabbath which the World was ever to behold! See the note which precedes St. Matth. xxvii. 57: also the note on St. Mark xv. 42.

And the women also, which came with 55 Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His Body was laid.

'There was Mary Magdalene, and the other

^a See above, the note on ver. 1.

^o See the notes on St. Mark xv. 43, and on St. Luke ii. 25.

Mary, (that is, 'Mary the Mother of Joses',^p 'sitting over against the Sepulchre,'—as St. Matthew relates ^q.

56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath Day according to the commandment.

Contrast the blessed calm in which these sad matrons passed their Sabbath, with the unholy excitement of the Chief Priests and Pharisees throughout the same solemn season ^r. These pious women, eager as they were to perform the last offices of love to their LORD, yet would not transgress the commandment. Having prepared the needful spices and unguents, they resolved to wait till the first Day of the week should dawn, before they presumed to approach the Holy Sepulchre. How blessed was the result! and how unblessed would have been the impatient yielding to their own inclination! Had they presented themselves sooner at the Grave, they would have been grieved by the presence, perhaps molested by the rudeness, of the Roman soldiers: while their purpose could not possibly have been effected. By waiting till the Sabbath was past,—they found the guard dispersed, and their LORD already risen! They embraced those limbs alive, which they had come to weep over, and to anoint in Death!

^p St. Mark xv. 47,—where see the note.

^q St. Mat h. xxvii. 61,—where see the note; and the verses enumerated in ver. 56.

^r St. Matth. xxvii. 62 to 66.

PLAIN COMMENTARY

ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER OF

St. Luke's Gospel.

1 CHRIST'S Resurrection is declared by two Angels to the women that come to the Sepulchre. **9** These report it to others. **13** CHRIST Himself appeareth to the two Disciples that went to Emmaus : **36** afterwards He appeareth to the Apostles, and reproveth their unbelief : **47** giveth them a Charge : **49** promiseth the HOLY GHOST : **51** and so ascendeth into Heaven.

THE concluding chapter of each of the three first Gospels comprehends the history of the great Forty Days^a; and stands in marked contrast with the chapters which immediately precede. With all the fearful events of our Blessed LORD'S Passion fresh in our memory, the story of the first Easter is like the cool fragrance of morning after a night of suffering and Death. It is in fact the Birthday of the New Creation. But the History is continuous; and to understand the first verse of the present chapter, the two last verses of that which goes before must be borne in mind. 'When the Sabbath was past,' (says St. Mark,) 'Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him^b.' It was therefore the first LORD'S Day, and about day-break. As it follows :

^a Acts i. 3.^b St. Mark xvi. 1.

XXIV. Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the Sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

These holy women, whose names the Evangelist will be found to specify more particularly in verse 10, desired to bestow upon the lifeless Body of their LORD the full honours of Burial; and they supposed that the rite of Anointing yet remained undischarged. The hasty ceremonial performed by the loving hands of Joseph and Nicodemus^c; they must have deemed incomplete in this respect. How striking, however, becomes the recollection at this stage of the sacred History, — (striking even to ourselves, but how much more striking must it have been to *them* !)—that a full week before, the sister of Lazarus was declared by CHRIST Himself to have bestowed upon His yet living Body the Anointing which was commonly reserved for the bodies of the dead^d! And fitting it surely was, that the LORD of Life should experience so singular an anointing,—that those blessed limbs which were destined never to ‘see Corruption, should exhibit in this respect a kind of prophetic intimation of the triumph which was to follow.

‘ Who shall roll us away the stone from the door

^c See St. John xix. 39, 40.

^d See St. Matth. xxvi. 12. St. Mark xiv. 8. St. John xii. 7.

of the Sepulchre^e?'—the women had 'said among themselves' as they came along. But they looked,

And they found the stone rolled away² from the Sepulchre.

How this had come to pass, St. Matthew explains^f.

And they entered in, and found not the³ Body of the LORD JESUS.

The course of the sacred narrative conducts us at once from the interment of our SAVIOUR, on the evening of Friday, to His Resurrection from Death, very early in the morning of Sunday. Concerning the whole interval, as far as the Great Captain of our Salvation is concerned, nothing whatever is revealed to us in the Gospel: but the momentous Truth that, during those three days, 'He descended^d into Hell,' hath been the constant belief of the Church, (the 'Witness and Keeper of Holy Writ^g;) from the beginning. Not indeed that the words themselves are found in the earliest copies of the Creed; but when Apollinaris, (who was Bishop of Laodicea in Syria, in A.D. 362,) taught that CHRIST had no human soul, but that the Word was to Him in place of a soul, the Church put forward [this well-known doctrine, and added it to her Creed, as an eternal protest against his dangerous heresy.

^e St. Mark xvi. 3.

^f St. Matth. xxviii. 2.

^g Article xx.

One of the purposes of our LORD's 'descent into Hell,' is declared in a well-known passage of St. Peter's first Epistle. He went to 'preach to the souls in safe keeping^h,'—according to the mysterious language of the Apostle; and the place of their abode was 'Paradise^l.' Doubtless, He proclaimed to them their Redemption accomplished, and rehearsed in their wondering ears His recent victory over Sin and Death. A few more words on this great subject will be found in the note prefixed to St. Mark xvi.

But the Sabbath was now passed; and the Human Soul of our LORD having returned to its fleshly Tabernacle, 'perfect GOD and perfect Man,' He raised Himself from Death^j; with calm majesty, divested Himself of His fragrant garments, and sometime before the Sun had risen,—before even the Angel had descended to hurl away the stone from the door of His Sepulchre,—after some wonderful and unrecorded fashion, He had come forth. Hence it was, that the women, on entering the chamber of Death, 'found not the Body of the LORD JESUS.'

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

More than 'shining.' It is implied that their garments were '*flashing*' with light.

^h 1 St. Peter iii.

^l St. Luke xxiii. 34, where see the note.

^j St. John ii. 19, 21 : x. 18.

and as they were afraid, and bowed down 5
their faces to the Earth, they said unto
them,

That is, the Angels said,—‘Fear not ye. Ye
seek JESUS of Nazareth, which was crucified:’

Why seek ye the Living among the dead ?

For they were seeking Him who proclaims con-
cerning Himself in the Book of Revelation,—‘I
am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I
am alive for evermore, Amen^k.’

He is not here, but is risen : remember how 6
He spake unto you when He was yet in
Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be 7
delivered into the hands of sinful men, and
be crucified, and the third day rise again.

And they remembered His words, 8

They remembered the memorable words re-
corded by St. Matthew^l, and St. Mark^m, and al-
luded to by St. Lukeⁿ,—as addressed to them by
their LORD ‘*while they abode in Galilee,*’ rather
more than half a year before. The reader is re-
quested to refer back to the notes on St. Matthew
xvii. 23, and St. Mark ix. 31, for some remarks on
this subject. — The Angels added a memorable
injunction on this occasion. They charged the
women to announce to the Disciples *that* appear-

^k Rev. i. 18.

^m St. Mark ix. 31.

^l St. Matth. xvii. 22, 23.

ⁿ St. Luke ix. 44.

ance on a mountain in Galilee, which our SAVIOUR was about to vouchsafe to His followers, in conformity with the promise He had made to the Apostles in His lifetime^o. That promise, He is found to have renewed, now that He was risen^p: and indeed the appearance alluded to must have been one of prime importance; for, as already shewn^q, it is almost the only event subsequent to the Resurrection, related by St. Matthew; and may be even said to fill the concluding chapter of his Gospel. St. Luke, perhaps because he will omit all notice of the appearance in question, is silent also as to the Angelic announcement of it. The women, (he says,) remembered the words of CHRIST,

9 and returned from the Sepulchre,

Returned,—themselves ‘anointed with the oil of gladness above their fellows^r.’ “And as they went to tell His Disciples, behold JESUS met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said JESUS unto them, Be not afraid: go tell My Brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me^s.” Thus charged, the company of women repaired to the City,

and told all these things unto the Eleven, and to all the rest.

^o St. Matth. xxvi. 32.

^p St. Matth. xxviii. 10.

^q In the note on St. Matth. xxviii. 16, to which the reader is requested to refer. ^r Ps. xlv. 7. ^s St. Matthew xxviii. 10.

It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and 10
 Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women*
that were with them, which told these things
 unto the Apostles.

These, then, are the women alluded to in ver.
 1,—to which St. Mark adds Salome^t. It is strik-
 ing indeed to find the name of Joanna, (the wife
 of Herod's Steward,) recurring at such a time.
 The circumstance recalls the last place where we
 met with her name; and suggests that 'Susanna'
 may have been another of that company of holy
 women, whose names, by consent, the Evangelists
 pass over here in silence. Consider St. Luke viii.
 2, and xxiii. 55, in connexion with the present
 place; and see the note on xxiii. 8.

And their words seemed to them as idle 11
 tales, and they believed them not.

It will perhaps occur to some, that they con-
 sidered not the miracle of the raising of Lazarus,
 for their heart was hardened^u. They had also
 clearly forgotten the express predictions of CHRIST
 Himself on this great subject: not once or twice
 made, but again and again. 'From that time forth,'
 —(from the time, namely, of St. Peter's Confession,)
 —'began JESUS to shew unto His Disciples, how
 that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer
 many things of the Elders, and Chief Priests, and

^t St. Mark xvi. 1.
 vi. 52.

^u Alluding to the language of St. Mark

Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day^v.' One week after, He had charged them to tell of the Transfiguration 'to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead^x.' Then followed, in Galilee, that special prediction of His Betrayal, violent Death, and Resurrection^y, to which we have heard the Angels refer, above, in verses 6 and 7. 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem;' (our SAVIOUR had said to the Twelve, when He was going up to the Capital for the last time,) 'and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished^z.' For He 'shall be delivered unto the Chief Priests, and unto the Scribes; and they shall condemn Him to Death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him, and the third day He shall rise again^a.' After such minuteness of description, (for it is more like a narrative of the past than a prophecy of the future,) it is strange indeed to find such utter unwillingness to believe in the fulfilment of what the lips of CHRIST had spoken: but so it was, that '*they understood none of these things*: and this saying was hid from them, neither understood they the things which were spoken^b.' Accordingly, we shall find that when

^v St. Matth. xvi. 21.

^x St. Matth. xvii. 9.

^y St. Matth. xvii. 22, 23.

^z St. Luke xviii. 31.

^a St. Mark x. 33, 34.

^b St. Luke xviii. 34. And observe that the same was said be-

the two Disciples returned from their walk to Emmaus, and related to the Apostles what had befallen them on the way,—‘*neither believed they them^c.*’ Well might our risen LORD upbraid the Eleven ‘with unbelief and hardness of heart,’ because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen^d.’—Take notice of what follows.

Then arose Peter, and ran unto the Sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself

Rather,—‘departed home, wondering,’ at that which was come to pass.

St. John had ran with St. Peter and outstripped him,—both in respect of speed and of Faith. The reader will do well to compare the present verse with the parallel place in St. John’s Gospel^e. Both Apostles, on reaching the Sepulchre, stooped and looked into it: both, in the end, entered, and beheld the spot where their LORD had lain,—observing the tokens of One who, having ‘laid Him down and slept, had awakened; for the LORD sustained Him^f.’ It had been no hurried waking, either. His grave-clothes were found deposited

fore; namely, in St. Luke ix. 45, which is the parallel place with St. Matth. xvii. 22, 23, above quoted.

^c St. Mark xvi. 13.

^d St. Mark xvi. 14,—where the reader is requested to read the note.

^e See St. John xx. 2 to 10.

^f Ps. iii. 5.

by themselves: 'and the napkin that was about His Head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself^a.' In one of the beholders, this sight is found to have produced Belief^b: in the other, only Wonder.

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* three-score furlongs.

The name of one of these Disciples is found to have been Cleopas; and St. Luke himself is presumed to have been the other. The conjecture, (for it is no more than a conjecture,) is a reasonable one. It is found to be the manner of the Evangelists thus to relate something concerning themselves¹; and the minuteness of detail with which St. Luke describes the present interview, favours the supposition that he was a witness of the transactions he describes.

14 And they talked together of all these
15 things which had happened. And it came
to pass, that, while they communed *together*
and reasoned, JESUS Himself drew near,
16 and went with them. But their eyes were
holden that they should not know Him.

St. Mark, with reference to this appearance

^a St. John xx. 7.

^b St. John xx. 8.

¹ Consider St. Matth. ix. 9, 10, &c., and the note there. St. Mark xiv. 52, and the note there. St. John in many places.

of our risen LORD, says that '*He appeared in another form* unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country^k.' As already remarked in another place^l, a wonderful change seems to have passed over the appearance of our LORD, at His Resurrection. He was the same, yet another; whence neither Mary in the garden^m,—nor Cleopas and his companion, on the road to Emmaus,—nor the seven Disciples at the Lake, at once recognised Him. The language of the Evangelist in the last-named case is very remarkableⁿ. St. Luke's manner of expressing the change alluded to is singular, and suggestive.

And He said unto them, What manner of 17
communications *are* these that ye have one
to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And 18
the one of them, whose name was Cleopas,

(Quite a distinct person, by the way, from the
'Cleophas' mentioned in St. John xix. 25, and
which ought to be written 'Clopas.')

—Cleopas,
answering said unto Him, Art Thou only a
stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known
the things which are come to pass there in
these days?

Rather,—'Thou art the only sojourner in Je-
rusalem who knoweth not,' &c.

And He said unto them, What things? 19

^k St. Mark xvi. 12.

^l See the note on St. Mark xvi. 12.

^m St. John xx. 15.

ⁿ See St. John xxi. 4, 12, &c.

As, before, He asked them the subject of their conversation, not as needing to be informed, but in order to draw them into discourse which He might turn to their instruction,—so now, He is found to make inquiry concerning Himself. See the notes on St. Mark v. 9, 30: ix. 21.

And they said unto Him, Concerning JESUS of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before GOD and all the people: and how the Chief Priests, and our Rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

These few words declare what had been the belief,—or rather, the ‘hope’ and ‘expectation,’—of the Disciples of CHRIST, concerning Him. This was the hope which had sustained them to the last^o; and the utter destruction of this hope it was which had paralyzed their minds, and reduced them to the strange state of perplexity and even despair, in which, at the dawning of the first Easter, we find them every one. Even on the Day of the Ascension, we hear them timidly inquiring,—‘LORD, wilt Thou at this time, restore

• Consider St. Luke xix. 11.

again the kingdom to Israel^p? — Cleopas proceeds:

Yea, and certain women also of our com- 22
pany made us astonished, which were early
at the Sepulchre; and when they found not 23
His body, they came, saying, that they had
also seen a vision of Angels, which said that
He was alive. And certain of them which 24
were with us went to the sepulchre, and
found *it* even so as the women had said:
but *Him* they saw not.

In such terms do they describe the visit of the
women, and of the Apostles St. Peter and St.
John, to the Sepulchre.

Then He said unto them, O fools, and 25
slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets
have spoken: ought not CHRIST to have 26
suffered these things, and to enter into His
Glory?

First, 'Suffering,'—then, 'Glory.' "In like
manner, the two passages of all the Old Testa-
ment which speak most fully of the Humiliation
of CHRIST, (the xxiind Psalm and the liiird of
Isaiah,) both end with the announcement of His
Glory. 'Therefore will I divide Him a portion
with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with
the strong.' 'The Kingdom is the LORD's, and

^p Acts i. 6.

He is the Governor among the people^p.” Take notice, further, that St. Peter declared himself to be “a witness of the *Sufferings* of CHRIST, and also a partaker of the *Glory* that shall be revealed^q.”

It has been pointed out on St. Luke xxiii. 35, (to which the reader is requested to refer,) that however marvellous it may seem to ourselves, the Jewish people seem never to have realized the great truth here laid down by our SAVIOUR: namely, — that it had been predicted by their ancient prophets that He should be put to death, and that through the gate of suffering He should enter into Glory. The Psalms, — the Books of Isaiah and of Daniel, — are full of this; and the Jewish Doctors freely recognised the MESSIAH in all those writings; yet, such was their blindness, they overlooked the great doctrine of what should befall Him at His first Advent.

‘Slow of heart,’ proved the very Disciples themselves to believe ‘all that the Prophets had spoken’ concerning CHRIST. Even *they* were slow to recognise, in the one Person of their LORD, the fulfilment of the prophetic witness to a suffering MESSIAH. Of what paramount importance this was to the fixing of their belief, and that of the early Church, on a sure basis, has been pointed out in the note on St. Luke xxii. 37; to which the reader is invited to refer. Behold, therefore, their risen LORD Himself pours into

^p Moberly.

^q 1 St. Peter v. 1.

the wondering ears of the two Disciples a Divine Commentary on 'Moses and all the Prophets.' As it follows:—

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Rather,—'He thoroughly interpreted.'

The walk to Emmaus was not certainly the most striking incident of the first Easter; yet, *who* has not felt that if he must name the one recorded event of that glorious Day at which he would desire to have been present, it must be *this*?—The appearance vouchsafed to Mary Magdalene, in the grey of the morning,—(the first of our LORD'S recorded appearances^r!)—when she 'supposed Him to be the gardener:'—the appearance to the Ten, as they sat at meat,—when, at CHRIST'S bidding, with mingled terror, joy, and wonder, the men whose names we know so well, handled Him and saw that it was He indeed; and when, with calm words of Benediction, He conveyed to them that Peace which the world can neither give nor take away^s:—almost any sight of the first Easter, it were bliss beyond all telling, to have beheld. Yet, to have walked with Him, although unknown, all the way to Emmaus; and to have heard Him, 'beginning at Moses^t, and all

^r St. Mark xvi. 9.

^s See below, ver. 36 to 43; and St. John xx. 19 to 23.

^t 'Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me:' (said our LORD,) 'for he wrote of Me.' St. John v. 46.

the Prophets, expound in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself,'—*this*, surely, were the *most* blessed portion of all! Surely, our hearts burn within us, even at the thought of what it must have been, to have heard *Him* so open the Scriptures. The Angels must have come down to listen, and Nature herself grown attentive to the accents of her CREATOR and her GOD!

Take notice that St. Paul, following in the footsteps of his LORD, "expounded and testified the kingdom of GOD," before his unbelieving countrymen, at Rome, "persuading them concerning JESUS, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening^u."

8 And they drew nigh unto the village,
whither they went: and He made as though
9 He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.

Consider on how many occasions besides the present, it is intimated that constraint is necessary on the part of those who would secure the abiding presence of CHRIST. "Pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant^v," was the respectful language of the patriarch Abraham: and, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me^x,' was the earnest exclamation of the patriarch Jacob. 'De-

^u Acts xxviii. 23.

^v Gen. xviii. 3.

^x Gen. xxxii. 26.

part not hence, I pray Thee, until I come unto Thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before Thee,' said Gideon to the Angel. 'And He said, I will tarry till thou come again'. 'I pray Thee, *let us detain Thee*,' was the entreaty of Manoah and his wife.

St. Andrew and St. John are thus found to have followed after the SAVIOUR, till they won from His lips the word of invitation^a: while the Woman of Canaan even pursued the Holy One into the House whither He had retired^b. On the Sea of Galilee, about the fourth watch of the night, the Disciples saw Him coming unto them, 'walking upon the Sea: and *He would have passed by them*^c,' had they not cried out, and by their entreaties persuaded Him to enter the ship in which they were. The like is found to have taken place during the walk to Emmaus. By all of which we are reminded, that as, without an effort, the blessing of CHRIST'S presence may not be won, so neither, without a constraining effort, may it be retained in the soul.

And it came to pass, as He sat at meat³⁰ with them, He took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them.

And their eyes were opened, and they³¹ knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.

^r Judges vi. 18.

^s Judges xiii. 15.

^a St. John i. 37 to 39.

^b St. Mark vii. 24.

^c St. Mark vi. 48.

It is impossible to read this statement without a deep conviction that a mystery lies beneath it. Here was no mere recognition; as when the unsuspected presence of a friend is discovered by his well-known gesture. It was more than that. The act described, corresponds exactly with what we read concerning the institution of the LORD'S Supper^d; and 'the breaking of the bread,' (which is presently alluded to, as the special act of our SAVIOUR on this occasion^e;) is the very expression by which the LORD'S Supper itself is twice indicated in the Acts^f. Not that it is necessary to suppose that the Holy Eucharist was partaken of at Emmaus: but it seems to be implied that the blessing of CHRIST served to a sacramental purpose; and that, by means of the Bread which He gave to the Disciples, "their eyes were opened." "It enlighteneth with belief," says Hooker^g of the Holy Eucharist; "it truly conformeth us unto the image of JESUS CHRIST." Now, to 'be like Him,' and to 'see Him as He is,' are one^h.

Take notice that the two Disciples, at Emmaus, had not been 'forgetful to entertain strangers;' whereby, they had 'entertained Angels unawaresⁱ.'

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked

^d St. Luke xxii. 19.

^e Acts ii. 42 and 46.

^h 1 St. John iii. 2.

^g See below, ver. 35.

^f Quoting Cyprian.

ⁱ Heb. xiii. 2.

with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?

“We seem to be taught by this, that in reading the Scriptures there may be an affectionate warmth and wonder as He opens them to us,—a kindling of His own Divine Love in the soul of His Disciples, however imperfect,—while He shews therein His Cross and His sufferings; and, it may be, discloses something of the Glory that is to be revealed. While we walk and are sad, from this we may yet find comfort. Discourses also which fill the hearers with a sensible warmth and fervour, and kindle a fire in their souls, may be from God; for CHRIST has promised that His HOLY SPIRIT shall speak by His Ministers. But such must consist in the unfolding of the Scriptures, and in the setting forth of CHRIST crucified, and the Power of His Resurrection. Let the middle, and the beginning, and the end, be the setting forth of CHRIST crucified, that the hearts of those that hear may burn. We know not how much in these things CHRIST is with us, in the stirring of the heart and affections, until He vanishes from us, and it is all past.

“But if He comes to be with us when we talk of Him, and while we walk with Him, yet are we hereby taught that it is *in the Breaking of Bread* He is to be known in His Church, unto the end^k.”

And they rose up the same hour, and re- 33

^k Williams.

turned to Jerusalem, and found the Eleven gathered together, and them that were with
 34 them, saying, The LORD is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

Take notice, that nothing is here said of the appearance to Mary Magdalene, or to the company of women. The appearance to Simon Peter is singled out in a marked way by the whole body of Disciples; and the language used concerning it, is the language of men who believe the thing they state. It had perhaps been attended by some extraordinary circumstances. St. Paul gives it the foremost place in his enumeration of our LORD'S appearances after His Resurrection. "He was seen of Cephas; then, of the Twelve; after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once¹."

35 And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.

Yet, strange to say, their report did not win belief; as St. Mark has expressly recorded^m.

36 And as they thus spake, JESUS Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

"He 'stood in the midst of them,'—suddenly, and without a sound or step being heard, or any

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 5, 6. Consider the note on St. Matth. xxviii. 16.

^m St. Mark xvi. 13.

approach or passing by noticed; noiseless as a shadow, and sightless in His coming as a dream. He is in the midst of them, with a suddenness and silence which marks all the comings of CHRIST. Here then was the promise visibly fulfilled, "where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of themⁿ." And what words may declare the joy of the Disciples at this sight of their Divine Master, thus standing among them as of old; restored to them, in a manner past all understanding, at the moment when they longed for Him most, and regarded His return as altogether impossible?

Peace,—the last word of the prophecy of Zacharias^o; the burthen of the Angelic Hymn on the night of the Nativity^p; the Salutation which our SAVIOUR had directed His Disciples to convey with them, wheresoever they published the Gospel of Peace^q; the precious legacy which the same SAVIOUR, on the last evening of His mortal Life, bequeathed to His Apostles^r: Peace,—is the first word which is heard from His lips when He is again risen from the dead.

But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My Hands and My feet, that it is I

ⁿ Williams, quoting St. Matth. xviii. 20.

^o St. Luke i. 79.

^p St. Luke ii. 14.

^q St. Luke x. 5.

^r St. John xiv. 27.

Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.

40 And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them *His* hands and *His* feet.

The Reader is requested to refer to some remarks in the Commentary on St. John xx. 20.

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye
42 here any meat? And they gave Him a piece
43 of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took *it*, and did eat before them.

Thus shewing them the reality of His Body.

How is it possible here to avoid hanging upon every word with interest and wonder? This then was the fare of the Apostles,—‘broiled fish,’ and ‘honeycomb.’ May there not be a meaning, also, in the food thus particularly mentioned, and partaken of on so great an occasion?

44 And He said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and *in* the Prophets, and *in* the Psalms, concerning Me.

For not only ‘the whole Book,’ but ‘every folding, every leaf of this Book,’ is full of Him. “Thou shalt not find a Story,” (says Hammond,) “a Rid-

e, a Prophecy, a Ceremony, a downright Legal institution, but hath some manner of aspect on his glass, some way drives at this mystery, 'God manifest in the flesh.' For example, (perhaps you have not noted,) whenever you read Seth's genealogies more insisted on than Cain's, Shem's than his elder brother Ham's, Abraham's than the whole world besides, Jacob's than Esau's, Judah's than the whole Twelve Patriarchs; and the like passages which directly drive down the line of CHRIST, and make that the whole business of Scripture: whenever, I say, you read of any of these, then are you to note that Shiloh was to come; that He which was sent, was on His journey; that from the creation, to the fulness of time, the Scripture was to travel with *Him*."

Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

Words soon read, but involving how important doctrine; and suggesting how many heart-stirring thoughts! 'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy Law' was the prayer of the devout Psalmist. The gift which he coveted, was now imparted to the Disciples of CHRIST; and by the hands of CHRIST Himself.

Consider how glorious must have been the result, when these words were spoken by Him who said 'in the beginning,' 'Let there be Light, and there was Light.' He had already, in the case of

Cleopas and his companion, 'expounded, in all the Scriptures,' ('beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,') 'the things concerning Himself.' But now, He caused all those dark writings to become clear to the mental eye; enabling the Disciples, by a mere act of intuition, to '*understand* the Scriptures:' not so much, (be sure!), to understand the hard points in Chronology, Geography, Physical Science, Natural History, and the like, which abound in Holy Writ; as to see which portions of Sacred Story are allegorical^a; which persons^b, transactions^c, and things^d, are typical; how far typical; and of what;—what hidden teaching lies concealed under the several enactments of the Law^e;—what is the true reference of the several Prophecies of the Old Testament^f;—lastly, what unsuspected mysteries and meanings lie beneath the surface of the latter, in every Work of the SPIRIT^g.

^a See above, ver. 27.

^a As, the History of Hagar. See Gal. iv. 21 to 31.

^b As, Melchizedek. See Heb. vii. 1 to 17.

^c As, the Crossing of the Red Sea. See 1 Cor. x. 1 to 6.

^d As, the Veil of the Temple. See Heb. x. 20.

^e As, the High-Priest's entering the Holy of Holies: see Heb. ix. 7, 8. Also, the prohibition (in Deut. xxv. 4,) to muzzle the ox which treadeth out the corn: See 1 Cor. ix. 9 to 11.

^f Consider how St. Peter expounds Ps. xvi. 8 to 11, in Acts ii. 29 to 31. Consider also St. Matth. ii. 15, 18, 23,—with the notes on each place.

^g Consider the inference which our LORD draws from Ex. iii. 6, in St. Mark xii. 26, 27,—where see the notes: and how St. Matthew (viii. 17,) explains Is. liii. 4: and how St. Paul comments on the viiith Psalm in Heb. ii. 5 to 9. Consider also Gal. iii. 16.

With most convincing power must men so enlightened, so unerringly instructed in the mysteries of CHRIST'S Kingdom, have proceeded to spread the knowledge of the Faith. There was even a time, (we know it for certain,) when certain great and curious secrets were in the keeping of the Church^f. These, indeed, have since passed into Oblivion. Yet must *the result* of such divine illumination have been permanent. The general consent of Antiquity on certain great subjects,—as the reference of our LORD'S Discourse with Nicodemus to Water Baptism,—must be regarded as quite conclusive as to the mind of the SPIRIT on those subjects; and the style and method of the ancient expositors, generally, must be held to be in strict conformity with the Truth. To proceed, however. Our SAVIOUR 'opened the understanding' of the Disciples:

and said unto them, Thus it is written, 46 and thus it behoved CHRIST to suffer, and to rise from the dead the Third Day: and that 47 Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

'Go ye therefore, and *teach all nations,*'—is the language of our LORD'S Charge as recorded by St. Matthew 8. 'For, from the rising of the Sun unto the going down of the same, My Name shall be

^f See 2 Thea. ii. 6.

⁸ St. Matth. xxviii. 19.

great among the Gentiles, . . . saith the LORD^h. The prophet Micah, in like manner, speaking of the last days, declares that ‘many nations shall say, Come, and let us go up to the Mountain of the LORD, and to the House of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for *the Law shall go forth of Sion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem*!’

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

Take notice how distinctly the office of ‘witnesses’ was assigned to the Apostles by their LORD; here, in St. John xv. 27, and in Acts i. 8. Accordingly, it is recognized by them on many occasions:—at the election of Matthias, into the Apostolic body^j; in St. Peter’s speech on the Day of Pentecost^k; after the healing of the lame man by St. Peter and St. John^l; before the Council^m; before Cornelius and his companyⁿ; and in St. Paul’s Sermon at Antioch^o. Consider also 1 St. Peter v. 1, and 2 St. Peter i. 16.

Hitherto, we have been occupied with the History of the first Easter,—the events of a single Sunday: but the five verses which come next give the History of our LORD’s Ascension into Heaven; and therefore a long interval,—the space of Forty Days, in fact,—is interposed between what precedes and what follows.

^h Mal. i. 11.

^j Acts i. 22.

^l Acts iii. 15, and iv. 20, 33.

ⁿ Acts x. 39.

ⁱ Micah iv. 2.

^k Acts ii. 32.

^m Acts v. 32.

^o Acts xiii. 31.

The place from which our LORD led the Eleven postles 'out as far as Bethany,' was certainly the City of Jerusalem,—the scene of the preceding verses. He had indeed, in the meantime, manifested Himself to His Disciples on the Mountain in Galilee, and again by the Lake^p: but they had now, once more, returned to Jerusalem. "And, being assembled together with them," (as St. Luke says in another place; where, by the way, the words would rather be translated, as in the margin, 'eating together with them,') He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem; but wait for the promise of the Father, which, [saith He,] ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with Water; but ye shall be baptized with the HOLY GHOST not many days hence^q." All this is here expressed more briefly, as follows:

And, behold, I send the promise of My 49
FATHER upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on High.

Which is said with obvious allusion to the great outpouring of the SPIRIT on the Day of Pentecost, which was to follow in ten days from the date of the Ascension; and for which, the Apostles were to wait, (literally, to 'sit' still,) in Jerusalem.

'Behold, I send.' And so, in St. John's Gospel,— 'The COMFORTER, whom I will send unto

^p See St. Matth. xxviii. 6, &c., and St. John xxi. 1, &c.

^q Acts i. 4, 5.

you from the FATHER.' 'If I depart *I will send Him* unto you *.' By which texts it is shewn that the HOLY GHOST "proceedeth from the FATHER and the SON †."—The outpouring of the SPIRIT, thus alluded to, was '*the promise*' of the FATHER, (as it is called here, and in Acts i. 4;) for the gift had been promised in ancient days by the mouth of His holy Prophets ‡.

50 And He led them out as far as to Bethany,

From Jerusalem, then, (as explained above, in the note preceding ver. 49,) He led them forth along the well-known road to Bethany; that road which rather more than forty days before, they had seen Him daily tread in much affliction^q; and thus He guided them to the summit of the Mount of Olives,—which, in common with the entire district in which it stands, was known by the name of 'Bethany.' 'Spots consecrated by the recollection of a thousand sayings and incidents which were full of peculiar interest to them; and many of which, the events that had since occurred had now unfolded and explained; but oh, with feelings and thoughts how different from those with which they had visited them before^r !'

There, He delivered to His Apostles His parting Charge,—as related in the concluding verses of

* St. John xv. 26 : xvi. 7. † See also St. John xvi. 14, 15.

‡ See Isaiah xliv. 3, Joel ii. 28, &c.

^q See St. Luke xxi. 37.

^r Williams.

the two first Gospels^a. Those solemn words ended, **He lifted up His Hands,**' bearing the marks of the wounds which He had received for them; and bestowed upon them His prevailing Blessing,—as St. Luke alone records:

and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.

The Law therefore began and ended with a curse^b: but the Gospel ends, as it began, with blessing^c. And take notice, that it was while our SAVIOUR was in the very act of blessing His apostles,—His Hands yet lifted up in Benediction, yet extended over them in Love unspeakable,—that He commenced His majestic Ascent. As follows:

And it came to pass, while He blessed 51 them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven.

Beautiful words! denoting rather that He was *taken away* from the men He loved, than that by an act of His own, He *left* them. For His Passion, it is said that He was impatient^d: for His Ascension, not so. He did not *leave* His Apostles, but '*was parted* from them.'

In the Commentary on St. Mark's Gospel, several

^a See St. Matthew xxviii. 18 to 20, and St. Mark xvi. 15 to 19, —where the reader is requested to see the notes.

^b Gen. iii. 14 to 19, and Mal. iv. 6.

^c St. Matth. v. 3 to 11, and the present place.

^d St. Mark x. 32, and St. Luke xii. 50.

remarks of a doctrinal character will be found on the subject of the Ascension,—to which the reader is invited to refer ^v.

He “sat on the Right Hand of God,”—as St. Mark is careful in this place to add^x. But St. Luke’s supplementary record, in the Acts, is especially worthy of remembrance here. After rehearsing a part of our LORD’s Charge and Commission, no where else recorded^y, the blessed Writer adds,—‘And when He had spoken these things, *while they beheld*, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.’ A chariot-cloud, —which was doubtless a host of ministering Angels: for ‘the chariots of GOD are twenty thousand, even thousands of Angels; and the LORD is among them, as in the holy place of Sinai.’ ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates,’ is their song; ‘and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in^a.’

“And while they looked steadfastly toward Heaven as He went up, behold, two Men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same JESUS, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven.” That is,—As ye have seen Him in a cloud depart, so ‘in clouds^b’ shall

^v See the note on St. Mark xvi. 19.

^x St. Mark xvi. 19.

^y Acts i. 6 to 8.

^a Ps. lxviii. 17.

^b Ps. xxiv. 7.

^b See the note on St. Matth. xxiv. 30,—the latter part of the verse.

Ye behold Him return. 'And His feet shall stand in that Day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the East^c.'

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey^d." The record of the same Evangelist, in his Gospel, is much briefer: namely,—

And they worshipped Him, and returned 52
to Jerusalem with great joy: and were con- 53
tinually in the Temple, praising and blessing
GOD. Amen.

They had been sorrowful, but their Sorrow hath been turned into Joy. CHRIST hath seen them again, according to His true promise: wherefore their heart rejoiceth; and now, their joy no man taketh from them^e. They repair to the Temple; and lo, the Temple-Service becomes henceforth filled with new meanings. "The Song of Moses has become to them the Song of the LAMB." To them, the Psalms speak henceforth another language, for they speak to them only of CHRIST.

Well may the Apostles have been henceforth

"continually in the Temple,
praising and blessing
God!"

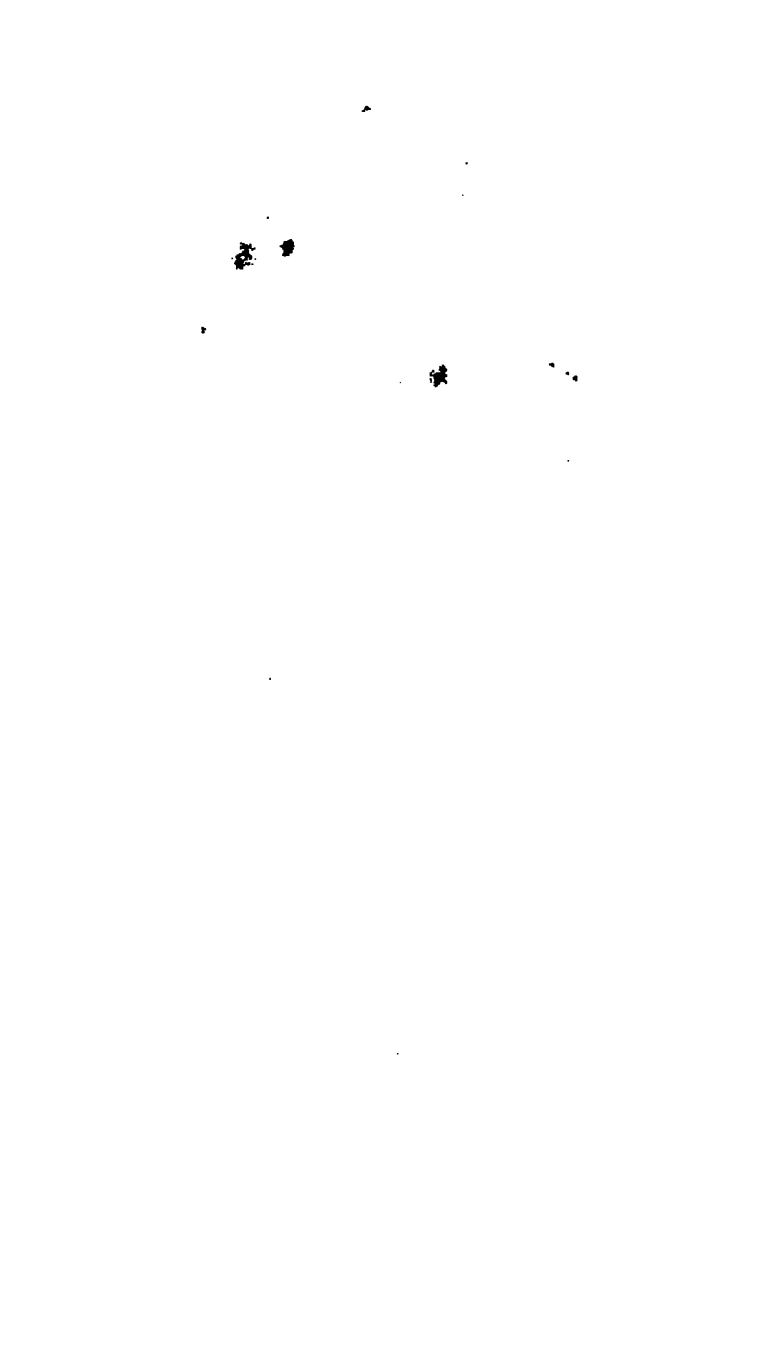
^e Zech. xiv. 4.

^d Acts i. 9 to 12.

^c St. John xvi. 20, 22.

The Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, who through Thine Only-begotten SON JESUS CHRIST hast overcome Death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting Life ; we humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special Grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect ; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the HOLY GHOST, ever one God, world without end. Amen.





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